

Principles for teaching different cohorts of students and students at different levels in parallel

Approved by: Academic Board on 7 November 2012

Date of effect: 1 January 2012

Amended:

1. Policy

Parallel teaching is the teaching of students at different levels with different learning goals in a single learning situation where they interact with one another such as a classroom, lecture room, laboratory, field trip or online discussion forum. Parallel teaching can occur among students from different cohorts who enrol in a common unit of study, or it may occur when different units of study share a learning situation. Parallel teaching can provide positive educational opportunities for students to jointly participate in learning experiences. However, in situations where students at different levels need to learn comparable disciplinary content, it is important that teaching situations are designed to provide the maximum opportunities for all students to achieve their learning goals and to meet outcomes and standards appropriate to their learning level.

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. The policy was revised in 2012 to take into account revisions to the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and developments in the area of graduate entry professional programs and combined degrees.

3. Coverage

These principles apply to the creation of all coursework units of study.

4. Principles

4.1 Each unit of study should indicate expected or required prior learning and the learning outcomes to be achieved on completion of the unit. Statements of prior learning and learning outcomes should consider both discipline specific learning and generic attributes. All students who complete a given unit are expected to achieve the outcomes.

4.2 As noted in the Australian Qualifications Framework, the design of units of study and learning experiences within an award course should ensure coherent learning outcomes at each stage that are consistent with level of the award course. Students should have an opportunity to demonstrate the learning outcomes and the assessment system should provide assurance that they have been met by all students.

4.3 Teaching in a unit of study should be designed and delivered so as to assist students to achieve the learning outcomes of the unit of study and of their award course, taking into account the prior learning that the students can be expected to have achieved.

4.4 A learning situation may involve students pursuing a variety of learning objectives but should normally be designed for students who are at similar levels, thus sharing common prior learning and aspiring to the same learning

outcomes at a comparable level. In particular, postgraduate students should undertake postgraduate units of study, and participate in learning situations whose teaching builds on prior learning and the knowledge, skills and application of these achieved in undergraduate study.

- 4.4.1 Postgraduate students enrolled in courses at level 8 and 9 of the AQF may enrol in common units provided that the unit caters for the prior learning of all students and all students are working towards the same learning outcomes.
- 4.4.2 Postgraduate research students enrolled in courses at levels 9 and 10 of the AQF may participate in any units of usually taken by students at level 7 and above, according to their individual learning needs as identified in the Training Needs Assessment or by the supervisor in consultation with the student.
- 4.4.3 Honours students enrolled in courses at level 8 of the AQF may enrol in undergraduate units of study usually taken by students at levels 7 or 8 and/or in postgraduate units of study usually taken by students at levels 8 or 9, on the advice and approval of the head of department and relevant course coordinators.
- 4.4.4 Graduates enrolled in graduate entry courses at level 7 who have the required discipline specific knowledge and graduate attributes from a prior level 7 award may enrol in postgraduate units of study usually taken by students at level 8 and 9, on the advice and approval of the head of department and relevant course coordinators. It is expected that these cases will apply mainly to elective units during later years of the level 7 course.
- 4.5 Additional cases of parallel teaching of undergraduate and postgraduate students, beyond those described in 4.4 above, may be approved by the Academic Board on the recommendation of the Graduate Studies Committee. The Academic Board must ensure that sound academic reasons exist for teaching postgraduate students and undergraduate students in parallel and that the interests of neither cohort is compromised.

5. Related information

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

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

5.2 University policies superseded or replaced by this policy:

5.1.2 Parallel Teaching of Postgraduate and Undergraduate Students (approved by the Academic Board on 9 June 2004)