

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR
EPIDEMIOLOGY
& POPULATION HEALTH



STUDENT INFORMATION GUIDE 2008

GRADUATE STUDIES PROGRAM IN EPIDEMIOLOGY, POPULATION HEALTH & HEALTH SERVICES



ANU COLLEGE OF MEDICINE & HEALTH SCIENCES

**NATIONAL CENTRE FOR EPIDEMIOLOGY
& POPULATION HEALTH**

**GRADUATE PROGRAM IN EPIDEMIOLOGY,
POPULATION HEALTH & HEALTH SERVICES**

INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our Student Information Guide.

We hope you find this guide useful and informative.

Who is this guide for?

It is designed to assist prospective students in completing an application to study at the National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health (NCEPH). We invite you to browse through our website for an indication of the areas of research in which staff at the Centre are engaged.

There is also a list of possible PhD topics and information on scholarships.

How do I apply to do a research degree at the ANU College of Medicine and Health Sciences?

The guide describes the process of applying to start a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) or Master of Philosophy (MPhil)

It provides detail of how to apply as either a local or overseas applicant.

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ABOUT THE GRADUATE STUDIES PROGRAM

This program offers unique opportunities for research in topics related to population health in Australia and overseas. The program addresses a wide range of important social, health and disease issues in Australia and offers training in a range of disciplines, including biostatistics, epidemiology, economics, demography, psychology, sociology and primary health care policy research.

There are many factors that affect the health of human populations outside the one-to-one interface between patient and health professional. Diet, lifestyle, the natural and built environments, the social environment, genetic endowments, socioeconomic status, the organisation of health service delivery, and the incentive effects inherent in various payment mechanisms for health professionals and health organisations are some of these factors. The scientific study of these factors falls within the field of population health.

THE ANU COLLEGE OF MEDICINE & HEALTH SCIENCES

The ANU College of Medicine and Health Sciences is home to the University's medical and health science teaching and research. World-class, scientific research is conducted in a number of areas and the College offers a medical degree, higher degree research and coursework programs, and postdoctoral research training. This guide is concerned with the Graduate Studies Program in Epidemiology, Population Health and Health Services which is offered in the National Centre for Epidemiology & Population Health (NCEPH). The program is also offered in the Australian Centre for Economic Research on Health (ACERH), The Australian Primary Health Care Research Institute (APHCRI) and the Centre for Mental Health research (CMHR). For information on study in other areas in the College please consult the website at <http://cmhs.anu.edu.au/study.php>

Research within NCEPH is often multi-disciplinary and done in collaboration with academics in other areas of the College, the University, or in other national and international institutions. Much of the Centre's research has external indicators of high quality. These include: major international and national research funding sources; prestigious awards to several investigators; many invitations to speak at international and national fora; and high-level positions in various international committees and task forces. NCEPH researchers also undertake policy analysis and contribute to national policy debates, including hosting national policy forums.

National Centre for Epidemiology & Population Health

NCEPH is a multi-disciplinary research centre, committed to furthering our understanding of the determinants of population health. NCEPH's larger mission is to contribute to better health, nationally and internationally, through research and workforce-training contributions to epidemiology and other population health disciplines, and to public health policy and practice.

A broad multi-disciplinary approach is taken, encompassing the social, behavioural, environmental and genetic influences on health. Along with epidemiology and biostatistics, the disciplines of economics, demography, sociology and anthropology are essential to much of the Centre's research, as staff and students study how to improve health across different groups in society, and how to use society's health-care resources most effectively. Contemporary questions about the links between sustainable development and population health are also addressed.

NCEPH's research is centred around five main program areas:

- biosecurity and infectious diseases
- environment, climate and health
- population health in the Asia Pacific
- social determinants and lifecourse health
- new developments in population health research methods.

Typically, NCEPH's academic staff are each based in one of these five areas, while also engaging in collaborative, interdisciplinary research across other areas. Several Centre-wide, nationally significant, research topics have been defined, including: the social and environmental origins of obesity; ageing and health; and the health impacts, present and future, of global climate and environmental changes.

Professor Niels Becker is Director of NCEPH.

AREAS OF POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH AND TRAINING

The National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health offers PhD and MPhil degrees for research covering a range of academic disciplines. Students undertake research of a wide range of important social, health and disease issues related to public health within the following research themes:

Biosecurity and Infectious Diseases

Epidemiological aspects of biosecurity and the control of infectious diseases are studied, including research into surveillance systems, outbreaks of emerging infections, tuberculosis, foodborne diseases, factors associated with transmission of infectious diseases and the assessment of control policy.

