Curriculum Policy

Section 1 - Purpose and Scope

Purpose

(1) This Policy governs the design and development of courses and units at Southern Cross University.

Scope

(2) This Policy applies to all award and non-award courses and units offered by Southern Cross University.

Section 2 - Definitions

(3) The [Definitions (Academic) Policy](#) applies to this Policy.

Section 3 - Policy Statement

Award Courses

(4) As a self-accrediting higher education provider, the University designs, develops and accredits award courses:

   a. comprised of accredited units;
   b. in alignment with the University's strategic priorities, Rules and Policies;
   c. for which it has the necessary expertise and resources to deliver;
   d. in accordance with Section 3.1 of the [Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021](#);
   e. that meet the requirements for an award at Levels 5 to 10 (Diploma to Doctorate) of the [Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)](#); and
   f. which comply with the [Education Services for Overseas Students Act](#) and [Regulations](#) and are consistent with the University's [CRICOS](#) registration (where offered to international onshore students).

(5) Courses and units will be designed and developed in accordance with the curriculum design principles described in this policy by staff with suitable expertise in curriculum design, pedagogical expertise, and disciplinary knowledge.

(6) A principal feature of the University's course design is that learning activities and assessment tasks align directly with Learning Outcomes set at unit and course levels, leading to students achieving the University's Graduate Attributes at the conclusion of a course of study. The course information materials provided to students clearly describes this key design feature.

(7) The award title, abbreviated award title, and volume of learning associated with an accredited course will satisfy the requirements of the [AQF](#) as specified in the [Course Nomenclature and Volume of Learning Schedule](#).

Non-award Courses

(8) The University may also design and develop non-award courses including pathway programs and professional

development courses:

    a. in alignment with the University's strategic priorities, Rules and Policies;

    b. for which it has the necessary expertise and resources to deliver; and

    c. which comply with the [Education Services for Overseas Students Act](#) and [Regulations](#) and are consistent with the University's [CRICOS](#) registration (where offered to international onshore students).

(9) Non-award courses must not be represented as leading to an accredited or [AQF](#) qualification.

Section 4 - Curriculum Design Principles for Accredited Courses and Units

(10) Accredited courses and units are designed according to the following principles:

    a. Design Principle 1: Accredited courses must clearly and explicitly develop learning outcomes and the University's Graduate Attributes consistent with the AQF level at which the course will be accredited;

    b. Design Principle 2: Accredited courses must provide clear and flexible requirements governing admission, progression through studies, transfer or articulation into other courses, and course completion, including exiting with an alternate award;

    c. Design Principle 3: Accredited courses and units must be designed using constructive alignment of expected learning outcomes with content, learning activities and assessment;

    d. Design Principle 4: Accredited courses and units must develop advanced knowledge and inquiry, including emerging directions informed by advances in research and practice, appropriate to the AQF level at which the course will be accredited;

    e. Design Principle 5: Accredited courses and units must meet the needs of relevant graduate destinations, including meeting professional accreditation standards, where relevant;

    f. Design Principle 6: Accredited courses and units should, where appropriate, include opportunities for Community Engaged Learning;

    g. Design Principle 7: Accredited courses and units must offer a learning experience that is relevant and equitable for the University's student profile; and

    h. Design Principle 8: Accredited courses and units must be of comparable standard to similar courses and units offered within Australia and overseas.

Design Principle 1: Course Learning Outcomes and Graduate Attributes aligned with the AQF

(11) Accredited courses will specify Course Learning Outcomes that:

    a. encompass the knowledge, skills and application relevant to the course type as specified in the [AQF](#);

    b. address discipline-specific and professional requirements; and

    c. are relevant, desirable, achievable, concise and written in plain English.

(12) The University's [Graduate Attributes](#) will be explicitly developed and aligned with Course Learning Outcomes in all accredited courses as specified in the [Graduate Attributes Schedule](#).

Design Principle 2: Clear and flexible course and unit requirements

(13) Requirements for a student to be admitted to a course:

a. are specified in the University's Rules Relating to Awards for the appropriate type of course; and

b. will be documented using clear, unambiguous, and consistent plain English wording.

(14) Notwithstanding clause (13), Academic Board may approve stipulation of additional admission requirements in the Specific Award Rules for a course if required to ensure that all admitted students are equipped to succeed in the course.

