



MGMT20150 Public Policy Design and Implementation

Term 2 - 2019

Profile information current as at 25/04/2024 03:58 pm

All details in this unit profile for MGMT20150 have been officially approved by CQUniversity 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

This unit will assist you to understand the dynamics of the public policy making process and the role of stakeholders in policy development and implementation. The unit expands on the notion of evidence-based policy and equips participants to evaluate the evidence used to craft policy development. You will develop the skills and knowledge required to better understand how policy analysis and implementation contributes to improved policy outcomes and stakeholders engagement. In addition, you will examine how public policy theories and concepts are applied to specific cases in order to understand the different stages of the policy process, including design, implementation and evaluation.

Details

Career Level: *Postgraduate*

Unit Level: *Level 9*

Credit Points: 6

Student Contribution Band: 10

Fraction of Full-Time Student Load: 0.125

Pre-requisites or Co-requisites

There are no requisites for this unit.

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 - 2019

- Melbourne
- 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 Postgraduate 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. **Research Assignment**

Weighting: 40%

2. **Case Study**

Weighting: 60%

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](#).

Unit Learning Outcomes

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

1. Critically examine a range of theories and models that help explain the public policy process and the role of policy analysis within that process
2. Analyse the role of government institutions and other stakeholders in the process of policy making
3. Design strategies to address policy issues, including policy design and implementation
4. Apply relevant theories and models to practical cases of policy design and implementation.

Alignment of Learning Outcomes, Assessment and Graduate Attributes



Alignment of Assessment Tasks to Learning Outcomes

Assessment Tasks	Learning Outcomes			
	1	2	3	4
1 - Research Assignment - 40%	•	•		
2 - Case Study - 60%			•	•

Alignment of Graduate Attributes to Learning Outcomes

Graduate Attributes	Learning Outcomes			
	1	2	3	4
1 - Knowledge	○	○	○	○
2 - Communication	○			
3 - Cognitive, technical and creative skills	○	○	○	○
4 - Research			○	○
5 - Self-management				○
6 - Ethical and Professional Responsibility		○	○	
7 - Leadership		○		
8 - 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
1 - Research Assignment - 40%	○		○	○		○		
2 - Case Study - 60%	○	○			○		○	

Textbooks and Resources

Textbooks

There are no required textbooks.

Additional Textbook Information

There are selected readings for each week. Information about readings will be posted on the Moodle site. Some readings will be posted on the Moodle Site.

IT Resources

You will need access to the following IT resources:

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

Referencing Style

All submissions for this unit must use the referencing style: [American Psychological Association 6th Edition \(APA 6th edition\)](#)

For further information, see the Assessment Tasks.

Teaching Contacts

Quamrul Alam Unit Coordinator

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Schedule

Week 1: Explaining Public Policy: Theoretical Perspectives - 15 Jul 2019

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
In week one the importance of public policy and the shifts in public policy making paradigms will be discussed. Various aspects of the political, economic, social, environmental, and global factors will be discussed to understand the changes in the policy-making environment. Students will get a better understanding of how public policy creates public value.	Althaus, C, Bridgeman, P; and Davis, G (2018), <i>The Australian Policy Handbook</i> , Allen & Urwin, Chapter 1. Fenna, A. (1998), <i>Introduction to Australia Puluic Policy</i> , Longman, Chapter3. Dennis, R; and Maddison, S (2013), <i>An Introduction to Australian Public Policy: Theory and Practice</i> , Booktopia, chapter 4. Considine, M (2012), <i>Thinking Outside the Box? Applying Design Theory to Public Policy</i> .	Students will understand the importance of public policy making in a constantly changing political, social, environmental and business environment. By reading the selected readings students will get a better understanding of how policymaking creates public value. Students will be able to understand how environmental forces influence the policy-making process in a country. They will also be able to identify emerging trends in the policy environment.

