



The University of Sydney

Parallel teaching of postgraduate and undergraduate students

Approved by: Academic Board on 9 June 2004
Date of effect: 10 June 2004
Amended: 15 November 2006

1. Policy

Parallel teaching of postgraduate and undergraduate students occurs where there is significant overlap in the teaching of a unit of study for the two groups of students. Typically, the practice involves the material being taught to both groups in the same setting, although it may involve postgraduate students spending some time in separate contact hours and/or having different assessment procedures from undergraduate students. While having primary application to postgraduate coursework students, there may be occasions when postgraduate research students undertake coursework units, and in such cases this policy will apply to postgraduate research students.

2. Background

The policy "Use of parallel teaching of postgraduate and undergraduate students in postgraduate courses" had been in place since August 1998. Concern about practices across the faculties had been identified during Academic Board Faculty Review Visits. At the request of the Graduate Studies Committee, the Postgraduate Coursework Sub-Committee investigated the matter. Each faculty reported on compliance with the policy. As a result some faculties were required to modify their practices and amendments to the policy were made.

3. Coverage

This policy applies to all postgraduate and all undergraduate (including honours) units of study.

4. Principles

- 4.1 While acknowledging some need for diversity across the University, there should nevertheless be some uniformity across the faculties in relation to parallel teaching.
- 4.2 Parallel teaching of postgraduate students and undergraduate Pass students is not permitted as a matter of course and faculties wishing to undertake some parallel teaching must seek approval from the Graduate Studies Committee.
- 4.3 As students enrolled in a Master's level course are undertaking studies at a graduate level they must be able to complete their studies without being taught in parallel with undergraduate Pass level students (i.e. students enrolled in the first three years of an undergraduate course).
- 4.4 A distinction is drawn between Pass and more advanced (i.e. beyond the first three years) undergraduate teaching.

- 4.5 There are a number of circumstances where sound academic reasons can be advanced for parallel teaching of Master's and non-Pass undergraduate students, especially, but not exclusively, in the performing arts; creative arts; and language fields.
- 4.6 There are several circumstances where the presence of a non-postgraduate student in a postgraduate unit of study will not disadvantage postgraduate students. For example, current undergraduate students, international exchange students and study abroad students who satisfy the prerequisites for a particular postgraduate unit of study, should be able to enrol in postgraduate units of study with appropriate Faculty permission.
- 4.7 Parallel teaching can not be justified on non-academic grounds (i.e. on a cost basis). If it is not cost-effective to teach a unit of study at the postgraduate level, then that unit should either be subsidised from within Department/Faculty resources or it should not be offered.
- 4.8 There may be benefits of joint teaching in laboratory settings; in the creative and performing arts; and in language teaching.
- 4.9 It is recognised that where the education of an individual postgraduate student will be enhanced by taking specific undergraduate units of study which serve to fill isolated 'gaps' in an otherwise acceptable undergraduate qualification. These include the situations where
 - 4.9.1 students with overseas undergraduate qualifications require an element of Australian-specific training in a single unit of study, and
 - 4.9.2 a student is able to gain useful 'background' knowledge by taking a unit of study outside the main focus of their discipline. In all of these scenarios, it is important that teaching arrangements and assessment procedures for postgraduate students be transparent and clearly differentiated from those for undergraduates.

5. Limitations

- 5.1 The upper limits be prescribed for possible amounts of undergraduate coursework that may be included are:
 - 5.1.2 25% for Graduate Certificate courses
 - 5.1.3 12.5% for Graduate Diplomas courses
 - 5.1.4 nil% for coursework Master's courses
 - 5.1.5 for students who progress through an articulated set of programs, these limits will apply at the first stage of their articulation, and in the subsequent levels of articulation the limits will be nil%.
- 5.2 Recognising the benefits of parallel teaching in some laboratory situations, in the creative arts and in the performing arts, and in the languages, in these circumstances there may be flexibility in the application of the limits prescribed above.

6. Procedures

- 6.1 There may be situations where a faculty wishes to accept an applicant for admission to candidature for a postgraduate coursework course even though the applicant has a weakness in his or her academic preparation. Where that weakness is best addressed by having the applicant undertake one or more undergraduate units of study, the person should be admitted initially to a period of preliminary candidature and should not be admitted to full candidature until he or she has successfully completed the preliminary conditions. The arrangements for the preliminary period should be transparent and would require the undergraduate units of study to be undertaken within the limits adopted by the Graduate Studies Committee.

Normally this would involve either admission at a lower level of award or admission subject to satisfactory performance in a specified preliminary period of study.

- 6.2 In putting a case to the Graduate Studies Committee for approval of parallel teaching, departments will need to justify the request on academic grounds. The following information will be required:
- 6.2.1 name of each unit of study taught in parallel and its function in the course (i.e. compulsory, core, elective);
 - 6.2.2 minimum proportion of the proposed course which involves parallel teaching;
 - 6.2.3 maximum proportion of the proposed course which involves parallel teaching;
 - 6.2.4 typical proportion of the proposed course which involves parallel teaching (i.e., the proportion which would feature in a typical student's course);
 - 6.2.5 how teaching and/or assessment is differentiated from that for undergraduates;
 - 6.2.6 whether the teaching is in one of the creative arts, the performing arts; a laboratory setting; or for languages;
 - 6.2.7 whether sufficient units of study will be available in each semester to enable a student to avoid parallel teaching but still have a reasonable range of choices
- 6.3 Approval is not required for the enrolment of non-postgraduate students, international exchange students or study abroad students, in postgraduate units of study provided such students satisfy the prerequisites for the particular postgraduate units of study. Such students are able to enrol in postgraduate units of study provided they have appropriate Faculty-level permission.

7. Authority

7.1 Development/consultation

In developing this policy, input was sought from the faculties on issues arising from the previous policy. The Postgraduate Coursework Sub-Committee undertook the development before referring the policy to the Graduate Studies Committee and Academic Board for approval.

7.2 Management responsibility

The Dean of Graduate Studies shall have overall management responsibility for the policy.

7.3 Implementation and monitoring

The Dean of Graduate Studies shall have responsibility for implementing and monitoring the policy. Monitoring of compliance with the policy shall occur on an annual basis.

7.4 Review

The Dean of Graduate Studies shall initiate a review process every five years, or earlier if the need arises.

7.5 Communication

The Dean of Graduate Studies shall be responsible for communicating the policy.

7.6 Contact

Inquiries should be directed to:
Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies

H04
Phone: 9036 9516
E-mail: DoGS@usyd.edu.au

8. Related information

8.1 Related University legislation, resolutions, policies and procedures include:

8.1.1 University of Sydney (Coursework) Rule 2000 (as amended) at <http://www.usyd.edu.au/policy>

8.2 University policies superseded or replaced by this policy:

8.1.2 Use of parallel teaching of postgraduate and undergraduate students in postgraduate courses (approved by the Academic Board on 13 August 1998) at <http://www.usyd.edu.au/policy>