Graduate Program in Evolution & Ecology 2013

The graduate program of the Evolution & Ecology Research Centre (E&ERC) at UNSW aims to foster excellence in postgraduate research and supervision, and the development of skills to better equip research students for careers in science. Students are offered support for their own research projects and a wide-ranging program of activities aimed at developing a broader conceptual understanding of the discipline and enhanced research skills. Excellence in postgraduate research is recognised by annual prizes for theses, publications, presentations and other research activities.

Degree programs supported

The graduate program supports the research students of the academics and research fellows in the E&ERC. These are from the School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences (BEES), the School of Biotechnology and Biomolecular Sciences (BABS), and the School of Mathematics and Statistics. The students may be enrolled in the following postgraduate research degrees:

- **Doctor of Philosophy (PhD):** 3-4 years full time
- **Master of Science by Research (MSc):** 2 years full time
- **Master of Philosophy** (MPhil): 1.5 years full time, 18 units of credit coursework, 54 units of credit research

*The MPhil provides an alternative to the Honours year for those students with an excellent academic record, providing greater research experience and a postgraduate degree within 18 months of completing undergraduate studies. MPhil places within the E&ERC are offered on a competitive basis.*

Students are required to enroll through the school of their supervisor. The supervisor may then elect students to be part of the E&ERC graduate program.

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FEATURES OF THE GRADUATE PROGRAM

Expectations for our Postgraduate Students

The postgraduate program has been developed to facilitate interactions between all members of the E&ERC. Broad participation of E&ERC students and staff enhances the experience of postgraduate students through increasing collaboration (and socialising) and promoting the transfer of skills between centre members. Postgraduate students are expected to participate in the E&ERC functions, and attend research seminars and the postgraduate research forum.

As a general rule, all postgraduate students should be attending the majority of E&ERC seminars, both regular seminars in the E&ERC series (Fridays, every other week) and special seminars given by visiting scientists. Students should also anticipate participating in at least one E&ERC workshop during their tenure and attend at least one E&ERC event each year that does not include specialty workshops. Active participation in postgraduate events is an important aspect of life as a postgraduate student, and is also taken into consideration during deliberations for E&ERC’s postgraduate grants, annual prizes and other awards.

Postgraduate Research Forum

Twice each year, the research activities of students are featured in the E&ERC Postgraduate Forum. Presentations from students across the centre, and associated social events, promote the effective communication of science and allow students to receive valuable feedback from fellow students and academics. The first forum will be held in June 2013, and the second in November (usually the week after the last teaching week of each session). All students are expected to attend, organising their research (i.e. fieldwork commitments) well in advance of these dates.

E&ERC Research Seminars

The Centre features regular research seminars on alternate Friday afternoons (3 pm, Biomed C) by resident and visiting academics and research fellows. Attendance at these seminars is considered essential for exposure to wide variety of evolutionary and ecological research topics, critical thinking beyond a student’s individual project and gaining potential contacts.

Seminars are coordinated by Dr Adriana Verges (a.verges@unsw.edu.au). Students should check the E&ERC website for dates and times of upcoming seminars.

Distinguished Visitor Program

The E&ERC hosts extended visits from distinguished research scientists. The visitors will give research presentations, participate in workshops and discussions, meet individually with research students, and attend dinners or other social events. Once a year our visitors will be part of a Diversity in Science program. The aims of this program are to showcase excellent science, highlight and address issues associated with diversity in science and to workshop strategies for career success. This program is targeted especially at early career researchers.

One of the distinguished visitors each year will be selected by the postgraduate students, offering an opportunity for students to meet important researchers relevant to their field and make important contacts (i.e., potential employers of postdocs).

March 11, 2013
Students with ideas for potential visitors should contact A/Prof. Tracey Rogers (t.rogers@unsw.edu.au) with their suggestions.

In 2013, Prof. Felisa Smith (University of New Mexico) and Prof. Terrie Williams (University of California, Santa Cruz) will be participating in the Distinguished Visitors Program.

