

MACQUARIE
UNIVERSITY



FACULTY OF
BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS

ACCG260
**Accounting and Reporting
for the Environment**

Semester 2, 2011

Department of Accounting and Finance

**MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS
UNIT OUTLINE**

Year and Semester: 2011, Semester 2

Unit convenor: James Hazelton

Prerequisites: 18 Credit Points

Corequisites: None

Students in this unit should read this unit outline carefully at the start of semester. It contains important information about the unit. If anything in it is unclear, please consult one of the teaching staff in the unit.

UNIT AIM

The principal aim of ACCG 260 is to provide students with an introduction to how environmental issues are accounted for and reported on from an organisational, governmental and personal perspective. ACCG 260 is a designated 'planet' unit.

OVERVIEW OF CONTENT

The unit considers key contemporary environmental issues such as carbon and water and investigates practical and theoretical issues in terms of locating reporting obligations, report boundaries, content, measurement and assurance. Case studies draw on current developments in the field, including the new carbon reporting obligations under the National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Act (2007), the ongoing development of national water accounting in response to the National Water Initiative (2004) and Macquarie University's own efforts to undertake sustainability reporting. At the completion of the unit students will have developed skills in relation to locating and interpreting environmental reports that will assist them in evaluating and improving environmental performance.

The content of the unit is informed by contemporary research in the area of environmental reporting, including recent publications by Macquarie staff.

PREREQUISITES

18 credit points.

TEACHING STAFF

The teaching staff member responsible for the delivery and administration of this unit is:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Room</u>	<u>Email</u>	<u>Telephone</u>
James Hazelton Unit Convenor	E4A 239	james.hazelton@mq.edu.au	9850-8486

Consultation is available by appointment.

CLASSES

Contact hours for ACCG 260 comprise:

- One 2 hour lecture per week; and
- One 1 hour tutorial per week.

The timetable for seminars can be found on the University web site at:

<http://www.timetables.mq.edu.au/>

REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED TEXTS AND/OR MATERIALS

There is no prescribed text for the unit.

Weekly readings are drawn from the following sources:

- The internet (students are expected to follow web links and download materials);
- Journals (students are expected to download journals via the University library website via Journal Finder); and
- eReserve (students are expected to download readings via the University library website via eReserve).

UNIT WEB PAGE

The web page for this unit is located at: <http://learn.mq.edu.au/webct> Please note that student activity on the unit web page is logged, and may be utilised by the Unit Convenor and other University staff in resolving student disputes regarding such issues as assignment submission. Instructions for obtaining help with accessing the unit web page can also be found at the above URL.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the unit, students will be able to:

1. Understand contemporary environmental issues (such as carbon pollution and water scarcity) and how accounting and reporting contributes to improving environmental outcomes;
2. Locate key environmental reporting obligations and reports for both governments and organisations;
3. Interpret and critically evaluate existing environmental reports; and
4. Suggest improvements for the process of accounting and reporting for the environment in order to improve environmental outcomes.

In addition to the discipline-based learning objectives, all academic programs at Macquarie seek to develop students' generic skills in a range of areas. One of the aims of this unit is that students develop their skills in the following:

- Communication skills
- Critical analysis skills

GRADUATE CAPABILITIES

In addition to the discipline-based learning objectives, all academic programs at Macquarie seek to develop the capabilities the University's graduates will need to develop to address the challenges, and to be effective, engaged participants in their world. This unit contributes to this by developing the following graduate capabilities:

- 1 Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills
- 2 Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking
- 3 Problem Solving and Research Capability
- 4 Creative and Innovative
- 5 Effective Communication
- 6 Engaged and Ethical Local and Global citizens
- 7 Socially and Environmentally Active and Responsible
- 8 Capable of Professional and Personal Judgement and Initiative
- 9 Commitment to Continuous Learning

TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGY

Students are expected to attend a two-hour lecture and a one-hour tutorial each week. Students are expected to have prepared for tutorials through reading the prescribed texts and preparing written tutorial assignments. Students are further expected to participate in tutorials via open discussion and group work.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ASSESSMENT AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

In ACCG 260 you must demonstrate that you have satisfied the learning objectives of the unit.

Attendance requirement: As much of the learning takes place through class discussion, missing more than two tutorials is grounds for a fail grade. Students who miss classes should discuss this matter promptly with the Unit Convenor.

The final assessment in ACCG 260 is based on raw scores calculated as follows:

	%
Weekly assignments	15
Diagnostic assignment	10
Group assignment	25
Final exam	<u>50</u>
	<u>100</u>

A summary of these assessment components is provided in the following table. Further details are provided below.