(15) Inherent Requirements for undertaking a course, or parts of a course, will be clearly stipulated, especially when an associated award may lead to registration as a professional practitioner.

(16) Coursework courses will provide students, where possible, with a choice of minors, majors or specialisations, and a choice of elective units, including where possible shared majors, minors and elective units, and opportunities to study in other disciplines.

(17) Units will be:

a. designed to minimise requirements for study of units in a particular order, to maximise flexibility for student progression through a course; and

b. assigned a Level of Study that provides students with guidance on appropriate progression pathways through a course.

(18) Units will only have a pre-requisite, co-requisite or other enrolment restriction requirement if necessary due to:

a. safety - the absence of an enrolment restriction will put individuals, the public, or the student at risk of harm;

b. rationing of places - there is a genuine and non-negotiable constraint on the maximum number of students who can be successfully taught in the unit;

c. academic peril - it would be unreasonable to allow students to enrol without mandatory prior preparation or study because they would almost certainly be unable to successfully complete the unit; or

d. external accreditation requirements - the absence of an enrolment restriction would make it impossible to meet the requirements of clause (31).

(19) Notwithstanding clause (18), units will normally have no more than one pre-requisite, co-requisite or other enrolment restriction requirement.

(20) Courses will be designed, where possible, to maximise opportunities for students to enter and exit at different stages, such as through use of nested courses and opportunities for recognition of prior learning.

(21) For the avoidance of doubt, nested courses must individually meet the requirements of this Policy, specifically including the requirement that all students must be able to achieve the Course Learning Outcomes regardless of the point of entry into and pathway through a course.

(22) General requirements for a student to successfully complete a course are specified in the University's Rules Relating to Awards for the appropriate type of course.

(23) Additional requirements for a student to successfully complete a coursework course will be stipulated in the Specific Award Rules, and will:

a. include details of which and how many units must be successfully completed, either individually or as part of a minor, major or specialisation;

b. clearly specify options for students to choose elective units, minors, majors or specialisations;

c. clearly specify alternative exit points, entry points, and formal pathways for transfer to other courses; and

d. be documented using clear, unambiguous, and consistent plain English wording.

Design Principle 3: Constructive alignment of learning outcomes with content, learning activities and assessment

(24) Courses, units, and unit clusters will have learning outcomes that students are expected to achieve from completing the course, unit, or cluster of units.

(25) Course Learning Outcomes will be designed to be achieved through the combination of Unit Cluster Learning Outcomes and Unit Learning Outcomes of unit clusters and core units that comprise the course.

(26) Unit Cluster Learning Outcomes will be designed to be achieved through the combination of Unit Learning Outcomes for units that comprise the unit cluster.

(27) Achievement of Unit Learning Outcomes will be validated through implementation of assessment tasks designed in accordance with the [Assessment, Teaching and Learning Policy](#).

(28) Learning activities and unit content will be designed in accordance with clauses (33) and (34) to facilitate student achievement of Unit Learning Outcomes.

Design Principle 4: Advanced knowledge and inquiry

(29) Accredited courses will engage with advanced knowledge and inquiry at a level appropriate to the AQF level of the course and Course Learning Outcomes, including:

a. current knowledge and scholarship in relevant academic disciplines;
b. study of the underlying theoretical and conceptual frameworks of the academic disciplines or fields of education or research represented in the course; and
c. emerging concepts that are informed by recent scholarship, current research findings and, where applicable, advances in practice.

Design Principle 5: Relevance to industry, the professions or other graduate destinations

(30) Course design will be informed by, and respond to, graduate destinations in industry, the professions, the community, or further study as appropriate.

(31) Course design will enable accreditation by a professional body where this is required for registration to practice.

Design Principle 6: Opportunities for Community Engaged Learning

(32) Courses should, where appropriate, include opportunities for Community Engaged Learning through contextualised and experiential learning activities, either within a single unit or distributed throughout the course, that:

a. enable students to apply theoretical knowledge and develop skills relevant to contexts for professional experience and civic engagement;
b. encourage reflective practice;
c. broaden and contextualise students' skills, knowledge and values;
d. develop civic responsibility;
e. prepare educated, engaged citizens;
f. develop professional identity;
g. address critical societal issues; and

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h. contribute to the public good.

