

Academic Quality, Standards and Integrity Policy

Section 1 - Purpose and Scope

Purpose

(1) This Policy:

- a. Describes the University's approach to upholding and improving the quality, standards and integrity of its academic activities and outcomes.
- b. Supports compliance with the [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#).

Scope

(2) This Policy applies to all academic activities conducted by the University, including through its educational partnerships, except for research-related academic activities.

(3) This Policy will be applied on a case-by-case basis as approved by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic Quality) for non-award courses and programs.

Section 2 - Definitions

(4) Refer to the [Definitions \(Academic\) Policy](#).

Section 3 - Quality Assurance of Academic Standards

(5) The University uses robust and efficient systems to support academic quality, uphold academic standards and integrity, and continuously improve academic practices, processes and outcomes to provide an outstanding student experience.

(6) Academic quality and integrity are assured by applying and upholding the following academic quality assurance principles:

- a. Designing and developing the curriculum to meet appropriate pre-determined internal and external specifications, including those set out in the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 201, [Australian Qualifications Framework](#) and professional accreditation requirements when applicable. (Threshold Standard 3.1 - Course Design)
- b. Regularly and systematically reviewing the taught curriculum, including learning outcomes, content and activities, and assessment, and actioning recommendations arising from those reviews. (Threshold Standard 5.3 - Monitoring, Review and Improvement, 3.1 - Course Design and 1.4 Learning - Outcomes and Assessment)
- c. Valuing student feedback as a key element in driving quality assurance and improving the student academic experience.

- d. Conducting external referencing of the curriculum and academic activities to ensure alignment with best practice. (Threshold Standard 5.3 Monitoring Review and Improvement and 1.4 Learning Outcomes and Assessment).
- e. Maintaining rigorous oversight of curriculum delivered by the University's educational partners to ensure equivalence of academic standards and quality. (Threshold Standard 5.4 – Delivery with Other Parties)
- f. Providing assurance of the quality of supervision of student experiences during Work Integrated Learning (WIL) (Threshold Standard 5.4.1 – Delivery with Other Parties).
- g. Enabling continued scholarly and professional development of academic staff to support high teaching standards and maintain currency of discipline expertise. (Threshold Standard 3.2 - Staffing)
- h. Upholding academic integrity standards by implementing a consistent and appropriate approach to the management of integrity issues and providing comprehensive information and guidance to students. (Threshold Standard 5.2 - Academic Integrity)
- i. Maintaining oversight of the education-related experience of students (Threshold Standards 1.1- 1.3 Admission, Credit and Recognition of Prior Learning, Orientation and Progression).
- j. Maintaining oversight of learning resources and learning support services to ensure that all students have timely access whether on campus or off campus. (Threshold Standard 3.3 – Learning Resources and Educational Support).

Section 4 - Policy Content

Principle 1: Curriculum is developed and accredited to consistently meet appropriate predetermined internal and external specifications

(7) Courses and units are designed and developed in accordance with the [Curriculum Policy](#) to meet the specifications set out in the [Australian Qualifications Framework](#) and [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#), and to enable external accreditation by a professional body when this is required for professional practice.

(8) Proposals to develop new courses and units, amend current courses and units, and to reaccredit courses are rigorously scrutinised and systematically approved by suitably qualified academic staff in accordance with the [Course and Unit Approval Authorities](#).

(9) The Unit and Course Management System (UCMS) clearly and comprehensively documents all elements of the curriculum to ensure compliance with the University's curriculum design principles.

Principle 2: The taught curriculum is regularly monitored and systematically reviewed to ensure continuous improvement

(10) The quality of the University's taught curriculum is assured and improved over time through a systematic process of monitoring and review in accordance with the [Student Outcomes Benchmark Indicators Framework](#).

(11) Curriculum monitoring and review processes are:

- a. externally referenced in accordance with the [External Referencing and Benchmarking Schedule](#);
- b. informed by student feedback and performance data including student progression, attrition and completion rates;
- c. applied across all student cohorts and delivery locations and against external reference points; and
- d. acted upon to improve future unit and teaching outcomes.

(12) The outcomes from curriculum monitoring and review processes, including recommendations for corrective action, will be regularly and systematically reported to Academic Board and its relevant sub-committees as set out in

the [Curriculum Monitoring and Review Reporting Schedule](#).

Monitoring and Review of Courses

(13) Monitoring and review of courses comprises:

- a. Annual Course Reports, which are required to be produced within the first half of the calendar year by the relevant Course Coordinator; and
- b. Comprehensive Course Reviews, which may be scheduled or ad hoc as required.

