

PHCM9781

Evidence Informed Decision Making

Semester 2, 2011

Contributor/s

Author

Professor Mary-Louise McLaws

School of Public Health and Community Medicine

Faculty of Medicine

University of New South Wales

UNSW Sydney NSW 2052

Lois Meyer as course designer assisted with the development of this new course in the Master of Health Management

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Welcome

Welcome to *Evidence Informed Decision Making* a core course in the Master of Health Management.

Imagine how disconcerting it is to read about the rate of heart disease in Australia. You read a study that has used recalled dietary intake from a selection of people from five other nationals which were compared with the average diet in Australia. The authors found the following:

1. The Japanese eat very little fat and suffer fewer heart attacks than Australians.
2. The Mexicans eat a lot of fat and suffer fewer heart attacks than Australians.
3. The Chinese drink very little red wine and suffer fewer heart attacks than Australians.
4. The Italians drink a lot of red wine and suffer fewer heart attacks than Australians.
5. The Germans drink a lot of beers and eat lots of sausages and fats and suffer fewer heart attacks than Australians.

Australians drink beer, drink wine and eat fat so can one conclude then that the contents of these diets are not the causal factors – you can eat and drink what you like?

What causal factor is missing from these five nations? Is speaking English what kills you!

Well hopefully not! In this course you will learn about sources of information and how to critically appraise the findings from the literature and data sources that you may use to inform your management or clinical decision making.

To develop your critical appraisal skills you will be introduced to the fundamental epidemiologic principles of research - the common study designs used in research, the appropriate design for the research or management question, and all the factors that can adversely impact on study findings, such as the choice of study population which have the potential for biasing results. You will also learn to interpret and present statistical results and how qualitative data can be used to suggest an association and how qualitative data can be used to support quantitative evidence-based findings. What you won't learn in this course will be all the other factors that influence decision making – such as the organisational structure, human behaviour, politics of health and the politics of work, and financial management. Skills to deal with these influential factors will be gained from your other courses! But during the last module we will philosophise about them in light of what you have learnt.

Course staff

Course convenor

Professor Mary-Louise McLaws is a clinical epidemiologist with a focus on infection control surveillance, patient safety and healthcare worker behaviour. In 1998 she developed the first standardised surveillance system for hospital infection as a pilot for the NSW DoH for which she won the *1999 Baxter-Australian Healthcare Association Healthcare Innovation Award - for Standardised Surveillance of Hospital Infection in Australia*. Her research has taken place in Australia, Iran, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, China and Vietnam. Her recent short term missions as a WHO advisor include the Chinese Ministry of Health and the Malaysian Ministry of Health. Missions include advising on the development of an accreditation system for the surveillance of infection control and associated patient safety practices in China and a review and development of a national patient safety surveillance system in Malaysia. Mary-Louise is currently the Epidemiology Advisor to the World Health Organization First Patient Safety Challenge – Clean Care is Safer Care. She holds a position as honorary epidemiologist at Prince of Wales, Concord and Centro Hospitalar Conde De Sao Januario (Macau) hospitals.

Email: m.mclaws@unsw.edu.au

Back-up Convenor

Professor Rohan Jayasuriya completed his MD in Sri Lanka and MPH in the USA and has vast experience in Public Health as he became aware of the significant inequity in health. Professor Jayasuriya has worked in Papua New Guinea and many projects funded through the World Bank, WHO, UNICEF and USAID and teaches Program Evaluation.

Tel: +61 (2) 9385-2278

Email: r.jayasuriya@unsw.edu.au

Please note: *The Back-up Convenor is available for emergencies should your Course Convenor, Prof Mary-Louise McLaws for some unforeseen reason not be available.*

Please make contacted with Prof Jayasuriya regarding PHCM9781 EIDM only in the event that he should have to replace Professor McLaws

Course tutors

Dr Alex Voukelatos is an experienced epidemiologist and is currently the Injury Program Manager at Sydney South West Area Health Promotion. Alex is trained in both science and mental health and holds a Masters degree in Health Promotion and a PhD in Injury Epidemiology. Alex is an experienced tutor in epidemiology and population health.

Email: alexander.voukelatos@hotmail.com

Course information

This course will introduce you to methods and applications for evidence based practice in undertaking health management decisions. But what do we mean by evidence based practice and how is it understood and explored in this course?

The following provides a brief introduction to the concept of Evidence Based Practice and how we will be applying this to decision making in health service contexts.

It is important that you read through and familiarise yourself with this material as part of commencing this course.

Definition of Evidence-Based Practice (for Decision Making)

Evidence-based practice (for decision making) is referred to as “best evidence” to emphasises that the quality of evidence that is the primary goal and that the “best” information is to be sought on the research/clinical/healthcare-related management topic, as opposed to the “most” information available.

Why do you need to use this approach?

