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## PLANNING PAINS? DON'T PANIC!

*This a new section for LUPR - an opportunity to ask all those burning questions about planning issues. To get started we have a question about LU qualifications but we are keen to include a range of topical and tricky planning queries in future issues. Please contact LUPR if you have a question you would like answered in the next issue.*

**Question** – Why do some Master of Environmental Planning (MEP) graduates from Lincoln University get honours and others get distinction or merit – what's the difference?

**Response** – An Honours degree generally indicates that the degree has included a significant individual, independent research component (hence the difference between a Bachelors degree with Honours and a Post Graduate Diploma). Under current regulations, at Lincoln University those students eligible to graduate with an MEP (Hons) are those who have replaced two of their courses with a dissertation. Those students who do not do a dissertation are eligible for being awarded Distinction or Merit.

The grading system for a Masters is the same as the Bachelors degree. 80% (A-) or more is '1<sup>st</sup> class Honours' or Distinction, 70-79% (B+, B) is '2<sup>nd</sup> class Honours, Division I' or Merit, 60-69% (B-, C+) is '2<sup>nd</sup> class Honours, Division II'. The award of an MEP with Honours or Merit/Distinction is automatic and only available to those students who have achieved that average. A candidate can only get Honours or Distinction/Merit if they

complete within 3 years of first enrolment date for full time students and four years for part-time students. Some Universities and degrees have a 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Honours category, but the MEP does not. Under older Lincoln University regulations the difference between Honours and Distinction/Merit was not as clearly specified as it is now.

It is important to note that if a student is seriously impaired for an examination and applies for an aegrotat they may not be awarded honours. Instead of applying for an aegrotat, they may elect to sit a subsequent examination (see general regulation 3 of the Master Degree regulations). Those students intending to do a PhD are recommended to do an honours programme as the preliminary qualification for admission to a PhD at a New Zealand university is a Bachelors or Masters degree with first or second class honours. This means that you have completed a research degree as opposed to a taught degree. Without honours you would need to apply for special admission and produce relevant information to progress to further assessment of your application.

*(From 2009 Lincoln University has changed its grading scale to be more in line with the scale used at other NZ universities. The percentages noted above apply from semester 1 2009. Marks awarded before 2009 were on the old grading scheme.)*