

## **POLICY ON HONOURS PROGRAM**

### **1. SCOPE**

This policy applies to 80 credit point Honours (Fourth Year Honours) programs undertaken after completion of an appropriate undergraduate Bachelor's degree and to Honours (Embedded Honours) programs embedded in the final year of the equivalent of at least the fourth year of study at Bachelor level<sup>1</sup>.

### **2. PURPOSE OF HONOURS PROGRAMS**

2.1 The main purpose of Honours programs, irrespective of discipline, is to allow students to build upon the knowledge gained in the Pass degree and to develop research techniques for further study at higher degree level. However, recognising that many Honours graduates do not subsequently undertake research degrees, there will also be opportunity for the development of attributes associated with research practice that have wider application. Within this broader context of introducing students to research and research practice, Faculties will formulate and explicitly state the aims and objectives of their Honours programs. The content of the program, and the assessment processes, will clearly reflect those objectives.

2.2 Faculties will identify in course proposals the particular purposes and character which distinguish their Honours programs from their other undergraduate and postgraduate coursework programs.

### **3. CONSISTENCY WITH THE UNIVERSITY'S MISSION**

Any Honours program will be consistent with the Mission of Australian Catholic University.

### **4. ENTRY PATHWAYS**

4.1 In order to qualify for entry to an Honours program a student must satisfy the requirements set out in the Schedule to the Admission Rules.

4.2 Enrolment in an Honours program may be subject to the Faculty/ies through the relevant School(s) being able to provide appropriate resources and staff to supervise the program of study and research.

### **5. NATURE OF PROGRAM**

5.1 The Honours program will require:

- (a) for Fourth Year Honours programs: completion of 80 credit points in academic studies (one-year full-time equivalent);
- (b) for Embedded Honours programs: completion of 40 credit points in academic studies as prescribed (in addition to satisfying the requirements of the Pass degree).

Where part-time enrolment in an Honours program is available, Faculties will identify provisions for the completion of Honours on a part-time basis.

5.2 Normally, Honours programs will contain a mix of advanced theory, professional training (where appropriate), research training and a research project leading to a thesis (in some fields, for example the performing arts, an alternative form of presentation may be appropriate). The research project leading to a thesis will be between 30 and 50 credit points.

5.3 Honours programs will include components involving the development of both written and oral communication skills<sup>2</sup>.

### **6. CHARACTERISTICS OF LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Characteristics of learning outcomes in Honours programs include:

- (a) a knowledge and application of research skills, methodology and technology and a capacity to conduct independent, self-directed research as well as to contribute effectively to research teams;

---

<sup>1</sup> This Policy also applies to the Postgraduate Diploma in Psychology thesis.

<sup>2</sup> For example, students will be required to present a seminar on their research project.

- (b) advanced conceptual and critical analysis skills and further development and consolidation of cumulative, sequential specialist/discipline knowledge or initial engagement with a new area of knowledge at the cutting edge of research;
- (c) a capacity to identify critically problems requiring research and to develop appropriate solutions/methodology to collect, analyse and interpret data; and
- (d) a capacity to complete, to a high standard, a thesis with a significant component of research, as a basis for higher degree research and professional practice.

## **7. SUPERVISION**

- 7.1 Normally the academic staff involved in supervising Honours students will be active researchers or at least have a sound background in research. The principal supervisor will be an Australian Catholic University academic staff member. A co-supervisor may also be appointed.
- 7.2 Where appropriate, involvement in supervision by qualified non-academics, for example from industry, will be encouraged. In some instances it may be appropriate to appoint an external contributor as co-supervisor.
- 7.3 The University will provide opportunities for supervisor training and development, and all supervisors will operate in accordance with the University Guidelines on Good Practice in Honours Supervision (Appendix A).
- 7.4 University Guidelines on the Responsibilities of Honours Students (Appendix B) will be provided to all Honours students.

