

Authority Source: Academic Board

Approval Date: 25/07/2016

Publication Date: 23/11/2016

Review Date: 25/07/2019

Effective Date: 25/07/2016

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Accessibility: Public

Status: Published

In developing this procedure the University had regard to the provisions of section 40B(1)(b) of the Human Rights Act 2004 (ACT).

PURPOSE:

1. This document sets out University requirements for postgraduate coursework courses.
2. These procedures cover the following postgraduate coursework awards offered by the University of Canberra (UC) within the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF):
 - graduate certificate (AQF level 8)
 - graduate diploma (AQF level 8)
 - masters degree (coursework) (AQF level 9)
 - masters degree (extended) (AQF level 9).
3. The procedures also cover postgraduate coursework sequences (nested courses), which are combinations of two or more of the above courses at different levels, in the same or related fields, usually with consistent course nomenclature, such that the lower level course forms the basis of credit in the higher level course.
4. These procedures are applicable for all University of Canberra postgraduate courses with a numeric course code. For courses with codes beginning with alpha codes, please refer to the [Undergraduate and Postgraduate Coursework Courses Procedures \(for courses starting with alpha course code\)](#).
5. The procedures provide *minimum requirements* within which faculties may develop and administer postgraduate coursework courses. When a faculty seeks Academic Board accreditation for a particular course or sequence, it may specify more demanding requirements than the general University policy.
6. Requirements for individual courses are stated in the Course Particulars for each course. Information about a specific course should be obtained from the accreditation document and Course Particulars in addition to this document.
7. Requirements for masters degrees by research, doctor of philosophy and professional doctorates are in [Higher Degrees by Research: Policy and Procedures](#) (the Gold Book) Part 3, [Distinctive Features of the Research Degrees and Programs](#).

PROCEDURE:

1. Key requirements

1.1. Purpose of a postgraduate course or sequence

1.1.1. A postgraduate coursework course or sequence will introduce a graduate student to study in a new discipline or extend study in a field or discipline beyond undergraduate level, for work-related and/or professional purposes and as a pathway to further learning. (In AQF terms these purposes are described as *broadening or deepening* students' knowledge and skills.)

1.1.2. UC courses comply with AQF specifications including the purpose and learning outcomes of each qualification type.

1.1.3. Courses will reflect the University's professional education focus and enable students to acquire the [Graduate Attributes Policy](#).

1.1.4. Graduate certificates and graduate diplomas share the same statement of purpose in the AQF. Learning outcomes are distinguished in that graduate certificates reflect 'specialised knowledge' and graduate diplomas 'advanced knowledge'.

1.1.5. Graduate diploma and postgraduate diploma courses are separate categories for Australian Government reporting purposes. The University offers both kinds of course leading to the same award of graduate diploma.

1.1.6. The masters degree (coursework) and masters degree (extended) have the same purpose in the AQF. While both qualification types may prepare graduates for professional practice, the masters degree (extended) is designed to prepare graduates to engage in a profession.

1.1.7. The Juris Doctor course at UC is a masters degree (extended) under the AQF. The [AQF Qualifications Issuance Policy](#) permits the award title 'Juris Doctor' for a masters degree (extended) for legal practice. Refer to the AQF for additional information.

1.2. Admission to postgraduate coursework courses

1.2.1. Students admitted to a course will commence study with a sufficient basis of prior knowledge and skills to achieve the course learning outcomes and the learning outcomes for the AQF qualification type and level in the time available in the course. The University's standard minimum admission requirement for a postgraduate coursework course is normally the completion of a bachelor's degree (AQF level 7).

1.2.2. Admission requirements may be in the same or in a different discipline to the undergraduate degree and will be determined for each course according to the purpose of the postgraduate course or sequence.

1.2.3. Where admission to a course requires prior study in the same discipline, guidance on what constitutes the same discipline for the purpose of that course, in terms of relevant field(s) and amount of study, will be included in the admission requirements in the Course Particulars.

1.2.4. The [Admission Policy for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Coursework Courses](#) and related *Procedures* provide guidelines for alternative entry to postgraduate courses on the basis of recognition of prior learning, equivalent graduate status and other grounds. When the basis for admission includes an equivalent to formal study, the learning (e.g. from professional experience) must be in a field relevant to the course to which admission is sought.

