

# Graduate Attributes Policy

## Section 1 - Purpose and Scope

(1) Southern Cross University (SCU) is committed to ensuring that its graduates achieve the Course Learning Outcomes of their respective awards. Graduates of the University will possess the skills and knowledge necessary for life and work related to their chosen field(s) of study, and for scholarly engagement in those fields.

(2) The purpose of this Policy is to clearly articulate the University's Graduate Attributes which serve to:

- a. define what SCU values as outcomes of university learning;
- b. prepare students for continued learning and activity beyond university;
- c. frame Course curricula and learning outcomes; and
- d. support assurance of learning and compliance with agreed national standards associated with teaching and learning.

(3) Scope:

- a. This Policy applies to all SCU accredited Coursework and Research awards. It excludes Courses not classified under the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF).

## Section 2 - Definitions

(4) For the purposes of this Policy:

- a. Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)
  - i. The AQF 'is the national policy for regulated qualifications in Australian education and training. It incorporates the qualifications from each education and training sector into a single comprehensive national qualifications framework' (AQF, 2013, p. 9).
- b. Capstone
  - i. The term "Capstone" describes Units or experiences that provide opportunities for a student to apply the skills and knowledge gained throughout their degree. Along with the consolidation of this knowledge and skills it can involve the integration of graduate attributes and employability skills. A capstone unit occurs usually, but not exclusively, in the final year of study.
- c. Course
  - i. An approved plan of study with specific award rules leading to an award of the University (<http://policies.scu.edu.au/view.current.php?id=00090>)
- d. Course Learning Outcomes
  - i. Course Learning Outcomes identify what a student is expected to know and be able to do by the end of a Course.
- e. English Language Proficiency (ELP)
  - i. ELP is defined as the ability of students to use the English language to make and communicate meaning

in diverse contexts, including spoken and written contexts, while completing their university studies. Such uses may range from discussing work with fellow students, to preparing and writing an academic paper, to delivering a speech to a professional audience. This view of proficiency as the ability to engage with and organise language to carry out a variety of communication tasks distinguishes the use of 'English language proficiency' from a narrow focus on language as a formal system concerned only with correct use of grammar and sentence structure. (see English Language Standards for Higher Education [DEEWR, 2010, p.1])

f. Generic Learning Outcomes

- i. 'Generic learning outcomes refer to transferable, non-discipline specific skills a graduate may achieve through learning that have application in study, work and life contexts. The four broad categories in the AQF are: fundamental skills; people skills; thinking skills and personal skills' (AQF 2013, p.95). According to the AQF (2013, 'In the higher education sector they are generally known as graduate attributes and are defined by each higher education provider' (e.g., see pp. 46, 49).

g. Graduate

- i. 'A graduate is a person who has been awarded a qualification by an authorised issuing organisation' (AQF, 2013, p 95).

h. Graduate Attribute

- i. Graduate Attributes are the 'qualities, skills and understandings a university community agrees its students should develop during their time with the institution. These attributes include, but go beyond, the disciplinary expertise or technical knowledge that has traditionally formed the core of most university courses.' (Bowden et al 2000).

i. Unit

- i. This is a discrete component of a Course; Units are identified by a title and code number, and typically require 130-150 hours of dedicated study time. (<http://policies.scu.edu.au/view.current.php?id=00090>)

## Section 3 - Policy Statement

(5) The University's seven Graduate Attributes (the Graduate Attributes) must be explicitly developed in every SCU Coursework award from AQF level 5 - 9 (including clustered awards, such as nested and integrated awards), through Course Learning Outcomes and thence identified Unit Learning Outcomes and associated assessment.

(6) All Course and Unit teaching staff must clearly inform students how they acquire the Graduate Attributes across a Course and within identified Units.

(7) The Graduate Attributes are:

### Graduate Attribute 1

Intellectual rigour: a commitment to excellence in all scholarly and intellectual activities, including critical judgement.

### Graduate Attribute 2

Creativity: an ability to develop creative and effective responses to intellectual, professional and social challenges.

### **Graduate Attribute 3**

Ethical practice: a commitment to sustainability and high ethical standards in social and professional practices.

