

Course Structures and Levels of Learning Policy

Section 1 - Purpose and Scope

(1) The purpose of this Policy is to establish course design principles for the University's coursework awards.

Scope

(2) This Policy applies to:

- a. the development of all new undergraduate coursework and postgraduate coursework courses offered by the University;
- b. the amendment of all existing courses; and
- c. all staff.

(3) This Policy does not apply to Bachelor (Honours) courses (instead refer to the [Honours Courses Development and Administration Policy](#)).

Section 2 - Definitions

(4) Nil.

Section 3 - Policy Statement

(5) Accredited SCU courses and their constituent units will:

- a. support student learning towards achieving:
 - i. the AQF's specific and generic learning outcomes;
 - ii. the University's graduate attributes, specific course learning outcomes and, where required, professional and external accreditation standards;
- b. incorporate high quality curricula, underpinned by the University's Policies concerning learning, teaching, curriculum and assessment;
- c. incorporate relevant pure, strategic and applied research;
- d. challenge students in their acquisition and application of knowledge and skills;
- e. promote the recognition of prior learning, whether that learning be formal, informal or non-formal;
- f. incorporate scaffolding of learning in each course to ensure students are able to:
 - i. broaden and deepen their knowledge and skills, with the exception of courses up to one year duration, for which either broadening or deepening is appropriate; and
 - ii. apply knowledge and skills in a discipline or applied field;
- g. comply with external legislation, standards and specifications, including the:
 - i. [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2011](#);
 - ii. [Australian Qualifications Framework \(AQF\) 2013](#); and

iii. [Education Services for Overseas Students \(ESOS\) Act 2000](#);

h. wherever possible, ensure students:

- i. have opportunities to engage in Community Engaged Learning and thereby promote employment outcomes for graduates;
- ii. are provided opportunities to broaden their knowledge outside their course discipline or applied field (e.g. study abroad; student exchange; university wide majors; availability of electives from Schools outside the School responsible for the award; integrated study options in collaboration or partnership with other institutions, including through multi-badged awards).

Course Structures

(6) Professional judgement based on sound pedagogy is to be exercised in structuring SCU courses.

(7) Subject to the principles contained in this Policy, course structures may vary in order to accommodate many factors, which include the array of potential student pathways for entry into an award, the possibilities of integrating and/or nesting awards, the requirements of external accrediting bodies and the development of multi-badged awards.

(8) It is the combination of units within a course which demonstrates the specified and generic learning outcomes of a course based on mapping AQF learning outcomes to:

- a. graduate attributes;
- b. unit/course learning outcomes; and
- c. assessment.

(9) Units designed for one AQF level may be used in another AQF level course as long as the course learning outcomes in the receiving course can be achieved in a justified, transparent manner. Therefore:

- a. units designed originally for one AQF level should be labelled with that AQF level even if used in another course with a different AQF level;
- b. units designed originally for one AQF level with a nominated level of learning should keep this nominated level of learning even if used in another course with a different AQF level; and
- c. units designed originally for one AQF level with a nominated level of learning should keep this nominated level of learning, unless the course is abolished or the unit removed from the award and incorporated in another course with a different AQF level.

(10) Level of learning is a classification for units within a course. Depending on its volume of learning (or duration), a course may have from one to three levels:

- a. Level 1 is Introductory;
- b. Level 2 is Intermediate; and
- c. Level 3 is Advanced.

(11) In a Bachelor degree, for example, these levels may relate to the years of study, but this is not a necessary condition and such a principle could not be applied to a Masters (Coursework) Degree for which the typical duration is 1 to 2 years Full Time Equivalent (FTE). Therefore, a level 2 (Intermediate) unit may be undertaken in the second session of year one; and in distance education or part time study, a level 2 unit may be taken in year 2, 3 or 4 or perhaps later. Rather than being a year of learning/enrolment equivalent, level of learning reflects an increasing sophistication of the unit learning outcomes so that scaffolding of learning is explicit within a course.

Specifications

(12) The specifications in this section should be read with reference to clauses (1) to (11). They provide flexible guidance for the development and review of units and courses at SCU. The terms "typically" and "normally" are used deliberately in the specification tables to indicate that exceptions are permitted where justified according to the principles at clauses (1) to (11).

Diploma Specifications

(13) Diplomas (AQF Level 5) will normally comply with the specifications in the following table:

AQF Level	Level 5
Volume of Learning (Duration)	Typically 1 to 2 years FTE
Total Units	1 year 96 credit points 2 years 192 credit points
Structure (including minimum requirements and restrictions)	Exceptions to the following are permitted if justified according to the principles at clause (5) in this policy. Normally, the course will: - have 8 units (96 cp) to match volume of learning of 1 year, or 16 units (192 cp) to match volume of learning of 2 years; - include a core of up to 4 units, only four of which may be at Introductory level; - be comprised of a majority of units from AQF Levels 5 to 6, and may include AQF 7 Introductory units The structure of a Diploma will vary in response to matters such as articulation agreements, student pathways for entry into an award, the integration and nesting of awards, the requirements of external accrediting bodies and multi-badging.
Grading of the Award	The qualification will be awarded as a Diploma.

