

**WESTERN SYDNEY**  
UNIVERSITY



## **School of Science and Health Honours Guidelines 2019**



<b>EMBEDDED HONOURS COURSE TITLE</b>	<b>HONOURS CONTACT DETAILS</b>
Bachelor of Occupational Therapy (Honours)	Dr Rosalind Bye
Bachelor of Physiotherapy (Honours)	Dr Amitabh Gupta
Bachelor of Podiatry (Honours)	Professor Deborah Turner

Director, HDR and Honours, School of Science and Health: Associate Professor Karen Liu

## Objectives of the Embedded Honours Programs

The School of Science and Health Honours Program includes three embedded honours programs in the clinical health science programs of occupational therapy, physiotherapy and podiatric medicine. The embedded program occurs across the final year and a half of these four-year programs. Eligible students are invited to undertake the honours program pertaining to their degree, and are enrolled into the honours specific program of that degree. Honours programs differ from the pass programs, with specific honours units embedded across the last three semesters of these degrees. These units combine to form an advanced, specialised study in clinical health sciences, extending students' knowledge and skills through a supervised research project together with advanced coursework in related areas of study. The Honours units build on the research principles established in the first two and a half years of the undergraduate course, which are further developed as students are introduced to a wider field of research knowledge, skills and techniques. The major component of the Honours degree is a supervised program of independent research that results in the completion of a thesis. Upon completion of the embedded honours program, the graduate will have achieved Level 8 of the Australian Qualifications Framework (<https://www.aqf.edu.au/aqf-qualifications>) and will, thus, have advanced knowledge and skills for professional or highly skilled work and/or further learning..

The School of Science and Health Embedded Honours programs are structured so that by the end of the relevant degree, students should be able to:

- i. Demonstrate an understanding of scientific methods of inquiry. This includes the identification of assumptions and limitations of scientific methods of inquiry and where appropriate, it involves accurate measurement and the use of replicated, controlled experimentation;
- ii. Distinguish original from second-hand information, facts from opinions, and hypotheses from substantiated conclusions; identify the need for and role of appropriate evidence in supporting or falsifying testable hypotheses or points of view, separating pseudoscientific from scientific evidence;
- iii. Identify problems, perceive associations and construct relationships that may be novel in the chosen field of research. This may involve the development and practice of methods used in the field;
- iv. Demonstrate the ability to ask relevant questions for further research in a chosen field.

It is assumed that students enrolled in the embedded Honours programs have attained a high standard of undergraduate achievement, including some specialised understanding of the field in which the research topic is based. More specifically, the following objectives should have been attained, such that where appropriate, students are able to:

- i. Use quantitative and/or qualitative data effectively to provide support for conclusions;
- ii. Recognise the misuse of data;
- iii. Identify assumptions and limitations in problem solving;
- iv. Evaluate the adequacy of the approaches used, both by self and others.

## **Honours Award Level Guidelines**

The Honours in [Bachelor Awards Policy](#) describes the framework for all Honours courses at Western Sydney University. These School Honours Award Level Guidelines contain procedural information specific to the available Honours degrees in the School of Science & Health (SSH).

## **Admission Process - Embedded Honours (Clinical Health Science Embedded Honours Programs: Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy and Podiatry)**

Honours places in the Clinical Health Science programs are by invitation only and students do not need to apply. Students will be contacted by their Director of Academic Program or their appointee with a direct invitation to undertake Honours study. This will occur soon after the results for Autumn Year 3 are released. Enrolment into the Clinical Health Science Honours programs occurs for Spring of Year 3. There is no statement of intent required; instead students are invited to join the program and are then required to submit preferences pertaining to projects available\*.

## **Criteria for Admission**

The criteria for admission is outlined in the [Honours in the Bachelors Award Policy](#) Part E, Clause 21:

- 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\* (see above); and
- c. Appointment of a principal supervisor by the Dean of the School or the appointee; and
- d. Demonstrated satisfactory academic writing skills appropriate to the discipline.

## **Calculation of the Admission Average Mark (AAM)**

As outlined in the Honours in the [Bachelors Award Policy](#) Part E, Clauses 24-26:

(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 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.

## **Supervision**

Honours supervision arrangements are in line with Part F, Clauses 28-30 of the [Honours in Bachelor Awards Policy](#):

(28) The primary supervisor will hold qualifications at AQF Level 8, 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 Honours Unit Coordinator who will facilitate management of supervision issues. In cases where the Honours Unit Coordinator is involved in supervision or supervision problems, the student may approach the School HDR Director for advice.