Environment, Climate and Health

Environmental factors affect health at several scales. We study the impacts of urban air pollution, environmental (especially UV radiation) influences on immune disorders, interlinked environmental, climatic and social influences on infectious disease emergence and spread, and health risks due to global climate change.

Population Health in the Asia Pacific Region

The Asia-Pacific Region, with its mosaic of cultures, races, languages and economic systems, is the most dynamic section of the globe. Our research addresses its health challenges in the areas of health transition, maternal and child health, sexual health, quality of life and reproduction and family formation.

Social Determinants and Lifecourse Health

Several of the most important elements shaping patterns of health and illness arise from people's social or economic location, or life stage. Our research focuses on significant precursors (such as paid work or food systems) of health, and also on important health outcomes (such as mental health or obesity).

New Developments in Population Health Research Methods

In addressing a wide range of population health problems we often need to use methods that are interdisciplinary and innovative. As a result we extend current boundaries of quantitative and qualitative research methods, and are developing integration and implementation sciences.

RESEARCH DEGREES

Doctor of Philosophy

Usual Duration: three – four years full-time

Contact: nceph_student_office@anu.edu.au

This program is available on a full-time or a part-time basis, but there are special requirements for part-time enrolment: applicants should consult the Student Officer for further information.

Prospective applicants are urged to confer with the Graduate Studies Convenor or a member of the academic staff about a possible research topic before making an application.

Admission requirements

Candidates should hold an honours degree, at least at the level of upper second class, an MBBS or equivalent qualification, or a masters degree in a discipline relevant to an area of the Graduate Studies Program's research interests. However, candidates should be aware that to be competitive for award of a scholarship, the candidate should hold a first-class honours degree or equivalent.

Master of Philosophy

Usual Duration: one – two years full-time

Contact: nceph_student_office@anu.edu.au

This program is available on a full-time or a part-time basis. Prospective applicants are urged to consult the Graduate Studies Convenor or a member of the academic staff about a possible research topic before making an application.

Admission requirements

Candidates should hold an honours degree, at least at the level of upper second class, an MBBS or equivalent qualification, or a masters degree in a discipline relevant to an area of the Graduate Studies Program's research interests.

COURSEWORK DEGREES

Master of Applied Epidemiology

Usual Duration: 22 months full-time

Contact: nceph_student_office@anu.edu.au

The program aims to develop expertise in disease surveillance, outbreak investigation, evaluation and disease control. It is predominantly field based, involving three months of intensive coursework in Canberra and the remainder in a field placement associated with a State or Territory health department or other health-related institution.

Admission requirements

Candidates normally hold an honours degree, at least at the level of upper second class, or an MBBS or equivalent qualification, and have at least two years previous experience in a health-related setting.

Entry to the MAE is normally by scholarship only. Scholarships are available to citizens and permanent residents of Australia. The application process is slightly different from other coursework degrees at the ANU. Please contact NCEPH for further details.

ABOUT YOUR APPLICATION

FIRST POINT OF CONTACT

NCEPH STUDENT OFFICE

T: +61 2 6125 2790

E: nceph.student.office@anu.edu.au

FEES

Fees for 2008

| Domestic Tuition Fee | | International Student Fee |
|----------------------|-------|---------------------------|
| PhD | HECS* | \$22,080 pa full time |
| MPhil | HECS* | \$22,080 pa full time |

* In 2006 all domestic higher degree research students were awarded an RTS place which provides HECS exemption for the duration of the accredited program.

SCHOLARSHIPS

A limited number of ANU stipend scholarships are awarded to PhD and MPhil candidates, working in areas concerning health issues important to Australia. The ANU awards Australian Postgraduate Awards (APA) and University Research Scholarships (URS).

Overseas candidates may apply for ANU scholarships (stipend only), and Endeavour International Postgraduate Research Scholarships (EIPRS) (fees only), or may apply under various scholarship schemes administered by the Commonwealth Government through AusAID. www.ausaid.gov.au/scholar/default.cfm

INTERNATIONAL APPLICANTS

Closing dates

Please note that the closing date for applications for EIPRS and ANU Scholarships is **31 August**. An application fee of AUD\$100 must accompany your application. Refer below for more detail.

