

Academic Board Resolution

Maintenance (Creation, Variation and Deletion) of Award Courses and Units of Study

The purpose of this document is

1. to assemble in one place Academic Board principles and policies related to the maintenance (i.e., creation, variation or deletion) of academic courses and units of study at the University of Sydney, and
2. to describe the procedures used to maintain award courses and units of study, pursuant to both Academic Board policies and the requirements of the relevant administrative systems.

This document, and the policies and procedural pro-formas to which it is linked, is maintained by the Academic Board and by the Registrar's Data Audit Committee. It is also published as part of the VCAC/Academic Board document *Units of Study and Award Courses: Their Creation and Maintenance*.

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1. Award Courses and Units of Study: Glossary of terminology

The adoption of common terminology for academic programs within the University of Sydney assists students and staff by reducing the potential for confusion and the need for wasteful translation. A glossary of the terminology used by the Student Information System (FlexSIS) and related academic and administrative activities is maintained at

[\(URL to be provided\)](#)

Policy Statement

The Academic Board has resolved that, wherever applicable, the terminology defined in the FlexSIS Glossary should be used in descriptions of the University's academic programs.

2. Non-award Courses – Acknowledgement of Work Completed

The University offers academic programs that are not parts of Award Courses but are nevertheless associated with the name of the University. These often provide professional development at postgraduate level, but also include programs offered by Continuing Education and individual Departments and Schools. These non-award courses do not pass through the academic approval processes required of award courses and units of study. It is important that the distinction between Award and non-Award courses be clear to students and other relevant parties.

Policy Statement

As a general principle, no certificate of completion of any non-Award course should include any of the generic words used in the titles of Award courses. Examples of words that should *not* be used include 'Certificate', 'Diploma', 'Graduate Certificate', etc. Phrases such as 'Certificate of Attendance' or 'Certificate of Completion' may be used. Certification of non-award courses is, of course, subject to the University's policy regarding the use of the Coat of Arms (see the *Delegations of Authority*).

3. Policy: Award Courses and Units of Study – Nomenclature

The purpose of a consistent nomenclature across the University's award program is

- (a) to rationalize and streamline University policies and procedures;
- (b) to conform as closely as practicable to national standards derived from DETYA;
- (c) to encourage rules and procedures that are readily understood, logically consistent, and computationally tractable (e.g. by allowing automatic checking of eligibility for graduation and so forth);
- (d) to facilitate the automatic production of entries in handbooks, etc., and the preparation of management information.

The name of an award course comprises one essential (generic) and one or more optional components (streams). Programs of study in award courses comprise selected units of study, chosen in accordance with published course rules. Course rules often specify structured programs of study involving several units of study; these structured programs are variously known as majors, minors and subject areas.

The components of award courses, and the policies concerning their maintenance and use, reflect the diversity of award course structures that have developed in the University. Given the existing complexity of the University and operating environment, faculties are precluded from introducing award course components outside these descriptors, and are encouraged to simplify descriptors and structures as far as possible.

Faculties should recognise that the titles and structures of award courses must reflect not only the policies of the Academic Board, but also the requirements of the University's business process systems, in particular the structure of the FlexSIS student administration system, and policies emerging from Government and legislative requirements.

Policy Statement

1. The names of award courses (undergraduate and postgraduate), and their governance rules, must adhere to authorized nomenclature.
2. The name of an award course comprises one essential and one or more optional components.
 - (a) Generic award. All award courses must include a generic or parent award (diploma, advanced diploma, Bachelor degree, graduate certificate, graduate diploma, Masters degree, Doctorate).
 - (b) Stream(s) within a generic award. These components are optional. Faculties are permitted to offer streams within streams, but are not encouraged to do so. The combination of a generic award with a stream is known as a specialization.
3. Course rules for Award Courses govern allowable enrolments and requirements for the award. Course rules may specify patterns of study involving several units of study, known as majors, minors and subject areas.