Design Principle 7: Relevant and equitable learning experiences for the University's student profile

(33) Courses and units will be designed to ensure that students have equivalent opportunities to achieve the intended learning outcomes irrespective of their study location or mode of participation.

(34) Courses and units will include content and learning experiences that are relevant to, and meet the learning needs of, the University's student profile, which includes Indigenous Australians, international students regardless of cultural background, mature age students, school leavers, and students who are the first in their family to study at university.

Design Principle 8: Externally referenced against similar courses and units

(35) Courses and units will be designed to develop learning outcomes and disciplinary expertise at a comparable level to, and consistent in scope and volume of learning with, similar courses and units offered by other higher education providers in Australia and overseas, except if explicitly designed otherwise for justifiable pedagogical, intellectual and strategic reasons.

Section 5 - Curriculum Design Principles for Non-Accredited Courses and Units

Pathway Programs and ELICOS

(36) Pathway programs will consist of one or more units, which may be award units or non-award units.

(37) Pathway programs and their associated units will be designed according to the following principles:

a. Clear and flexible course requirements - as specified in clauses (13) to (23);
b. Constructive alignment of assessment, learning activities and content with learning outcomes - as specified in clauses (24) to (28);
c. Relevant and equitable learning experiences for the University's student profile - as specified in clauses (33) and (34);
d. Comparable standards to similar courses and units offered elsewhere - as specified in clause (35);
e. A strengths-based, scaffolded approach that builds on students' previous experiences to develop academic literacies;
f. Contextualised and embedded developmental support; and
g. Continuous evaluation and feedback which identifies areas for improvement.

Professional development courses and other similar non-accredited courses

(38) Professional development courses and other similar non-accredited courses will be designed according to the following principles:

a. Clearly specified course requirements - eligibility for enrolment in the course, requirements to successfully complete the course, the nature of the document to be provided on successful completion of the course, and whether the course provides a basis for advanced standing into award courses at the University, will be specified using clear and unambiguous plain English wording;
b. Clearly specified learning outcomes, course content and learning activities - expected learning outcomes will be clearly specified and supported by relevant and aligned course content and learning activities;

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c. Relevant assessment - the nature of assessment tasks, if any, will be consistent with the specified course requirements and designed to validate the expected learning outcomes, if required;

d. Development of knowledge and skills to meet industry, professional and community needs.

Section 6 - Approval and Administration

Approval to commence or cease offering curriculum in a Broad Field of Education

(39) Approval from the University Council is required prior to the University:

a. creating a course in a new Broad Field of Education (as set out in the Australian Standard Classification of Education (ASCED), 2001); or

b. removing all courses in a Broad Field of Education (as set out in the Australian Standard Classification of Education (ASCED), 2001).

Approval and administration of accredited courses, unit clusters and units

(40) Creation, amendment or removal of accredited courses, unit clusters or units must be approved in accordance with the [Course and Unit Approval Authorities](#).

(41) For the avoidance of doubt, a person or committee authorised to approve an item specified in the [Course and Unit Approval Authorities](#) may only do so if all persons or committees authorised to recommend approval have done so, unless the Academic Board explicitly authorises otherwise.

(42) All activities associated with the creation, amendment and removal of accredited courses, unit clusters and units, including associated approvals, must be documented and recorded in the University's Unit and Course Management System (UCMS), or as otherwise specified by Governance Services.

(43) UCMS records will clearly and comprehensively document all curriculum elements required to ensure compliance with the curriculum design principles specified in this policy and associated procedures.

(44) The Pro Vice Chancellor (Academic Innovation) will publish a Curriculum Planning Timeline annually. Approval from the Vice President (Students) and Registrar is required before creating, amending or removing accredited courses, unit clusters or units outside of the Curriculum Planning Timeline.

Creation of new accredited courses

(45) A new accredited course may only be delivered when:

a. the Pro Vice Chancellor (Academic Innovation) has approved a Course Concept Proposal, thereby confirming that the course aligns with the University's [Strategic Plan](#) and priorities and is financially viable;

b. Academic Board has approved the New Course submission and thereby accredited the course;

c. accreditation has been confirmed in writing by any relevant external accrediting bodies recognised by the Academic Board, when this is required for registration to practice; and

d. for courses to be delivered to international onshore students, the course has been registered for inclusion on CRICOS at the relevant locations.

