

Policy Redesign Project

All policies and procedures are being reviewed as part of this project. This document is pending review, but remains in effect until the review is carried out.

Honours Programs

Establishment: Council, 4 August 2004

Last Amended: Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Students), 24 November 2020

Nature of Amendment: Consequential amendments arising from the approval of a new Assessment Policy

Date Last Reviewed: September 2015

Responsible Officer: Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Students)

1. Scope

1.1 This policy applies to 36 unit (one year full-time equivalent) Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Level 8 Honours programs ("stand-alone programs) taken after completion of an appropriate undergraduate AQF Level 7 Bachelor's degree and to Honours programs embedded in four-year AQF Level 8 Bachelor (Honours) degrees.

2. Preamble

2.1 All Honours programs must be designed with reference to the AQF specification for Bachelor Honours Degree programs.

3. Purpose of Honours Programs

3.1 The main purposes of Honours programs are:

- to introduce students to research principles and practice, thus enabling them
 - to undertake research (which may include creative activity) in a variety of settings, including employment in occupations related to the discipline; and
 - to progress to research higher degree candidature; and
- to enable students to develop advanced knowledge and competencies in the discipline.

Colleges will formulate and explicitly state the aims of objectives specific to their Honours programs. The content of the program, and the assessment processes, must clearly reflect the objectives.

4. Admission to Honours

4.1 The standard admission criterion for entry to a stand-alone Honours program will be the completion to a required standard of a three-year AQF Level 7 Bachelor's degree in an appropriate discipline (or another qualification deemed to be equivalent by the relevant College). The approved standard required for admission will be published in the course rule.

4.2 Any program-specific admission processes will be explicitly described and published in the course rule.

4.3 Students will be advised that enrolment in a stand-alone Honours program may be subject to the College being able to provide appropriate resources and staff to supervise the program of study.

4.4 The standard admission requirements for entry into a four-year AQF Level 8 Bachelor (Honours) degree are specified in detail in the University's *Entry Requirements: Policy and Procedures*. The requirements for progress into the embedded Honours component of four-year undergraduate degrees will be specified in the course rules for the program.

5. Structure

5.1 The stand-alone Honours program will require the satisfactory completion of 36 units of work.

5.2 All Honours programs must specify learning outcomes consistent with Level 8 of the Australian Qualifications Framework. Normally, Honours programs will contain a mix of advanced theory, professional training (where appropriate), research training, and project work and/or an independent research project leading to a thesis. The research project leading to a thesis will be a minimum of 13.5 units and a maximum of 27 units, and preferably should be at least 18 units. Project work may take the form of a practice-based creative project.

5.3 Honours programs will include components involving the development of both written and oral communication skills. For example, students may be required to provide a seminar on their thesis or to engage in an oral defence of their work.

5.4 Normally, stand-alone Honours programs and the final year of embedded Honours programs will comprise topics with learning outcomes consistent with AQF Level 8. Honours programs should not routinely include Level 7 topics. Where a relevant Level 7 topic exists, a Level 8 version should be established with content and assessment commensurate with Level 8 learning outcomes. In exceptional, individual circumstances, up to 9 units of topics with AQF Level 7 learning outcomes may be permitted, where the following can be shown:

- That there is a clear academic rationale for the inclusion of such topics;
- The Level 8 learning outcomes can still be achieved in the Honours program as a whole;
- Assessment in all topics that comprise the 36 unit stand-alone Honours programs and the final year of embedded Honours program is managed in accordance with the Honours and [Assessment](#) policies; and
- The AQF Level 7 topics do not form part of the first year of an articulated Masters degree and are not recognised for credit in the first year of an articulated Masters degree.

6. Supervision

6.1 The academic staff involved in supervising the research component of Honours programs will be active researchers or have a sound background in research and must have academic qualifications at AQF level 9

or higher, or equivalent relevant academic or professional experience and expertise. The Principal Supervisor will be a Flinders University academic staff member or a person holding full academic status. Associate Supervisors may also be appointed.

6.2 Where appropriate, involvement in supervision by qualified non-academics, for example from industry, will be encouraged. In some instances it may be appropriate to appoint these external contributors as Adjunct Supervisors.

6.3 The University will provide opportunities for research supervisor training and development, and will ensure that University guidelines on good practice in Honours supervision are provided by College to all supervisors ([Appendix A](#)).

6.4 University guidelines on the responsibilities of Honours supervisors and students will be provided by Colleges to all supervisors and students ([Appendix B](#)).

7. Administration

7.1 Systematic information and advice regarding stand-alone Honours programs will be provided to potential students at appropriate points in their undergraduate degree. As well as individual advice and encouragement, information will be provided which sets out entry requirements, expectations, advantages, the structure of the Honours program and facilities available, including financial assistance. In particular, admission criteria will be carefully spelt out.

7.2 Colleges will ensure that, at or prior to commencement, Honours students receive information on the aims, nature and benefits of the Honours program, together with such matters as: details of staff research expertise; availability of thesis projects; supervision; facilities available; course requirements and assessment procedures; thesis requirements (including style guide and word limit); information on the criteria used for decisions concerning the assessment in the Honours program; weightings of the various components in determining the final overall Honours grade; submission dates; and guidelines for such activities as laboratory, field, performance or studio work.

