

Honours Policy

Section 1 - Purpose and Context

(1) This policy has been developed for the purpose of assisting the Colleges of the University of Western Sydney in the management of their respective Honours Degrees. The policy is designed to provide a University framework for equitable, consistent, and high quality Honours degrees. The objective of the policy is to establish a coherent nomenclature and procedures for Honours awards programs.

(2) The policy applies to all undergraduate degrees awarding a class of Honours at graduation. This includes both 80 credit point Honours (End-on or Fourth Year) programs undertaken after the completion of an appropriate undergraduate Bachelors degree and to Honours programs embedded in a four year undergraduate Bachelors degree (Embedded Honours).

Section 2 - Definitions

(3) For the purpose of this policy the following definitions apply:

(4) a. "Coursework" means units of study 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.

Section 3 - Policy Reference

Part A - The Honours Degree

(5) Normally, the "Honours" component of the degree requires the completion of no more than 80 Credit Points.

(6) The structure of Honours degrees is made up of three components:

(7) a. A Research Training Component comprising three constituent elements (included within a range of 10-20 credit points) which must appear in a degree's coursework components:

- i. Formal Research Proposal (refer Clause 38 under Guidelines);
- ii. Ethics Approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee (refer Clause 39 under Guidelines);
- iii. Research Seminar Attendance and Participation (refer Clause 40 under Guidelines).

b. A Significant Research Component or Equivalent (Range from 40-70 Credit Points) (refer Clause 41 under Guidelines).

c. A Coursework Component of Honours (refer Clause 42 under Guidelines).

(8) In keeping with the practice of Australian universities in the awarding of Honours, the structure of the Bachelor of Laws (Honours), Bachelor of Science (Honours) Mathematics, Bachelor of Engineering (Honours), Bachelor of Industrial Design (Honours) and Bachelor of Construction Management (Honours) will stand as exceptions to the requirements

set out in clause (5). Those disciplines will require a Significant Research Component of at least 20 credit points.

Embedded Honours

(9) For Embedded Honours, if the Research Training Components under clause (5)a are met then any additional coursework components of the Honours component of the Embedded Honours degree should not exceed two coursework units or 20 Credit Points. (Range 10-20 Credit Points).

(10) However, if the requirements of clause (5)a are incorporated into existing coursework units, the maximum coursework component of the Honours component of the degree for Embedded Honours may not exceed 40 credit points (Range 10-40 Credit Points).

Nomenclature for Degrees

(11) The nomenclature of generic Honours degrees is aligned with the University of Western Sydney undergraduate programs. Disciplines can be indicated on the first line of the testamur. The nomenclature should reflect the broad area of study or key program area, such as "business and commerce", "science", "contemporary arts", or "humanities".

(12) If a variation from the University of Western Sydney [Structure and Nomenclature of Bachelor Awards Policy](#) is sought, then approval of the Courses Approvals and Articulations Committee is required.

Part B - Admission

(13) Admission is based on:

- (14) a. a. academic merit as defined in clause (13) in terms of a satisfactory Grade Point Average (GPA);
- b. the submission of a satisfactory Statement of Intent as defined in clause (14); and
- c. the availability of suitable supervisors and other resources.

(15) Applications for admission to Honours study will be assessed by a College committee.

Grade Point Average Requirement

(16) Admission requires a Grade Point Average (GPA) calculation of greater than a Credit Average (greater than 5.0). The calculation is taken over all semesters. However, for students whose overall GPA is no less than 4.5, a case for admission may be made based upon a GPA calculation from a selection of units in the second or third years of study (as approved by the College) amounting to no less than 80 credit points, and meeting the threshold of 5.0. The definition and calculation of a Grade Point Average is detailed in Part C of the [Graduation Policy](#).

Statement of Intent Requirement

(17) Prospective students will submit a Statement of Intent of approximately 1,000 words which describes the proposed research in a scholarly manner. The statement should focus on the significance, aims, conceptual framework and/or methodology to be employed in the study. The statement would normally address any ethical issues involved in the proposed research, and include a relevant bibliography (up to 2 pages).

(18) The quality of the Statement of Intent will be assessed by the relevant College committee.

Section 4 - Procedures

Part C - Quality Assurance

(19) Colleges will be required to develop quality assurance protocols to:

(20) a. implement this policy; and

b. demonstrate the encouragement of Honours research through the provision of appropriate support (e.g. supervision, technical facilities, etc.).