## **8. THESIS**

- 8.1 Honours theses will normally be between 10,000 and 15,000 words in length, with a maximum of 18,000 words.
- 8.2 The Honours thesis may take the form of a thesis manuscript or be in a format which incorporates a component for a refereed journal publication, as outlined in the Guidelines for Theses in Appendix C<sup>3</sup>, which also provides guidelines regarding word length for this alternative format.
- 8.3 Honours theses will be submitted by the third Monday in October<sup>4</sup> to enable Honours results to be finalised in line with the date (in early December) for same published by Universities Australia.
- 8.4 Two bound copies and one electronic copy of the thesis must be submitted for examination.

## **9. ASSESSMENT**

- 9.1 Assessment in Honours programs will be conducted in accordance with the *University's Assessment Policy and Procedures* (<http://my.acu.edu.au/38271> [Policy 6.19]).
- 9.2 Faculties will develop explicit criteria for the assessment of each Honours program. Such criteria will include expected standards of performance for each Honours classification. These criteria will address but not be limited to:
  - (a) clarity of the aims and the demonstrated significance of the study;
  - (b) breadth and depth of the survey of relevant literature and evidence of appropriate critical understandings;
  - (c) design and use of appropriate methodology to provide relevant insights and/or data;
  - (d) demonstration of critical analysis and perceptive scholarship to draw conclusions;
  - (e) evidence of creative ability and potential for future research;
  - (f) accuracy and clarity of the presentation of the thesis.

<sup>3</sup> These matters relate to formatting of the thesis only. Assessment occurs in accordance with Section 9.

<sup>4</sup> See also Academic Regulations re extension of submission date for Honours thesis.

All students and examiners will be provided with a clear statement of the criteria and standards.

- 9.3 Schools will provide regular and systematic feedback to students on all elements of their performance in the Honours program as it proceeds.
- 9.4 Schools will maintain written records of the criteria used for grading Honours students' performance to facilitate comparability from year to year. Written records of the considerations taken into account in reaching final grades for students will be maintained.

## 9.5 Examination of Thesis

9.5.1 Every Honours thesis will be examined by two examiners, normally including one internal and one external examiner<sup>5</sup>.

9.5.2 In the case of a thesis in a format which incorporates a component for journal submission examiners will weight the grading of the thesis as follows:

- (a) (i) literature review: 30%;  
(ii) journal submission component: 50%;  
(iii) expanded methods section or discussion of methodology: 20%;

or

- (b) (i) literature review: 50%;  
(ii) journal submission component: 50%.

9.5.3 The examiners will examine the Honours thesis and make separate reports which will be submitted for consideration to the Head of School.

9.5.4 Each examiner's report will include a recommendation that the student:

- (a) has met the Honours thesis requirement and has passed outright;  
(b) has passed the Honours thesis requirements, subject to minor changes, as recommended in the examiners' reports, being made to the satisfaction of the Head of School acting on the advice of the supervisor;  
(c) be permitted to revise and resubmit the Honours thesis within an appropriate timeframe of no more than one semester full-time or equivalent part-time, as determined by the Head of School, in consultation with the supervisor and in accordance with the Academic Regulations<sup>6</sup>; or  
(d) has failed to meet the Honours thesis requirements and has failed outright.

9.5.5 Examiners will also be requested to provide both a grade and numerical marks for the Honours thesis in accordance with the following:

Grade	Numerical marks	Explanation
HD	85-100	Work of exceptional quality showing clear understanding of subject matter and appreciation of issues; well formulated; arguments sustained; relevant literature referenced; marked evidence of creative ability and high level of intellectual work. The thesis suggests excellent potential for future research work.
DI	75-84	Work of good quality showing strong grasp of subject matter and appreciation of dominant issues, though not necessarily of the finer points; arguments clearly developed; relevant literature referenced; evidence of creative ability; solid

<sup>5</sup> Assessment is undertaken irrespective of the format adopted for the thesis, and is in no way contingent on publication in any journal.

