



## Academic Board Policy on Awards with Honours

**Approved by:** Academic Board on 13 August 2003

**Date of effect:** 14 August 2003

**Amended by:** Academic Board on 18 April 2007

**Effective from:** 19 April 2007

### **Other Policy Documents**

This policy should be read in conjunction with the *University of Sydney (Coursework) Rule 2000 (as amended)* and the Academic Board Policy on Assessment and Examination of Coursework.

### **Principles**

1. Honours degrees are offered to provide research training opportunities to students demonstrating special proficiency, and the ability for further study and research within a discipline.
2. Honours courses exist to attract and stimulate students of high ability in a discipline.
3. Honours courses may be graded to reward and recognise outstanding academic ability within a discipline.
4. The requirements and criteria for entering, undertaking and achieving an award with honours, and the criteria for awarding honours at various levels must be available to students in clear statements and in a timely fashion so as to enable any student with the necessary motivation and ability to aspire to complete their award with honours.

### **Definitions**

*Integrated Honours degrees:* These are Honours degrees where the Honours material is incorporated into the base degree.

*Appended Honours degrees:* These are Honours degrees where a student may graduate with a base degree, or take an extra year to qualify for Honours.

### **Transitional arrangements:**

This policy will apply to all students who commenced their degree during or after 2008/2009. Students who commenced prior to 2008 may complete their degree, including any honours component according to the faculty resolutions in force at the time of commencement.

The timeline for faculty amendments to honours processes and resolutions is as follows:

- minor changes to faculty processes and units of study: these will be introduced for 2008;
- minor amendments to faculty resolutions: these will be introduced for 2008, but transitional arrangements are to be developed by faculties for continuing students (i.e. students who enrolled prior to 2008); and
- major curriculum and resolution changes: faculties will develop these for introduction in 2009, with appropriate transitional arrangements for continuing students (i.e. students who enrolled prior to 2009).

## **Policy**

1. Entry to an Honours degree at the University of Sydney requires a grade average of at least 65, averaged across at least 48 credit points of undergraduate units of study. These 48 credit points should not include Junior Units where the degree is available on a full time basis to high school graduates.
2. All honours degrees shall provide the foundations of research training within the discipline concerned and shall have an identifiable discipline-specific individual research, scholarly or creative component, with a minimum of 12 credit points of research. These 12 credit points must be readily identifiable by either a separate unit of study code, or as a quantified component of a unit or units of study.
3. The award of a degree with honours and the grade of honours awarded shall be assessed and calculated according to one of two mechanisms: by an honours Mark for appended Honours or by a grade average calculated across at least 48 credit points of study for integrated Honours.
4. In appended Honours degrees and integrated Honours using a grade average based on less than 96 credit points the grades for the award of honours, where appropriate, shall be:
  - First Class 80-100
  - Second Class/Division 1 75-79
  - Second Class/Division 2 70-74
  - Third Class 65 – 69
  - honours not awarded: below 65.
5. In integrated Honours degrees using a grade average drawn from 96 or more credit points the grades for the award of honours, where appropriate, shall be
  - First Class grade average  $\geq 75$
  - Second Class/Division 1 grade average  $\geq 70$
  - Second Class/Division 2 grade average  $\geq 65$

These are minimum grades. Faculties may set higher cut-off marks if deemed appropriate.

Third Class honours shall not be awarded in integrated Honours degrees. Students who do not achieve Second Class/Division 2 standard should be awarded a Pass degree.

Faculties should determine the WAM formula to be used and which Units of Study are to be included in the WAM calculation, however junior Units of Study should not be included in the WAM calculation for degrees that are available on a full-time basis to students entering directly from high school. The weighting of the research components of the WAM should be at least twice the weighting for non-Honours components.

Faculties offering integrated honours may choose to use the grades for appended honours. This is particularly recommended for those integrated honours courses with a substantial research component.

6. Faculties shall publish annually a clear statement in the faculty handbook describing:
  - a. the honours component in degrees in which the award of honours is made
  - b. the requirements and criteria for entry into honours courses;
  - c. the requirements for completion of an award with honours

- d. the means by which the final award of honours is determined including, where appropriate, the method by which the honours mark is calculated, the classes of honours available, including, where appropriate the availability of university medals, the marks necessary for the award of various classes and the criteria for assessment.

The assessment of research units of study in Honours shall be assessed, at least in part, by a dissertation.

7. Each calendar year, faculties shall submit a report to the Academic Board setting out the number and percentages of the various classes of honours and pass students in each award for the year, a comment on how these percentages compare with those of previous years identifying significant trends, a comment on issues arising from the figures and the faculties plans for addressing those issues, and a comment on action taken pursuant to any previous such reports.

### **University Medals**

1. A faculty may signal outstanding achievement in a Bachelor course by the award of a University Medal to one or more students who have satisfied the requirements of an Honours degree.
2. Faculties should discuss and agree on the normal minimum levels of academic performance required for the award of a Medal, preferably using broadly comparable University-wide criteria based on the conditions for the award of First Class Honours. In those cases where departments submit results and recommendations to more than one faculty, the award of both Medals and First Class Honours in all of the faculties should be consistent overall with the departmental order of merit.
3. The merits of each candidate for a Medal should be debated by each faculty honours board. The award of a Medal should not be based solely on a numerical mark/faculty formula (i.e. a minimum criterion should be regarded as a necessary but not sufficient condition for the award of a Medal).
4. A distinction should be made between the requirements for the award of First Class Honours and of Medals. For example, in courses in which an Honours Fourth Year is prescribed the Honours awards could be based solely on final year marks. On the other hand, Medals should be awarded taking account of students' academic performance throughout their university studies in that course. Recipients of Medals would be expected to have not only outstanding performances in the Honours year, but also meritorious undergraduate performances (particularly in their major subjects), especially after first year. Faculties should allow consideration of students who exhibit ever-improving academic performance.
5. Faculty honours boards should consider candidates for Medals within the context of the whole field of candidates for First Class Honours within the course in question. Members of honours boards should have before them the complete academic records of students recommended by departments for the award of First Class.
6. Honours students entering the University with advanced standing should be assessed for Medals in the same way as students undertaking their entire studies within the University.