

## **GRADUATE STUDIES BOARD**

### **POLICIES RELATING TO POSTGRADUATE COURSEWORK PROGRAMS AND LEARNING AND TEACHING PRACTICE**

**(Current as at 15 March 2010)**

These policies should be read in conjunction with the University's Coursework Rule, available at:

[http://fmweb01.ucc.usyd.edu.au/FMPro?-db=POL\\_Main.fp5&-lay=www&-format=/pol/pol\\_summary.html&-RecID=17&-find](http://fmweb01.ucc.usyd.edu.au/FMPro?-db=POL_Main.fp5&-lay=www&-format=/pol/pol_summary.html&-RecID=17&-find)

Note that the provisions in this Rule, including those relating to program structure and nomenclature, apply to all programs.

**Faculty-level Policies with General Application Endorsed by the Graduate Studies Board (date of approval bracketed)**

#### **1. Program and Unit of Study Administration**

##### **Unit Credits and Waivers**

Credit for units of study completed at another institution will only be granted on production of a certified academic transcript indicating that the applicant has withdrawn from the award course in which these units of study were undertaken. (17 Apr 2003)

Upgrades from a Graduate Certificate to a Masters will be automatically approved when a student obtains at least a credit average in the Graduate Certificate. (5 Aug 2004)

Credit within embedded programs: for individuals who graduated with a graduate certificate or a graduate diploma and who are applying to be admitted to a grad diploma or a master's degree respectively (of the same title or one with a natural progression from a previous set of units of study), if admitted we will allow all units to be counted towards the new degree provided that the individual has had a period of at least 3 years elapsed since they completed the previous qualification. If the period is less than three years, then the current resolutions will still apply. (14 Oct 2004)

Once finalised, credits awarded to commencing students cannot be reversed during the period of the candidature. (14 Oct 2004)

In relation to credits and waivers, SIO should make decisions in the first instance and refers any doubtful cases to Program Directors or Discipline Coordinators. (16 Feb 2006; amended 15 April 2010)

##### **Unit Codes and Descriptions**

MCom core units should be coded 5000-5999 to reflect their foundation status. All other postgraduate coursework units should be coded 6000+ to reflect their advanced status. (11 May 2006; amended 15 April 2010)

**Program Marketing**

Discipline publications promoting specific degrees will not be supported by the Graduate Studies Board in the future. (Nov 13 2003)

To ensure compliance with University branding requirements, promotion of Faculty Coursework Programs via the print and electronic media should be coordinated centrally by the Associate Dean Postgraduate and CAIRO in consultation with Program Directors/Discipline Chairs/Discipline Coordinators and the University marketing unit (15 April 2010).

**Proposals for Amending Existing Units**

All changes to unit titles and handbook descriptions should be submitted to the Board via the Unit Amendment Form for consideration prior to inclusion in handbook (15 April 2010).

**Unit Withdrawals**

From semester 2, 2007, Disciplines wishing to cancel a postgraduate unit of study must submit a request to the GSB, in a format to be decided. (12 July 2007)

Where an elective unit of study has attracted less than 10 students over a consecutive two (2) year period, the unit should no longer be offered. Research Projects and Special Topics are to be excluded from this ruling. (3 Nov 2005)

## **2. Learning and Teaching Practice**

### **Contact Hours**

That all postgraduate units of study must reflect a minimum of 39 core contact hours from the beginning of 2008. (10 May 2007)

### **Class Times**

The Board endorses flexible modes of delivery for teaching. Class times in each program should involve a balanced mix of standard evening mode, standard day mode, weekend intensive mode and block intensive mode. Use of standard day mode and block intensive should not be to the disadvantage of part-time students. (17 April 2003; amended 15 April 2009).

No classes are to be scheduled for the AVCC week. (10 Sep 2009)

Where a program allows part-time enrolment, classes in compulsory units of Study (i.e. foundational units, core units in majors, capstone units) should be offered once per year either in standard evening mode (i.e. 6pm-9pm) or in weekend intensive mode during each semester. Additional to this, these units may be offered in day or weekend intensive mode during Summer and/or Winter School. (10 Sep 2009)

Where a program allows part-time enrolment, no less than 50% of elective units offered by each Discipline and teaching centre during each semester must be offered in standard evening mode (i.e. 6pm-9pm) or in weekend intensive mode. Additional to this, elective units may be offered in day, evening or weekend intensive mode during Summer and/or Winter School. (10 Sep 2009)

The Associate Dean Postgraduate will consult regularly with Program Directors, Discipline Coordinators and Discipline Chairs regarding proposed class times for the following year to ensure that proposals comply with the above requirements. Approval of proposed class times by the Associate Dean Postgraduate will be required prior to being implemented by the Faculty Timetabling Officer. (10 Sep 2009)

### **Class size**

Each discipline should adopt a class size strategy consistent with one or more of the following strategies for a Unit of Study (UoS):

- i. Offer a single class for part of a UoS (not exceeding 50% of class time) and a series of repeat classes with no more than 50 students per class for the balance of the class time.
- ii. Offer a single class for part of a UoS (not exceeding two-thirds of class time) and a series of repeat classes with no more than 25 students per class for the balance of the class time.
- iii. Offer repeat classes throughout the class time with a desired number per class up to 50 students but not exceeding 70 students. (17 Apr 2003; amended 15 April 2010)

### **Postgraduate Pedagogy and Assurance of Learning**

- i. Our students are likely to learn most effectively when they are actively engaged in learning, when they learn from and with each other, where their previous experience is