In addition to the above, each clinical health science embedded honours program has a relevant Director of Academic program and/or an honours point of contact, and thus these people are available to students to discuss supervision concerns. In cases where the supervisor involved is one of the nominated people noted here, or if the student feels more comfortable, the student should then approach the Director of Higher Degrees and Research (HDR).

## **Ethics and/or other required approvals**

Ethics approval is the formal approval, where required and appropriate, of the proposed research by the relevant Western Sydney University Ethics Committee. Details on when ethics approval should be sought can be found in the [Research Ethics and Integrity](#) site.

The principal supervisor is responsible for obtaining the appropriate approvals that may be required for the research proposed, both by the University and external agencies/organisations. No data collection, experimental or field work can be undertaken without the appropriate approvals.

## **Embedded Honours Course Summaries**

Each program has an approved honours course document with a specific course code that is different to the pass version of each program.

Clinical health science students in occupational therapy, physiotherapy and podiatry, study several

honours specific units in third and fourth year of their degree. The units required for each program are specified for each course in the University Handbook at the following links:

4707.1 Bachelor of Physiotherapy (Honours)

4709.1 Bachelor of Podiatric Medicine (Honours)

4712.1 Bachelor of Occupational Therapy (Honours)

4733.1 Bachelor of Physiotherapy (Honours)

For the award of Honours, students must carry out an independent research project under the guidance of their supervisor, and will write up their results in a format suitable for examination, for example a research thesis or a combination of a journal manuscript and extended literature and methods reviews.

## Honours Progression

Part G of the [Honours in Bachelor Awards Policy](#), which deals with progression. Clauses 31 and 32 are relevant to the embedded honours program:

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

(32) The provisions of policies applying to withdrawal, leave of absence, special consideration, and academic misconduct in undergraduate degrees apply

The due date for the submission of Honours theses varies across the three clinical health science programs due to differing course structures and timing of clinical placements. Due dates for each program are published each year in the honours units learning guide for their first honours unit studied in year 3, 400944 Evidence-based Practice (Advanced). Students therefore have a minimum of one-year advanced notice of their required due date.

## Extension for Submission of Thesis

Part H, Clauses 34-36 of the [Honours in Bachelors Award Policy](#), outlines the procedure for applying for an extension:

(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 Special

Consideration 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.

Note, in relation to the above policy, in the School of Science and Health does not have one honours coordinator for these three honours programs, and therefore students apply for the extension via the special consideration application process which goes to the unit coordinator for the unit under which their thesis is submitted. This staff member follows through as per the policy. Students are advised that late submission may impact on their graduation timeline, registration with the Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency (AHPRA) and/or the ability to compete for HDR scholarships. In the case of physiotherapy students, registration with AHPRA and allocation processes for employment with NSW Health may also be impacted.

## **Lodgment of Thesis**

Thesis submission will be specified in the learning guide. Soft-bound copies or electronic submission are options available to each program.

## **Key Dates and Assessment Information**

All key dates are included in the learning guides of the Honours units pertaining to each program. Assessment details and marking rubrics are included in the learning guides of the Honours coursework and thesis units.

## **Examination Procedures**

The [Honours in Bachelor Award Policy](#), Part I – Examination, Clauses 37-42 outlines the examination process:

(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.

Note, in the School of Science and Health, it may be the Unit Coordinator of the honours submission unit, in conjunction with the Director of Academic Program or Program Honours contact, overseeing actions pertaining to clause 41 as there is not one School Honours Coordinator.

## **Honours Award Levels**

The [Honours in Bachelor Awards Policy](#), Part J, Clauses 43-47, outlines the award levels and relevant procedures:

(43) Honours for end-on, embedded and excellence-in-attainment programs is awarded using the following: 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.

In the three, embedded clinical health science honours programs, the final honours level is determined by the mark of the thesis only. Each approved course document outlines the determination of the honours level based on the thesis mark. The Honours Unit coordinator of the unit under which theses are submitted, is responsible for ensuring all marks are collected and entered correctly in marking spreadsheets and/or gradebooks. The collation of all reports, marks, and other information is required for the determination of the final Honours level as per policy.

Students eligible for the University Medal are also determined at this final point in line with Part K – University Medal section in the [Graduation Policy](#).

The standard [Review of Grade Policy](#) applies to all units of the honours program and is outlined, along with appeals against level of honours, in Part L, Clause 49 and 50, and Part M, Clauses 51-53, of the [Honours in Bachelor Awards Policy](#).