

School of Government

MMPM 554 / MAPP 575 / STRA 526

DISSERTATION

(60 Points)

Trimester Q2 / 2009

COURSE OUTLINE

Names and Contact Details

Course Coordinator:

Dr Amanda Wolf

Room RH 803, Level 8, Rutherford House, Pipitea Campus

Email: amanda.wolf@vuw.ac.nz

Telephone: (04) 463 5712

Amanda is responsible for ensuring that you get general advice and support on academic matters up to the point at which you are underway with an approved supervisor. She is also responsible for other matters associated with the Part 3 research options, including troubleshooting supervisory problems, and ensuring consistent and accurate assessment.

For specific inquiries of an administrative nature, please contact:

Bun Wong, Senior Programme Coordinator

Email: bun.wong@vuw.ac.nz

Telephone: (04) 463 5453

Darren Morgan, Masters Administrator

Email: darren.morgan@vuw.ac.nz

Telephone: (04) 463 5458

Bun and Darren look after your enrolment and fees, notify workshops, provide support materials and track your progress.

For Human Ethics Committee matters, please contact:

Dr Russell Harding, HEC representative

Email: russell.harding@vuw.ac.nz

Telephone: (04) 463 7488

Russell is delegated by the Head of School to ensure that HEC standards are met, and to check all applications to the HEC from School staff and students.

Office Hours:

8.30am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday

Trimester Dates

The dissertation is completed over three consecutive trimesters.

Trimester Q2/2009 covers the period of trimesters 2 and 3/2009 **and** 1/2010.

The dates for trimester Q2/2009 are Monday 13 July 2009 to Wednesday 30 June 2010.

Withdrawal Dates

Students giving notice of withdrawal from this course after **Friday 24 July 2009** will NOT receive a refund of fees.

Students giving notice of withdrawal from this course after **Friday 19 March 2010** are regarded as having failed the course, unless the Associate Dean subsequently gives approval to withdraw.

Notice of withdrawal must be in writing or emailed to the Master's Administrator. Ceasing to attend or verbally advising a member of staff will NOT be accepted as a notice of withdrawal.

Course Content

This course is an independent research course.

Course Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, you should have:

- Demonstrated the ability, at a high academic standard, to design and conduct applied research tasks;
- Developed an in-depth understanding of a body of theoretical or conceptual material and/or its applicability in your selected subject area;
- Acquired some new research skills; and
- Become well-informed in the subject area(s) investigated for the paper.

Course Delivery

No formal classes are associated with this course. This course is an independent research course.

Expected Workload

As this is an individual course of study, and courses vary between students, it is not possible to indicate the amount of time you can expect each part to take. However, as a rough overall guide, the University considers that a 120-point Masters thesis is a full-time, full-year course of study. Thus, your 60-point dissertation is about 1/2 of a full-time year of study.

Readings

There are no specified readings.

Please refer to a separate booklet, *School of Government Research & Internship Guidelines MPM/MPP/MSS 2009*, available from the Masters Administrator, which supplements this course outline.

Assessment Requirements

OVERVIEW

Your grade is based on a final report. However, there are three additional requirements, which are summarised and explained in detail below.

| Requirement | Due Dates |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. One-paragraph description of the intended topic | Monday 20 July 2009 * |
| 2. Draft proposal for the dissertation, approx 1,000-1,250 words | Monday 17 August 2009 |
| 3. Final proposal, approx 1,000-1,250 words | Monday 14 September 2009 |
| 4. Final essay, 30,000-40,000 words | Tuesday 4 May 2010 |

* Note that the dissertation course is restricted entry. One condition is that you have selected a suitable topic before the start of the trimester in which you enrol. If you do not provide a satisfactory topic description by this date, you will be advised to enrol in a later trimester.

YOU SHOULD AIM TO SUBMIT A PENULTIMATE DRAFT OF THE FINAL DISSERTATION TO YOUR SUPERVISOR BY MONDAY 5 APRIL 2010 AT THE LATEST.

