



COURSE OUTLINE

CMN302 Investigative and Data Journalism

School: School of Business and Creative Industries

2026 | Trimester 1

UniSC Sunshine Coast

BLENDED
LEARNING

Most of your course is on campus but you may be able to do some components of this course online.

Online

ONLINE

You can do this course without coming onto campus, unless your program has specified a mandatory onsite requirement.

Please go to usc.edu.au for up to date information on the teaching sessions and campuses where this course is usually offered.

1. What is this course about?

1.1. Description

This course provides a detailed exploration of the research and reporting practices for in depth investigative reporting. It canvasses major database sources, contemporary case studies, key institutions, and legal frameworks in this field. It focuses on the internet and statistics to expand the information that a journalist or researcher can employ to increase the depth and efficiency of their reporting and writing. You will learn to use software to extract meanings from raw data which might not have been evident otherwise, and how to find and access relevant, accurate information online.

1.2. How will this course be delivered?

ACTIVITY	HOURS	BEGINNING WEEK	FREQUENCY
BLENDED LEARNING			
Learning materials – Interactive online learning activities.	1hr	Week 1	12 times
Tutorial/Workshop 1 – Scheduled face to face workshops.	2hrs	Week 1	12 times
ONLINE			
Learning materials – Interactive online learning activities.	1hr	Week 1	12 times
Tutorial/Workshop 1 – Scheduled online workshops (Recorded).	2hrs	Week 1	12 times

1.3. Course Topics

Module 1 – Data and visualisations

Module 2 – Investigating sources

Module 3 – Statistics and news stories

2. What level is this course?

300 Level (Graduate)

Demonstrating coherence and breadth or depth of knowledge and skills. Independent application of knowledge and skills in unfamiliar contexts. Meeting professional requirements and AQF descriptors for the degree. May require pre-requisites where discipline specific introductory or developing knowledge or skills is necessary. Normally undertaken in the third or fourth full-time study year of an undergraduate program.

3. What is the unit value of this course?

12 units

4. How does this course contribute to my learning?

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES	GRADUATE QUALITIES MAPPING	PROFESSIONAL STANDARD MAPPING *
On successful completion of this course, you should be able to...	Completing these tasks successfully will contribute to you becoming...	Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business
① Identify and explain the capacities, limitations and socio-professional implications of reporting practices in investigative and data journalism.	Knowledgeable	PC3
② Examine, interrogate and research an investigative story, through the use of advanced research methods.	Creative and critical thinker	PC3
③ Explain and justify the selection of investigative and journalistic methods including their limitations.	Empowered	PC3
④ Identify and describe the key ethical and legal obligations associated with investigative and data journalism.	Ethical	PC3

* Competencies by Professional Body

CODE	COMPETENCY
ASSOCIATION TO ADVANCE COLLEGIATE SCHOOLS OF BUSINESS	
PC3	Creative and Critical Thinking

5. Am I eligible to enrol in this course?

Refer to the [UniSC Glossary of terms](#) for definitions of “pre-requisites, co-requisites and anti-requisites”.

5.1. Pre-requisites

Not applicable

5.2. Co-requisites

Not applicable

5.3. Anti-requisites

Not applicable

5.4. Specific assumed prior knowledge and skills (where applicable)

Prior knowledge equates to the developing-level journalism subjects, is essential and assumed. This includes being able to write news stories, interview high-level sources, undertake detailed research, understand legal and ethical issues, and be able to operate across media platforms.

6. How am I going to be assessed?

6.1. Grading Scale

Standard Grading (GRD)

High Distinction (HD), Distinction (DN), Credit (CR), Pass (PS), Fail (FL).

6.2. Details of early feedback on progress

Formative feedback on your academic progress will be provided in tutorials throughout the trimester. An early formative assessment will also occur in Week 3 through an online quiz that will help with preparation for Assessment Task 1.

6.3. Assessment tasks

DELIVERY MODE	TASK NO.	ASSESSMENT PRODUCT	INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP	WEIGHTING %	WHAT IS THE DURATION / LENGTH?	WHEN SHOULD I SUBMIT?	WHERE SHOULD I SUBMIT IT?
All	1	Artefact - Creative, and Written Piece	Individual	20%	500 words	Week 4	Online Assignment Submission with plagiarism check
All	2	Written Piece	Individual	45%	2000 words	Week 9	Online Assignment Submission with plagiarism check
All	3	Written Piece	Individual	35%	750 words	Exam Period	Online Assignment Submission with plagiarism check

