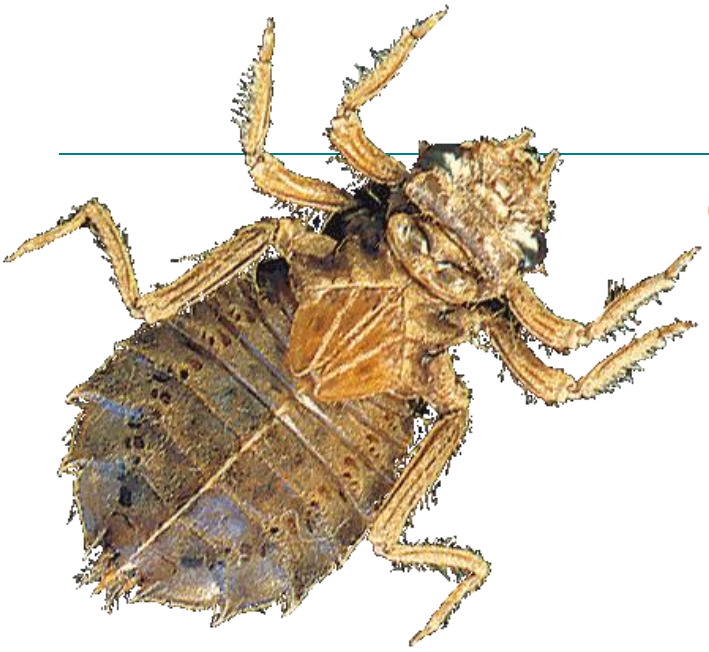
Institute for Applied Ecology

eWater CRC

Australian Government
Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities

AUSRIVAS
Australian River Assessment System



AUSRIVAS
Course outline

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Materials development team

Compiled by:	Sue Nichols, 2003
	Amara Barlow, 2003
	Richard Norris, 2003
Graphic Design:	Peter Delgado, 2003
FDDU Project Manager:	Deborah Veness, 2003

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Welcome

Welcome to the AUSRIVAS course, a new course offered by the University of Canberra. There are five AUSRIVAS modules that make up the complete course:

1. Study design and site selection;
2. The habitat;
3. Macroinvertebrate sampling and processing;
4. Data analysis, prediction and indices; and
5. AUSRIVAS practical workshop.

General information

Course title:	AUSRIVAS BIOASSESSMENT
Semester and year:	1/2013
Subject convener:	Susan Nichols
Faculty and research centre:	Applied Science Institute for Applied Ecology

Academic content

General information

AUSRIVAS (Australian River Assessment System) is a standardized sampling and prediction system used to assess the health of Australian rivers. AUSRIVAS was developed under the National River Health Program (NRHP) by the Federal Government in 1994, in response to growing concern in Australia for maintaining ecological values. The NRHP involves the major environmental agency in each State and Territory and is centrally administered by Environment Australia (EA) and the Land and Water Resources Research and Development Corporation (LWRRDC). The AUSRIVAS predictive software was developed at the Co-operative Research Centre for Freshwater Ecology (CRCFE).

The term 'river health' is an umbrella term, as is human health, both can be measured and assessed by a range of different indicators. The analogy with human health provides an insight into the complexities of aquatic ecosystem damage and in turn evokes awareness and concern about human impacts on rivers. Traditionally, water quality guidelines have focused heavily on physical and chemical indicators of stream condition. Water quality indicators have undergone a shift in focus with the emphasis toward biological assessment of river condition (see ANZECC and ARMCANZ at Inland waters - water quality home page at http://www.deh.gov.au/water/quality/). The recent approaches to river health assessment acknowledge the importance of physical, chemical and biological interactions, recognising the biological end point resulting from the various stressors added to and modifying aquatic systems. Aquatic macroinvertebrates are commonly used biological indicators for freshwater resources.