Applying for a scholarship

The tuition fee for the PhD course at the ANU in 2008 is \$22,080 per annum. If seeking scholarship support from the ANU you will require separate scholarships to meet your tuition fee and your living expenses, and you should be aware that competition for both types of award is fierce.

Endeavour International Postgraduate Research Scholarship (EIPRS) scheme

The appropriate tuition scholarship scheme for international students is the EIPRS scheme. These scholarships are few in number (usually less than 20 are awarded to ANU each year), and awarded in competition across all disciplines in the University. To have a chance of success an applicant needs to have an academic record that is at First Class Honours level, or equivalent.

Living Allowance

You should also apply for an ANU Scholarship, which provides a stipend, or living allowance. Australian applicants, as well those from overseas, compete for these scholarships, however a successful EIPRS applicant could normally expect also to be awarded an ANU Scholarship.

Alternative sources of funding

You may be eligible for scholarship support under the Australian Development Scholarships (ADS) scheme or the Australian Leadership Awards (ALAs) administered by the Australian Government through AusAID. You will find a list of eligible countries at (<http://www.ausaid.gov.au/scholar/default.cfm>). Conditions governing these awards vary from country to country (e.g. the extent to which they are available for PhD as compared to Masters study; the extent to which they are awarded in open competition or to members of the local public service). Inquiries need to be directed to the relevant local Australian Diplomatic Mission (see the above website).

Other potential sources of funding include embassies, your own government, or foundations like the Ford Foundation (<http://www.fordfound.org/>), the Rockefeller Foundation (<http://www.rockfound.org/>), the World Bank (<http://www.worldbank.org/> then go to "Students"), the Asian Development Bank (<http://www.adb.org/Internship/default.asp>) and the Population Council (<http://www.popcouncil.org/>).

School tuition fees may be payable for your children

Dependant children of international students, with the exception of those on full Australian Government-funded scholarships are required to pay the "Temporary Visa Holders Education Fee". An application fee also applies. For further information, please refer to: http://www.anu.edu.au/graduate/prospective/student_visas.php

Academic Transcripts

In order that we can judge your academic credentials we require **certified copies** of transcripts for all university-level programs of study you have completed. Details of acceptable forms of certification accompany the official ANU application form.

Please note (a) that if your transcripts are not in English, certified English translations are required, and (b) that copies of degree or other award diplomas *are not* acceptable substitutes for transcripts. We need to be able to see the full detail of the individual courses/papers you have taken, and the results you achieved.

If you are currently enrolled in a program of university study that is incomplete, and for which you therefore cannot obtain a transcript at the time of application, you should if possible provide a letter from your Head of Department or Program Coordinator detailing your performance in the program to date. Typically, for example, an applicant has completed the coursework of a Masters degree, and only the result of the research component is unknown. If, however, it is not possible to provide such a letter it will be vital that your referees include at least one person (and preferably two) qualified to comment more generally on your level of attainment in the program.

You should also ensure that a complete transcript is provided to the College as soon as it becomes available.

English Language Requirements (international applicants)

As part of the application process, you need to demonstrate that you are proficient in English. Before submitting an application, you should note the specific requirements concerning English language proficiency at http://info.anu.edu.au/StudyAt/International_Office/getting_in/englishreqmts.asp

Please note that IELTS and TOEFL results only remain valid for two (2) years, beyond which either test must be retaken. TOEFL now offers internet-based language tests in addition to paper and computer based. *Note also that for some countries, Australian Government requirements for the issue of a student visa mean that only IELTS results are acceptable.* In this situation it obviously makes sense to sit the IELTS test, so that you can use the one test to satisfy the requirements of both the ANU and Australian immigration authorities. Check the English language requirements with your local visa-issuing office. You must satisfy both the ANU's and the Australian Government's minimum English language requirements.

LOCAL APPLICANTS

Admission only

The Graduate Studies Program in Epidemiology, Population Health and Health Services considers applicants applying for admission to the PhD and MPhil programs only (ie: not applying for scholarships) on an on-going basis. For information on how to apply, refer to: http://www.anu.edu.au/graduate/prospective/how_to_apply.php

Scholarships

Please note that applications for scholarships for citizens/permanent residents of Australia or citizens of New Zealand **normally close on 31 October each year**. For further information on scholarships, please refer to the URL detailed above.