(14) Annual Course Reports will be produced for all currently accredited courses and locations, including those courses delivered through educational partnership arrangements, except when a course:

- a. had no students enrolled during the reporting period (including when the course was available only as an exit award during that period); or
- b. is in teach-out and has an expected course removal date within 12 months.

(15) Annual Course Reports will:

- a. evaluate course performance over the reporting period, considering both internal and external benchmarking data (when available), with respect to:
 - i. student enrolment patterns,
 - ii. student outcomes, including success, satisfaction, attrition, retention and completion rates as measured against the [Student Outcomes Benchmark Indicator Thresholds](#) ,
 - iii. effectiveness of the approach to course delivery,
 - iv. achievement of intended learning outcomes, and
 - v. equivalence of outcomes and student experience across different delivery locations, including delivery through educational partnership arrangements;
 - vi. work-integrated learning.
- b. report on the risks regarding external professional accreditation, if any;
- c. report on the external peer review of subject assessment, providing evidence that assessment methods and student grading are appropriate, aligned to the subject and course learning outcomes and are broadly comparable with those occurring in similar courses offered by other institutions;
- d. review the course academic staffing profile and teaching and learning resources;
- e. report on breaches of academic integrity;
- f. report on the outcomes of any monitoring or corrective actions required from the previous Annual Course Report process; and
- g. recommend any actions required to further monitor or correct unsatisfactory course performance.

(16) The Comprehensive Course Reviews will be conducted to meet the requirements of the [Higher Education Threshold Standards 2021](#) including the following:

- a. evaluate the suitability of course design in the context of the principles set out in the [Curriculum Policy](#), including compliance with the [Australian Qualifications Framework](#) and any professional accreditation requirements;
- b. review and evaluate responses to benchmarking and external referencing undertaken for the course, including assessment methods and grading of students' achievement of learning outcomes;
- c. evaluate the effectiveness of the course in delivering intended student learning outcomes;
- d. evaluate how feedback is used to inform monitoring, review and improvement activities;

- e. evaluate the quality of the academic experience for students;
- f. evaluate the suitability and effectiveness of staffing and other resources for the course;
- g. evaluate the financial viability and strategic fit of the course in the University's overall academic profile;
- h. examine any other matters requested by the Chair, Academic Board; and
- i. make recommendations to Academic Board concerning any of the matters above in this clause, including a recommendation as to whether the course should be reaccredited with or without conditions.

(17) A reduced comprehensive course review scope may be applied under the following circumstances, if approved by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic Quality):

- a. When a course has external accreditation with a professional accrediting body, following a gap analysis conducted by the Office of Business Intelligence and Quality, the scope of the relevant Comprehensive Course Review may be addressed by evidence from the external accreditation process, including findings and recommendations from the external accreditation panel.
- b. When a course is in teach-out, and has an expected removal date exceeding 12 months, informed by relevant TEQSA guidelines.

(18) Each Comprehensive Course Review will have a specified panel appointed by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic Quality) in accordance with the [Course Review Procedures](#).

(19) Comprehensive Course Reviews will be conducted within seven years of the initial accreditation or last reaccreditation of the course by the Academic Board in accordance with the [Course Review Procedures](#).

(20) A rolling five-year Comprehensive Course Review cycle schedule will be determined annually by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic Quality), aligned wherever possible with the timing of reviews by external accreditation bodies and reviews of related courses to minimise duplication of effort.

(21) An ad hoc Comprehensive Course Review may be initiated at any time by:

- a. the Academic Board;
- b. the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic Quality); or
- c. the Chair, Academic Board.

(22) An ad hoc Comprehensive Course Review can be initiated in the following circumstances:

- a. significant concerns about the performance of a course, including those arising from course performance data;
or
- b. a recommendation from another course review or other quality assurance process; or
- c. change in the University's strategic direction; or
- d. significant changes in government regulations; or
- e. significant changes in the requirements of professional accrediting bodies.

(23) Following a Comprehensive Course Review, Academic Board will either:

- a. approve that the course be reaccredited for a subsequent period of up to seven years;
- b. require specific actions to be taken prior to or as a condition of approving that the course be reaccredited; or
- c. determine that the course should not remain accredited and be removed from the offerings of the University in line with the [Curriculum Amendment and Removal Procedures](#).