'Rapid' biological assessment methods have been designed so that macroinvertebrate sample collection, processing, and data analysis is fast and easily done. The broad scale assessment of Australia's rivers required the development of a nationally comparative, standardized sampling protocol. Consequently, AUSRIVAS was developed for Australia's National River Health Program (NRHP) and involves standardized sampling methods, computer software and predictive models. Macroinvertebrate assemblages, as assessed by AUSRIVAS, have already been identified as an environmental indicator for 'State of the Environment' (SoE) reporting (also see ANZECC and ARMCANZ at http://www.deh.gov.au/water/quality/nwqms/).

AUSRIVAS assessments of river condition are based on the collection of a representative sample of the macroinvertebrate assemblage at a site. The accuracy and precision of the assessments relies on the ability of field and laboratory staff to perform to a satisfactory level during all AUSRIVAS components. The AUSRIVAS Course is designed to establish an acceptable standard of biological assessment data. Quality control is achieved through the training component, which will reduce the variation and error in results. Quality assurance is achieved through the accreditation component, which will provide potential users with the assurance that the accuracy of results is within controlled and acceptable limits.

Please note that the state authority will confer AUSRIVAS accreditation (see http://ausrivas.ewater.com.au/index.php/bio-assessment/macroinvertebrates for the list of NRHP lead agency contacts). Please clarify the details of the accreditation requirements with your State NRHP lead agency. Following completion of the AUSRIVAS course the University of Canberra will provide participants with a written certificate, outlining the training and accreditation criteria that have been met. The participant can then provide the agency with a copy of the certificate enabling the agency to issue the course participant with an AUSRIVAS training or a training and accreditation certificate.

Training will equate with a "satisfactory" pass (see the AUSRIVAS course outline for details) and accreditation equates with the standards specified in the relevant State / Territory Accreditation manual available at http://ausrivas.ewater.com.au/index.php/training-and-accreditation3
The names of trained and accredited operators will be entered on a Training and Accreditation register kept by the Department of the Environment and Heritage at http://www.deh.gov.au/water/rivers/nrhp/register/index.html
- details provided on course completion.

Learning outcomes

The aims of all the AUSRIVAS modules are to provide course participants with the necessary skills and knowledge to successfully conduct assessments of river health, to an acceptable standard, using AUSRIVAS methods and; to provide uniformity and consistency in the application of AUSRIVAS methods.

The learning outcomes for each module are as follows:

Module	Learning outcomes
1. Study design and site selection	Participants will have a strong understanding of the steps involved in study design, the selection of test and reference sites, and quality assurance/quality control procedures for AUSRIVAS assessments.
2. The habitat	Participants will have an understanding of ecological assessment, field-trip preparation, and collecting site and habitat information.
3. Macroinvertebrate sampling and processing	Participants will understand the requirements for collecting and processing standardized macroinvertebrate samples from the various in-stream habitats. Note that this module will provide an introduction to family level macroinvertebrate identification and is not designed to provide comprehensive taxonomic training.
4. Data analysis, predictions and indices	Participants will be proficient in operating the AUSRIVAS predictive models and interpreting the results.
5. AUSRIVAS practical workshop	Participants will gain practical experience and demonstrate proficiency in collecting macroinvertebrates and habitat data for AUSRIVAS assessments. Those participants with sufficient experience may also wish to demonstrate proficiency in macroinvertebrate identification to the standard required for AUSRIVAS accreditation (note that you will need to indicate this at the time of course application).

Pre-requisites

No pre-requisites are required to complete the AUSRIVAS modules but some knowledge of freshwater ecology would be beneficial.

Depending on the needs of the course participant, one or all of the AUSRIVAS modules may be completed. However, to gain AUSRIVAS accreditation for any course component the participant must successfully complete that component to the required standard specified in the relevant State / Territory Accreditation manual (available at http://ausrivas.ewater.com.au/index.php/training-and-accreditation3 The lead agency in each State or Territory may have additional pre-requisites for accreditation (see http://ausrivas.ewater.com.au/index.php/macroinvertebratessub for the list of NRHP contacts).

