



LAWS12072 Legal Research

Term 2 - 2021

Profile information current as at 19/09/2025 08:41 am

All details in this unit profile for LAWS12072 have been officially approved by CQUUniversity and represent a learning partnership between the University and you (our student). The information will not be changed unless absolutely necessary and any change will be clearly indicated by an approved correction included in the profile.

General Information

Overview

Legal Research builds upon your existing legal research skills acquired in Introduction to Law to enhance your ability to locate, analyse and apply a range of legal and interdisciplinary sources in a range of contexts. In this unit, you will work on a research project that involves critical analysis of a contemporary legal issue and its potential solutions. You will also build a research portfolio in which you will apply your research skills to a range of authentic research exercises you are likely to face as a trainee or newly qualified lawyer and engage in self-reflection and peer review.

Details

Career Level: *Undergraduate*

Unit Level: *Level 2*

Credit Points: 6

Student Contribution Band: 10

Fraction of Full-Time Student Load: 0.125

Pre-requisites or Co-requisites

Co-requisite: LAWS11057

Important note: Students enrolled in a subsequent unit who failed their pre-requisite unit, should drop the subsequent unit before the census date or within 10 working days of Fail grade notification. Students who do not drop the unit in this timeframe cannot later drop the unit without academic and financial liability. See details in the [Assessment Policy and Procedure \(Higher Education Coursework\)](#).

Offerings For Term 2 - 2021

- Online

Attendance Requirements

All on-campus students are expected to attend scheduled classes - in some units, these classes are identified as a mandatory (pass/fail) component and attendance is compulsory. International students, on a student visa, must maintain a full time study load and meet both attendance and academic progress requirements in each study period (satisfactory attendance for International students is defined as maintaining at least an 80% attendance record).

Website

[This unit has a website, within the Moodle system, which is available two weeks before the start of term. It is important that you visit your Moodle site throughout the term. Please visit Moodle for more information.](#)

Class and Assessment Overview

Recommended Student Time Commitment

Each 6-credit Undergraduate unit at CQUniversity requires an overall time commitment of an average of 12.5 hours of study per week, making a total of 150 hours for the unit.

Class Timetable

[Regional Campuses](#)

Bundaberg, Cairns, Emerald, Gladstone, Mackay, Rockhampton, Townsville

[Metropolitan Campuses](#)

Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth, Sydney

Assessment Overview

1. **Portfolio**

Weighting: 60%

2. **Written Assessment**

Weighting: 40%

Assessment Grading

This is a graded unit: your overall grade will be calculated from the marks or grades for each assessment task, based on the relative weightings shown in the table above. You must obtain an overall mark for the unit of at least 50%, or an overall grade of 'pass' in order to pass the unit. If any 'pass/fail' tasks are shown in the table above they must also be completed successfully ('pass' grade). You must also meet any minimum mark requirements specified for a particular assessment task, as detailed in the 'assessment task' section (note that in some instances, the minimum mark for a task may be greater than 50%). Consult the [University's Grades and Results Policy](#) for more details of interim results and final grades.

CQUniversity Policies

All University policies are available on the [CQUniversity Policy site](#).

You may wish to view these policies:

- Grades and Results Policy
- Assessment Policy and Procedure (Higher Education Coursework)
- Review of Grade Procedure
- Student Academic Integrity Policy and Procedure
- Monitoring Academic Progress (MAP) Policy and Procedure – Domestic Students
- Monitoring Academic Progress (MAP) Policy and Procedure – International Students
- Student Refund and Credit Balance Policy and Procedure
- Student Feedback – Compliments and Complaints Policy and Procedure
- Information and Communications Technology Acceptable Use Policy and Procedure

This list is not an exhaustive list of all University policies. The full list of University policies are available on the [CQUniversity Policy site](#).

Previous Student Feedback

Feedback, Recommendations and Responses

Every unit is reviewed for enhancement each year. At the most recent review, the following staff and student feedback items were identified and recommendations were made.

