

School of Government

MAPP 526
POLICY METHODS AND PRACTICE
(15 Points)

Trimester Two / 2010

COURSE OUTLINE

Names and Contact Details

Course Coordinator: **Dr Amanda Wolf**
Room RH 804, Level 8, Rutherford House, Pipitea Campus
Telephone: (04) 463 5712
Fax: (04) 463 5454
Email: amanda.wolf@vuw.ac.nz

Other Lecturer: **Professor Sharleen Forbes**
Room RH 830, Level 8, Rutherford House, Pipitea Campus
Telephone: (04) 463 6850
Fax: (04) 463 5454
Email: sharleen.forbes@vuw.ac.nz

Masters Administrator: **Darren Morgan**
Room RH 821, Level 8, Rutherford House, Pipitea Campus
Telephone: (04) 463 5458
Fax: (04) 463 5454
Email: darren.morgan@vuw.ac.nz

Office Hours: 8.30am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday

Trimester Dates

Teaching Period: Thursday 8 July – Monday 1 November 2010

Class Times and Room Numbers

Module One:	Thursday 8 July 2010	8.30am – 6.00pm
Module Two:	Thursday 26 August 2010	8.30am – 6.00pm
Module Three:	Thursday 21 October 2010	8.30am – 6.00pm

Locations: Classes will be held on the Pipitea Campus of Victoria University in Wellington and you will be advised of your classroom one week prior to each module by email.

Withdrawal Dates

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

Your fees will be refunded if you withdraw from this course on or before **Tuesday 27 July 2010**.

The last date for withdrawal from this course is **Monday 27 September 2010**. After this date, permission to withdraw requires the approval of the Associate Dean (Students), as set out in section 8 of the Personal Courses of Study Statute

(<http://policy.vuw.ac.nz/Amphora!~policy.vuw.ac.nz~POLICY~000000001743.pdf>). To apply for this permission, fill in the Late Withdrawal form available from either of our Student Customer Service Desks, or downloaded from www.victoria.ac.nz/fca/studenthelp/Forms.aspx.

Course Content and Readings

Policy analysis is a process of multidisciplinary inquiry that creates, critically assesses, and communicates information that is useful for understanding and improving policies (William Dunn, *Public Policy Analysis: An Introduction*, 4th Ed. Prentice Hall, 2008, p. xiii)

Policy analysis is neither more nor less than a lens for viewing a subject, a frame designed to fit around a problem so as to help us come to grips with it. It is a useful framework for integrating knowledge about most problems which lend themselves to purposeful individual or social action. Policy analysis is designed to force one to think ahead in order to identify and organise the information which both defines a given problem and appears to be necessary to fully explore solutions. . . . Policy analysis is not a discipline. Rather, it chooses the analytic methods, theories, and substantive knowledge generated by other fields that are useful to integrate into its own framework for application to particular problems at hand (Joel Fleishman in *Divided Knowledge: Across Disciplines, Across Cultures*, Easton, D. & Schelling, C. S. Eds., 1991, p. 235–6).

Overview

This course introduces the methods analysts use to describe, understand, explain, or predict policy-relevant changes in behaviours, conditions, outcomes, and aspirations. It covers the applications of both qualitative and quantitative methods in the policy decision-making environment.

Policy analysis is not a technocratic practice – our understanding of policy has moved on from one in which ‘problems’ had ‘solutions’ (if this ever was the perception). For example, we have witnessed a diversification of the roles of the policy analyst, and are now accustomed to thinking of policies in systemic terms, thinking of many policy problems as ‘wicked’ (or at least very uncertain and complicated) and policy behaviours as complex and unpredictable. Knowledge is always incomplete, multiple and provisional. Accordingly, policy inquiry is influenced by the choices inquirers make and the policy-decision environment. Thus, a primary emphasis throughout the course is on understanding how to best respond to the challenges that confront the analyst. That, in turn, requires reflective practice and an effort to continually develop sensitivity to unique configurations of policy tasks and their place in improving policy outcomes.