4. Award courses may involve combined or double degrees. Students will receive separate testamurs for the two awards.
5. The following table summarizes some key distinctions between the components of programs of study of an award course:

Table: Components of Award Courses

	Generic Award	Stream(s)	Major(s)
Mandatory	Yes	No	No
Created/Altered/Deleted by	Senate	Senate	Academic Board
Published in	Calendar	Calendar	Faculty Handbook
UAC Code allowed	Yes	Yes	No
Printed on testamur	Compulsory	Optional (a)	Optional (a)
When do students enter	On admission	On admission (b)	After 1-2 years
Mode of entry	Enrolment	Enrolment (b)	Selection of units of study

- (a) Faculty resolutions may specify whether or not the stream(s) or major(s) in which a student graduates are to appear on the testamur. If a student becomes eligible to receive a testamur with more than one award title, the Registrar will determine the adopted form.
 - (b) Faculty resolutions may permit students to transfer between streams within a given generic award, during the period of their enrolment in that generic award. If such transfers are permitted by Faculty Resolution, the resolution must specify the basis on which transfer is allowed. The purpose of this Academic Board policy is to ensure fairness and equity where entry to a particular stream is academically competitive for newly admitted students.
4. The name and abbreviation used for each award course offered by the University shall be that approved by the Senate on the advice of the Academic Board and the faculty or faculties concerned.
 5. The canonical descriptor of a unit of study is defined by the student record system (FlexSIS). It ensures the general relevance of the descriptor to curriculum planning and organisation, both by staff and by students.
 6. Award courses and units of study are related via progression and completion rules. These rules, and many other types of linkage between course and unit information and other enrolment data, are handled using constructs available within the student information system (FlexSIS). They do not form part of the descriptor for units of study.
 7. Faculties must use a nomenclature for award courses that distinguishes between research courses and coursework courses. The same award should not be available by the two methods of candidature.

4 Award Courses and Units of Study – Semesterization

Award courses and units of study at the University of Sydney are semesterized. The purpose of semesterization is to

- (a) allow efficient administrative control (e.g., through uniform cut-off dates) of courses, units of study and students' enrolments,
- (b) facilitate the preparation of reports for HECS/DETYA, etc.,
- (c) support students' progression by ensuring the orderly management of assessment across units of study, and
- (d) assist timetabling, room allocations, and so forth.

Policy Statement

1. The Senate has resolved that
 - (1) The academic year shall contain such periods of instruction, commencing and concluding on such dates as the Academic Board may determine;
 - (2) Any faculty or academic college which wishes to operate according to dates which are different from those prescribed by the Board may apply to the Board for such permission. Any such application must be made by no later than the November Board meeting of the year preceding that in which the faculty or college wishes to vary the prescribed dates.
2. The Academic Board will determine the periods of instruction in standard teaching sessions named First Semester, Second Semester and Summer Session.
3. It is Academic Board policy that all units of study will be semesterized, at the undergraduate level. This means that any undergraduate units of study in which students formally enrol must normally be established as being taught and examined in either the first or second semester, or in both semesters if the course is offered twice, or in the summer session.
4. Although they are semesterized for administrative purposes, certain components of final honours year or postgraduate programs relating to a thesis or other similar research-orientated project, or programs involving field work, clinical placements, practicums or similar activities, may be assigned two or more semesters for completion.
5. It is acceptable to offer units of study in postgraduate award courses in non-standard teaching sessions, provided that appropriate arrangements have been made concerning facilities and other resources.
6. The Academic Board acknowledges that the increasing use of flexible teaching and learning modes for both on-campus and off-campus studies tends to conflict with defined Semester times. However, students' progression and choice of unit of study options may be unnecessarily and inadvertently impaired if study programs and assessment events in flexibly delivered units of study are not synchronised with the established Semester/Summer School pattern. Such synchronisation is of particular importance in

many undergraduate courses, but is less important in stand-alone postgraduate coursework award courses or in certain undergraduate courses that may be quarantined.

5. Award Courses and Units of Study – Credit Points

The building blocks of all award courses are Units of Study. A course generally comprises many units of study, selected according to the regulations of the Faculty or Board which controls the course. However, different units of study do not always have equal academic demands or content. Moreover, many of the units of study offered by the University may be taken as part of more than one course, including courses not controlled by the Faculty which controls the unit of study.

The absence of a tight mapping between courses and units of study is an important aspect of academic flexibility and efficiency in the University. However, it does require that the University establish a measure of the relative quantitative contribution of a unit of study to a course. The consistency of the relativities of units of study across the University is determined by the Academic Board policy relating to Credit Points.

Policy Statement

1. Credit points indicate the relative quantitative contribution of a unit of study to an award course.
2. Units of study shared across courses are required to have the same credit point value in every course. This policy applies when units of study are shared between faculties or between undergraduate and postgraduate courses.
3. The relationship between the level of student effort in a unit of study and the credit point value of that unit is articulated and defined within the context of all of the courses sharing that unit of study.
4. The full-time load for all undergraduate and postgraduate coursework award courses is 24 credit points per semester (or 12 points for the January session).
5. The credit point value of a unit of study will be an integer, normally lying between 3 and 24. In assigning the level of student effort and hence the credit point value of a unit of study, faculties should be mindful of the advantages to students when credit points in preferred academic pathways add naturally to a sum of 24 per semester. This is best achieved by using credit point values that are divisors of 24 (i.e., 3, 4, 6, 8, 12).
6. A faculty may, on academic grounds, propose to the Undergraduate or Graduate Studies Committees units of study with 1 or 2 credit points. Although such units of study are discouraged, they will normally be approved if the unit of study is available only within courses controlled by the proposing faculty.

