

# Program Design Procedure

## Purpose

This procedure specifies the requirements for the design and structure of coursework programs. It aims to ensure that the design and structure of programs provide students with a coherent education experience which supports their achievement of the program learning outcomes and graduate capabilities.

## Scope

The procedure applies to:

- Coursework programs, including Sub-Bachelor, Bachelor Pass, Bachelor Honours, Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma, Masters (Coursework) and Masters (Extended)
- Specialisations and courses within these programs
- Coursework elements of higher degree research programs.

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## Program and course design

### 1. Overarching design considerations

All programs will:

- 1.1. Incorporate the design elements specified in section 3.1.1 of the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA) [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#) and any relevant professional accreditation and inherent requirements, and be approved and reviewed in accordance with the UNSW program approval process.
- 1.2. Have a structure, design, learning outcomes and duration (expressed in units of credit) that are consistent with the [Australian Qualifications Framework \(AQF\) qualification specification](#) for the program, and are appropriate for the student cohort.
- 1.3. Specify the program entry requirements in accordance with the [Admissions Policy](#) and [Admission to Coursework Programs Procedure](#), the pathways for students into and between qualifications, and the arrangements for recognising prior learning for admission or credit/exemptions in accordance with the [Recognition of Prior Learning \(Coursework Programs\) Procedure](#).

### 2. The Integrated Curriculum Framework

The elements of the [Integrated Curriculum Framework \(ICF\)](#) will be incorporated into the design of programs and courses to ensure coherence across curriculum elements and alignment with program learning outcomes and graduate capabilities.

- 2.1. All programs will maintain a map, which demonstrates alignment between the ICF elements. The key elements of the ICF are:
  - a) A clear rationale and purpose for the program.
  - b) A set of learning outcomes (program, specialisation and course) that align with the university's strategic intent, as expressed in the [UNSW Strategy: Progress for All](#), and desired graduate capabilities, the program purpose and the relevant AQF qualification specification.
  - c) Program components (specialisations and courses), course components and assessments, and evidence of alignment between all components.
  - d) A composition and sequence of courses which supports student progression from foundational to more advanced disciplinary knowledge and skills.
  - e) An evaluation process that provides data on the extent to which students have achieved the learning outcomes, which is used to evaluate and enhance the quality of the program and course.

Advice and support on the ICF and curriculum mapping are available from the Office of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) and the [Teaching Gateway](#).

### 3. Units of credit and workload expectations

- 3.1. Program structure is based on units of credit (UOC). Typically, courses are 6 UOC.
- 3.2. Normal workload expectations for each UOC are 25 hours including class contact hours, online and other learning activities, preparation and time spent on all assessable work.
- 3.3. Full-time enrolment for one year is defined as 48 UOC, which equates to 1.0 Equivalent Full Time Study Load (EFTSL).

### 4. Work integrated learning

- 4.1. All Bachelor (Pass and Embedded Honours), Masters (Coursework) and Masters (Extended) programs will provide opportunities for students to undertake work integrated learning (WIL). Double degrees will provide an opportunity for students to undertake WIL in at least one of the constituent programs. For further information on the design, delivery and quality assurance of WIL refer to the [Work Integrated Learning Procedure](#).

## 5. Research and research integrated learning

A research component is an AQF requirement in a Bachelor (Honours) (AQF-8) and Masters by Coursework (AQF-9), including Masters (Extended) programs. The research component is a distinguishing feature of these programs.

Research is typically recognised as a research-based project, a capstone learning experience, or a piece of scholarship. It is important to recognise that research in the Honours and coursework Masters programs do not require a graduate to have contributed to new knowledge. The project, capstone or piece of scholarship may synthesise existing knowledge to draw conclusions in a professional or discipline context.

- 5.1. Where research or a research-integrated learning activity is included in a program or course, the curriculum will be designed to prepare students for the activity by the provision of research training commensurate with the depth, complexity and expectations of the research being undertaken.
- 5.2. Where research is a required element of the program, it must be clearly identifiable by specific courses, or by a significant student assessable item, e.g. a portfolio, that satisfies the program's definition of research.
- 5.3. Where the activity involves research it must comply with the [Code of Conduct and Values](#) and the principles and responsibilities set out in the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#), as well as the [Human Research Ethics Procedure](#) and/or [Animal Research Ethics Procedure](#), where appropriate.

## 6. Comparability of experience and learning outcomes

- 6.1. Where the program or course will be offered across different locations, delivery modes, times or teaching periods, the program, courses and activities will be designed to ensure that students have comparable experiences and learning outcomes, except where additional requirements are imposed as part of accreditation or contractual requirements.
- 6.2. Where programs are designed in collaboration with a third party or designed to be delivered by a third party, they must comply with all UNSW policies.

## Single degree undergraduate coursework programs

### 7. Sub-Bachelor programs

All Sub-Bachelor programs must be aligned to the specifications for skills, knowledge, and application of skills and knowledge for the relevant qualification type in the AQF.

At UNSW, all Sub-Bachelor programs will be designed as either:

- a) a program designed to articulate to a higher-level qualification,
- b) a qualification that can be taken with a concurrent enrolment in a higher qualification, and/or
- c) an exit qualification.

Undergraduate Certificates will be designed to qualify students with knowledge and skills for further study, professional up-skilling, employment, and participation in lifelong learning. Undergraduate Certificates will be designed so that upon completion they equip students with foundational skills sufficient to articulate into a program at AQF Level 5, 6, or 7.

- 7.1. An Undergraduate Certificate will be 24 units of credit (UOC). The Undergraduate Certificate is not located at a single qualification level. It must consist of courses that belong to an existing program at AQF Level 5, 6, or 7.
- 7.2. Upon successful completion, students must be provided with an option to articulate into a higher-level program (subject to meeting entry or articulation requirements) or to graduate with a standalone award.
- 7.3. Diploma programs will be a minimum of 48 UOC.
- 7.4. Associate Degree programs will be a minimum of 96 UOC.
- 7.5. Students may be awarded a Sub-Bachelor award upon early exit from a higher-level undergraduate program. This pathway is only eligible to students where recommended by the university.

