Making a Start!
An academic orientation for Master by Coursework Students

Learning Advisors
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Masters by coursework students...

1. Diverse
   • Goals
   • Courses
   • Academic history & recency
   • Place of origin

2. Academically curious
The workshop will...

• Outline the academic context for Masters by coursework
• Describe academic expectations at postgraduate level
  • Academic writing - genres; style.
  • Critical thinking
  • Academic Integrity
• Decipher assessment tasks and marking criteria
• Identify support for data analysis
• Signpost future workshops
Where are you now?
Academic Expectations at the start of the journey

**Bachelor Degree**
- Planning, problem solving, decision making
- Adapting knowledge & skills
- Accountable for own learning & practice
- Autonomy, judgement, adaptability
- Plan & execute research project with some independence

**Bachelor with Honours**
- High level, independent judgement in technical & management specialties
- Initiate, plan, implement, evaluate in specialized contexts

**Graduate Certificate**
- High level, independent judgements & initiate, plan, implement and evaluate specialised technical, creative or management functions

**Graduate Diploma**

...the national policy for regulated qualifications in Australian education and training.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1 – Certificate I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 2 – Certificate II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3 – Certificate III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4 – Certificate IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 5 – Diploma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 6 – Advanced Diploma, Associate Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 7 – Bachelor Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 8 – Bachelor Honours Degree, Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 9 – Masters Degree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level 10 – Doctoral Degree</td>
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</table>

**AQF level 9 criteria**

**Summary**
Graduates at this level will have specialised knowledge and skills for research, and/or professional practice and/or further learning.

**Knowledge**
Graduates at this level will have advanced and integrated understanding of a complex body of knowledge in one or more disciplines or areas of practice.

**Skills**
Graduates at this level will have expert, specialised cognitive and technical skills in a body of knowledge or practice to independently:

- analyse critically, reflect on and synthesise complex information, problems, concepts and theories
- research and apply established theories to a body of knowledge or practice
- interpret and transmit knowledge, skills and ideas to specialist and non-specialist audiences

**Application of knowledge and skills**
Graduates at this level will apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, expert judgement, adaptability and responsibility as a practitioner or learner.
Graduates will have:

**Knowledge**

- Knowledge that includes the understanding of recent developments in a discipline and/or area of professional practice
- Knowledge of research principles and methods applicable to a field of work and/or learning

**Skills**

- Cognitive skills to demonstrate theoretical knowledge, reflect critically on theory and professional practice or scholarship
- Cognitive, technical and creative skills to:
  - investigate, analyse and synthesise complex information, problems, concepts and theories
  - apply established theories to different bodies of knowledge or practice
  - generate and evaluate complex ideas and concepts at an abstract level
- Research skills to justify and interpret theoretical propositions, methodologies, conclusions and professional decisions to specialist and non-specialist audiences
- Technical and communication skills to design, evaluate, implement, analyse and theorise about developments that contribute to professional practice or scholarship

Graduates will demonstrate the application of knowledge and skills:

- With creativity and initiative to new situations in professional practice and/or further learning
- With high level of personal autonomy and accountability
- To plan and execute a substantial research-based project, capstone experience and/or piece of scholarship
Expectations for writing

• Engage with evidence
• Be open-minded and doing objective enquiry
• Present reasons to dispute a particular finding
• Provide an alternative approach
• Recognise the limitations of evidence: either your, or evidence presented by others
• Think around a specific problem

∴ it is essential you think critically

to develop AQF level 9 skills & knowledge

with expert judgement
demonstrating adaptability
with responsibility
Critical thinking
What does this mean? What does it involve?
Defined as:
The objective analysis and evaluation of an issue in order to form a judgement

It involves you:
• Organising and evaluating/arguing/contesting evidence
• Making comparisons between material
• Analysing why something does/did/did not work
• Applying your own judgements
• Making links between areas of knowledge
• Weighing alternatives
• Drawing conclusions
Critical thinking

To think broadly and deeply on a theory, concept, idea, practice or approach, we must identify the questions to ask:

Elements of thought Model

https://www.criticalthinking.org/ctmodel/logic-model1.htm
Expectations for Writing

Genres

- Essays (Scientific, Business, Law, Education, Literature)
- Reports (Business, Practical/Lab, Field, Engineering, Research, Social policy)
- Literature reviews
- Critical reviews
- Critical reflections
- Systematic reviews
- Abstracts
- Case Plans
- Portfolios
- Reflective writing
- Research proposals
- Outlines
- Editorials
- Briefing notes
- Book reviews
- Annotated bibliographies, Executive summaries
- Presentation (oral, poster)
Resources to Develop your Writing Style

Learning Centre Resources

- Writing genres - assignment guides

LibGuides

- Writing Guide – resources & links

Studioity

- Feedback on your writing

Peer Advice Desk

- Face-to-face drop-in at Library

Workshops...

jcu.edu.au
Characteristics of Good Writing Style

**Clarity:**
To write precisely what you mean

**Concision:**
Brief, succinct + comprehensive

**Elegance:**
The right word in the right place
# Academic Writing Style

## Some recommended practices

1. **Use the active voice (after checking that your discipline wants you to):** "Critic X argues..."
2. **Use evidence you can attribute to specific reliable sources and reference:** "Knoll et al. (2013) contests early life evolved rapidly."
3. **When using acronyms or abbreviations spell them out fully when first introduced:** "Time and Relative Dimension in Space (TARDIS)."
4. **Use simple, clear language. Academics look for sophisticated thinking but plain language:**
   - Instead of 'the great majority of' use 'most'
   - Instead of 'paucity of data' use 'few facts'
   - Instead of 'at this time' use 'now'.

## Some practices to avoid

1. **Avoid using the passive voice (unless your discipline requires it):** "It is argued by critic X".
2. **Avoid broad generalisations that cannot be verified:** "People believe..."
3. **Avoid contractions: use 'does not' rather than 'doesn’t'; 'that is' rather than 'i.e.'
4. **Avoid unnecessary words:** 'As such, it is necessary for more research to be conducted within this field of psychology, to fully understand...'. Try 'More research is necessary to fully understand...'.

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Academic Writing Style

Some recommended practices

- Use personal pronouns such as ‘I’, ‘me’, ‘my’ cautiously – check with your discipline’s practice.
- Ask yourself: “what do I really want to tell the reader?” and write that in words you understand.
- Write so that your meaning is clear: “The Australian Republican Movement (ARM) has not been active since the 1999 referendum”.
- Be restrained and objective: ‘There is much agreement among scholars (refs), but this view fails to account for...’

Some practices to avoid

- Avoid using personal pronouns such as ‘you, ‘we’, ‘us’ (it is unclear who you are referring to)
- Avoid unfamiliar synonyms from a thesaurus – there may be a nuanced difference in meaning
- Avoid slang and colloquialism: “Republicanism in Australia has taken a back seat in recent years”

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is defined as:
“a commitment, even in the face of adversity, to six fundamental values:

honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage.”

(International Centre for Academic Integrity, 2014).

See more at The Learning Centre
And
LibGuide Avoiding Plagiarism

I TOOK IT OFF THE INTERNET TO GIVE TO YOU

Useful resources
Approaching Assessment – where do I start?

• Subject Outline
• Task Assessment Sheets
• Marking Rubrics
Using the Subject Outline

• Understand the purpose of the task
  • Context & Objectives

• Read carefully the task instructions
  • This will flesh out what you are to do
  • Variable amounts of detail