1. ASSESSMENT DETAILS: One-Paragraph Description of the intended topic, due Monday 20 July 2009

Set out in one paragraph the topic you intend to develop into your dissertation. The purposes of this paragraph are to ensure you make a timely start with proposal development and to assist the School to allocate supervisors for all research getting underway at the same time.

Your paragraph should be presented on one page, with the following information:

- Course code and name
- Assessment item descriptor (one-paragraph description)
- Due date (and date submitted, if different)
- Name of candidate
- Candidate Student ID number

Your paragraph should be a draft version of the “issue statement” (see the proposal details below for a description of the issue statement). Please email to amanda.wolf@vuw.ac.nz by 5.00pm on Monday 20 July 2009.

2. + 3. ASSESSMENT DETAILS: Draft Proposal, due Monday 17 August 2009 and Final Proposal, due Monday 14 September 2009

The above dates are the latest possible dates. Earlier submission is encouraged.

A final proposal is due by Monday 14 September 2009. The proposal is a mandatory requirement. An acceptable proposal is needed for you to be formally allocated a supervisor and for you to proceed with the proposed research. Feedback on at least one draft of the proposal is almost always needed in order for the final proposal to be accepted.

Your proposal, which should be approximately 1,000-1,250 words, should include the following:

1. A title
2. An issue statement
3. A brief summary of the background, merit, and methodology of the proposed research
4. A section-by-section outline of the final report
5. A statement of any particular conditions that apply
6. An HEC statement
7. An initial bibliography

The Proposal in Detail

1. The Title
Titles should be short and descriptive. Journals are good sources of ideas for titles.
2. The Issue Statement
The issue statement should, first, let the reader know what “corner of the world” you are in – your general field of interest, such as child health policy or interagency collaboration. Second, it should raise a feature for focused examination in that corner of the world. Third, it should convey the purpose of the research. Finally, the issue statement should convey the nature of the answer you will provide. The issue statement should be about 4 or 5 sentences.
3. Summary
The summary provides an overview of the objectives and merits of the research, and an indication of the methodology to be used. If there is some relevant background or

context that the reader needs to understand your objectives, then this section should include a brief note on it. This section can vary from one paragraph to about three or four, but should be as short as possible.

The purposes of the summary are to allow the reader to assess the feasibility of the research, the coherence of the overall design and the academic merit of the proposed work. In reaching this assessment, the reader will look at how well the indicated methodology matches the study objectives (will the methodology provide the desired type of answer?). The reader will judge feasibility mainly by looking at the stated objectives, but also by looking at the implied time and resources required for the indicated methodology. Academic merit will be established through scrutiny of the summary as a whole in light of the course objectives.

A Note on Methodology

A research methodology is the strategy with which you will achieve your objectives. How will you do what you want to do? The summary section should clearly state your strategy and the rest of the proposal should develop it in a consistent manner.

Attention must be paid to methodology in two important respects:

- What information are you going to use and how are you going to get it?
- How are you going to construct your argument? That is, how are you going to muster theory and evidence in a way that allows the reader to follow you and be able to judge for themselves the conclusions you have reached? How will you go about putting together a convincing chain of evidence and reasoning?

4. Section-by-section Outline

Here you will describe what each section of your final dissertation will contain. As appropriate you will indicate the information you are going to draw on and how that information will be collected and interpreted. This section should be about two pages long.

Depending on your topic or methodology, you may have more or fewer sections than the rough guide below, which provided “generic” section headings for an essay that includes some literature review, an application, analysis and interpretation. Note that the proposal should comment on the content and appropriate methodology for each section (as applicable). You may find it helpful to include indicative word limits for each section.

Introduction

For the proposal, you may briefly state something like: “This section will set out the issue(s) to be addressed and provide a reader’s guide to the paper.” You may also state if the introduction will include some particular context that will raise the reader’s interest and justify the study (for example, a recent event or publication).

