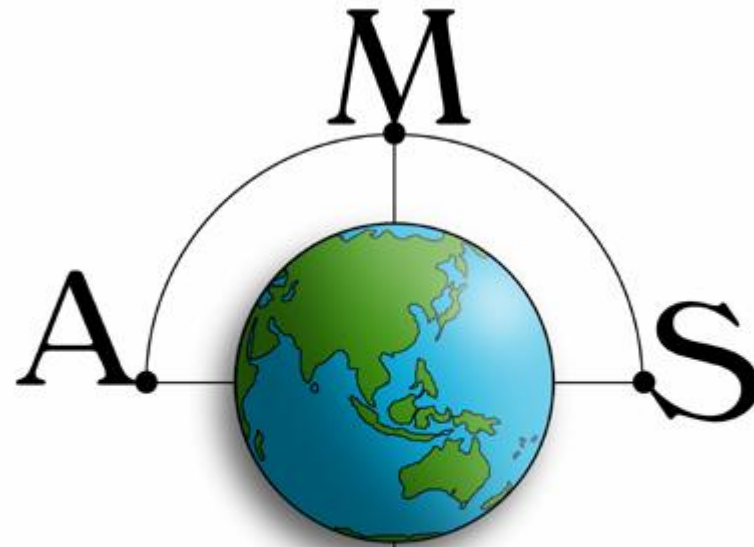


# Pre-Commencement Briefing

## AMS 2008-2009



Advanced Medical Science

experience health care and research in an off-campus setting

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# ***AMS Semester Dates***

- Semester 6 July 14 – November 21 2008
- Semester 7 January 19 – May 29 2009
- Some variation is permitted, but we expect students to be on task for the AMS year, and to have appropriate breaks.
- Inform AMS office of any major variations in dates.
- Research Report is due 1pm on 22 May 2009

# ***AMS Important Dates***

- **An online document** outlining all key dates – for things such as:
  - Project title submission
  - Submission of progress reports
  - Submission of draft one month before completion
  - etc

# ***Research Methods Courses***

- Special pre-AMS research methods courses will occur for most AMS students for 1 or 2 weeks commencing July 14, or through Semester 6.
- These are assessed and attendance is not optional.
- Check class lists, email and timetables on LMS prior to July 14.

# ***AMS Website***

- Make sure you check the website on:  
<http://medicine.unimelb.edu.au/ams/>
- This website has answers to many of the questions that we are emailed or called about.

# ***Ethics .... Ethics!!!!!!***

- Ethics approval has been the major source of delays in AMS project commencements.
- SPEAK to your supervisor about Ethics Approval – is it needed (seriously!), how quickly can it be processed. Follow this up NOW, repeat, **NOW**
- We will be monitoring all projects for Ethics issues.
- Follow the handed out flowchart.
- If at an institution other than the University of Melbourne, follow their process.

# ***Structure of Project Report (1)***

- Your project report is the primary assessment of the AMS year.
- Many examples of past B.Med.Sci reports of various types are available on the AMS Website.
- You should **NOT** allow preparation of a publication to impede your research report progress, even if urged by your supervisor. If a conflict arises, contact the AMS Coordinator.

# ***Structure of Project Report (2)***

- The project report is NOT about a specific result, but about the research process you experienced.
- A project with no substantial findings could easily receive an excellent grade if the research was carried out well.
- It includes many things not normally put into a publication, and is thus more complete – a publication might be extracted later from relevant parts of the report.

# ***Staying in touch!***

- We maintain frequent contact with you (and also with supervisors).
- It is VERY important that your **UGRAD** email address is current, working and checked regularly
- Any changes to your contact information (including address and phone) should be notified immediately to BOTH the AMS office and the School of Medicine.
- Medical Information Form is essential

# ***Safety (1)***

- Your safety is of the utmost importance.
- We need to have a “key contact person” who knows your movements and whereabouts.
  - Insurance
  - Missing students (AWOL)
  - External emergencies when we need to contact you
  - Unanticipated global events

# ***Safety (2)***

- HIV form for potentially dangerous projects (available online).
- Working with children / police checks.
- Short LOA forms (available online).
- Fieldwork forms (available online).
  - All forms related to absences and dangerous activities are important for insurance purposes.
- The University does not automatically provide normal “travel insurance”, this is your responsibility.

# ***Danger Signs (1)***

## ***Dual Projects***

- Too frequently we receive late notice about students undertaking two projects. Sometimes these are not even related. Notify us immediately about this!
- Any major change to your project must first be approved by the AMS office. This is for your protection.
- The plan of a “backup project” has more often been a hindrance rather than a help.