• Look for
  • Action phrases
  • key words, new words, topics

• Follow specific instructions
  • e.g. Structure and format
  • Word length

• Don’t forget info. for planning
Using the Subject Outline

The Marking Criteria Sheet Or Rubric

### ASSESSMENT TASK 3 MARKING CRITERIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consultation [10 marks]</td>
<td>There is a clearly rationalized and well-justified description of the consultation process used. A communication strategy was devised that identified key stakeholders and justifies how and why they needed to be consulted.</td>
<td>There is a thoughtfully rationalized and coherent description of the consultation process used. A communication strategy was devised that identified key stakeholders and how they were contacted.</td>
<td>There is a credible rationalized and competent description of the consultation process used. A number of key stakeholders identified, no description of communication processes used.</td>
<td>There is a rational description of the consultation process used. Method of communication described.</td>
<td>There is no or unclear description of the consultation process used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focused research question [5 marks]</td>
<td>A clear and succinct focused research question is provided.</td>
<td>A clear focused research question is provided.</td>
<td>A focused research question is provided.</td>
<td>A research question is provided.</td>
<td>A research question isn’t provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus strategy process [15 marks]</td>
<td>Focused research question posed to be answered by the literature review. Comprehensive search strategy process described and justified. Inclusion and exclusion criteria identified and justifying. Electronic journal library bases identified and appropriate to question. Method of critical appraisal (comprehensively explained and justified).</td>
<td>Focused research question posed to be answered by the literature review. Comprehensive search strategy process described and justified. Inclusion and exclusion criteria identified and explained. Electronic journal library bases identified and appropriate to question. Method of critical appraisal explained and justified.</td>
<td>Focused research question posed to be answered by the literature review. Comprehensive search strategy process described and justified. Inclusion and exclusion criteria identified and explained. Electronic journal library bases identified and appropriate to question. Method of critical appraisal explained and justified.</td>
<td>No focused research question posed to be answered by the literature review. Basic search strategy process described satisfactorily. Inclusion and exclusion criteria provided. Electronic journal library bases identified. Method of critical appraisal identified.</td>
<td>No focused research question posed to be answered by the literature review. No search strategy process described. No inclusion criteria, no exclusion criteria. No electronic journal library bases identified. No method of critical appraisal mentioned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem statement, aim of the study, research question [15 marks]</td>
<td>The research problem is comprehensively discussed and derivation of appropriate research aim and questions in a format appropriate to the discipline area, topic or type of investigation.</td>
<td>The research problem is thoroughly discussed and derivation of appropriate research aim and questions in a format appropriate to the discipline area, topic or type of investigation.</td>
<td>The research problem is satisfactorily discussed and derivation of appropriate research aim and questions in a format appropriate to the discipline area, topic or type of investigation.</td>
<td>The research problem is narrowly discussed and derivation of appropriate research aim and questions in a format that is appropriate to the discipline area, topic or type of investigation.</td>
<td>The research problem and derivation of appropriate research aim and questions in a format appropriate to the discipline area, topic or type of investigation are not discussed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research methodology [20 marks]</td>
<td>Analytical and critical explanation of theoretical underpinnings of the study (e.g. critical theory, phenomenology, grounded theory, mixed methods - pragmatism, experimental research), with reference to seminal texts. High level consideration of context and its influence on the study design identifying strategies to manage the strengths and limitations this might present (e.g. Indigenous research methodologies, remote/rural, acute hospitals and culture, community health and advocacy/autonomy and primary healthcare).</td>
<td>Comprehensive explanation of theoretical underpinnings of the study (e.g. critical theory, phenomenology, grounded theory, mixed methods - pragmatism, experimental research) with reference to seminal texts. High level consideration of context and its influence on the study design identifying strategies to manage the strengths and limitations this might present (e.g. Indigenous research methodologies, remote/rural, acute hospitals and culture, community health and advocacy/autonomy and primary healthcare).</td>
<td>Detailed explanation of theoretical underpinnings of the study (e.g. critical theory, phenomenology, grounded theory, mixed methods - pragmatism, experimental research) with reference to seminal texts. High level consideration of context and its influence on the study design identifying strategies to manage the strengths and limitations this might present (e.g. Indigenous research methodologies, remote/rural, acute hospitals and culture, community health and advocacy/autonomy and primary healthcare).</td>
<td>Limited explanation of theoretical underpinnings of the study (e.g. critical theory, phenomenology, grounded theory, mixed methods - pragmatism, experimental research) with reference to seminal texts. High level consideration of context and its influence on the study design identifying strategies to manage the strengths and limitations this might present (e.g. Indigenous research methodologies, remote/rural, acute hospitals and culture, community health and advocacy/autonomy and primary healthcare).</td>
<td>No explanation of theoretical underpinnings of the study (e.g. critical theory, phenomenology, grounded theory, mixed methods - pragmatism, experimental research) with reference to seminal texts. High level consideration of context and its influence on the study design identifying strategies to manage the strengths and limitations this might present (e.g. Indigenous research methodologies, remote/rural, acute hospitals and culture, community health and advocacy/autonomy and primary healthcare).</td>
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Using the Subject Outline

