

Course Planning and Approval Policy

Section 1 - Preamble

(1) This Policy is currently under review as part of the Unit and Course Management System (UCMS) project. To the extent of any inconsistency, the Unit and Course Management System <http://staff.scu.edu.au/ucms/> takes precedence over the contents of this Policy.

Section 2 - Introduction

(2) This Chapter addresses matters related to the quality and integrity of the planning and approval process for academic courses offered by the University. It also deals with the internal quality and integrity of the courses themselves and how they fit with University policies and the University's strategic directions and current Academic Plan. It describes the processes which apply throughout the life cycle of a course, dealing with conception and approval, introduction, change and possible removal.

(3) The Vice Chancellor normally addresses matters related to the financial viability of, and resource issues related to, a course. However, where these affect the quality of the course offering the Academic Board will also consider such matters and advise the Vice Chancellor.

Objectives

(4) This Chapter is intended to assure and enhance the quality, integrity and relevance of the academic courses of the University by establishing policy and processes for the rigorous development and consideration of all academic courses offered by the University - from conception, approval and introduction to changes and possible removal.

Section 3 - Content and Implementation

Documentation

(5) All course documentation relating to new course concepts, approvals, changes or removals must come from the School Board /College Board to the Secretary, Academic Board or the Senior Deputy Vice Chancellor (SDVC) as appropriate. All financial documentation must come from the Head of School /Head of College.

New Course Developments

(6) School Boards /College Boards shall be responsible for recommending new course developments for consideration by the Academic Board or Council.

(7) All courses that are in a new discipline area for the University shall be approved by Council.

(8) All other new course proposals shall be approved by Academic Board.

(9) The Academic Board or Council and the Senior Deputy Vice Chancellor shall require advance notice of an intention by a School Board /College Board to proceed with a new course development.

(10) All new course developments shall require that a [New Course Concept Proposal and an Initial Resource Statement](#) be developed. The New Course Concept Proposal shall contain, amongst other things, the proposed members of the Course Development Team, and an approval and implementation timetable (which may change in the [New Course Accreditation Master File](#)).

(11) With approval of the New Course Concept Proposal marketing and entry in relevant publications may be possible with the approval of the SDVC.

(12) Following approval of the New Course Concept Proposal a new course development shall also require production of a [New Course Accreditation Master File](#) and a Full Resource Statement as appropriate.

(13) A Course Development Team is to be formed to write the [New Course Accreditation Master File](#).

(14) This Team shall be approved by the SDVC.

(15) A new course shall not be delivered until the SDVC has confirmed that the course fits with the University's strategic direction and current Academic Plan; has confirmed the economic viability of the course; and the University Council or the Academic Board, as per delegations, has approved the [New Course Accreditation Master File](#).

(16) The Academic Board may request to view the Full Resource Statement.

Changes to Award Courses

(17) School Boards /College Boards shall be responsible for recommending changes to courses for consideration by the Academic Board or its delegated sub-committee.

(18) A course change shall require production of a [Transitional Course Amendments Template](#) and, where prescribed by the Senior Deputy Vice Chancellor, a Resource Statement.

(19) A changed course shall not be delivered in its new form until the course change submission has been approved and, where relevant, the SDVC has confirmed the economic viability, and the Director, Student Administration Services has confirmed the viability of the implementation schedule of the revised course.

(20) A major change to a course may not be made in the year prior to a School Review, unless:

- a. it is required to meet urgent changes to professional registration requirements, for example in teaching or nursing; or
- b. where the SDVC and Chair, Academic Board agree that a change is warranted and should be allowed to proceed to Accreditation Committee and Academic Board from a School Board.

(21) See <http://staff.scu.edu.au/ucms/>.

Removal of a course

(22) Where the proposal has come from a Head of School /Head of College or Pro Vice Chancellor, the School Board /College Board shall be responsible for recommending the removal of a course. It shall then be forwarded for consideration by Council through the Academic Board.

