Taking to the great Aussie outdoors

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Taking to the great Aussie outdoors

Students are participating in exciting new field trips as part of their degree programs. Recent federal government moves to increase student participation in these off-campus activities is ensuring that students from all backgrounds now have increased opportunities.

From the wet tropics of northern Queensland to the stunning marine life of Heron Island and the ecotourism of central Finland, the School of Environment is offering a selection of exciting domestic and overseas field trips for environment students keen to broaden their knowledge of their chosen topics.

One such trip was undertaken to Bowna, in far western Queensland. Giving students a taste of the semi-arid environment of this region, the inaugural Wildlife Ecology Field Course was run at Bowna Station from 25 September to 1 October.

Forty students attended the course, and for many it was their first experience of the Australian arid zone. Over the course of the week, students gained experience in mammal and reptile catching, survey techniques, botanising and collecting data for individual projects.

Third year student Sophie Olsson-Pons, who completed a research project on reptile species abundance, says one of the benefits of the trip was the opportunity to interact with a range of specialist academics.

“It was great to have immediate access to people within specialist areas such as bird, frog and lizard identification,” she says.

Now completing an honours program with the School of Environment, Sophie says the Bowna trip was one of the reasons she eventually decided to focus on studying avian malaria, a topic within terrestrial ecology.

“It really helped me realise where my real passion lies.”

During the field trip, School of Environment student, Sophie Olsson-Pons discovered her passion for terrestrial ecology.

Taking a hands-on approach to science in the great Aussie outdoors is the focus for students from Griffith’s School of Environment.

Sustainability in the real world

Experience in the world of sustainable energy has been one of the many benefits for Bachelor of Engineering student Kieren Hewerdine.

The Brisbane based student, now in the final year of his four year degree, is part of the first graduating cohort of the Bachelor of Engineering (Sustainable Energy Systems).

An eleven week full-time work placement at Ergon Energy in Townsville has formed an important aspect of Kieren’s final year.

“With Ergon I have been working on the Solar City Project, an Australian government program which works in partnership with industry and the community to trial sustainable energy systems,” says Kieren. “Working under the supervision of an electrical engineer, I have been assessing the installation of new energy systems with the residential houses on Magnetic Island and seeing how they’re coping with rising energy demands.

“I have also been involved with the data analysis of other energy systems installed on, for example, a local skate park and the RSL Stadium in Townsville. It’s great to be able to get real-life experience such as this which relates well to what we are learning during uni.”

Back in the lecture theatre, Kieren says he’s gaining practical experience in renewable energy systems, such as the monitoring of wind and solar systems at Griffith’s Nathan campus.

“This degree program really suits my core strengths of logical problem solving and it also combines my passion for sustainability and the environment.

With renewable energy being one of the fastest growing market sectors, Kieren says he is looking forward to the overseas opportunities that his degree may bring him. “This market is still quite new, but growing exponentially. I’m very pleased I’m going to be a part of it.”

To find out more about our Environmental Science degrees visit griffith.edu.au/environment-planning-architecture

To find out about the amazing opportunities a degree in Engineering (Sustainable Energy Systems) can bring, check Environmental Engineering at griffith.edu.au/engineering-information-technology

Kieren is part of the first graduating cohort of the Bachelor of Engineering (Sustainable Energy Systems).
Pacific ecotourism prompts PhD study

A Griffith PhD student is visiting the idyllic villages of Fiji and the Solomon Islands to see how environmental tourism can boost the developing island nations.

Funded by charitable trust Nature Fiji, Rochelle Steven from Griffith’s School of Environment has been offered the chance to fly to Fiji where she will be undertaking a feasibility study with a view to launching ‘village-stay’ bird watching tours. The Gold Coast postgraduate student will be staying in the heart of the village with the local community where she will be assessing the numbers of native birds such as the Red-Throated Lorikeet.

“If numbers are good then we will be advising of the benefits that bird watching tours and other sorts of environmental tourism can bring to this region,” says Rochelle.

