

ADVANCED STUDIES

What is it and why I should be involved

Advanced Studies (AS) is a compulsory research and scholarship stream integrated within the Health Professions and Society (HPS) theme across all four years of the MD program. It requires students to undertake a research project or coursework (aimed at allowing students to finish an additional graduate certificate after completion) from the second semester in Year 2, to the “Capstone” topic in Year 4 when they present their work. The research activities are limited to around 135 hours a year making a total of 405 hours over three years. This is approximately equivalent to the time required for an honours degree, but spread over three years. In 2017, this is the first year this stream is implemented over the full 4 years of the MD program.

Advanced Studies is aimed to provide our medical graduates with a solid understanding of medical research and with practical research skills (or in the case of course work, providing a fast pathway to a graduate certificate in the chosen area) that in the short term would make them highly competitive in an environment where both internship places and the later occurring entry to colleges are no longer guaranteed. In the long term, this stream promotes our students to be comfortable in a role of driving medical research as a medical practitioner or as an educational specialist further fostering our future workforce. It is the view of the School (and the Australian Medical Council) that these are essential skill sets necessary in their future professional roles.

Advanced Studies research projects span across many disciplines broadly related to Medicine and are conducted in collaboration with clinical, academic and research staff within and across all Flinders related sites. The coursework choice provides an opportunity for students, that are primarily interested in medical education or for various reasons feel uncomfortable with undertaking a research project to allow them to expand their knowledge and experience in a selected range of postgraduate coursework topics covering areas such as Public Health, Health Care Management, Clinical Education, Chronic Conditions Management, Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, Biostatistics, and Remote & Indigenous Health. The aim of coursework is to provide a major part towards a graduate certificate in these topics. The proportion of students choosing this pathway is approximately between 35-45% of the student cohort. Based on previous comments, it is important to state that this is not “an easy way out”, but do require similar commitments as the research path.

The Advanced Studies stream started with first year MD students in 2014 and in the current format, the work that the students are undertaking is listed as below:

Year of the MD Course		
Year 1	All students undertake studies in research methods, ethics, epidemiology and statistics	
Year 2	Research	OR Coursework
Year 3	Research	OR Coursework
Year 4	All students undertake the Advanced Studies Capstone	

In an early evaluation of the outcomes of Advanced Studies, approximately 20% of students undertaking research projects either was part of peer reviewed publications (in journals ranging from lower impact journals to high impact journals such as New England Journal of Medicine) or presented their work at national or international meetings. The remaining students presented their work in other forms including reports, locally presented posters or otherwise. Several of these students are being invited to present their work at the “Research Week” in September 2017 organised by Professor Willis Marshall, the Director of Office for Research, Southern Adelaide Local Health Network.

Under the new topic coordinator of Advanced studies (Dr Hakan Muyderman) the learning outcomes for this topic are under review and are likely to slightly change in 2018 with further emphasis on research skills and student's future role as medical practitioners in medical research. Listed below are the LOs currently in place.

On completion of Advanced Studies theme, the student will be able to:

1. Apply extensive knowledge of research design and methods to a scientific, community or clinical context
2. Analyse, interpret, and critically appraise research outcomes and data using conceptual frameworks grounded in relevant fields
3. Extend and advance personal knowledge in a specialised area of biological, clinical, epidemiological, social and/or behavioural sciences that will enhance professional practice and/or build professional capacity
4. Identify and exercise ethical responsibilities in reviewing processes in the conduct of research
5. Self-reflect and improve professional practice
6. Demonstrate a high standard of personal and professional behaviour as part of a collaborative or inter-professional team
7. Demonstrate leadership in a specialised area of health practice
8. Communicate acquired knowledge of expertise to a variety of audiences to relevant community and professional audiences, potentially using new technologies and systems
9. Demonstrate the significance of Advanced Studies work to the community and/or the profession in relevant contexts.

Specifics – integration of Advanced studies into the different years of the MD course.

Year 1

In August, first year students are presented with a range of approved research projects, or in some cases students suggest their own proposal (subject to approval and availability of supervisors) or coursework options. They submit their project preferences from the list of approved projects (projects are updated annually and may be based at the University, Flinders Medical Centre, and other sites within the metropolitan Adelaide or in our rural and remote sites in South Australia and in the Northern Territory). For the coursework option, students select 4.5 units of coursework from a range of approved postgraduate coursework topics to be completed in Year 2.

Year 2

Students pursue their Advanced Studies choice (research or coursework) in second half of Year 2 (July – December). Estimated workload would be approximately 135 hours.

Year 3

Students continue to pursue their Advanced Studies choice in first half of Year 3 (January – August). A research student typically continues with the same research project. A coursework student undertakes a second coursework topic in Year 3.

Year 4

The Advanced Studies Capstone is the final topic students undertake in the Advanced Studies theme of the Flinders MD. All students will be undertaking the topic where they will showcase their research or scholarly work, in addition to the skills and knowledge they have acquired over the four years. This takes place in first half of Year 4 (January – July).

The following pages contain answers to previously raised questions from research supervisors:

Can students switch between research and coursework in Year 2 & Year 3?