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<tr>
<th>EVALUATIVE CRITERIA</th>
<th>LEVELS OF ACHIEVEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative definitions</td>
<td>Analytical and critical explanation of</td>
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<td>Comprehensive explanation of</td>
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<td>Detailed explanation of</td>
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<td>Limited explanation of</td>
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<td></td>
<td>No explanation of</td>
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**Levels of achievement**

- **5**
  - Comprehensive explanation of theoretical underpinnings of the study (e.g., critical theory, phenomenology, grounded theory, mixed-methods-pragmatism, experimental research)
  - Comprehensive examination of the consultation process used. A communication strategy was devised that identified key stakeholders and their needs, and why they needed to be consulted.

- **4**
  - Comprehensive explanation of the consultation process used. A communication strategy was devised that identified key stakeholders and their needs, and how they were consulted.

- **3**
  - There is a clearly rationalized and coherent description of the consultation process used. A communication strategy was devised that identified key stakeholders and their needs.

- **2**
  - There is a rational description of the consultation process used. Method of communication described.

- **1**
  - There is no or unclear description of the consultation process used.
Resources to help with Data Analysis

• Lecturers, tutors and supervisors/advisors

• The Learning Centre
  • Learning Advisors/Peer Advice Desk
  • Basic Statistics Workshop Sunday March 3 (+ every semester)

• [https://www.khanacademy.org/](https://www.khanacademy.org/)
  • (good intro to chi-square test, regression, ANOVA)

• Lynda.com (structured training tutorials: e.g. Statistics foundations & applications; Excel; SPSS; R and more)

• JCU Graduate Research School ‘StatsHelp’ Program:
  • PhD & Research Masters
  • Honours and coursework Masters Degree (fee basis only and pending availability).
lynda.com

• provides online tutorial course-based video instruction for many topics including statistics and statistic software tools

• Courses are structured as beginner, intermediate and advanced levels

• Available to all current JCU staff and students
  • Tracks what you’ve done
  • Takes you back to where you left off
  • Stores playlists of courses you want to do
  • Allows you to move sequentially through a course or just pick the bits you need

• Links may be embedded in LearnJCU subject page, or search for Lynda.com from the home page – requires login.
Short courses, Workshops & Online Resources

- **Maths refresher**
  27\textsuperscript{th} and 28\textsuperscript{th} July

- **Getting the most from your readings**
  Monday 29\textsuperscript{th} July

- **Basic Statistics**
  Saturday 3\textsuperscript{rd} August

- **Academic Writing**
  Saturday 17\textsuperscript{th} August

- **Develop Your English**
  Online resources - The Learning Centre

https://www.jcu.edu.au/students/learning-centre/short-courses-and-workshops
And here's some more...

**Communicating Science**

Mondays 10.00 - 11.30am
Wednesdays 10.00 - 11.30am

Stay tuned for times and place

The Critical Reading and Writing Workshops are for CSE postgraduate coursework students. The purpose of these workshops is to help you to become better academic and scientific writers. Topics covered will include: How to get the most out of your reading; Tips for Better Scientific Writing; the Literature Review, Scientific Reports, and the Art of Editing. You do not need to book for these sessions, just drop-in.

For more information, contact: kellie.johns@jcu.edu.au

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Do you need more time to:
- think?
- read, take notes & think?
- plan your work?
- organise your ideas?
- write?
- edit your work?
- get some feedback?

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For all Postgrad students

**Shut Up & Write!**

There is no need to book; stay and read/write for as short or as long a time as you like

For more information, contact: kellie.johns@jcu.edu.au
What to do now?

3 key things to do when you leave today…