Evidence-Based Practice for Decision Making (EBDM) provides assurance that:

- Decision making has been based on scientific evidence and effective practices not personal preference.
- The retrieval evidence is up-to-date and reliable about both the for-and-against for a particular research/clinical or healthcare-related management question.
- Evidence is neither *fashionable* nor *politically* acceptable and you have utilized your efforts reviewing the best scientific information available.

You should use this approach when needing to clearly demonstrate the evidence and value of a change within your health service context. For example:

- Evaluating a change in clinical practice - you will need strong scientific evidence that favours change.
- Aiming to change management practice – you will need strong economic or other beneficial evidence to favour organisational change

- Proving your health program or intervention is effective and provides cost benefits - you will need to demonstrate scientifically that you have the evidence of the program or intervention's effectiveness
- Applying for funding - you will need to be able to support your application through appropriate use of supporting literature and present the evidence for your approach.

Definition of Evidence-Based Decision Making

The definition of evidence-based public health is:

The development, implementation, and evaluation of effective programs and policies in public health through application of principles of scientific reasoning, including systematic uses of data and information systems, and appropriate use of behavioral science theory and program planning models. (Brownson, Ross C., Elizabeth A. Baker, Terry L. Leet, and Kathleen N. Gillespie, Editors. *Evidence-Based Public Health*.

New York: Oxford University Press, 2003)

If we were to modify this for health services we could define evidence-based decision making as *The development, implementation, and evaluation of effective clinical interventions, health services programs and management of health services and related policies through an application of the principles of epidemiologic and scientific reasoning to perform and review a systematic (repeatable) search and evaluation of data/information systems, behavioural, cultural and organisational theory and program planning models for evidence.*

So in this course we will examine the 'principles of epidemiologic and scientific reasoning' that can be applied to health management decisions and how best we can draw on these principles to help determine and communicate the value of those decisions to our stakeholders. To start, we will consider what types of decisions are required by health managers and then focus on when and how we need to apply an evidence based approach. We will also consider what constitutes evidence and what types of evidence and research methods are appropriate to meet particular types of research problems in managing health services. In particular we will consider how to access relevant sources of data, critically evaluate their usefulness for undertaking work-based decisions and identify an appropriate methodology to inform specific health management issues relevant to health management workplace contexts.

So in brief, in this course you will learn to:

- Develop appropriate search strategies
- Use search methods (Boolean logic, Subject/Mesh searching, combining, limiting, filters, PICO model)
- Select a databases as sources of evidence

- Critically appraise published literature for evidence
- Appreciate the limitations of available resources (databases) and the literature
- Understand and determine what form of evidence you need to make different decisions
- Categorise a research question (are you asking a “Does X cause Y?” or “How much X or Y do we have?”)
- Identify the limitations of research designs and the appropriate choice for the level of evidence required to make a decision
- Present data and communicate your findings for enhancing decision making.

Units of credit

This course is a core course of the Master of Health Management Program, comprising 6 units of credit towards the total 48 units of credit, required for completion of the study program.

Course aim



This course aims to introduce you to evidence-based decision making by developing your search and critical appraisal skills of relevant research to inform your decision making in health management.

Course outcomes

By the end of this course you should be able to:

- Discuss the meaning of knowledge and evidence and how this relates to one’s own decision making
- Identify different types of decisions managers undertake and the role of evidence within these
- Determine the category of a question for supporting a health management issue requiring an evidence informed decision
- Navigate various databases for which data can be gleaned and search for relevant scientific publications to support a research question
- Identify an appropriate study design for a question and the limitations of each study design and the quality of evidence it provides
- Explain the appropriate use and interpretation of descriptive and inferential statistics and the principles of reliability and predictive validity

- Illustrate and report statistical results in a format that helps inform evidence based decision making
- Critically appraise a scientific publication for its strengths and weaknesses and its relevance to the health management research question
- Identify the possible impact of all other factors that are to be taken into consideration when seeking to implement evidence into health management practice

Table 1, below, outlines how each of the learning outcomes fits within the course and provides a brief description of the content, with the purpose and skills to be achieved from each of the six modules.