This course provides appropriate training but lead agencies in each state and territory are responsible for accreditation.

Delivery of module and timetable

Module delivery

The delivery of the theory component of each module is conducted via the Internet, which requires no staff student face-to-face contact. The online study

material comprises self-contained sections, which should be completed sequentially.

The AUSRIVAS practical workshop involves face-to-face staff student interaction. The workshop will be run over 4 days (5th day optional) from the University of Canberra campus and will involve field trips to river sites in the ACT region.

Semester dates

Semester 2 - 2012

Online components to be completed between 11 Feb and 12 May 2013.

Workshop date TBA November/December 2013

Note: The workshop will be run over 5 days, with the 5th day for those wishing to demonstrate proficiency in AUSRIVAS macroinvertebrate identification (you must have indicated this at the time of course application). ID tuition is provided on this day to participants not doing the macroinvertebrate accreditation.

Timetable and schedules

As a guide to study planning, the table below indicates the timeline for progress through the AUSRIVAS course.

Week	Date week begins	Module	Tasks
0	11 Feb	registration	Obtain student password from University of Canberra administration Log on to learnonline
1 to 3	18 Feb	Study design and site selection	Read module content 3 E-Reserve readings 3 Self-test quizzes 3 Discussions topics (assessed) 1 Written assignment – DUE 10 March
4 to 6	11 March	The habitat	Read module content 5 E-Reserve readings 1 Exercise 3 Self-test quizzes 4 Discussions topics (assessed) Written assignment and online assessment quiz – DUE 31 March
7 to 9	01 April	Macroinvertebrate sampling and processing	Read module content 5 E-Reserve readings 1 Online macroinvertebrate ID tutorial 3 Self-test quizzes 3 Discussions topics (assessed) 1 Exam Quiz – DUE 21 April
10 to 12	22 April	Data analysis, predictions and indices	Read module content 6 E-Reserve readings 3 Exercises 3 Self-test quizzes 5 Discussions topics (assessed) 1 Written assignment – DUE 12 May

Week	Date week begins	Module	Tasks
End week 12		**All modules**	**Complete all online modules Friday this week (12 May)**
AUSRIVAS Workshop		Workshop: AUSRIVAS sampling and processing (practical)	Attend the workshop Compete the field and laboratory exercises Assessment 1: Complete AUSRIVAS habitat and site information sheets Assessment 2: sample collection, macroinvertebrate sorting and laboratory procedures Macroinvertebrate identification tutorial or demonstrate proficiency in AUSRIVAS macroinvertebrate identification (you must have indicated this at the time of course application)

Online delivery information

The theory components of all modules will be delivered online, without staff student face-to-face contact. There is a Learn online site for each module and they will be added to your Learn online page when you are enrolled. The module study materials are presented using a series of self-contained sections, each building upon the last.

The sections within each module will:

- outline the work to be undertaken
- provide the key concepts
- include readings – which are available for download via the Website
- integrate learning activities – such as:
  - self-assessment – designed to provide feedback by online multi-choice questions on the section topics.
  - discussion topics - You can share your experiences regarding the sections, ask questions and get feedback within the specific discussion topics on the bulletin board.
  - online assessment will be required using multi-choice quizzes, the bulletin board or written assignments, which can be submitted online.

Each module is divided into sections designed to focus your studies. You will be expected to progress through these modules, and sections within modules, in sequence.

Note: You will need a modem, associated software and access to the Internet via a reliable Internet Service Provider (ISP), if you do not have access through your workplace or university, (see section on 'What hardware and software must the student provide?').

We do not provide computer or modem as part of the study materials.

We do not provide Microsoft Windows operating system, Microsoft Office or Microsoft Word as part of the module materials.

Staff contact

Convener: Susan Nichols, Building 3, UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA, ACT 2601.

