Dear BCA student

Welcome to the Biostatistics Collaboration of Australia (BCA). The BCA is a consortium of universities that delivers postgraduate courses in biostatistics by distance across a number of universities. My name is Erica Jobling. My colleague, Emily Higginson, and I run the central administrative office for the BCA. Our contact details can be found here.

Please read this message carefully, as it contains important information for your coursework. ...and please get back to us if you should not be on this address list (eg because you have withdrawn your enrolment).

BCA courses are delivered by distance, by a consortium of universities, and so procedures will differ somewhat from ‘on-campus’ studies.

We have received notification from one of the BCA universities of your application for enrolment in units of study* in the BCA program. This has either been via BCA forms µ or university class lists forwarded to us by university support staff.

PLEASE NOTE THAT BCA FORMS ARE NOT OFFICIAL UNIVERSITY ENROLMENT FORMS. We use them to register information as quickly as possible within BCA consortium arrangements - so that we can get you up and running at the start of semester. If you have not already formally enrolled, you will need to do so through the university you have chosen to apply to, and that university will notify you about the status of your application. (We will record all information sent to us and include this in the BCA class lists we send to unit coordinators. If however you don’t appear on enrolment lists of your “home” university by the census date of 31 March, we will take you out of BCA class lists and stop online access.)

The documents and links mentioned below can be found on the "Student Resources" page of the BCA website (www.bca.edu.au/currentstudents.html) We will refer you to this site from time to time in the following message.

Please get back to us immediately if you think you may have problems accessing online information. The program is delivered by distance means and online facilities are used extensively. If this is a problem we will need to work something out.

SEMESTER START DATE – semester 2, 2019
The BCA semester starts on Monday 29 July regardless of which university you are enrolled in. (This coincides with the start date at Adelaide, Monash, Macquarie and Melbourne. The official start date at Queensland and Sydney 22 July and 5 August respectively.)

*The exception to the 29 July start date is Epidemiology delivered by the University of Queensland. As this unit is delivered to a larger cohort at UQ, delivery will commence on the start date of 22 July at those universities. BCA HQ will send class lists to the coordinators at UQ before this date and students will be contacted by the unit coordinators, and support staff about access to online learning.

COMMUNICATION WITH UNIT COORDINATORS
Postgraduate student administrators at your home university will send your contact details and unit of study* choices to us at the BCA coordinating office. We record this information, compile class lists to send to coordinators of the units you have chosen for the current semester and make arrangements for your online learning access.

Before the start of semester, unit coordinators will send a welcome email to students entered in their BCA class lists, with information about how they the unit will be run. You should receive this message on the Friday before the start of semester (26July). Please send a reply email to the coordinator so that they can confirm that you are in contact (and this may prompt the posting of unit materials).

* Units of study are called variously, units, subjects, courses or papers at different universities. A unit of study in the BCA program of courses is generally referred to as a unit. Units are one semester in length (with the exception of WPP, which may comprise more
than one unit). There are two semesters in the academic year, semester 1 starting in late February or early March and semester 2 in late July or early August, with a mid-year break between the two. (UQ students please note: what UQ calls a unit is half a standard UQ course. 2 UQ units = 1 UQ course which is equivalent to 1 unit of study.)

GETTING STARTED

Study notes:
You may receive printed copies of study materials from unit coordinators, posted to the address we have in our BCA records. Mail-out procedures will vary across units. Coordinators of some units that don’t include readings from journal articles etc. (which universities do not allow to be posted online) may not send materials by post.

For units where mail-outs occur: Admissions at some universities may still be in progress and coordinators don’t get a lot of leeway between receiving your contact details and the start of semester, so you are unlikely to receive the notes before the start of semester. You will find Study Guides and first module/s in online unit sites in eLearning. The important thing to look out for is the welcome email from the unit coordinator in which they will explain the procedures for their unit."

Please note that the BCA office does not mail out study materials. These are posted by staff at the delivering university.

Study Guides
Study Guides for upcoming units of study this semester are available to download from the Student Resources site (if not yet posted, keep checking, they will be shortly).

Online learning

E Learning, using “Canvas”, will be the main online learning management system used by coordinators to communicate with you. These facilities will help you learn in a distance environment by allowing you to have class discussions with students and coordinators, and providing electronic access to such things as study notes, assessment items and submission facilities and solutions to exercises, and mini lecture videos in some units. Notice: Most BCA eLearning unit sites are accessed through The University of Sydney (USyd) server. The BCA online facilities are, however, independent of the policies and procedures of this university and apply equally to all BCA consortium universities. You will have access to USyd online help and user instructions, via Sydney Educational Innovations (EI).

* EXCEPTIONS: Important note for students enrolled in Epidemiology (EPI)
EPI is offered on-campus (face-to-face) and/or by distance at some universities. If you are NOT doing the EPI delivered by your home university, you will be doing (Introduction to) Epidemiology delivered by the University of Queensland. (See here www.bca.edu.au/TC.html#epi1 for contact details for EPI at UQ [PUBH7600])

The program coordinator at your home university can advise about EPI choices.

Whether you are studying EPI on campus; by distance at your home university; or the UQ external (distance) EPI, the BCA eLearning sites (in Canvas) will NOT be used for this unit (because, at all universities, Epidemiology is delivered to a larger cohort of students enrolled in a range of degrees).

Unit coordinators/tutors of these units will contact you with advice about how to access online sites at the relevant delivering universities.

Access to BCA eLearning

Your access profile will be loaded onto the eLearning database by the start of semester. You will not be able to access your eLearning site until this has been done.