Week 2: Institutional Framework of Public Policy Making - 22 Jul 2019

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
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In week 2 we will discuss institutional and regulatory changes that influence the public policy-making regime.

Althaus, C, Bridgeman, P; and Davis, G (2018), *The Australian Policy Handbook*, Allen & Urwin, Chapter 2.
 Fenna, A (1998), *Introduction to Australia Puluic Policy*, Longman, Chapter 4.
 Stewart, J (2004), *The Meaning of Strategy in the Public Sector*, *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, Vol 63 (4): 16-21
 Argy, A (2004), *Balancing Conflicting Goals: The big challenge for governments*, *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, Vol 63 (4): 22-28.
 Fells, A (2004), *Regulating markets: Marketing Regulation*, *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, Vol 63 (4): 29-36.

By reading the selected readings for week 2, students will learn how the institutional factors and the role of policy actors shape public policies, Students will understand why social norms and goals that were once considered unassailable are no longer part of the policy ethos.
 By reading the case **Australia Post** students will learn how the exercise of political mastery helps to achieve a balance between conflicting values/goals that is compatible with community preferences and through policy-making and institutional processes.

Week 3: Policy Making: Steps and Processes - 29 Jul 2019

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
Designing public policy is a complex governance challenge. In week 3, we will mainly focus on who formulates public policies, how policies are made and the limits of institutionalism in the policy-making process. The importance of evidence-informed policy making steps and processes will be discussed. The key functional roles of policymakers in policy development, regulatory issues, and variations in service delivery across a range of policy and administrative responsibilities will be covered.	Althaus, C, Bridgeman, P; and Davis, G (2018), <i>The Australian Policy Handbook</i> , Allen & Urwin, Chapter 3. Clarke, A (2019), <i>The twin faces of public sector design</i> , <i>Governance</i> , Vol 32: 5-21. Steen, Martin Van der and Twist, M. van (2018), <i>Strategies for robustness: Five perspectives on how policy design is done</i> , <i>Policy and Society</i> , Vol 37 (4): 491-513. Head, B.W (2015), <i>Towards More "Evidence-Informed" Policymaking</i> , <i>Public Administration Review</i> , Vol 76, Issue 3: 472-484.	Students should read the suggested chapter and the articles. Students will learn how design thinking can inform and enrich governance by helping policy designers produce adaptable designs, better appreciate the behavioral dynamics of public sector policy design. Case study discussion: The East link project..

Week 4: Policy Coordination and Decision Making - 05 Aug 2019

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
In week 4 we discuss why policy coordination is one of the oldest challenges for governments but has become even more important as the problems confronting governments change, and the ideas of 'New Public Management' are diffused.	Peter, B. G (2018), <i>The challenge of policy coordination' Policy Design and practice</i> , Vol 1 (1): 1-11. Althaus, C, Bridgeman, P; and Davis, G (2018), <i>The Australian Policy Handbook</i> , Allen & Urwin, Chapter 4.	The case for class discussion: On Solid Ground? Using a Public Private Partnership to build a new flagship hospital in Adelaide. Students will be able to examine and understand the causes of coordination problems and the mechanisms available for improving coordination in policymaking.

Week 5: Public Policy Models - 12 Aug 2019

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
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The students will be engaged in a series of case study discussions and team-building exercises and a rigorous policy exercise. The case studies will set the stage for the students/graduates by exploring how leading public sector organisations define, analyse, and address major public policy challenges. The team-building exercise is an experiential problem-solving challenge designed to help students build skills such as active listening, empathy, information sharing, and critical analytical thinking.

Althaus, C, Bridgeman, P; and Davis, G (2018), *The Australian Policy Handbook*, Allen & Urwin, Chapters 5, 5 &7.
 Hughes, O (2017), *New Public Management*, Owen Hughes Chapter 5.
 Ohemeng, F. L.K, and Grant, J.K (2014), Neither Public nor Private: The efficacy of mixed model public service delivery in two Canadian municipalities, *Canadian Public Administration*, Vol 57 (4): 548-572..
 Australian Public Service Commission (2018), *Changing behaviour: A public Policy Perspective*.

