SWM620 Supervised Case Study Project – Guidelines for students

This note is to advise Sir Walter Murdoch School students of the details surrounding supervision and assessment for SWM620 Supervised Case Study Project.

Background: The Supervised Case Study is one of three options that students have for completing the ‘capstone experience’ of the SWMS masters degrees, which allows students to apply their learning to a practical issue. As such, the unit enables students to demonstrate their command of their chosen subject and their ability to integrate basic theory, method and data in the analysis of a contemporary policy issue. The unit is worth 3 points and can be completed during Semester 1, Semester 2 and the Winter term. It has two versions.

1. Desk Research Case Study (the standard option)
2. Work Integrated Learning (WIL) Case Study (by special arrangement only)

Details: The desk research case study enables students to analyse in depth an issue of policy significance using relevant conceptual tools, professional skills, and theoretical perspectives. The case study (up to 5,000 words) can focus upon either governmental or non-governmental issues, at international, national, state or local level. It is important that students demonstrate evaluative, analytical and critical skills as part of this study.

For the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) Case Study, students can link their case study to privately arranged national or international internships and delegations, with the approval of WIL Coordinator Dr David Rowbottom (D.Rowbottom@murdoch.edu.au).

Practicalities: Students intending to enrol in SWM620 should discuss their proposed subject with their Academic Chair and potential supervisors: http://www.murdoch.edu.au/Sirwalterschool/Academic-profiles/. Once agreed, they should inform the School Dean, Professor Reilly (Ben.Reilly@murdoch.edu.au).

Format: Students may wish to utilise the following format:

Task 1: identify a policy area of choice: prepare a literature review that covers current research in the area (1000 words).

Task 2: policy analysis: analyse the policy in line with current research identifying tensions in terms of problem definition, policy design and implementation (3000 words).

Task 3: integrate the analysis and literature review to highlight how the analysis contributes to the existing policy and scholarly literature on the subject. An introduction stating the issue being examined and conclusion presenting the main findings should be part of this integration (1000 words).
Supervision: The student's academic supervisor’s responsibilities are to guide the student and assess the project. This will usually involve some one-on-one supervision – regular meetings for most students; for those who work fulltime it is likely to be more email and phone discussions with meetings as needed. The assessment will reflect how successfully the student has achieved the steps outlined above, in light of the reasonable expectations of what can be achieved in a 3-unit period of independent study.

Additional details for WIL Case Study Option

If a student identifies an internship or delegation opportunity that is not suitable for the 6-point SWM 619 Research Internship Capstone unit, then it may be possible to utilise this experience within SWM 620 via the Workplace Integrated Learning (WIL) Option.

Dr David Rowbottom briefs the student prior to departure and helps them prepare for their WIL experience. The student also completes an online WIL module provided by the University and provides the supervisor with evidence of this before departure.

The student keeps a journal during the WIL experience. At its completion, this journal should be at least 1000 words long and detail daily tasks and reflections.

The student enrolls in SWM620 for the period including the WIL experience or the next available academic period.

During this period, the student and their supervisor arrange for the student to make a presentation worth 30% of the unit. Ideally this should occur soon after the student’s return from the WIL experience. The student presents for 20 minutes plus questions, and bring the diary to the presentation, leaving it with the supervisor as evidence of work completed towards the presentation. The presentation covers the student’s experiences within the organisation and his/her reflections on the institution and its role. The presentation is assessed on structure, content, critical thinking and delivery, with the diary as evidence of thought-gathering and reflection.

On the final day of the Semester / Study period, the student submits to the supervisor a 4000-word Case Study Report worth 70%, following the guidelines above. In addition, the report should:

- Profile the WIL organisation.
- Briefly justify the decision to pursue this particular experience.
- Describe the tasks performed for the organisation and their aims.
- Discuss any problems encountered and their solutions.

This report will be assessed on:

- Structure and presentation of Report.
- Linkage of WIL to discipline / learning from degree.
- Engagement with appropriate academic literature.
- Depth of insight and critical thought.