	Weekly Assignments	Diagnostic assignment	Group assignment	Final Exam
Due date	Weekly (see below)	22 August	10 October	Examination period
% Weighting	15%	10%	25%	50%
Grading method	Refer below	Refer below	Refer below	All topics are examinable.
Submission method	In-class, following tutorial	Online. Details will be provided on unit webpage.	Online. Details will be provided on unit webpage.	As per usual examination procedure.
Feedback	Individual and group feedback will be provided as appropriate in the week following tutorial submission.	Individual feedback will be provided as appropriate within three weeks of submission.	Individual and group feedback will be provided as appropriate within three weeks of submission.	N/A
Estimated student workload (hours)	6 per week	6	20	

	Weekly Assignments	Diagnostic assignment	Group assignment	Final Exam
Learning outcomes assessed				
1	X	X	X	X
2	X		X	X
3	X	X	X	X
4	X	X	X	X
Graduate capabilities assessed				
1	X	X	X	X
2	X	X	X	X
3	X	X	X	
4		X	X	X
5	X	X	X	
6	X	X	X	X
7	X	X	X	
8		X	X	X
9			X	

The weekly assignments and mid semester assignment provide the means of continuous assessment and continuous learning throughout the semester.

The primary objective of the continuous assessment tasks in ACCG 260 is to make you ready, willing and able to demonstrate your understanding of the learning objectives on the day of the final exam.

CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT (50%)

a) Weekly assignments (15%)

Independent work on assignment exercises and problems is fundamental to satisfying the learning objectives of this unit. You are not expected to always have the right answers from your independent work but you are expected to make a significant attempt to assignment questions before each tutorial. It is expected that, in addition to attendance at the weekly tutorials, you will need to spend at least six hours per week working on assignments and preparing for the next tutorial. Assignment length will depend on the particular week's questions, but as a guide they will average 2-3 typed pages.

Each week students will be required to submit written answers to the assignment questions for the topic area. The tutorial assignments therefore provide an opportunity for students to develop the core learning outcomes on a week-by-week basis as well as written communication skills. The material covered in tutorials will also form the basis for the final examination.

It is expected that the written work you submit for the weekly assignments will be completed before the tutorial rather than during the tutorial. If it is noticed that an assignment is being prepared during the tutorial then it will not be considered satisfactory. Late assignments will not be accepted without a medical certificate.

On the front page of each weekly assignment that you submit please include the following:

- your student name
- your student number
- the following statement: "This assignment is my own work"

Students submitting the same or similar tutorial assignments to others in the unit risk disciplinary action. Students must also ensure that they do not inadvertently plagiarise material from textbooks or other readings. Copying material from the textbook or readings is also a form of plagiarism and will be awarded nil marks. Plagiarism is discussed in more detail below.

Over the course of the semester, weekly assignments will contribute to all the learning objectives listed above.

During the semester **three assignments will be collected at random and marked out of five**. The assessment criteria for tutorial assignments is as follows:

0/5 – Assignment is incomplete. One or more questions have not been attempted.

1/5 – Assignment is incomplete. All questions have been attempted, but some sub-parts of questions have not been addressed.

2/5 – All questions have been attempted but some answers are incorrect and / or superficial.

3/5 – All questions have been attempted and are substantially correct.

4/5 – All questions have been attempted and the student has answered questions in detail and has included their own opinions and/or analysis where appropriate.

5/5 - All questions have been attempted and in addition to providing their own analysis the student has related appropriate questions to other materials either in the unit or in the wider context. For example the student has related the question to a previous reading referred to a current event / media article.

b) Diagnostic test (10%)

Choose one example of environmental reporting (on a product, by an organisation or by a government agency) and answer the following:

1/ What decision is the reporting attempting to influence?

2/ What is one limitation of the reporting in relation to the decision?

3/ What is one improvement that might be made to improve decision-making?

Word limit: **350 words**

Assessment will be as follows

0-4/10: Analysis does not demonstrate a good understanding of the issues and does not address one or more of the questions. Alternately maximum word count requirements are exceeded.

5-7/10: Analysis demonstrates a good understanding of the issues and all aspects of the question are addressed. Answers are logical and considered.

8-10/10: Analysis demonstrates a deep understanding of the issues. Answers are innovative in addition to logical and considered.

c) Group assignment (25%)

You are required to submit one group assignment. Groups will be randomly determined by the Unit Convener. The group assignment is enhances the realization of the unit learning objectives in the following way:

- The assignment topic reinforces and extends core technical unit content;
- Working in a group environment facilitates the exchange of views and insights which may not be realized by working alone;
- Working in a group facilitates team working and collaboration skills critical in virtually all employment contexts.

Assignment topic:

Discuss the adequacy of current reporting requirements and options for improvement for greenhouse gas emissions in relation to reporting by organisations, countries OR on products. You may choose current reporting requirements in any country or region to analyze. Include at least one example (organisation, country or product) in your answer.

Assignment notes

1. The word limit for the assignment is 2,000 words.
2. The example(s) should not include those discussed in class.
3. The assignment should be properly referenced. You may select the referencing style you adopt but it must be applied consistently throughout the assignment.
4. Your assignment must be submitted electronically to the ACCG 260 website via Turn-It-In. Details will be provided in class.
5. It is assumed that all group members will have contributed equally in the preparation of the assignment. Where this is not the case please provide a letter signed by each group member detailing the different contribution. This weighting will then be applied to the overall assignment mark.

