

## COURSE OUTLINE

CMN315

## Communication Research

**School:** School of Business and Creative Industries

2026 | Semester 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](http://usc.edu.au) for up to date information on the teaching sessions and campuses where this course is usually offered.*

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## 1. What is this course about?

### 1.1. Description

This course introduces various empirical methods and tools to investigate emerging forms of media and audience practices. It offers a detailed understanding of different ways in which questions of media impact and audience power have been theorised in communication studies. You will engage with contemporary digital media and audience research methodologies, write an innovative research proposal and develop ethical skills in relation to these. Approaches examined include quantitative and qualitative with emphasis on surveys, case studies, focus groups, ethnography, textual and virtual analysis.

### 1.2. How will this course be delivered?

ACTIVITY	HOURS	BEGINNING WEEK	FREQUENCY
<b>BLENDED LEARNING</b>			
<b>Lecture</b> – 1 hour online lecture content for 12 weeks (or equivalent).	1hr	Week 1	12 times
<b>Tutorial/Workshop 1</b> – On campus tutorial/workshop for 12 weeks (or equivalent).	2hrs	Week 1	12 times
<b>ONLINE</b>			
<b>Online</b> – 3 hours online content for 12 weeks (or equivalent).	3hrs	Week 1	12 times

### 1.3. Course Topics

Communication and media research paradigms

Research methodologies

Research methods

Developing a research proposal

## 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
On successful completion of this course, you should be able to...	Completing these tasks successfully will contribute to you becoming...
① Interrogate media and communication practice.	Creative and critical thinker
② Recognise and evaluate concepts, methods, paradigms, and theories in communication literature	Knowledgeable
③ Develop and produce a research plan.	Empowered
④ Demonstrate scholarly communication skills	Empowered

## 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

CMN253

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

Knowledge of media industry practices and communication concepts and theories.

## 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

A draft copy of your research idea will be peer-reviewed and discussed in a participatory 2-hour workshop session or via an interactive discussion board to provide formative feedback early in the semester.

### 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?
Blended learning	1	Activity Participation	Group	20%	20 minutes oral 12 ppt slides	Week 4	Online Assignment Submission with plagiarism check
Blended learning	2	Literature Review (or component)	Individual	35%	1500 words	Week 8	Online Assignment Submission with plagiarism check
Blended learning	3	Artefact - Technical and Scientific, and Written Piece	Individual	45%	3000 words	Week 12	Online Assignment Submission with plagiarism check
Online	1	Activity Participation	Individual	20%	15 minutes oral 12 ppt slides	Week 4	Online Assignment Submission with plagiarism check
Online	2	Literature Review (or component)	Individual	35%	1500 words	Week 8	Online Assignment Submission with plagiarism check
Online	3	Artefact - Technical and Scientific, and Written Piece	Individual	45%	3000 words	Week 12	Online Assignment Submission with plagiarism check

#### Blended learning - Assessment Task 1: Research Brief

<b>GOAL:</b>	You will work in a team to identify, develop and pitch a significant research problem within a delimited research topic to a group of your peers.	
<b>PRODUCT:</b>	Activity Participation	
<b>FORMAT:</b>	<p>Team oral presentation: Create a clear, well researched, and theoretically supported presentation for a potential research topic.</p> <p>Should include several ways of interrogating the problem/issue.</p> <p>One slide dedicated to outlining how each team member participated in the development of the project. 12 slides total - use graphics and images rather than text heavy slides.</p> <p>Be convincing!</p>	
<b>CRITERIA:</b>	<p><b>No.</b></p> <p>1 Appropriate selection of topic</p> <p>2 Critical analysis of research problem</p> <p>3 Quality of scope and parameters outlined</p> <p>4 Quality of critical questions posed and key concepts defined</p> <p>5 Demonstration of relevant literature and theory identified</p> <p>6 Evidence of collaboration</p> <p>7 Quality of communication</p>	
<b>GENERIC SKILLS:</b>	Communication, Collaboration, Organisation, Information literacy	<b>Learning Outcome assessed</b>
		1
		2
		2
		3 4
		2
		4
		4

### Blended learning - Assessment Task 2: Annotated Bibliography

<b>GOAL:</b>	A literature review is an essential part of the research process. You will develop the ability to identify past studies relevant to your research problem, cite sources appropriately and summarise and critique literature.	
<b>PRODUCT:</b>	Literature Review (or component)	
<b>FORMAT:</b>	<p>Essay format with Harvard referencing style (detailed on blackboard).</p> <p>You should use between 12 -15 peer reviewed academic journal articles (journal articles are not all the same depth or complexity)</p>	
<b>CRITERIA:</b>	<p><b>No.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Identifying literature relevant to the research problem</li> <li>2 Succinctly summarising literature related to the research problem</li> <li>3 Applying Harvard referencing style correctly for citations</li> <li>4 Evaluating selected literature in a sophisticated manner</li> <li>5 Quality of communication</li> </ol>	<b>Learning Outcome assessed</b>
<b>GENERIC SKILLS:</b>	Communication, Organisation, Information literacy	