Advanced Diploma Specifications

(14) Advanced Diploma awards (AQF Level 6) will normally comply with the specifications in the following table:

AQF Level	Level 6
Volume of Learning (Duration)	Typically 1.5 to 2 years FTE
Total Units	1.5 years 144 credit points 2 years 192 credit points
Structure (including minimum requirements and restrictions)	Exceptions to the following are permitted if justified according to the principles at clause (5) in this policy. Normally, the course will: - have 12 units (144 cp) to match volume of learning of 1.5 years, or 16 units (192 cp) to match volume of learning of 2 years; - include a core of up to 8 units; - be comprised of a majority of units from AQF Level 6 Introductory to Advanced level units, to AQF Level 7 Introductory and Intermediate level units. The structure of an Advanced Diploma will vary in response to matters such as articulation agreements, student pathways for entry into an award, the integration and nesting of awards, the requirements of external accrediting bodies and multi-badging.
Grading of the Award	The qualification will be awarded as an Advanced Diploma.

Associate Degree Specifications

(15) Associate Degrees (AQF Level 6) will normally comply with the specifications in the following table:

AQF Level	Level 6
Volume of Learning (Duration)	Typically 2 years FTE

Total Units	2 years 192 credit points
Structure (including minimum requirements and restrictions)	Exceptions to the following are permitted if justified according to the principles at clause (5) in this policy. Normally, the course will: - have 16 units (192 cp) to match volume of learning of 2 years; - include a core of up to 8 units; - be comprised of AQF Level 6 Introductory to Advanced level units and AQF Level 7 Introductory and Intermediate level units. A small number of AQF Level 7 Advanced level units may be incorporated. The structure of an Associate Degree will vary in response to matters such as articulation agreements, student pathways for entry into an award, the integration and nesting of awards, the requirements of external accrediting bodies and multi-badging.
Grading of the Award	The qualification will be awarded as an Associate Degree. The qualification will be awarded 'with Distinction' to those students who: complete at least 96cp at SCU; who achieve a grade point average (GPA) of 6.0; and who record no fail or absent fail grades during their studies at the University or through approved arrangements such as study abroad.

Bachelor Degree Specifications

(16) Bachelor Degrees (AQF Level 7) will normally comply with the specifications in the following table:

AQF Level	Level 7
Volume of Learning (Duration)	Typically 3 to 4 years FTE
Total Units	3 years 288 credit points 4 years 384 credit points
Structure (including minimum requirements and restrictions)	Exceptions to the following are permitted if justified according to the principles at clause (5) in this policy. Normally, the course will: - have 24 units (288 cp) to match volume of learning of 3 years, or 32 units (384 cp) to match volume of learning of 4 years; - incorporate a nested Diploma (AQF 5) and/or Associate Degree (AQF 6) as an exit point; - contain a maximum of 10 units (120cp) at Introductory level; - contain a minimum of 6 units (72cp) at Advanced level; - include a core of up to 8 units (96cp) of which no more than 48cp may be at a level 7 Introductory or lower AQF level unit, and of which at least 24cp must be at Advanced AQF level 7; - provide a choice of majors, where the major is normally 96cp, comprising a sequence of units, including no less than 12cp at Advanced AQF level 7; - provide a choice of minors, where the minor is normally 48cp, comprising a sequence of units, including no less than 12cp at Advanced level; - contain a minimum of 24cp as electives; - be comprised of a majority of units at AQF 7 Introductory, Intermediate and Advanced levels; - where possible support student choice through opportunities to incorporate majors, minors and elective units from outside the School responsible for the course. The structure of a Bachelor Degree will vary in response to matters such as articulation agreements, student pathways for entry into an award, the integration and nesting of awards, the requirements of external accrediting bodies and multi-badging.
Grading of the Award	The qualification will normally be awarded as an ordinary degree. The qualification will be awarded 'with Distinction' to those students who: complete at least 96cp at Intermediate and Advanced level units at SCU; who achieve a grade point average (GPA) of 6.0 or higher in Intermediate and Advanced level units; and who record no fail or absent fail grades during their studies at the University or through approved arrangements such as study abroad.