Assignment assessment criteria

Assignments will be evaluated against the following criteria:

10% Quality of analysis

- 0-4: Analysis does not demonstrate a good understanding of the issue. Key arguments are not discussed or addressed. For example, only one side of a particular issue is given and objections to this position are not considered.
- 5-7: Analysis demonstrates a good understanding of the issue. Key arguments are discussed and addressed. For example, where a position is argued objections to this position are considered. A logical overall conclusion is provided.
- 8-10: Analysis demonstrates a deep understanding of the issue. In addition to detailing current knowledge and opinion, the assignment provides an original perspective in the form of a new idea, objection or insight.

10% Depth of research

- 0-4: References limited to materials cited in class. References not well understood.
- 5-6: References substantially beyond materials cited in class. References well understood and used appropriately to further the analysis.
- 7-10: References substantially beyond materials cited in class and included **contemporary academic journal articles**. References well understood and used appropriately to further the analysis. The following journals may prove useful:
 - Accounting, Organisations and Society
 - Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal
 - Environmental Economics
 - Food Policy
 - Sustainable Development

5% Presentation and Referencing

- 0-2: Extensive referencing and/or grammatical errors.
- 3-4: Few referencing and/or grammatical errors.
- 5: No referencing and/or grammatical errors.

High quality assignments may be submitted and considered for publication in Scholaris (a student e-journal). The details of the special issue of Scholaris calling for papers on sustainability and business ethics is attached as an Appendix.

FINAL EXAM (50%)

A final examination is included as an assessment task for this unit to provide assurance that:

- i) the product belongs to the student and
- ii) the student has attained the knowledge and skills tested in the exam.

A 2 hour final examination for this unit will be held during the University Examination period.

The University Examination period in Second Half Year 2011 is from 15 November 2011 to 2 December 2011.

You are expected to present yourself for examination at the time and place designated in the University Examination Timetable. The timetable will be available in Draft form

approximately eight weeks before the commencement of the examinations and in Final form approximately four weeks before the commencement of the examinations.
<http://www.timetables.mq.edu.au/exam>

The only exception to not sitting an examination at the designated time is because of documented illness or unavoidable disruption. In these circumstances you may wish to consider applying for Special Consideration. The University's policy on special consideration process is available at
http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/special_consideration/policy.html

If a Supplementary Examination is granted as a result of the Special Consideration process the examination will be scheduled after the conclusion of the official examination period. (Individual Faculties may wish to signal when the Faculties' Supplementary Exams are normally scheduled.)

The Macquarie University examination policy details the principles and conduct of examinations at the University. The policy is available at:
<http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/examination/policy.htm>

GRADING

Macquarie University uses the following grades in coursework units of study:

HD –High Distinction
D – Distinction
CR – Credit
P – Pass
F – Fail

Grade descriptors and other information concerning grading are contained in the Macquarie University Grading Policy which is available at:
<http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grading/policy.html>

All final grades in the Department of Accounting and Corporate Governance are determined by a grading committee and are not the sole responsibility of the Unit Coordinator.

Students will be awarded one of these grades plus a Standardised Numerical Grade (SNG). The SNG is not necessarily a summation of the individual assessment components.

The final grade and SNG that are awarded reflect the corresponding grade descriptor in the Grading Policy.

In addition, there is a requirement to pass the final examination to be awarded a final grade of a Pass or a higher grade.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

The nature of scholarly endeavour, dependent as it is on the work of others, binds all members of the University community to abide by the principles of academic honesty. Its fundamental principle is that all staff and students act with integrity in the creation, development, application and use of ideas and information. This means that:

- all academic work claimed as original is the work of the author making the claim
- all academic collaborations are acknowledged
- academic work is not falsified in any way
- when the ideas of others are used, these ideas are acknowledged appropriately.

Further information on the academic honesty can be found in the Macquarie University Academic Honesty Policy at

http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.html

SPECIAL CONSIDERATION

The University is committed to equity and fairness in all aspects of its learning and teaching. In stating this commitment, the University recognises that there may be circumstances where a student is prevented by unavoidable disruption from performing in accordance with their ability. A special consideration policy exists to support students who experience serious and unavoidable disruption such that they do not reach their usual demonstrated performance level. The policy is available at:

http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/special_consideration/procedure.html

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Macquarie University provides a range of Academic Student Support Services. Details of these services can be accessed at <http://www.student.mq.edu.au>.

LECTURE SUMMARY

<u>Week</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Lecture Topic</u>
1	1 Aug	Perspectives on sustainability and the right to information
2	8 Aug	Ecological footprint
3	15 Aug	Product labelling and life-cycle analysis
4	22 Aug	Organisational reporting (Diagnostic assignment due)
5	29 Aug	Greenhouse accounting 1
6	5 Sep	Greenhouse accounting 2
7	12 Sep	Assurance
	19 Sep	Mid-semester break
	26 Sep	Mid-semester break
	3 Oct	Public holiday
8	10 Oct	Pollutant reporting by organisations (Group assignment due)
9	17 Oct	Water accounting 1
10	24 Oct	Water accounting 2
11	31 Oct	State of the environment reporting
12	7 Nov	Revision