Tel. (02) 6201 2543 and email

Tutors:

Sue Nichols

Tel. (02) 6201 5408 and email

Evan Harrison

Tel. (02) 6201 2080 and email

Consultation with staff

- For the online components of each module the primary mode of communication between students and staff will be the learn online bulletin board or private email through learn online.
- If needed staff can be contacted on the above phone numbers.

Consultation between students

Students are expected to participate in bulletin board discussions.

Module resources

Online study material

The following manuals are required reading:

The AUSRIVAS field sampling manuals - available online at http://ausrivas.ewater.com.au/index.php/macroinvertebratessub

AUSRIVAS predictive modelling manual - available online at http://ausrivas.ewater.com.au/index.php/manuals-a-datasheets

AUSRIVAS software users manual - available online at http://ausrivas.ewater.com.au/index.php/manuals-a-datasheets

You will be required to download the AUSRIVAS macroinvertebrate predictive modelling software from http://ausrivas.ewater.com.au/index.php/get-the-predictive-modelling-software

AUSRIVAS username and password will be provided with enrolment in module 4 (Data analysis, predictions and indices). Note that the AUSRIVAS username and password is required to run a predictive model but not required to download and install the software (software download is free).

Other readings will be made available online via the University of Canberra library system, also called E-reserve.

Further online study material as outlined in the study plan.

The Websites

The course Website is http://learnonline.canberra.edu.au/ You will need to log on with your student ID number and University password for Web access. Additional information on using Learn online can be obtained from:

http://learnonline.canberra.edu.au/course/view.php?id=1344

Other useful Websites include:

- Information regarding AUSRIVAS from the Website at: http://ausrivas.ewater.com.au/index.php/home
- The Australian Aquatic Invertebrates Web Keys available at: http://www.lucidcentral.com/keys/lwrrdc/public/Aquatics
- The CRC for Freshwater Ecology including links to many other relevant Websites. http://freshwater.canberra.edu.au
- The National River Health Program site for AUSRIVAS including sampling methods manuals and models for analysing data for all of Australia. http://ausrivas.canberra.edu.au/
- The National Land and Water Resources Audit site that includes the Assessment of River Condition under the topic of water http://www.nlwra.gov.au/
- This site outlines the State of the Environment reporting, which provides an assessment of the condition of Australia's inland waters http://www.deh.gov.au/soe/inland/index.html
- National water quality management strategy - Australian guidelines for water quality monitoring and reporting at: http://www.deh.gov.au/water/quality/nwqms/

The UC library

Many electronic journals and databases can be accessed through the UC library http://www.canberra.edu.au/library

What hardware and software must the student provide?

To access the online materials, submit assignments and interact with tutors and other students in each module you will need to purchase or obtain a computer capable of running the following software:

- The Microsoft Windows Operating System
- A browser (one with a Flash 6 plug-in if you wish to view animations)
- Flash 6 plug-in may be downloaded from www.macromedia.com
- Microsoft Office
- Adobe Acrobat Reader - download FREE Acrobat Reader at http://www.adobe.com.au/products/acrobat/readstep.html
- An email package
- You will need software to unzip zipped files. You can download a free evaluation version of WINZIP from the following website - http://www.winzip.com/downwzeval.htm

You will also need a modem, associated software and access to the Internet via a reliable Internet Service Provider (ISP), if you do not have access through your workplace or university.

We do not provide computer or modem as part of the study materials.

We do not provide Microsoft Windows operating system, Microsoft Office or Microsoft Word as part of the module materials.

Assessment

All assessment will comply with the *UC Assessment Policy,* which is available at the following URL: http://www.canberra.edu.au/secretariat/uo-guidepol.html

Module 1. AUSRIVAS study design and site selection

Assessment for the module will involve two components.

1. A written assignment relating to the theory presented online. In your own interest, you should not submit the assessment item until you have completed the entire online work plan for all module sections.
2. Contribution to the bulletin board discussions.