Module	Learning Outcomes	Brief Outline of Content
<p><i>Module 1: Decision Making</i></p> <p>1.1 What kinds of decisions do managers need to make?</p> <p>1.2 For these decisions - what function should your research /management question serve you?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊕ Discuss the meaning of knowledge and evidence and how this relates to one's own decision making ⊕ Identify different types of decisions managers take and the role of evidence within these ⊕ Determine the category of a question for researching a health management issue requiring an evidence informed decision 	<p>1.1 The areas -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decisions on-the-fly - Decisions that alter clinical practice - Decisions that alter human resources <p>1.2 What is the aim of the research/management question?</p>
<p><i>Module 2: Searching for Evidence</i></p> <p>2.1 What are relevant databases?</p> <p>2.2 How do you do searches on the data bases?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊕ Navigate various databases available from which data can be gleaned and search for relevant scientific publications to support the research question. 	<p>2.1 Data base sources</p> <p>Explanation and demonstration by Health Informatics academic (sources of data) followed by Librarian (e.g. PubMed tools & how to use them).</p>
<p><i>Module 3: Designs for research, clinical and health service management questions</i></p> <p>3.1 What is an appropriate study design?</p> <p>3.2 What are the limitations?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊕ Identify an appropriate study design for a question and the limitations of each study design and the quality of evidence it provides 	<p>3.1 Is the question: "Does X cause Y?" or is it "How much of X &/or Y?"</p> <p>3.2 Appropriate and inappropriate designs according to the question.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - History of epidemiologic design - Designs - Biases

Table 1: Module Content and Learning Outcomes		
Module	Learning Outcomes	Brief Outline of Content
<p><i>Module 4: Data presentation</i></p> <p>4.1 What are the appropriate use and interpretation of inferential and descriptive statistics?</p> <p>4.2 What do we mean by reliability and predictive validity and how can these be used to critically evaluate research?</p> <p>4.3 What are useful ways of communicating results to inform decision making?</p>	<p>⊕ Explain the appropriate use and interpretation of descriptive and inferential statistics and the principles of reliability and predictive validity</p> <p>⊕ Illustrate and report statistical results in a format that helps inform evidence based decision making</p>	<p>4.1 Overview:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distribution of data, - Measurements – descriptive & inferential - Power <p>4.2 Displaying findings – quant & qual results</p> <p>4.3 Reliability - Sensitivity/Specificity, Predictiveness</p>
<p><i>Module 5: Critical Appraisal</i></p> <p>5.1 What do we need to consider to critically appraise a scientific publication?</p> <p>5.2 How can you evaluate the overall weight of evidence for a health management issue</p>	<p>⊕ Critically appraise publications for their strengths and weaknesses and their relevance to the health management research question</p>	<p>5.1 Bringing it all together - using epidemiologic principles to critically appraise evidence</p> <p>5.2 Are your management decisions really made on high quality performance/ patient safety indicator data?</p>
<p><i>Module 6: Other considerations?</i></p> <p>6.1 What other factors and considerations do you need to make a decision?</p> <p>6.2 How might these factors influence the way you present and communicate your evidence?</p> <p>6.3 On reflection what are the challenges of seeking to implement an evidence informed approach to decision making in health management?</p>	<p>⊕ Identify the possible impact of all other factors that are to be taken into consideration when attempting to implement evidence into practice.</p>	<p>6.1 Some other considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Human Behaviour - Management of Organisations - Healthcare Economics/ Financial Management <p>6.2 When should you make a decision to change the way you are doing things?</p> <p>6.3 The dead end: What should you do about change of practice/policy when you find no evidence or poor evidence?</p> <p>6.4 The long road ahead: What do you do when the evidence is there but the cost implications for change are great?</p> <p>6.5 The ethics of evidence based decision making and practice.</p>

Graduate attributes

Evidence Informed Decision Making will support you in developing the following important graduate attributes for successfully completing the Master of Health Management.

(For an outline of all the graduate attributes that are fostered in the Master of Health Management, please go to the School website).

In this course you will have the following knowledge and skills fostered:

- 1. Utilise information for decision making in health service delivery**
 - Make decisions that are informed by evidence and data
 - Manage and use health information to support healthcare and health service related decisions
- 2. Manage risk and quality in health service delivery**
 - Apply quality frameworks to ensure effective health service delivery
 - Manage risks drawing on relevant theory and evidence informed practice
 - Evaluate health service programs, projects and policies

In this course you will have the following interactional abilities fostered:

- 1. Communicate across a range of health service contexts**
 - Network and communicate with staff
 - Network and communicate with peers and health service colleagues
 - Network and communicate with communities
- 2. Work within and contribute to local, national and international communities**
 - Locate own health management practice within the dynamics of local and global communities and health service contexts
 - Demonstrate cultural competence
 - Advocate and contribute to policy reform within and beyond own area of managerial responsibility
- 3. Enhance the capacity for collaborative and multidisciplinary teamwork**
 - Lead and participate in collaborative teamwork
 - Demonstrate multidisciplinary ways of working

In this course you will have the following personal attributes fostered:

- 1. Apply analytical and critical thinking for creative problem solving**
 - Evaluate evidence and assumptions
 - Use evidence and sound judgement to inform practice
 - Apply strategic thinking to problem solving and decision-making

2. Commit to ethical practice and social responsibility

- Apply legal and ethical frameworks
- Promote social justice to address health inequalities
- Act with personal integrity and abide by professional ethics

3. Engage in lifelong learning and reflective practice

- Engage in scholarly enquiry
- Critically reflect on own practice, recognising personal limits and assumptions
- Actively promote own learning, resilience and professional capacity

Learning and teaching rationale

Overview

The course will introduce the concepts required to achieve the course aim and learning outcomes. The course has been structured for adult learning where you are supported during your learning to gain the knowledge and skills relevant to epidemiology and scientific reasoning for evidence informed decision making. During the semester you will be expected to undertake a range of learning activities that will contribute to your capacity to make evidence informed decisions in a health management context.