MAPP 526 is a ‘companion course’ to MAPP 525, Policy Analysis and Advising. Participants who have not already done so are strongly encouraged to read the MAPP 525 text, C. Scott and K. Baehler, *Adding value to policy analysis and advice* (UNSW Press, 2010).

There is no textbook for this course. Two reading packets will be supplied, with contents as described below. In addition, you may be directed to some internet sites as part of your preparation for class sessions. Additional materials may be made available, at no cost to you, during class sessions.

PART I: Introduction to Statistics: Sharleen Forbes

Part I (Module 1) is designed specifically for professionals who are engaged in policy analysis and advisory work, and who require a good conceptual understanding of statistics as they are used in policy. While no prior training in statistics is assumed, it is expected that most participants are ‘consumers’ of statistical information in some form (e.g. in survey results or policy reports), and have that basis from which to improve their ‘statistical thinking’ skills.

Module 1 (Thursday 8 July 2010)

- Introduction to key concepts in statistics and probability.
- Estimating population information from samples.
- Interpreting statistical tests.

Reading (in Packet I)

1. Arnold, R. & Forbes, S. (2008). *Introductory Statistics*. Notes prepared for MAPP 526.

Please read the entire set of notes prior to the class. You may not understand it all, and you need not read through it more than once. However, reading through will make it easier for you to learn the material presented in the class sessions.

Assignment 1 will be handed out in the class. This assignment covers learning objectives 1 and 2.

PART II: Topics in Methods and Practice: Amanda Wolf

Part II (Modules 2 and 3) considers the contexts of policy analysis practice and a variety of methods policy analysts use. As with the first topic, introduction to statistics/statistical thinking, the aim is to improve both skills for working with information and ‘evidence’ and critical understanding of how policy contexts bear on the deployment of those skills. There are far more

topics of interest to policy practitioners than space to consider them. Likewise, there is not time for in-depth treatment of any one method. In your own work, you may use some and not others, and depth and understanding develop with time and practice, like any higher-order skill.

There are many skills and abilities we admire in policy professionals. Some of these are person characteristics, like attentive listening and the ability to stay focused. Others are responsive to the institutional settings of policy work, such as the abilities to draw on institutional knowledge and to work well with operational people as well as political players. These important aspects of policy practice are outside our scope. Instead, the focus is on ways that you can think more clearly and nimbly as you engage in the various information and evidence tasks of policy work.

We start Part II with an overview of policy practice. In Module 2, we emphasise the practitioner and the context and we critically consider the current influential imperatives of ‘evidence-based policy’ practice. We then swing in the opposite direction, to look at the general menu of methods available for inquiring into policy-relevant changes in behaviours, conditions, outcomes, and aspirations. Practice, evidence-based policy, and methods come together as we learn both from the experiences and views of those who are interested in and affected by policies and from evaluations of policies in practice.

Module 3 looks at cost-benefit analysis, its variants and uncertainty. The topics are technical, but the main learning value comes from understanding the underpinning concepts. Before winding up the day with a motivating case and an opportunity to pull some insights and reflections together, we look intensively at the manner in which policy claims are argued, and the interplay of empirical and normative claims, so that we can both communicate more effectively with the limited knowledge and understanding we will inevitably command and diagnose the strengths and weaknesses of others’ claims.

The readings are essential: they are to be read carefully in advance of the class meetings. They provide a foundation, questions and points of discussion. They complement material presented in class and class discussions. Some of the readings are ‘applications’. They cover a variety of topics, and have been selected in part to facilitate your learning by offering you a chance to step out of the familiar. Indeed, four of the five examples are set in Australia (the fifth in Dunedin).

The learning associated with the final two modules of this course will work best for you if you work at it steadily: in the 12 weeks between turning in your first assignment on Monday 9 August 2010 and your last assignment on Monday 1 November 2010, you need to find about 50-70 non-contact hours, or about 4-5 hours per week (divided between reading and writing).

