BIOL3640: PACE Experience in Biological Sciences

UNIT SUMMARY FOR STUDENTS

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT BIOL3640?

BIOL3640 is a Professional and Community Engagement (PACE) unit open to all undergraduate students who meet eligibility requirements at the time of applying for Special Approval. It provides students with the opportunity to apply theory learnt through their degree to real-world situations, to consider what they might want to do after graduation, to learn through participation, and further develop their employability.

Learning is facilitated through:
- Orientation and induction activities
- Curriculum which fosters skill and knowledge development on topics such as Program Learning Outcomes, career skills, ethics and ethical practice, communicating science, reflection, and more
- Debriefing on experiences
- Rigorous academic assessment

Please see the BIOL3640 Unit Guide for more detailed information.

Enrolment in BIOL3640 is by Special Approval only. In addition to meeting the pre-requisite of having 130 credit points, including 40 credit points in BIOL units, eligibility is based on:

- Attendance in person or virtual of the pre-enrolment workshop and review of the essential resources found in the BIOL3640 pre-enrolment iLearn site
- A projected PACE activity and partner organisation meeting the PACE criteria (e.g. mutual benefit, ethical, etc.)
- A projected PACE activity enabling the unit learning outcomes
- WHS/risk considerations (e.g. should be relatively low risk)
- And completion and submission of the BIOL3640 PACE student profile as part of your request to enrol

BIOL3640 can be used to meet the PACE requirement of a program when any PACE unit can be chosen. It can also be taken in the Flexible Zones of programs with specified PACE units to obtain additional hands-on experience.

I'M INTERESTED, TELL ME MORE!

Step 1: Check out the essentials. Add yourself to the BIOL3640 Pre-enrolment iLearn site: https://ilearn.mq.edu.au/course/view.php?id=37365 and attend the pre-enrolment workshop either in person, or virtually (both PowerPoints and Echo360 recording). Following this, review all other essential resources as listed in the site.

Step 2: Prepare for Special Approval, then apply for it. Once you have attended the pre-enrolment workshop (in person or virtually), and as part of reviewing essential resources ‘Prepare for Special Approval’ by learning what information is needed. For example: your plans for the PACE activity, possible partner organisations, and your core skills and interests. If you want to enrol in BIOL3640, click on the the Web link ‘Apply for Special Approval’ to provide this information to the FSE PACE Team.

SPECIAL APPROVAL

Students must apply for Special Approval using the online form through the BIOL3640 Pre-enrolment iLearn site (not through Ask MQ) no later than 4 weeks before the start of session. PDF forms will not be accepted.

LEARN MORE AND ENROL

The BIOL3640 Pre-enrolment iLearn site is your Explorer’s Guide to the unit. Check the site regularly for essential resources, announcements, and required processes.

What I did:

I helped conduct cross cultural biodiversity surveys and wetland monitoring with the Wirralka Rangers in North East Arnhem, Northern Territory. This activity not only allowed me to put theory I'd learnt at Macquarie into practise, but also feel empowered knowing that my actions had real social and environmental benefits.”

Bridget Campbell, BABSc Anthropology and Biology.

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Step 3: Act on Special Approval decision. Applications for Special Approval are processed on a rolling basis. Eligible students will receive an email to confirm receipt of Special Approval. These students should finalise enrolment ASAP via e-student (i.e. as you would normally enrol for a unit). Once enrolled, you will have access to a system called ‘iParticipate’ which enables acknowledgement of your PACE roles and responsibilities, provision of emergency contacts, information on checks such as Working With Children as appropriate, and expressions of interest for limited PACE activities that might become available. In cases where additional information is required or enrolment is not possible, students will be consulted by email.

WHAT IS A PACE ACTIVITY AND HOW DO I FIND ONE?

A PACE activity is the practical experience students complete as part of the PACE unit. PACE activities occur in partnership with a relevant organisation, and must:

- Enable the learning outcomes of the unit
- Meet the PACE criteria (e.g. contribute to the host organisation’s goals in a way that benefits you and them)
- Be suitable in terms of WHS and risk.

Think carefully about activities that align with your own interests and skills, while also being flexible and open to opportunities that might not seem obvious at first.

In BIOL3640 the main way of finding your PACE activity is to Bring Your Own Activity (BYOA). This method can have the greatest amount of benefit and security. Where possible, there may be very limited and highly competitive activities advertised by FSE PACE; however, there is no guarantee these will be available or that you will be successful therefore, it is important that you place priority on BYOA. See below for more detail.

BRING YOUR OWN ACTIVITY (BYOA)

BIOL3640 students are encouraged to make the most of BYOA: you can be more involved in negotiating your activity tasks and terms; learn first-hand how to approach future employers and opportunities be it for the first time, changing directions, or progressing your career; and enhance chances of securing something that meets your goals and interests no matter at what professional stage you are. Begin by reviewing the BIOL3640 pre-enrolment workshop, and the essential resources which includes a video of how to find your PACE activity and helpful tips. Be realistic in your expectations and truthful in your dealings with organisations.

DIRECT APPLICATION TO A PARTNER-RUN SELECTION PROCESS

Some partner organisations prefer to run their own selection process for the limited opportunities they have available. These activities will be advertised on the PACE Opportunities page: [http://pace-opportunities.mq.edu.au/iat/en/listing/](http://pace-opportunities.mq.edu.au/iat/en/listing/) and students will be required to apply directly to the partner organisation as per the details of the promotion. Due to the competitive nature of these students are encouraged to put their best foot forward well ahead of the deadline.

Even if you plan to apply for such an opportunity, you should demonstrate independent research of other organisations, and your efforts to BYOA as there is no guarantee your application will be successful.

EXPRESSING INTEREST FOR AN ACTIVITY WITH AN FSE PACE PARTNER

Depending on the session there can be limited and competitive opportunities available through existing FSE PACE partner organisations. Only students enrolled in BIOL3640 can express an interest for these opportunities; you are welcome to consult these opportunities, however, you should also demonstrate independent research of other organisations, and especially your efforts to BYOA. This is important as these opportunities are unpredictable and not guaranteed, might not match your skills and interests, and generally are not available well in advance of a session. Where they exist the FSE PACE team will communicate them to students, as well as explain what is needed to express an interest, and by when.

Important: If you have exceptional circumstances that require you to start your PACE activity prior to the session, you must contact FSE PACE about the possibility of Early Commencement: [https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policies/pace-activity-management](https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policies/pace-activity-management)

Photo: Jonathan Kennedy 2016

“I learnt how to apply and practice ‘hard science’ in a communication and interpersonal role...[It] gave me far greater scope on the opportunities that exist for those with a scientific background.”

Jono Kennedy (BSc Biomolecular Studies) did his work experience at the Centre for Genetics Education.

(Left) B MarSci students, Emily Best and Mitchell Hawtrey, Manly Sealife Sanctuary (Photo credit: Chris Stacey 2015).