(46) Accredited courses will remain accredited for a maximum of seven years after:

a. the new course is first approved; or

b. the course is re-accredited following a formal Course Review under the [Academic Quality, Standards and](#)

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[Integrity Policy](#).

Amendment or removal of accredited courses, unit clusters or units

(47) When it is proposed to substantially amend an accredited course, unit cluster or unit to the extent that the amendment would fundamentally change the expected outcomes, or representation of expected outcomes, for students or the broader (academic and non-academic) community:

   a. in the case of such an amendment to a course or specialisation, a new course must be created in accordance with clauses (40) to (46).
   b. in the case of such an amendment to a minor, major or unit, a new major, minor or unit, respectively, must be created in accordance with clauses (40) to (44).

(48) When creation, amendment or removal of an accredited course, specialisation, major, minor or unit results in consequential changes to another accredited course, each consequential change will be approved and administered as described in the [Consequential Changes Schedule](#).

(49) Amendment of courses will not normally be permitted for a period of two years following accreditation of the new course, unless otherwise determined by the Chair, Accreditation Committee on the basis of one or more of the following:

   a. in response to the recommendations from external accreditation reviews; or
   b. in response to significant issues raised during the monitoring and review of courses under the [Academic Quality, Standards and Integrity Policy](#); or
   c. the proposed changes would demonstrably increase student demand for the course (for example, the introduction of a new major, minor or specialisation); or
   d. the proposed changes are required as a result of approved amendments to another course, unit cluster or unit.

(50) All amendments to accredited courses, unit clusters or units must meet the curriculum design principles set out in Section 4 of this Policy.

(51) Removal of a course, unit cluster or unit means the process undertaken to permanently remove its accreditation and availability for students and, for courses and unit clusters, consists of:

   a. approval from the Pro Vice Chancellor (Academic Innovation) to cease intake of commencing students into the course or unit cluster.
   b. Approval from the Academic Board to teaching or transitioning continuing students out of the course or unit cluster.
   c. Disaccreditation of the course or unit cluster.

(52) The University may consider removing a course or unit cluster for one or more of the following reasons:

   a. a recommendation in a Course Review;
   b. the course or unit cluster no longer has a strategic fit with the University's plans and priorities;
   c. the course or unit cluster in not financially viable;
   d. the course or unit cluster has a pattern of low course performance based on:
      i. low student satisfaction; or
      ii. a lack of applications for admission (or substantially declining applications); or
      iii. a lack of enrolments (or substantially declining enrolments); or
      iv. poor student performance including high attrition and low student progression.

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(53) Removal of a course or unit cluster, or any amendment to the curriculum that has the potential to disadvantage current students, impact expected outcomes, or impact the representation of expected outcomes for students or the broader community, requires development and approval of the following in accordance with the [Curriculum Amendment and Removal Procedures](#) and the [Course and Unit Approval Authorities](#).

    a. a Significant Curriculum Change Proposal; and

    b. a Transition Plan.

(54) Transitional arrangements must be made for all students affected by amendments or removal of accredited courses or unit clusters to ensure they are not disadvantaged by the amendment or removal, as set out in the [Curriculum Amendment and Removal Procedures](#).

(55) Courses and unit clusters in teach out must remain accredited and continue to meet the requirements set out in this Policy.

Creation, amendment and removal of non-accredited courses and units

(56) Creation, amendment and removal of pathway programs and their constituent units will be approved and administered in the same manner as for accredited courses and units, as specified in clauses (40) to (55).

(57) Creation, amendment and removal of professional development and other similar non-accredited courses will be approved by the Executive Dean or College Dean of the administering Faculty or College and administered as described in the [Professional Development Courses Procedures](#).

(58) All amendments to pathway programs and their constituent units must meet the curriculum design principles set out in Section 5 of this Policy.

Section 7 - Associated Documents

(59) Schedules:

    a. [Course Nomenclature and Volume of Learning Schedule](#)

    b. [Graduate Attributes Schedule](#)

    c. [Course and Unit Approval Authorities](#)

    d. [Consequential Changes Schedule](#)

(60) Procedures:

    a. [Curriculum Design and Development Procedures](#)

    b. [Curriculum Amendment and Removal Procedures](#)

    c. [Professional Development Courses Procedures](#)

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Status and Details

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Responsible Executive	Erica Wilson Pro Vice Chancellor (Academic Innovation) +61 2 66203151
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