Module 2 (Thursday 26 August 2010)

- Overview: policy practice.
- Evidence-based policy.
- Introduction to qualitative and quantitative methods.
- Learning from experiment and experience.

Readings (in Packet II)

1. Bobrow, D. B. (2006). Policy design: ubiquitous, necessary and difficult. In Peters, B. G. & Pierre, J. (Eds.) *Handbook of public policy* (pp. 75–95), London: Sage.
2. Schön, D. (1983). From technical rationality to reflection-in-action. *The reflective practitioner* (pp. 21–69), NY: Basic Books.

3. Banks, G. (2009). Evidence-based policy-making: What is it? How do we get it? ANZSOG/ANU Public Lecture Series, 2009, Canberra, Feb 4. Available at www.pc.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0003/85836/20090204-evidence-based-policy.pdf
4. Head, B. W. (2008). Three lenses of evidence-based policy. *The Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 67(1), 1–11.
5. Boaz, A. & Pawson, R. (2005). The perilous road from evidence to policy: five journeys compared. *Journal of Social Policy* 34(2), 175–94.
6. Bowen, S., Zwi, A. B., Sainsbury, P. & Whitehead, M. (2009). Killer facts, politics and other influences: what evidence triggered early childhood intervention policies in Australia? *Evidence & Policy*, 5(1), 5–32.
7. Hall, R. (2009). Qualitative research methods. In Argyrous, G. (Ed.) *Evidence for policy and decision-making: a practical guide* (pp. 218–239), UNSW Press.
8. Mukherjee, C. & Wuyts, M. (2007). Thinking with quantitative data. In Thomas, A. & Mohan, G. (Eds.) *Research skills for policy development: how to find out fast* (pp. 231–253), Sage Publications.
9. Sam, M. P. & Scherer, J. (2008). Stand up and be counted: numerical storylines in a stadium debate. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 43(1), 53–70.
10. Pawson, R. (2006). *Evidence-based policy: a realist perspective* (pp. 73–104), London: Sage.
11. Sanderson, I. (2009). Intelligent policy making for a complex world: pragmatism, evidence and learning. *Political Studies*, 57, 699–719.
12. Ockwell, D. G. (2008). ‘Opening up’ policy to reflexive appraisal: a role for Q methodology? A case study of fire management in Cape York, Australia. *Policy Science*, 41, 263–292

Module 3 (Thursday 21 October 2010)

- Cost-benefit analysis.
- Uncertainty.
- Communication: a focus on argument.
- Case and reflection: With guest facilitator, Mike McGinnis.

Readings (in Packet II)

13. Boardman, A. E., Greenberg, D. H., Vining, A. R. & Weimer, D. L. (1996). *Cost-benefit analysis: concepts and practice* (pp. 28–49), Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall.
14. Moore, T. J., Ritter, A. & Caulkins, J. P. (2007). The costs and consequences of three policy options for reducing heroin dependency. *Drug and Alcohol Review*, 26, 369–378.
15. Farber, D. A. Uncertainty (February 18, 2010). UC Berkeley Public Law Research Paper No. 1555343. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1555343>

16. Head, B. W. (2010). Water policy—evidence, learning and the governance of uncertainty. *Policy and Society*, 29, 171–180.
17. Dunn, W. N. (2008). Developing policy arguments. In *Policy analysis: an introduction* 4th Ed., (pp. 377–419). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.
18. Fischer, F. (2007). Deliberative policy analysis as practical reason: integrating empirical and normative arguments. In Fischer, F, Miller, G. T., & Sidney, M.S. (Eds.) *Handbook of public policy analysis: theory, politics and methods* (pp. 223–236), Boca Raton, NY, Oxford: Taylor and Francis, CRC Press.