“We also want to look at the reasons that people are currently visiting these areas. If it is for environmental reasons, then we need to explore what types of activities they are undertaking and the impact it may have on the environment.”

“There will be a lot of interaction with local organisations and national parks in order to complete my reports at the end of the visit.”

Also funded by an Australian Postgraduate Award (APA) of $22,000 per year for her living expenses, Rochelle says she has always had a long-term interest in how environmental tourism can contribute to the needs of developing countries as opposed to extractive activity such as mining and logging.

“These are currently big threats to the biodiversity in Western Pacific regions and I am keen to look at alternative means of contributing to the economies of these countries.”

The Solomon Islands will be next on Rochelle’s list of countries to visit and where she will build on her research, followed potentially by Vanuatu and New Caledonia.

“Funding permitted, I will be looking to expand on my work in Fiji in these two countries where the levels of socio-economic development vary.

“I will be comparing how tourism is happening in these countries based on their different governance systems, their land tenure arrangements and the existing ecotourism arrangements they have in place.”

Long-term, Rochelle says that with her passion for conserving ecosystems, she is keen to influence decision makers and the general community in conserving biodiversity while maintaining sustainable economic development.

Rochelle Steven is taking her passion for environmental science to developing nations.

Nature and adventure in Finland

In July this year, ten lucky students at Griffith will receive Australian Government travel scholarships, as well as Griffith University support, to take part in an ecotourism field course in the lakes and fells of Finland and Finnish Lapland.

These international ecotourism field courses are run as electives every second year, and are open to students throughout the University with preference to those studying environmental degrees.

Previous courses have taken students to developing countries such as Ecuador, Nepal and Papua New Guinea. This will be the first course in Finland, and there are up to 25 places in total.

The course has been developed through an academic partnership between two professors of ecotourism, Professor Ralf Buckley at Griffith and Professor Jarkko Saarinen at the University of Oulu in Finland, with which Griffith has an exchange agreement.

Griffith students will visit national parks, wilderness areas, ecotourism enterprises and a University research station in Finland, accompanied by Finnish students. They will hike a multi-day trail, stay in parks huts, raft down a whitewater river and meet staff from Finland’s national parks agency, Metsähallitus.

“This field course gives students a wonderful opportunity to see the Scandinavian outdoors in summer, and find out how tourism and park management work in ecosystems and social settings which are different from those in Australia,” says Professor Buckley.

“We expect it to lead on to many future exchanges between Griffith and Oulu.”
Scholarship prestige for Griffith engineering student

Receiving hands-on practical experience in the world of civil engineering is just one of the benefits for Griffith University student Rebecca Petersen, after receiving a Gold Coast City Council (GCCC) Engineering Scholarship.

The Bachelor of Engineering student who is about to enter her second year of study, was awarded the $25,000 scholarship at the end of last year following a strong academic record and a high grade point average.

Now Rebecca is using her summer holiday to gain valuable work experience in the Technical Services division of GCCC at Varsity Lakes.

“I have only just started but already I can see I am going to get great exposure to a whole range of engineering areas which are of great interest to me,” she says.

“I am also learning a lot about the engineering requirements within the local Gold Coast community.”

The scholarship is designed to pay for the remaining three years of Rebecca’s tuition fees on the Bachelor of Engineering degree and offers her the chance to work one day a week at the GCCC once she goes back to Griffith next month.

Personal strengths, leadership potential and being a visible role-model in the community were also part of the criteria for receiving the scholarship.

“I am a surf life saving volunteer at Palm Beach where I live and I think that helped in securing the award,” Rebecca says.

“I am stoked to receive a scholarship like this. It will really assist me financially and it also motivates me to further my studies in engineering.”

Deputy Head of the School of Engineering Associate Professor Charles Lemckert says the professional exposure these prestigious scholarships offer is an experience that all recipients value.

“This is an outstanding opportunity to develop high quality engineering skills, including professionalism, communication and technical knowledge.