Notes:

- (a) Student transcripts and student record files will record a single result and a single credit point value for each unit of study attempted by a student. In those cases where the textual description of a unit of study includes reference to options within that unit, the transcript will not include a result or a credit point value for any specific option. Any option for which a result and credit point value is required must be identified as a stand-alone unit of study, with a distinct descriptor.
- (b) The requirement that each unit of study have a single unique credit point value, even if it is available in a range of courses (e.g., a mathematics unit in the BSc, the BE and the Combined Arts/Law degrees), may lead in principle to different minimum total credit point values for different degrees, or to different full-time study requirements per semester according to the award course chosen. In general, faculties are expected to construct undergraduate degree programs on the basis that a normal full-time load is 24 credit points per semester and, if necessary, to use this as a minimum credit point value for course construction.
- (c) The credit point terminology refers to the value of a unit of study towards meeting award course completion requirements. While it may be expected to relate in a reasonably direct way to the amount of work in a unit of study, or to the load generated by a unit of study, these are matters to be determined by the faculty or faculties involved, in accordance with relevant University guidelines. There is no underlying necessity that “equal credit points” imply “equal amounts of work” or “equal load” across different courses of study offered by the University.

6. Award Courses and Units of Study – Approval policies and timelines

The University of Sydney Act states that the Senate of the University “may provide such courses, and may confer such degrees (including ad eundem degrees and honorary degrees) and award such diplomas and certificates, as it thinks fit”.

Pursuant to the Act, the Rules of the Senate of the University state that

The Senate may determine the requirements to be satisfied by candidates for a degree, diploma or certificate for the award of the degree, diploma or certificate (part II, Div 1 68(a)).

The Senate has resolved that the procedures for the consideration, and deadline for submission of proposals for new and amended award programs and courses will be determined by the Academic Board (Part II, Div 2, 69(1)).

The policies and procedures determined by the Academic Board pursuant to these Rules are set out below in the Policy Statement.

The purposes of these policies are to:

- (a) Ensure that proposals for new or amended award courses and units of study are examined in the appropriate University-wide context, while reflecting the delegation of academic authority to Faculties and Departments to approve certain amendments, additions or deletions to academic programs.
- (b) Establish time scales and cut-off dates in the procedures for creating and maintaining award courses and units of study, to ensure that important deadlines can be met (such as the publication of the Universities Admissions Centre Guide and Faculty handbooks) while allowing time for proper review of the academic and administrative implications of proposed changes.
- (c) Exploit wherever possible the power and flexibility of the University’s information management systems to facilitate and streamline the consideration of proposals.

So far as possible, the approval processes will be identical for undergraduate and postgraduate programs. Where necessary, the specific needs of undergraduate or postgraduate programs will be mentioned separately.

Policy Statement

1. Approval levels for the maintenance, (creation, variation or deletion) of award courses and units of study are classified as follows:

1.1 *Senate approval (on the advice of the Academic Board)*

- 1.1.1 New award courses, including combined/double degrees

1.1.2 Alterations to existing award courses involving

- (a) a change to the name or deletion of an award course,
- (b) addition, modification or deletion of a stream that is specified in the award course name on the testamur,
- (c) a change in the duration of an award course, or
- (d) addition or deletion of an honours component in the award course.

1.2 *Academic Board approval (on the advice of the Undergraduate Studies Committee or the Graduate Studies Committee, as appropriate)*

1.2.1 Substantial revision to the academic content of an award course including

- (a) additions, modifications or deletions of majors or subject areas,
- (b) adoption of a new mode of delivery (e.g. web-based, off-campus, interstate or offshore) in an entire course,
- (c) significant alterations of academic pathways through the award course resulting from a review of the award course, or
- (d) any change to an award course that has not been reviewed at course level within the past 5 years.

1.2.2 Changes having an impact on the study options available to prospective students, including changes to

- (a) selection/admission procedures and standards, or
- (b) prerequisites, co-requisites and assumed knowledge.