Assignment	Due date	Mark	Requirements
Study Design and Site Selection	10 March	90%	Complete an assignment related to the theory covered in all topics presented in the online modules (i.e. study design, site selection and QA/QC procedures).
Bulletin board discussions	10 March	10%	Contribute to the bulletin board discussions for each of the topics listed at the end of each section in the online 'Study design and site selection' study guide. Submit your 2 best postings for assessment.

To pass Module 1, students must complete the assignment exercises and gain a passing mark. This mark must include at least 40% of the available marks from each of the assessments.

Module 2. AUSRIVAS the habitat

Assessment for the module will involve three components.

1. A written assignment relating to the theory presented online.
2. An on-line quiz relating to the theory presented online. In your own interest, you should not submit the quiz or written assignment for assessment until you have completed the entire online work plan for all sections.
3. Contribution to the bulletin board discussions.

Assignment	Due date	Mark	Requirements
1. The habitat written assignment	31 March	45%	Complete an assignment related to the theory covered in all topics presented in the online module (i.e. preparation for field work, site & field sampling information).

2. The habitat online quiz	31 March	45%	Complete an online quiz related to the theory covered in all topics presented in the module (i.e. preparation for field work, site & field sampling information).
3. Bulletin board discussions	31 March	10%	Contribute to the bulletin board discussions for each of the topics listed at the end of each section in the online 'The habitat' study guide. Submit your 2 best postings for assessment.

To pass Module 2, students must complete all assignment exercises and gain an aggregate passing mark. This mark must include at least 40% of the available marks from each of the assessments.

Module 3. AUSRIVAS macroinvertebrate sampling and processing

Assessment for the module will involve two components.

1. An on-line quiz relating to the theory presented online. In your own interest, you should not submit the quiz for assessment until you have completed the entire online work plan for all module sections.
2. Contribution to the bulletin board discussions.

Assignment	Due date	Mark	Requirements
Macroinvertebrate sampling and processing	21 April	90%	Complete an online quiz related to the theory covered in all topics presented in the online modules (i.e., sample collection, macroinvertebrate sorting and laboratory procedures).
Bulletin board discussions	21 April	10%	Contribute to the bulletin board discussions for each of the topics listed at the end of each section in the online 'Macroinvertebrate sampling and processing' study guide. Submit your 2 best postings for assessment.

To pass Module 3, students must complete all assignment exercises and gain an aggregate passing mark. This mark must include at least 40% of the available marks from each of the assessments.

Module 4. AUSRIVAS data analysis, predictions and indices

Assessment will be by two assessment items.

1. Bulletin board contributions worth 10% of the total module mark.

2. An assignment comprising of a series of 3 exercises worth 90% of the total module mark. In your own interest, you should not submit the assignment until you have completed the entire work plan for all module sections.

Assignment	Assignment exercises	Due date	Mark	Requirements
Data analysis, prediction & indices	1. Data preparation & operating	12 May	30%	Prepare the data set supplied and run through the appropriate AUSRIVAS

	AUSRIVAS			model.
	2. Site assessment	12 May	30%	Using the same information supplied for Exercise 1 and the AURIVAS output, compile a table of information that you will use to assess the sites.
	3. Interpreting results	12 May	30%	Following on from Exercise 2 write a report detailing your interpretation of the results.
Bulletin board discussions		12 May	10%	Contribute to the bulletin board discussions for each of the topics listed at the end of each section in the online 'Data analysis, prediction & indices' study guide. Submit your 2 best postings for assessment.

To pass Module 4, students must complete all assignment exercises and gain an aggregate passing mark. This mark must include at least 40% of the available marks from each of the assessments.

Module 5. AUSRIVAS practical workshop

Assessment for the module will involve an assessment of your performance in the field collecting both habitat information and macroinvertebrates. Macroinvertebrate-identification assessment is optional and you must have indicated your desire to complete this assessment component at the time of course application.