Previous distinguished visitors have included:

- Prof. Judy Stamps, University of California at Davis (2010)
- Prof. Jonathan Losos, Harvard University (2010)
- Prof. Troy Day, Queen’s University (2010)
- Prof. Rodolfo Dirzo, Stanford University (2011)
- Prof. Ken Heck (Dauphin Island Sea Lab, USA (2012)

Conferences and Meetings

The E&ERC hosts short conferences on areas of research strength. In these conferences, academics and postgrads from the E&ERC, and other Australian and global researchers present seminars and participate in discussion groups on current and future research directions in that research area.

Previous conferences hosted by the E&ERC have included:

- 2009: “The Invasion Occasion” (organised by the Angela Moles and her students), a 1-day conference on the evolution and ecology of invasive species.
- 2011: “Marine bioinvasions in a variable world” (convened by Dr. Melanie Bishop from Macquarie University and Associate Professor Emma Johnston from the E&ERC). This mini-conference spanned the topics of the physico-chemical and biotic controls of marine bioinvasion, the biogeography of marine bioinvasion and marine bioinvasion in a changing climate.
- 2012: “Shifting species interactions and the tropicalisation of temperate marine ecosystems”, which brought together ecologists and oceanographers from Australia, USA, Japan and Spain to discuss and review the ecological impacts of climate-mediated changes in species interactions.

Social functions

The centre hosts regular social events associated with the Postgraduate Research Forum, visits by distinguished scientists and final seminars by completing postgraduate students. In addition, the EERC hosts some less formal social events such as the Quiz and Cuisine night, and beginning of year mixers.

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DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCH SKILLS

Workshops

The E&ERC hosts regular workshops, courses and discussions throughout the year aimed at improving the research skills of postgraduate students. These will be held by centre academics,
research fellows and distinguished visitors. Postgraduate students are encouraged to be actively involved in the selection of topics that will most benefit their research project and development as a research scientist.

Details on specific workshops will be announced during the year and are typically centred on the following themes:

**Writing skills.** The centre strongly promotes the written communication of research via journal articles, and the popular media. Workshops will give guidance in all steps of the publication process: manuscript preparation, selection of appropriate journals, dealing with reviewers’ comments and manuscript revisions. Excellence in publication is recognised by the annual E&ERC postgraduate award for “Outstanding Paper in Evolution and Ecology”.

Communicating research to the broader community is encouraged via preparation of articles for the popular press, and promotion of student research on the E&ERC web page. Excellence in scientific communication in addition to journal articles is recognised by the annual E&ERC award for “Outstanding Evolution & Ecology Postgraduate Researcher”.

**Practical skills:** Academics, research fellows and distinguished visitors will periodically present workshops on specific skills relevant to their research (e.g., advanced statistical analyses). A database of research skills held by centre staff and students will facilitate skill sharing among postgraduate students.

Students should check the E&ERC website for dates and times of upcoming events.

**Special Interest Advanced Courses:** The E&ERC offers advanced courses in evolution and ecology for postgraduate and honours students. These are aimed at developing the research and critical thinking skills of students, giving them a broader conceptual understanding of their discipline.

**Past special interest courses have included:**

Session 1, 2008. *A critical look at the modern relationships between evolutionary biology, society and the meaning of life* (Rob Brooks and Erik Postma)

Session 2, 2008. *Strategies for successful publishing in ecology and evolution* (Peter Banks and Alistair Poore)

Session 1, 2009. *Selling Your Science* (Tracey Rogers)

Session 2, 2009. *Topics in the Philosophy of Science* (Russell Bonduriansky)

Session 1, 2010. *Modeling Workshop* (Troy Day – Queen’s University, Canada)

Session 2, 2012. *Strategies for successful publishing in ecology and evolution.* (Alistair Poore and Terry Ord)

**Postgraduate Writing and Skills Transfer Scholarship**

In addition to these special courses run by E&ERC faculty, several courses run by senior postgraduate students and typically scheduled towards the end of the year have also been offered as a part of the “E&ERC Postgraduate Writing & Skills Transfer Scholarship”.