Academic Transcripts

So that we can judge your academic credentials we require **certified copies** of transcripts for all university-level programs of study you have completed. Details of acceptable forms of certification accompany the official ANU application form.

Please note (a) that if your transcripts are not in English, certified English translations are required, and (b) that copies of degree or other award diplomas **are not** acceptable substitutes for transcripts. We need to be able to see the full detail of the individual courses/papers you have taken, and the results you achieved.

If you are currently enrolled in a program of university study that is incomplete, and for which you therefore cannot obtain a transcript at the time of application, you should if possible provide a letter from your Head of Department or Program Coordinator detailing your performance in the program to date. Typically, for example, an applicant has completed the coursework of a Masters degree, and only the result of the research component is unknown.

If it is not possible to provide such a letter it will be vital that your referees include at least one person (and preferably two) qualified to comment more generally on your level of attainment in the program.

ALL APPLICANTS - LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL

Your Reports from Referees

You need to provide **three** referee reports as part of the application process. It is very important that your referees send us their reports together with the referee's questionnaire at the time you lodge your application, and it is **your responsibility** to arrange this. The College will not chase your referees for you. If a nominated referee cannot respond promptly, we recommend that you find an alternative referee

to support your application. **We cannot process your application until we receive reports from all referees.**

How to choose your referees

Normally referees should be **academics** who can comment on **your ability to undertake research in an academic environment**. Your referee reports should provide the College with an assessment of your research potential, and associated important qualities. Please refer to the Referee's Questionnaire for more detail.

The referees you nominate **MUST** have taught and/or supervised you during your most relevant previous program of university study. If you completed your most recent program of study some time ago and wish to base your application partly on subsequent work experience, it is acceptable for one referee to be a non-academic qualified to comment on that work experience. Please ensure your referee reports arrive by the closing date for applications.

What a referee's report consists of

Referees are asked to do **two** things – fill out one of the enclosed Referee's Questionnaires **and** provide written reference attesting to your research potential. Please be sure your referees understand this. A completed questionnaire without a written reference will, at best, delay consideration of your application.

YOUR RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Possible topics and whether we can provide supervision

All PhD applicants are required to provide a brief (2-3 page) research proposal on the topic they wish to pursue. It will be to your advantage to submit with your application a well-developed research proposal on a topic that falls within one of the broad areas of research interest of the Graduate Program in Epidemiology, Population Health and Health Services.

Contact a potential supervisor

Possible topics may be discussed with potential supervisors before lodging your application. At the very least, however, you should familiarize yourself with research interests of staff from each of the areas within the Program and be reasonably sure your topic fits within one of these. **We cannot accept students, no matter how well qualified, for whom we cannot provide adequate supervision.**

Look at our Research Programs on the website

To assist you in deciding on a research topic, we suggest that you refer to the Centre's website.

Topics: http://nceph.anu.edu.au/Study/Research/hot_topics.php

Research areas: <http://nceph.anu.edu.au/Research/index.php>

Staff: http://nceph.anu.edu.au/Staff_Students/academics.php

Develop your topic

We encourage applicants to approach us with a research topic. We prefer the germ of an idea, or if you wish several ideas, for a topic to come from you. You can approach a potential supervisor with your ideas, who can then help you develop a topic or propose an alternative topic. If an academic you approach is not a suitable supervisor, she or he may be able to refer you to a colleague who is better suited.

Format of your research proposal

Your research proposal should have a clear title, briefly outline the nature of the topic, and indicate why you consider it to be worth studying. It should demonstrate an awareness of key items in the literature, but should **not** include a lengthy 'Background' section or present a full-scale literature review.

It is not essential that you demonstrate a full grasp of the relevant literature. Rather we want to satisfy ourselves that you have given thought to the **practical** aspects of your proposed project.



NCEPH organises and supports many seminars on topics of interest to staff and students throughout the year.

Structure Your Proposal

The crucial sections of your proposal should outline your aims and objectives, your proposed data sources (including details of any fieldwork you envisage conducting), and your proposed methods of data analysis. If it is planned to use data from an existing survey, a copy of the survey questionnaire (in English) should accompany your research proposal.

We do not expect you, in your application, to have worked through **all** of the practical issues you might confront in the course of your research. However, we do expect you to have thought sufficiently about your proposed study to be able to convince us that it is:

- (i) worthwhile,
- (ii) methodologically sound, and
- (iii) able to be completed within a three-year full-time PhD.