- valued and built upon, and when the learning experience fosters inquiry, critical evaluation and the development of professionally relevant work-based skills.
- ii. Curricula for postgraduate coursework Masters programs should recognise and build on students' academic skills and knowledge acquired at undergraduate level.
  - iii. Curricula for postgraduate coursework Masters programs should recognise and draw upon the diversity of experience, background and skills inherent in the postgraduate student cohort.
  - iv. Assessment tasks in postgraduate coursework programs should draw upon work integrated learning practices and incorporate real world contexts wherever possible.
  - v. Program-specific learning goals and learning outcomes should involve a higher level of learning challenge in relation to both general attributes and disciplinary knowledge and skills than is required at undergraduate level.
  - vi. Curricula in foundational units should both link back to general skills and knowledge acquired at undergraduate level and prepare students to develop the higher technical knowledge and skills addressed in non-foundational units within particular disciplines and specialisations.
  - vii. Curriculum, learning and teaching practice and assessment in each Masters program should address a set of agreed program-specific learning outcomes that are unique to that program and define the program's essential pedagogical purpose.
  - viii. Each Masters program should include a graduating-level learning experience, preferably in the form a capstone unit, which consolidates learning in relevant program specific learning outcomes, regularly assures that students completing the program demonstrate the specified learning outcomes at an appropriate level of proficiency, and provides timely feedback on facets of curriculum design, learning and teaching practice, and assessment that may require further improvement so to further enhance learning outcome achievement.
  - ix. Strategies should be introduced or continued that encourage students to make links between each postgraduate unit studied and to build upon learning in other postgraduate units wherever possible.
  - x. The Board and the Faculty should work towards encouraging a more systemic approach to postgraduate learning and teaching, particularly by sharing effective practice in relation to the above principles and providing more discipline-based support through the Office of Learning and Teaching. (15 April 2010)

### **Assessment Methods**

Assessment in postgraduate units should reflect the principle of continuous feedback and a mix of assessment modes. (15 April 2010)

### **Examination Scheduling**

In-semester compulsory evening examinations in individual units should be scheduled so as to minimise the possibility of the exam time clashing with scheduled class time in other units

likely to be taken by students required to take the exam. Where a clash is unavoidable, students so affected must be advised to apply for a Special Arrangement to sit a further test. (15 April 2010)

### **3. Dissertation Supervision and Examination**

#### **Postgraduate Coursework Dissertation Supervision and Examination** (April 2009)

The following are the requirements for the supervision and examination of research dissertations undertaken in postgraduate coursework programs within the Faculty of Economics and Business. The purpose of these requirements is to ensure the quality of both the supervision and examination process. The requirements also accord with those applying to undergraduate honours supervision and examination. In allocating supervisory responsibilities to individual academics at postgraduate coursework level it is recommended that Disciplines seek to strike a fair and reasonable balance of supervisory workload across all levels, including undergraduate honours, postgraduate coursework dissertations and higher research dissertations.

#### Primary Supervisors

- Every dissertation student must have a designated Primary Supervisor.
- Primary Supervisors must have a PhD or meet the university definition of “research active”.
- Primary Supervisors will not supervise more than two postgraduate coursework dissertation students concurrently.
- First time Primary Supervisors at any level will not supervise more than one postgraduate coursework dissertation student.

#### Co-supervision

- A dissertation student may also have a designated Co-supervisor.
- Co-supervision is most appropriate where an experienced Primary Supervisor is mentoring a less-experienced academic on supervision.
- Where a co-supervisor is appointed the student should receive clear advice as to which academic is the Primary Supervisor.
- Students should be consulted in advance of changes to Primary Supervisor and/or Co-supervisor arrangements.

#### Examiners

- Each dissertation should be examined by at least two examiners.
- Examiners must have a PhD or meet the university definition of “research active”.
- Examiners may be internal to the Discipline but Primary Supervisors and Co-supervisors should not examine any dissertation for which they have been a designated supervisor.
- Only one of the examiners may be a first time examiner of a dissertation at any level.

#### Resolving disagreement between examiners (section added 15 April 2010)

- Where the discrepancy in marks awarded is ten percentage points or less, the mark awarded for the thesis shall be the mean of the two marks.
- Where the discrepancy exceeds ten percentage points, the relevant Chair, Discipline Coordinator or Program Director shall first seek to resolve the difference by means of joint consultation to the satisfaction of both examiners.
- Where the examiners remain in disagreement, the Chair, Discipline Coordinator or Program Director shall seek input from a third examiner who may be either internal or external to the Faculty. The third examiner shall be given access to the initial examiners’ marks and reports. The mark awarded by the third examiner, having regard to the reports of the initial two examiners, shall be taken as the mark awarded.

## Suggested development and support for supervisors and examiners

Disciplines are encouraged to provide support mechanisms for the development of new supervisors and examiners. Along with undergraduate honours supervision, supervision and examination of this type is an ideal “training ground” to support staff development for PhD supervision and examination. Below are some suggestions of mechanisms used by some disciplines which could be considered by other disciplines:

### Supervisors

- New supervisors should work with an experienced supervisor in a co-supervision arrangement.
- New supervisors should have a mentor/buddy who is available to provide advice on the various stages of the supervision process, in particular project design and progress evaluation. The mentor/buddy is also available for general advice. The mentor/buddy may or may not have any direct interaction with the student depending on the preferences of the supervisor.

### Examiners

- New examiners should receive training and/or mentoring in what the assessment criteria mean, how to apply them and how to write an examiner's report.
- New examiners should receive one-on-one advice from experienced examiners.
- Discipline postgraduate coursework coordinators provide advice and support to new examiners.
- Disciplines should seek to provide new examiners with examples of high quality examiner reports.