Graduate Certificate Specifications

(17) A Graduate Certificate (AQF Level 8) will normally comply with the specifications in the following table:

AQF Level	Level 8
Volume of Learning (Duration)	Typically 0.5 to 1 year FTE
Total Units	0.5 year 48 credit points 1 year 96 credit points

Structure (including minimum requirements and restrictions)	Exceptions to the following are permitted if justified according to the principles at clause (5) in this policy. Normally, the course will: - have 4 units (48 cp) to match volume of learning of 0.5 year, or 8 units (96 cp) to match volume of learning of 1 year; - be comprised of a majority of units at AQF 7 Advanced level and Level 8 units at Introductory and Intermediate levels. The structure of a Graduate Certificate will vary in response to matters such as articulation agreements, student pathways for entry into an award, the integration and nesting of awards, the requirements of external accrediting bodies and multi-badging.
Grading of the Award	The qualification will normally be awarded as an ordinary degree.

Graduate Diploma Specifications

(18) A Graduate Diploma (AQF Level 8) will normally comply with the specifications in the following table:

AQF Level	Level 8
Volume of Learning (Duration)	Typically 1 to 2 years FTE
Total Units	1 year 96 credit points 2 years 192 credit points
Structure (including minimum requirements and restrictions)	Exceptions to the following are permitted if justified according to the principles at clause (5) in this policy. Normally, the course will: - have 8 units (96 cp) to match volume of learning of 1 year, or 16 units (192 cp) to match volume of learning of 2 years; - incorporate a nested Graduate Certificate (AQF 8) as an exit point; - be comprised of a majority of units at AQF 8 Introductory, Intermediate and Advanced levels. The structure of an Advanced Diploma will vary in response to matters such as articulation agreements, student pathways for entry into an award, the integration and nesting of awards, the requirements of external accrediting bodies and multi-badging.
Grading of the Award	The qualification will normally be awarded as an ordinary degree.

Masters (Coursework) Specifications

(19) A Masters (Coursework) Degree (AQF Level 9) will normally comply with the specifications in the following table:

AQF Level	Level 9
Volume of Learning (Duration)	Typically 1 to 2 years FTE
Total Units	1 year 96 credit points 2 years 192 credit points
Structure (including minimum requirements and restrictions)	Exceptions to the following are permitted if justified according to the principles at clause (5) in this policy. Normally the course will: - have 8 units (96 cp) to match volume of learning of 1 year, or 16 units (192 cp) to match volume of learning of 2 years; - incorporate a nested Graduate Certificate (AQF 8) and/or Graduate Diploma (AQF 8) as an exit point; - provide a choice of specialisations, where the specialisation is a minimum of 48cp and a maximum of 96cp, comprising a sequence of units which includes no less than 12cp at Advanced level; - contain a minimum of 24cp as electives; - be comprised of a majority of units at AQF 9 Introductory, Intermediate and Advanced levels; - contain a minimum of 48cp at Advanced level; The structure of a Masters (Coursework) will vary in response to matters such as articulation agreements, student pathways for entry into an award, the integration and nesting of awards, the requirements of external accrediting bodies and multi-badging.
Grading of the Award	The qualification will normally be awarded as an ordinary degree. The qualification will be awarded 'with Distinction' to those students who: complete at least 96cp at SCU; who achieve a grade point average (GPA) of 6.0 or higher; and who record no fail or absent fail grades during their studies at the University or through approved arrangements such as study abroad.

Masters (Extended) Specifications

(20) A Masters (Extended) Degree (AQF Level 9) will normally comply with the specifications in the following table:

AQF Level	Level 9
Volume of Learning (Duration)	Typically 3 to 4 years FTE
Total Units	3 years 288 credit points 4 years 384 credit points
Structure (including minimum requirements and restrictions)	Exceptions to the following are permitted if justified according to the principles at clause (5) in this policy. Normally the course will: - have 24 units (288 cp) to match volume of learning of 3 years, or 32 units (384 cp) to match volume of learning of 4 years; - provide a choice of specialisations, where the specialisation is a minimum of 48cp and a maximum of 96cp, comprising a sequence of units which includes no less than 12cp at Advanced level; - contain a minimum of 24cp as electives; - be comprised of a majority of units at AQF 9 Introductory, Intermediate and Advanced levels; The structure of a Masters (Extended) will vary in response to matters such as articulation agreements, student pathways for entry into an award, the integration and nesting of awards, the requirements of external accrediting bodies and multi-badging.
Grading of the Award	The qualification will normally be awarded as an ordinary degree. The qualification will be awarded 'with Distinction' to those students who: complete at least 96cp at SCU; who achieve a grade point average (GPA) of 6.0 or higher; and who record no fail or absent fail grades during their studies at the University or through approved arrangements such as study abroad.

Section 4 - Guidelines

(21) Nil.

Status and Details

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Head of Work Unit	Erica Wilson Pro Vice Chancellor (Academic Innovation) +61 2 66203151
Enquiries Contact	Governance Services