Course Learning Objectives

At the end of this course, you should have gained:

1. An understanding of probability and statistical concepts as they are used in reporting statistical analyses;
2. Ability to carry out some statistical calculations and interpret statistical results and graphs;
3. A critical appreciation of contemporary ‘evidence-based policy’ frames and practice in diverse, and often complex and uncertain, contexts;
4. An understanding of different types of policy-relevant information, and the purposes, strengths and limitations of some analytic methods for generating and using information in specific policy applications;
5. Reflective awareness of your own policy practices;
6. Critical ability to work with policy arguments.

Course Delivery

This course is delivered in a modular format, which includes a minimum of 24 hours contact. The 24 hours are broken up into three separate days of eight hours each (a ‘module’). There are three modules in the course with approximately five to six weeks between each module. **Attendance is required at all three modular teaching days (8.30am – 6.00pm).**

Expected Workload

The learning objectives set for each course are demanding and, to achieve them, candidates must make a significant commitment in time and effort to reading, studying, thinking, and completion of assessment items outside of contact time. Courses vary in design but all require preparation and learning before the first module. Regular learning is necessary between modules (students who leave everything to the last moment rarely achieve at a high level). Expressed in input terms, the time commitment required usually translates to 65-95 hours (excluding class contact time) per course.

Group Work

No group work is required outside of class meetings, and there is no assessment associated with in-class group work.

Materials and Equipment

You will need a basic calculator for Part I.

Assessment Requirements

There are two assignments, one for each part of the course. The part-II assignment extends across modules 2 and 3, but there is an interim assessment between modules (see below for details).

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Due Date</i>	<i>Weight</i>
1. Part I problem set	Monday 9 August 2010	30%
2. Short answers/reflections compilation (8 entries, 4,000 to 6,000 words in total)	Interim checkpoint: Monday 20 September 2010	30%
	Final: Monday 1 November 2010	40%

Assignment 1

The part-I problem set will be handed out in class. It will consist in a number of exercises (perhaps 5-6) covering different aspects of the material covered on the day. You will need to allocate 5-20 hours to it, depending on your prior knowledge of statistics.

Assignment 2

The part-II assignment requires you to compile a set of *eight* 'entries' based on set questions or stimuli and/or reflections within set guidelines. It is a bit complicated, so if you have any questions or concerns, please raise them. You are encouraged to work steadily over a 12-week span: read and write a bit each week.

The final compilation should contain 4,000-6,000 words and eight entries. Four of the entries are required. For the remaining four, you may choose from an optional list or devise your own (details below). The compilation is like a journal or notebook, but rather than jotting down thoughts and ideas randomly, you are instructed to follow a few instructions. Your writing must meet high standards of clarity. If you use diagrams or hand-drawn illustrations, these must be scanned into the submitted document. Sources must be scrupulously acknowledged.

The assignment is worth 70 points. Each entry is worth 10 points. You must submit *four* entries by the interim checkpoint (any combination of required, optional or own choice topics) and your best *three* will count (maximum 30 points). You must then submit *four* more entries (along with the initial entries) by the final due date. The four best entries (from among the four new entries and the entry not previously credited) will count (maximum 40 points).

Required entries: these four entries MUST be completed by all students

1. Read: Bowen, et al (reading 6). Discuss (a) the authors' treatment of context and (b) the reported role of 'quantitative' evidence in the case of early childhood intervention policies in Australia.
2. Why do authors such as Head (reading 4) and Sanderson (reading 11) introduce ideas about 'pragmatism' and 'practical reasoning' into their critical examination of 'evidence-based policy'? Use an example (a real example from your experience, a reported example or a hypothetical example) to illustrate pragmatism/practical reasoning in action.