### **Graduate Attribute 4**

Knowledge of a discipline: command of a discipline to enable a smooth transition and contribution to professional and community settings.

### **Graduate Attribute 5**

Lifelong learning: the ability to be responsive to change, to be inquiring and reflective in practice, through information literacy and autonomous, self-managed learning.

### **Graduate Attribute 6**

Communication and social skills: the ability to communicate and collaborate with individuals, and within teams, in professional and community settings.

### **Graduate Attribute 7**

Cultural competence: an ability to engage with diverse cultural and Indigenous perspectives in both global and local settings.

## **Graduate attributes and Course Learning Outcomes**

(8) Each SCU Graduate Attribute must map to Course Learning Outcomes. These Course Learning Outcomes encompass both prescribed AQF Generic Learning Outcomes for each AQF level and discipline/professional Course Learning Outcomes as required.

(9) Course Learning Outcomes must be contextualised to meet the needs of each Course using the Graduate Attributes-Course Learning Outcomes Matrix as a guide to outcomes across AQF levels.

(10) SCU Graduate Attributes and the contextualised Course Learning Outcomes encompass the AQF Generic Learning Outcomes, namely:

- a. 'fundamental skills, such as literacy and numeracy appropriate to the level and qualification type
- b. people skills, such as working with others and communication skills
- c. thinking skills, such as learning to learn, decision making and problem solving
- d. personal skills, such as self-direction and acting with integrity' (AQF, 2013, p. 11).

## **Descriptors for the Graduate Attributes across AQF levels**

(11) Graduate Attributes and by design the Course Learning Outcomes that emerge from them are general. It is only when the Unit Learning Outcomes are developed and linked to assessment that specific details (skills, knowledge and their application) embedded within each Graduate Attribute emerge. The graduate attribute descriptors express the possible skills and knowledge that can be embedded within a Graduate Attribute and that may emerge through the

unit learning outcomes and linked assessment tasks.

## SCU Graduate Attributes Descriptors Table

SCU Graduate Attributes	Descriptors
Intellectual rigour A commitment to excellence in all scholarly and intellectual activities, including critical judgement	Critical thinking, analysis and evaluation Judgement Problem posing and solving Synthesis and evaluation of ideas Adoption, justification and arguing a position Research principles and methodologies Australian Indigenous perspectives Disciplinary thinking
Creativity An ability to develop creative and effective responses to intellectual, professional and social challenges	Innovative thinking and problem solving Artistic creativity Entrepreneurship Research Decision making Generation of ideas, approaches, perspectives and products
Ethical practice A commitment to sustainability and high ethical standards in social and professional practices.	Australian Indigenous perspectives and ethical practice(s) Sustainability Social justice principles Professional ethical practice Academic integrity
Knowledge of a discipline Command of a discipline to enable a smooth transition and contribution to professional and community settings.	Overview of a body of discipline knowledge Relationship of theory to practice Social and historical context of discipline knowledge Indigenous Australian perspectives within discipline knowledge Research methodologies and protocols within the discipline or profession Interdisciplinary perspective
Lifelong learning The ability to be responsive to change, to be inquiring and reflective in practice, through information literacy and autonomous, self-managed learning.	Information literacy Self-regulated/self-managed learning Working independently Goal setting, planning, time and priority management Questioning and critical reflection Career and continuing professional learning Culturally competent work practices
Communication and social skills The ability to communicate and collaborate with individuals, and within teams, in professional and community settings.	English Language Proficiency (reading, writing, listening, speaking) Non-verbal communication Digital fluency Visual literacy Quantitative fluency Research fluency Discipline/Professional literacies Interpersonal skills Team work and team leadership Communication protocols, including Indigenous Australian protocols
Cultural competence An ability to engage with diverse cultural and Indigenous perspectives in both global and local settings.	Indigenous Australian perspectives Social justice Cultural diversity Global perspectives Inclusivity Civic responsibility

## Section 4 - Procedures

### Procedures for embedding Graduate Attributes across Course curricula

(12) Course learning outcomes are contextualised using the Graduate Attributes- Course Learning Outcomes Matrix and SCU Graduate Attributes Descriptors Table as guides.