## 8. Bachelor (Pass) programs

The purpose of the Bachelor (Pass) Degree qualification type is to qualify individuals who apply a broad and coherent body of knowledge in a range of contexts to undertake professional work and as a pathway for further learning. Bachelor (Pass) Degree qualifications are located at level 7 of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF-7). Bachelor (Pass) Degree qualifications must be designed and accredited to enable graduates to demonstrate the learning outcomes expressed as knowledge, skills and the application of knowledge and skills specified in the AQF-7 criteria and the Bachelor Degree descriptor.

- 8.1. A Bachelor (Pass) degree program will be 144 units of credit (UOC) (except for 8.2) and consists of a disciplinary component, a Cross-Disciplinary (XD) component and free electives.
- 8.2. A Bachelor (Pass) program can exceed 144 UOC in cases where additional experience is justified. Bachelor (Pass) programs that exceed 144 UOC increase the size of their disciplinary component and maintain the same Cross-Disciplinary (XD) component and free elective UOC of a Bachelor (Pass).

### Disciplinary Component

The disciplinary component of a program comprises the courses in the area of study of the degree that must be completed to fulfil the discipline learning requirements of the program, and where appropriate, accreditation requirements. The disciplinary component is unique to each program, and relevant only to students in that program (notwithstanding double degrees). Program authorities have discretion, within the disciplinary component, to structure the program as provides the best student learning outcomes. This discretion falls within the guard rails provided below.

- 8.3. The disciplinary component of a 144 UOC Bachelor (Pass) program must be either 96 UOC or 120 UOC.
- 8.4. The disciplinary component may contain required courses, prescribed elective courses and disciplinary specialisations.
- 8.5. The disciplinary component does not contain free electives.
- 8.6. All required elements of the disciplinary component must be possible to complete within the disciplinary component UOC. Optional elements, such as optional majors or optional minors, may require the use of free electives to complete.

### Disciplinary Specialisations

A specialisation is a defined area of disciplinary study within a program that is coherent, structured, and distinct from any other specialisation offered in that program. It is constituted by a purposeful grouping of courses that collectively define a unique body of knowledge and skills. In Undergraduate (UG) programs, specialisations are referred to as majors and minors.

Disciplinary majors are used to further define a sub-discipline, especially in programs where the program itself may have broad program learning outcomes.

Disciplinary minors are designed to either broaden disciplinary knowledge through introductory, self-contained study, or further deepen it through advanced courses that may include entry requirements. The purpose of each disciplinary minor should be clearly communicated within the program structure so students understand its intent and focus.

- 8.7. The disciplinary component can include a major (or majors). A major will be a minimum of 48 UOC. All courses, including all course prerequisites, must reside within the major.
- 8.8. All majors within the disciplinary component of a program must be the same size (UOC).
- 8.9. Majors must be constructed so that they demonstrate unique specialisation learning outcomes, i.e. no two students should be able to obtain different majors with the same selection of courses.  
  
Where two similar majors are contemplated, the program authority is encouraged to explore minors as the secondary distinction.
- 8.10. The level of courses in a major must be approximately one-third at each of Levels 1, 2 and 3 across the 3 years of study.
- 8.11. The disciplinary component can include a minor (or minors) of 24, 30 or 36 UOC.
- 8.12. All minors within the disciplinary component of a program must be the same size (UOC).

- 8.13. Where any two majors have the same name, or any two minors have the same name, they must have identical structure and course requirements, irrespective of the program in which they are offered.

### **Cross-Disciplinary Component**

The Cross-Disciplinary (XD) component is a feature of all UNSW single Bachelor (Pass) and Bachelor (Honours) programs. It is designed so that students complement the disciplinary study in their program, with cross-disciplinary study through the selection of either individual courses or in a coherent manner, through XD majors and minors.

- 8.14. Programs will include a XD component of 12 UOC.
- 8.15. Courses satisfying the XD requirement must have a subject code that different to every course listed in the program's disciplinary component and all majors contained within the disciplinary component.
- 8.16. Program rules can specify subject codes for specific eligibility or ineligibility as XD where such an exception aligns with enhancing students' ability to broaden their experience outside their program's primary area(s) of study.

Example 1, specific inclusion: a single course in a subject code might appear in the disciplinary component, and the program authority makes the case that excluding all courses in that subject code is detrimental to the students' ability to broaden their experience.

Example 2, specific exclusion: although a subject code is not mentioned in the disciplinary component, the program authority may deem another subject code to be too similar to the disciplinary component for a student to broaden their knowledge or skills.

### **Cross-Disciplinary Specialisations**

Cross-Disciplinary (XD) Specialisations are an optional component of programs which allow students to satisfy their 12 UOC XD component requirement and also complete a major or minor. The additional UOC required to complete XD majors or minors can be drawn from the student's disciplinary component or free electives.

- 8.17. The XD component can include an optional major (or majors). A major will be 48 UOC, comprise courses distributed over Levels 1 – 3 (see clause 8.10), and must ensure the student satisfies the 12 UOC XD course requirement for their program (see clause 8.14 - 8.16). All courses, including all course prerequisites, must reside within the major.
- 8.18. The XD component can include an optional minor (or minors). A minor will be 24 UOC and must ensure the student satisfies the 12 UOC Cross-Disciplinary course requirement for their program (see clause 8.14 - 8.16). All courses, including all course prerequisites, must reside within the minor.
- 8.19. Where any two majors have the same name, or any two minors have the same name, they must have identical structure and course requirements, irrespective of the program in which they are offered.

### **Free Electives**

The free elective requirements of a program are designed to enable students to choose further disciplinary or cross-disciplinary study, or any combination of the two.

- 8.20. Outside the disciplinary component (96 or 120 UOC) and Cross-Disciplinary component (12 UOC), the remaining UOC (12 or 36 UOC) must be unrestricted free electives.
- 8.21. Free electives can be counted toward optional disciplinary and XD Majors and Minors.

### **Other requirements**

- 8.22. No more than 72 UOC of Level 1 courses can be counted towards the completion of a Bachelor (Pass) program.

