Graduate Program in Evolution & Ecology
2014

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), School of Mathematics and Statistics, School of Humanities and Languages and the School of Economics. 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.
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 2014, 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 A) 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 Will Cornwell (w.cornwell@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 24, 2014
Students with ideas for potential visitors should contact A/Prof. Tracey Rogers (t.rogers@unsw.edu.au) with their suggestions.

Previous distinguished visitors have included:
- Prof. Jeffrey H. Schwartz, University of Pittsburgh (2014)
- Prof. Martin Daly, University of Missouri (2014)
- Dr Donald Baird, University of New Brunswick (2014)
- Prof. Terrie Williams, University of California, Santa Cruz (2013)
- Prof. Felisa Smith, University of New Mexico (2013)
- Prof. Ken Heck, Dauphin Island Sea Lab, USA (2012)
- Prof. Rodolfo Dirzo, Stanford University (2011)
- Prof. Judy Stamps, University of California at Davis (2010)
- Prof. Jonathan Losos, Harvard University (2010)
- Prof. Troy Day, Queen’s University (2010)

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:

2014: “Cooperation and Conflict in the family” organised by Centre Director, Rob Brooks and Jason Collins. This conference brought together leading economic and evolutionary researchers to explore the nature of conflict and cooperation between the sexes in the areas of marriage, mating and fertility. The conference also provided an opportunity for researchers to discuss the economic and evolutionary biology approaches to these issues, explore common ground and identify collaborative opportunities.

2013: “Colour analysis workshop” Dr Michael Kasumovic organised this 2 day workshop that covered the different techniques used in colour analysis and the research that individuals are doing now. A hyperspectral camera was available to trial.

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.

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.

2009: “The Invasion Occasion” (organised by the Angela Moles and her students), a 1-day conference on the evolution and ecology of invasive species.
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 2, 2012. Strategies for successful publishing in ecology and evolution. (Alistair Poore and Terry Ord)

Session 1, 2010. Modeling Workshop (Troy Day – Queen’s University, Canada)
Session 1, 2009. *Selling Your Science* (Tracey Rogers)

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

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)

**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”.

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:

- **Tree-thinking** (Anna Namyatova; 2013)
- **Effective strategies to networking** (Katelyn Edge; 2013)
- **Winning Presentations** (Marie Attard; 2013)
- **Clarity, Intrigue and Persuasion: Making Your Scientific Writing Worth Reading** (Margo Adler; 2012)
- **Understanding and incorporating genetic and microbial analyses into your research** (Tiffanie Nelson & Anna Kopps; 2011)
- **Introduction to the R Environment** (Luke Hedge; 2011)
- **A Successful Abstract, Making your Conference Talk Stand Out, and Speaking to the Public** (Alex Jordan; 2010)
- **Interdisciplinary Research: melding for maximum impact** (Louise McKenzie; 2010)
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 Dixson (b.dixson@unsw.edu.au)
- **Molecular Ecology** – Sherwin laboratory, contact Sven Delaney (s.delaney@unsw.edu.au)
- **Marine ecology and evolution** – Johnston & Poore and laboratories, contact: Dr Mariana Mayer Pinto m.mayerpinto@unsw.edu.au
- **Fisheries and marine environmental research** – Suthers laboratory, contact Iain Suthers (i.suthers@unsw.edu.au)
- **Ecochats** – Bonser and Moles laboratories, contact Claire Brandenburger (c.brandenburger@unsw.edu.au)
- **Eco-Stats** – contact David Warton (David.Warton@unsw.edu.au). Every month there is an Eco-Stats Lab introducing modern statistical methods to ecologists (Bioscience level 6 computer lab).

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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.

March 24, 2014
Outstanding Evolution and Evolution (Postgraduate) graphic

- Awarded to the student who has a graphic within a study or paper that illustrates the data and or findings in the most effective way.
- The graphic needs to be captioned and will be selected by the E&ERC Education Subcommittee based on the effectiveness of how data and or findings is presented and conveyed.

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

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.

March 24, 2014
This coursework should be successfully completed within the first two semesters of enrolment 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:

Progress Reporting

Annual progress reports
Students are required to submit annual progress reports within the first 12 months of enrolment, and again for each year enrolled. The UNSW policies on adequate progress are available at:
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 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. 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, 2014**

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Sessions enrolled</th>
<th>Written submissions</th>
<th>Oral presentations</th>
<th>Meetings of supervisory panel</th>
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<td>Introductory proposal within 4 months of enrolment</td>
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<td>Annual Progress review with major project review Oct 2015</td>
<td>Research seminar Nov 2015</td>
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<td>Annual Progress review Oct 2016</td>
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<td></td>
<td>7-8</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, 2014**

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<td>Annual Progress review May 2018</td>
<td>Research seminar Jun 2018</td>
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<td>7-8</td>
<td>Submit thesis 3-4 years</td>
<td>Exit seminar within 3 months of thesis submission</td>
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<td>Research seminar Nov 2015</td>
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### MSC: starting Session 2, 2014

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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. Tracey Rogers 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. She 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. Tracey Rogers, Ph: 9385 8095,
Email: tracey.rogers@unsw.edu.au

School of Biotechnology and Biomolecular Sciences
Web: http://www.babs.unsw.edu.au/future_students/future-students
Postgraduate coordinator: Dr Li Zhang, Ph: 9385 2042,
Email: l.zhang@unsw.edu.au

School of Mathematics and Statistics
Web: http://www.maths.unsw.edu.au/currentstudents/postgraduate-research
Postgraduate Coursework coordinator: Dr Gery Geenens, Ph: 9385 7032, Email: pg.MathsStats@unsw.edu.au
Postgraduate research coordinator: A/Prof David Warton, Ph: 9385 7031,
Email: re.MathsStats@unsw.edu.au

RESOURCES

E&ERC website:  www.eerc.com.au

E&ERC on facebook:  www.facebook.com/EERC.UNSW
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 24, 2014
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.ic.unsw.edu.au/plagiarism/link.html

The information contained in this brochure is correct as at February 2013. Prospective students should contact UNSW to confirm admission requirements and availability of programs. UNSW reserves the right to change any program, admission requirement or other information herein without any prior notice.

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