1.2.5. Where admission to a course requires work or professional experience in addition to standard requirements, the professional experience may justify a shorter course duration than the AQF maximum for the award type (see Volume of learning and duration below). In such cases a minimum of three years of professional experience is required in the same or cognate area as the course to which admission is sought. The nature and level of the professional experience required, with examples, where possible, should be stated in the admission requirements for the course. *Note:* Course proponents may make a case for exception to the three year requirement on specific academic grounds.

1.3. Credit and minimum amount of required study at UC

1.3.1. Credit provisions for postgraduate courses are set out in the [Credit Procedure](#).

1.3.2. Under the [University of Canberra Courses and Awards \(Courses of Study\) Rules 2013](#), to be eligible for the award of a graduate certificate, graduate diploma or masters by coursework, a student must obtain at least 12 credit points towards the academic requirements of that award through study at UC. For a masters degree (extended) a student must obtain at least 24 credit points towards the academic requirements of that award through study at UC.

1.3.3. External credit may be granted for up to the remaining credit points in a course within limits of the [Credit Procedure](#). The Course Particulars for a course may specify less credit than generally permitted by the Rules and the Credit Procedures.

1.4. Postgraduate coursework sequences

1.4.1. In a postgraduate coursework sequence (consisting of graduate certificate and/or graduate diploma and/or masters degree), admission requirements for all courses would normally be the same and academic requirements of the lower level course(s) would be part of the requirements of the higher level course(s) unless otherwise stated in the DCP for the relevant course.

1.4.2. In a postgraduate coursework sequence, the award earned by completion of a course which forms the basis for credit in a higher level course is said to be *subsumable* in the award earned by completion of the higher level course. Students who meet academic requirements for a lower level award may exit from the higher level course with that award. This relationship will be stated in the DCP for all relevant courses.

1.5. Course design and course components

1.5.1. In accordance with the AQF specification, as a **masters (extended)** course is designed to prepare graduates for a profession, the practice-related learning component of the course must be developed in consultation with a relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body.

1.5.2. A significant component of a **masters (coursework)** course that prepares students for a profession will be developed in collaboration with the relevant professional body.

1.5.3. Postgraduate courses may include streams or specialisations as options for students. A single course may lead to more than one award, with the award received by a student depending on their choice of specialisation within the course. Where a single course leads to more than one award, requirements for each award will be specified in the Course Particulars. A substantial proportion of the academic requirements of the course should relate to the specific award.

Research components

1.5.4. A research project in a postgraduate coursework course will normally be no more than 25 per cent of the total credit points of the course.

1.5.5. Research units in a postgraduate coursework course are G or PG level (see Unit levels below) not R level, which is reserved for units that contribute to the research component of a higher degree by research. *Research project units* must be PG level.

1.5.6. The AQF requires coursework masters degrees to include a research dimension. To meet AQF requirements^[1], UC masters (coursework) and masters (extended) courses will include the equivalent of at least 3 credit points training in research skills (normally but not necessarily as a separate unit) and a minimum of 3 credit points independent research project work.

1.5.7. The following UC definitions provide guidance in relation to AQF requirements for research outcomes in coursework masters degrees:

- a. A *capstone experience* is usually at the end of a course and provides a reflective opportunity that helps students to integrate what they have learnt over the course of their degree and/or prepares them for transition to the next phase of their development, typically either professional practice or further study. (For example, preparation of a professional portfolio or a work-integrated learning activity, either work-based or simulated)
- b. A *piece of scholarship* is work that involves critical review, synthesis and evaluation, and is in a form appropriate for exchange and use by other members of the scholarly/professional community. (For example, a critical review of literature or practice)
- c. A *research-based project* contributes to the advancement of knowledge, involving some independent research activity and supervisory assistance.

1.6. Unit levels

1.6.1. Units of study in postgraduate coursework courses are G (Graduate) level or PG (Postgraduate) level (see Definitions). The level of units in a postgraduate coursework course or sequence is determined by its purpose:

- a. If intended to introduce a graduate student to study in a new discipline (to broaden knowledge and skills), the course will include at least some units at G level.
- b. If intended to extend study in a field or discipline beyond undergraduate level (to deepen knowledge and skills) the course will normally contain a majority of units at PG level.

1.6.2. A **graduate certificate** course that introduces students to a new discipline would normally include at least 12cp at G level. A course that builds on a previous qualification in the same discipline would consist predominantly of PG level units.