(24) The Academic Board may determine to reaccredit a course for a period of not more than 12 months without a

Comprehensive Course Review if the course is in teach-out. In this case, the Faculty or College must demonstrate to Accreditation Committee and Academic Board ongoing quality of the academic experience for teach-out courses including maintaining sufficient staff levels, complying with unit monitoring processes, and maintaining equivalent student experience and learning support.

(25) A course will remain accredited until it is formally discredited or removed by the Academic Board.

(26) Courses will be submitted for re-accreditation within seven years of their previous accreditation.

(27) Any significant change in the status of external accreditation with any relevant professional bodies for a course will be reported to Academic Board by the Chair of Accreditation Committee as soon as practicable.

Monitoring and Review of Units

(28) All coursework units, including those offered in higher degree research awards, are regularly and systematically reviewed. Monitoring and review of units occurs through the [Internal Quality Indicators in Learning and Teaching \(iQILT\)](#) reporting process, which evaluates unit performance at the conclusion of each study period in which that unit was offered with respect to:

- a. Unit Success rate, which is defined as the percentage of students attempting the unit that received a passing grade; and
- b. Unit Satisfaction rate, which is defined as the percentage of Unit Feedback Survey respondents marking 'Agree' or 'Strongly Agree' to the question "Overall, I am satisfied with this unit".

(29) Unit Success and Unit Satisfaction rates are determined using student feedback and performance data collected at the conclusion of each study period, consisting of:

- a. a unit feedback report for each unit derived from the University's Unit Feedback Survey, which includes feedback on unit teaching and unit teaching staff; and
- b. a unit performance report for each unit that includes student success, student withdrawal and grade outcomes.

(30) iQILT reports will:

- a. evaluate unit performance against the [Student Outcomes Benchmark Indicator Thresholds](#) for Unit and Success and Unit Satisfaction Rates;
- b. report on the outcomes of any monitoring or corrective actions required from the previous iQILT report process; and
- c. recommend any actions required to further monitor or correct unsatisfactory unit performance.

Monitoring and Review of Learning Outcomes and Assessment

(31) Curriculum quality is supported by the alignment of assessment with learning outcomes at the unit level, and alignment of unit learning outcomes with learning outcomes at the minor, major, specialisation and course levels, as set out in the [Curriculum Policy](#).

(32) Assessment quality is assured and continuously improved using evidence-based practices as set out in the [Assessment, Teaching and Learning Policy](#).

(33) The integrity of assessment, its effectiveness in verifying achievement of unit learning outcomes, and integrity of grading standards is assured by:

- a. appropriateness of assessment requirements and grading standards with respect to expectations of other higher education providers, the academic community and industry in the relevant discipline, through external

- referencing, review and benchmarking;
- b. consistency of marking, regardless of where or how a unit is delivered;
- c. fairness of marking, against standards set in the marking criteria and rubrics;
- d. for courses in scope, ensuring the grade is accurate and a reflection of the marking, in accordance with the [Assessment Moderation Guidelines](#) and following the processes set out in the [Grade Release and Quality Assurance Procedures](#);
- e. a commitment to continuous improvement, using student feedback, expert review and internal and external referencing to inform quality assurance processes relating to assessment and curriculum design.

Principle 3: Student feedback and evaluation is systematically used to assure curriculum quality and inform continuous improvement

(34) The University regularly and systematically collects student feedback and evaluation data through surveys and other evaluation instruments including:

- a. Unit Feedback Surveys (internal);
- b. Student Experience Survey (external);
- c. Course Experience Questionnaire (external);
- d. Graduate Outcomes Survey (external); and
- e. International Student Barometer (external).

(35) Student feedback and evaluation data is used to assure and improve:

- a. course performance through inclusion in the Annual Course Report process;
- b. unit performance through inclusion in the iQILT process, where relevant; and
- c. teaching and assessment quality by explicitly considering and responding to student feedback in each consecutive unit delivery.

(36) Student feedback and evaluation data is additionally used, with other information, to:

- a. meet external quality assurance reporting requirements; and
- b. provide evidence for staff promotion, probation and awards.

Principle 4: External referencing is systematically used to assure academic quality and inform continuous improvement

(37) Referencing and benchmarking is systematically used to:

- a. compare academic practices, processes and performance outcomes across the University's Faculties and Colleges and higher education institutions nationally;
- b. identify institutional and sector best practice; and
- c. identify and implement opportunities for improvement to ensure high quality academic experience and outcomes.