(13) The Graduate Attributes shall then be mapped across the whole Course curriculum using the Course Learning Outcomes as a guide to ensure a whole-of-Course approach.

(14) Each Unit must include at most 3 of the Graduate Attributes explicitly articulated in the Unit learning Outcomes, except, for example, in double weighted Units and Capstone Units which may include more.

(15) Each of the Graduate Attributes identified through the Unit Learning Outcomes must be explicitly assessed and included in the marking criteria for the assessment task (refer to Assessment Policy).

(16) The interrelationships between the Graduate Attributes, Unit Learning Outcomes and assessment tasks must be displayed in the Unit Master File for each Unit.

(17) Decisions about which Graduate Attributes are included in individual Units shall be at the discretion of the Course coordinator in order to ensure a whole-of-Course approach. If Units are used across multiple Courses then wider consultations and approvals must occur.

(18) Changes to the established Graduate Attributes of a Unit may occur subject to the Unit Statement Policy.

## Procedures for monitoring the development and acquisition of graduate attributes over time

(19) Teaching, learning and assessment of the Graduate Attributes are assured through adherence to the Course Planning and Approval Policy and Course Review Policy.

(20) Schools must monitor student's acquisition of Graduate Attributes embedded in Units through the Unit reporting process in accordance with the Course Review Policy.

(21) Some Courses may include a Capstone experience through which the acquisition of the Graduate Attributes can be additionally monitored and assured. Capstone Units may have more than three (3) graduate attributes.

## Procedures for raising students' awareness of Graduate Attributes

(22) Graduate Attributes must be included on the SCU website.

(23) Orientation may include information on the Graduate Attributes.

(24) Graduation must reference the Graduate Attributes.

(25) Unit assessors must inform students explicitly about Graduate Attributes embedded in the Units at the commencement of a Unit and:

- a. in the Unit website, Unit learning materials or in classes; and
- b. in assessment tasks in which a specific Graduate Attribute is assessed.

## Section 5 - Guidelines

(26) The Graduate Attributes - Course Learning Outcomes matrix is a guide for staff developing or revising Course Learning Outcomes.

SCU Graduate Attributes	Diploma AQF 5	Associate Degree AQF 6	Bachelor AQF 7	Honours AQF 8	Masters AQF 9	Doctorate AQF 10
Intellectual rigour A commitment to excellence in all scholarly and intellectual activities, including critical judgement	Exercise critical thinking and judgement to interpret and sometimes solve problems in prescribed situations	Exercise critical thinking and judgement to interpret and sometimes solve problems with some intellectual independence	Exercise critical thinking and judgement in identifying and solving problems with intellectual independence	Exercise critical thinking, judgement (and in some Courses research processes) in identifying and solving problems with intellectual independence	Exercise a knowledge of research principles and methods applicable to the field of work or learning	Exercise a substantial knowledge of research principles and methods applicable to a frontier learning or field of work
Creativity An ability to develop creative and effective responses to intellectual, professional and social challenges	Apply knowledge and skills creatively in defined disciplinary or social challenges	Apply knowledge and skills creatively in defined intellectual, disciplinary or social challenges	Apply knowledge and skills creatively in broad intellectual, disciplinary and social challenges	Apply knowledge and skills creatively in broad intellectual, disciplinary and social challenges	Apply knowledge and skills with initiative and creativity with new challenges or in new situations	Apply expert knowledge and skills with initiative and creativity with new challenges or in new situations