March 11, 2013
These awards support students who have recently submitted their PhD theses to continue the preparation of journal articles from their theses. Students receiving this award will also present a short course. The short course is usually based upon the skills they developed during their tenure as PhD students and is presented to students in the EERC graduate program. The aim of these awards is to maximise research output (and to increase competitiveness for post doctoral research fellowships and research positions), and to facilitate the transfer of professional and research skills between post graduate students. Information on the application requirements and submission dates for these awards is available on the EERC website.

Previous skills transfer courses have included:

**Interdisciplinary Research: melding for maximum impact** (Louise McKenzie; 2010)

**A Successful Abstract, Making your Conference Talk Stand Out, and Speaking to the Public** (Alex Jordan; 2010)

**Introduction to the R Environment** (Luke Hedge; 2011)

**Understanding and incorporating genetic and microbial analyses into your research** (Tiffanie Nelson & Anna Kopps; 2011)

**Clarity, Intrigue and Persuasion: Making Your Scientific Writing Worth Reading** (Margo Adler; 2012)

**Research Discussion Groups**

Students and staff regularly meet to discuss ideas in evolution and ecology. These groups feature discussions of published papers, short presentations of student research, and sessions for planning proposed research. Currently active discussion groups include:

- **Evolution of sexual selection, ageing** – Brooks & Bonduriansky laboratories, contact Barnaby Dixon (b.dixon@unsw.edu.au)
- **Molecular Ecology** – Sherwin laboratory, contact Sven Delaney (s.delaney@unsw.edu.au)
- **Marine ecology and evolution** – Johnston& Poore and laboratories, contact: Katherine Daiforn (k.daiforn@unsw.edu.au)
- **Fisheries and marine environmental research** – Suthers laboratory, contact Iain Suthers (i.suthers@unsw.edu.au) or Chris Setio (csetio@gmail.com)
- **Ecochats** – Bonser and Moles laboratories, contact Rhiannon Dalrymple (r.dalrymple@unsw.edu.au)

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**DEVELOPMENT OF A RESEARCH CAREER**

There is more to developing a research career than simply finishing a postgraduate degree. With experienced mentors, we aim to provide resources and advice for students at various steps along the pathway to a research career. The most tangible way the centre achieves this is through special interest courses in which faculty and senior postgraduates provide advice on various aspects of a successful research career, including funding opportunities, grant writing, research networking, and finding employment. These courses are recurrent and will generally overlap a student’s tenure within the graduate program (e.g., see the list of Special Interest Advanced Courses in the previous section ‘development of research skills’). Nevertheless, new students should feel free to contact Dr. Terry Ord (t.ord@unsw.edu.au) to express interest in
any past courses that have not been run recently, or to propose ideas for any new, future courses that might be run by the centre.

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RECOGNITION OF RESEARCH EXCELLENCE

Each year, the E&ERC awards prizes that recognise excellence in postgraduate research conducted at UNSW. We offer the following prizes:

Outstanding Evolution and Ecology Student Paper
- Awarded to a study published in each calendar year with research conducted at UNSW and postgraduate student as first author.
- The paper will be selected by the E&ERC Education Subcommittee based on the significance and originality of the research, and quality of the journal in which it was published.

Outstanding Evolution and Ecology Presentation
- Awarded to an outstanding oral presentation at the E&ERC Postgraduate Forum.
- The outstanding presentation will be selected by a panel of academics, research fellows and postgraduate students. All students presenting in a given forum will be considered for the prize.

Outstanding Evolution and Ecology (Postgraduate) Researcher
- Awarded to a student with outstanding overall research performance in each calendar year.
- The student will be selected by the E&ERC Education Subcommittee based on the significance and originality of the research conducted, research output (publications and conference presentations) and contributions to outreach and E&ERC activities.