## **9. Bachelor (Honours) programs**

Bachelor (Honours) programs are level 8 in the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF-8). Graduates of an Honours program will have advanced knowledge and skills in their chosen discipline. The AQF states that the defining difference between a Pass and Honours degree is "the development of advanced knowledge and the requirement for research".

Honours (Embedded) programs integrate the Honours components (research and advanced knowledge) within a single undergraduate program that spans AQF levels 7 and 8.

Honours (Separate Year) programs are undertaken after completion of a Bachelor (Pass) degree in a

cognate discipline and are AQF level 8.

TEQSA does not support the awarding of Honours to a student who completes the same program of study as a Pass degree student. Students in Bachelor (Pass) programs who achieve meritorious performance may instead receive recognition as outlined in the [Assessment Implementation Procedure](#).

### **Research Requirements**

The research requirements must satisfy the conditions for research in **Section 5**. In addition,

- 9.1. The research requirement will be a minimum of 12 Units of Credit (UOC) of separate research courses that involve the planning and executing of a piece of research or a professional project undertaken with some independence; and
- 9.2. In addition to the research UOC the program must include training in research methodologies, research ethics, and academic writing skills relevant to the discipline. This training may be embedded in the program in dedicated courses designed for this purpose, or may be included within learning activities across the program.

### **Bachelor (Honours) - Embedded programs**

- 9.3. Bachelor (Honours) - Embedded programs will typically be 192 UOC when undertaken as a single degree. It can exceed this duration in keeping with 8.2.
- 9.4. A Bachelor (Honours) - Embedded program will comprise Bachelor (Pass) degree components as specified in **Section 8** with the following differences:
  - The size of the disciplinary component must be either 144 UOC or 168 UOC (Bachelor (Pass) Disciplinary component plus 48 UOC Honours);
  - Progressive development of Honours-level, advanced knowledge;
  - Mandatory research requirement of at least 12 UOC within the disciplinary component.
- 9.5. Students may be required to take higher-level courses relative to Bachelor (Pass) students, where different levels are available.

### **Admission and Progression Requirements**

- 9.6. Typically, students are admitted directly into a Bachelor (Honours) - Embedded program upon initial admission.
- 9.7. To remain in the program, students will be required to continue to meet the progression requirements specified in the approved program rules. Progression requirements may include the requirement to satisfy a stage gate or achieve an overall Weighted Average Mark (WAM).
- 9.8. A student who does not meet the progression requirements will be required to transfer to an appropriate Bachelor (Pass) program.
- 9.9. Some programs may admit students to a Bachelor (Pass) program and then permit qualified students to transfer with credit to a Bachelor (Honours) program at an appropriate point throughout their study.
- 9.10. No more than 72 UOC of Level 1 courses can be counted towards the completion of a Bachelor (Honours) - Embedded program.
- 9.11. Embedded Honours programs must require students to complete a sufficient volume of advanced learning to merit the award of an AQF-8 degree. This evidence might include the Honours research component (see below); a selection of advanced courses, usually in the final 48 UOC of the program; or other program requirements commensurate with advanced learning, skills or experience.

### **Bachelor (Honours) - Separate-Year programs**

- 9.12. Bachelor (Honours) – Separate-Year programs will be 48 UOC and will have a research requirement of at least 12 UOC.
- 9.13. Coursework that comprises the remainder of the program must lead to the attainment of AQF-8 advanced learning outcomes.

### **Admission and Progression Requirements**

- 9.14. Typically, students are admitted into a Bachelor (Honours) – Separate-Year program following the

completion of a Bachelor (Pass) degree in the same discipline.

- 9.15. Admission criteria may include the attainment of a specific WAM in the Bachelor (Pass) degree to demonstrate ability to achieve AQF-8 learning outcomes.

#### **Specialisations**

- 9.16. Bachelor (Honours) – Separate-Year programs may include specialisations to indicate the specific sub-discipline.

## **Single degree postgraduate coursework programs**

The advanced knowledge and skills expected at postgraduate level require applicants to have completed an undergraduate qualification or possess equivalent professional experience.

### **10. General Principles**

- 10.1. A postgraduate coursework program is focused entirely within the discipline, with no Cross-Disciplinary component.
- 10.2. Elective choice consists of discipline electives.

### **11. Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma programs**

Graduate Certificates and Graduate Diplomas are both level 8 qualifications in the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF-8). Both have the same descriptors in the AQF, with the difference being volume-of-learning. The AQF descriptor for these programs is that graduates can apply advanced knowledge and skills in a range of contexts to undertake professional or highly skilled work and as a pathway for further learning. Graduate Certificates and Graduate Diplomas have no research requirement.

A Graduate Certificate or a Graduate Diploma may be a stand-alone (non-articulated) program, an exit-only program, or part of an articulated (nested) suite of programs, as specified in **Section 14 Articulated postgraduate coursework programs**.

- 11.1. Graduate Certificate programs will be 24 Units of Credit (UOC). Graduate Diploma programs will be 48 UOC.
- 11.2. Coursework in Graduate Certificates and Graduate Diploma programs must lead to the attainment of AQF-8 advanced learning outcomes. Graduate Certificate or Graduate Diplomas may include no more than 12 UOC of content below AQF Level 8.

#### **Admission Criteria and Advanced Standing**

- 11.3. The minimum entry qualification for a Graduate Certificate or Graduate Diploma is a 3-year Bachelor (Pass) qualification in any discipline.
- 11.4. Applicants without a Bachelor qualification may be considered for entry to a Graduate Certificate based on a minimum of six years relevant professional experience.
- 11.5. Advanced standing, leading to a smaller volume-of-learning, is not available for Graduate Certificate or Graduate Diplomas, except for specifically articulated (nested) programs (see **Section 12 Admission Criteria & Advanced Standing**).

#### **Specialisations**

- 11.6. Graduate Certificates and Graduate Diplomas may include one or more specialisations. Where included, specialisations will be a minimum 24 UOC.
- 11.7. All specialisations within a Graduate Certificate or Graduate Diploma must be the same UOC.
- 11.8. Specialisations must be constructed so that they demonstrate unique specialisation learning outcomes, i.e. no two students can obtain different specialisations with the same selection of courses.