Learning strategies

The course comprises **the compulsory on-campus workshop for all students**. At the workshop you will be working in groups as an introduction to each module that you will then follow-up away from campus with independent study of the course notes and readings. After completing the lecture notes and readings you will be required to undertake set exercises that provide opportunity to develop your skills in evidence informed decision making. These exercises are part of your formal assessment and you will need to satisfactorily complete these and submit at specified dates for meeting the course requirements.

Compulsory Residential School

All students (both internal and external) must attend the residential school in July.

The residential school is of limited time and it will be impossible to cover every aspect of the six modules. The workshop will provide opportunity to meet your fellow students, your lecturer and begin coming to grips with the key issues of evidence informed decision making in a range of health management contexts. At the workshop you will be expected to contribute to and participate in the workshop activities and discussions and this will contribute to your assessment result.

Internal Students

All internal students are required to attend the residential workshop as well as weekly lectures. At the residential workshop you will be introduced to core concepts and skills in undertaking research and applying an evidence based approach to health management decision making. In the weekly lectures you will be provided with additional lecture material and you will be expected to attend having undertaken the module assessment exercises set out in your course notes.

At the weekly classes you will engage in class discussion of the module assessment exercises as well as be introduced to further research methods and skills for evidence informed decision making. Discussions will be similar in structure to the on-line study groups for external students. You will be able to use *UNSW Blackboard* to access course materials and library resources, however, you are not required to participate in the on-line discussions.

Online learning component



The purpose of the online component of this course is to provide you with access to your course notes and readings as well as a range of additional resources.

External Students

All external students are required to attend the residential workshop. At the residential workshop you will be introduced to core concepts and skills in undertaking research and applying an evidence based approach to health management decision making.

All external students will be organised into a study group (either A or B) and assigned an online tutor. Your online tutor can assist you in answering any problems you may be having with the course and the specified assessment

tasks. You will be able to access your group workspace by clicking **Group Work** in the course menu.

Using UNSW Blackboard all external students will have opportunity to:

- Access the course notes, readings and weekly lectures presented in PowerPoint.
- Discuss any difficulties/questions you would like answered from your online group tutor as well as content in the weekly lectures.
- Submit the assessment tasks via Blackboard and receive feedback on your progress.

Key features of UNSW Blackboard:

- **Assessment submission. (Mandatory)** On or before the due date you will submit your due assessment tasks using the Task specific icon. There are 5 assessment tasks that you are required to submit via UNSW Blackboard. Shortly after you have submitted the task we will post up model answers and feedback on the assessment task. You should use this to guide your learning and consider how you are going with the course. You will be informed a little later about the grade you have achieved for the task.
- **Study group discussions. This is voluntary but highly recommended.** As an external student we wish to ensure you are supported in your learning. You will be divided into two study tutorial groups for discussing the course notes and any problems you may be having in understanding key concepts and techniques and your progress with the assessments.
- We have also included a **Getting to Know You** (*voluntary*) facility for you to chat socially amongst yourselves.

You are not required, for purposes of assessment, to contribute to the online discussions in your study group. However, I believe you will find that on-line participation will significantly enhance your learning experience.

Guidance for using UNSW Blackboard

The School runs a Blackboard tutorial during residential week at the start of each semester. If you are unable to attend this tutorial, guidance for using UNSW Blackboard, including some basic tips, can be found at:
<http://support.telt.unsw.edu.au/blackboard>

If you are still experiencing difficulties with UNSW Blackboard, please contact the UNSW IT Service Desk for assistance.

Text Books

This course covers three areas that have yet to be written about in a single text: (1) introduction to the epidemiological study designs, (2) critical appraisal of published medical papers and (3) the management decisions you will make that are not covered in epidemiology or critical appraisal.

The following two books cover the first two points and are **highly recommended but not mandatory**:

1. Evidence Based Health Care and Public Health by Gray, 3rd Edition 2008.
2. Epidemiology Biostatistics and Preventive Med by Jekel et al, 3rd Edition 2007.