Assignment	Due date	Mark	Requirements
1. Field sampling – habitat information	TBA	50%	Attend the workshop and satisfactorily complete the field exercises and field sampling and site information sheets for two sites in the ACT.
2. Field sampling – water & macroinvertebrate sampling	TBA	50%	Attend the workshop and complete the field and laboratory exercises to a satisfactory standard, which cover sample collection and macroinvertebrate sorting procedures.
macroinvertebrate identification tutorial or accreditation	TBA		Macroinvertebrate ID tutorial or identify, to accreditation standard, the macroinvertebrates collected from the two habitats at an ACT site and from a reference collection.

To pass Module 5, students must complete all assignment exercises and gain an aggregate passing mark.

Please note: This course provides appropriate training but lead agencies in each state and territory are responsible for accreditation. Thus, to gain AUSRIVAS accreditation for any course component the participant must successfully complete that component to the required standard specified in the relevant State / Territory Accreditation manual (available at

http://ausrivas.canberra.edu.au/Bioassessment/Macroinvertebrates/Training/ The lead agency in each State or Territory may have additional pre-requisites for accreditation (see http://ausrivas.canberra.edu.au/Bioassessment/Macroinvertebrates/ for the list of NRHP contacts).

Descriptors for grades

The following descriptors are used as a guide to determination of grades. For final assessment in the subject, the result will be one of the following grades: HD, DI, CR, P or Fail. The following table describes grades and the relationship between letter and numerical grades at the University of Canberra for both individual assessment items and the final result for the subject:

Designated grade	Verbal description
High Distinction (HD) (85%-100%)	Work of outstanding quality on the learning outcomes of the subject, which may be demonstrated in areas such as criticism, logical argument, interpretation of materials or use of methods. This grade may also be given to recognise particular originality or creativity.
Distinction (DI) (75%-84%)	Work of superior quality on the learning outcomes of the subject, demonstrating a sound grasp of content, together with efficient organisation and selectivity.
Credit (CR) (65%-74%)	Work of good quality showing more than satisfactory achievement on the learning outcomes of the subject, or work of superior quality on a majority of the learning outcomes of the subject
Pass (P) (50%-64%)	Work showing a satisfactory achievement of the learning outcomes of the subject.
Fail (N) (0%-49%)	Work showing an unsatisfactory achievement of one or more learning outcomes of the subject, and not qualifying for the grade of pass or conceded pass.

The translation of grades for the series of individual assessment items into the final grade for the subject is defined by the conditions in this subject outline.

Students, who are unable to achieve the due date for assignments, should discuss the matter with the subject convenor.

On some occasions, assignments have apparently been lost, before or, after they have been handed in. Students are reminded that in the final analysis it is their own responsibility to ensure that assignments are available for marking, and therefore are advised to consider the following precautions:

- Retain a copy of the assignment; or
- Retain detailed notes used in the assignment so that if necessary an additional copy can be submitted.

Extensions of assignment deadlines will be given only on production of an appropriate medical certificate or extreme personal extenuating circumstances. Contact the subject convenor and arrange to submit the assignment at an agreed postponed date.

Role of academic judgement

Students should note that while it is a reasonable expectation that a pass result will be given for an overall mark of 50% or more, the relationship between marks and grades is conditioned by the exercise of subjective

judgement. The borders between grades are determined each semester in the light of a partly subjective judgement of overall class performance. Although subject to review upon presentation of relevant argument, the university has confirmed that the assignment of grades remains a matter for the exercise of the judgement of the subject committee

Feedback

Feedback will be provided on all assessments both to the class as a whole, via the Bulletin Board, and individually.

Referencing requirements

The preferred citation style for all submitted material is that adopted by the Australian Journals published by CSIRO, in particular *Marine and Freshwater Research* available at http://www.publish.csiro.au/nid/129/aid/434.htm

Students also are asked to note the copyright requirements set out in the guide to policies and procedures available at:

http://www.canberra.edu.au/secretariat/uo-guidepol.html .