(23) The SDVC must be informed of the proposed removal of the course to ascertain that this action does not adversely affect the strategic directions or current Academic Plan of the University and that this action complies with ASCED requirements.

(24) Where the proposal comes from the Senior Deputy Vice Chancellor or Vice Chancellor the Submission will go directly to Accreditation Committee for noting and forwarding to Academic Board and Council for approval.

(25) The removal of a course shall require production of a [Course Removal Template](#).

(26) A course removal shall not be acted upon until the Senior Deputy Vice Chancellor: has confirmed that the removal of the course does not adversely affect the strategic directions or current Academic Plan of the University; that the removal of the course meets ASCED requirements; and the University Council has approved the [Course Removal Template](#).

(27) See <http://staff.scu.edu.au/ucms/>.

Justification for New Course Developments, Changes to, or Removal of, Award Courses

(28) In all instances, School Boards /College Boards shall provide the Academic Board or Council, as per delegations, with a clear justification for introducing a new course, or for making changes to an existing course. They must also justify the proposed removal of a course.

(29) These statements shall form part of the relevant submission. The Academic Board or Council shall consider all submissions from the standpoint of the quality of the learning experience for existing or prospective students; their alignment with existing University policies, strategic directions and the Academic Plan. Academic Board shall not normally consider resource issues unless they affect the quality of the course offering and may request to see the Full Resource Statement.

Exceptional Circumstances

(30) In exceptional circumstances, as defined by the Chair, Academic Board, the Chair may waive some or all of this Chapter after appropriate consultation. This consultation will include, where relevant: Director, Teaching and Learning, Director, Student Administration Services, Director of Marketing, Course Production Unit, SDVC, Director, Library Services and Copyright Officer and Director, Technology Services. ASCED and other requirements will still have to be met.

Financial Viability

(31) A course shall not be offered until the SDVC has approved the related Full Resource Statement and confirmed the financial viability of the proposal.

Part A - Course and Unit Nomenclature

Approval of a Title

(32) Approval for the use of award and unit nomenclature is given by Academic Board and then, where appropriate, Council through the course planning and approval process.

(33) Generic award titles should normally be used. However, specific award titles may be requested. In this case, and in conjunction with the Course and Unit Nomenclature Guidelines, the proposed title must be justified by addressing the following matters:

- a. the level of specialisation within the award (see Field of Study);
- b. whether there is an established market demand for the nomenclature;
- c. whether there are professional or industry demands for the nomenclature;
- d. whether the nomenclature might be misleading or deceptive;
- e. the life expectancy of the nomenclature;
- f. the existing use of the nomenclature in the national and international community;
- g. articulation between awards;

- h. graduate attributes in the award; and
- i. resources required.

(34) Normally study areas are designated by majors and these will be described on the testamur and not in the name of the award. In exceptional circumstances, approved by the Vice Chancellor and the Chair, Academic Board, a study area may be added to the generic award title, as a descriptor. Where a descriptor qualifies a generic title, the descriptor will appear in parentheses. Examples of this very limited usage are Bachelor of Applied Science (Forestry), Bachelor of Education (Secondary). Where this occurs these are separate awards.

(35) Award abbreviations should be consistent within the discipline area and School/College.

(36) They should also be readily recognisable, but at the same time as short as possible.

(37) Unit titles should reflect the content of the unit and fit within a sequence of units in a course.

(38) Unit codes are allocated in sequence by Student Services and do not relate to the content of the unit, the year of offering or the course.

Part B - Undergraduate Course Structures

(39) Undergraduate courses will as far as possible comply with the following principles:

a. Structure

- i. Each undergraduate degree shall comprise a core and will conform to one of the course structures in (e) below.

b. Core

- i. The core of each undergraduate degree shall comprise at least eight (8) units and eight (8) of these units will be delivered in first year.
- ii. In exceptional circumstances a case may be made to Academic Board:
 - to approve a core with less than eight (8) units; or
 - for less than eight (8) core units to be delivered in first year.

c. Majors

- i. A major will consist of 8 units and will be one of the following two types - Specialist (S) and University-wide (U).