Background

This section will provide the reader with key *facts* that set the scene for your investigation. It could include a summary of legislation, a brief history, or a description of the state of the world with regard to your topic. If your work is comparative, you may describe aspects of the comparators here. If your work is mainly theoretical, you may describe the real-world salience of your analysis. Your proposal should indicate what content will be included and the general sources for that content.

Concepts, theories or ideas (the “literature”)

Concepts, theories or ideas (or whatever word you prefer) provide the framework and terms for your investigation. In this section, you will report the selection of literature, summarise its relevant aspects, define and justify concepts and related tasks. In your proposal, you need to identify the content of this chapter and/or the way in which you are going to come up with the content (for instance by drawing on several different strands in the literature, or synthesising several frameworks used in other jurisdictions).

Empirical focus

In this section you will present your research findings. To the extent possible, you should present these results first and then (in the next chapter) tell the reader how you have analysed and interpreted them. In other words, you should first *describe* your findings. However, this is not a hard and fast rule. You should write up what information you collected, organised in some sensible way. Your proposal, therefore, needs to explain what evidence you will collect, or use, and how.

Analysis and interpretation

In this section you interpret your evidence in light of your concepts, theories or ideas. Your proposal needs to make clear how you will analyse and interpret the evidence.

Conclusions/Implications

This final section reports your conclusion and recommendations (if any). In the proposal, you should re-iterate from your issue statement the *nature* of these conclusions. This does not mean that you will state your actual conclusions.

5. Statement of Particular Conditions

State any particular conditions that apply, such as the involvement of a third-party mentor (such as a workplace supervisor), the relationship of the research to your paid employment, or whether the research builds on a paper you submitted to another course in your current degree or previous study. If your research may suggest conflicts of interests or political sensitivities or similar, discuss how you plan to deal with these.

6. HEC Statement

State either: “HEC approval is not required” OR “HEC approval is required”.

NOTE: If your research will involve getting information from people, you may find that working through the Human Ethics Committee application at the same time as you write your proposal will make both processes easier. Remember that HEC approval must be secured before you embark on research involving people.

A Note on HEC Process

(Note that you do not actually begin this process until after your proposal is approved as you must develop your application with your supervisor).

Pipitea HEC guidelines and application form are **only** available at www.victoria.ac.nz/fca/research-services/ServicesProvided.aspx#HEC

Full HEC requirements are at www.victoria.ac.nz/postgradlife/pages/pages_current_pg/ethics.html (this link is to be used **only** to refer to the Victoria University Policy - **NOT** to download the application form)

If approval is needed, you will need to draft an application, with advice from your supervisor. Forward your draft applications electronically to Russell Harding (russell.harding@vuw.ac.nz). Please use a subject heading in the format: HEC SoG Application your name. Russell, with authority delegated by the Head of School, checks the application and, if amendments are required, notifies the applicant and supervisor.

Corrected applications are forwarded electronically by Russell in one rtf file to the FCA HEC secretary, Maggie Teleki-Rainey. When HEC notice of approval is received, you must forward a signed hard copy to the FCA HEC secretary. Student research requires three signatures, the student's, the supervisor's, and the Head of School's, (or delegate, Russell Harding). When an approved signed copy is sent in, the approved research may begin.

7. Initial Bibliography

The last required part of the proposal is an initial bibliography, which will probably contain at least 10 items. The bibliography will show that you have undertaken sufficient preliminary investigation to have identified the key sources of facts, concepts, methodology, comparisons or whatever else is relevant for your study. As you compile the bibliography – which should be presented in correct format – check that you have at least one reference for each type of published information that you have described.

