

Subject Outline

Subject Overview

Designing public policies and programs has long been recognised more as art and craft than science. Advisers try to bring evidence-based analytical perspectives to public issues of the day in a context in which they must take account of the authorising environment, ideological and political preferences and perspectives, existing policy commitments and international best practice. Professor Aaron Wildavsky, a well-known teacher of policy studies, described the job of policy advisers as 'speaking truth to power', though what is truth and the public interest will often be contested. Our democratic Westminster traditions require government advisers to balance out the dual roles of implementing the decisions of politicians while also providing analytically sound and professional policy advice which is frank and fearless.

Designing Public Policies and Programs will give attention to the growing complexity of policy issues and the need for government policy advisers to connect to key actors and institutions at both national and international levels. The course builds on and extends existing models and approaches to policy analysis and advisory work, including Professor Eugene Bardach's 8-step path to successful problem solving, the Bridgman and Davis policy cycle model, and the Mayer, van Daalen and Bots policy hexagon approach. An integrated approach is discussed in DPPP which adopts a policy systems focus, applies tools and methods to analyse complex issues, and encourages a wide range of policy options to be generated.

The course will consider the attributes of value-adding policy analysis, including strategies for enhancing policy capability and performance.

The subject will be taught as a one week intensive in three centres:

Learning Outcomes

Students completing this subject will:

- Develop a better understanding of policy systems in Australia and New Zealand and their strengths and weaknesses;

- Learn about different concepts, theories and models of policy analysis and advising, including relationships to policy practice;
- Reflect on the role of government in society and the implications of this for public sector policy and management systems;
- Explore different approaches to framing issues and designing policy options – drawing on various policy tools, methods and smart practices;
- Consider the concept and assessment of ‘quality’ and ‘value’ in policy analysis and advising;
- Examine some contemporary policy issues and how various approaches can be applied;
- Become more aware of the capabilities required to delivery ‘value-adding’ policy analysis and advice;
- Consider approaches and strategies for enhancing the performance of the policy system.