OR

- Gary Banks (reading 3) argues strenuously that we need more and better evidence-based policy and he identifies a number of 'essential ingredients'. What do you think his response might be to the 'practical reasoning'-based arguments of Head (reading 4) and Sanderson (reading 11)?
3. Critically discuss the policy-relevance of information as treated in *one* of the following 'application' readings assigned for this course:
 - a. Sam, M. P. & Scherer, J. (2008). Stand up and be counted: numerical storylines in a stadium debate. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 43(1), 53–70 (reading 9)
 - b. Ockwell, D. G. (2008). 'Opening up' policy to reflexive appraisal: a role for Q methodology? A case study of fire management in Cape York, Australia. *Policy Science*, 41, 263–292 (reading 12)
 - c. Moore, T. J., Ritter, A. & Caulkins, J. P. (2007). The costs and consequences of three policy options for reducing heroin dependency. *Drug and Alcohol Review*, 26, 369–378 (reading 14)
 - d. Head, B. W. (2010). Water policy – evidence, learning and the governance of uncertainty. *Policy and Society*, 29, 171-180 (reading 16)
 4. Find a short policy argument (press release, editorial or similar) and assess it based on Dunn's method. Please attach the full text of the argument at the end of your entry.

Optional entries: these MAY be completed, or you can substitute own choice items.

1. After completing the required exercise 1, also discuss (a) the authors' (Bowen, et al.'s) own contribution to the study of "evidence-based policy" and (b) the main lessons YOU take from this article for YOUR practice.
2. Read: Farber (reading 15). Devise, explain, and justify five 'lessons' about working with uncertainty suitable for presentation to a group of recently hired policy practitioners. Each lesson should be brief, and illustrated in a memorable way.
3. With reference to required item three above, critically discuss a second reading from the list.
4. Are you a 'reflective practitioner'? Discuss whether you are or not, and what steps you can take in the near future that might make you a better policy practitioner.

Open-choice entries: these may be used to substitute for optional items

You can choose to substitute one to four of the optional items with topics of your own devising. There are just a few guidelines to keep in mind:

- The 'stimulus' for your entry should be a course reading or a topic from class discussion. Be sure that the stimulus is clear in your entry. Focus on what you have learned. Avoid merely 'repackaging' readings or course discussions.
- Your entry should be 'critically reflective'. By *critical*, I mean thinking that probes beneath the surface, that seeks out, queries, and suggests possible answers to interesting or challenging questions, assumptions, controversies, links different ideas together in insightful

ways, and so on. It is *reflective* when the thinker adopts a stance 'at one remove' from the surface matter, and draws on his/her own experiences, ideas, intuitions, or ideals.

- You should back your claims with examples, quotations and the like, not simply assert them.
- You should provide a reader with brief but sufficient background information to follow your point.
- In marking open-choice entries, credit will be given for setting-up a pertinent and challenging stimulus: it can 'pay' to challenge yourself.
- Real examples can be used, based in your own experience, but hypothetical illustrations are fine. You will not be marked down based on policy substance or for the stance you take on an issue.

A marking rubric will be distributed in class. Assignment 2 covers learning objectives 3 to 6.

Please submit assignment 1 BY HARD COPY to:

Post Experience Programmes,
School of Government,
Victoria University of Wellington,
Level 8 Reception,
Rutherford House,
23 Lambton Quay,
P.O. Box 600,
Wellington.

Assignments that are submitted in person should be placed in the secure box at School of Government reception (Level 8, Rutherford House, Pipitea Campus) during office hours of 8.30am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday. The assignment box is cleared daily, and assignments will be date stamped.

Please submit assignment 2 (checkpoint and final) in one MSWord document BY EMAIL to: amanda.wolf@vuw.ac.nz . I will notify you only if I do NOT receive your assignment.

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.

Students should keep a copy of all submitted work.

Class Attendance

The School expects you to attend all three modules for the course. If, before enrolment for a course, you are aware that you will not be able to attend a module, you must notify the Director of Master's Programmes when you enrol explaining why you will not be able to attend. The Director of Master's Programmes will consult with the relevant course coordinator. In such circumstances, you may be declined entry into a course.