All - Assessment Task 1: Data journalism visualisation and minor essay

GOAL:	The purpose of this task is to produce a visualisation and then identify, explain and reflect on it in relation to its importance as a work of data journalism.		
PRODUCT:	Artefact - Creative, and Written Piece		
FORMAT:	Professional/industry format and academic format. Employing data journalism methods, create a visualisation to enhance and help explain a newsworthy issue. In essay form, respond critically to this visualisation. The response will also engage with the strengths and weaknesses of your particular example of data journalism.		
CRITERIA:	No. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Use of technology to create data journalism 2 Appropriateness of news selection 3 Critical analysis 4 Communication 		
GENERIC SKILLS:	Problem solving, Organisation, Applying technologies, Information literacy		

All - Assessment Task 2: An investigative news feature article based on the use of investigative methods

GOAL:	The purpose of this task is for you to examine and interrogate the use of investigative methods and identify and explain the uses and limitations of these methods.																						
PRODUCT:	Written Piece																						
FORMAT:	<p>Topics will be assigned in Week 5 tutorials for the 1500 word investigative news feature article. The article should be based on accurate and verified information gathered through a variety of investigative methods. You must interview at least two relevant sources.</p> <p>A 500 word explanation and justification of the investigative methods used to produce the feature article is also required. It should include a description of how the information the article was based on was verified, limitations to the chosen methods and details of any obstacles encountered in the research, and how they were overcome.</p> <p>This task is being used for measuring assurance of learning towards Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) accreditation. The following Program Competency will be assessed: PC 2 - Critical and creative thinkers and practitioners</p>																						
CRITERIA:	<p>No.</p> <table> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>Quality of article (structure, interest to readership, suitability for publication)</td> <td>1 2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>Clarity of expression</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>Depth of research</td> <td>1 2 3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>Use of interviews/ quotes and credible hyperlinks</td> <td>1 2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5</td> <td>Demonstrated understanding of investigative methods</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6</td> <td>Demonstrated understanding of limitations</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>7</td> <td>Clarity of explanation</td> <td>1</td> </tr> </table>		1	Quality of article (structure, interest to readership, suitability for publication)	1 2	2	Clarity of expression	1	3	Depth of research	1 2 3	4	Use of interviews/ quotes and credible hyperlinks	1 2	5	Demonstrated understanding of investigative methods	3	6	Demonstrated understanding of limitations	3	7	Clarity of explanation	1
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6	Demonstrated understanding of limitations	3																					
7	Clarity of explanation	1																					
GENERIC SKILLS:	Communication, Collaboration, Organisation, Applying technologies, Information literacy																						

All - Assessment Task 3: News story based on statistics

GOAL:	The purpose of this task is for you to examine and interrogate the use of data journalism techniques.										
PRODUCT:	Written Piece										
FORMAT:	Professional/industry format. You will write a 750-word news story based on an interpretation of statistics gathered from the web and subsequently sorted, grouped and displayed in a spreadsheet. You will enrich your story by incorporating at least two interviews with expert sources. Spreadsheets should also be submitted as part of the assessment requirement.										
CRITERIA:	<p>No.</p> <table> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>Accuracy of figures and depth of statistical analysis</td> <td>1 2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>Quality and structure of article</td> <td>3 4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>Quality and use of interview(s)/quotes</td> <td>2 4</td> </tr> </table>		1	Accuracy of figures and depth of statistical analysis	1 2	2	Quality and structure of article	3 4	3	Quality and use of interview(s)/quotes	2 4
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GENERIC SKILLS:	Collaboration, Problem solving, Organisation, Applying technologies										

7. Directed study hours

A 12-unit course will have total of 150 learning hours which will include directed study hours (including online if required), self-directed learning and completion of assessable tasks. Student workload is calculated at 12.5 learning hours per one unit.

8. What resources do I need to undertake this course?

Please note: Course information, including specific information of recommended readings, learning activities, resources, weekly readings, etc. are available on the course Canvas site—Please log in as soon as possible.

8.1. Prescribed text(s) or course reader

There are no required/recommended resources for this course.

8.2. Specific requirements

This course requires some commercial software or hardware which is provided at USC campuses for student use. If you elect to do this course online, you may either; attend a campus at which it is available, discuss alternative open source solutions with your course coordinator that would enable you to demonstrate the learning outcomes, or if you prefer you may acquire this software and/or hardware at your own expense.

9. How are risks managed in this course?

Health and safety risks for this course have been assessed as low. It is your responsibility to review course material, search online, discuss with lecturers and peers and understand the health and safety risks associated with your specific course of study and to familiarise yourself with the University's general health and safety principles by reviewing the [online induction training for students](#), and following the instructions of the University staff.

10. What administrative information is relevant to this course?

10.1. Assessment: Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is the ethical standard of university participation. It ensures that students graduate as a result of proving they are competent in their discipline. This is integral in maintaining the value of academic qualifications. Each industry has expectations and standards of the skills and knowledge within that discipline and these are reflected in assessment.