### **12. Masters (Coursework) programs**

Located at level 9 of the AQF, the purpose of the Masters Degree by Coursework qualification is to prepare individuals who possess advanced knowledge and specialised skills in a specific field of study to engage in professional practice and further academic inquiry.

- 12.1. Masters (Coursework) programs will be structured at 48, 72, or 96 Units of Credit (UOC). Programs of longer duration are permitted in multiples of 24 UOC, where clear reasoning and rationale is provided. The volume of learning of the Masters is determined by the prior learning and/or experience of applicants as specified in Table 1 and Table 2.
- 12.2. All Master (Coursework) programs, regardless of their purpose or duration, must contain at least 36 UOC of courses approved for level 9 AQF qualifications, including the research component.
- 12.3. Masters programs that are longer than 48 UOC will be permitted to use courses approved for lower AQF level programs (including Bachelor programs), subject to clause 12.2.

#### Admission Criteria & Advanced Standing

Longer programs may offer advanced standing to suitably qualified applicants to shorten the program. While minimum admission standards are compulsory, offering advanced standing in a program is optional.

Table 1 and Table 2 define the minimum entry requirements and maximum permissible advanced standing for Masters (Coursework) programs, based on students' prior qualifications and/or relevant work experience. They demonstrate how entry criteria and the application of advanced standing can affect and reduce the overall program length, in accordance with AQF and TEQSA guidelines.

- 12.4. The minimum entry requirement for a 96 UOC Masters is a 3-year Bachelor (Pass) qualification in any discipline.
- 12.5. The minimum entry requirement for a 72 UOC Masters is one item from list 1, Table 2.
- 12.6. The minimum entry requirement for a 48 UOC Masters is one item from list 2, Table 2.
- 12.7. Table 1 and Table 2 outline the maximum amount of advanced standing that may be offered in a Masters (Coursework) program.
- 12.8. Advanced Standing may only be offered in multiples of exactly 24 UOC.
- 12.9. Advanced Standing and/or Recognition of Prior Learning must not reduce a Masters (Coursework) degree below 48 UOC. Courses where the student can demonstrate they have previously completed the course learning outcomes, can be substituted but not credited in the final 48 UOC of a program.
- 12.10. Applicants with no previous tertiary education must demonstrate a minimum of six years of relevant work experience and may only be admitted to a Masters (Coursework) program via a nested Graduate Certificate.

**Table 1 Minimum Admission Criteria and Advanced Standing limits for Masters (Coursework) Programs.**

<b>Masters Degree Length</b>	<b>Minimum Admission Criteria (Compulsory)</b>	<b>Maximum Advanced Standing Limits</b>
<b>96 UOC (2 years)</b>	<b>3 year Bachelor (Pass) Degree</b>	<b>Up to 48 UOC of advanced standing may be granted.</b> 24 UOC may be awarded from a selection of 1 option from <i>List 1</i> 48 UOC may be awarded from a selection of 1 option from <i>List 2</i>
<b>72 UOC (1.5 years)</b>	Must choose at least <b>1 option from List 1</b>	<b>Only 24 UOC of advanced standing may be granted.</b> 24 UOC may be awarded for 1 option from <i>List 2</i>
<b>48 UOC (1 year)</b>	Must choose at least <b>1 option from List 2</b>	<b>No Advanced Standing allowed</b>

**Table 2 List of UNSW entry and Advanced Standing criteria for Masters (Coursework) programs.**

	<b>Credit equivalence used for Admission and Advanced Standing</b>
<b>List 1 (24 UOC)</b>	<i>Criteria that can grant up to 24 UOC of credit</i> 1. Cognate 3-year Bachelor (Pass) degree 2. Non-cognate 4-year Bachelor (Pass) degree 3. Non-cognate Bachelor (Honours) degree

	4. Cognate Graduate Certificate 5. Non-cognate Graduate Diploma 6. Any Bachelor degree plus 2 years relevant work experience
<b>List 2 (48 UOC)</b>	<i>Criteria that can grant up to 48 UOC of credit</i> 1. Cognate 4-year Bachelor degree 2. Cognate Honours Degree 3. Cognate Graduate Diploma 4. Any degree listed 1-5 in list 1, plus 2 years relevant work experience

### Specialisations

A specialisation is a defined disciplinary focus within a program that is coherent, structured, and clearly differentiated from all other specialisations offered in the same program. It is constituted by a purposeful grouping of courses that collectively define a unique body of knowledge and skills.

12.11. Where included, specialisations will be a minimum 24 UOC.

12.12. All specialisations within a Masters must be the same size (UOC).

12.13. Specialisations must be constructed so that they demonstrate unique specialisation learning outcomes, i.e. no two students should be able to obtain different specialisations with the same selection of courses.

12.14. When program rules allow for completion of more than one specialisation, the second or subsequent specialisation must require students to complete 18 UOC that is not course shared with any other specialisation.

### Research Requirement

The research and research training components of a Masters by Coursework must satisfy the conditions for research in **Section 5**. In addition,

12.15. Masters (Coursework) programs (including Masters (Extended)) must incorporate a research component that represents a substantial body of individual work, meeting AQF Level 9 requirements.

12.16. Each program must include at least 6 UOC of research, undertaken through a substantial project, capstone experience, piece of scholarship, or professional practice project. Where smaller tasks are distributed across multiple courses, they must culminate in a cohesive final assessment (e.g. a portfolio of coherent work from a collection of courses completed through the Masters). Each student must provide an individually assessable contribution, including within group projects. These are minimum standards; program authorities may impose higher requirements.

12.17. In addition to the research UOC the program must include training in research methodologies, research ethics, and academic writing skills relevant to the discipline. This training may be embedded in the program in dedicated courses designed for this purpose, or may be included within learning activities across the program

12.18. Where the research component of a Masters (Coursework) program is designed to provide a pathway to doctoral study (AQF level 10), the program learning outcomes will align with the admission requirements for doctoral study at UNSW (see [Admission to Higher Degree Research Programs Procedure](#)).

