

Centre for
Biodiversity
Analysis



Australian
National
University



Invitation and information for potential external Honours co-supervisors



External co-supervisors bring unique problems and foci from real-world research, management and policy that have the potential to provide engaging and valuable student experience. These projects allow students to maintain and develop their university connections and research skills while being exposed to researchers, managers and policy makers in an operational environment. They also afford an excellent opportunity to develop collaborative linkages between government staff and university researchers.

Honours is a one-year (full time) program based on independent research. Most of the year is spent working on a research project, under the guidance of a supervisor/s. The Centre for Biodiversity Analysis (CBA) invites interested external supervisors (e.g. CSIRO, Government) to propose research project ideas that can help address their own priority areas. A PhD qualification is a preferred but not necessary requirement for the external co-supervisor as a university academic at ANU or University of Canberra will be the primary supervisor. The CBA can help identify and 'match-make' suitable co-supervisors at ANU and University of Canberra. We can also help advertise proposed projects to third year students.

An honours project needs to introduce a student to all aspects of original scientific research: experimental design, data collection, statistical analysis, scientific writing and publishing. The topic should identify questions to be answered or gaps to be filled in the current knowledge. It is also helpful to confine the research problem to a well-defined question so that the objectives of the research can be achieved in the time available.

As suitable project will comprise the workload of an Honours year and thesis (see 'honours year' below), and can be accomplished within the time frame, resources and infrastructure available (e.g. the Research School of Biology at ANU allocates \$2500 operating budget per honours student). Students can commence their Honours year either in February or July, which is useful when planning field-based projects to account for seasonality of flora and fauna. The application deadline is mid-December (February start) or end of May (July start).

The CBA also has Honours Awards with up to \$10,000 available for stipends and operational expenses (<http://cba.anu.edu.au/opportunities/cba-grants-funding/honours-awards>). These can be adapted to include external partners other than CSIRO. External support can be in-kind and/or cash.

Examples of co-supervised honours projects previously funded by the CBA:

- <https://cba.anu.edu.au/opportunities/student-research/projects-opportunities/genetic-rescue-southern-brush-tailed-rock>
- <https://cba.anu.edu.au/opportunities/student-research/projects-opportunities/sequencing-genome-australian-alpine-plant>
- <https://cba.anu.edu.au/opportunities/student-research/projects-opportunities/uncovering-hare-microbiome>

The honours year

Well before applications close, third year students are encouraged to get in touch with potential supervisors to discuss their research interests. Students often use an 'off the shelf' project offered by a supervisor/s, but can also design an entirely new project with their supervisor's assistance. Once a topic is decided upon, students work with their supervisor/s to develop a detailed research plan for their honours project.

The year begins with a few weeks of training courses and workshops to equip students with important research skills. Early in the year, students will present a 15 min Introductory Seminar to outline their project to fellow staff and students. A few weeks later students submit a Research Proposal outlining the background, aims and methods of their project, and then meet with their panel of examiners to discuss their project plan. The Research Proposal is typically worth 15%. They will meet with their panel of examiners mid-way through the year to review their progress and then near the end of the year present their findings and conclusions in a 15 min Final Seminar.

The major piece of assessment is the ~10,000 word Thesis. This is typically worth 85% of their final score. The thesis presents the background and literature review relevant to the project, project aims, a description of the methods and results, a discussion of the findings and their implications, and conclusions. After their thesis is submitted, they will meet again with their examiners for a discussion of their thesis.

As a member of a research group, honours students are expected to participate in their supervisors'/s' group's regular activities such as lab meetings and are encouraged to actively participate activities at the School or Division level, such as journal clubs, workshops, weekly seminars, and various social events.

Further information on honours at ANU and University of Canberra in biodiversity science-related areas:

- <https://biology.anu.edu.au/study/honours>
- <https://fennerschool.anu.edu.au/study/bachelor-degrees-honours/undergraduate-research-and-honours>
- <https://www.canberra.edu.au/research/institutes/iae/study-with-us>

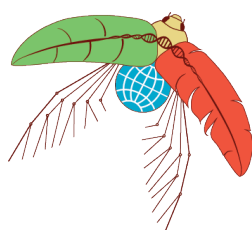
If you have an idea for a potential honours project, or would like more information, please contact:

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