Academic integrity means that you do not engage in any activity that is considered to be academic fraud; including plagiarism, collusion or outsourcing any part of any assessment item to any other person. You are expected to be honest and ethical by completing all work yourself and indicating in your work which ideas and information were developed by you and which were taken from others. You cannot provide your assessment work to others. You are also expected to provide evidence of wide and critical reading, usually by using appropriate academic references.

In order to minimise incidents of academic fraud, this course may require that some of its assessment tasks, when submitted to Canvas, are electronically checked through Turnitin. This software allows for text comparisons to be made between your submitted assessment item and all other work to which Turnitin has access.

10.2. Assessment: Additional Requirements

Eligibility for Supplementary Assessment

Your eligibility for supplementary assessment in a course is dependent of the following conditions applying:

- (a) The final mark is in the percentage range 47% to 49.4%; and
- (b) The course is graded using the Standard Grading scale

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The final mark is in the percentage range 47% to 49.4%

The course is graded using the Standard Grading scale

You have not failed an assessment task in the course due to academic misconduct.

10.3. Assessment: Submission penalties

Late submissions may be penalised up to and including the following maximum percentage of the assessment task's identified value, with weekdays and weekends included in the calculation of days late:

- (a) One day: deduct 5%;
- (b) Two days: deduct 10%;
- (c) Three days: deduct 20%;
- (d) Four days: deduct 40%;
- (e) Five days: deduct 60%;
- (f) Six days: deduct 80%;
- (g) Seven days: A result of zero is awarded for the assessment task.

The following penalties will apply for a late submission for an online examination:

Less than 15 minutes: No penalty

From 15 minutes to 30 minutes: 20% penalty

More than 30 minutes: 100% penalty

10.4. SafeUniSC

UniSC is committed to a culture of respect and providing a safe and supportive environment for all members of our community. For immediate assistance on campus contact SafeUniSC by phone: [07 5430 1168](#) or using the [SafeZone](#) app. For general enquires contact the SafeUniSC team by phone [07 5456 3864](#) or email safe@usc.edu.au.

The SafeUniSC Specialist Service is a Student Wellbeing service that provides free and confidential support to students who may have experienced or observed behaviour that could cause fear, offence or trauma. To contact the service call [07 5430 1226](#) or email studentwellbeing@usc.edu.au.

10.5. Study help

For help with course-specific advice, for example what information to include in your assessment, you should first contact your tutor, then your course coordinator, if needed.

If you require additional assistance, the Learning Advisers are trained professionals who are ready to help you develop a wide range of academic skills. Visit the [Learning Advisers](#) web page for more information, or contact Student Central for further assistance: +61 7 5430 2890 or studentcentral@usc.edu.au.

10.6. Wellbeing Services

Student Wellbeing provide free and confidential counselling on a wide range of personal, academic, social and psychological matters, to foster positive mental health and wellbeing for your academic success.

To book a confidential appointment go to [Student Hub](#), email studentwellbeing@usc.edu.au or call 07 5430 1226.

10.7. AccessAbility Services

Ability Advisers ensure equal access to all aspects of university life. If your studies are affected by a disability, learning disorder mental health issue, injury or illness, or you are a primary carer for someone with a disability or who is considered frail and aged, [AccessAbility Services](#) can provide access to appropriate reasonable adjustments and practical advice about the support and facilities available to you throughout the University.

To book a confidential appointment go to [Student Hub](#), email AccessAbility@usc.edu.au or call 07 5430 2890.

10.8. Links to relevant University policy and procedures

For more information on Academic Learning & Teaching categories including:

- Assessment: Courses and Coursework Programs
- Review of Assessment and Final Grades
- Supplementary Assessment
- Central Examinations
- Deferred Examinations
- Student Conduct
- Students with a Disability

For more information, visit <https://www.usc.edu.au/explore/policies-and-procedures#academic-learning-and-teaching>

10.9. Student Charter

UniSC is committed to excellence in teaching, research and engagement in an environment that is inclusive, inspiring, safe and respectful. The [Student Charter](#) sets out what students can expect from the University, and what in turn is expected of students, to achieve these outcomes.

10.10. General Enquiries

In person:

- **UniSC Sunshine Coast** - Student Central, Ground Floor, Building C, 90 Sippy Downs Drive, Sippy Downs
- **UniSC Moreton Bay** - Service Centre, Ground Floor, Foundation Building, Gympie Road, Petrie
- **UniSC SouthBank** - Student Central, Building A4 (SW1), 52 Merivale Street, South Brisbane
- **UniSC Gympie** - Student Central, 71 Cartwright Road, Gympie
- **UniSC Fraser Coast** - Student Central, Student Central, Building A, 161 Old Maryborough Rd, Hervey Bay
- **UniSC Caboolture** - Student Central, Level 1 Building J, Cnr Manley and Tallon Street, Caboolture

Tel: +61 7 5430 2890

Email: studentcentral@usc.edu.au