Ethical practice A commitment to sustainability and high ethical standards in social and professional practices.	Demonstrate knowledge of the use of ethical framework(s) in scholarly, social or professional situations	Demonstrate well developed knowledge of the use of ethical framework(s) in scholarly, social or professional situations	Demonstrate judgement and use of ethical framework(s) in scholarly, social and professional situations	Demonstrate well developed judgement and use of ethical framework(s) in scholarly, social and professional situations	Demonstrate highly developed judgement and use of ethical framework(s) in scholarly, research, social and professional situations	Demonstrate expert judgement and use of ethical framework(s) in scholarly, and professional situations
	Demonstrate knowledge of sustainability principles for relevant contexts	Demonstrate knowledge of sustainability principles for relevant contexts	Apply sustainability principles to relevant social and professional situations	Apply sustainability principles to relevant social and professional situations	Apply sustainability principles to relevant research, social and professional situations	Apply sustainability principles to relevant research, social and professional situations
Knowledge of a discipline Command of a discipline to enable a smooth transition and contribution to professional and community settings.	Demonstrate a basic theoretical and technical knowledge within a defined disciplinary or professional context	Demonstrate a broad theoretical and technical knowledge within a defined disciplinary or professional context	Demonstrate a broad, coherent, theoretical and technical knowledge with depth in one or more disciplines or areas of practice	Demonstrate an advanced theoretical and technical knowledge in one or more disciplines or areas of practice	Demonstrate an advanced, integrated understanding of a complex body of knowledge in one or more disciplines or areas of practice	Demonstrate a systematic and critical understanding of a substantial and complex body of knowledge at the frontier of a discipline or area of professional practice.
Lifelong learning The ability to be responsive to change, to be inquiring and reflective in practice, through information literacy and autonomous, self-managed learning.	Reflect on and assess their own learning capabilities and performance within defined parameters	Reflect on and assess their own learning capabilities and performance	Reflect on, assess and regulate their own learning capabilities and performance with personal autonomy	Reflect on, assess and regulate their own learning and research capabilities and performance with personal autonomy and accountability	Reflect on, assess and regulate their own learning and research capabilities and performance with personal autonomy and accountability	Reflect on, assess and regulate their own learning and research capabilities and performance with a high level of personal autonomy, accountability and responsibility for outputs
	Analyse, evaluate and use information from a defined set of sources	Analyse, evaluate and use information from a defined set of sources	Locate, analyse, evaluate, and use information from a range of sources	Locate, analyse, evaluate, manage and use information from a range of sources	Locate, evaluate, manage and use information in order to create new information	Locate, analyse, evaluate and manage information in order to create new concepts or to create new information

Communication and social skills The ability to communicate and collaborate with individuals, and within teams, in professional and community settings.	Communicate clear, coherent exposition of knowledge and ideas to a defined audience	Communicate clear, coherent and independent exposition of knowledge and ideas to a defined audience	Communicate clear, coherent and independent exposition of knowledge and ideas to a variety of audiences	Communicate theory, concepts, complex knowledge and ideas within a research or professional setting to a variety of audiences	Communicate arguments, theory, complex knowledge and ideas within an investigation of originality to specialist and non-specialist audiences.	Communicate cogently arguments, theory, complex knowledge, ideas within a complex investigation of originality to specialist and non-specialist audiences.
	Work in collaboration with others to achieve defined goals	Work in collaboration with others to achieve defined goals	Work in collaboration with others and in a team to achieve goals	Work in collaboration with others and in a team to achieve self-determined goals	Work collaboratively with individuals and teams to achieve research outcomes	Work collaboratively with individuals and teams to achieve research outcomes
Cultural competence An ability to engage with diverse cultural and Indigenous perspectives in both global and local settings.	Demonstrate an understanding of Indigenous Australian contemporary realities and protocols	Demonstrate an understanding of Indigenous Australian contemporary realities and protocols	Demonstrate an understanding of Indigenous Australian contemporary realities and protocols	Demonstrate an understanding of Indigenous Australian contemporary realities and protocols	Demonstrate an understanding of Indigenous Australian contemporary realities and protocols	Demonstrate an understanding of Indigenous Australian contemporary realities and protocols
	Demonstrate cultural competence in local, Australia-wide and/or global settings	Demonstrate cultural competence in local, Australia-wide and/or global settings	Demonstrate cultural competence in local, Australia-wide and/or global settings	Demonstrate cultural competence in local, Australia-wide and/or global settings	Demonstrate cultural competence in local, Australia-wide and/or global settings	Demonstrate cultural competence in local, Australia-wide and/or global settings

## Reference

Bowden, J., Hart, G., King, B., Trigwell, K. & Watts, O. (2000). *Generic Capabilities of ATN University Graduates*. Canberra: Australian Government Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs.

## Status and Details

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