### Masters (Extension)

Masters (Extension) programs are not a separate AQF qualification but are classified as Masters (Coursework) degrees. They represent an extension of an existing UNSW Masters (Coursework) program, incorporating a minimum of 24 additional UOC. Masters (Extension) programs typically enable students to deepen their expertise, explore additional areas of professional relevance, or undertake a more extensive capstone or research component.

A Masters (Extension) program will satisfy all the requirements of Masters (Coursework) programs. In addition,

- 12.19. Masters (Extension) programs must be built upon an existing UNSW Masters (Coursework) program and include a minimum of 24 additional UOC.

### **13. Masters (Extended) programs**

The purpose of the Masters Degree (Extended) qualification type is to equip individuals with advanced knowledge and highly specialised skills in a specific professional field, preparing them for advanced professional practice, leadership roles, and further academic inquiry. Similar to Masters (Coursework) qualifications, they sit at level 9 of the AQF. Existing examples of Masters (Extended) degrees include Juris Doctor, Master of Pharmacy, and Doctor of Medicine.

A Masters (Extended) program will satisfy all the requirements of Masters (Coursework) programs, including research, with the following differences:

- 13.1. Masters (Extended) programs will be a minimum 144 UOC following completion of a minimum 3-year Bachelor (Pass) qualification.

### **14. Articulated postgraduate coursework programs**

Articulated (nested) postgraduate coursework programs are a defined sequence of programs that provide a pathway to a higher-level qualification for students who may wish to take a staged approach to completing a Masters (Coursework) degree.

In articulated programs:

- 14.1. The learning outcomes for preliminary programs in the sequence must align with and form constituent parts of the learning outcomes of subsequent programs in the sequence.
- 14.2. The courses and requirements for completion of earlier programs in the sequence must be a subset of subsequent programs in the sequence.
- 14.3. Full credit is granted for courses completed in earlier programs in the sequence in accordance with the [Recognition of Prior Learning \(Coursework Programs\) Procedure](#).
- 14.4. Admission requirements of articulated Graduate Certificates and Graduate Diplomas must meet the minimum entry criteria (outlined in Table 1) of the length of every Masters degree they are nested within. While nested programs must meet the admission requirements outlined in Table 1, they are not required to have the same WAM or additional criteria that may be required for direct entry to the Masters (Coursework) program.
- 14.5. There are no articulation pathways for a 48 UOC Masters. With approval from the Academic Board, articulation to a 48 UOC Masters may be permitted if it can be demonstrated that the learning outcomes of the Graduate Certificate are at AQF level 9.

## **Double degree coursework programs**

### **15. General Principles**

Single programs can be combined to form a double degree. A double degree is the concurrent or sequential study of two award programs as one integrated and coherent program leading to two awards and two testamurs (one for each program). A double degree may combine two undergraduate awards, two postgraduate awards, or an undergraduate award with a postgraduate award.

- 15.1. Faculties may specify that the single program may only be undertaken concurrently with another program as a double degree (examples include the Bachelor of Laws and Bachelor of Education programs, which are not available as single standalone degrees).
- 15.2. Upon creation of a double degree, the Owning Faculty, will act as the Program Authority. Each single degree Owning Faculty retains responsibility for certifying that students have met the requirements of their respective degree.
- 15.3. Students must achieve the same learning outcomes as the two single award programs.

### **16. Sub-Bachelor programs**

- 16.1. Where an Undergraduate Diploma is combined with another single or double degree undergraduate program, a maximum of 12 UOC can be double counted toward the Undergraduate Diploma from the full undergraduate program, thereby reducing the overall UOC.

## **17. Double degree Bachelor (Pass) and Honours programs**

- 17.1. Where two Bachelor (Pass) and/or Bachelor (Honours) - Embedded programs are combined, the disciplinary component of each single degree must still be met. The Cross-Disciplinary requirement for individual degrees is met by completing the double degree.
- 17.2. Where the Bachelor (Pass) component of a double degree program offers Separate-Year Honours, a student may enrol in the Separate-Year Honours program before completing all program requirements of the double degree, provided they meet the admission requirements to the Separate-Year Honours program.
- 17.3. In principle, a student enrolled in a Separate Year Honours program will not be enrolled in another program at the same time. A student enrolled in a double degree program would normally be suspended in that program if they interrupt their study to undertake the Separate Year Honours program. In exceptional cases, and subject to the agreement of both Faculties, a student may be permitted to enrol simultaneously in both the Separate Year Honours program and another program.
- 17.4. No more than 96 UOC of Level 1 courses can be counted towards the completion of a double Bachelor (Pass and / or Honours) program.

## **18. Bachelor-Masters Double Degrees**

- 18.1. If an UG-PG double degree is only offered as a single integrated program, a minimum total duration of 240 UOC applies and is only permitted for programs with professional accreditation requirements.
- 18.2. Where there are progression requirements into the Masters program and a student does not meet these requirements, or when the student does not wish to complete the Masters component, they will be required to transfer into an appropriate Bachelors program.

## **19. Double Master degree programs**

- 19.1. The minimum length of a double Masters Degree is 96 UOC. No Advanced Standing or double counting is permitted in a 96 UOC double Masters Degree.
- 19.2. The entry requirements for a double degree must include and uphold the entry requirements of both programs, ensuring that all criteria from each component are fully satisfied.
- 19.3. When awarding advanced standing, any credit applied must align with the student's eligibility as if they were enrolled in each standalone program independently.

## **20. Graduation and testamurs**

- 20.1. Students who satisfactorily complete a double degree will receive two testamurs. Faculties may permit students to graduate in one of the component degree programs of a double degree after the relevant requirements have been met, or jointly after completion of both component programs.
- 20.2. Students may not graduate with an undergraduate diploma or any postgraduate award component of a double degree program prior to completing the undergraduate degree.

## **Courses**

### **21. Zero UOC courses**

A course is a planned and structured sequence of learning and teaching over one teaching period that allows a student to gain knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to an approved set of learning outcomes. Courses are assigned a unit of credit (UOC) value which indicates the course size, workload and contribution to meeting the requirements of a program. UOC are used in the calculation of student contribution charges and fees.

