

**Department of Physical Geography  
Division of Environmental and Life Sciences  
Macquarie University**

**Guide for Commencing Postgraduate Students  
2007**

*Welcome to the Department of Physical Geography at Macquarie University! This document has been designed to help you become familiar with Departmental policies covering postgraduates – what we expect of you, what you can expect of us, and the range of resources you can access.*

*Your Research Postgraduate Representative (Coordinator) within the Department of Physical Geography is Dr Paul Beggs (Building E7A room 604, Phone: 9850-8399; Email: paul.beggs@mq.edu.au). Paul should be your first point of contact for any matters concerning your postgraduate candidature.*

**PART A: CANDIDATURE**

**Departmental, Supervisor, and Student Responsibilities**

Macquarie University has a Code of Higher Degree Research Practice, incorporating a Code of Supervisory Practice. These give details of Departmental, Supervisory, and Student responsibilities. When you first enrol, you and your supervisor should obtain them from [http://www.research.mq.edu.au/students/current\\_students/documents/Code\\_of\\_Supervisory\\_Practice\\_070104.pdf](http://www.research.mq.edu.au/students/current_students/documents/Code_of_Supervisory_Practice_070104.pdf) and also

[http://www.research.mq.edu.au/students/current\\_students/hdrguide](http://www.research.mq.edu.au/students/current_students/hdrguide)

and discuss them with your supervisor if you have any questions. Pay particular attention to the guidelines pertaining agreements between candidate and supervisor; regular meetings between candidate and supervisor to discuss progress; and procedures for dealing with problems of supervision or progress. Supervisor and student responsibilities and relations will also be discussed at progress interviews.

**Monitoring Your Progress**

It is important to the Department and to yourselves that you complete your studies within the maximum time frame set by the Federal Government – The *maximum* lengths of candidature are:

*Masters degree:* two years full-time; four years part-time.

*PhD degree:* four years full-time; eight years part-time.

For the *new* Division of Environmental and Life Sciences (ELS) graded degree of *Masters Honours*, the maximum length of candidature is also two years full-time. However, the Division strongly recommends that you endeavour to complete this degree in a maximum of 18 months of candidature. This follows successful completion of a six-month Postgraduate Certificate in Research Preparation (*PG Cert.*) at the Credit level or higher.

The Department of Physical Geography has put in place a set of procedures for ensuring timely completion of your postgraduate candidature.

***In your first postgraduate year***

The first year of being a postgraduate can be difficult – especially if you are making the transition from undergraduate to postgraduate life and trying to develop a research topic (including aims, objectives and questions posed). It is thus compulsory that students attend the Central Commencement Program (held in February and July). An online version is available too, but attendance at the Central Commencement Program is compulsory for most students. You must also attend the Departmental induction program that introduces you to the Department of Physical Geography and outlines the expectations of you and your supervisor. This is typically held at the end of February - early March in the first half-year or late July – early August in the second half year, depending on when students begin. This induction program will include a meeting between yourself, your supervisor, and the Postgraduate Coordinator.

This first meeting will discuss whether you should be required to complete any coursework. If you are new to Macquarie University, or your first degree was not in physical geography, we may recommend that you enroll in *GEOS862 Research in Physical Geography*. This unit is routinely undertaken by Physical Geography *Bachelor's Honours* degree students, as well as those students enrolled in the *PG Cert.*, prior to enrolment in the graded degree of Masters Honours. GEOS862 is intended to train new research students in the Department the importance of (i) writing a *critical* literature review, (ii) writing a research proposal, (iii) timetabling your research degree, (iv) orally presenting your work, and (v) being able to write a project report of work undertaken in a subject area that involves some analysis of data. For further information regarding GEOS862, visit <http://www.es.mq.edu.au/physgeog/hons/GEOS862.htm> or contact Dr Kirstie Fryirs (Building E7A room 629, Phone: 9850-8367; Email: [kirstie.fryirs@mq.edu.au](mailto:kirstie.fryirs@mq.edu.au)).