Crispin Rice Prize for Outreach and Communication in Evolution and Ecology
- The Prize shall be awarded to a student who has demonstrated outstanding achievement in communicating research relating to evolution and ecology to the broader community through popular media and outreach activity.

Outstanding Evolution and Ecology Thesis
- Awarded to a thesis approved for the degree of PhD, MSc or MPhil.
- The thesis will be selected by the E&ERC Education Subcommittee based on the significance and originality of research, comments from thesis examiners, research output, and documented evidence of impact. All theses submitted in a calendar year will be considered for the prize.

To be eligible for the paper or researcher prizes, students must nominate themselves or their publication. Forms will be available on the E&ERC website, with details of nomination closing dates.

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SUPERVISION AND PROGRESS

Supervision

March 11, 2013
Each postgraduate student will have a supervisory panel, comprising the student’s supervisor and co-supervisor(s). A student may have joint supervisors if more than one academic is equally responsible for a given project. In addition, a minimum of two academics should be chosen as panel members in consultation with them and the student’s supervisor. While the student will meet regularly with the primary supervisor, an important role of the supervisory panel is to assess progress and provide feedback on project and thesis planning via annual progress meetings (see below). The UNSW policy on postgraduate supervision can be found at: www.policy.unsw.edu.au/policy/higher_degree_research_supervision.htm

Introductory Research Proposal

Within four months of commencing their project, students participating in the E&ERC graduate program are expected to submit a written introductory research proposal. The proposals are modeled on part of the grant proposals that are submitted each year to the Australian Research Council Discovery Projects scheme.

The proposal* should include text in the following sections:

Student and supervisor(s):
Project title:
Aims and background:
- Describe the aims and background of the project.
- Include information about recent international progress in the field of the research and the relationship of this project to work in the field generally

Significance and innovation:
- Describe how the research is significant and whether the research addresses an important problem.
- Describe how the anticipated outcomes will advance the knowledge base of the discipline (e.g., what important gaps in our understanding of a particular topic will your project address?) and why the project aims and concepts are novel and innovative.
- Detail what new methodologies or technologies will be developed in the course of the project.

Approach and methodology
- Outline the conceptual framework, design and methods, and demonstrate that these are adequately developed, well integrated and appropriate to the project aims
- Include a research plan and proposed timelines.

References:

*Page limit: 5 pages.

After consultation with their supervisor, students should submit their proposal to the Centre Administrator Vera Banschikoff (v.banschikoff@unsw.edu.au). The proposals will be reviewed by your supervisor and supervisory panel for critical feedback.

Research Presentations

Students enrolled in a PhD program are expected to give research presentations once each year at the E&ERC Postgraduate Forum, and a final seminar after completion.

- annual research seminars (typically 12 minutes +3 for questions). The research seminars are expected to be in the style of a conference presentation, covering one aspect of the project.
- exit seminar (30 minutes +10) An exit seminar scheduled as a special centre seminar typically followed by a reception.
Students enrolled in a **MSc program** are expected to give research presentations once each year at the E&ERC Postgraduate Forum, and a final seminar after completion.

- **Annual research seminars** (12 minutes +3 for questions)

Students enrolled in a **MPhil program** are expected to give one research presentation at the E&ERC Postgraduate Forum, and a final seminar after completion.

- **Research seminar** (12 minutes +3 for questions)

**MPhil Coursework**

The degree of Master of Philosophy has coursework requirements in addition to the submission of a thesis. The degree is comprised of the equivalent of between 18 and 24 Units of Credit (UoC) of coursework with the remainder of the degree allocated to the thesis.

This coursework should be successfully completed **within the first two semesters** of enrollment of the MPhil unless approval is given by the Committee. Students should note that E&ERC Special Interest Advanced Courses can contribute to these units. In fact, most of our students meet the course UoC simply by taking E&ERC workshops that they would have taken anyway.