Case Study discussion
 Students will form groups and present case analysis. Cases will be posted on the Moodle site in week 2.
 The case analysis will help students to understand the features of various policy models

Vacation Week - 19 Aug 2019

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
		Working on assignment 1.

Week 6:Public Policy Design: Issues and Challenges - 26 Aug 2019

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
Policy design and policy tool selection is a highly constrained process. In this week, we will discuss how policymakers select policy tools to design or plan policy outcomes.	Althaus, C, Bridgeman, P; and Davis, G (2018), <i>The Australian Policy Handbook</i> , Allen & Urwin, Chapter 3, & 4. Howlett, M (2009), <i>What, Who and Why?</i> , Chapter 9. (Policy Design). Howlett, M; Jeremy, R. (2013), <i>Patching vs Packaging in Policy Formulation: Assessing Policy Portfolio Design, Politics, and Governance</i> , Vol 1 (2), 170-182.	<p>Submission of assignment 1 (Topic) Discuss the importance of the public policy process in a highly competitive political and economic environment. Critically analyse various public policy, implementation models. Select one public policy from your area of interest and expertise. Relevant reading materials will be posted on the Moodle site. Class discussion: The Competition Policy</p> <p>Discuss the importance of public policy process in a highly competitive political and economic environment. Critically analyse various public policy implementation models. Select one public policy from your area of interest and expertise Due: Week 6 Friday (30 Aug 2019) 11:55 pm AEST</p>

Week 7:Public Policy Implementation - 02 Sep 2019

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
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Key issues in policy implementation and related problems will be discussed in week 7.

Althaus, C, Bridgeman, P; and Davis, G (2018), *The Australian Policy Handbook*, Allen & Urwin, Chapter 10.
 .Hudson, B; Hunter, D; and Peckham, S (2019), Policy Failure and policy implementation gap: can policy support program help? *Policy Design and Practice*, Vol 2 (1): 1-14.
 McLaughlin, M. W (1987), Learning from Experience: Lessons from Policy Implementation, *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, Vol 9,(2): 171-178.
 Ewalt, Jo G (2001), Theories of Governance and New Public Management: Links to Understanding Policy Implementation. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the American Society for Public Administration Newark, NJ March 12, 2001.

Students must read the recommended articles for week 7.
 By reading the articles and participating in the class discussion students will be able to understand the relations between policy and practice and understand that effective implementation requires a strategic balance of pressure and support.

Week 8: Policy Implementation and Street-level Bureaucracy - 09 Sep 2019

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
Public managers working in various ministries, departments and local level administration play significant roles in policy implementation. Creating public value through effective policy implementation is not an easy task. This week we will discuss the role of the street level bureaucrats in implementing public policies and the skills and competencies they require to perform tasks.	Tummers, L and Bekkers, V (2014), Policy Implementation, Street-Level Bureaucracy, and the Importance of Discretion, <i>Public Management Review</i> , Vol 16 (4): 527-547. Lavee, E; Cohen, N, and Nouman, H (2018), Reinforcing public responsibility? Influences and practices in street-level bureaucrats' engagement in policy design, <i>Public Administration</i> , Vol 96:333-348. Brunetto, Y (2000), Management of Policy Implementation within Australian Universities, <i>Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources</i> , Vol 38 (1): 50-66.	Three articles have been selected for this week's reading. By reading the articles students will learn why a certain degree of autonomy/discretion is required for policy implementation. Students will also gain knowledge about the importance of operational level autonomy and discretion.