If you become aware after a course starts that you will be unable to attend a module or a significant part of a module (i.e. more than two hours in any given day), you must advise the course coordinator before the module explaining why you will be unable to attend. The course coordinator may excuse you from attendance and may also require you to complete compensatory work relating to the course content covered during your absence.

Penalties, Deadlines and Failure to Meet Due Dates

The ability to plan for and meet deadlines is a core competency of both advanced study and public management. Failure to meet deadlines disrupts course planning and is unfair on students who do submit their work on time. It is expected therefore that you will complete and hand in assignments by the due date. Marks will be deducted at the rate of five per cent for every day by which the assignment is late and no assignments will be accepted after five working days beyond the date they are due. For example, if you get 65% for an assignment, but you handed it in on Monday when it was due the previous Friday, you will get a mark of 50%.

If ill-health, family bereavement or other personal circumstances beyond your control prevent you from meeting the deadline for submitting a piece of written work or from attending class to make a presentation, you can apply for and may be granted an extension to the due date. You should let your course coordinator know as soon as possible in advance of the deadline (if circumstances permit) if you are seeking an extension. Where an extension is sought, evidence, by way of a medical certificate or similar, may be required by the course coordinator.

Mandatory Course Requirements

Submit or participate in all pieces of assessment required for this course.

Communication of Additional Information

Additional information or information on changes will be conveyed to you by email to all class members. If you want your email address to remain confidential, you should note this on the email sign-up list circulated on the first day of class.

Academic Integrity, Plagiarism, and the Use of Turnitin

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's work as if it were your own, whether you mean to or not.

'Someone else's work' means anything that is not your own idea. Even if it is presented in your own style, you must still acknowledge your sources fully and appropriately. This includes:

- material from books, journals or any other printed source
- the work of other students or staff
- information from the Internet
- software programs and other electronic material

- designs and ideas
- the organisation or structuring of any such material.

Acknowledgement is required for all material in any work submitted for assessment unless it is a ‘fact’ that is well-known in the context (such as “Wellington is the capital of New Zealand”) or your own ideas in your own words. Everything else that derives from one of the sources above and ends up in your work – whether it is directly quoted, paraphrased, or put into a table or figure, needs to be acknowledged with a reference that is sufficient for your reader to locate the original source.

Plagiarism undermines academic integrity simply because it is a form of lying, stealing and mistreating others. Plagiarism involves stealing other people’s intellectual property and lying about whose work it is. This is why plagiarism is prohibited at Victoria.

If you are found guilty of plagiarism, you may be penalised under the Statute on Student Conduct. You should be aware of your obligations under the Statute, which can be downloaded from the policy website (www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy/students.aspx). You could fail your course or even be suspended from the University.

Plagiarism is easy to detect. The University has systems in place to identify it.

Student work provided for assessment in this course may be checked for academic integrity by the electronic search engine www.turnitin.com. Turnitin is an on-line plagiarism prevention tool which compares submitted work with a very large database of existing material. At the discretion of the Head of School, handwritten work may be copy-typed by the School and subject to checking by Turnitin. Turnitin will retain a copy of submitted materials on behalf of the University for detection of future plagiarism, but access to the full text of submissions will not be made available to any other party.

There is guidance available to students on how to avoid plagiarism by way of sound study skills and the proper and consistent use of a recognised referencing system. This guidance may be found at the following website: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism.aspx.

If in doubt, seek the advice of your course coordinator. **Plagiarism is simply not worth the risk.**

Other Information

For the following important information, follow the links provided:

- **Academic Integrity and Plagiarism**
www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism.aspx
- **General University Policies and Statutes**
www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy
- **AVC (Academic) Website: information including Conduct, Academic Grievances, Students with Impairments, Student Support**
www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/avcacademic/Publications.aspx
- **Faculty of Commerce and Administration Offices**
www.victoria.ac.nz/fca/studenthelp/
- **Manaaki Pihipihinga Programme**
www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/mentoring/