(38) External referencing and benchmarking is conducted in accordance with the [External Referencing and Benchmarking Schedule](#) for a range of academic activities related to:

- a. curriculum design;
- b. curriculum review and monitoring;
- c. assessment standards;

- d. admission standards;
- e. student outcomes.

Principle 5: Curriculum delivered by the University's educational partners meets the same standards and provides an equivalent student experience as curriculum delivered by the University

(39) Curriculum delivered through the University's educational partnership arrangements will meet the requirements of this policy and associated procedures to ensure equivalent academic standards are maintained by the University and its educational partners.

(40) Educational partnership arrangements are subject to additional quality assurance reviews in accordance with the [Educational Partnership Policy](#) and [Educational Partnership Quality Assurance Procedures](#).

Principle 6: Work integrated learning arrangements and the supervision of student experiences are quality assured

(41) The University will provide assurance of the quality of supervision of student experiences during WIL.

(42) Quality WIL student experience is assured through the WIL Framework, Work Integrated Learning at SCU and enacted through the [Work Integrated Learning Procedures](#).

Principle 7: Teaching is informed by scholarship

(43) The University's Human Resources policies establish the settings and processes to ensure that all staff are appropriately qualified and experienced for the academic activities they lead.

(44) The academic staffing profile for each course of study reviewed annually as part of the Annual Course Reporting process, will encompass the necessary depth and breadth of academic leadership and teaching capacity needed to lead students in intellectual inquiry suited to the nature and level of expected learning outcomes, as demonstrated by:

- a. formal staff qualifications; and
- b. scholarship in the discipline area.

(45) All newly appointed teaching academic staff, including casual staff, are offered an induction program on teaching and assessment practice, which is designed and delivered by the Centre for Teaching and Learning, unless equivalence can be demonstrated.

(46) All teaching staff are provided with opportunities to continuously improve teaching practice based on scholarly evidence, including for teaching different student cohorts with particular needs.

Principle 8: Academic integrity is rigorously assured and proactively defended in all aspects of teaching and scholarship

(47) Risks to academic integrity associated with research activities of staff and Higher Degree Research students are managed in accordance with the [Research Quality Standards and Integrity Policy](#), [Research Integrity – Staff Procedures](#), [Research Integrity – Higher Degree Researchers \(Students\) Procedures](#) and [Research Publication, Authorship and Dissemination Procedures](#).

(48) Risks to academic integrity associated with coursework teaching and learning are proactively defended against by:

- a. designing assessment to explicitly mitigate the potential for academic integrity breaches;

- b. educating students to avoid academic integrity breaches, including the development of their academic literacy skills;
- c. explicitly defining and enforcing the acceptable limits of use of technology (including generative artificial intelligence technology) in teaching and learning with respect to the principles of academic integrity, as set out in the [Assessment, Teaching and Learning Policy](#);
- d. mandating use of rigorous tools and processes, including employing appropriate technology and educating staff, to detect, deter and compile evidence of academic integrity breaches;
- e. facilitating sharing of effective practices, ideas and resources among the teaching community; and
- f. applying consistent and proportionate responses to breaches of academic integrity as set out in the [Academic Integrity Guidelines](#).

(49) The University's framework for upholding and managing academic integrity will be easily accessible and clearly articulated to the entire academic community, including staff and students, via a dedicated page on the University's website.

(50) Curriculum design and accreditation processes will incorporate mechanisms to ensure all students are educated about academic integrity, explicitly identify and quantify risks to academic integrity, and implement appropriate strategies to mitigate identified risks, at both the unit and course level.

(51) Breaches of academic integrity by students will be classified using clear, published criteria as:

- a. Minor – unintentional and reasonable as part of the normal learning process; or
- b. Moderate – unintentional but unacceptably negligent in the context of the student's opportunities to learn; or
- c. Major – intentional or purposely negligent, including contract cheating.

(52) Suspected Minor breaches of academic integrity will be managed in the Academic Integrity Management System (AIMS) by Unit Assessors using an educative approach.

(53) Suspected Moderate and Major breaches of academic integrity are considered potential academic misconduct and will be managed in AIMS by the Academic Integrity Officers in accordance with the [Rules - Student Academic and Non-Academic Misconduct Rules](#).

(54) The consequences of student academic integrity breaches are primarily focused on education for unintentional breaches and deterrence for intentional breaches and are proportionate to the extent and impact of the breach at each level.

(55) Robust and transparent processes for reporting and analysis of academic integrity breaches will be employed to enable regular review of success in managing risks to academic integrity, continuous improvement of processes to further strengthen defences, and rapid response to significant trends and incidents. Reporting will be coordinated centrally by the Academic Integrity Support Officer in accordance with the [Academic Integrity Reporting Framework](#) Schedule which sets out the contents of the reports and the responsible officers.