Feedback from Surveys, class feedback

Feedback

Many students indicated that compiling the weekly workshop tasks into a research portfolio was beneficial as each week was designed to enhance students' skills and facilitate the construction of the final project. However, some students did

not complete the tasks (and thus compile the research portfolio) incrementally, and therefore indicated it was very intense trying to compile the research portfolio over a few short days at the end of term.

Recommendation

From a learning design perspective, and as indicated in feedback, there is great benefit for students in combining the weekly workshop tasks, which are focused on the progression of skills relevant to the research project, with assessment to encourage students to engage with the weekly material while compiling their project. However, students receive little benefit from the weekly workshop tasks if they are compiled over a few days at the end of term. The research portfolio should be submitted incrementally, in a journal-like format, to encourage students to engage with the workshop materials more frequently (although not on a weekly basis so that students are afforded some flexibility).

Feedback from Surveys, class feedback, student consultations, emails

Feedback

Some students felt that there was a lack of connection to legal practice because the research project is focused on a Law Reform Commission's issues paper. However, some students do not want to be a lawyer or see the value in advocating for change and enjoyed immersing themselves in a topic and working on their final project for the duration of the term.

Recommendation

There is value in constructing a final project that is focused on a theoretical legal issue rather than a problem scenario. Lawyers may make submissions to Law Reform Commissions on topics within their field of expertise or advocate for change. Many students do not intend to practice. The ability to fully engage with a topic over the course of a term produces a better outcome and enhances students' research skills and ability to engage in critical analysis. However, the unit could offer a mix of tasks, with some research tasks connected to legal issues set in the context of a client's scenario and also a smaller research paper focused on critically analysing the law. The final project should be retained but reduced from 60% weighting. The research portfolio should incorporate tasks focused on problem scenarios as well as the final project and submitted incrementally throughout the term and its weighting should be increased.

Feedback from Surveys, class feedback, student consultations, emails

Feedback

Some students liked the fact that they could select any topic within the selected Queensland Law Reform Commission's issues paper or formulate their own topic, provided that it was within the scope of the issues paper. Other students found the fact that they were not directed to research a particular question or topic daunting.

Recommendation

Students were provided with guidance on formulating their own topics in the weekly workshops and students were provided with the option of one-to-one consultations about their topics via Zoom. Students who posted on Moodle/MS Teams received feedback on their proposed topics and extensive guidance on the research question, structure and arguments was provided on each student's project plan. The Queensland Law Reform Commission's issues paper contained a large list of questions that students could have used as their research topic. To provide students with the flexibility of selecting a topic that they are really interested in but also to assist those students who find it overwhelming, the unit should offer students the option of formulating their own topic within the scope of the relevant issues paper or they can select one of a number of pre-designed questions.

Feedback from Surveys, class feedback, student consultations

Feedback

Responsive and extensive guidance on formulating the research topic/ question, the structure and the content of the project was provided across Moodle, MS Teams, via email, in one-to-one student consultations and in the weekly workshops

Recommendation

Continue to provide guidance across both platforms, via email, offer one-to-one consultations and continue with weekly workshops focused on helping students to construct their final project.

Feedback from Lecturer reflection, colleagues

Feedback

The library should be involved in designing legal research materials

Recommendation

Work with the library to create materials reinforcing basic research skills. Currently, extensive materials (including follow-along videos) on navigating the legal databases are provided in Moodle. However, use of the other databases in the library (such as HeinOnline) could be supported by resources created by the library.

Unit Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

1. Identify issues in ill-defined legal problems and conduct legal research to provide advice and recommendations using relevant and suitable sources.
2. Design and complete a legal research project utilising suitable research methods to locate credible legal and interdisciplinary sources.
3. Respond to complex and dynamic issues through critical analysis of the law and evaluating evidence and potential solutions.
4. Communicate effectively both orally and in writing in a range of professional and academic contexts.
5. Critically reflect on work and provide comprehensive feedback to others through a peer review process.