Zero UOC courses may be established in limited circumstances for operational purposes, where recording student enrolment or activity is needed without charging fees or counting units of credit towards their degree program.

Examples of use include:

- Assessing student progression e.g. stage-gates or hurdle assessment;
  - Administrative purposes e.g. providing insurance for students on work experience or activities off campus or outside normal teaching periods;
  - Recording elements of higher degree research programs;
  - Registering skill acquisition e.g. study skills, academic writing, on-boarding or research.
- 21.1. Student workload requirements for 0 UOC courses must be minimal, consisting of no more than 15 hours of university work per teaching period (semester or term). This includes class contact hours, independent study and assessments, but excludes work experience hours.
  - 21.2. Only a grading basis without numerical component can be used for 0 UOC courses, for example Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (SY / FL) or Competency-Based (CO/CN or CO/CN/CM).

## 22. Maturity rules

Maturity rules either advise or prevent students from enrolling in a course until they have completed a minimum UOC. Their function is to ensure students reach an appropriate level of knowledge, skills, or readiness before advancing to higher-level study, undertaking capstone or research components, or engaging in activities such as work placements. Maturity rules may be an appropriate type of prerequisite where multiple pathways lead to a course. They can help to support student success and provide clear checkpoints within a program's structure.

- 22.1. At the course level, a maturity rule prevents student enrolment in a course unless the maturity rule conditions are met. Course maturity rules must be an approved course enrolment requirement and enforced during course enrolment.
- 22.2. Course maturity rules cannot enforce a different maturity UOC requirement depending on the program in which a student is enrolled.
- 22.3. Course maturity rules can vary by student career (i.e. undergraduate, postgraduate).
- 22.4. At the program level, maturity rules are advisory only.

## 23. Course sharing and double counting

- 23.1. Course sharing occurs when a single course satisfies more than one program requirement. The course counts toward each applicable requirement, however its UOC are counted only once toward the total program UOC. Students must complete additional courses as needed to meet the total UOC requirement.

Limits to course sharing ensure a sufficient volume of learning by the student to warrant the award of an additional major or minor.

- 23.2. Course sharing between qualifications that comprise a double degree program is allowed. Substitution courses are electives.

**Bachelor (Pass) and Bachelor (Honours)**

Course sharing is permitted with the following restrictions:

- 23.3. To satisfy the requirements of a second or subsequent major a student must attain at least 36 UOC that is not course shared with any other major or minor declared by the student.
- 23.4. To satisfy the requirements of a second or subsequent minor a student must attain at least 18 UOC that is not course shared with any other major or minor declared by the student.
- 23.5. Substitution courses are chosen from electives within the disciplinary component.

**Double degree Bachelor (Pass) and Bachelor (Honours)**

Double counting is where a course counts towards discipline components across two programs and, as a result, the double degree volume of learning and therefore length of degree is reduced. Double counting can only be explicitly designed and approved in a double degree.

- 23.6. Exactly 24 UOC can be double counted in a double degree, reducing the total UOC by 24 UOC, provided the following conditions are met:
  - a) The sum of the disciplinary component of the two single programs is at least 240 UOC.
  - b) At least 24 UOC of courses are course shared in every valid combination of the programs requirements.  
e.g. every combination of required majors from both single programs that are included in the double degree offering can course share at least 24 UOC.
- 23.7. Once the double-counting limit is reached courses may still be shared between programs however additional prescribed electives from within the disciplinary component must be completed to meet the minimum UOC requirement for the other award.

**Double degree Masters Programs**

- 23.8. Exactly 24 UOC of double counting is permitted in a double Masters degree, provided the overall program does not fall below 96 UOC.
- 23.9. Double counting must be applied consistently at the program level and cannot be dependent on declared specialisations.

**24. Short courses and micro-credentials**

- 24.1. Short courses are not an award course and are therefore, for the purpose of this document, considered below AQF Level 8 content. For further information refer to the [Microcredentials and Short Courses Procedure](#).

## Quality assurance

**25. Quality assurance and enhancement of program design**

Faculties will ensure that processes are in place to assure and enhance the quality of the design of programs and courses, in accordance with the [Education Quality Policy](#) and [Academic Offerings Monitoring and Review Procedure](#).

**26. Roles and responsibilities of Program and Course Authorities**

- 26.1. The Program Authority is the position with overall responsibility for all aspects of a program. Responsibilities related to program design include:
  - Ensuring programs are designed in accordance with this Procedure and the principles of the ICF;
  - Specifying program rules and designating courses that meet Cross-Disciplinary (XD) requirements; and
  - Verify continuing compliance with the standards in the Higher Education Standards Framework, including programs designed in collaboration with another party or designed to be delivered by an approved UNSW Third Party Provider.

- 26.2. The Specialisation Authority is the position with overall responsibility for all aspects of a specialisation, major or minor. Responsibilities related to specialisation design include ensuring specialisations are designed in accordance with the procedure and the principles of the ICF.
- 26.3. The Course Authority is the position with overall responsibility for all aspects of a course. Responsibilities related to course design include ensuring courses are designed in accordance with this Procedure and the principles of the ICF.
- 26.4. Program, Specialisation and Course Authorities may delegate responsibilities to nominated staff or administrative units, where permitted by Schedule 1 of UNSW [Delegations Policy and Schedules](#).

## 27. Exemptions to clauses in this procedure

This procedure has been designed to accommodate the wide variety of programs at UNSW which serve a wide range of student and societal needs. The intent is to ensure programs deliver an excellent student experience, are academically coherent, compliant with all relevant regulatory and professional requirements, and are straightforward for staff to administer and advise on. In exceptional circumstances, such as professional accreditation requirements, the situation might arise where a program must be exempted from one or more clauses of this procedure.

- 27.1. Where a program cannot comply with one or more clauses of this procedure, or where the Program Authority determines that an exemption is necessary, a proposal must be submitted in accordance with [Academic Offerings Approval Procedure](#) clearly identifying the exemption and justification.
- 27.2. Where exemptions are granted, the specific exemption(s) and reasons justifying the exemption must be recorded by the approving governance body within the relevant program, specialisation or course record.
- 27.3. The validity of granted exemptions should be reassessed where the need or justification changes.