Assignments

Evidence Informed Assessment Tasks

You are required to complete 5 assessment tasks throughout the semester as well as attend the residential workshop. The assessment schedule with the tasks to be completed, the date for submission and the percentage weighting for the specific assessment task are set out in the Assessment Table 1 below. *These written assessments are expected to be your own individual work even if you worked up the assignment in a group or discussed it in your tutorial group. It is essential that you abide by academic standards and that your assignment is not the result of collusion or that of plagiarism. Please see UNSW definition of collusion and plagiarism in the course notes*

The assessment tasks in brief consist of the following components:

Residential Participation	=	Required
Task 1: Searching for Evidence	=	10%
Task 2: Research Questions and Study Design	=	15%
Task 3: Data Analysis and Presentation	=	15%
Task 4 : Data Analysis and Presentation	=	15%
Task 5: Critical Appraisal and Reflection	=	45%
<i>Total Assessment Tasks</i>	=	<i>100%</i>

Internal students will hand in their assignments in class by the due date to their lecturer
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External students will submit their assessment tasks via UNSW Blackboard and will receive their grade via UNSW Blackboard.

It is important that you submit each of the tasks by the due date set out in the schedule below. We will endeavour to provide feedback and your grade within a short space of time so that you may use that to guide your progress and support your understanding with your next assessment task.

Assessment Table 1: Required Assessment Tasks Schedule

<i>Task</i>	<i>Details of the Assessment Task</i>	<i>Due Date and % Weighting</i>
Residential Participation	Participate in residential activities is an expectation of all Masters by coursework students. Completion of questions in Module 1 on Health Management Decision Making should be undertaken during the workshop.	Date: 13 July 9am-4pm (Residential) Required Attendance
Task 1: Searching for Evidence	Using the following health management question perform a search of data bases for evidence on the following question. Q. What is the evidence for Health Care Workers being vaccinated against seasonal flu? a. Provide evidence of your search: listing search engines used, list of search words, what other method did you use to locate papers/reports? b. Write a brief overview of results focusing on 5- papers only as your key research papers for addressing the question – list evidence of your search (list each paper/report using Vancouver style); the countries of origin of the research; why you narrowed your results to these 5- papers? c. Comment briefly on what you have learnt from this activity on effective ways to undertake a search to address a health management related issue.	August 2nd 10%

Task	Details of the Assessment Task	Due Date and % Weighting
Task 2: Study Design and Research Questions	<p>Complete Activity 3.2 in your course notes and submit.</p> <p>Read the THREE papers or sections of papers provided for this task and answer the questions for EACH paper:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> What was the aim of the study causal (does X cause Y) or magnitude (prevalence)? Where in the paper did you find this information? What study design was used? Where in the paper did you find this information? List the study factor(s) and the outcome factor(s). What study design would have given the highest possible evidence for the aim of the study? What study design would have given the highest quality of evidence but would have been feasible and ethical? 	<p>August 16th</p> <p>15%</p>
Task 3: Module 4.1	Complete the 11 assessment exercises in Module 4.1 of your course notes and submit.	<p>August 30th</p> <p>15 %</p>
Task 4: Module 4.2	Complete the three assessment exercises in Module 4.2 of your course notes and submit.	<p>Sept. 20th</p> <p>15%</p>
Task 5: Critical Appraisal, Data Presentation and Reflection	<p>Part A: Critical Appraisal</p> <p>Before commencing this Task please undertake “Revision Activity 5.1” to prepare for the Task – the answers to the revision Activity 5.1 are at the end of Module 5.</p> <p>Using the two papers provided undertake a critical appraisal using the Critical Appraisal Performa in your course notes (Refer to Activity 5.1 in Module 5 for completing Part A of this final assessment).</p> <p>Part B: Data Presentation</p> <p>Scenario: Reporting on findings to stakeholders</p> <p>You will be applying the knowledge of the infection prevention tool from your critical appraisal in Part B.</p> <p>You have been assigned a project in your area health service to look at ways of reducing the risk of</p>	<p>October 22nd</p> <p>Part A: 25%</p> <p>Part B: 10%</p>

Task	Details of the Assessment Task	Due Date and % Weighting
	<p>transmission of pandemic influenza in healthcare workers in your hospital. The media and colleagues have shown a lot of interest in the two articles provided. You need to report back to a small steering group on the evidence presented in these articles. Your summary presentation will help the steering group and senior health service managers in making decisions on prevention strategies for your clinical staff.</p> <p>You are asked to provide a summary of what your area should do to follow the studies' recommendations and the reasons behind it. Write a one page summary outlining:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would you recommend change in practice to reflect the findings from the two studies? • What are the reasons for this decision? • Using the data presented in the studies, summarise it in two figures (tables and/or graphs) to support your decision. <p>Part C: Reflection: Implementing Evidence Informed Decision Making in Health Management</p> <p>Review the 10 step process for this course and consider your own practice for being a health manager who can draw on an evidence informed approach. Write a short critical reflection of approximately 300 - 400 words identifying:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you see as the benefits and possible challenges of applying an evidence-informed approach to health management? • What might be an issue that you could now focus on using the evidence informed approach? • What strategies might you need to put in place to implement the approach for this issue? (for example thinking of your own skills? The possible constraints or barriers in your own workplace context?). 	<p>Part C: 10%</p> <p>Total Task 5 = 45%</p>
TOTAL		100%

