

# Honours in Bachelor Awards Policy

## Section 1 - Purpose and Context

- (1) This policy defines and describes:
  - a. the structure, nomenclature and grading of Bachelor Honours awards; and
  - b. requirements for admission, progression and completion of the award.
- (2) The Policy assists schools to manage their Bachelor Honours awards in an equitable, consistent, and high quality manner.
- (3) The following objectives underpin the University's approach to the structure and nomenclature of Honours awards:
  - a. Superior research training;
  - b. High quality research supervision; and
  - c. Adherence to the University's [Research Code of Practice](#).
- (4) The policy applies to all undergraduate degrees which have rules for the provision of Honours (AQF level 8).

## Section 2 - Definitions

- (5) For the purpose of this policy the following definitions apply:
  - a. "Honours program" - an undergraduate course or program designed to provide research training to serve the needs of students preparing for research careers or intending to undertake applied research and knowledge development in their professional careers.
  - b. "Research Training Component" - means a component of the Honours program that provides explicit training in the formulation of research proposals, in research techniques, and in composing submissions for any required ethics approvals.
  - c. "Optional Coursework Component" - means coursework units that require students to appraise scholarly work or address disciplinary issues and problems in the light of scholarly work, but does not entail original research.
  - d. "Significant Research Component" - is the outcome of research training as evidenced by a thesis, research chapter, or combination of written or other media, in keeping with the conventions and standards of scholarship in the field of study for the Honours program.
  - e. "Specialisation" - a formal grouping of units on the Student Management System that contributes to the structure of a course; for example, a course core, key program, major, sub-major or postgraduate specialisation, or set of pool or alternate units and, in the context of this Policy, the grouping of units that comprise the honours component of an embedded honours program (also see [Curriculum Structure Procedures](#)).
  - f. "School Honours Coordinator" - a member of academic staff, nominated by the Dean, with responsibility for managing the School's Bachelor Honours programs.
  - g. "Ethics approval"- is formal approval of the proposed research study by the relevant University ethics approval

- committee or panel.
- h. "Statement of intent" - is a brief outline of the proposed topic area and general method to be used for honours research study.
  - i. "Formal research proposal" - is a paper, seminar presentation or School equivalent that outlines, at an introductory level, the research question, method, background scope and significance of a research study or equivalent.
  - j. "Thesis" - is an analytical and appropriately referenced presentation of the author's literature review, research results, or piece of creative work, discussion and conclusions, and is the major assessable item of the Significant Research Component.
  - k. "End-on honours" - is an 80 credit point program to develop research skills and knowledge, taken as a self-contained course by a student, following completion of an ordinary bachelor degree.
  - l. "Embedded honours" - is a program of study to develop research skills and knowledge; it is a distinct unit, or an honours specialisation, in an undergraduate course; the undergraduate course is normally no less than 320 credit points.
  - m. "School equivalent" - is the teaching, learning, or assessment activities deemed equivalent to an item specified in this policy by the School Academic Committee; School equivalents will be reported to the Assessment Committee of Academic Senate.
  - n. "Admission Average Mark" (AAM) - Average mark calculated from units of an undergraduate course.

## Section 3 - Policy Statement

### Part A - Nomenclature of Honours Awards

(6) The nomenclature of honours degrees will reflect the nomenclature provisions of the bachelor awards defined in the [Curriculum Structure Procedures](#).

(7) End-on honours courses have a course code that differs from that for the ordinary bachelor degree course.

(8) Units comprising the embedded honours component of the bachelor honours course are identified as an honours specialisation.

(9) Honours will be awarded retrospectively upon completion of course requirements.

(10) Successful completion of an honours degree will be identified on the academic transcript, and the testamur, by the name of the undergraduate course, as specified in the approved course title and course code, and the word "Honours," in parentheses.

(11) Variation from the [Curriculum Structure Procedures](#) requires approval of the Academic Senate.

### Part B - Structure of Honours degrees

(12) An "Honours" program requires the completion of a program of study either as:

- a. a stand-alone "end-on" honours course commenced at the completion of an appropriate undergraduate degree that is normally of 80 credit points; or
- b. as an "embedded" honours program within an undergraduate course that is normally no less than 320 credit points. The credit points comprising the honours component of the program will be sufficient to meet the standards expected for research training within the discipline, and the embedded honours program is approved in line with University policy for course approval.

