



FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

SCHOOL OF LINGUISTICS AND APPLIED LANGUAGE STUDIES

**MASTER OF ARTS
LALS 541 THE RESEARCH PROCESS
15 POINTS**

TRIMESTER 2 2013

Important dates

Trimester dates: 15 July to 17 November 2013

Teaching dates: 22 July to 9 October 2013

Mid-trimester break: 26 August to 8 September 2013

Last assessment item due: 31 October 2013

Study period: 21–25 October 2013

Examination/Assessment Period: 25 October to 16 November 2013

Withdrawal dates: Refer to www.victoria.ac.nz/home/admisenrol/payments/withdrawalsrefunds

If you cannot complete an assignment or sit a test or examination (aegrotats), refer to www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/exams-and-assessments/aegrotat

Class times and locations

Wednesday, 16.10 – 18.00
24 Kelburn Parade, Room 103

Names and contact details

Course coordinator / lecturer

Associate Professor **Frank Boers**

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In office: On appointment

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MA course administration at LALS:

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Communication of additional information

Additional information about this course and information about any changes will be announced in on campus classes and posted on the course website in Blackboard.

Prescription

A study of the design and implementation of research studies in Applied Linguistics.

Course content

This course explores methodological issues in conducting applied linguistics research, especially research in the area of (instructed) second language acquisition. During the course, we will follow the research process from the formulation of a research question to the research report. Different types of research designs and data analysis will be exemplified and discussed, with an emphasis throughout on the validity and reliability of research methods, and the need for caution in interpreting findings. Students will set up their own small-scale research project, report on its development and give constructive feedback to their peers.

Course learning objectives (CLOs)

Students who pass this course will be able to:

1. Synthesise research publications addressing a topic of their interest in the domain of applied linguistics;
2. formulate answerable research questions in response to an unresolved issue;
3. make a justified choice of research methodology to address a specific question;
4. conduct a small-scale study to pilot the methodology;
5. analyse the results, and discuss the implications;
6. report research in a way that accords with EAP customs in our research community.

Teaching format

The course is delivered in two modes: on campus and by distance.

On campus classes are run as workshops.

For distance students, the course is delivered on-line through <http://blackboard.vuw.ac.nz>.

In both modes, students are expected to participate actively in activities and discussions.

Mandatory course requirements

In addition to achieving an overall pass mark of 50%, students must:

1. Submit both assignments
2. Attend at least 8 of the 10 two-hour sessions (campus students)
3. Respond to the weekly questions posted on Blackboard (distance students).

Workload

It is anticipated that students will invest 150 hours in this course, which includes attending classes / contributing to the discussion board on Blackboard, reading the essential and recommended texts, and preparing the assessment items.

Assessment

The following table outlines the assessment components for LALS 541:

	Component	Value	Word count	Due date	CLOs
1.	Writing a draft literature review and research question(s)	30%	1500	16 September	1, 2, 6
2.	Writing the full research report (including revised literature review and research questions)	70%	7000	31 October	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

The criteria for marking correspond to those commonly used in evaluations of research papers (*cf.* LALS 540), most notably: the coherence and clarity of argumentation, the pertinence and answerability of the research questions, the connections with the research literature on the chosen topic, the suitability of the research method chosen to answer a research question, the appropriateness of the data analysis, and the logic of the conclusions and implications drawn from the data.

Submission and return of work

Both assignments are to be submitted electronically via Blackboard. Feedback will be given to students also via Blackboard.

Penalties

No penalty will be imposed if you obtain permission to submit the assignment after the deadline. Late work will not be accepted unless prior arrangements have been made with the course coordinator. Also consult the course coordinator in case your text exceeds the word limit. Without prior arrangements in that regard, the course coordinator maintains the right to give only minimal feedback on the text.

Set texts

Articles to exemplify diverse types of research methods in applied linguistics will be made available on the LALS 541 Blackboard site.

Recommended reading

Mackey, A. & Gass, S. (Eds.) (2012) 'Research methods in second language acquisition: A practical guide' (Wiley-Blackwell) contains chapters with guidelines about diverse types of applied linguistics research.

Further recommended reading will be made available on Blackboard to cater to individual students' needs and interests.

Class representative

The MA programme has a student representative whose name and contact details will be available to VUWSA, the Course Coordinator and the class. The representative provides a communication channel to liaise with the Course Coordinator on behalf of students.

Student feedback

The previous version of the course was similar to the current version, with students developing a research project of their own. As a final assignment, students were asked to write about how they would go about analysing and reporting imagined data. Students commented that writing about fictitious data was harder than actually piloting the proposed method and reporting real data.

As a result, the current version of the course encourages actual data collection (albeit at a very small scale), so that a 'real' results section can be included at the end of the second assignment.

Student feedback is welcome at all times and will be solicited formally in the last week of the course.

Student feedback on University courses may be found at www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/feedback/feedback_display.php.

Other important information

The information above is specific to this course. There is other important information that students must familiarise themselves with, including:

- Academic Integrity and Plagiarism: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism
- Aegrotats: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/exams-and-assessments/aegrotat
- Academic Progress: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/academic-progress (including restrictions and non-engagement)
- Dates and deadlines: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/dates
- FHSS Student and Academic Services Office: www.victoria.ac.nz/fhss/student-admin
- Grades: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/exams-and-assessments/grades
- Resolving academic issues: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/avcacademic/publications2#grievances
- Special passes: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/avcacademic/publications2#specialpass
- Statutes and policies including the Student Conduct Statute: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy
- Student support: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/viclife/student-service
- Students with disabilities: www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/disability
- Student Charter: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/viclife/student-charter
- Student Contract: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/admisenrol/enrol/studentcontract
- Turnitin: www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/wiki/index.php/Turnitin
- University structure: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about
- VUWSA: www.vuwsa.org.nz