The BCA office will send you instructions for logging on before the start of semester (Please do not ask your unit coordinators for this information).

Look out for the email titled “BCA: eLearning instructions semester 2”.

Study Resources can be found in Student Resources on the BCA website. Entries include: contact details; BCA Program Outline; BCA curriculum; Textbook & Software Guide for Students; SAS purchase forms; BCA eLearning Guide - Getting Started, Home university libraries - textbook and journal
access; BCA Assessment Guide; Referencing Style Guide; Guide for Reporting Statistical Results; Workplace Project Portfolio (WPP) Guidelines; WPP examples; and more...

the **BCA Textbook and Software Guide** contains details of compulsory and recommended textbooks and software for each unit of study, and purchasing advice. It is important to note that suppliers may need to order in textbooks and statistical software purchasing procedures may take some time. We urge you to read the Guide carefully and make your orders as soon as possible.

**Software**
Stata and R are the base-line statistical software requirements for units of study within the program. Both packages are compulsory requirements for the core unit Data Management and Statistical Computing (DMC). Coordinators are aware that many people will be familiar with other packages. The choice has been limited in the interests of teaching efficiency and industry standards.

Stata must be bought from the suppliers. R can be downloaded free of charge from the R-project homepage. Software requirements per unit and access/purchasing details can be found in the **BCA Textbook and Software Guide** (from p6 on).

**Textbooks**
For textbook requirements per unit and purchasing details, see pages 1, 2 and 4,5 of the **BCA Textbook and Software Guide**.

**BCA Curriculum Guides**
An important document for study planning is the **BCA Program Outline**. This document contains study guides and current information about the program. It includes outlines of all units, including prescribed references and software. The table on page 5 lists core and elective units for each course, semester availability and prerequisites. The tables on pages 6 and 7 show examples of how you might structure your schedule of study.

**COMMUNICATION**
In a consortium and distance education environment, you need to know how the lines of communication work. **How the BCA works** (in a nutshell), and **About the BCA** contain short explanations.

See also contact details for university support staff and program coordinators and unit coordinators.

Following are some key pointers about how to make things work for you in a distance environment.

- **University emails and student portals**
  It’s advisable to set up your student email so that messages are automatically forwarded to your commonly-used email address, and to stay familiar with your home university student internet access (your "my")student portal/hub*). You can generally use this site to enrol in units for upcoming semesters, update your details for home university consumption and check your results. **Note, your student portal is not the same as your Canvas access.**
  These sites are called variously at different universities: myUni / Sydney Student (University of Sydney); MyUQ / mySI-net (University of Queensland); Student Portal (University of Melbourne); my.monash / WES (Monash University); myMQ (Macquarie University); and myUni / Access Adelaide (University of Adelaide).

- **Don’t be a stranger**
  If you make changes to your enrolment or your contact details change, drop us and your unit coordinator/s a line – one email message copied to the other is fine. (So that your official student record is up to date, you should also update these details at your home university via your online student portal, but note, the BCA database is not linked to any university records systems so this information doesn’t automatically flow through.)

**BCA HQ announcements**
We’ll send the usual messages containing updates throughout the semester and. As ever, we’ll try not to savage your email inbox. If you see one that has a “BCA – (subject line)”, it will be sure to contain relevant information about your study.

**ENQUIRIES**
- Staff at the BCA office are available at all times to respond to your enquiries: bca@ctc.usyd.edu.au (02) 9562 5076/5054.

- If you have questions about your enrolment in units of study (e.g., your enrolment choices are blocked in your student portal) contact the postgraduate student office at your home university and/or your program coordinator.

- If you have academic questions, contact the program coordinator at your home university:

- If you have problems with Canvas: Here’s some contacts:
  - A range of good help facilities are available in the “Help” link on your Canvas Dashboard: LH (grey) menu, go to the question mark icon just below your profile.
  - Call us at BCA HQ.
  - If you have access (unikey) issues, contact the BCA office – unless you are enrolled at the University of Sydney, in which case you should contact the ICT Helpdesk on (02) 9251 2000

  Note: Unless you are enrolled at Sydney, don’t use the Sydney MyUni link. This is the University of Sydney student portal.

**CHANGES TO YOUR ENROLMENT:** You should first tell your university about these, so that they can be included in your student record (and delays may have financial implications). However, again, a quick email to your unit coordinators and the BCA coordinating office will mean that we can act on the information immediately.

**CENSUS DATES:** The final dates that you can withdraw from units/subjects without incurring financial penalty are the last working day before the census date of 31 March in semester 1 and 31 August for semester 2. This date is generated by the Australian Government so it should carry across all universities. However, some dates and details for student records are university specific. We recommend that you check in with university staff and websites.

**A couple more things...**

**THE STATISTICAL COMMUNITY – ANZSTAT and StatsSci.org**

**It’s a good idea to subscribe to the “anzstats” mail group.** This is a forum for exchange of information for statisticians in Australia and New Zealand. It’s a good way of staying in touch with events, issues, and advertised positions within the statistical community. Subscription is free. It’s available here (if a debate gets going, they can bang on a bit at times, but you may find it interesting, or there’s always the delete button J) There is also a job listing database at StatsSci.org and the SSAI Career Centre page.

**And finally...**

In this distance environment, you need to know you can put your hand up if you need anything. Please don’t hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or need help at any time. Even if we can’t answer your question/s immediately, we can advise where to direct them (we don’t get out much; always happy to talk to students 😊)

We hope you enjoy your studies.
All the best
Erica and Emily

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