## Part C - Components of Honours Programs

(13) Embedded and end-on honours programs will have two compulsory components - the Research Training Component and the Significant Research Component. The honours program may also have a third component - the Optional Coursework Component. These components may be integrated or may be part of the honours specialisations. In either case the School Honours Coordinator will monitor honours candidates to ensure that all complete the two compulsory components as a condition to apply for graduation.

### Compulsory Research Training Component

(14) The compulsory Research Training component must include:

- a. A formal Research Proposal or School equivalent;
- b. Research Seminar Attendance or School equivalent.

(15) The compulsory Research Training Component may include training in the ethical conduct of research - for example, supervised preparation, or contribution to the preparation, of applications for consideration by the University's Biosafety and Radiation Safety Committee, Animal Care and Ethics Committee, Human Research Ethics Committee or Human Research Ethics Panel, depending upon the nature of the study.

(16) Where ethics approval is required, data collection must not commence until this is granted (refer School Honours Award Level Guidelines below).

### Compulsory Significant Research Component (20-70 Credit Points)

(17) An end-on or embedded Honours program must contain a Significant Research Component, or School equivalent (range from 20-70 Credit Points). The Significant Research Component may be a written thesis, or a non-standard thesis, as follows:

- a. A written thesis. The thesis may vary in length according to the credit points allocated. As a guide, a 60-credit point thesis may range in length between 15,000-20,000 words. A 40-credit point thesis may range in length between 8,000-12,000 words.
- b. Non-standard thesis. This option includes a substantial body of creative practical work with accompanying scholarly exegesis, ranging between 5,000 - 10,000 words. Typical examples of the other media used may include exhibition, performance, novel, film, computer program etc. Where creative practical work is undertaken, consideration must be given to the permanence of the work. While it is acknowledged that a performance cannot be replicated, it can be recorded via a script or a video of the work. Attention should be given to the digital archival recording of the practical work, with copies being held with the written exegesis.

### Optional Coursework Component

(18) An end-on or embedded honours program may include a prescribed Coursework Component of other coursework units (refer Coursework Component of Honours in School Honours Award Level Guidelines).

## Part D - Application

(19) Applications for admission to end-on or embedded honours programs are made on-line at any time of the year following student completion of threshold credit point requirements or in the case of final year students applying for end-on honours, they must be enrolled in sufficient units to complete their degree.

(20) Applications will be considered by the School Honours Coordinator to determine eligibility against Honours policy admission criteria; the Dean of the School then approves or declines admission and advises the Director, Data

## Part E - Admission

(21) Admission to an end-on or embedded honours program is determined on the basis of all of the four following criteria being met:

- a. Achievement of a threshold Admission Average Mark (AAM) equal to or above the minimum of 65; and
- b. Statement of Intent or School equivalent; and
- c. Appointment of a principal supervisor by the Dean of the School; and
- d. Demonstrated satisfactory academic writing skills appropriate to the discipline.

(22) In the case of the embedded Bachelor of Laws Honours program, demonstration of the likelihood, as assessed by the Dean or delegate in exercise of their discretion, of completing the Bachelor of Laws degree with a GPA of at least 5.5.

(23) A School Academic Committee may, on recommendation of the School Honours Coordinator, rank applicants on the basis of AAMs if the Dean of the School indicates the number of applications exceeds the availability of supervised places.

(24) The AAM will normally be calculated on the basis of all units from program commencement.

(25) In applications where advanced standing impedes the calculation of a whole-of-program AAM, results from a minimum of 80 Western Sydney University credit points chosen with the approval of the School Academic Committee, on the recommendation of the School Honours Coordinator, may be used.

(26) Applications for end-on or embedded Honours may be made after completion of a minimum of 200 credit points if the AAM is equal to or greater than 65 and if the course rules permit, or, in the case of the embedded Bachelor of Laws honours program, after completion of no less than 160 credit points and no more than 200 credit points of Bachelor of Laws units (where GPA requirements are also met).

(27) Admission to end-on honours will not be made until satisfactory completion of the pass degree.

## Part F - Supervision

(28) The primary supervisor will hold qualifications at AQF Level 9, or above, and have a record of research or scholarly attainment in a relevant field, to satisfy the Higher Education Threshold Standard of "equivalent professional experience".

(29) Honours candidates will have a principal supervisor but may have co-supervisors.

(30) Where a student is experiencing supervision problems, he/she will in the first instance approach their supervisor and/or co-supervisor, then if required the School Honours Coordinator who will facilitate management of supervision issues. In cases where the School Honours Coordinator is involved in supervision or supervision problems, the student may approach the Dean, Graduate Studies for advice.

