

RESEARCH CLINIC

General information

Supervisor:	Kristin Makszin
Title of clinic:	Decolonising Data and Policy Analysis
Number of students:	Up to 6
Major (<i>if applicable and approved by the Major Convener</i>):	
(Pre)requisites (<i>if applicable</i>):	First year statistics, All GC courses. Note: The research clinic will take place in blocks 2 and 3 Therefore participants must not be graduating in Winter 2021.

Research context

The state of research and knowledge is very often influenced by what data and information is available, but the processes of collecting and analyzing data are influenced by social and political hierarchies. To give a few examples:

- comparable data are often systematically missing from countries in the global South,
- social survey data often lack observations to enable studying anything about minority groups,
- women are underrepresented in clinic research.

Data availability often drives what we can research and we know that data is rarely missing ‘at random’. In this research clinic, we will explore how social dynamics and power structures influence data collection across various policy relevant fields and investigate the consequences of missing or biased data for the state of knowledge in academics and for policy processes as well. We will critically explore the processes of data collection, analysis, and applications that are commonly utilized in academic and policy realms. The analysis of public policy is often aimed at generating ‘best practices’ and relying on evidence to recommend policy action. Therefore biases in the processes of data collection and analysis may have dramatic real world consequences.

The research clinic will take place in blocks 2 and 3. This research clinic is being organized in the context of the “Decolonisation Working Group”, as part of a bigger project to decolonise education at LUC and may have some common activities or interactions with the other research clinics. While the core activities will take place in Blocks 2 and 3, starting in Block 1, the Decolonisation Working Group (DWG), will be hosting a speaker series. It is recommended that students in the research clinic attend these lectures to understand the current debates about decolonising learning more broadly.

Students' tasks and activities

1. Part I: Decolonizing data analysis

In the first part, starting in block 2, we will be familiarizing ourselves with the debates around what it means to decolonize a curriculum more broadly and within fields that rely on statistics and data analysis more explicitly. This will involve group discussions and debates where participants will be expected to review, present and discuss literature. We will also invite outside speakers when possible. This will include reviewing how decolonization has been implemented in other higher educational institutes. The goal of this part is to provide a framework for future discussion and to reflect on what decolonization means in practice, as there are significant debates about what is appropriate and simple solutions are scarce and likely insufficient. The output from this section will be a jointly produced annotated bibliography and a jointly written discussion paper that will be shared with the broader LUC community, including LUC professors.

2. Part II: Understanding the consequences of missing and biased data

In the second part, each participant will focus on a specific context where data are missing or biased, such as social surveys, internationally comparable datasets, application of random controlled trials, or more. The participants will select their topic in dialogue with the rest of the group and supervisor, but the topic could be linked to various academic fields or areas, depending on the major and interest of the participant. The participants will conduct a project where they will explore the reasons behind the missing or biased data collection and then through specific case studies explore the academic and policy consequences of missing or biased data. The research clinic meetings will focus on students presenting progress on their project and providing feedback to each other as a research community. We will also hold trainings on research skills that support the projects.

3. Part III: Reflection on what this means for LUC

We will have a dialogue about what the discussions and output from the research clinic imply for education at LUC. How could our discussions inform future adaptations of LUC curriculum? We will write a reflection and set of recommendations that will be sent to the College Board, Program Board, Program Council, and relevant major convenors.

Students will be expected to produce the following outputs:

- a. Individual reports and case studies summarizing the findings of their project: These may be in the form of an academic paper, a policy brief, or both, depending on the project. We will agree on the expected output when you select the project topic. We will have specific workshops about writing and presenting research to different audiences (academic or policy).
- b. Presentation of project output at a session for LUC staff and students: The presentation should include key findings or discussion points and specific reflections on the implications of your findings for academics and/or policy realms.
- c. Organization and facilitation of a townhall discussion open to all in the LUC community near the end of block 3: The group will present their reflections based on the research clinic overall and what their reflections imply for decolonizing education. The group will then lead an open discussion and debate.
- d. Contribution to jointly written discussion paper (Part I) and report (Part III)
- e. Personal Reflections on participation in this clinic.

If possible with the restrictions at the time, the research clinic will also include some in person meetings.