7.3 Colleges will provide induction for incoming Honours students, including where applicable, for mid-year entrants.

7.4 Collaboration between Colleges and across institutions will be encouraged so that the range of specialist topics and the pool of students for them can be increased.

7.5 Colleges will ensure that joint or cooperative Honours programs give particular attention to determining consistent assessment standards.

7.6 Colleges will ensure that each Honours program has a formal organisational and administrative structure (for example Honours Coordinator and/or Course Committee) for such matters as monitoring or making recommendations on:

- thesis proposals;
- the selection of coursework topics;
- the structure and coherence of course offerings (with reference to clause 5.4 above);
- the selection of supervisors;
- the effectiveness of supervision;
- assessment procedures.

7.7 Colleges will regularly evaluate their Honours programs in terms of the suitability of objectives, success in achieving objectives, the comparability of standards, and student equity. There will be regular reviews of all Honours Programs, in accordance with the [Award Course Improvement and Accreditation Procedures](#) to provide on-going monitoring of the conduct and standards of Honours Programs. Colleges will ensure that there is systematic benchmarking of Honours program standards against those of comparable institutions.

8. Assessment

8.1 Assessment of individual Honours topics will be conducted in accordance with the University's [Assessment Policy](#) and supporting procedures.

8.2 The criteria for the assessment of the Honours programs must be determined in accordance with the [Grading Scheme](#). All students and examiners, particularly external examiners, will be provided with a clear statement of the criteria and standards.

8.3 Colleges will ensure that regular and systematic feedback is provided to students on all elements of their performance in the Honours program as it proceeds.

8.4 The assessment process will include written reports on the thesis incorporating a short statement of the reasons for the grade or mark awarded to the thesis.

8.5 Colleges will determine the number of examiners who will comprise the Examination Panel and the use of external examiners, provided that there are at least two examiners for the research component. Examiners must hold a qualification at AQF level 9 or higher, or equivalent relevant academic or professional experience and expertise.

8.6 A supervisor cannot be an examiner for a research component that they have supervised. A supervisor may make a recommendation to the examiners on the grade for a student's performance in elements of study that are related to the research component such as field work or laboratory work, but should not otherwise participate in the determination of the final grade for the research component.

8.7 Colleges will review the comparability of honours results from year to year, including the considerations entered into in reaching final grades, to ensure consistency.

8.8 Colleges will ensure that external examiners or moderators are used to benchmark and maintain standards by comparison with other universities. Where there is no external examination, external moderation should take place, normally at least every 5 years, within the discipline. The results of this moderation will be included in the information considered in course reviews.

8.9 It is compulsory for all students submitting a written thesis to review the thesis using electronic text-matching software (academic integrity software), provided by the University, prior to submitting it for examination. Use of text-matching software must comply with the Protocols for the Use of Electronic Text-Matching Software.

9. Related matters

9.1 Grievance and appeal matters are covered by the University policies and procedures detailed in the Student Related Policies and Procedures, Appeals and Complaints section.

9.2 Intellectual property matters are covered by the University policies and procedures detailed in Research-related Policies and Procedures, [Intellectual Property](#) Policy.

9.3 Colleges will ensure that, where relevant, students are aware of the need to obtain ethics approval. Colleges will ensure that approval is obtained as early as possible. More information regarding ethics approval processes can be obtained by contacting [Research Development and Support](#).

9.4 Colleges will ensure that Honours students are aware of scholarships and prizes offered by the University at honours level, and at the postgraduate level in anticipation of enrolment in a Higher Degree.

9.5 The University encourages the publication of research output where appropriate. Any such publication should be undertaken in accordance with the University's Research Policies and Guidelines on Authorship, and where academically appropriate may be in collaboration with the research supervisor.

Appendix A: Guidelines on the Responsibilities of the Supervisor of a Student Enrolled in the Research Component of an Honours Program

The responsibilities of supervisors of students enrolled in the research component of an Honours program include:

1. planning an appropriate research topic with the student, which should include:
 - evaluating the feasibility of the proposed research topic;
 - discussing the value of the research;
 - ensuring that the scope of the research is appropriate to the degree;
 - ensuring that adequate resources and funding will exist to support the project;
 - ensuring that he or she has the necessary knowledge/expertise to effectively supervise the student in the area chosen;
2. becoming well acquainted with the student's academic background so that if the student needs additional skills and/or knowledge to undertake the proposed research project, the student can be informed how these might be acquired;
3. at the start of the research project, discussing with the student an agreed method of working and schedule of meetings;
4. informing the student about any planned long leave (or retirement) during the student's anticipated period of enrolment and the arrangements made to provide effective supervision during such an absence;
5. maintaining close and regular contact with the student throughout the research project and structuring supervision sessions so that it is relatively easy for the student to ask questions and exchange ideas;
6. giving guidance to the student on the appropriate conceptual framework, research methods/techniques to adopt for the research project, and suggesting appropriate library and other information resources relevant to the field of research;
7. assisting the student to develop a research plan that sets out timelines for completing stages of the research project;
8. monitoring the student's performance and progress against the agreed timetable and assisting the student to develop solutions to problems as they are identified;
9. ensuring that inadequate progress or work below the standard generally expected for an honours degree is brought to the student's attention;
10. ensuring the student is aware of facilities, resources and technical assistance available in the College to support their research;
11. ensuring the student's project has appropriate ethical and/or biosafety approval (if applicable), and that the student is aware at the start of the project of any confidentiality agreements or other issues of intellectual property;

