

# Policy on Academic Programs offered across Australian Catholic University

## 1. Purpose of the Policy<sup>1</sup>

To provide guidance to the Faculties in the provision of coursework programs at multiple locations and/or in multiple modes.

## 2. Rationale

Australian Catholic University, like other multi-campus higher education providers, has the specific challenge of ensuring that the standards and outcomes of its academic courses offered at different locations and in different modes are equivalent. Further, it is important that the University can provide evidence of how it sets, maintains and reviews academic standards and measures outcomes for its academic programs. Of particular relevance is equivalence of standards and outcomes across locations and delivery modes, especially relating to comparable requirements of and support for students during their studies, student progress, student achievements and graduate outcomes.

Offering academic programs from its multiple campuses allows Australian Catholic University to optimise access to the expertise available across the University in order to:

- develop, enhance and deliver its academic programs,
- share best practice in pedagogy and curriculum,
- broaden student experience, and
- promote efficient use of the University's resources.

Australian Catholic University recognises that it is important to manage such programs effectively to ensure equivalence of academic standards, alignment with University, Faculty and campus strategic objectives, and effective academic program marketing and delivery.

## 3. Scope

This policy applies to all courses and units:

- (a) offered from more than one campus or other location off-campus or offshore, at which the University's coursework programs are delivered,
- (b) offered in more than one mode (on-campus, on-site, distance, off-shore, online, mixed-mode and multi-mode),<sup>2</sup>
- (c) where students undertake studies towards their award by means of more than one campus/mode.

## 4. Course Implementation Committees

4.1 Course implementation committees represent a key mechanism in relation to the operationalisation of this policy.

4.2 The Dean of the relevant Faculty will establish a course implementation committee for all courses offered beyond a single location. The committee will include representation from Schools involved in offering the course. The chair of this committee will be appointed by the Dean.

4.3 Where a course is jointly offered by Faculties in partnership, the course implementation committee will contain representation from relevant Schools in each of these Faculties. The chair of such a course implementation committee will be appointed following consultation between the relevant Faculty Deans.

4.4 The course implementation committee will:

- (a) oversee the operation of the course across all locations/modes as well as any location/mode-specific variation, in accordance with this policy;
- (b) agree upon any variations in offering the course and report same to both the Faculty and the Schools offering the course;
- (c) ensure that there is appropriate communication between the teaching staff within the relevant Schools involved in offering the course, and clear articulation of both learning objectives and assessment procedures;
- (d) ensure that teaching resources are comparable between the locations/modes, and are shared, where relevant;<sup>3</sup>
- (e) ensure that there is contribution by key teaching staff to the development of assessment items, including the preparation of the examination questions and the approval of the final examination;
- (f) coordinate assessment for the units comprising a particular course to ensure that there is equivalence in assessment standards, including the proportion of examination and non-examination assessments, hurdle requirements, and results calculation practices across the various locations/modes of offering the course;
- (g) implement strategies to ensure equivalence of assessment strategies across locations/modes such as the following:
  - (i) demonstrably equivalent assessment tasks with identical weights that are undertaken by students enrolled in the unit at all locations and in all modes;
  - (ii) assessment tasks that do not disadvantage any student cohort. Some location specific variation to assessment tasks may be appropriate in view of differing student cultural and national/State/Territory contexts;<sup>4</sup>
  - (iii) comparability between markers. A range of techniques will be used to ensure the equivalence of assessment across cohorts and between markers, including for example:
    - o using a detailed written marking guide for each item of assessment,
    - o training assessors to ensure a common interpretation of the marking guide,
    - o using one assessor or assessment team for each item of assessment across locations/modes, where such arrangements are practicable,
    - o second-marking of a selected sample of items of assessment to validate assessment standards and the interpretation of the marking guide across locations/modes,
    - o exchanging samples of graded items of assessment between assessors;
  - (iv) comparability of the results obtained by each cohort for each assessable task;
- (h) ensure that unit evaluation is conducted in a consistent manner and evaluation results are reviewed within each relevant School offering the unit; and
- (i) report to the Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee on the operation of the course and implementation of this policy, including the performance of students in the course and the extent to which cross-location/mode oversight was implemented and consistency achieved.

## **5. Courses offered from Multiple Locations and/or in Multiple Modes**

Where a course is offered from multiple locations and/or in multiple modes:

- (a) it will have the same course title and lead to the same award in each instance;

- (b) there will be equivalent course entry requirements, and credit transfer arrangements, for all offerings of the course;
- (c) the minimum eligibility score<sup>5</sup> for Year 12 entry to an undergraduate course will be equivalent for all offerings of the course. The Dean, in consultation with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs), will have the authority to limit numbers entering the course at any particular offering;
- (d) it will have identical course rules and equivalent length for all offerings of the course, although specific unit offerings may in some cases vary between locations, due to differing State/Territory accreditation/regulatory requirements;
- (e) the course will have identical learning outcomes so as to ensure equivalence across all offerings;
- (f) variations in the range of major or minor sequences or specialisations offered may be necessary or desirable to enhance the development of the academic portfolio at a particular location, differentiate offerings in the same market or meet national/State/Territory accreditation/regulatory requirements;
- (g) all such course variations will be clearly articulated in the Course Enrolment Guide, course promotional materials and other information regarding the course;
- (h) the sequencing of particular units may vary across offerings of the course, provided that they are consistent with pre-requisite requirements and do not restrict student academic progression;
- (i) the Faculty will consider whether offering selected units in the course (e.g. capstone units, units with small enrolments) in different semesters on different campuses or in different modes may provide students with more options; and
- (j) not all elective units in any particular course are required to be offered at each location or in each mode.

## **6. Courses Units offered from more than one Location and/or in more than one Mode**

Where a unit is offered at more than one location and/or in more than one mode:

- (a) the unit code will be identical;
- (b) subject to paragraph (c) below, for all offerings of the unit, there will be only one unit outline, which will contain information common to all modes of offering. For any given mode, the unit outline will also be augmented with information specific to that mode of offering;
- (c) variations of case studies, texts, references and other learning resources are permitted with the approval of the course implementation committee;
- (d) it will have comparable assessment tasks so as to ensure equivalence across all offerings.

## **7. Policy Review**

The University may make changes to this policy from time to time to improve the effectiveness of its operation. In this regard, any staff member who wishes to make any comments about this policy may forward their suggestions to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs).

## 8. Further Assistance

Any staff member who requires assistance in understanding this policy should first consult his/her nominated supervisor who is responsible for the implementation and operation of these arrangements in the work area. Should further advice be needed, the staff member should contact the Director, Institute for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning.

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<sup>1</sup> This policy has been adapted from a comparable policy of Monash University, *Academic Programs Offered from Multiple Campuses Policy* (accessed on 5 August 2007 at <http://www.policy.monash.edu/policy-bank/academic/education/awards/>), modified to apply to the specific cross-State/Territory nature of Australian Catholic University.

<sup>2</sup> See [Policy on Course Approval, Amendment and Review - Accredited Higher Education Courses](#).

<sup>3</sup> This is of particular importance for courses that are offered at more than one location and are accredited by an appropriate professional body.

<sup>4</sup> For example, in the Bachelor of Business (Accounting) offered at Caritas Francis Hsu College, it may be appropriate, while ensuring that the “home course” is offered to Hong Kong students, as required by the Hong Kong Council of Academic Accreditation, to vary assessment tasks for such reasons.

<sup>5</sup> See also the Admission Rules.

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