For the details of these requirements see: [http://www.handbook.unsw.edu.au/research/programs/2012/2475.html](http://www.handbook.unsw.edu.au/research/programs/2012/2475.html)

**Progress Reporting**

**Annual progress reports**

Students are required to submit annual progress reports within the first 12 months of enrollment, and again for each year enrolled. The UNSW policies on adequate progress are available at: [www.grs.unsw.edu.au/currentstudents/progress.html](http://www.grs.unsw.edu.au/currentstudents/progress.html)

Student participation in the events presented as part of the E&ERC graduate program should be documented as “other achievements” in section B3 of the form. Student contributions in this regard will be assessed by supervisors and recognised by the annual prize for Outstanding Postgraduate Researcher.

**Major project review**

For PhD students, the Annual Progress report that occurs after four enrolled sessions (or pro-rata for part-time students) must include a detailed review of progress toward thesis completion (section B2), and planning for remaining research (section B4). Section B4 of the form should include a thesis outline with all completed chapters, planned chapters and intentions for research publication.

A major project review and review presentation should also be undertaken by students in the MSc program wishing to transfer to the PhD program.

Submit your progress reports to the Centre Administrator Vera Banschikoff (v.banschikoff@unsw.edu.au) **two weeks prior** to your postgraduate committee meeting.

**Postgraduate committee meetings**

Once a year, students will meet with their supervisory panel and members of the E&ERC Education subcommittee to assess progress, provide feedback on project ideas and plan for thesis completion. The meetings also offer an opportunity for students to raise issues in the absence of their supervisor if needed. Meetings will occur in association with the submission of

March 11, 2013
Annual Progress Reviews.

Changes to your enrolment status and major difficulties should be discussed with your supervisor, panel and with your school’s postgraduate coordinator.

Completion

**Thesis submission.** The Graduate Research School has detailed instructions for the submission of higher degree theses: [http://www.grs.unsw.edu.au/currentstudents/thesis.html](http://www.grs.unsw.edu.au/currentstudents/thesis.html). Students must lodge a notification of intention to submit two months prior to submission.

**Ceremonies for final completion.** The E&ERC will host ceremonies for the successful completion of higher degrees. Students that have recently submitted their theses will present their final seminar to an audience of centre members and invited guests followed by drinks and snacks.
Summary of progress requirements

**PhD: starting Session 1, 2013**

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<th>Year</th>
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<th>Written submissions</th>
<th>Oral presentations</th>
<th>Meetings of supervisory panel</th>
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<td>Annual Progress review Oct 2013</td>
<td>Research seminar Nov 2013</td>
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<td>Annual Progress review with major project review Oct 2014</td>
<td>Research seminar Nov 2014</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>Annual Progress review Oct 2015</td>
<td>Research seminar Nov 2015</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Submit thesis 3-4 years</td>
<td>Final seminar within 3 months of thesis submission</td>
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**PhD: starting Session 2, 2013**

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<th>Year</th>
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<td>Introductory proposal within 4 months of enrolment</td>
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<td>Annual Progress review, May 2014</td>
<td>Research seminar Jun 2014</td>
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<td>Annual Progress review with major project review May 2015</td>
<td>Research seminar Jun 2015</td>
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<td>Annual Progress review May 2016</td>
<td>Research seminar Jun 2016</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Submit thesis 3-4 years</td>
<td>Exit seminar within 3 months of thesis submission</td>
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March 11, 2013
### MSC: starting Session 1, 2013

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<td>Annual Progress review, Oct 2013</td>
<td>Research seminar Nov 2013</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Annual Progress review Oct 2014 Submit thesis 1.5-2 years</td>
<td>Research seminar Nov 2014</td>
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### MSC: starting Session 2, 2013

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**MPhil: starting Session 1, 2013**

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**MPhil: starting Session 2, 2013**

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RESOURCES

E&ERC website: www.eerc.com.au
E&ERC on facebook: www.facebook.com/EERC.UNSW

E&ERC Education Subcommittee

The development of the Graduate Program in Evolution & Ecology is the responsibility of the Education Subcommittee of the E&ERC. In 2013, the committee is directed by Dr Terry Ord (Deputy Director/Education) who should generally be the primary point of contact for all E&ERC postgraduate students.