Student responsibility in relation to assessment

- If there is any doubt with regard to the requirements of any particular assignments or assessment procedure, the onus for clarifying the issue rests with the student who should contact the convener or tutor about the matter. Tutors will also be happy to assist in this regard.

Special consideration and deferred examinations

- In the case of illness, misadventure or unavoidable commitments at the scheduled time of an examination or assignment students should contact the subject convener as soon as possible.

Individual work and plagiarism

- The University assumes students are honest and expects from students honest work in all their assignments. Good scholarship involves building on and borrowing from the work of others but this use must be acknowledged. Cheating, plagiarism, and falsification of data are dishonest practices, which contravene academic values of respect for knowledge, scholarship and scholars. These practices devalue the quality of learning, both for the individual and for others enrolled in the course; they also diminish the reputation of a University course.
- It is taken for granted that assignments give evidence of background reading, intelligent criticism, keen observation and the development of a line of argument to support any particular stance adopted. It is also assumed that, unless explicitly stated otherwise, each assignment is totally the work of the individual submitting it and is produced specifically for the subject in question.
- The appropriation by reproducing, paraphrasing, summarising or otherwise presenting in altered form, of another person's ideas or arguments without acknowledgment is plagiarism. Plagiarism includes submitting work prepared by another author, including another student, as one's own.
- The University imposes strict penalties on students who are found to contravene the University plagiarism policy. The Academic Board policy on plagiarism is set out in more detail in the guide to policies and procedures found at http://www.canberra.edu.au/secretariat/uo-guidepol.html.

Intellectual property

- Students are asked to consult the guide to policies and procedures http://www.canberra.edu.au/secretariat/uo-guidepol.html for information on intellectual property.

Student feedback on and formal evaluation of subject

Students are welcome to make comments on any aspect of the modules by emailing the convenor at any time during the teaching weeks. A formal evaluation form will be made available online near the conclusion of the modules.

Your feedback is important to us and will be used to improve the course for future participants. By completing the evaluation survey you give permission for the course conveners / instructors to publish the survey results. Your anonymity and privacy will be protected and we will take care not to publish any short answer responses that may inadvertently identify you.

Student responsibility

Student address and contact details

It is the student's responsibility to provide accurate information about their address and contact details (including current email address), and to notify the course convener of changes as soon as they occur.

Enrolment

It is the student's responsibility to ensure that they are correctly enrolled in each subject and that the subjects are correct for their course of study.

Attendance

Students are expected to complete all sections within the modules and submit assessable work by the required method and by the due date. They are also expected to participate in use of the bulletin board.

Provision of information to the group

Announcements on the first page of the Website and those made to the email class list are deemed to be made to the whole group. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that their current email address is on this list.

Workload

The amount of time you will need to spend on study will depend on a number of factors including your prior knowledge, learning skill level and learning style. Nevertheless, in planning your time commitments you should note that each AUSRIVAS module is about the equivalent workload of 1 university credit point. A credit point is an indicator of the amount of work required in a subject and represents a workload of about four hours per week throughout the semester for an average student (http://www.canberra.edu.au/handbook/).

In line with the University of Canberra guidelines for academic progress, each online module is expected to take about 48 hours to complete, which includes time spent on WebCT, completing assessment items and other study associated with the module. Participants undertaking Module 5, 'The AUSRIVAS practical workshop', are expected to attend the 4-day workshop.

IT skills

The students should have a good understanding of the operation of their computer, have an Internet connection, have an email account and some personal Web space allocated to them.

Assignments

Students should keep a copy of any assessment item that has been submitted.

Authority of this subject outline

Standard provision

Any change to the information contained in the Sections Academic content, Delivery of subject and timetable and Assessment of this document, will be made by the Subject Convener if the written agreement of staff and a majority of students has been obtained; and if written advice of the change is then forwarded to each student enrolled in the subject at their registered term address. Any individual student who believes him/herself to be disadvantaged by a change is encouraged to discuss the matter with the Subject Convener.