UQ boasts some of the strongest groups in the social and political sciences in Australia, with particular strengths in anthropology, archaeology, human geography, international relations, political science, social work and sociology. Our research is also highly diverse, focusing on local, regional, national and global levels with the key aim of fostering an analytical and empirical orientation to social problems and issues. Among the theoretical and methodological approaches employed are quantitative modeling and spatial analysis, qualitative and normative analysis, mixed methods and longitudinal analysis. A suite of externally-funded, project-based studies feeds results directly into policy-making, via UQ’s world-class Schools and Institute for Social Science Research (ISSR). The UQ Culture & Heritage Unit is a leading provider of anthropological and archaeological research expertise in indigenous native title cases and related negotiations over land and resources development.

UQ’s Social and Political Sciences researchers are of high calibre, hosting one of just two social science Australian Research Council Centres of Excellence (The Life Course Centre led by Janeen Baxter from the Institute for Social Science Research), one Australian Research Council (ARC) Laureate Fellow (Lorraine Mazerolle), one ARC Discovery Outstanding Research Award winner (Brian Head), eight Future Fellowship holders, and five Fellows of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia. Academic alliances have been forged with the Institute of Social and Economic Research (Essex), the Harvard Kennedy School, the Stanford Centre on Poverty and Inequality, the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, and many other international and national research bodies, Australian and State governments, and a range of private and not-for-profit organisations.

Research occurs at:
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, including:
- Institute for Social Science Research
- ARC Centre of Excellence for Children and Families over the Life Course
- Rotary Centre for International Studies in Peace and Conflict Resolution, and Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect
Faculty of Health and Behavioural Sciences
Faculty of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences
Global Change Institute
Sustainable Minerals Institute – Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining

UQ has particular expertise in the areas of:
- Archaeological Science
- Care for the Ageing and the Disabled
- Conflict Resolution and Peace-building
- Counselling and Community Development
- Crime and Social Justice
- Evaluation and Intervention Research
- Gender and Inequality
- Governance and Public Policy
- Health, Well-being and the Life-course
- Indigeneity, Cultural Heritage and Sense of Place
- Indigenous Native Title Anthropology
- International Relations
- Population, Demography and Development Studies
- Social Statistics and Survey Research Methods
- Social performance of the resources industry
- Urban Neighbourhoods and Housing
Analysis and policy advice on pressing social problems

The social study of health, wellbeing and disadvantage over the life-course is a key research strength of the social sciences at UQ. Researchers employ advanced longitudinal and multilevel data analysis to understand the transmission of inequalities over the life course. We examine a range of community dynamics that lead to resilient and healthy communities, along with factors that contribute to crime, social disorder and inter-group conflict. Some of the major studies include: the Mater-University of Queensland Study of Pregnancy and its Outcomes (MUSP), which commenced in 1981; the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women’s Health (ALSWH), which commenced in 1996; and the national evaluation of the Paid Parental Leave scheme, which began in 2010 and the Australian Community Capacity Study (ACCS), which commenced in 2005. The new ARC Life Course Centre, hosted by ISSR, occupies a central role for leading life course research into the future and will be at the forefront of research targeted at reducing the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage within families both in Australia and internationally. The Centre is a major initiative for UQ and brings together leading researchers from four Australian universities and 16 international universities, alongside strong partnerships with government and non-government organisations in Australia involved in human service delivery and policy.

ISSR is Australia’s largest multidisciplinary social science institute and a world leader in advanced social science. ISSR has a distinguished record of building the best possible social science knowledge to improve economic and social wellbeing for individuals, households, communities and regions in Australia and internationally. Researchers have investigated the causes of homelessness and its solutions, evaluated major social policy initiatives, examined why some communities are especially resilient when faced with adversity, used unique experimental methods to shed new light on effective policing, and focused on how social science can be used more effectively.

ISSR is also leading the way in bridging the gap between academic research and policy-making through other initiatives such as hosting a symposium of academics and public sector policymakers to discuss the impact of academic research on policy. Held in late 2013, the symposium was the culmination of a three-year collaborative ARC Linkage Project to examine the uptake of academic social research in policy development and program review with a particular focus on human service policies and programs. Symposium panelists included representatives from the project’s funding and collaborative partners in State and Commonwealth agencies as well as a number of leading social researchers.

Responding to the global challenges of peace and security

The Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect is the only regional centre of its kind specifically dedicated to advancing the ‘responsibility to protect’ principle through research and policy dialogue. The Centre supports states to build capacity in the region to prevent genocide and mass atrocities. The Centre encourages partnerships to promote a shared consensus on the value of the ‘responsibility to protect’. Through its research, it generates creative policy recommendations to make a material difference in the lives of at-risk civilian populations.

Similarly, The Rotary Centre for International Studies for Peace and Conflict Resolution is part of a global program to advance research, teaching, practical training and knowledge on issues of international relations, human rights, conflict resolution and peace-building. The Centre is one of only five worldwide - with others housed at University of Bradford (UK), Duke/University of North Carolina (USA), Uppsala University (Sweden) and International Christian University (Japan). Rotary Peace Fellows trained at UQ are leaders in the promotion of national and international cooperation, peace, and the successful resolution of conflict throughout their lives, in their careers, and through service activities.

Understanding Australia’s population dynamics and impact on natural resources

Human geography at UQ emphasises quantitative modelling and spatial analysis, with a particular focus on their application in population dynamics, urban systems and economic activity. It has strengths in geographic information systems and in the development of statistical indicators to understand spatial variations in social and economic activity. Particular expertise is in the analysis of flows and networks such as patterns of commuting and human migration, and the development of population and urban simulation models. The work also has a strongly applied focus, with close collaborative linkages to Australian governments, and international organisations, particularly the UN. Human geographers are prominent in interdisciplinary teams researching the impact of society on the environment and the prospects for sustainable development.

The Queensland Centre for Population Research (QCPR) is an international leader in the analysis of human migration and Australia’s pre-eminent centre of expertise in demographic forecasting. It houses a global repository of data on within-country migration, and has developed new statistical indicators adopted by the UN for cross-national comparisons of mobility. Multi-regional and probabilistic projection models developed by QCPR are used by Governments widely in Australia and internationally. Other research foci include urban simulation models and the use of emergent mobile technologies for population estimation.