-
12. ensuring the student's research is conducted in accordance with the University's work health and safety requirements;
 13. encouraging the student to participate in research training opportunities provided in the honours program, which may include attendance at seminars;
 14. encouraging the student to submit written work, including drafts of the thesis, on an agreed schedule so that his or her progress can be assessed at regular intervals. In each instance, a turnaround time for any submitted work should be established;
 15. providing constructive and critical comment on the content and the drafts of the honours thesis, including providing advice on the presentation of the thesis;
 16. ensuring the student is aware of the requirements of the examination process, including submission dates;
 17. discussing with the student, in the first instance, any difficulties with the supervision relationship, and if the concerns are not resolved satisfactorily, seeking advice from the honours coordinator (or equivalent). Should the supervisory relationship breakdown, the supervisor should immediately inform the honours coordinator (or equivalent).
 18. taking reasonable steps to ensure that all publications and presentations that arise directly from research undertaken for Honours at Flinders University, whether published or presented during the completion of Honours or subsequently, carry appropriate Flinders University attribution and any additional attribution to other appropriate institutions.

Appendix B: Guidelines on the Responsibilities of Students Enrolled in the Research Component of an Honours Program.

The responsibilities of students enrolled in the research component of an honours program include:

1. becoming familiar and complying with the Rules governing the degree, and the University's Student Related Policies and Procedures, including the Policy on Honours Programs;
2. planning, with the supervisor, an appropriate research project within the time limits defined by the research component of the honours degree;
3. discussing with the supervisor an agreed method of working and schedule of meetings;
4. drawing to the attention of the supervisor any problems or difficulties being experienced with the research and thesis writing and sharing responsibility for seeking solutions;
5. maintaining the progress of the work in accordance with the stages and time lines agreed to with the supervisor;
6. meeting with the supervisor at regular intervals and discussing the progress towards, and impediments to, maintaining the agreed timetable;
7. participating in research training opportunities provided in the honours program, which may include attendance and presentations at seminars;
8. becoming familiar with, and adopting, safe working practices relevant to the field of research;
9. becoming familiar with, and adhering to, the ethical practices appropriate to the field of research, including gaining ethics clearance where appropriate;
10. becoming familiar with, and adopting, appropriate research practices relevant to the field of research for the retention and storage of research records and data;

-
11. becoming familiar and complying with the requirements of the University's Intellectual Property Policies;
 12. accepting responsibility for preparing the honours thesis for examination, including the standard of presentation;
 13. discussing with the supervisor, in the first instance, any difficulties with the supervision relationship, and if the concerns are not resolved satisfactorily, seeking advice from the honours coordinator (or equivalent); if the concerns are still not resolved, proceeding in accordance with the Student Appeals and Complaints Policy.
 14. ensuring that all publications and presentations that arise directly from research undertaken for Honours at Flinders University, whether published or presented during the completion of Honours or subsequently, carry appropriate Flinders University attribution to other appropriate institutions.

Appendix C: Ethics and Biosafety Approval, and Work Health and Safety Requirements

8.1 Any research project involving human subjects, animals, or biosafety (eg gene technology) matters must obtain prior ethical and/or biosafety approval from the relevant committee listed below:

Human Subjects:

Southern Adelaide Clinical Human Research Ethics Committee (managed by SA Health);

Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (SBREC).

Proposals to conduct research that involves or impacts upon Indigenous peoples are forwarded by SBREC to the Yunggorendi First Nations Centre for Higher Education and Research for comments and recommendations, which are incorporated into the Committee's response.

Animals:

Animal Welfare Committee.

Biosafety:

Biosafety Committee - Under its terms of reference, the Biosafety Committee receives applications for approval of research projects involving the use of:

- (i) a genetically modified organism (GMO); and
- (ii) biohazardous material (including human body fluids, human tissue samples and other body products but excluding clinical activities such as collection and testing of specimens).

Researchers proposing to use carcinogenic or toxic chemicals (other than those specified above) must refer to the Workplace Substances Procedures. Researchers proposing to use ionising radiation must consult the relevant Area Radiation Officer.

8.2 It is the supervisor's responsibility to ensure that the student's research project has appropriate ethical and/or biosafety approval.

8.3 Students and supervisors will note that in the event of a student's proposed research project not receiving appropriate ethical and/or biosafety approval, the student will need to choose another research project or his/her enrolment in the research component topic will be cancelled.

8.4 The supervisors will ensure that the student's research is conducted in accordance with the University's Work Health and Safety requirements.