Other items for discussion at the first meeting will be:

- associate supervision;
- research project budget and possible funding opportunities;
- office and laboratory space;
- fieldwork issues (where appropriate);
- occupational health and safety (including lab safety);
- ethics considerations (if required);
- other available resources within the Department;
- authorship on publications; and
- thesis type (*regular* or *by publication*).

Also to be discussed will be equipment and travel, etc., required to properly resource your project. Here, all reasonable requests for resources should be made through your supervisor in the first instance (e.g., access to a computer terminal). Special requests *may* be made through the Department. However, it is generally more appropriate (and advised!) that you pursue funding opportunities for project-related equipment and travel through established avenues such as the *Macquarie University Postgraduate Research Fund (PGRF)* (see below).

At the end of your first six months of candidature (pro-rata for part-time), you are required to present a research proposal to the Department along with a report on progress thus far and goals for the next year. You are also required to participate in the Department's six-monthly Symposium, by giving a seminar outlining your research project and progress. Time allowing, your research presentation will be followed by another meeting between yourself, your supervisor, the Postgraduate Coordinator and the Head of Department (HoD). At this time, we will review supervisory arrangements, your progress so far, and outline goals for the subsequent year. If progress is deemed to be unsatisfactory, further goals and timelines will be established, and a further review date established.

In May or October of your first year, you will be required to participate in the University's formal annual progress review process outlined below.

### ***In your second and subsequent years***

It is a University requirement that every postgraduate student completes an annual progress report. However, there are also two other Departmental review requirements. Every six months, in May and October, you will be required to meet with the Department's Postgraduate Coordinator together with your supervisor. The aim of this meeting is to discuss (i) what you believe your achievements have been during the previous six months, (ii) how those achievements compare with what you hoped to achieve, (iii) an outline of goals and plans for the next six months, and (iv) the identification of mechanisms for ensuring continued progress. During the meeting you will also be asked to comment on the quantity and quality of your supervision. Your supervisor will be absent during this phase of the interview. This is part of our commitment to achieving excellence in supervision. Please remember that this meeting is not an inquisition, but an opportunity to reflect on the past half-year, commend satisfactory progress (this does not mean we aim to praise mediocrity, but rather that you continue to maintain "satisfactory" progress as required by the University), and/or identify possible difficulties and attempt to rectify them.

If, during the previous year leading up to the University's annual progress review, you have not presented your research at a Departmental seminar or other public forum, you will be required to give a Departmental seminar in October. A "satisfactory" on the University's annual progress report will not be given without it being demonstrated that your progress is indeed at least satisfactory!

## ***PART B: RESOURCES***

### **Contacts and Sources of Information**

Your Principal Supervisor should be the first and most immediate source of any information you require. However, there are a variety of contacts and sources you can utilise within the Department and the University. These are the:

- *Research Postgraduate Representative (Coordinator)* for the Department: Dr Paul Beggs (Building E7A room 604, Phone: 9850-8399; Email: paul.beggs@mq.edu.au). The Postgraduate Coordinator will be pleased to help with any general questions you have about postgraduate studies and policies within the Department, postgraduate scholarships, progress reports, etc.;
- *Associate Dean of Research and Postgraduate Studies* for the Division of ELS (Assoc Prof Geoff Humphreys; E7A 631; ext. 7990; email: geoff.humphreys@mq.edu.au). The Associate Dean coordinates postgraduate research issues and activities at the Divisional Level and is an alternative point of contact for postgraduate matters of a more serious nature;
- *Head of Department (HoD)* of Physical Geography (Assoc Prof Richard de Dear; E7A 621; ext. 7582; email: pg\_head@student.els.mq.edu.au). The HoD is responsible for approval of fieldwork applications, and is concerned with all Departmental issues;
- *Executive Officer* for the Department of Physical Geography (Wendy Southwell; E7A 617; ext. 8426; email: pg\_admin@els.mq.edu.au). The Executive Officer will be able to answer general questions about postgraduate studies within the Department and issues regarding Departmental administration;
- *Higher Degree Research Office (HDRO)* ("Research HUB" Level 3 C5C East; ext. 7987; [http://www.research.mq.edu.au/students/contact\\_us/address\\_\\_and\\_\\_map](http://www.research.mq.edu.au/students/contact_us/address__and__map); hdro@vc.mq.edu.au). The HDRO can help with enquiries about your enrolment status, fees, scholarship, thesis submission, etc.; and