<sup>6</sup> Any student who is permitted to resubmit a thesis will not be awarded a class of honours higher than Third Class, and will not be permitted to submit the thesis for a third time.

		intellectual work. The thesis suggests good potential for future research work.
CR	65-74	Work of solid quality showing competent understanding of subject matter and appreciation of main issues though possibly with some lapses and inadequacies; arguments clearly developed and supported by references; some evidence of creative ability; well prepared and presented. The thesis suggests limited potential for future research work.
PA	50-64	Adequate, but lacking breadth and depth; work generally has gaps; frequently work of this grade takes a simple factual approach and does not attempt to interpret the findings; at the lower end, indicates a need for considerable effort to achieve improvement. The thesis suggests little potential for future research work.
NN	0-49	Unsatisfactory; this grade characterises work that shows a lack of understanding of the topic and inadequacy in degree of relevance and/or completeness. The thesis does not suggest any potential for future research work.

The above grades and marks are awarded on the basis of the Honours thesis as submitted for examination and not on the basis of a version produced after revisions have been made in the light of examiners' comments.

9.5.6 In the case of examiners awarding the Honours thesis results that are more than 15 marks apart, the Head of School will refer the matter to the relevant School committee. The committee will be given copies of the thesis and of the examiners' reports and may:

- (a) seek consultation with and/or between the examiners;
- (b) not re-examine the thesis but make a recommendation to the Head of School based on the advice found within the conflicting examiners' reports;
- (c) recommend to the Head of School that the candidate be required to re-submit the thesis within an appropriate timeframe determined by the School committee, in consultation with the supervisor and in accordance with the Academic Regulations, only to the examiner assigning the lower marks; or
- (d) appoint an adjudicator, external to the committee, who will be given a copy of the thesis and the examiners' reports. The adjudicator will not act as an examiner but will provide advice based on the conflicting examiners' reports. The adjudicator's report will be given to the School committee which will make a final recommendation to the Head of School.

9.5.7 The grade of the Honours thesis will be calculated on the basis of the average of the marks awarded by the examiners.

## 10. CALCULATION OF HONOURS GRADE

10.1 The final Honours grade will be:

- (a) calculated as the average of the marks obtained by the student in all units comprising the Honours program, weighted by the credit point value of each unit; and
- (b) awarded in accordance with the table of Grading Codes contained in the Academic Regulations.

10.2 Where a student has been granted credit towards the Honours program on the basis of studies undertaken at another University or other institution, marks gained in those studies will be included in the calculation of the final Honours grade only if:

- (a) specified credit for individual units was granted under the relevant course rules; and

- (b) the marks allocated in the respective units are available at the time of calculation of the final Honours program grade.

## 11. APPEALS

Any appeal will be dealt with in accordance with the Academic Regulations. (<http://my.acu.edu.au/39999> [current Handbook]).

## 12. DOCUMENTS AND RELATED POLICIES

- **Academic Honesty Policy**  
<http://my.acu.edu.au/38271> [Policy 6.5]
- **Academic Regulations**  
<http://my.acu.edu.au/39999> [current Handbook]
- **Assessment Policy and Procedures**  
<http://my.acu.edu.au/38271> [Policy 6.19]
- **Cultural Diversity Policy**  
<http://my.acu.edu.au/38271> [Policy 1.2]
- **Intellectual Property Policy**  
<http://my.acu.edu.au/38271> [Policy 9.1]
- **Language and Literacy Policy**  
<http://my.acu.edu.au/38271> [Policy 6.3]
- **Mission Statement**  
<http://my.acu.edu.au/38271> [Policy 1.1]
- **Policy on Course Approval, Amendment and Review – Accredited Higher Education Courses**  
<http://my.acu.edu.au/38271> [Policy 12.1]
- **Principles of Inclusive Curriculum**  
<http://my.acu.edu.au/38271> [Policy 6.32]
- **Policy on Integrity of Courses**  
<http://my.acu.edu.au/38271> [Policy 6.4]
- **Definition of Internationalisation**  
<http://my.acu.edu.au/38271> [Policy 6.33]
- **Policy on Quality Teaching and Learning**  
<http://my.acu.edu.au/38271> [Policy 6.1]
- **Policy on Recognition of Prior Learning**  
<http://my.acu.edu.au/38271> [Policy 6.2]
- **Statute 10 – Student Conduct and Discipline**  
<http://my.acu.edu.au/39999> [current Handbook]
- **University Code of Conduct for Research**  
<http://my.acu.edu.au/39247>

