

LAW440 Honours Research Methods, Design and Confirmation

School: School of Law and Society

2026 | Trimester 1

UniSC Sunshine Coast
UniSC Moreton Bay

**BLENDED
LEARNING**

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

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 is the first of two linked courses required to graduate with honours in Law. In this course you will further prepare and develop your knowledge and capability in research skills, methods and ethics. Specifically, in consultation with your academic supervisor, you will formulate and clarify a research topic including research planning, generating research questions, ethical considerations, search techniques and methodology. The aim of which is to prepare you for the writing and submission of your Law Honours Thesis in trimester two (LAW441).

1.2. How will this course be delivered?

ACTIVITY	HOURS	BEGINNING WEEK	FREQUENCY
BLENDED LEARNING			
Tutorial/Workshop 1 – Workshops	2hrs	Week 1	3 times
Independent Study/Research – Students continue independent study on their Honours Thesis, meeting with their supervisory team as required throughout the trimester.	2hrs	Week 2	10 times

1.3. Course Topics

This course provides an introduction to the Honours program and equips students with skills and techniques to tackle the development and delivery of a research project. This includes tips surrounding the development of research proposals and plans – particularly highlighting the importance of research questions and methodologies – as well as managing the student-supervisor relationship. This course intends to foster connections between Honours students, and provide some tools for success.

2. What level is this course?

400 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 Design a research project and develop a management plan	Engaged
2 Assess the ethical obligations of researchers.	Ethical
3 Identify and apply appropriate research methods to address complex legal research issues	Empowered
4 Demonstrate advanced learning and understanding in an area of law.	Knowledgeable
5 Critically review, analyse and synthesise knowledge.	Creative and critical thinker
6 Exercise critical thinking and judgment to generate appropriate responses to complex legal issues.	Creative and critical thinker
7 Work independently and make use of feedback to support your professional and/or academic development	Empowered
8 Communicate effectively in writing and orally to a professional and/or academic audience	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

Enrolled in Law Honours Program with 8 courses to complete and permission required for enrolment. Students will normally have a GPA of 5.75 in LAW-coded courses but can apply if they have a GPA of at least 5.5. If students have a GPA of between 5.5 and 5.74, they must apply to the Law Honours Coordinator for entry to the honours program. Students will need to attach a statement of up to 250 words to their application, outlining their ability to successfully complete an honours research project, based upon demonstrated ability in academic writing (or other evidence of high-level research and writing). The Law Honours Coordinator, in consultation with the Head of School, will also consider the capacity of academic staff to supervise the project. Please contact the Course Coordinator

5.2. Co-requisites

Not applicable

5.3. Anti-requisites

Not applicable

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

Not applicable

6. How am I going to be assessed?

6.1. Grading Scale

Limited Grading (PNP)

Pass (PU), Fail (UF). All assessment tasks are required to be passed for successful completion of the course.

6.2. Details of early feedback on progress

Students receive ongoing early feedback from assigned supervisors, with the usual expectation of weekly or bi-weekly meetings for this purpose. Additionally, students are able to receive feedback early on their research plans and progress when they attend the 2-hour seminars on research and research methods in the first three weeks of trimester.

6.3. Assessment tasks

DELIVERY MODE	TASK NO.	ASSESSMENT PRODUCT	INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP	WHAT IS THE DURATION / LENGTH?	WHEN SHOULD I SUBMIT?	WHERE SHOULD I SUBMIT IT?
All	1	Plan	Individual	1500 words	Week 4	Online Assignment Submission with plagiarism check
All	2	Written Piece	Individual	3500-4000 words	Week 11	Online Assignment Submission with plagiarism check
All	3	Oral	Individual	15 minutes	Week 12	In Class