# ***Danger Signs (2)***

## ***Recruitment***

- Unfortunately, many supervisors are prone to serious overestimation of recruitment capacity.  
Example: current student, planned 100 subjects, now has 7.
- Within the first 6-8 weeks you should find any records that allow you to check actual recruitment potential, so that any shortfall is found quickly.
- It is your responsibility to check the facts, rather than relying solely on your supervisor's "expert opinion".

# ***Danger Signs (3)***

## ***Dependence on others***

- Sometimes you cannot avoid needing specific expert help, such as:
  - a supervisor “classifying” or otherwise processing a large amount of information (eg MRI scans)
  - a lab technician who has to run assays
  - medical records department locating and providing files.
- Your project is less important to these people than it is to you. This means that you can be seriously delayed by the (lack of) priority given to these tasks by others.
- Do your utmost to get agreement on deadlines, and if there are any suggestions of delays, deal with it promptly.

# ***Danger Signs (4)***

## ***Foreskins***

- Some projects (and/or supervisors) will attempt activities that are technically unethical, or completely impractical.
- Think through what you are planning to do to make sure it is both feasible and ethically acceptable.
- Examples
  - “interviewing is harmless, no ethics are needed”
  - data obtained without permission
  - foreskins
  - verbal rather than written agreements for support

# ***Support (1)***

- You have several support structures.
  - Supervisor for your project.
  - Student supervisor agreement document.
  - Unit Coordinator (may also be supervisor).
  - If available in the unit, the alternate Contact Person for Support.
  - AMS Team
    - Stephen Farish
    - Monika Younan
    - Lindsay Guy
    - Katie Dumas
    - Justin Bilszta

# ***Support (2)***

- Do not unduly delay seeking help with any problem.
- Too many issues have been made worse by waiting too long.
- No issue is outside the scope of support.
- Of course, allow time for small problems to resolve. Setting deadlines for seeking support is a great idea.
- GET, AND USE, A DIARY to set deadlines for key delays and for problems to be resolved.

# ***Support (3) Money !!***

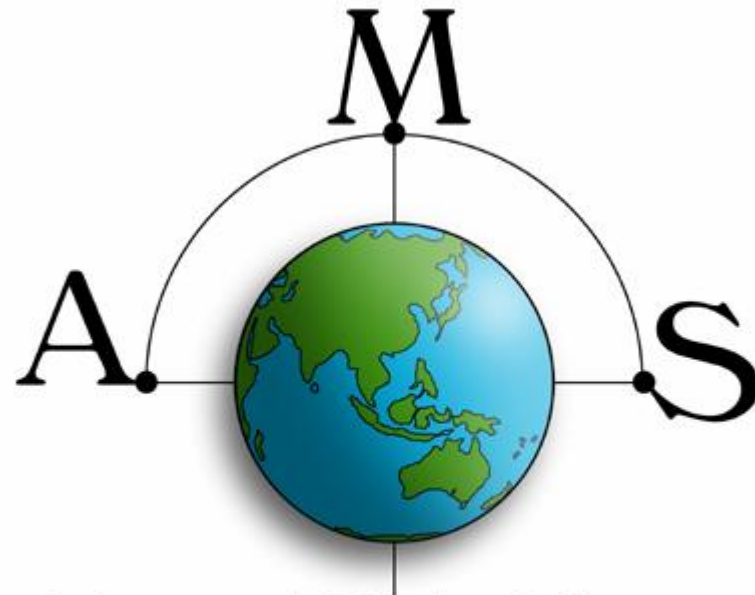
- Units do receive financial support for having you.
- This money is spent at the Unit's discretion.
- You are not entitled to decide how that is spent!
- Do not commit (financially) to conferences and/or travel without the unit's approval.
- Most units do not provide funding for conferences.

# ***Your own responsibilities***

- YOU are your own best (or worst) asset.
- In various situations, many students do not initiate action when needed, causing delays.
- GET, AND USE, A DIARY to plan what you will do each day, and check your progress often.
- Use this same diary to RECORD what is said that affects your timeline (like when the machine will be fixed, for example). Being seen to record this can often make things happen sooner.

# ***Going Overseas?***

- Visas are your responsibility.
- Sign & return the student agreement.
- Copies of visa applications, itinerary and travel insurance documents given to Katie.
- Reminders will be posted on LMS.
- Overseas fieldwork students should apply for permission and follow the above steps.



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