

Honours Courses Development and Administration Policy

Section 1 - Purpose and Scope

(1) This Policy defines approved processes to develop and administer the University's Bachelor Honours degree courses, so as to meet Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Level 8 (Bachelor Honours) specifications, and to support consistent approaches to, and high quality delivery of, Honours courses across the University. This Policy should be read in conjunction with both the University's [Rules Relating to Awards -Rule 5 - Honours Awards \(Separate Year\)](#), and the suite of Bachelor Honours Specific Awards Rules.

Scope

(2) This Policy applies to:

- a. one-year (end on) full-time equivalent (96 credit point) Honours courses that normally follow a three year Bachelor degree or equivalent (hereafter referred to as One Year Honours Courses);
- b. four year full time equivalent (384 credit point) courses where a Bachelor Honours Degree may be awarded (hereafter referred to as Embedded Honours Courses); and
- c. three year full time equivalent (288 credit points) courses for a graduate only entry Bachelor degree where an Honours may be awarded (hereafter referred to as Graduate Entry Embedded Honours Courses).

Section 2 - Definitions

(3) For the purpose of this Policy refer to the [Definitions \(Academic\) Policy](#).

Section 3 - Policy Statement

Part A - Course Development

(4) Honours degrees at Southern Cross University may be structured as:

- a. a one year (end on) full time equivalent (96 credit points) course leading to the qualification of Bachelor Honours degree, which normally follows successful completion of a three (3) year Bachelor degree course (or equivalent);
- b. a four year full time equivalent (384 credit point) course leading to the qualification of Bachelor Honours degree, in which the Honours component is embedded in the award and is equivalent to one year full time (96 credit points) equivalent study; or
- c. three year full time equivalent (288 points) courses for a graduate only entry Bachelor degree where an Honours may be awarded.

(5) Honours courses should contain a mix of advanced theory, professional training (where appropriate), research

training, and a research project leading to a thesis. In some fields, for example, the creative and performing arts, an alternative form of appropriate scholarly presentation may be appropriate.

(6) During their Honours course, students must be required 'to plan and execute project work and/or a piece of research and scholarship with some independence' (AQF, 2013, p.51).

(7) Students will normally be required to provide a seminar on their thesis.

(8) In developing Honours courses, Schools must ensure equivalency of proposed learning outcomes to those prescribed for Level 8, Bachelor Honours awards in the AQF.

(9) Schools must identify the particular purposes and characteristics that distinguish their Honours courses from their other undergraduate and postgraduate coursework courses.

(10) Courses will include components commensurate with the University's Graduate Attributes and course learning outcomes.

One Year Honours Courses

(11) Schools may develop One Year Honours courses which:

- a. equip students to undertake professional work; and/or
- b. provide pathways for further learning and research training.

(12) All units must be Level 8 units, with a minimum of 48 credit points at Advanced level.

(13) The structure of One Year Honours courses will normally require completion of 96 credit points of study incorporating:

- a. a minimum of 12 credit points which may be across more than one unit of study of research principles and methodology coursework; and
- b. a thesis or research project of an appropriate discipline-specific length.

Embedded Honours Courses

(14) Schools may develop Embedded Honours Courses and Graduate Entry Embedded Honours Courses which:

- a. are typically embedded as an additional year;
- b. equip students to undertake professional work; and/or
- c. provide pathways for further learning and research training.

(15) All Honours units must be Level 8 units, with a minimum of 48 credit points at Advanced level.

(16) The structure of four year (embedded) Honours courses will normally require completion of 384 credit points of study incorporating:

- a. a minimum of 12 credit points which may be across more than one unit of study of research principles and methodology coursework at Level 8;
- b. additional independent research assessment in Level 8 units; and
- c. independent research components such as a thesis (or equivalent) of no less than 48 credit points which could comprise, but is not limited to, one or a combination of the following:
 - i. a thesis or research project of an appropriate discipline-specific length;

- ii. a body of independent research incorporating papers of 3,000 to 5,000 words in Level 8 units commensurate with (16)c.i above;
- iii. a capstone report based on work in an applied, professional setting, and equivalent to (16)c.i or (16)c.ii.

Part B - Course Administration

One Year Honours and Graduate Entry Embedded Honours/Embedded Honours with a Thesis component of 48 credit points or more.

Supervision

(17) Supervisors must be appointed in accordance with Rule 5 - Honours Awards (One Year) Section 3.

(18) A Candidate-supervisor Agreement form must be filled in by both the supervisor and the student and submitted to the Honours coordinator by no later than Week 4 of the teaching period in which the Honours candidate commenced.

(19) Supervisors must provide regular and systematic feedback to students on all elements of their performance in the Honours course as it proceeds. Candidates must maintain regular contact with their supervisor(s).

(20) Perceived breaches of the agreement expressed in the Candidate-supervisor Agreement will be dealt with in the first instance by discussion between the supervisor and candidate. If the matter cannot be resolved satisfactorily, reference will then be made to the Head of School.

