



BIOL7660

Advanced Studies in Palaeobiology

Session 1, Weekday attendance, North Ryde 2020

Department of Biological Sciences

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

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Credit points

10

Prerequisites

Admission to MRes

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

This is an advanced unit that exposes students to the best examples of recent (and classic) primary literature across a broad range of fields including palaeobiology, evolutionary biology, ecology and geobiology. In particular, this unit focuses on exciting interdisciplinary research streams where the work of geneticists and embryologists is combined fruitfully with the investigations of palaeobiologists and evolutionary biologists in order to decipher important evolutionary questions. The unit also focuses on the enormous interest in reconstructing past environments through studies of community palaeoecology, taphonomy and ecosystem evolution. Students will participate in and contribute to weekly group based discussions, debates and seminars that aim to probe, critically evaluate and assess topical questions and test prevailing models and/or hypotheses across a wide range of interdisciplinary research themes. The curriculum will include written and oral essay style assessments as well as planning and presentation of a novel research project focused on an important aspect of evolutionary biology and/or palaeobiology. This unit provides students an opportunity to directly interact with research active academic staff, postdoctoral researchers and PhD students from many disciplines including evolutionary biology, palaeobiology, ecology and geoscience.

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

ULO1: Evaluate and synthesise current literature concerning large spatial, temporal and intellectual scales in evolutionary biology, palaeobiology and ecology

ULO2: Design, construct, and present innovative written and oral evaluations and interpretations of relevant primary literature at an advanced level

ULO3: Organise, lead, and convene a group discussion focussed on current or controversial topics in evolutionary biology and based on recently published relevant primary sources

ULO4: Plan and devise novel research focussed on an important aspect of evolutionary biology and/or palaeobiology

Assessment Tasks

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

Assessment details are no longer provided here as a result of changes due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Students should consult [iLearn](#) for revised unit information.

[Find out more about the Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) and potential impacts on staff and students](#)

General Assessment Information

1. Weekly Summaries

Each week, each student will summarise literature related to the discussion topic. The main aim is to lay the foundation for good practice in data mining primary scientific literature, evaluating data sources, and formatting written work. The summaries should review at least four relatively new and pertinent scientific papers or books. The summary of each paper should be no longer than 30 words.

2. Essays

Two essays (maximum 2500 words each) will be produced. Each essay is based on a topic of your choice. Both essay topics must be substantially different from your MRes research.

The essays will provide you with an opportunity to delve more deeply into the literature and present a more comprehensive analysis of the topic. Details on exact submission dates, specific marking criteria and format for each stream will be provided separately.

Students will be assessed on coverage and comprehension of the literature relevant to the chosen topics, critical evaluation of the material, and style and writing of the essay.

The essays will be independently assessed by the supervisor and at least one other member of staff with relevant expertise. More staff may be co-opted to act as independent assessors if required.

The due dates will be agreed in discussions between the student and supervisor. Normally, Essay 1 is handed in by the end of week 7 and Essay 2 at the end of Week 11.

3. Research Presentation

Each student will be expected to present a seminar of 20 minutes duration plus 10 minutes for questions and discussion.

It is important that your talk is well structured. Remember to keep the structure of your talk simple, but logical.

You will need to carefully evaluate and present only essential, important and relevant material (especially illustrations) in an organised and logical sequence. The best seminars are those that are relatively simple, logically organised, clearly illustrated, informative and entertaining. Remember that the seminar is worth 15% of your final mark, so we expect high quality work (especially in terms of scientific evaluation, presentation of factually correct information and relevance). Your presentation will be presented during the Week 12 or 13 meetings (see Schedule) and the audience will consist of at least 2 staff members, relevant postdocs, PhD students, and other MRes students. Other students completing BIOL766 will also be present.

