



## BCA welcome to new students 2-2017

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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for your coursework.** ...and please get back to us if you should not be on this address list (eg because you have withdrawn your enrolment).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 or university class lists forwarded to me 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 \(www.bca.edu.au/currentstudents.html\)](http://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, 2017**

The BCA semester starts on **Monday 31 July** (regardless of which university you are enrolled in)

### **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 (28 July).** 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

eLearning, using "Blackboard", 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.

**Note:** 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 eLearning .

### \* 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](http://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 (Blackboard) will NOT be used for this unit** (because, at all universities, Epidemiology is delivered to a much 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; 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 SAS 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). SAS is not required for any other units but you will need Stata for a number of others.

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. SAS can be downloaded / accessed online. 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.**

#### STAYING IN TOUCH WITH THE BCA

Please email us (the BCA office and your unit coordinator/s) immediately if your contact details change. Information that has been added to your record at your home university will not automatically be transmitted to the BCA, and vice-versa for contact information that you send to the BCA office and unit coordinators. Email addresses are particularly important, and postal addresses for hard copy mail-outs.

#### BCA ANNOUNCEMENTS

From time to time we'll send messages containing updates. We'll keep these emails to a minimum (and they will all be shorter than this one ☺) so if you see one that has a “BCA – (subject line)”, it will contain current information for students.

## HOME UNIVERSITY INFORMATION

**... information from your home university to you:**

**\*Your home university will give you a student email. Whilst you may not use this as your main contact address, you should set this address up so that messages are automatically redirected to your commonly use email address** (ie the one used by the BCA)\*. Most universities use the student email address to post important information to students, eg university calendar updates such as current pre-enrolment timetables and dates that results are released.

You should also stay familiar with the student web access provided by your home university, by occasionally logging in (these sites are called variously at different universities: MyUni (University of Sydney); MyUQ (University of Queensland); Student Portal (University of Melbourne); my.monash / WES (Monash University); myMQ (Macquarie University); and Access Adelaide / MyUni (University of Adelaide). You can generally do things like updating your details for home uni consumption and pre-enrolling in units of study, and your results will be posted on this site.

Access is usually via the "Current Students" link on your home university website.

(Note that if you are unable to pre-enrol in units of study via your student site, you should contact the postgraduate student office at your university and ask them to register the enrolment. Program coordinators should be consulted if choices appear to be blocked. [Contacts](#)

**...information from you to universities and the BCA:**

**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, or 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 about what will appear on your student record are university specific. We recommend you check the calendars of your home university or talk to postgraduate staff there.

**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](#)

**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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