(21) The Honours coordinators and academic staff involved in supervising Honours candidates will normally be active researchers and have a higher degree by research (or equivalent research or professional experience).

(22) An associate supervisor will be appointed by the Head of School to provide back-up and support commensurate with a supervisor's responsibilities if a supervisor becomes unable to act. Associate supervisors may also be appointed in cases where a Head of School seeks to provide additional support for the student and/or to facilitate and support staff development in research training.

(23) Where appropriate, qualified non-academics, such as experts or professionals from industry may be involved and/or appointed as associate supervisors.

(24) Guidelines on best practice in supervision, approved by School Boards, must be provided to supervisors and students. Schools must also ensure all Honours courses have an induction process which engages all students and their supervisors.

(25) Where directed to do so by the relevant Head of School, Supervisors must attend the supervisor workshops conducted for Research Higher Degree supervisors by the University.

(26) Supervisors must familiarise themselves with, and adhere to, relevant national codes concerning research practice and SCU policies concerning research conduct.

(27) The Head of School/College will ensure that, in cross-institutional supervisory or assessment arrangements or where non-academic staff members are associate supervisors, the person or agency is provided with the opportunity to sign an SCU Confidentiality Agreement.

(28) Honours Course Coordinators and Supervisors must ensure that all Honours research adheres to the appropriate University procedures for research ethics clearance

Provision of Information

(29) Schools must provide students with information contained in an approved Unit Information Guide, following standard Southern Cross University format, and a Handbook or other appropriate publication, including no less than the following items:

- a. overview of admission criteria;
- b. length of Honours course;
- c. where examples of Honours theses can be found;
- d. key contacts;
- e. administration of the Honours course, including information about co-ordination and committees, such as advisory committees;
- f. aims, nature and benefits of the Honours course;
- g. details of staff interests;
- h. the roles and responsibilities of supervisors;
- i. expectations about supervisors with regards to student contact, feedback on drafts and other relevant matters;
- j. students' responsibilities and references to relevant Course Rules, including Specific Award Rules, Policies and Procedures;
- k. grievance procedures;
- l. facilities, resources and support available for students;
- m. course requirements and assessment procedures;
- n. ethics clearance and associated procedures;
- o. expectations regarding academic integrity;
- p. thesis requirements (including style guide and word limit);
- q. information on the criteria and guidelines used for decisions concerning assessment for the Honours course;
- r. weightings of the various assessment components;
- s. key dates, including submission dates for assessment items, including theses;
- t. application dates for major scholarships; and
- u. guidelines for such activities as laboratory, field or studio work.

Course Monitoring and Evaluation

(30) Schools must establish a formal organisational and administrative structure for the Honours course (for example, Honours coordinators or Honours committees), for such matters as:

- a. reviewing and evaluating thesis proposals;
- b. making recommendations on course related proposals, such as research proposals;
- c. monitoring the structure and coherence of the Honours course offerings;
- d. monitoring the effectiveness of student supervision;
- e. monitoring assessment procedures and learning outcomes; and
- f. course evaluation and improvement.

Assessment

(31) Examinations of Theses must be in accordance with Rule 5 - Honours Awards (One Year) Section 4.

(32) Schools Boards must approve and forward to Academic Board for noting, explicit criteria for the assessment of theses, including definitions of performance at the various grades of Honours.

- (33) Examiners should be active researchers and have a higher degree by research (or equivalent research or professional experience).
- (34) All examiners must be provided with a clear statement of the criteria and standards.
- (35) The assessment of a thesis will require written reports on the thesis incorporating a statement of the reasons for the grade or mark awarded to the thesis.
- (36) Students must be informed of the result for each assessment component contributing to the Honours award.
- (37) Schools must maintain written records of the criteria used for grading Honours performance to facilitate comparability from year to year. Written records of the considerations entered into in reaching final grades for students must be maintained.
- (38) Schools will endeavour to finalise Honours grades for students as early as possible to facilitate consideration of applications for Australian Postgraduate Awards etc. Final grades should preferably be released by 30 November each year.
- (39) The following process applies when discrepancies arise in Honours assessments between thesis markers:
- a. the mark may be contested as inappropriate by the student or the supervisor where there is a variation of more than one Honours band;
 - b. if a mark is contested, the Honours coordinator, will consider the grading;
 - c. where appropriate, the Honours coordinator, may decide on a remark by a different examiner — usually external;
 - d. if the student is then not satisfied with the Class of Honours awarded, they may appeal in accordance with the Academic Board Appeals Policy-Students
- (40) Where the Honours coordinator is also a supervisor, the Director of Research Higher Degrees in the School/College will participate in processes relating to (39)b, (39)c, and (39)d.
- (41) Students may query assessment results in accordance with the Rules Relating to Awards Rule 3.

Status and Details

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