## 13. REFERENCES

- *Guidelines for Honours Degrees* - Australian Qualifications Framework;
- *Fourth Year Honours Programs - Guidelines for Good Practice* - Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee; and
- *Policy on Honours Programs* - Flinders University.

## APPENDIX A

### GUIDELINES ON GOOD PRACTICE IN HONOURS SUPERVISION

The responsibilities of supervisors of students enrolled in the research component of an Honours program include:

1. verifying that the student is correctly enrolled;
2. planning an appropriate research topic with the student, which should include:
  - (i) evaluating the feasibility of the proposed research topic;
  - (ii) discussing the value of the research;
  - (iii) ensuring that the scope of the research is appropriate to the degree;
  - (iv) ensuring that adequate resources and funding will exist to support the project;
  - (v) ensuring that he or she has the necessary knowledge/expertise to supervise the student effectively in the area chosen;
3. becoming well acquainted with the student's academic background so that if the student needs additional skills and/or knowledge to undertake the proposed research project, the student can be informed how these might be acquired, or alternative courses of action can be discussed;
4. at the start of the research project, discussing with the student an agreed method of working and schedule of meetings;
5. informing the student about any planned extended leave (or retirement) during the student's enrolment and the arrangements made to provide effective supervision during such an absence;
6. maintaining close and regular contact with the student throughout the research project and structuring supervision sessions so that it is relatively easy for the student to ask questions and exchange ideas;
7. giving guidance to the student on the appropriate conceptual framework and research methods/techniques to adopt for the research project, and suggesting appropriate library and other information resources relevant to the field of research;
8. assisting the student to develop a research plan that sets out timelines for completing stages of the research project;
9. monitoring the student's performance and progress against the agreed timetable and assisting the student to develop solutions to problems as they are identified;
10. ensuring that inadequate progress or work below the standard generally expected for an Honours degree is brought to the student's attention;
11. ensuring that, where relevant, Honours students inform themselves of State and Commonwealth legislative requirements regarding ethics approval<sup>7</sup>;
12. ensuring that Honours students are aware of scholarships and prizes offered by the University at the postgraduate level, in anticipation of enrolment in a higher degree;
13. ensuring the student is aware of facilities, resources and technical assistance available in the School(s) and Faculty/ies to support his or her research;
14. ensuring the student's project has appropriate ethical and/or biosafety approval (if applicable), and that the student is aware at the start of the project of any confidentiality agreements or other issues of intellectual property;
15. ensuring the student's research is conducted in accordance with the University's occupational health and safety requirements<sup>8</sup>;

---

<sup>7</sup> More information regarding ethics approval can be obtained by contacting Research Services  
[http://my.acu.edu.au/staff/organisation/research/research\\_services](http://my.acu.edu.au/staff/organisation/research/research_services)

<sup>8</sup> See National OH&S Policy Statement and OH&S Roles and Responsibilities Policy  
[http://my.acu.edu.au/staff/services/preod/working\\_@\\_acu/policies\\_\\_and\\_\\_procedures/health,\\_safety\\_and\\_wellbeing](http://my.acu.edu.au/staff/services/preod/working_@_acu/policies__and__procedures/health,_safety_and_wellbeing)