Alignment of Learning Outcomes, Assessment and Graduate Attributes



Alignment of Assessment Tasks to Learning Outcomes

Assessment Tasks	Learning Outcomes				
	1	2	3	4	5
1 - Portfolio - 60%	•		•	•	•
2 - Written Assessment - 40%	•	•	•	•	

Alignment of Graduate Attributes to Learning Outcomes

Graduate Attributes	Learning Outcomes				
	1	2	3	4	5
1 - Communication	•	•	•	•	•
2 - Problem Solving	•	•	•		
3 - Critical Thinking		•	•		•
4 - Information Literacy	•	•	•		
5 - Team Work					•
6 - Information Technology Competence	•	•	•		
7 - Cross Cultural Competence					
8 - Ethical practice		•		•	
9 - Social Innovation					
10 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultures					

Alignment of Assessment Tasks to Graduate Attributes

Assessment Tasks	Graduate Attributes									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1 - Portfolio - 60%	•	•	•	•	•	•				
2 - Written Assessment - 40%	•	•	•	•		•				

Textbooks and Resources

Textbooks

There are no required textbooks.

IT Resources

You will need access to the following IT resources:

- CQUniversity Student Email
- Internet
- Unit Website (Moodle)
- ZOOM

Referencing Style

All submissions for this unit must use the referencing style: [Australian Guide to Legal Citation, 4th ed](#)
For further information, see the Assessment Tasks.

Teaching Contacts

Malcolm Barrett Unit Coordinator
m.a.barrett@cqu.edu.au

Nichola Corbett-Jarvis Unit Coordinator
n.corbett-jarvis@cqu.edu.au

Schedule

Week 1: Introduction to Legal Research - 12 Jul 2021

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
Introduction to Legal Research.		Weekly online Zoom workshop.

Week 2: Analysing Legal Issues - 19 Jul 2021

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
Analysing Legal Issues.	Nichola Corbett-Jarvis and Brendan Grigg, <i>Effective Legal Writing: A Practical Guide</i> (LexisNexis Butterworths, 3rd ed, 2021), sections 5.73 - 5.125 Scott Beattie, <i>The Law Workbook</i> (Federation Press, 3rd ed, 2010), Chapter 10 'Law Reform' (in the e-Readings list).	Weekly online Zoom workshop.

Week 3: Project Management and Ethical Research - 26 Jul 2021

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
Project Management and Ethical Research.	Elizabeth Gritter, 'Time Management Tips for Dissertation Writing', (2011). David B Resnick, 'What is ethics in research and why is it important?' (Dec 1 2015).	Weekly online Zoom workshop.

Week 4: Focus on Rules - 02 Aug 2021

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
--------------	---------	------------------------------

Focus on Rules.	Jay Sanderson, Droccos Stamboulakis and Kim Kelly, <i>A Practical Guide to Legal Research</i> (Lawbook Co, 5th ed, 2021), Chapter 2. Michael Kirby, 'Statutory Interpretation: The Meaning of Meaning' (2011) 35(1) <i>Melbourne University Law Review</i> 113	Weekly online Zoom workshop.
-----------------	---	------------------------------

Week 5: Focus on Cases - 09 Aug 2021

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
Focus on Cases.		Weekly online Zoom workshop.

Vacation Week - 16 Aug 2021

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
		No Zoom workshop this week.

Week 6: Focus on Secondary Sources - 23 Aug 2021

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
Focus on Secondary Sources.	Bruce Bott and Ruth Talbot-Stokes, Nemes and Coss', <i>Effective Legal Research</i> (LexisNexis Butterworths, 6th ed, 2015) sections 5.38 - 5.104.	Weekly online Zoom workshop. Part 1 of Research Portfolio due 11.59 pm on Thursday 26 August 2021 (Qld time).

Week 7: Focus on Data and Other Sources - 30 Aug 2021

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
Focus on Data and Other Sources.	Wing Hong Chui, 'Quantitative Legal Research' in Mike McConville and Wing Hong Chui (eds), <i>Research Methods for Law</i> (Edinburgh University Press, 2007).	Weekly online Zoom workshop.

Week 8: Legal Writing - 06 Sep 2021

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
Legal Writing.	Nichola Corbett-Jarvis and Brendan Grigg, <i>Effective Legal Writing: A Practical Guide</i> (LexisNexis Butterworths, 3rd ed, 2021), Chapter 4 and revisit sections 5.73 - 5.125 (available as an e-book in the library).	Weekly online Zoom workshop.