1.6.3. A **graduate diploma** course that introduces students to a new discipline will include at least 12cp at G level. A course in the same discipline as the preceding qualification will consist predominantly of PG level units.

1.6.4. **Masters degree (coursework)** courses will include a minimum of 24 credit points of units at PG level. A coursework masters course that introduces students to a new discipline will include at least 12cp at G level. A course in the same discipline as the preceding qualification will include predominantly PG level units.

1.6.5. The 12 credit points *minimum amount of study to be undertaken at UC for a masters by coursework degree must be at PG level.*

1.6.6. **Masters degree (extended)** courses will include a minimum of 24 credit points of units at PG level.

1.7. Volume of learning and duration

1.7.1. The amount of study required to obtain a postgraduate coursework award will be determined for each course according to the purpose of the postgraduate course or sequence and AQF volume of learning guidelines and learning outcome specifications for each award type.

1.7.2. In general, courses that introduce a student to study in a new discipline require the maximum volume of learning specified in the AQF range for the award type.

1.7.3. Where the volume of learning is less than the maximum indicated by the AQF, the academic rationale for the variation must demonstrate that learning outcomes of the course are appropriate for the AQF qualification type, level and the discipline, and that students are able to achieve all learning outcomes in the time available.

1.7.4. A shorter duration may be appropriate when:

- a. the qualification on which admission is based is in the same discipline (or sufficient commonality of discipline is established to Academic Board satisfaction), and the course is designed to deepen rather than broaden students' knowledge, skills and application; or
- b. substantial relevant professional experience is part of admission requirements (the nature and level of the work experience required, with examples if possible, should be specified in the Course Particulars); or
- c. shorter duration is justified on other academic grounds.

1.7.5. The volume of learning of a **graduate certificate** in the AQF is typically 0.5 – 1 year (12 to 24 credit points at UC). Provided the course design demonstrates that it meets the AQF level 8 criteria and graduate certificate learning outcomes, the standard duration of a graduate certificate course at the University of Canberra is 0.5 year (12cp).

1.7.6. The volume of learning of a **graduate diploma** in the AQF is typically 1 to 2 years (24 to 48 credit points at UC). Provided the course design demonstrates that it meets the AQF level 8 criteria and graduate diploma learning outcomes, the standard duration of a graduate diploma course at the University of Canberra is one year (24cp).

1.7.7. The volume of learning of a **masters degree (coursework)** is typically 1 to 2 years (24 to 48 credit points at UC). The volume of learning of a course will depend on both its purpose and its admission requirements.

1.7.8. If the purpose of the masters degree qualification is to *deepen* knowledge and skills gained from earlier study, the volume of learning will be:

- a. 1.5 years or 36 credit points following a level 7 qualification (bachelor degree);
- b. 1 year or 24 credit points following a level 8 qualification (bachelor honours degree, graduate certificate or graduate diploma).

1.7.9. If the purpose of the masters degree qualification is to *broaden* knowledge and skills, the volume of learning will be:

- a. 2 years or 48 credit points following a level 7 qualification (bachelor degree);
- b. 1.5 years or 36 credit points following a level 8 qualification (bachelor honours degree, graduate certificate or graduate diploma).

1.7.10. A masters course for deepening purposes (extending study in the same discipline as the preceding undergraduate qualification) may exceed 36 credit points if required for professional accreditation or other reasons.

1.7.11. The volume of learning of a **masters degree (extended)** is typically 3 to 4 years (72 to 96 credit points) following completion of a minimum of a 3 year bachelor qualification.

1.7.12. Courses at the same level may be combined, subject to relevant course policies and the [Credit Procedure](#). In a cluster of qualifications at the same level, some rationalisation of the volume of learning may be justifiable.^[2]

1.7.13. Proposals to combine masters (coursework) courses must require students to complete a minimum of an additional 24 credit points of work above the requirements of the longer of the two courses.