**Effective:** 1 January 2026      **Responsible:** Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic Quality  
**Lead:** Pro Vice-Chancellor Education  
**Version:** 3.0

## Appendix 1

### Legislative compliance

This procedure supports the University's compliance with the following legislation:

1. Australian Qualifications Framework 2013
2. *Disability Standards for Education 2005* (Cth)
3. *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* (Cth) (ESOS Act)
4. *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021* (Cth)
5. *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011* (Cth)

### Related documents

For the latest version of all UNSW Policies and Procedures visit [Governance – UNSW Policies](#)

[Academic Offerings Review Procedure](#)

[Academic Progression and Enrolment Policy](#)

[Academic Progression Procedure](#)

[Admission to Coursework Programs Procedure](#)

[Admissions Policy](#)

[Animal Research Ethics Procedure](#)

[Assessment Design Procedure](#)

[Assessment Implementation Procedure](#)

[Assessment Policy](#)

[Code of Conduct and Values](#)

[Education Quality Policy](#)

[Education Quality Procedure](#)

[Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#)

[Human Research Ethics Procedure](#)

[Integrated Curriculum Framework](#)

[myExperience Survey Procedure](#)

[Program Delivery Procedure](#)

[Recognition of Prior Learning \(Coursework Programs\) Procedure](#)

[Higher Education Standards Framework](#)

[University Medal Policy](#)

[University Medal Procedure](#)

[Work Integrated Learning Procedure](#)

Definitions and acronyms	
<b>Advanced Standing</b>	A status that reflects that a student's progression through their program has been advanced as a result of the granting of credit for prior learning. The granting of credit results in the reduction of the amount of learning required to achieve a qualification. The prior learning for which credit is granted may be formal, non-formal or informal/workplace learning. The credit granted may be specified or unspecified
<b>AQF</b>	Australian Qualifications Framework.
<b>Articulated programs</b>	A defined sequence of programs in which the courses and requirements for completion of earlier programs in the sequence are a subset of subsequent programs in the sequence, and full credit is granted for courses completed in earlier programs in the sequence.
<b>Articulation arrangement</b>	An approved agreement or structure that enables students to progress in a defined pathway from one qualification to another with credit. An articulation arrangement can be internal, through an articulated sequence of programs, or external.
<b>ASCED</b>	The <a href="#">Australian Standard Classification of Education (ASCED)</a> is a statistical classification for use in the collection and analysis of data on educational activity and attainment. ASCED has been developed as part of a national framework for the storage, exchange and dissemination of statistical and administrative data on educational activity in Australia.
<b>Cognate discipline</b>	A cognate discipline is a closely allied or related discipline, or defined branch of study or learning. The disciplines, branches of study or learning that are considered 'cognate' are commonly defined at the program or specialisation level for the purposes of assessing applicants for entry or for recognition of prior learning.
<b>Course Authority</b>	Position with overarching responsibility for all aspects of a course. The Course Authority may delegate responsibilities to nominated staff or administrative units, where permitted by Schedule 1 of UNSW Delegations.
<b>Course components</b>	A combination of aligned resources, activities, support, assessment, feedback and evaluation required for the full achievement of course, specialisation and program learning outcomes, and graduate capabilities.
<b>Course learning outcomes (CLOs)</b>	The knowledge, skills and their applications, behaviours and practices that students need to demonstrate to complete a course within a program. CLOs articulate with PLOs and SLOs (where relevant).
<b>Course rule</b>	Courses that are equivalent for the purposes of determining whether a student has satisfied a particular academic requirement of the program. For example, a student may be required to select either Mathematics 1A or Higher Mathematics 1A, and either course will count towards the same rule within the program requirements.
<b>Course sharing</b>	A course that satisfies more than one academic rule in a program (e.g. a course that meets the rules of two majors, or a major and a minor, or for different awards within a double degree program). A shared course can be counted only once towards unit of credit (UOC) requirements, where a course is shared the student must choose from prescribed electives within one of the relevant majors/minors to complete the normal total UOC. See <i>double counting</i> .
<b>Coursework</b>	A mode of study, which is largely, or wholly, constituted of courses involving directed learning, including face-to-face class instruction, online learning, distance learning, or combinations of these.
<b>Cross-Disciplinary component (XD)</b>	A component that exists in all undergraduate, single degree programs. It requires that a student completes at least 12 UOC of courses that count as Cross-Disciplinary. Where present, it must be satisfactorily completed to meet the requirements of the program.
<b>Disciplinary component</b>	Specified courses, or clusters of courses, in a specialised area of study that must be satisfactorily completed to meet the requirements of the program.