The option of switching between research and coursework, i.e.: research in Year 2 and coursework in Year 3 OR coursework in Year 2 and research in Year 3, is reserved for special circumstances. Approval is granted by the AS Topic Coordinator after discussions with the supervisor on a case-by-case basis.

How are students choosing which research project to join?

Details of all the research projects offered by all researchers/ clinicians/ research teams are made available to students in July/ August. This gives students the opportunity to see what is on offer and begin to decide on what projects suit them and possibly contact you about the project before they formally decide on which project to choose.

Students submit their preference application indicating their top three projects in which they have an interest. The application process takes place in September each year. Once the applications have closed, they are processed in three rounds. Student applications are forwarded to the lead supervisor of the project for review, requesting them to make the final decision about which student(s) are to be invited to join their project(s).

Students who have identified their own area of research interest are required to submit a research project proposal in consultation with their chosen research supervisor. The Advanced Studies Topic workgroup reviews all research project proposals to assess the suitability prior to final approval.

Is the decision to invite a student to join the project solely based on the application they have submitted?

Students are encouraged to contact research project supervisors once the details of the research projects are made available to them. It is acceptable to meet the student to share further details about the project; however, it is important to note that **a student should not be accepted into a project until the application process has closed** and all applications received have been reviewed.

When reviewing applications, the lead supervisor may request a meeting or meetings with the applicants to determine their suitability and skills prior to deciding which student(s) to invite to join the project.

All clinical, academic, research and professional staff who submit research projects for Advanced Studies will be provided with detailed information on the student application and timelines.

When do students start their research work?

The student is expected to be part of the research project for the equivalent of 13.5 units, approximately 405 hours over a period of three years. Time allocation for Advanced Studies Research is HY2, Year 2 (July – December 2018) and HY1, Year 3 (January – August 2019) and HY1, Year 4 (January – July). However, students may choose to work on the research project outside of this time subject to supervisor and student availability and agreement.

What kind of tasks can students undertake as part of a research team?

It is important to note that it is unlikely that a student can drive a project totally independent (with a few exceptions). However, as part of a team with a well-defined research question these students have the ability to substantially aid in the progress of the project. Likewise, having several students each doing part of a study is a good solution. There are also no restrictions on that a student does half of the project as a literature review and the other half practically participating in a project. There are many tasks that may be appropriate for students to undertake as part of a research team, for example:

- Literature critique / meta study / systematic reviews
- Add a longitudinal or parallel component to your project
- Collaborative (i.e. several students collect data on the same or similar issue at different locations) or single data collection
- Data analysis and interpretation
- Undertake a survey
- Having a group of student running a small clinical trial under the umbrella of your supervision

What are the responsibilities of me as a supervisor?

As a research supervisor of an Advanced Studies student, you are expected to:

- make sure that the project you are offering is doable and that all methods required for the project are in place.
- recognise that any ethical approvals needed are your responsibility and are needed to be approved by the time the student is required to start working on the project. While students are encouraged to take part in writing ethic applications, this is not a requirement and not something that would be expected by the students.
- be available (on a weekly basis) to provide guidance to the student on the appropriate level of literature review and critique, data collection and analysis to adopt for the research project.
- maintain regular (weekly) contact with the student throughout the research project.
- monitor student progress and provide progress reports.
- help the student to recognise the impact of their research and how this may be translated into a high quality presentation in either a publication or poster/oral presentation at national or international meetings.
- acknowledge that there are no requirements that students need to publish their results as described above to achieve a high grade on their work.
- acknowledge that the students are not supposed to produce work equivalent to a PhD student but rather an honours student.

Is there a stipend available for supervisors?

Yes, as an Advanced Studies research supervisor, you will receive a stipend of \$1000 per student (maximum of \$2,000 which is given in Year 2 & 3 of the MD) to assist with project consumables and other costs such as publishing findings in a peer review journal.

Do projects need ethics approval to be listed?

Projects do not need to have ethics approval to be listed as an Advanced Studies project, although it is expected that ethics approval will be obtained prior to the initiation of the project. Although students may contribute to the ethics approval process, please note that it is the research project supervisor's responsibility to obtain appropriate ethics approval for the project(s). Due to the workload of the Office for Research, ethics applications (together with governance application) should be submitted early in the year, preferably before 1st of March to minimize the risk of substantial delays in commencing the project. *This should be discussed with the student before the student is assigned the project.*

What about intellectual property (IP) rights?

Students and staff should familiarise themselves with the University's Policy on Intellectual Property: <http://www.flinders.edu.au/ppmanual/research/intellectual-property.cfm>

Is the student expected to present and/ or publish locally and/ or internationally?

Students are not expected to produce research outcomes that are directly publishable. However, we strongly encourage all students undertaking research as part of Advanced Studies to publish their work as it further enhances their portfolio when applying for postgraduate training.

I'm interested in submitting a research project for consideration. How do I go about it?

All clinical, academic and professional staff are invited to submit research projects to be listed. **New projects are to be submitted by or before June 1 each year** for students to join the following year. **Extended deadline: 15 June, 2017**

The research project pro forma is available by contacting Seya Manawamma (seya.manawamma@flinders.edu.au).

I have a question about Advanced Studies. Who can I talk to?

Please contact:

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Phone: 0452199965 (available between 9 am to 10 pm Monday - Friday)

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