Week 9: Presenting Research to an Audience - 13 Sep 2021

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
Presenting Research to an Audience.	Jordan Furlong, '9 steps to a presentation that won't leave your audience hating you' (2013)	Weekly online Zoom workshop.

Week 10: Providing Feedback through Peer Review - 20 Sep 2021

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
Providing Feedback through Peer Review.	No reading this week. Further instructions for carrying out the peer review process will be provided on the Moodle site.	Weekly online Zoom session.

Week 11: Professional Practice and Reflection - 27 Sep 2021

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic

Professional Practice and Reflection.	Nichola Corbett-Jarvis and Brendan Grigg, <i>Effective Legal Writing: A Practical Guide</i> (LexisNexis Butterworths, 3rd ed, 2021), sections 5.165 - 5.183 (available as an e-book in the library). Mandy Wintink, 'Receiving Constructive Feedback'.	Weekly online Zoom workshop. Research Portfolio Due: Week 11 Friday (1 Oct 2021) 11:59 pm AEST
---------------------------------------	---	--

Week 12: Writing week - 04 Oct 2021

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
This week is reserved for writing/working on the Research Project.	No reading this week.	Drop in Zoom session. Research Project Due: Week 12 Friday (8 Oct 2021) 11:59 pm AEST

Review/Exam Week - 11 Oct 2021

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
--------------	---------	------------------------------

Assessment Tasks

1 Research Portfolio

Assessment Type

Portfolio

Task Description

This Unit models a regular and incremental approach to research that is consistent with professional life. The life-cycle of a research project is broken into weekly workshop tasks in order to develop an orderly and iterative progress toward completion. Through discussion of these tasks in weekly Zoom workshops and in the forums, you will be able to get further guidance and feedback on your progress from your tutor and your peers. In addition to the tasks designed to enhance your research project, you will also be required to undertake a range of discrete research exercises similar to those expected of trainees or newly qualified lawyers. In these exercises you will be required to analyse a variety of sources and provide advice to others. While the content of these exercises is not connected to the research project, they exercises will further enhance your analytical and research skills.

The aim of this assessment is to show the incremental progression of your research skills, your ability to engage in critical analysis and to encourage you to engage in reflective practice.

Your research portfolio will be submitted in two parts:

Part 1: research exercise and weekly activities from weeks 1 to 5 due in week 6.

Part 2: research exercise and weekly activities from weeks 6 to 11 due in week 11.

Assessment Due Date

Week 11 Friday (1 Oct 2021) 11:59 pm AEST

Portfolio must be submitted incrementally as indicated in the description.

Return Date to Students

Part 1 within 2 weeks but Part 2 may not be released until certification of grades.

Weighting

60%

Assessment Criteria

The Research Portfolio assesses your ability to:

- locate and critically analyse appropriate legal and interdisciplinary sources;
- apply the law to factual scenarios;
- present information in a range of contexts and to a variety of audiences;
- provide comprehensive and constructive feedback to a peer on their Research Project;
- engage in self-evaluation and critical reflection; and
- communicate effectively orally and in writing.

Please see the criteria rubric in the 'Assessment' area of Moodle for further information about the above criteria.

Referencing Style

- [Australian Guide to Legal Citation, 4th ed](#)

Submission

Online

Learning Outcomes Assessed

- Identify issues in ill-defined legal problems and conduct legal research to provide advice and recommendations using relevant and suitable sources.
- Respond to complex and dynamic issues through critical analysis of the law and evaluating evidence and potential solutions.
- Communicate effectively both orally and in writing in a range of professional and academic contexts.
- Critically reflect on work and provide comprehensive feedback to others through a peer review process.