<b>Double counting</b>	A course that forms part of the disciplinary component requirements for two separate programs and can be counted towards both sets of rules and contribute fully to the overall UOC requirements of both programs. A course that is double counted reduces the total program length by the UOC of the course. <i>See course sharing.</i>
<b>Double degree</b>	The concurrent or sequential study of two award programs as one integrated and coherent program leading to two awards and two testamurs (one for each program). Double degree programs can be within a career (e.g. double degree masters programs) or cross-career (e.g. combined bachelors and masters programs).
<b>Equivalent Full-Time Study Load (EFTSL)</b>	A measure of study load for one year on a normal full-time basis. At UNSW 1 EFTSL is defined as 48 units of credit (UOC). A standard 6 unit of credit course would equate to 0.125 EFTSL.
<b>Elective</b>	A course that is not part of the core of a program, but which may be undertaken and credited towards the program.
<b>Embedded Honours program</b>	A program where the Honours components are studied as part of an integrated program along with the Pass degree requirements.
<b>Field of Education</b>	Field of Education (FoE) is an <a href="#">ASCED classification</a> . ASCED defines the FoE as the subject matter of an educational activity. Fields of education are related to each other through the similarity of subject matter, through the broad purpose for which the education is undertaken, and through the theoretical content which underpins the subject matter.
<b>Graduate capabilities</b>	The generic knowledge, skills and their applications, behaviours and practices that students are required to evidence during and on completion of their studies. They are common for all programs and are mapped to program learning outcomes.
<b>Honours</b>	The highest level of learning in an undergraduate program. It typically includes a research component. Honours is available in two modes: Separate Year Honours; and Embedded Honours.
<b>Inherent requirements</b>	The essential elements of a program or course that all students must meet for admission, progression and successful completion of a program. They are used as a reference point for students to identify their ability to successfully undertake the course of study and for identifying potential educational adjustments for students. Inherent requirements must be reasonable and clearly related to the course of study.
<b>Levels - AQF</b>	Levels refer to AQF levels are an indication of the relative complexity and/or depth of achievement and the autonomy required to demonstrate that achievement. AQF Level 1 has the lowest complexity and AQF level 10 has the highest complexity.
<b>Levels - course</b>	Undergraduate courses are usually classified by Level. Level 1 courses are usually undertaken in the first stage of a program, Level 2 in the second stage, and so on. In many cases, the first digit of the four-digit numeric suffix of the course code indicates the level of the course. For example, ECON1101 is a Level 1 course and MARK3054 is a Level 3 course.
<b>Major</b>	A specified sequence of study in a discipline or sub-discipline area within a program, with an approved set of courses at different levels.
<b>Minor</b>	A specified sequence of study within a discipline or sub-discipline, smaller in size and scope than a major.
<b>Masters Extended</b>	An AQF qualification type. See the <a href="#">Australian Qualifications Framework</a> for a description of the Masters (Extended) qualification type.
<b>Masters Extension</b>	Masters Extension describes programs of a longer duration that allow students to attain more disciplinary breadth.

<b>Postgraduate program</b>	A program of study that leads to the award of a Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma, Masters degree or doctorate.
<b>Program Authority</b>	Position with overarching responsibility for all aspects of a program. The Program Authority may delegate responsibilities to nominated staff or administrative units, where permitted by Schedule 1 of UNSW Delegations.
<b>Program learning outcomes (PLOs)</b>	The specific knowledge, skills and their applications, behaviours and practices, including graduate capabilities, that students need to demonstrate in completing a program.
<b>Program rules</b>	The academic requirements a student must satisfy to be awarded the qualification. Program rules include: core, electives, and Cross-Disciplinary component course rules; unit of credit requirements; specialisation requirements; and limit rules.
<b>Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)</b>	<p>The process of assessing an individual's relevant prior learning (including formal, non-formal learning and informal or workplace learning) for equivalence to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The learning outcomes of the qualification specified as a requirement for admission to the program</li> <li>• Courses in the program to which a student has been admitted to determine the credit value to be granted as advanced standing or exemptions.</li> </ul>
<b>Research integrated learning</b>	An educational activity that integrates theoretical learning with its application in a research context aimed at developing skills in research or research methodologies and techniques. It may involve activities such as theses or projects, student administered surveys and other forms of student-led data collection, or participation in research.
<b>Rules</b>	See Program Rules and Course Rule.
<b>Separate Year Honours program</b>	An additional, distinct year of study that follows the completion of an undergraduate degree in a cognate discipline, whether at UNSW or elsewhere. All components of the Honours program contribute to the Honours level qualification. Separate Year Honours programs require completion of 48 UOC of study typically undertaken over one calendar year (or part-time equivalent).
<b>Specialisation</b>	The umbrella term for the defined area of disciplinary study. In undergraduate programs, they are referred to as majors and minors. In postgraduate programs they are referred to as specialisations. <i>See Major and Minor.</i>
<b>Specialisation learning outcomes (SLO)</b>	The knowledge, skills and their applications, behaviours and practices that students need to demonstrate to complete a specialisation within a program. SLOs articulate with PLOs.
<b>Third Party Provider</b>	Third party in the context of design and delivery of academic offerings refers to an individual who is not an employee of UNSW, or a separate entity, providing services to or on behalf of UNSW. For example, a sessional academic engaged as an independent contractor (using an ABN) or another university providing tuition under an agreement with UNSW.
<b>Undergraduate program</b>	A program of study that leads to the award of a Diploma, Associate degree or a Bachelor degree (Pass or Honours).
<b>Unit of credit (UOC)</b>	The value assigned to programs and courses indicating duration and workload. For a course, UOC indicates the student workload expectations and the contribution of the course to meeting program requirements.
<b>Work integrated learning (WIL)</b>	<p>At UNSW, work integrated learning is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embedded in a course and has an assigned unit of credit value; and/or</li> <li>• A program requirement for those professions that require a minimum level of work experience to receive accreditation.</li> </ul>

Revision History				
Version	Approved by	Approval date	Effective date	Sections modified
<p>The Program Design Procedure, v2.1, superseded:</p> <p>The Program Design Procedure v1.0</p> <p>General Education Requirements in Concurrent Degree Programs (AB11/69)</p> <p>Honours at UNSW Discussion Paper (AB12/58)</p> <p>Program Level Learning Outcomes for Honours and Postgraduate Coursework Programs – Guideline, v1.1</p> <p>Simplification of the UNSW Undergraduate Model Discussion Paper (AB10/109)</p> <p>Simplification of UNSW Undergraduate Model – Additional Guidelines (AB11/19)</p> <p>Structure of Honours Programs Policy, v1.1</p> <p>Structure of Honours Programs Procedure, v1.1</p> <p>Structure of Postgraduate Coursework Programs Policy, v2.1</p> <p>Structure of Postgraduate Coursework Programs Procedure, v2.3</p> <p>Structure of Undergraduate Programs Policy, v1.1</p> <p>Structure of Undergraduate Programs Procedure, v1.2</p>				
1.0	Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic	24 October 2018	1 January 2019	New procedure
1.1	Director of Governance	23 September 2019	23 September 2019	Administrative update - hyperlinks to Work Integrated Learning Procedure inserted in Section 1.4 and Related Documents
2.0	Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic & Student Life	3 October 2021	1 January 2022	Section 2.1 revised to include the AQF Specification for the Undergraduate Certificate qualification
3.0	Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic Quality	16 December 2025	1 January 2026 for new academic offerings 1 January 2028 for existing academic offerings	Full Review