1.2.3 Changes having a significant impact on the professions, employers or the wider community, including

- (a) enhancement or diminution of employment opportunities,
- (b) entry into a new segment of the education system or higher education sector,
or
- (c) new off-shore or distance education delivery modes.

1.3 *Faculty approval*

1.3.1 Revisions to award courses not requiring Senate or Board approval, and

1.3.2 All additions, modifications or deletions to units of study under the academic direction of the faculty, provided that adequate notification of changes has been given to the Deans of all other faculties offering award courses in which the unit is listed in the unit of study table. Faculties are required to inform the chair of the Academic Board before making a change to the mode of delivery of a unit of study. This step is required to allow appropriate monitoring of the impact of flexible delivery modes on University-wide teaching resources such as the Library and Information Technology systems.

2. Determining approval levels

Where doubt exists, the Chair of the Academic Board shall determine the level of approval required after consultation with the relevant Dean(s). It should be noted that Senate and/or Academic Board approval changes will normally require prior approval by the relevant Faculties. The fact that an academic governance regulation appears in a Faculty Handbook, or is published as a Faculty Resolution, is not of itself evidence that only Faculty approval is required for any proposed change.

3. Timescales for approvals

Senate and Academic Board approval for proposed changes in award courses and units of study may be requested at any time. Approval procedures will include information on the normal time to process a request. Except as permitted by the policy and procedures regarding late, urgent approval, no course or unit of study may be advertised or offered until it has been duly approved.

4. Preliminary approval

Provision exists for a Faculty to seek Preliminary Approval for a new award course or for changes to an existing course where the proposed changes may affect students' subject choices for Year 11 and Year 12. This provision reflects the long lead time required to give notice to Year 10 students about changes to University admission requirements. Such approval may be given by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Planning and Resources) who will normally consult with the Chair of the Academic Board to evaluate the academic implications of the proposal. All award courses given preliminary approval must be advertised with the qualification "subject to approval".

5. Late, urgent approval

Late urgent approval for variations in award courses and units of study may be given by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Planning and Resources), who may consult with the Chair of the Academic Board and the Registrar to determine the implications of such approval.

Where an award course of unit of study has been given late, urgent approval, a full proposal must be submitted as soon as possible, according to the normal procedures.

Academic Board Guidelines: Maintenance Of Award Courses And Units Of Study

1. Overview

Senate and Academic Board Polices regarding the maintenance of Award Courses and Units of Study require that all changes be formally approved, by Faculties, the Academic Board, or Senate depending on the nature of the change.

This document provides guidelines and procedures to be followed and pro-formas to be used in seeking formal approval for proposed changes requiring approval by the Academic Board or Senate. The guidelines and procedures aim to:

- (a) ensure conformity with all relevant policy,
- (b) encourage coherence and consistency in the expression of the governance rules of Award Courses and Units of Study,
- (c) provide all of the information required by the relevant approving authorities, especially information associated with academic quality assurance, and
- (d) minimize administrative workload, and streamline the procedures as far as possible while respecting collegial values and the views of stakeholders.

The Guidelines and Pro-Formas are revised and updated from time to time, by staff in the Secretariat and Corporate Information Unit, working with advice from the Chair and Deputy Chairs of the Board, Deans and Faculty Managers.

2. Roles and Authorities

Heads of Schools/Departments.

In Faculties with a School/Department structure, the Head of School/Department is required by Resolution of Senate to consult with the School/Departmental Board and with the professors in the School/Department concerning the units of study offered by the School/Department. Proposals to change units of study offered by the School/Department will normally be prepared by the Head or the Head's delegate, working with the advice of the School/Departmental Board, the professors, and in many cases, a committee or working party with special expertise and interest in the specific academic area.

Deans and College Directors.

Deans and College Directors, in consultation with Faculty secretaries, are responsible for:

- (a) Establishing policies and procedures, consistent with University policies and procedures, for managing all aspects of Faculty-approved changes. In particular, these policies and procedures will cover the creation, variation and deletion of units of study under the academic supervision of the Faculty,
- (b) Preparing proposals for changes requiring approval by the Academic Board and/or Senate, and
- (c) Ensuring that all proposed changes to Award Courses and Units of Study are formally approved by Faculty Boards or Boards of Study.

Academic Board

Proposals requiring approval by the Academic Board and/or Senate normally will be considered first by the Undergraduate Studies Committee or the Graduate Studies Committee, as appropriate. The respective Chairs of these Committees may form small Working Parties to consider proposals that are complex or potentially controversial

Provision exists for minor changes, of a typographical or administrative kind, to be made to the Resolutions of Senate or of the Academic Board without the formal approval of Senate or the Academic Board.