All - Assessment Task 1: Research Plan

GOAL:	<p>The goal of the Research Plan is to enable you to develop project planning skills that will lead to timely completion of your Honours Thesis in second trimester. The Research Plan will plot the aims, methods and milestones of the Honours research paper, presentation and thesis. The Research Plan will include: (i) an overview of current knowledge of the topic and a statement/s about the research questions and aims of the research; (ii) details about the research methodology and, if applicable, ethics consideration and approval; and (iii) realistic milestones indicating content, activities and research to be undertaken in preparation for Assessment Task 2 and 3, as well as LAW441 Honours Thesis.</p> <p>The Research Plan is a dynamic document that you will review and revise with your supervisors throughout your Honours project.</p>					
PRODUCT:	Plan					
FORMAT:	This is an individual assignment, no more than 1500 words.					
CRITERIA:	No.					Learning Outcome assessed
	1	A plan for developing the knowledge required for the question				1
	2	Coherence and suitability of research question/s and aims/s				3 5
	3	Appropriateness of research methodology				3
	4	Evidence of critical thinking and judgement				6
	5	Realistic milestones, provision for making use of feedback				7
GENERIC SKILLS:	Communication, Problem solving, Organisation, Information literacy					

All - Assessment Task 2: Research Paper

GOAL:	The goal of the Research Paper is to present clear and coherent knowledge of an area of law. More specifically, you are expected to present a reasoned and substantiated argument that critically analyses and consolidates legal knowledge and ideas. In doing so you will exhibit the significance and originality of content and argument of your Honours Thesis.		
PRODUCT:	Written Piece		
FORMAT:	This is an individual assignment, in total no more than 4,000 words.		
CRITERIA:	No.		Learning Outcome assessed
	1	Advanced knowledge of an area of the law	4
	2	Understanding of the issues raised	2 3
	3	Thorough legal and associated research	3 4
	4	Critical thinking, judgement and analysis	6
	5	Comprehensive and appropriate use and application of research to law	3 4
	6	Ability to review, analyse and synthesise information in a critical and logical manner	5
	7	Clear and coherent communication of research questions, laws and supporting arguments	1
	8	Originality and significance in content and argument	1 4 6
	9	Style guide compliance including appropriate referencing	8
GENERIC SKILLS:	Communication, Problem solving, Organisation, Information literacy		

All - Assessment Task 3: Research Presentation (oral)

GOAL:	<p>The Research Presentation is how the School assesses your progress and determines whether the research project, as set out in the presentation and Research Paper (Task 2), is clearly defined, coherent and feasible. You will be assessed on your demonstration of a broad understanding of a specific area or law and context, as well as the design and use of research method/s.</p> <p>The Research Presentation will also enable the School and you to assess whether the project is suitably designed for successful completion in LAW441: Law Honours Thesis.</p>																																
PRODUCT:	Oral																																
FORMAT:	15-minute presentation to your Honours student peers and supervisors, based on Assessment Task 2. The presentation will clearly articulate the research question/s and aim/s. You will concisely and clearly describe the research methodology and analysis, and detail the work already completed, and how this will be developed in LAW441.																																
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GENERIC SKILLS:	Communication, Organisation, Applying technologies, 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

There are no required/recommended resources for this course.

8.2. Specific requirements

Not applicable

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

This course will be graded as Pass in a Limited Grade Course (PU) or Fail in a Limited Grade Course (UF) as per clause 5.1.1.3 and 5.1.1.4 of the Grades and Grade Point Average (GPA) - Academic Policy.

In a course eligible to use Limited Grades, all assessment items in that course are marked on a Pass/Fail basis and all assessment tasks are required to be passed for a student to successfully complete the course. Supplementary assessment is not available in courses using Limited Grades.

10.3. Assessment: Submission penalties

You must contact your Course Coordinator and provide the required documentation if you require an extension or alternate assessment.

Refer to the Assessment: Courses and Coursework Programs – Procedures.

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](tel:0754301168) or using the [SafeZone](#) app. For general enquires contact the SafeUniSC team by phone [07 5456 3864](tel:0754563864) 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](tel:0754301226) 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