Grading and marking

Grades to be used are represented by the following symbols (and corresponding range of marks): **HD** (85%-100%), **DN** (75%-84%), **CR** (65%-74%), **PS** (50%-64%), **FL** (<50%)

HD This grade represents a High Distinction. This level of performance involves all of the characteristics of a DN performance but also a level of excellence that makes it outstanding. The level of originality, creativity, or depth of thought and understanding shown would be higher than normally expected for postgraduate students. It demonstrates a higher order of critical thinking and reflection than that demonstrated at the level of DN.

DN This grade represents a Distinction. This level of performance involves all of the characteristics of a CR performance but also a level of originality, creativity, or depth of thought and understanding. The work might involve a high level of abstract thinking, or the ability to take an idea or an application into a new context, understand the demands of that context and make modifications. Specific assessment criteria relevant to this assignment are adequately addressed and ALL aspects well done. (This distinguishes it from a CR in which one or two aspects may be incomplete or otherwise not well done.)

CR This grade represents a Credit. The assignment or project comes together to make a broadly coherent whole. The response answers the question, makes a good argument, draws on appropriate evidence, and shows some selectivity and judgment in deciding what is important and what is not. Communication is clear and effective. Specific assessment criteria relevant to this assignment are adequately addressed. (One or two aspects may not be well done but the overall result is still MORE THAN satisfactory).

PS This grade represents a pass. The student has demonstrated understanding of the basic aspects of the topic, but they may be minimally integrated and fail to make a convincing coherent statement or argument. Written work may be descriptive rather than analytical. It may rely too much on retelling other sources such as texts and lecture notes, with little evidence that the student is capable of transforming these into a personal understanding. Significant elements of the assignment are treated superficially. Assessment criteria relevant to the assignment are sufficiently addressed to warrant a PS however the overall standard is no more than satisfactory.

FL This grade represents a clear fail. This grade is used when the student has misunderstood the point of the assignment, or failed to address the most important aspects of the topic. In other words a substantial failure, which would need major work before it could be passed.

NOTE: Students are expected to meet UNSW standards of academic writing and in particular must meet standards of referencing described by the Learning Centre. Failure to reference correctly may limit marks to PS or below. Plagiarism or collusion will result in an automatic FL.

Submitting your assignments

1. **All assignments** must have a cover sheet attached.
Cover sheets can be downloaded from the school website:
<http://www.sphcm.med.unsw.edu.au/sphcmweb.nsf/page/AdminForms>
Students submitting assignments in UNSW Blackboard should use the cover sheet available in UNSW Blackboard.
2. **Internal Students:**
All internal students must hand in their assessment tasks to your lecturer by the due date.
3. **External Students:**
All external students will submit their assessment tasks via **UNSW Blackboard**. Students must ensure that the electronic assignment coversheet is attached. Student name, course code, date and assignment title should be included in the header or footer on every page, and in the file name. This will be reviewed with tracked comments and send back via UNSW Blackboard.
4. **Please note:** Any assignment submitted electronically may be checked at random for plagiarism using the tool, Turnitin. For more on how to avoid plagiarism, see section on plagiarism.
5. See School website for more information on **guidelines on assessment**, including information on extensions and late assignments:
<http://www.sphcm.med.unsw.edu.au/sphcmweb.nsf/page/assessmentguidelines>

Referencing

It is your responsibility to learn one of the accepted academic methods for acknowledging sources of information (citing references). Guidelines for acknowledging sources of information can be found on the following websites:

Faculty of Medicine

<http://web.med.unsw.edu.au/infoskills/cite.htm>

SPHCM

<http://www.sphcm.med.unsw.edu.au/sphcmweb.nsf/page/AssessmentGuidelines>

The Learning Centre

<http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/olib.html#Referencing>

Academic honesty and plagiarism

At UNSW plagiarism is considered to be a form of academic misconduct and is viewed very seriously. The following notes describe what plagiarism is. You need to ensure you understand what it is so you avoid it in any of your assignments or other work. You will find more information on plagiarism and the consequences of plagiarising in the Student handbook:

<http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/plagiarism/link.html>

What is Plagiarism?

Plagiarism is the presentation of the thoughts or work of another as one's own.* Examples include:

- direct duplication of the thoughts or work of another, including by copying material, ideas or concepts from a book, article, report or other written document (whether published or unpublished), composition, artwork, design, drawing, circuitry, computer program or software, web site, Internet, other electronic resource, or another person's assignment without appropriate acknowledgement;
- paraphrasing another person's work with very minor changes keeping the meaning, form and/or progression of ideas of the original;
- piecing together sections of the work of others into a new whole;
- presenting an assessment item as independent work when it has been produced in whole or part in collusion with other people, for example, another student or a tutor; and
- claiming credit for a proportion a work contributed to a group assessment item that is greater than that actually contributed.†

For the purposes of this policy, submitting an assessment item that has already been submitted for academic credit elsewhere may be considered plagiarism.