- *Department of Physical Geography web site* <http://www.es.mq.edu.au/physgeog/> contains information (including this booklet) on the Department, what we teach, and staff and student research interests.

## **Facilities**

Details about research student facilities are available through the Higher Degree Research Office web-site at <http://www.research.mq.edu.au/students/home>. In addition, the Postgraduate Studies Section web page contains information on University-wide facilities available to you at <http://www.es.mq.edu.au/physgeog/postgrad/index.htm>.

*Space:* You will be allocated an office that will typically be shared with a number of other postgraduates. Ensure your office is locked whenever it is unoccupied.

*Photocopying:* Your library card doubles as a rechargeable photocopy card for photocopiers in the Library. There is also a Departmental photocopier in E7A 620. There is replacement paper for the photocopier and printer in the cabinet in E7A 620 (the key to the cabinet is in an envelope behind the door).

E7A 620 also contains a heavy duty stapler (capable of stapling thick documents), a cutter, and many of the forms you may need to use from time to time (such as leave forms).

*Email/computers:* Email accounts can be established by Phil Ingram (ext. 8401; email: [pingram@els.mq.edu.au](mailto:pingram@els.mq.edu.au)). IT support is also available through the Division of ELS. If you have any IT problems associated with your research, please log your request through <http://www.els.mq.edu.au/it-helpdesk/>.

*Printing:* Our computers are networked to a central printer in E7A 620. If you require colour printing, then your computer can be set up to printer to the colour printer in E7A 603.

*Scanning:* If you need to scan anything, this can be done using the scanner connected to the computer in E7A 603.

*Office phone:* Your office phone number is 9850 XXXX. The phone will be shared amongst the students in your office.

### *Internal (Macquarie) calls*

Just dial the last four numbers.

### *Outside local calls*

Dial 0 then the number.

### *Long distance calls*

Not all phones are set up to make long distance calls. If you need this then discuss it with you supervisor.

### *Voicemail*

You have access to voicemail. A userguide can be found here:

<http://www.mq.edu.au:8080/phone/vmail.html>

*Fax:* The Departmental fax machine is located in E7A 603. Cover sheets can be found on the wall above the fax machine. Record details of long distance faxes on the form in the folder beside the fax machine.

### *Internal (Macquarie) faxes*

Just dial the last four numbers.

### *Outside faxes*

Dial 0 then the number.

*Mail:*

*Sending mail*

The mail bag is located in E7A 603 to the side of the desk. Macquarie University envelopes should be used. These can be obtained from the stationery cabinets. For internal mail you can use an Internal Mail envelope. For mail going outside the University, write the Department name (i.e. Physical Geography) and your name in the upper left of the envelope.

*Receiving Mail*

You will have a pigeon hole on the 8th floor of E7A (western end).

Your postal address here at Macquarie is:

[Your Name]  
Department of Physical Geography  
Macquarie University  
New South Wales 2109  
Australia

*Stationery:* Available in the metal cabinets in E7A 603 (keep a record of items taken using the sheets provided on the front of the cabinet).

GIS Software: Postgraduate students have access to standard GIS software and where necessary the GIS research laboratory. See Carol Jacobson (ext. 8403; email: carol.jacobson@mq.edu.au) for assistance.

The Department has access to the Division of ELS's *multimedia and design facility*. Postgraduate students may gain access to this facility by organising this first through their supervisor and then by contacting Judy Davis (ext. 8473; email: jdavis@els.mq.edu.au).