Marks will be allocated for:

- (a) Scientific content, factual correctness, and relevance— how well data have been evaluated, synthesised and presented. Adequate acknowledgement of relevant sources. (50%)
- (b) Organisation and logistics – the materials and methods are clearly and logically outlined. (20%)
- (c) Clarity of presentation (oral and visual); quality of the visuals presented (30%)

Essay submission and *Turnitin*

Both essays must initially be submitted via *Turnitin* which can be accessed via the BIOL766 website. Essays will not be marked until they have been submitted to the *Turnitin* website.

More detailed information and instructions for using *Turnitin*, including quickstart and step-by-step user manuals, can be found at: <http://www.turnitin.com/static/training.html>.

Extensions and penalties

10% off the mark allocated for essays will be deducted per day for any work that is submitted after the due date.

The deadlines for essays are not negotiable. Only a medical certificate or a letter with appropriate supporting documents outlining other serious, extenuating circumstances can be used to submit an essay after the due date without penalty. All applications for special consideration or extension must be sought *before the due date* unless this is absolutely impossible. All applications for extensions of deadlines must be submitted to the appropriate unit convenor.

Feedback and unit evaluation

As this is a small unit, there should be a considerable amount of contact between the student and their supervisor. This contact can be face to face or via electronic communication. Informal feedback will be provided on semi regular basis. In addition you will receive written feedback on your essays. The unit is too small to allow anonymous unit evaluation surveys to be used. However, we hope students will raise any issues with their supervisor and/or the convener of the stream they are undertaking.

Delivery and Resources

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

Any references to on-campus delivery below may no longer be relevant due to COVID-19.

Please check here for updated delivery information: https://ask.mq.edu.au/account/pub/display/unit_status

Pre-requisites

This unit is offered as an option in Biological Sciences for students enrolled in the Bachelor of Philosophy and Master of Research Degrees.

Unit description

This advanced postgraduate unit exposes students to the best examples of recent and classic primary scientific literature across palaeobiology, including related research in evolutionary biology, ecology, and geobiology. Students will contribute to combined seminars and discussions each week. There are both written and oral assessments. This unit provides students with an opportunity to directly interact with research active academic staff, postdoctoral researchers, PhD students, and year 2 MRes students.

Unit Schedule

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

The unit schedule/topics and any references to on-campus delivery below may no longer be relevant due to COVID-19. Please consult [iLearn](#) for latest details, and check here for updated delivery information: https://ask.mq.edu.au/account/pub/display/unit_status

This unit will not be offered in 2020.

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central) (<https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central>). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

- [Academic Appeals Policy](#)
- [Academic Integrity Policy](#)
- [Academic Progression Policy](#)
- [Assessment Policy](#)
- [Fitness to Practice Procedure](#)
- [Grade Appeal Policy](#)
- [Complaint Management Procedure for Students and Members of the Public](#)
- [Special Consideration Policy](#) (**Note:** *The Special Consideration Policy is effective from 4 December 2017 and replaces the Disruption to Studies Policy.*)

Students seeking more policy resources can visit the [Student Policy Gateway](https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/student-policy-gateway) (<https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/student-policy-gateway>). It is your one-stop-shop for the key policies you need to know about throughout your undergraduate student journey.

If you would like to see all the policies relevant to Learning and Teaching visit [Policy Central](https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central) (<https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central>).

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: <https://students.mq.edu.au/study/getting-started/student-conduct>

Results

Results published on platform other than [eStudent](#), (eg. iLearn, Coursera etc.) or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in [eStudent](#). For more information visit ask.mq.edu.au or if you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@mq.edu.au

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <https://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

Learning Skills

Learning Skills (mq.edu.au/learningskills) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to help you improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Getting help with your assignment](#)
- [Workshops](#)
- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module](#)

The Library provides online and face to face support to help you find and use relevant information resources.

- [Subject and Research Guides](#)
- [Ask a Librarian](#)

Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the [Disability Service](#) who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at ask.mq.edu.au

If you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@mq.edu.au

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use of IT Resources Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.