Week 9: Public Professionals and Policy Implementation - 16 Sep 2019

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
Although most practitioners claim to support the use of evidence relevant to their roles, their use of the best available evidence is patchy. Public officials should have the skills and competencies to understand how political and ideological factors often undermine evidence-informed practices. This week we will examine the role public officials play in policy implementation and the pressures they face during policy implementation.	Tummers, L; Vermeeren, B; Steijin, B; and Bekkers, V (2012), Public Professionals and Policy Implementation, <i>Public Management Review</i> , Vol., Vol 14 (8): 1041-1059. Head, B.W (2015) Toward More "Evidence-Informed" Policy Making?, <i>Public Administration Review</i> , <i>Public Administration Review</i> , Vol. 76, Iss. 3, pp. 472-484. Tummers, L; Bekkers, V; and Steijin, B (2009), Policy Alienation of Public Professionals, <i>Public Management Review</i> , Vol 11 (5): 685-706. Crosby, B. C; Hart, P; and Torfing, J (2017), Public value creation through collaboration, <i>Public Management Review</i> , Vol, 19 (5): 655-669.	Students should read these three articles and make a summary identifying how public managers use insights about public sector innovation and public value governance to make more than incremental progress in addressing public policy purposes. Students should also realise that for policy implementation interaction between key actors and brokering across organizational boundaries are crucial.

Week 10: New Public Governance and Policy Implementation - 23 Sep 2019

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
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This week we will discuss how an effective public governance model facilitates the system of inclusion of public input into the complex public policy decision process. We will explain that governance' is the exercise of power or authority - political, economic, administrative or otherwise - to manage a country's resources and affairs. It comprises the mechanisms, processes, and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences.

Osborne, S.P (2006), *The New Public Governance, Public Management Review*, Vol 8 (3): 377-387.
 Parto, S (2017), *Good Governance and Policy Analysis*, MERIT - Maastricht Economic Research Institute on Innovation and Technology.
 CIPFA & IFAC Report (2017), *Good Governance in the Public Sector— Consultation Draft for an International Framework -*
 Walters, L.C; Aydelotte, J.; and Miller, J (2000), *Putting more Public in Policy Analysis, Public Administration Review*, Vol 60 (4), July-August: 349-358.

By reading the articles students will learn how governance affects policy implementation. Students will participate in a syndicate discussion in the class and debate on how governance can be exercised as a political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country's affairs at all levels. Students will critically analyse whether governance comprises the complex mechanisms, processes, and institutions through which citizens can articulate their interests, mediate their differences and exercise their legal rights and obligations.

Week 11: Managing the Policy Process - 30 Sep 2019

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
In week 11, we will analyse the strategic triangle framework to demonstrate that public value creation through policy implementation is a means to strengthen the democratic process and establish citizen-focused administration. We also examine the importance of procedural integrity, ethical and managerial challenges in public policy implementation.	Althaus, C, Bridgeman, P; and Davis, G (2018), <i>The Australian Policy Handbook</i> , Allen & Urwin, Chapter 12 & 13. Osborne, S.P; Radnor, Z; and Strokosch, K (2016) <i>Co-production and the Co-Creation of Value in Public Services: A suitable case for Treatment, Public Management Review</i> , Vol 18 (5): 639-653. Bryson, J. B; Sancino, A; Benington, J and Sorensen, E (2017), <i>Towards Multi-sector theory of public value creation, Public Management Review</i> , Vol 19 (5): 640-654.	In the second half of the three hour class, students will be asked to discuss the concept of co-creation and public policy implementation and the nature of mutual relationship between participation and policy implementation.. The discussion will assist students to understand how a broad range of participation can make public policy design and implementation more inclusive and effective..

Week 12: Unit review and discuss on the major themes covered in this unit - 07 Oct 2019

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
Unit review Summary of public policy processes Trends in policy making and the challenges Shifts in policy design and future trends Analysis of new public policy implementation models Feedback on assignment 2.		Group discussion on key themes of public policy design and implementation. Case Study. Due: Week 12 Friday (11 Oct 2019) 11:55 pm AEST

Review/Exam Week - 14 Oct 2019

Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic
Exam Week - 21 Oct 2019		
Module/Topic	Chapter	Events and Submissions/Topic

Assessment Tasks

1 Discuss the importance of public policy process in a highly competitive political and economic environment. Critically analyse various public policy implementation models. Select one public policy from your area of interest and

expertise

Assessment Type

Research Assignment

Task Description

Assignment Type: Individual

Weighting: 40%

Word Limit: 3000

Task Description

Define public policy and discuss the importance of public policy.