“Rebecca has shown great academic ability and, equally important, her willingness to contribute to the larger community. She is enthusiastic and we expect her to be a great engineering ambassador.”

Engineering student Rebecca Petersen is gaining practical experience thanks to her Gold Coast City Council (GCCC) Engineering Scholarship.

Aiming to bridge the divide between engineering and the burgeoning biomedical field is Samantha Nyakeya.

As a second year Bachelor of Engineering (Sports and Biomedical) student, originally from Nairobi, Kenya, Samantha is focussing on the area of prosthetics within her study and is eventually hoping to become involved in development.

“Prosthetics is a rapidly growing field which is coming on leaps and bounds in terms of the technology,” says Samantha. “It’s fascinating to see how the technologies are developing and the subsequent overlap that they have with computer engineering.”

“So far, my degree hasn’t been massively different from other engineering degrees, but now as I am progressing into the middle of the program I can see more about the health applications that are available within the discipline.

“I can also see that there are many employment opportunities opening up within this new field which is very exciting for students like me.”

Long-term, Samantha says she is aiming to increase her knowledge of prosthetics and computer-based software during the four year degree program.

Check out our Engineering disciplines under Electrical and electronic engineering and find out more about a degree in Engineering (Sport and Biomedical). Visit griffith.edu.au/engineering-information-technology

Student Samantha Nyakeya exploring the rapidly growing field of Sports and Biomedical engineering.
Developing technology for developing countries

Enabling people in developing countries to play a part in the global economy by helping them to go from ‘economic survival mode’ to wealth creation, acquisition and growth, has been the mission for a group of Griffith Bachelor of IT students.

In collaboration with Julius Akinyemi, entrepreneur in residence from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s Media Lab in the US, the five students spent eight months developing eRegistry, a database of individuals and their assets from the world’s emerging economies. Raphael Shen Yi, Erik Alo-Emile, John McLaughlin, Tim Compton and Timothy Obezek (all pictured right with Julius Akinyemi) have been working on the project as part of their third year special project.

Originally the brainchild of Mr Akinyemi, the technology specialist has been assisting the students in the development of the prototype in preparation for its imminent roll-out in African countries.

Now being tested by the Nathan campus students, the system is being used to ‘match up’ supply and demand by registering individuals’ assets for both job availability and capital sourcing for business funding.

“Financial credit availability for people in emerging countries is not always a viable option without a credible property right validation. This is what eRegistry provides. “With information often located in disparate places or non-existent, eRegistry is able to use a database system to broker information for the benefit of individuals,” Mr Akinyemi is very positive about working with students on a project such as this.

“In addition to the high quality professional and creative skills that these five young people have displayed e.g. in development, writing code and working with HTML, working with these students has given the project a truly international reach that is of great value to the project.”

Get mentored by the best in IT. Study Information and Communication technology at Griffith.

Find out where a multimedia degree can take you, visit griffith.edu.au/engineering-information-technology

University opens doors for multimedia student

Student Tom Dignan was entering unknown terrain in 2009 when he was the first in his family to attend university.

Tom, who is undertaking his final year of a Bachelor of Multimedia at the Gold Coast campus, says he always thought he’d go to university.

“My parents didn’t receive tertiary education so I wanted to go ahead and be the first,” he says.

“Right throughout high school I was interested in computing and did a few information technology subjects, so to pursue multimedia at a tertiary level just seemed a natural step for me.”

Tom has flourished at university, winning the Griffith Award for Academic Excellence in 2009 and 2010.

“I’ve got to really extend the knowledge I gained in high school and also experienced a lot of practical elements to my degree,” he says.

This year, as part of the Industry Affiliates Program (a work-integrated learning program designed to integrate undergraduate and postgraduate students into the workplace), he worked with the Story Dog Foundation, to produce a training video for new recruits of the Foundation, an organisation that helps children improve their literacy.

“That was something I really enjoyed because I have a strong interest in film,” he says.