Graduate Attributes

- Communication
- Problem Solving
- Critical Thinking
- Information Literacy
- Team Work
- Information Technology Competence

2 Research Project

Assessment Type

Written Assessment

Task Description

As legal practitioners, we have a professional responsibility to protect the rule of law and the integrity of our legal system. One aspect of this ethical duty is the responsibility to engage with law reform. Organisations conducting inquiries into law reform, such as Law Reform Commissions and Parliamentary Committees, have their own research staff but also rely on the public submissions of professionals, organisations and members of the community to assist in the process. If you work in government, not-for-profit organisations, community legal centres or businesses affected by particular policies you may be asked to engage in research and evaluation of a particular area of the law. Your research skills must therefore be refined so that you can tackle both discrete and large research projects.

In this Unit we are using the context of a current law reform topic to explore the full spectrum of legal research skills required for legal practice and other law-related roles. Throughout the term, you must work on your submission, informed by the weekly workshop tasks and peer review exercise. You are encouraged to collaborate with those working on a similar topic on locating suitable sources and information, although your project must be submitted individually and be entirely your own work.

Assessment Due Date

Week 12 Friday (8 Oct 2021) 11:59 pm AEST

Return Date to Students

Grades may not be released until certification of grades.

Weighting

40%

Assessment Criteria

The Research Project assesses your ability to:

- structure a reasoned, logical argument;
- critically analyse legal and interdisciplinary materials;
- adopt an evidence-based approach to discussion and analysis;
- reach informed conclusions grounded in the arguments presented in the paper; and
- communicate effectively in writing (including grammar, spelling and referencing) and present arguments in a professional manner.

Please see the criteria rubric in the 'Assessment' area of Moodle for more information about the above criteria.

Referencing Style

- [Australian Guide to Legal Citation, 4th ed](#)

Submission

Online

Learning Outcomes Assessed

- Identify issues in ill-defined legal problems and conduct legal research to provide advice and recommendations using relevant and suitable sources.
- Design and complete a legal research project utilising suitable research methods to locate credible legal and interdisciplinary sources.
- Respond to complex and dynamic issues through critical analysis of the law and evaluating evidence and potential solutions.
- Communicate effectively both orally and in writing in a range of professional and academic contexts.

Graduate Attributes

- Communication
- Problem Solving
- Critical Thinking
- Information Literacy
- Information Technology Competence

Academic Integrity Statement

As a CQUniversity student you are expected to act honestly in all aspects of your academic work.

Any assessable work undertaken or submitted for review or assessment must be your own work. Assessable work is any type of work you do to meet the assessment requirements in the unit, including draft work submitted for review and feedback and final work to be assessed.

When you use the ideas, words or data of others in your assessment, you must thoroughly and clearly acknowledge the source of this information by using the correct referencing style for your unit. Using others' work without proper acknowledgement may be considered a form of intellectual dishonesty.

Participating honestly, respectfully, responsibly, and fairly in your university study ensures the CQUniversity qualification you earn will be valued as a true indication of your individual academic achievement and will continue to receive the respect and recognition it deserves.

As a student, you are responsible for reading and following CQUniversity's policies, including the [Student Academic Integrity Policy and Procedure](#). This policy sets out CQUniversity's expectations of you to act with integrity, examples of academic integrity breaches to avoid, the processes used to address alleged breaches of academic integrity, and potential penalties.

What is a breach of academic integrity?

A breach of academic integrity includes but is not limited to plagiarism, self-plagiarism, collusion, cheating, contract cheating, and academic misconduct. The Student Academic Integrity Policy and Procedure defines what these terms mean and gives examples.

Why is academic integrity important?

A breach of academic integrity may result in one or more penalties, including suspension or even expulsion from the University. It can also have negative implications for student visas and future enrolment at CQUniversity or elsewhere. Students who engage in contract cheating also risk being blackmailed by contract cheating services.

Where can I get assistance?

For academic advice and guidance, the [Academic Learning Centre \(ALC\)](#) can support you in becoming confident in completing assessments with integrity and of high standard.

What can you do to act with integrity?



Be Honest

If your assessment task is done by someone else, it would be dishonest of you to claim it as your own



Seek Help

If you are not sure about how to cite or reference in essays, reports etc, then seek help from your lecturer, the library or the Academic Learning Centre (ALC)



Produce Original Work

Originality comes from your ability to read widely, think critically, and apply your gained knowledge to address a question or problem