

Information for New Masters and PhD Students in Statistical Science

This information is for postgraduate students starting their Masters or PhD studies in statistics at Department of Statistical Science of La Trobe University. It also provides a reference for supervisors about things they should discuss with new students.

1. Get what you need to begin your study (the supervisor can help).

- ❖ Register yourself with the University Research and Graduate Studies Office.
- ❖ For international students, further register at the International Programs Office.
- ❖ You will be assigned an office by the department. Get the keys from the department office.
- ❖ You will be assigned a computer, most likely with Microsoft Windows system. Useful software packages are TeX/LaTeX, Splus, R, Minitab, SPSS, Maple and Matlab. Note that the department has only a limited number of concurrent Matlab licences. Check with the computer manager to see whether they are installed.
- ❖ Obtain a student ID card and an email account.
- ❖ Make an arrangement for regular meetings with your supervisor during your candidature.
- ❖ Get familiar with using the library: how to find books and papers manually and by electronic means. Also become familiar with the Web of Science database (Science Citation Index) provided on the library website and the Current Index to Statistics (via departmental access). You should seek your supervisor's advice about the usefulness of these facilities and how you can access them.
- ❖ Other facilities are available: you will have a letter box in the common room; photocopy machine is on the 3rd floor; first aid box is in the 2nd floor department office; campus emergency phone number is 2222. For emergency evacuation procedures, check with an administrative staff member for more information.
- ❖ If you come from outside Melbourne, you need to find appropriate accommodation. You can contact the university's Student Accommodation and Financial Services (<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/accommodation/bundoora/>) for more information. Suggest purchasing a copy of a Melway street map which has proved to be very helpful for newcomers to orient themselves.

2. Conduct the research

- Research is the most important task during your Masters/PhD study.
- The first step is to identify a research problem. The supervisor can help you to do this by providing some books or papers or a data set to begin the investigation. But it is ultimately your responsibility to find a research problem, to know what can be done for this problem, and to make a plan for tackling this problem.
- There is no unique route to successful research. Some vital factors are in-depth and broad research reading, critical thinking, enterprise, originality and commitment to intensive work.
- To facilitate your research, it will be necessary for you to improve certain skills, e.g. your knowledge of some advanced statistics and mathematics topics, and computing and programming skills. You should speak to your supervisor about the possibility of doing extra 4th year subjects and attending summer courses offered by AMSI (Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute). You should also attend all departmental seminars and actively participate in academic discussion and communication with the other members of the department and with visiting scholars.
- Quality of research. It is very important that you obtain and read a copy of the Thesis Examiner's Guidelines so that you know the quality standard expected from your work. This information can be found in Appendix A of Handbook for Candidates and Supervisors for Masters Degrees by Research and Doctoral Degrees which can be accessed online at <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/rgso/information/forms/INFOSUPC.pdf>.

3. Duration of candidature

While the official time limit of candidature is 2 years for Masters and 4 years for PhD, the department encourages students to submit their theses within 1.5 years for Masters and 3 years for PhDs.

If after 3 years of PhD candidature or 1.5 years of Masters candidature, the student has not submitted the form 'Notice of intention to submit the thesis for examination', he/she should meet with both the supervisor and the postgraduate coordinator (or head of department) to discuss how to complete the thesis on time. The student should provide evidence of "thesis progress" for the meeting.

4. Scholarships

The APA and LTUPRS scholarships are provided for a period of 2 years for Masters degrees and 3 years for doctoral degrees. No extensions are given for Masters degrees and a maximum extension of 6 months may be possible at doctoral level. The IPRS and LTUOPRS scholarships are provided for a period of 2 years for Masters by research and 3 years for a PhD with the possibility of an extension of an extra year for each.

5. Writing the thesis

Writing the thesis is an ongoing procedure during the whole Masters/PhD candidature. Regularly writing up your findings prevents them from being lost as time goes on. Sometimes you will find difficult to continue the work. But this is often the time that you are about to make a breakthrough. So do not wait until the final stage to start writing your thesis.

6. Annual Progress report

The Research and Graduate Studies Office requires each student to submit a progress report in July or August each year. Check the Handbook for Candidates and Supervisors for Masters Degrees by Research and Doctoral Degrees for details.

7. Milestones for PhD candidates

- A successful first year of the study consists of (a) learning to program well in the computer language chosen for the project, (b) learning to write in LaTeX, (c) a thorough familiarization with the background literature and (d) significant progress on at least one minor research paper. At the end of the year, the student is expected to submit a literature survey and a plan of the research project.
- By the end of the second year, the candidate is expected to have made substantial progress on a new major work, possibly with supervisor as co-author, and demonstrated through presentation of a seminar to the department.

8. Grievance

From time to time during your candidature you may encounter various problems and difficulties. You should speak to your supervisor about any grievances or concerns. If that does not help, you are encouraged to speak to the postgraduate coordinator, the head of department and the postgraduate association (<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/lupa/>).

9. Enjoy your Masters/PhD years

Postgraduate students in the department regularly get together at lunch times during semester. You are encouraged to actively join with them. You are also encouraged to come to the lunches with visiting speakers. Speak to your supervisor about becoming a member of Statistical Society of Australia and other statistical associations such as Institute of Mathematical Statistics, International Biometric Society and Bernoulli Society.

The department will usually be able to fund at least one trip for each student during their candidature to attend a statistics conference, provided that the student presents a talk at the conference. The student should discuss the possibility of such a trip with her/his supervisor.