But it wasn’t all smooth sailing. Tom admits his time at university has been a steep learning curve and says his first days at orientation were daunting.

“Once I got a group of friends though, everything was fine,” he says.

“I’ve learnt so much in my degree, I’ve got to work on a number of different projects and learnt the value of team work and communication.”

After completing his studies at the end of this semester, Tom hopes to pursue postgraduate studies.

Find out where your IT degree can take you, visit griffith.edu.au/engineering-information-technology

You can find out more about the Industry Affiliates Program here griffith.edu.au/iap

Check us out on facebook.com/griffithuniversityiap
Just 17 and a Griffith graduate

Graduating with a university honours degree is not something the average 17 year old normally gets to do. But that is precisely what student Michael Kelly did last December when he received a Class 2A honours Bachelor of Photonics and Nanoscience from Griffith.

A Gold Coast resident, Michael started studying at Griffith’s Nathan campus when he was just 12 years old and is believed to be the youngest Australian accepted into university. His father Joseph says he is extremely proud of his son’s Einstein-like brilliance and that he is the first in the family to gain a university degree.

“His mother and I never studied at university, so we’re very happy that he’s achieved so much at such a young age,” he says.

Michael says he has now signed onto a PhD program which he plans to complete when he is 20.

“This has been a humbling experience and a lot of hard work but it has paid off as now I can continue my long-term goal of becoming a world famous professor. Hopefully this will enable me to use my skills to help make the world a better place.

“I would like to thank Griffith University for accepting a 12 year old into university and all the lecturers in the Photonics and Nanoscience department for having the faith in me which has allowed me to achieve my goal. I hope that other young people will choose science degrees by realising that if I can get a Bachelor of Photonics and Nanoscience with Honours after just turning 17, so can they.

“The last four years at Griffith have truly been the best of my life.”

Griffith University’s research in Quantum Physics received the highest possible rating* (5) from the Australian government’s research assessment exercise, ERA 2010, indicating that it is well above world standard.

Flying high after Griffith

Now a fully qualified airline pilot for Cathay Pacific, Griffith Bachelor of Aviation graduate Madison Heaney says she is glad she took a higher education pathway to her chosen career.

“Originally I tried to get onto an airline cadetship straight from school but didn’t have much luck. It wasn’t until I began my degree at Griffith that I found out about the Cathay Pacific program and the links that they have with the University.

“It’s a very competitive program as they only recruit about 100 cadets a year but many come from Griffith which has an excellent reputation with them.”

Madison is now a second officer for the international airline and has spent the past year living in Hong Kong. From there she makes about three or four long-haul flights per month, in between designated rest times and ongoing flight training.

“I really love Hong Kong – it’s such a vibrant and cosmopolitan city,” she says. “I’m glad I ended up at Griffith as I would never have found out about the Cathay program otherwise.”

Working within what is still very much a male-dominated industry has not presented any barriers for Madison. “This industry has a reputation for being male dominated but it’s getting a lot better. Sure, I have had to work hard to make more diverse friends in different places, but I do know quite a few female pilots now.

“Just the other week, I flew to Auckland and for the first time ever there were more women on the flight crew than men!”

You too can become a leader in aviation visit griffith.edu.au/aviation

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*Based on analysis of the Excellence in Research for Australia 2010 National Report for the number of fields of research assessed as meeting world standard or better at both the 2- and 4-digit levels.
Australian students share passion for science at Griffith

Students from all over Australia shared their passion for science at Griffith during February as part of the National Youth Science Program (NYSP).

Having operated since 1984 the program enables Year 11 and 12 students to experience a wide variety of science in labs on university campuses and in other research or science-driven industry environments.

The program selects around 450 students from around 2000 applicants each year who are invited to attend a 12 day science immersion program in Canberra or Perth, followed by a 3-day “Next Step” program at universities nationally.

“The program is a fabulous opportunity for students unsure of their scientific career pathway, to gain further insight into a range of options right across the science spectrum,” says Sandra Meek, NYSP Associate Director Operations.