Knowingly permitting your work to be copied by another student may also be considered to be plagiarism.

Note that an assessment item produced in oral, not written, form, or involving live presentation, may similarly contain plagiarised material.

The inclusion of the thoughts or work of another with attribution appropriate to the academic discipline does *not* amount to plagiarism.

The Learning Centre website is main repository for resources for staff and students on plagiarism and academic honesty. These resources can be located via: www.lc.unsw.edu.au/plagiarism

The Learning Centre also provides substantial educational written materials, workshops, and tutorials to aid students, for example, in:

- correct referencing practices;
- paraphrasing, summarising, essay writing, and time management;
- appropriate use of, and attribution for, a range of materials including text, images, formulae and concepts.

Individual assistance is available on request from The Learning Centre.

Students are also reminded that careful time management is an important part of study and one of the identified causes of plagiarism is poor time management. Students should allow sufficient time for research, drafting, and the proper referencing of sources in preparing all assessment items.

* Based on that proposed to the University of Newcastle by the St James Ethics Centre. Used with kind permission from the University of Newcastle

† Adapted with kind permission from the University of Melbourne.

Collusion

The School recognises and encourages the need of external students to have contact with each other and where possible collaborate in their studies. However, there have been instances where students have copied each other's material and submitted it as their own. Lecturers, despite their heavy workload, are alert to this practice. It is emphasised that where collusion can be shown, the students involved may be required to rewrite and re-submit their assignments or may be awarded a fail for the assignment or may be failed in the whole course and even be excluded from the University for misconduct. You should not attempt the assignment questions together and submit the same work as someone else. **It is also not acceptable to submit an assignment which has been submitted by a student in a previous year.**

How to adopt a critical approach to your assignments

It is important that you adopt a critical approach to your assignments, to the material that you obtain for assignments, to the required readings, and to other information with which you are presented in this course.

A critical approach does not mean a disparaging or belittling attitude to information. Rather, it means that you do not absorb what you are reading in a passive way and that you do not accept without question what may often seem to be authoritative pronouncements by authors and commentators. It means you think about and evaluate the material which you are reading and, which you are presenting in assignments. It means that you attempt to cast aside your assumptions and biases and, attempt to assess the logic and consistency of the material in light of the supporting evidence. Wide reading on a topic facilitates this process.

Readings and resources

Learning resources for this course consist of the following:

1. A one-day residential school workshop
2. These course notes with readings and required assessment activities
3. An online learning component only for external students to engage in study group discussion and feedback

Continual course improvement

Periodically student evaluative feedback on both courses and teaching is gathered. The UNSW's Course and Teaching Evaluation and Improvement (CATEI) Processes are used along with student focus groups, student forums, and at times additional evaluation and improvement instruments developed in consultation with the Faculty of Medicine's Program Evaluation and Improvement Group. Student feedback is taken seriously, and continual improvements are made to the course based in part on such feedback.

Evaluation activities across the Faculty are strongly linked to improvements and ensuring support for learning and teaching activities for both students and staff.

Additional support to students

IT requirements for UNSW students

Our courses have online components which have been developed and are taught on the assumption that all students meet the UNSW IT Requirements Policy. Viewable online at:

<https://www.it.unsw.edu.au/students/policies/index.html>

UNSW IT Service Desk (UNSW Blackboard support)

The IT Service Desk is your central point of contact for assistance and support with UNSW Blackboard, UniPass, zPass, UniMail, UniWide, zMail and Anti-virus software. Contact them directly for assistance with IT related matters, including UNSW Blackboard:

Website: <http://www.it.unsw.edu.au/index.html>

Tel: +61 (2) 9385 1333

Email: itservicecentre@unsw.edu.au

Location: UNSW Library

UNSW library support

Staff at the library can help you:

- find information resources for your assignments
- access electronic resources & databases
- advise you on library and information services.

Information about UNSW library assistance is available at:

Library Homepage: <http://www.library.unsw.edu.au/>
Postgraduate Services: <http://www.library.unsw.edu.au/servicesfor/PGandH.html>
Tel: 02 9385 2650
Location: UNSW Library, Level 2 Service desk

Library resources

Online training and resources

There are a variety of online tutorials and resources available to Postgraduate students to help equip you with the information skills you will need to get started in your program such as: searching databases (which include videos and screen captures), evaluating different types of resources like peer-reviewed journals and websites, and citing references. These resources are designed to help students learn more about: searching for information to complete assignments and projects, and self-directed learning. It is highly recommended that students complete the **Online Information Skills Tutorial** prior to commencing their studies and assignments. <http://eliseplus.library.unsw.edu.au/>

Subject guides

Use these guides as a quick and easy pathway to locating resources in your subject area. These excellent guides bring together the core web and print resources in one place and provide a one click portal into the online resources.