Principle 9: Student participation and attainment are supported through quality assured processes of admission, recognition of prior learning and orientation

(56) Admission requirements are transparent and offer a range of pathways designed to provide access to students with a broad range of educational backgrounds and experience, [Rules Relating to Awards – Rule 2 – Coursework Awards – General Provisions](#).

(57) A rigorous and consistent standards-based process for managing credit transfer and recognising prior learning will be implemented to ensure that the integrity of the curriculum and associated awards are maintained ([Recognition of](#)

[Prior Learning Policy](#)).

- a. Students will be awarded maximum credit for relevant prior learning on condition that the integrity of the course of study is maintained and that students granted credit are not disadvantaged in achieving the expected learning outcomes for the course of study.
- b. A rigorous and consistent process is applied to managing credit transfer and recognition of prior learning to ensure that the integrity of courses and associated awards are maintained, and in accordance with the [AQF Qualifications Pathways Policy](#).
- c. Credit transfer or recognition of prior learning will be awarded:
 - i. strictly based on evidence demonstrating that the prior learning experience is equivalent to the credit granted with respect to learning outcomes, volume of learning, content, and learning and assessment approaches;
 - ii. regardless of how, when and where prior learning was acquired, provided that the learning is relevant and current;
 - iii. fairly, equitably, consistently and transparently by appropriately trained staff; and
 - iv. in accordance with the [Recognition of Prior Learning Policy](#) and [Procedures](#).
- d. Credit transfer or recognition of prior learning will not be awarded when it would compromise:
 - i. the integrity of a course or the associated award;
 - ii. the status of external accreditation by a professional body; or
 - iii. the ability of a student to successfully complete the course.
- e. Standards relating to credit transfer and recognition of prior learning are benchmarked to ensure approaches and practices are consistent with those employed by other Australian and international higher education institutions.
- f. Credit transfer standards and arrangements are reported annually via the Admissions Committee to the Academic Board meeting after the first Admission Committee in each calendar year.

(58) Orientation, both on-campus and online, is provided to ensure that students have the tools necessary to succeed in their studies ([Student Academic Experience Policy](#)).

Principle 10: The Learning resources and learning support provided by the University are up to date, adequate and accessible when needed by students

(59) The learning resources that are specified or recommended for a course of study, relate directly to the learning outcomes, are up to date and, where supplied as part of a course of study, are accessible when needed by students.

(60) Where learning resources are part of an electronic learning management system, all users have timely access to the system and training is available in use of the system.

(61) Access to learning resources does not present undue barriers, costs or technology requirements for students, including for students with special needs and those who study off campus.

(62) Students have access to learning support services that are consistent with the requirements of their course of study, their mode of study and the learning needs of student cohorts, including arrangements for supporting and maintaining contact with students who are off campus.

(63) The University provides a learning environment that enables students to succeed in their studies and this is assured through the [Student Academic Experience Policy](#).

Section 5 - Associated Documents

(64) Schedules:

- a. [External Referencing and Benchmarking Schedule](#)
- b. [Curriculum Monitoring and Review Reporting Schedule](#)

(65) Procedures:

- a. [Academic Integrity Procedures](#)
- b. [Course Review Procedures](#)
- c. [Grade Release and Quality Assurance Procedures](#)
- d. [Work Integrated Learning Procedures](#)

(66) This Policy should be read in conjunction with:

- a. [Student Outcomes for Benchmark Indicators Framework](#) and [Thresholds](#)
- b. [Curriculum Policy](#)
- c. [Curriculum Design and Development Procedures](#)
- d. [Assessment, Teaching and Learning Policy](#)
- e. [Assessment, Teaching and Learning Procedures](#)
- f. [Student Academic Experience Policy](#)
- g. [Educational Partnership Policy](#)
- h. [Educational Partnership Quality Assurance Procedures](#)
- i. [Recognition of Prior Learning Policy](#)
- j. [Recognition of Prior Learning - Assessment of Applications - Procedures](#)
- k. [Academic Integrity Guidelines](#)
- l. [Student Academic and Non-Academic Misconduct Rules](#)
- m. [Text Matching Software Policy](#)
- n. [Assessment Moderation Guidelines](#)
- o. The [WIL Framework: Working Integrated Learning \(WIL\) at SCU – Southern Cross University](#)

Status and Details

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