A Specialist Major:

- comprises 8 units to be chosen from a maximum of 12;
- builds on the core, i.e. pre-requisites come from the core;
- may enable pathways through the major through requisites contained within the major;
- does not include independent studies units;
- only includes viable units; and
- is built by the specialist School, College or Department to suit the needs of the specialist degree that it is part of;
- can include units from other Schools, Colleges or Departments, with consultation; and
- will be named and approved by Academic Board.

- ii. A University-wide Major (U):

- comprises 8 units to be chosen from a maximum of 14;
- is self-contained and does not require entry pre-requisites although pathways through the major can be constructed through requisites (if required) contained within the major;

- does not include independent studies units;
- only includes viable units;
- exists independently of a specific award;
- can be constructed by a School, College or Department or combination of such but one School, College or Department must be responsible for the approval and management of the major;
- will be the same regardless of the degree undertaken; and
- will be approved by Academic Board as available across the University for inclusion in a range of UG degrees.

d. Electives (E):

- i. An elective unit can be drawn from anywhere within the University, unless constrained by professional accreditation requirements.

e. Course Structures for undergraduate three year degrees shall be:

- i. C + S + S or
- ii. C + S + U or
- iii. C + U + U or
- iv. C + U + E or
- v. C + S + E or
- vi. C + E + E or
- vii. C + C + (C, S, U or E)
- viii. A special case may be argued to Academic Board where the above structures are constrained by professional accreditation requirements.

- f. Course Structures for undergraduate four year degrees shall follow the same pattern as a three year degree except that a fourth year may comprise additional core units, an additional major (S or U) or additional electives. A special case may be argued to Academic Board where the above structures are constrained by professional accreditation requirements.

Part C - Academic Advisory Committee - Terms of Reference

(40) It is recommended that an Academic Advisory Committee be established for each award or suite of awards, both undergraduate and postgraduate, offered or during the development of a new course at the University.

(41) The Academic Advisory Committee could also operate as a School/College Advisory Committee with an expanded brief to consider other issues such as resources, facilities, staffing and the interrelationships between courses.

(42) The role of the Academic Advisory Committee is to provide informed advice to the relevant Head of School or Head of College.

(43) The suggested terms of reference for the academic component of an Academic Advisory Committee are:

- a. to provide advice as to the adequacy of the course in light of industry, profession, government and community needs, including proposals for revised or new units and courses in the area covered by the Committee;
- b. to provide advice regarding the promotion of teaching and learning activities in relation to the courses covered by the Committee, including external collaborative activities with other higher educational institutions, industry and government;
- c. to provide advice on the direction and scope of the research and development, consulting, continuing education and other community related activities associated with the program area or course, including identifying emerging needs and opportunities;
- d. to provide advice on the annual Course Performance Reports submitted to the Committee by the Course

Coordinator, with an emphasis on quality assurance matters;

- e. to recommend on the introduction of new units and the modification or elimination of existing units as well as the overall structure of courses, including entry requirements, pre-requisites and co-requisites, within the context of the University's Strategic and related plans;
- f. to advise the School/College on the promotion of the recruitment and retention of well-qualified students and advise in strategies for their subsequent employment after graduation; and
- g. to provide advice to the Head of School /Head of College and Head, Departments regarding academic standards and the quality of whole of course assessment, taking into account the annual course performance review and other relevant information, together with emphasis on quality assurance matters and benchmarking.

(44) Possible membership:

- a. Head of School /Head of College
- b. School/College Director, Teaching and Learning
- c. Course Coordinators
- d. One student representative from each year of the course
- e. One graduate from the course
- f. External experts
- g. Representatives from professional bodies or related industry groups.

(45) Procedures:

- a. The Academic Advisory Committee shall meet at least once a year.
- b. Term of Office for members will be three years. Consecutive terms will be permitted.
- c. Each meeting of the Academic Advisory Committee shall be documented using an agenda, minutes and an action record.
- d. Quorum is 25% of the membership, and the majority of those present must be from outside SCU.

Status and Details

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