A/Prof. Dale Dominey-Howes is the postgraduate coordinator for the School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences, and a member on the Faculty of Science Faculty higher degree committee. He is available to help with issues of enrolment, reporting requirements and completion.

Further information on postgraduate study at UNSW

Graduate Research School. The GRS is the central administrative and support unit for all higher degree research students and their supervisors at UNSW. Their website has extensive information on postgraduate policies, available scholarships, forms that you will need, and resources available for students at UNSW.
  Web: www.grs.unsw.edu.au
  Email: enquiries.grs@unsw.edu.au
  Ph: 9385 5500/5502

School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences
  Web: http://www.bees.unsw.edu.au/current/postgraduate
  Postgraduate coordinator: A/Prof. Dale Dominey-Howes, Ph: 9385 4830,
  Email: dale.dh@unsw.edu.au

School of Biotechnology and Biomolecular Sciences
  Web: http://www.babs.unsw.edu.au/future_students/future-students
  Postgraduate coordinator: A/Prof Ruiting Lan, Ph: 9385 1483,
  Email: r.lan@unsw.edu.au

School of Mathematics and Statistics
  Web: http://www.maths.unsw.edu.au/currentstudents/postgraduate-research
  Postgraduate Coursework coordinator: Dr Donna Salopek, Ph: 9385 7030,
  Email: pg.MathsStats@unsw.edu.au
  Postgraduate research coordinator: Assoc Prof. Thanh Tran, Ph: 9385 7041,
  Email:re.MathsStats@unsw.edu.au

March 11, 2013  13
Travel and research grants available for students

Contact your school and supervisor for information on financial support for attending conferences. The Graduate Research School also supports conference travel for postgraduate students – check their website for due dates and application forms.

A wide variety of research grants are available from scientific societies and other agencies to support small research projects and scientific travel. E&ERC students are strongly encouraged to apply for these to gain experience in grant writing, support their project and strengthen their CVs.

Below is a partial list of such grants. Please email Terry Ord (t.ord@unsw.edu.au) if you are aware of others suitable for our discipline.

**Animal Behaviour Society**

**Australasian Society for Phycology and Aquatic Botany**
- Conference Travel Support, International Travel Support - [http://www.aspab.org/funding.htm](http://www.aspab.org/funding.htm)

**Australian Federation of University Women**

**Australian Geographic**

**Australian Marine Science Association**
- AMSA International Conference Prize for Students - [https://www.amsa.asn.au/students/international.php](https://www.amsa.asn.au/students/international.php)
- Annual Conference - Student Travel Subsidy - [https://www.amsa.asn.au/students/travel.php](https://www.amsa.asn.au/students/travel.php)

**Ecological Society of Australia**

**Australian Society for Fish Biology**

**Genetics Society of Australia**

**Linnean Society of New South Wales**

**Project AWARE (marine conservation)**

**Royal Zoological Society of New South Wales**

**SeaWorld Research and Rescue Foundation**

**Sydney Aquarium Conservation Foundation**

March 11, 2013
Occupational Health & Safety

Students are required to conform to UNSW policies on occupational health & safety. Further information can be obtained on the OH&S pages of your supervisors’ school.

School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences:
http://www.bees.unsw.edu.au/ohs

School of Biotechnology and Biomolecular Sciences:

School of Mathematics and Statistics:
http://www.maths.unsw.edu.au/

Licensing requirements

It is the responsibility of the student and supervisor to ensure that all research conducted is approved by the relevant collection permits and animal ethics committees. Information on the application process for animal ethics is at:


Grievance procedure and complaints

The Graduate Research School outlines the procedure for handling grievances. See the policy at:


Academic honesty and plagiarism

Students must be aware of UNSW policies that relate to plagiarism and academic honesty. See further details at:

www.1c.unsw.edu.au/plagiarism/link.html