It is not the role of the Academic Board or its Standing Committees to assess, in detail, the specific academic content of a proposal to introduce or change an Award Course or Unit of Study. Nor is it the role of the Academic Board or its Standing Committees to assess, in detail, the resource needs and implications of new teaching initiatives. However, the Academic Board does advise Senate and the Vice-Chancellor on all matters relating to the University's educational programs. The Board and its Committees will concern themselves principally with matters relating to:

- (a) The academic need for, and merit of, the proposed change,
- (b) The extent to which a proposed change has been the subject of appropriate consultation and approval within Faculties, and between all Faculties having an academic interest in the proposed change,
- (c) The consistency of the proposal with relevant University policies,
- (d) The potential impact of the proposed new course or change on University resources, including the Library, central Information Technology resources, and the resources of other Faculties and Schools/Departments, and
- (e) The presence of appropriate mechanisms to evaluate the quality of delivery and academic outcomes of the proposal, and to make any improvements if required.

It is important to recognize that by their Terms of Reference and by convention, the Academic Board and its Committees are not authorized to reject proposals for reasons related to the provision of resources. However, the Committees may comment on resource-related matters when reporting to the Academic Board. Such comments may be

of particular importance in framing the Board's advice to Senate for Senate-approved changes.

Frequently, Academic Board Standing Committees will suggest, or require, changes to proposals made by Faculties, before the proposals are submitted to the Academic Board (and thence Senate if appropriate).

Academic Board will normally receive proposals from its Standing Committees with a recommendation to approve, or to recommend that Senate approve, the proposed change.

3. Timelines

It is Academic Board policy that proposed changes requiring approval by the Academic Board and/or Senate will be considered at any time. The time scale for approval is dependent upon the calendar of meeting dates of the relevant Standing Committee (Undergraduate or Graduate Studies), the following meeting of the Academic Board, and if Senate approval is required, the following normal meeting of Senate (Senate Colloquium meetings do not consider Academic Board reports). The Calendar of meeting dates is published on the intranet at:

Academic Board:

<http://www.usyd.edu.au/su/ab/meetings/meetings00.html>

Undergraduate Studies:

<http://www.usyd.edu.au/su/ab/committees/USC/meetings.html>

Graduate Studies:

<http://www.usyd.edu.au/su/ab/committees/GSC/meetings.html>

It is the responsibility of Faculty Secretaries and Deans to monitor the calendar of meeting dates, and to ensure that approvals are in place by appropriate key dates.

Key dates are normally established by the Registrar, and include:

- (a) Cut-off date for notification to Year 10 students of changes that may impact on the selection of HSC subjects. Proposals of this kind may be the subject of Preliminary Approval by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Planning and Resources) [normally, 34 months prior to the introduction of the change],
- (b) Cut-off date for the UAC Guide for admissions in the subsequent calendar year [normally, 10 months prior to the introduction of the change], and
- (c) Finalization of the Units of Study Master File for the subsequent year [normally, by the end of September in the year preceding the year in which the change will apply].

4. Documentation

- 4.1 This section describes the format and content of the documentation required to support a request for Academic Board and/or Senate approval to create, vary or delete award courses or units of study.

In preparing documentation, Faculty officers should consider the following principles:

- a) It is important to distinguish between the level of approval required, and the scale of the proposed change. Small changes, even those requiring Senate approval, may not require extensive documentation. Only the relevant parts of pro-formas need to be completed.
- b) All documentation passes through the administrative system in electronic form. Unless prior arrangements are made, the electronic form must be Microsoft Word, with pages laid out in portrait format.
- c) Faculty officers are responsible for drafting the explanatory material that will appear in Academic Board and Senate agendas. It is particularly important that such material be clear, brief, and informative. This material is provided under the heading "Description of the Program" in the pro-forma.
- d) Two different modes of expression of governance rules exist in the University – governance rules expressed in Senate Resolutions, and governance rules expressed in Faculty Resolutions supported by generic Senate Rules. Faculties are encouraged to adopt the latter form for all new proposals, and to convert old programs to the latter form, as soon as possible.
- e) The documentation is designed to support Faculty officers by identifying all required administrative activities, even where a responsibility does not lie with Academic Board.

4.2 Structure of Documentation.

Documentation supporting requests to approve changes to courses and units will have the following structure:

- a) Covering letter from Dean
- b) Description of the Program (for Academic Board and/or Senate Agenda)
- c) Proposal details
- d) Supporting documentation.

Pro-formas have been developed to facilitate the preparation of uniform, complete documentation.