UNSW Library Subject Guides: <http://subjectguides.library.unsw.edu.au/>

Public Health and Community Medicine Subject Guide:

<http://subjectguides.library.unsw.edu.au/publichealth>

Virtual Library: Public Health

The Virtual Public Health Library brings together public health sites and resources from around the world in a systematic and easily accessible way for all those wishing to be in touch with the most relevant and meaningful public health resources – see <http://vph.sphcm.med.unsw.edu.au/>

Learning Centre

The Learning Centre provides a wide range of workshops and study skill resources to students enrolled in degree programs at the University. Students can access information on: Essay and assignment writing, Exam skills, Reading and writing skills, Referencing and plagiarism, Organisation skills, Oral presentations. See: <http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au>

Administrative matters

All administrative matters are covered comprehensively on the SPHCM Website. Check for details on how to access email, obtain your UniPass etc. at: <http://www.sphcm.med.unsw.edu.au/sphcmweb.nsf/page/StudentResources>

See the school website for information on school assessment guidelines, including extensions and late assignments: <http://www.sphcm.med.unsw.edu.au/SPHCMWeb.nsf/page/AssessmentGuidelines>

If you do not have a handbook you can pick one up from the Postgraduate Coursework Office, Level 2 Samuels Building or download it from the web. <http://www.sphcm.med.unsw.edu.au/SPHCMWeb.nsf/page/Current%20Students>

For any further assistance, you can contact:

Postgraduate Office
School of Public Health and Community Medicine
The University of New South Wales
Level 2, Samuels Building
UNSW Sydney NSW 2052, Australia

T: + 61 (2) 9385 1699 - Graduate Health Management Programs
T: + 61 (2) 9385 2507 - Graduate Public Health Programs
T: + 61 (2) 9385 1928 - Graduate Clinical Education Programs

F: + 61 (2) 9385 1526
E: postgrad-sphcm@unsw.edu.au

Other matters

Occupational Health & Safety: http://www.ohs.unsw.edu.au/ohs_students/index.html

Complaints procedures: <https://my.unsw.edu.au/student/atoz/Complaints.html>

Equity & Diversity: <http://www.studentequity.unsw.edu.au/content/default.cfm?ss=0>

Course schedule

Module	Date	Activity	Assessment Tasks
Module 1: Decision Making	Week 1 18 July – 22 July	Residential Activities including Module 1	Attendance is required at the residential workshop Date: 13 July 9-4pm
Module 2: Searching for Evidence	Week 2 25 July - 29 July	Module 2 Notes and Activities and Tutorial/Discussion	Submit Task 1: Searching for Evidence (10%) Date: 2 August
Module 3: Research Questions and Study Design	Weeks 3 and 4 1 August – 5 August & 8 August – 12 August	Module 3 Notes, Tutorial/Discussion and Activity 3.2	Submit Task 2: Research Questions and Study Design (15%) Date: 16 August
Module 4: Data Analysis and Presentation: Part 1	Weeks 5 & 6 15 August – 19 August & 22 August – 26 August	Module 4 .1 Notes, Tutorial/Discussion Module 4 Part 1 Activities	Submit Task 3: Module 4.1: Activities (15%) Date: 30 August
Module 4: Data Analysis and Presentation: Part 2	Weeks 7 & 8 29 August – 2 Sept & 12 Sept. – 16 Sept.	Module 4 .2 Notes, Tutorial/Discussion Module 4 Part 2 Activities	Submit Task 4: Module 4.2: Activities (15%) Date: 20 September
Session Break: 5 September – 9 September			
Module 5: Critical Appraisal	Week 9 19 Sept. – 23 Sept.	Module 5 Notes Tutorial/Discussion	No task due
Module 5: Critical Appraisal Cont'd	Week 10 26 Sept– 30 Sept.	Module 5 Notes Tutorial/Discussion	No task due
Module 6: Other Considerations & Review	Week 11 and 12 3 Oct. – 7 October & 10 Oct. – 14 October	Modules 5 & 6 Notes Tutorial/Discussion	Submit Task 5 Parts A, B & C: Critical Appraisal, Data Presentation and Reflection 45 % Date: 22 October

Evidence
Informed Decision
Making

Reading



Tang, J-L and Griffiths, S, 2009, Epidemiology, evidence-based medicine, and public health, *Asia-Pacific Journal of Public Health*, 21(3), 244-251.

<http://er.library.unsw.edu.au/er/cgi-bin/eraccess.cgi?url=http://aph.sagepub.com/content/21/3/244.full.pdf+html>