### Blended learning - Assessment Task 3: Research Proposal

<b>GOAL:</b>	You will develop a research proposal outlining the step-by-step process of your research plan. Your proposal should be written in a convincing and methodologically competent manner.	
<b>PRODUCT:</b>	Artefact - Technical and Scientific, and Written Piece	
<b>FORMAT:</b>	You will further develop the research problem identified and reviewed in assessment tasks 1 and 2. You will refine your research questions, revisit literature, identify an appropriate methodology and write a plan for the research. A more detailed outline of this task will be provided on Blackboard.	
<b>CRITERIA:</b>	<p><b>No.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Quality of introduction</li> <li>2 Quality of literature review</li> <li>3 Appropriateness of selected methodology</li> <li>4 Data analysis and discussion</li> <li>5 Quality of conclusion</li> <li>6 Appropriate use of referencing</li> <li>7 Correct use of formatting and academic style</li> <li>8 Quality of abstract</li> </ol>	<b>Learning Outcome assessed</b>
<b>GENERIC SKILLS:</b>	Communication, Problem solving, Information literacy	

**Online - Assessment Task 1:** Research Brief

<b>GOAL:</b>	You will identify, develop and pitch a significant research problem within a delimited research topic.	
<b>PRODUCT:</b>	Activity Participation	
<b>FORMAT:</b>	<p>Submit a video presentation of a clear, well researched, and theoretically supported presentation for a potential research topic.</p> <p>Should include several ways of interrogating the problem/issue.</p> <p>12 slides total - use graphics and images rather than text heavy slides.</p> <p>Be convincing!</p>	
<b>CRITERIA:</b>	<p><b>No.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Appropriate selection of topic</li> <li>2 Critical analysis of research problem</li> <li>3 Quality of scope and parameters outlined</li> <li>4 Quality of critical questions posed and key concepts defined</li> <li>5 Demonstration of relevant literature and theory identified</li> <li>6 Quality of communication</li> </ol>	<b>Learning Outcome assessed</b>
<b>GENERIC SKILLS:</b>	Communication, Applying technologies, Information literacy	

**Online - Assessment Task 2:** Annotated Bibliography

<b>GOAL:</b>	A literature review is an essential part of the research process. You will develop the ability to identify past studies relevant to your research problem, cite sources appropriately and summarise and critique literature.	
<b>PRODUCT:</b>	Literature Review (or component)	
<b>FORMAT:</b>	<p>Essay format with Harvard referencing style (detailed on blackboard).</p> <p>You should use between 12 -15 peer reviewed academic journal articles (journal articles are not all the same depth or complexity)</p>	
<b>CRITERIA:</b>	<p><b>No.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Identifying literature relevant to the research problem</li> <li>2 Succinctly summarising literature related to the research problem</li> <li>3 Applying Harvard referencing style correctly for citations</li> <li>4 Evaluating selected literature in a sophisticated manner</li> <li>5 Quality of communication</li> </ol>	<b>Learning Outcome assessed</b>
<b>GENERIC SKILLS:</b>	Communication, Organisation, Information literacy	

### Online - Assessment Task 3: Research Proposal

<b>GOAL:</b>	You will develop a research proposal outlining the step-by-step process of your research plan. Your proposal should be written in a convincing and methodologically competent manner.	
<b>PRODUCT:</b>	Artefact - Technical and Scientific, and Written Piece	
<b>FORMAT:</b>	You will further develop the research problem identified and reviewed in assessment tasks 1 and 2. You will refine your research questions, revisit literature, identify an appropriate methodology and write a plan for the research. A more detailed outline of this task will be provided on Blackboard.	
<b>CRITERIA:</b>	<p><b>No.</b></p> <p>1 Quality of introduction</p> <p>2 Quality of literature review</p> <p>3 Appropriateness of selected methodology</p> <p>4 Data analysis and discussion</p> <p>5 Appropriate use of referencing</p> <p>6 Correct use of formatting and academic style</p> <p>7 Quality of abstract</p> <p>8 Quality of conclusion</p>	<b>Learning Outcome assessed</b>
<b>GENERIC SKILLS:</b>	Communication, Problem solving, Information literacy	

## 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

Please note that you need to have regular access to the resource(s) listed below. Resources may be required or recommended.

REQUIRED?	AUTHOR	YEAR	TITLE	EDITION	PUBLISHER
Required	Niranjala Weerakkody	2015	Research Methods for Media and Communication	2	n/a

### 8.2. Specific requirements

Nil

## 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

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

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 submission of assessment tasks may be penalised at the following maximum rate:

- 5% (of the assessment task's identified value) per day for the first two days from the date identified as the due date for the assessment task.

- 10% (of the assessment task's identified value) for the third day - 20% (of the assessment task's identified value) for the fourth day and subsequent days up to and including seven days from the date identified as the due date for the assessment task.

- A result of zero is awarded for an assessment task submitted after seven days from the date identified as the due date for the assessment task. Weekdays and weekends are included in the calculation of days late. To request an extension you must contact your course coordinator to negotiate an outcome.

## 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:studentcentral@usc.edu.au)