16. encouraging the student to participate in research training opportunities provided in the Honours program, which may include attendance at seminars or other activities;
17. encouraging the student to submit written work, including drafts of the thesis, on an agreed schedule so that his or her progress can be assessed at regular intervals. In each instance, a turnaround time for any submitted work should be established;
18. providing constructive and critical comment on the content and the drafts of the Honours thesis, including providing advice on the presentation of the thesis or final research product;
19. ensuring the student is aware of the requirements of the examination process, including submission dates;
20. discussing with the student, in the first instance, any difficulties with the supervision relationship and, if the concerns are not resolved satisfactorily, seeking advice from the Honours course coordinator. Should the supervisory relationship breakdown, the supervisor should immediately inform the Honours course coordinator.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **GUIDELINES ON THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUDENTS ENROLLED IN THE RESEARCH COMPONENT OF AN HONOURS PROGRAM**

The responsibilities of students enrolled in the research component of an Honours program include:

1. becoming familiar and complying with the course rules governing the degree, and the University's student-related policies and procedures, including the Policy on Honours Programs, the University Code of Conduct for Research (<http://my.acu.edu.au/39247>) and the Intellectual Property Policy (<http://my.acu.edu.au/39247>);
2. ensuring accurate and timely enrolment;
3. planning, with the supervisor, an appropriate research project within the time limits defined by the research component of the Honours degree;
4. discussing with the supervisor an agreed method of working and schedule of meetings;
5. drawing to the attention of the supervisor any problems or difficulties being experienced with the research and thesis writing and sharing responsibility for seeking solutions;
6. maintaining the progress of the work in accordance with the stages and timelines agreed with the supervisor;
7. meeting with the supervisor at regular intervals and discussing the progress towards, and impediments to, maintaining the agreed timetable;
8. participating in research training opportunities provided in the Honours program, which may include attendance and presentations at seminars;
9. becoming familiar with, and adopting, safe working practices relevant to the field of research;
10. becoming familiar with, and adhering to, the ethical practices appropriate to the field of research;
11. becoming familiar with, and adopting, appropriate research practices relevant to the field of research for the retention and storage of research records and data;
12. becoming familiar and complying with the requirements of the University's Intellectual Property Policy;
13. accepting responsibility for preparing the Honours thesis for examination, including the standard of presentation;
14. discussing with the supervisor, in the first instance, any difficulties with the supervision relationship and, if the concerns are not resolved satisfactorily, seeking advice from the Honours course coordinator.

## APPENDIX C

### GUIDELINES FOR HONOURS THESES

#### 1. FORMAT OF THESIS

A thesis may take the form of a manuscript (traditional style thesis) or be in a format which incorporates a component for a refereed journal publication<sup>9</sup>.

#### 2. CONTENTS OF THESIS

2.1 Typical structure – a thesis manuscript (traditional style thesis) will normally be structured as follows:

- (a) Preliminary information
  - (i) Title page
  - (ii) Author declaration
  - (iii) Abstract of no more than 500 words
  - (iv) Table of contents
  - (v) List of all illustrations and diagrams
- (b) Body of the thesis
  - (i) Review of the literature: systematic or narrative review, depending on the nature of the thesis
  - (ii) Main text
- (c) Appendices

2.2 Typical structure – a thesis which incorporates a component for a refereed journal publication will normally be presented in three major parts as follows<sup>10</sup>:

- (a) Preliminary information
  - (i) Title page
  - (ii) Author declaration
  - (iii) Acknowledgements
  - (iv) Abstract of 150-250 words
  - (v) Table of contents
  - (vi) List of all illustrations and diagrams
- (b) Body of the thesis
  - (i) Review of the literature: systematic or narrative review, depending on the nature of the thesis
  - (ii) Main text (in the case of a journal article, the style may be influenced by the guidelines of the intended journal)
  - (iii) If in journal submission format under 9.5.2 (a) (iii), an expanded methods section or discussion of methodology
- (c) Appendices

---

<sup>9</sup> The adoption of a format where the completed project is written as a journal article is in line with the philosophy that research is not complete until the results have been published.

<sup>10</sup> The length of the journal article will depend on the requirements of the specific journal but may be of the order of 2,500 – 4,000 words. A literature review will normally be 3,000 – 4,000 words. [Adapted from *Research methods in physical activity* (Thomas and Nelson, 2001)]. The default guide for referencing and style will be that of the journal to which the paper will be submitted.