External Benchmarking

(21) In consultation with the Office of Planning and Quality, Honours programs should participate in an external benchmarking process on a triennial basis.

Part D - Enrolment into Honours

(22) Students may enrol full-time or part-time. It should be noted, particularly with part-time enrolments, that some units in the Honours component of the degree may not be available in a particular session. It is possible that the structure of some degrees may not allow mid-year entry for part-time students.

(23) Normally, for End-on Honours students would be expected to complete the Honours degree in 1.0 EFTSL, which for full time students would be 1 year and for part time students would be 2 years.

(24) Normally, in the case of Embedded Honours, students would be expected to commence the honours component after completion of 200 credit points and complete the entire degree, including the Embedded Honours within 4 years full-time equivalent.

Enrolment by External Students

(25) Consistent with the UWS [Advanced Standing and Recognition of Prior Learning Policy](#), students external to the University who wish to undertake the Honours component of a degree may apply by submitting a case demonstrating their successful completion of equivalent undergraduate coursework study at another institution. All other admission criteria will apply to such applications.

English Requirements

(26) Admission for international students, where English is not the first language or was not the medium of instruction in the applicant's secondary or tertiary studies, will be dependent on the specified English proficiency requirements detailed on the UWS International website.

Part E - Supervision and Examination

Supervision

(27) Normally, principal or sole Honours supervisors should be qualified to PhD or Master's (Honours) level, as well as having an established publishing and research track record. The minimum requirement to supervise an Honours student is Honours Class I or Honours Class II Division I. Prospective Honours supervisors not on the [Graduate Supervisor Register \(Finding a Supervisor\)](#) are required to undertake supervision training.

Assessment

(28) Assessment practices for Honours units will be consistent with the UWS [Assessment Policy - Criteria and](#)

(29) All grades for Honours units will be approved by the relevant College Education Assessment and Progression Committee.

Examination of Significant Research Component, or Equivalent (e.g. Thesis, Research Chapter, or combination of Written and other Media)

(30) A compulsory thesis submission date of the Significant Thesis Research Component should be determined by the College that will allow sufficient time for examination and timely submission of grades, so that students may be eligible to apply for scholarships and Research Training Scheme funded higher research degree places during the ranking process. The submission date should be mid-October.

Examiners

(31) Two examiners are required for the Honours Significant Research Component. Normally, the examination panel may include one internal and one external examiner. Examiners will typically hold at least a Bachelor (Honours, First Class) and preferably a research Masters, PhD or Professional Doctorate. The School Research Committee needs to scrutinise and document the qualifications and experience of examiners. Internal examiners may be selected from any School or College at the University of Western Sydney.

(32) Where there are significant discrepancies in the marks awarded for the research component, either a difference in grade or a numerical difference of 10 marks, an additional examiner of the research component will be appointed.

(33) Usually, the supervisor(s) will not be the examiner(s) of the Significant Research Component or involved in the examination in any way, without the approval of the Head of School.

(34) A supervisor's report may be submitted for consideration by the School Assessment Committee.

(35) Subject to approval by the relevant College committee, and in consistency with the UWS [Assessment Policy](#), Schools should develop instructions for examiners.

Lodgement of final grades

(36) Final grades for Honours students should be lodged with the Office of the Academic Registrar in accordance with the Student Administration Timeline of Activities so that Honours students' results may be included for review and ranking of scholarship applications.

Part F - Award Levels

Honours Award Grade Levels

(37) Calculation of the Honours Award level (Class of Honours) is based on the results of both Honours Coursework and Honours Research:

(38) a. The Honours Coursework calculation includes all coursework units, including research methods, the formal research proposal, ethics approval, and research seminar attendance, as they are structured in the Honours Component of the Degree. Calculation of the Honours Coursework may include relevant components outlined in clause (5)a and c above.

b. Calculation of the Significant Research component may include either of the two research options outlined in clause (41)a and b below.

(39) The final grade will be calculated according to the credit point allocation in the degree, and the grades of honours will be as follows:

- (40) a. Honours Class I requires achievement within the range of 85-100%.
- b. Honours Class II Division I requires achievement within the range of 75-84%.
- c. Honours Class II Division II requires achievement within the range of 65-74%.
- d. Honours Class III requires achievement within the range of 50-64%.