Discuss the factors that influence the public policy process in a country.

Evaluate various policy implementation models.

Each student selects an important public policy and uses any one of the models to analyse the key features of the policy implementation strategies.

The students should identify the problems of that policy and suggest some recommendations. The students need to demonstrate their competency to analyse, evaluate and discuss theoretical concepts and principles of public policy making. In their written assignment the students should be able to articulate their arguments and clearly communicate their understanding of the complex nature of modern-day public policy making, models of policy implementation.

Assessment Due Date

Week 6 Friday (30 Aug 2019) 11:55 pm AEST

Return Date to Students

Week 8 Friday (13 Sept 2019)

Return with Feedback

Weighting

40%

Assessment Criteria

You are required to select an important public policy or a policy pursued by a nonprofit organisation.

You are required to critically analyse the policy design, processes, and various steps involved in that public policy formulation.

You should also be able to identify and analyse the factors that influenced the processes and policy outcomes.

You need to discuss the implementation strategies and the challenges that the policymakers faced.

You are required to use your knowledge, cognitive and communication skills in explaining how the policy actors used their innovative leadership and management capability in designing and implementing the policy.

You should conduct research and collect recent information to write an argumentative and analytical case study.

They should demonstrate your knowledge and scholarship in articulating your arguments.

Referencing Style

- [American Psychological Association 6th Edition \(APA 6th edition\)](#)

Submission

Online

Learning Outcomes Assessed

- Critically examine a range of theories and models that help explain the public policy process and the role of policy analysis within that process
- Analyse the role of government institutions and other stakeholders in the process of policy making

Graduate Attributes

- Knowledge
- Cognitive, technical and creative skills
- Research
- Ethical and Professional Responsibility

2 Case Study.

Assessment Type

Case Study

Task Description

Assessment Type: Individual

Word Limit: 4000

Weighting: 60%

Assessment Tasks

Each student will select one of the two suggested public policies and write an analytic and argumentative professional case study report,

1. Critically discuss the Age Care policy of Australia focusing on the services provided by private sector organisations.

You are required to discuss:

The main elements of the policy

Services provided by the private sector

Quality of services

Problems of care reported in various electronic and social media.

Your own observation

Recommendations

2. Discuss the steps the Department of Human Services takes to administer the Newstart Allowance Policy in Australia.

Critically analyse the issues affecting the quality of services and make recommendations on how to make the policy more citizen-friendly

Assessment Due Date

Week 12 Friday (11 Oct 2019) 11:55 pm AEST

Return Date to Students

Review/Exam Week Friday (18 Oct 2019)

Feedback will be given in Week 8

Weighting

60%

Assessment Criteria

Your analysis needs to be critical, thoughtful and argumentative.

Your assignment must reveal scholarship and demonstrate your ability to understand and use theories and models of public policy and implementation.

You should have advance knowledge and communication skills to provide a logical structure and meet the graduate attributes.

You should be able to demonstrate that you are able to interpret public policy processes and challenges of policy implementation.

You should use your cognitive, technical and creative skills in developing your arguments.

You need to collect information from published documents and use at least 15 references including quality journal articles.

Referencing Style

- [American Psychological Association 6th Edition \(APA 6th edition\)](#)

Submission

Online

Submission Instructions

Submit on line Moodle Site . Use Tun-It-In before submitting.

Learning Outcomes Assessed

- Design strategies to address policy issues, including policy design and implementation
- Apply relevant theories and models to practical cases of policy design and implementation.

Graduate Attributes

- Knowledge
- Communication
- Self-management
- Leadership

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