When submitting your proposal, include a front page with the following details (centred):

- Course code and name
- Assessment item descriptor (e.g. draft or final proposal)
- Due date (and date submitted, if different)
- Name of candidate
- Candidate Student ID number

Please email your proposal in an attachment to amanda.wolf@vuw.ac.nz

Proposal Approval

Approval of dissertation proposals is a collective responsibility of the School. Three decisions are possible:

1. Approve, with the student and supervisor invited to consider any refinements to the proposal;
2. Conditionally approve, with the student to address issues or make changes as indicated on the approval form, to the satisfaction of the supervisor before proceeding to undertake further work;
3. Not approve. This option requires the student to submit a new proposal, taking into account comments on the approval form, and incurs a penalty (see section on penalties below).

4. ASSESSMENT DETAILS: Final Dissertation, due Tuesday 4 May 2010

The final report, of 30,000 to 40,000 words, is worth 100% of your grade for this course. It should be completed in accordance with your approved proposal and with the advice of your supervisor.

No *major* changes can be made to an approved proposal without speaking to Amanda Wolf. However, it is recognized that as information becomes available during the research process, the original proposal may need to be modified. Modest modifications can be approved by your supervisor.

Submission

See the *School of Government Research & Internship Guidelines MPM/MPP/MSS 2009* for details on the format and presentation of the final dissertation. Include a title page, with title, your FULL name, degree and date. Submit one clean copy to Bun Wong by Tuesday 4 May 2010 and one electronic copy. Do not staple or bind the hard copy. After the paper has been assessed, you will need to supply a corrected copy for the Library.

Library Copies

Dissertations are lodged in the VUW library after completion, and are therefore available to all browsers and borrowers. If your final version contains typos or related errors, you will be required to supply a corrected copy. Errors in the final version can affect your grade. You might ask your supervisor if he or she would like a final hard or soft copy. The library will,

on request, seek permission from the Head of School to photocopy your entire work to meet a request of a person not able to visit the library.

IF YOU DO NOT WISH THE HEAD OF SCHOOL TO APPROVE SUCH REQUESTS, YOU MUST MAKE THIS KNOWN WHEN YOU SUBMIT YOUR PAPER.

Assessment

Assessment of post-graduate research is not a formulaic process. There is no “right” or “wrong”. The professional judgement of the assessor plays a significant role. In general, one may assume that a “passing” competence must be demonstrated on *each* of the points in the list below. It is also assumed in what follows that the student prepared and kept to an approved research design (which means that many assessment criteria for the research design carry through to the finished project). The main criteria are:

- Completion of intended objectives (as set out in the research proposal, or as modified with approval)
- Coverage of theory
- Depth of understanding and analysis
- Adequate and proper use of resources
- Logical coherence of arguments
- Structure and expression
- Technical aspects of production
- Difficulty and originality
- Recommendations and conclusions follow from the earlier sections
- Adherence to acceptable research methods.

Note: Your assessed work may also be used for quality assurance purposes, such as to assess the level of achievement of learning objectives as required for accreditation and audit purposes. The findings may be used to inform changes aimed at improving the quality of FCA programmes. All material used for such processes will be treated as confidential, and the outcome will not affect your grade for the course.

Deadlines and Failure to Meet Due Dates

Late or unacceptable proposal: Five marks will be deducted from the final grade for late submission of the final proposal, or if a final proposal submitted by the due date is not of an approvable standard.

Late final report: Five marks will be deducted for each week the dissertation is late, up to a maximum period of 4 weeks, after which the student will be awarded an E, and will need to re-enrol in the course to complete.

NOTE: Requests for exemptions from penalties MUST be made to the Research Convenor.

Mandatory Course Requirements

A formally approved proposal is required.

Communication of Additional Information

Any additional information will be communicated by email.

Other Information

For the following important information follow the links provided:

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism.aspx>

General University Policies and Statutes

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy/academic.aspx>

Faculty of Commerce and Administration Offices

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/fca/studenthelp/Contactus.aspx>

Manaaki Pihipihinga Programme

http://www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/mentoring/