(41) The award of Honours Class I requires both achievement within the range of 85-100% for the Honours Research Component and a weighted average mark in the range of 85-100 for the combined Research and Coursework components.

LLB (Honours) Award Grade Levels

(42) In the case of the LLB (Honours), the calculation of the Honours Award level (Class of Honours) is based on the results of Honours Research and the overall course GPA.

- (43) a. The award of Honours Class I for the LLB (Honours) requires achievement within the range of 85-100 for Honours Research and a GPA of 6.0 or greater in the LLB units.
- b. The award of Honours Class II Division I for the LLB (Honours) requires achievement within the range of 75-100 for Honours Research and a course GPA of 5.8 or greater in the LLB units.
- c. The award of Honours Class II Division II for the LLB (Honours) requires achievement within the range of 65-100 for Honours Research and a course GPA of 5.5 or greater in the LLB units.
- d. Honours Class III is not awarded in the LLB (Honours).

Section 5 - Guidelines

(44) These guidelines have been developed to provide explanatory statements and guidance on certain requirements of the Honours Policy.

Part G - Part F — Guidelines Related to the Honours Degree

Formal Research Proposal

(45) The proposal may be included as part of a Research Training Unit or integrated into another Research Training Unit.

Ethics Approval

(46) Where required, the ethics proposal may be included as part of a 10 credit point Research Training Unit or integrated into another 10 credit point coursework unit. The ethics proposal component of any coursework unit should be graded as a "threshold" assessment item, that is, graded on a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory basis such that no marks should be awarded for the successful completion of the ethics proposal. The ethics proposal must be completed satisfactorily prior to the commencement of any fieldwork research.

Research Seminar Attendance and Participation

(47) This component may be included, either as a 10 credit point Research Training Unit or integrated into another 10-credit point coursework unit. The seminar attendance is designed to raise the profile of Honours research and provide students with experience in presenting their work for feedback and critique. The seminar attendance may take the form of:

(48) a. A School or College Work in Progress Review;

b. A Conference Presentation or Publication; or

c. Another form of seminar or colloquium presentation, as specified by the School or College.

Significant Research Component or Equivalent

(49) Credit points should be allocated to reflect the amount of work required. Schools and Colleges may choose from each of the following alternatives which may comprise this component of the degree:

(50) 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.

Coursework Component of Honours

(51) Units included in the Coursework Component of the degree would normally be at Level 5, particularly for End-On degrees. However, these units may be drawn from undergraduate coursework units currently at Levels 2, 3, and 4, or from Postgraduate (Level 7) coursework units.

Embedded Honours Preparation

(52) Undergraduate coursework components selected from the degree to form part of the Honours component of the degree should be selected from study during semesters 5, 6, 7 and 8 in a four-year degree (or equivalent). The coursework components may also include advanced research methods subjects. Students should study research methods prior to their entry into the Honours component of the degree.

End-on Honours Preparation

(53) The coursework component may include a high level research methods subject if required. It is also recommended that students study research methods prior to their entry into Honours as part of the "streaming" into Honours.

Written Thesis

(54) Attention to careful editing, the quality of the written work, grammar, spelling, referencing and citations, the research process and outcomes, and demonstrable evidence of high quality research training outcomes is required (Range 40-70 credit points).

Non-standard Thesis

(55) The presentation of non-standard work as part of Honours research can only be one part of the requirements of the Honours research component. Any non-standard content must be presented in concert with a discursive text in which the student is required to show a critical, comprehensive understanding of the field to which their other work contributes. Successful completion of the thesis requirements will entail satisfactory performance in both the non-standard and scholarly, discursive element. Normally, the discursive element should be not less than one third of the complete degree requirements, and should adhere to the same standard of presentation as set out in clause (41)

above.

Part H - Part G – Identification and Preparation of Honours Students

(56) Where possible, potential Honours students should be identified during semester 4 or 5 of their undergraduate program for "streaming" into Honours. This may entail the utilization of at least one of their open elective subjects to undertake research preparation, through the study of high level research methods and/or specific knowledge acquisition relevant to their future Honours degree.

(57) It is essential that students be adequately trained in the appropriate research methods required to undertake their research. This can be achieved in two ways. Students may complete their research methods training prior to admission to Honours or they may undertake their research methods in an intensive mode early in the first year of their enrolment, so that they are able to then complete the Formal Research Proposal and, if required, gain Ethics Approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee in a timely manner.

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