“The benefits they receive in terms of hands-on experience through the various workshops and the interaction with prominent scientists are second to none.”

Her sentiment is echoed by past NYSP participant Gihan Hapuarachchi who is now a first year Bachelor of Medical Science student at Griffith’s Nathan campus.

“The program was a great experience for me and was instrumental in mentoring me during my decision-making process for my medical degree,” he says.

“It also gave me the confidence to apply for a scholarship at Griffith, which I was then successful in achieving.”

NYSP students taking a tour of the Ecocentre.

Visit our Facebook site, where you can chat to students. Search for Griffith School of Biomolecular and Physical Sciences.

EcoCentre 7

Griffith University EcoCentre

After two years in the planning, the final system to the EcoCentre’s solar energy upgrade was installed in February this year. Supporting the roof mounted 20kW system which comprises eight different PV technologies is the Dual Axis Tracker with a 3kW multi crystalline PV system.

Positioned in the EcoCentre are two display screens with a kiosk displaying the performance of each of the technologies. The system, information displays and access to live data will provide a comprehensive hands-on resource to Griffith’s energy management students by providing them with a living laboratory for their studies.

“The upgrade will also support the Toohey Forest Environmental Education Centre’s Energy Wise Program and help the wider community understand the importance of solar energy and how it can be implemented to reduce carbon emissions and energy costs,” says EcoCentre manager Delwyn Langdon.

To find out more about the EcoCentre visit griffith.edu.au/ecocentre

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Experience Days 14 to 18 May 2012
Come and sample our Environment, Engineering and IT courses and experience student life at Griffith University!
Register now through your high school Guidance Officer.
Online registrations will open in early March.
To download a timetable for all workshops and to find out more visit griffith.edu.au/experiencedays

Medicine Information evening
Griffith University invites you to attend our pathways to Medicine Information Evening. This evening will include a presentation for Year 12 students and undergraduate applicants, about your study options and will provide an opportunity to meet Griffith staff.
Brisbane – South Bank campus
Date: Monday 21 May
Time: 6.00pm – 7.00pm
Venue: Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium, South Bank
Gold Coast – Gold Coast campus
Date: Wednesday 23 May
Time: 5.30pm – 6.30pm
Venue: Glycomics 1 (G26), lecture theatre 4.09
To register visit griffith.edu.au/medicine

Architecture information evening
Please register your details to attend our Architecture Information Evening and stay up to date on information regarding Griffith’s undergraduate and postgraduate programs that will lead you to a career in Architecture.
The evening includes a presentation about the degree, the opportunity to see our facilities and meet industry advisors and Griffith University staff.
Gold Coast campus
Date: Tuesday 5 June
Time: 6.00pm – 7.30pm
Venue: Clinical Sciences 2 (G16), lecture theatre 1.07
To register visit griffith.edu.au/architecture

Engineering information evening
Griffith University invites you to attend our Engineering Information Evening. This evening will include a presentation about available study options and will provide an opportunity to meet Griffith staff and students.
Nathan campus
Date: Tuesday 22 May
Time: 4.30pm – 6.00pm
Venue: Science 2 (N34), lecture theatre 0.04
Gold Coast campus
Date: Wednesday 6 June
Time: 4.30pm – 6.00pm
Venue: Science, Engineering and Architecture (G39), lecture theatre 1.17
To register visit griffith.edu.au/engineering

Science and Engineering Challenge
The Science and Engineering Challenge is a set of exciting, hands-on activities, which are designed to demonstrate the practical elements of a career in the science or engineering industries. The Challenge is open to class-sized teams of year 9 and 10 high school students across the Gold Coast and Brisbane South.
Gold Coast
Date: Thursday 12 and Friday 13 July
Venue: Queensland Academy for Health Sciences, Southport.
Brisbane South
Date: Tuesday 17 and Wednesday 18 July
Venue: Canterbury College, Waterford.
To register visit griffith.edu.au/science-engineering-challenge

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