## **Funding Opportunities**

### ***Scholarships/Employment***

The Australian Postgraduate Award (APA) is an important source of funding for many research postgraduates. They are highly competitive and the deadline for applications is October 31 each year. Please talk to Paul Beggs and/or your supervisor for advice to help maximise your chances of being awarded an APA, if you do not already hold a scholarship. Other scholarships are also available.

Postgraduates are also commonly employed as tutors or research assistants for various members of staff. The demand for tutors and research assistants depends on the availability of funding: in some years we have more work than those seeking it, in other years we have many prospective employees but no work for them. It is probably best to let your supervisor (and Paul Beggs if necessary) know if you are interested in tutoring and/or research assistant work.

### ***Research Funding***

Postgraduate research students will be entitled to an annual research budget from the Department to support their research. Budget spending will be overseen by the candidate's supervisor.

A range of activities might be supported by your research budget allowance. *The principal guideline is that the money should be used to facilitate the student's research and timely completion of the degree.* Likely expenses include (though this is not an exhaustive list):

- Fieldwork expenses – e.g., travel, accommodation, food;

- Fieldwork equipment – e.g., special tools particular to the project that are not otherwise already available through the Department’s current assets;
- Laboratory materials and equipment;
- Necessary capital equipment – e.g., scanners, computers (if not already available), technical software;
- Purchase of data;
- General maintenance expenses – photocopying, document charges, special stationery;
- Conference expenses.

*It is important to note that certain project types may **require** a contribution from budget spending towards particular Departmental and/or Divisional resources, e.g., for atmospheric and ocean scientists doing climate modelling, this would require an allocation of the budget towards maintenance of the Division’s Linux (or Unix) computing facility.*

Each year, you should discuss your planned use of the annually budgeted monies with your supervisor and you should prepare a budget by the end of Week 4 of the teaching semester in which you are enrolling. In June and December of each year, you are required to submit a report to the Postgraduate Coordinator. This report should outline in detail your use of the money and how it contributed to your research and progress.

Students are also expected to utilise the *Macquarie University Postgraduate Research Fund (PGRF)*. Funds are allocated according to merit and are based on an application. You can only receive funding as a once-only grant of \$4000 during your candidature, so plan well. There are two funding rounds per year. Details are on the website of the Research Office at:

[http://www.research.mq.edu.au/researchers/funding/internal/pgrf\\_documents/pgrfFundRules\\_revised.pdf](http://www.research.mq.edu.au/researchers/funding/internal/pgrf_documents/pgrfFundRules_revised.pdf).

### ***Conference/Travel Funding***

The Departmental and University funds outlined above can be used to support conference attendance if you are giving a paper. In addition, the Institute of Australian Geographers offers travel grants to postgraduates presenting a paper at an IAG Annual Conference. You can obtain more information from your supervisor and/or the IAG web page at <http://www.iag.org.au>.

## ***PART C: SAFETY AND ETHICS***

### **Fieldwork Issues**

Most (though not all) physical geography research programs involve some form of fieldwork, ranging from travelling to and drilling ice cores in the Antarctic, to atmospheric (microclimatic) measurements in Lane Cove catchment! You and your supervisor will determine the exact nature of your research, but there are two issues pertinent to all forms of fieldwork – safety and ethics!!

### **Safety**

You are obliged to satisfy the Department that you are aware of the potential risks your research might pose to yourself, and that you are well equipped and trained to take reasonable steps to avoid those risks. You should obtain the relevant forms from the Division’s website (<http://www.els.mq.edu.au/safety/index.htm>) (Form 1 Fieldwork notification; Form 2 Fieldwork participant; Form 3 Fieldwork Risk Assessment; Form 4 International Fieldwork; Form 5 Coursework Fieldwork Risk Assessment), fill it in and have it signed by both your supervisor, Russ Field and then approved by the Head of Department (HoD) *before* commencing any fieldwork. Please do this at LEAST FIVE working days before fieldwork commences. It is appreciated that urgent field work occasionally arises (e.g. sampling of flood waters or other rare environmental sampling opportunity), but the documentation outlined above must still be completed before

commencing any fieldwork. Failure to do this will almost certainly result in prohibition of any further fieldwork activities!