## Part G - Progression

(31) Progression through to graduation will be dependent upon meeting minimum success rates and correctly re-enrolling, in accordance with the [Progression Policy](#).

(32) The provisions of policies applying to withdrawal, leave of absence, special consideration, and academic

misconduct in undergraduate degrees apply.

(33) The normal period of candidature for students enrolled in an end-on honours course is one year fulltime, or its part time equivalent.

## **Part H - Extension for Submission of a Thesis**

(34) A student may apply for an extension of time for thesis submission up to three working days before the student's originally approved submission date. Extensions can only be granted in exceptional and compelling circumstances consistent with the provisions of the [Disruption to Studies Policy](#).

(35) The principles and procedure of that policy should be followed in making the application, but the application must be submitted to the School Honours Coordinator. The School Honours coordinator will recommend to the Dean or Deputy Dean of the School whether or not the extension should be granted, and in making that recommendation he/she will consult with the primary supervisor and/or co-supervisor. The Dean or Deputy Dean of the School will advise the student and the School Academic Committee in writing of the decision.

(36) Where an extension has been granted and the work is not submitted by the census date for the following semester teaching period, the student will normally be required to re-enrol in a non award 20 credit point unit. The student's enrolment in the unit will not consume additional Student Learning Entitlement, but will incur a tuition fee liability.

## **Part I - Examination**

(37) Where an honours program requires formal examinations the [Examinations Policy](#) will apply.

(38) The significant research component will be examined by two suitably qualified examiners, who may be external to the University or internal to the University in schools or programs where an independent moderation process is used to assure quality and consistency of internal examination. Examiners must normally hold a qualification at or above honours and have a record of research or scholarly attainment in a relevant field.

(39) The School Academic Committee will recommend examiners for the significant research component who are approved by the Dean or Deputy Dean of the School.

(40) Examiners will not be supervisors or co-supervisors; examiners will make independent determinations on the significant research component and will each award a mark out of 100, which will be averaged to give a total score.

(41) Where there is a mark discrepancy of 10 or more marks between significant research component examiners or a difference in the examiner-recommended "grade", the School Honours Coordinator may take one or more of the following actions:

- a. Invite the examiners to confer with each other and/or with the School Research and Higher Degrees Committee with a view to presenting a consolidated recommendation;
- b. Appoint an experienced marker of bachelor (honours) theses as a third examiner who will act as an arbiter; following review of the thesis and the other examiners' reports the arbiter determines the mark and grade on the basis of the published criteria and standards for the thesis; this is the final examination result for recommendation to the School Academic Committee.

(42) The final examination result is made available to students.

## **Part J - Award Levels**

(43) Honours levels are awarded as follows: First Class (highest level of honours), Second Class, and Third Class (lowest level of honours). Second class has two divisions of performance identified: Division 1 (highest) and Division 2.

(44) The level of honours is determined using the relevant "School Honours Award Level Guidelines", approved by School Academic Committees and endorsed by the Research Studies Committee of Academic Senate in the academic year prior to student commencement of honours study; these are associated documents to this policy.

(45) The School Honours Coordinator considers examiner reports, marks, and other information as specified in the School Honours Award Level Guide and recommends the level of award to the School Academic Committee, which approves the Honours award outcome.

(46) After each teaching session in which Honours awards are made, the School Academic Committee sends a written report to the Assessment Committee of Academic Senate, including a summary of the approved honours results, any significant variability, anomalies and trends, any extensions on thesis submission dates, and any recommendations about assessment policies and practices.

(47) The Assessment Committee of Academic Senate will monitor the processes that are used to ensure consistency of honours assessment across markers and student cohorts, including external benchmarking.

## **Part K - University Medal**

(48) Refer to University Medal in the [Graduation Policy](#).

## **Part L - Review of Grade**

(49) The [Review of Grade Policy](#) and procedures will apply to all units, including the significant research component, in the honours program. The review may affect the level of honours awarded.

(50) Appeals that relate to more than one unit must be made separately.

## **Part M - Appeal Against Level of Honours**

(51) Appeals not related to individual unit marks but against the level of honours awarded can be made in accordance with the Academic Appeal Procedures with the only grounds for appeal being those arising from procedural irregularity.

## **Section 4 - Procedures**

(52) Nil.

## **Section 5 - Guidelines**

(53) Honours Award Level Guidelines are available as associated information to this policy.

## Status and Details

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