1.7.14. Courses must be completed in reasonable time to ensure graduates' knowledge and skills in the discipline are current. The maximum time students may take to complete a qualification may vary from course to course depending on the volume of learning of the course and professional or disciplinary requirements. Maximum periods less than the following will be recorded on the Course Particulars for a course:

| Volume of learning of the course (in EFTSL) | Standard maximum period of time to complete the course (from initial enrolment to completion including periods of approved leave) |
|---|---|
| 0.5 year (12 credit points) | 3 years from date of enrolment to date of completion |
| 1 year (24 credit points) | 4 years from date of enrolment to date of course completion |
| 1.5 years (36 credit points) | 5 years from date of enrolment to date of course completion |
| 2 years (48 credit points) | 6 years from date of enrolment to date of course completion |
| 3 years or longer (72 credit points or above) | 10 years from date of enrolment to date of course completion |

[1] Extracts from AQF Specification for the Masters Degree (Addendum to [AQF Second Edition](#), January 2013): *Graduates of a Masters Degree (Coursework) will have ... knowledge of research principles and methods applicable to a field of work and/or learning ... [and] will demonstrate the application of knowledge and skills to plan and execute a substantial research-based project, capstone experience and/or piece of scholarship. Graduates of a Masters Degree (Extended) will have ... knowledge of research principles and methods applicable to the discipline and its professional practice ... [and] will demonstrate the application of knowledge and skills to plan and execute a substantial research-based project, capstone experience and/or professionally focused project.*

[2] [AQF Explanations](#): Clustered qualifications, November 2012. For further UC guidance on relationships between courses and combined courses see the [Undergraduate Courses Procedure](#). The same principles (with the additional requirement of 3.8.13) apply at postgraduate level.

IMPLEMENTATION AND REPORTING:

Reporting

Compliance with procedures will be monitored by Learning and Teaching (L&T) through course approval

processes. Compliance with AQF specifications is checked when courses are accredited, re-accredited or revised.

GOVERNING POLICY AND LEGISLATION:

Governing framework or legislation

1. The issues in this policy fall within the parameters of the University's Courses and Awards Statute and Rules and the Admission Statute and Rules.
2. Implementation of this policy will be consistent with the Higher Education Standards Framework (2021), the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and requirements of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA).

SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

Related documents

- [Australian Qualifications Framework](#), Second Edition, January 2013 with addendum May 2014 (Amended Qualification Type: Masters Degree)
- [Australian Qualifications Framework Explanations](#), January 2013 with amendment May 2014
- [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#) (including Amendment No. 1, Feb 2013)
- Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) [Resource Library](#)
- [University of Canberra \(Courses and Awards\) Statute 2010](#) and [University of Canberra Courses and Awards \(Courses of Study\) Rules 2013](#)
- [Admission Statute 1995](#) and [University of Canberra Admission Rules](#)
- [Admission \(for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Coursework Courses\) Policy](#)
- [Course and Award Nomenclature Policy](#) (under review)
- [Course Policy](#) (under review)
- [Credit Procedure](#)
- [Graduates Attributes Policy](#)
- [Honours Courses Policy and Procedures](#)
- [New Course Development Policy](#)
- [New Course Development Procedure](#)
- [Undergraduate Courses Procedure](#)

DEFINITIONS:

| Terms | Definitions |
|--------------------|---|
| Course Particulars | Details of specific course information, including design, delivery, structure and assessment, which is approved through University course approval processes. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Equivalent Graduate Status | Equivalent Graduate Status is recognition of prior learning approved by Academic Board that enables admission to postgraduate courses on the basis of a combination of formal learning and work experience or professional membership, in addition to any special requirements of a course. See the Admission Policy and Procedures. |
| G (Graduate) in relation to a unit | The designation G in a unit title denotes a unit which is graduate in time and level and which does not assume undergraduate studies in the discipline of the subject content. Units at G level represent initial postgraduate skills and knowledge (in graduate certificate courses) and intermediate postgraduate skills and knowledge (in graduate diploma courses). G level units generally indicate content at AQF level 8. |
| PG (Postgraduate) in relation to a unit and in relation to a course | The designation PG in a unit title denotes a unit which is graduate in time and level and which extends studies beyond undergraduate (including honours) and graduate level. Units at PG level represent advanced postgraduate knowledge and skills. PG level units generally indicate content at AQF level 9. The term postgraduate or the abbreviation PG when used in relation to a course denotes any course which follows an undergraduate course. |
| R (Research) in relation to a unit | The designation R in a unit title denotes a postgraduate research level unit in a higher degree research course that contributes to the research component of the course. R units are not used in postgraduate coursework courses. |
| Volume of learning | The volume of learning is a dimension of the complexity of a qualification. It is used with the level criteria and qualification type descriptor to determine the depth and breadth of the learning outcomes of a qualification. The volume of learning identifies the notional duration of all activities required for the achievement of the learning outcomes specified for a particular AQF qualification type. It is expressed in equivalent full-time years. (AQF definition) |