All research students who work in laboratories and/or go out in the field will be required to undertake safety training with the Divisional Safety Officer, Ron Claassens, located in E7A 725, ext. 8417. These students must report to the ELS Safety Personnel Jenny Minard/Ron Claassens as early as possible and/or before undertaking any laboratory work. Further details of the venue for the safety induction program will be provided at Departmental induction. A form will need to be signed after the completion of this program.

### **Ethics**

All Macquarie University research involving human subjects (formal or informal interviews, questionnaires, etc.), animal subjects, or any research of a bioethical nature, must be demonstrably ethically appropriate. To do this, you must apply to the University Ethics Committee for clearance. Application forms and guidelines are available through the Macquarie University Ethics website: <http://www.research.mq.edu.au/researchers/ethics>. After consultation with your supervisor, fill in the application form, append the necessary attachments, and submit the form via the HoD's Office, prior to submission to the University Ethics Committee. Please speak to your supervisor regarding the time frame required for ethics approval given that it can take weeks not days.

### **Questions?**

As a Department, it is our goal to generate an inclusive and stimulating postgraduate experience. If you have any queries or concerns please contact Paul Beggs.

## Research Project Budget and Expenditure

### Guidelines for appropriate use of postgraduate research project funds in the Department of Physical Geography

Commencing in 2004, there will be an allocation of up to \$5,000 per annum for research-related costs attached to postgraduate research projects within the University. This document is intended to provide both guidelines and a framework for appropriate use of these funds within the Department of Physical Geography.

1. You will be required to draw up a budget of expected costs for the year ahead. This should be completed by the end of Week 4 of semester 1 of the Macquarie University teaching calendar. This budget should include items such as expected field-work expenses, computing costs (e.g., for atmospheric science students using the Department's Unix facility, this would require an allocation of about \$1,200/year), travel expenses, conference expenses, as well as including costs of telephone calls, printing expenses, faxes, and photocopying!! All of these items are real costs to the Department and are not free! You should consult with your supervisor on your budget. Physical Geography staff have experience with costing issues associated with regularly applying for grants, etc. Budgets need to be formulated at the commencement of each year, detailing expected expenditure for the year ahead.
2. There should be an allocation of \$1-2,000 in your budget for your supervisor. This allocation is for project-related expenses concerned with supervision of the postgraduate project and may be used at the discretion of the supervisor for, for example, travel expenses related to visiting the postgraduate student's Adjunct Supervisor on the project; co-attendance with the student at conferences related to the project, etc. The supervisor may choose to use only part (or none) of this allocation, in which case the remainder would be returned to the student for direct student expenses.
3. The full-time equivalent funding allocation will be \$5,000/year attached to each postgraduate project. This translates to \$2,500 for each full-time equivalent half year enrolment (e.g., those students commencing their candidature in second semester) and \$2,500 for each part-time equivalent full year enrolment. For PhD students commencing their fourth full-time year of candidature, an allocation of \$2,500 will be made. If the student has not completed by 3 ½ years, and goes into the second half of their fourth year of candidature, a new budget should also be made for the second half of this year in order to gain the extra \$2,500 if required.
4. Postgraduate students awarded, and in receipt of, Department of Physical Geography scholarships (at the Australian Postgraduate Award (APA) rate) will not receive the \$5,000/year allocation.
5. Administration procedures: For simple listed budgetary items of less than \$100, it will be sufficient for authorisation to be made by the Physical Geography Finance Officer (Meredith McGregor). For those items in excess of \$100, the supervisor will need to also sign authorisation of the expenditure. **All budgeted items must have direct relevance to the thesis for research expenditure.**
6. All allocated accounts are subject to standard auditing procedures.
7. Any unspent annual allocation will be returned to the central Departmental account immediately following 31 December in any year. A case would need to be made for funds to be carried forward into a subsequent year.

*Head of Department of Physical Geography (April 2004).*