The University of Sydney
Faculty of Architecture

ARCF 9003

THE PRAGMATICS OF RESEARCH

Seminar Room 557, Wilkinson Building

Coordinator:  Professor Gary Moore

Lecturers:  A variety of guest lecturers will be invited to present on the pragmatics of research of their particular expertise. This will include senior staff from several of the Faculty’s major research disciplines, senior PhD students who have mastered the techniques needed by junior students early in their research candidatures (students will be paid through the GTRF/GTA scheme as part-time lecturers) as well as people from other parts of the University. Professionals may also be invited to come in and talk about their experience alongside academics.

Credit Point Value:  TBD (0, 2 or 6 cp)

Semester Offered:  First (March) Semester. Presented in intensive, block format, some at the beginning, middle and near the end of first semester.

Background:  This unit is intended to help new research students with some of the pragmatics of conducting research. These pragmatics are not taught in undergraduate programs from which our research students hail, nor are they taught in the more abstract Modes of Inquiry and The Nature of Theory courses available to PhD students, yet they persist as being needed by all research students, especially early in candidature. The pragmatics about which new research students are asking are also not taught by the Institute for Teaching and Learning (mostly staff oriented) nor by the Learning Assistance Centre (the needs expressed by our research students are more specific than what is offered by the LAC). While some of these pragmatics are introduced by some supervisors, or partially in some discipline groups, many current students report they are not assisted in these pragmatics, except occasionally by asking senior students. There is, therefore, to be a genuine need for a Faculty-wide intensive block course on some of the pragmatics of research to get students started and oriented to the research endeavour.

Objectives:  This unit would be designed to address many of the fundamental tools and processes students require to complete a research degree in any of the five research disciplines in the Faculty as well as helping students to plan for their future careers. This course will be designed to accelerate the process of acquiring basic skills needed to complete the process of research. It will cover things like planning the research task, critical reading, writing up research and writing papers, research grant proposals, CV’s, electronic searching, relevant software and data analysis programs, ethics and intellectual property. It will also encourage students to begin to think of their future careers and incorporate preliminary planning for this in their early years as a research student.

As one person said, this course should be is about saying, “We [the Faculty] know how tough this process is and we will do what we can to support you in your efforts to complete it and to help you prepare for your career after it”.

Comments from Students:  The following are some comments from PhD and MPhil research students about the need for this unit of study:

“I have been struggling with SPSS this past few weeks and finally have made some progress in achieving a detailed understanding the difference between various tests and assumptions, the implications for this in formulating and testing hypothesis, and the research basis for this. I mention this by way of example that I think the type of unit outlined would be helpful, and yes, also to have a greater understanding of ethics (and ethical committee procedures).” A current PT PhD student.

“I reckon it would be a good idea; I'd certainly turn up to it.” A current PT PhD student.

“I think that this course is useful and I'd like to take it if it is offered. Some other things relating to pragmatics of research that I’d love to know include: How to sort materials collected during fieldwork? And where to find research funding (some successful examples)?” A new international PT PhD student.

“I think that such a course would be valuable, however its value would arise within the structuring of the content. As I am in the final 12 months of my thesis, I would appreciate being able to choose to attend the relevant seminar, as I am sure you can understand that time is important at this stage. I would not appreciate a compulsory attendance of the course.” A current FT PhD student.

“I certainly think a course covering the ground noted would be useful, particularly if as a continuing student you could drop in and out of the sessions as needed. I might suggest that the skill of writing a paper is different from the skill of presenting one ... so maybe a session giving some pointers on how to give a lively and effective presentation would be helpful. I am hoping to get some new inputs from the HERDSA conference; they seem to put emphasis on interactive presentations, should be interesting.” A current PT PhD student.

“New students would find useful tutoring in such matters, but I'm not sure if it should be for credit ... but help on housekeeping matters is always welcome.” A current FT PhD student about to submit the thesis.

I am “very enthusiastic at the prospect of such as subject being introduced and that it should be compulsory for all research students.” A FT PhD student about to submit the thesis.

**Applicable Programs:** It is proposed that this course be required as part of the probationary requirements for all new PhD, MPhil and Hons students in the Faculty, to be taken the first time offered after enrolment. Available to graduate honours coursework students as an elective and to continuing research students to attend as needed. Others including visiting research students and visiting scholars from other universities by permission of the professor in charge.

**Precedents in Other Faculties:** Other faculties within the University also offer similar graduate units of study as part of their PhD programs. The new Australian Graduate School of Management, as part of their PhD program, offer a graduate unit of study on Intellectual Foundations (IP).

The Faculty of Engineering offers a 2 cp unit of study called “Philosophy of Scientific Research,” that is mandatory for all PhD and masters research students. The unit, while including segments on research methods, introductions to hypotheses, theories and experiments, spends more time on general topics like “what makes for a great researcher” and “learning from distinguished researchers – personal reflections on personal experience.” It also includes a number of segments on the pragmatics of research, such as “tools for research information retrieving,” “selective and effective ways of reading technical papers,” “efficient management of research and global networking,” “intellectual property – who won what?” “research linkage with industry,” “commercialisation of research outcomes,” “scientific writing and communicating research results” and “issues and policies on publications.” It is
coordinated by an academic member of staff and includes segments by the Dean, Chair of the
Academic Board and other senior professors.

Readings: As required in preparation for a particular module.

Draft Content / Possible Lecturer:

The following draft content has been requested entirely by research students, and subsequently
organised into possible modules – very tentative possible lecturers are indicated alongside (but in many
cases not yet contacted):

• A guide to **planning research** (ie, the task across the three plus years ahead) – Professor John
  Gero, Associate Dean (Research) or Professor Gary Moore, Dean

• **Databases and electronic searching** including web-based search engines – Jennifer Gamble,
  PhD candidate

• Advanced features of major **software programs** like Word, Endnote, PhotoShop and
  Illustrator including managing data, references and large documents, and working with images
  in documents – Jennifer Gamble, PhD candidate

• **Ethics** requirements and procedures, including plagiarism – someone from the University
  Ethics Committee + A/Professor Peter Phibbs or Professor Gary Moore, Dean

• **Intellectual property (IP)** rights, management and commercialisation – Malcolm Donnell,
  Commercialisation Manager & Licensing, Business Liaison Office

• Introduction to the use of **SPSS** statistical programs – Rohan Lulham, PhD candidate

• Introduction to the use of **qualitative data analysis programs** – Katina Dimoulias, PhD
  candidate

• How to write **research grant proposals** – Professor John Gero, Associate Dean (Research)

• How to make **linkage contacts** with and involve industries and the professions in ARC-
  linkage research grant proposals – Ms Merrilee Robb, Director of Research Development

• How to summarise research, write **papers, reports and theses**, and see them published –
  Professor Gary Moore, Dean

• How to write **CVs and business plans** – Ms Zena O’Connor, PhD Candidate

• **Professional development considerations** – options, avenues, preparatory steps, ie, those
  which should/could be completed during your time as a student – with reports from the field, a
  representatives from a range of professional view points – who could say how this step and
  stage could benefit the students’ career choice and what preparatory steps students should plan
  to complete during this time as a student – professionals as appropriate