

Honours Course Guidelines

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Purpose

This guideline supports the [Approval and Maintenance of Higher Education Courses Procedure](#) and describes the requirements for single-year Honours courses. Each Institute may implement further guidelines via a Honours handbook/unit description(s) that complements, but does not conflict with, this guideline.

Scope

This guideline applies to Honours courses consisting of a single year of study following on from a Bachelor degree.

Definitions

Note: Definitions throughout this guideline can be accessed via the [Policy Glossary](#) which is currently under development.

A further list of definitions specifically relevant to this guideline is included below:

Term	Definition
Degree with Honours	A four-year degree where an Honours year is embedded into the course as a fourth year of study.
Honours Course	A single year of full-time study (or equivalent), following on from a Bachelor degree, consisting of 120 credit points at fourth year level that combines coursework and research. The research component will be undertaken under the supervision of an appropriately qualified supervisor and may be presented as a thesis or by a combination of creative or practical work and supporting exegesis.
Supervisor	An academic staff member of the University with a minimum of an AQF level 9 degree or equivalent who is active in research. The responsibility of a supervisor is to guide the student towards successful completion of the thesis or creative or practical work and supporting exegesis.
Honours Coordinator	The person/s appointed by the Institute to take responsibility for implementing the course of study.

Legislative context

- [Federation University Australia Act 2010](#)
- [The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011 \(TEQSA Act\)](#)
- [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#)
- [Australian Qualifications Framework Second Edition January 2013](#)

Guideline statement

Honours course design

1. An honours course will consist of 120 credit points of study at AQF level 8.
2. The honours course will usually be undertaken over one academic year, taking nine months. Part-time students will typically complete within two academic years, and will usually complete coursework prior to thesis/creative or practical work with exegesis to ensure equity.
3. The course learning outcomes will align with the AQF learning outcome descriptors for a Bachelor Honours Degree as specified in the Australian Qualification Framework Second Edition January 2013.
4. The honours course will comprise a combination of coursework and research:
 - a. Coursework will include training in the principles of research which are designed to support the research project. For part-time students, coursework should normally be undertaken before the research thesis. If the course design includes separate literature review and research methods coursework units, each can be valued at no more than 12.5% (15 credit points) of the total course grade.
 - b. Research may be presented as a thesis or by a combination of creative or practical work and supporting exegesis. The research component will comprise at least 45 credit points of the course and be carried out under the guidance of at least one academic supervisor. Where the student is undertaking a creative or practical project, the exegesis should constitute between 30-50% of the work of the research project.

Admission

1. Admission to Honours requires completion of a three- or four-year undergraduate degree with a grade point average (GPA) of at least 6.0 in the final year or the relevant major sequence. In Psychology, the minimum entry requirement is a GPA of 5.0 in second- and third-year Psychology units.
2. With the exception of Psychology, a student who does not meet these entry requirements may present a case in writing to the Executive Dean, demonstrating the capabilities required to succeed in the course. Any decision regarding waiving requirements must be reported to the Chair, Academic Board, with reasons provided.
3. Students will normally propose a research topic for approval by the Honours course coordinator as part of the application for admission. In Science, the research topic/project to be undertaken by the student must be proposed by or in conjunction with the proposed supervisor. In Psychology, the project will be co-designed with the supervisor following enrolment. Approval of a proposed research topic may depend on the availability of a suitable supervisor.
4. Students may apply for leave from their studies during enrolment, however they must complete their studies within four years from their commencement date.

Thesis or creative/practical work with exegesis

1. Research may be presented as a thesis or by a combination of creative/practical work with supporting exegesis.
2. The thesis or research project length will be identified in the Institute's Honours handbook/unit description(s) relevant to the discipline.
3. The thesis or research project will have a clear focus and line of argument and be presented in accordance with the referencing and formatting requirements of the discipline or field of study, as identified in the relevant Honours handbook/unit description(s).
4. For a creative/practical work with exegesis, a combination of creative or practical work (such as software development or a performance or exhibition of creative work) must communicate the research question, findings, and disciplinary context of the research in an appropriate manner through a supporting exegesis.

Supervisor responsibilities

1. Institutes should ensure that the expectations and responsibilities of supervisors are detailed in the relevant Honours handbook/unit description(s).
2. Each student undertaking research will have a Federation University academic as a supervisor. The supervisor should hold a minimum of an AQF level 9 degree or equivalent. An Honours supervisor who does not hold this qualification must be supervised regularly by a staff member with a minimum AQF level 9 degree or equivalent, as per the [Higher Education Academic Teaching Requirements Procedure](#).
3. Supervisors must have relevant research expertise and a sound knowledge of the relevant discipline area.
4. The supervisor will communicate regularly with the student to provide advice and monitor progress.
5. The supervisor is responsible for guiding the student toward successful completion of the thesis or creative/practical work with exegesis. In particular, the supervisor will advise on:
 - Development of a suitable topic and feasible project plan;
 - The availability of library and other resources in the field;
 - The process of preparing the thesis or creative/practical project with exegesis, including providing feedback on plans and drafts, and guidance on style and citation methods.
6. The supervisor should informally evaluate the student's progress and performance, provide advice, and draw the student's attention to unsatisfactory progress or work below the standard expected.
7. The supervisor should help with developing solutions to identified problems.

Student responsibilities

1. The student is expected to submit work of high quality at all stages of the project and to take the initiative in ensuring that progress is maintained.
2. In particular, the student is expected to:
 - Propose and develop a suitable research topic;
 - Arrange to communicate and/or meet regularly with the supervisor;
 - Take initiative in identifying and raising any problems and share the responsibility for seeking solutions;
 - Attend any seminars required for completion of the thesis or coursework;
 - Use, at all times, safe working practices relevant to the field of research;
 - Adhere to the ethical practices appropriate to the discipline and institution (including the use of AI as specified in Honours handbook/unit descriptions);
 - Attend and complete any compulsory modules;
 - Accept responsibility for producing the final copy of the thesis or creative/ practical work with exegesis, including its content and ensuring it meets the relevant requirements such as the standard of documentation as outlined in Honours handbook/unit description(s).

Assessment

1. Examination of the Honours thesis or creative/practical work with exegesis must be conducted by two appropriately qualified examiners who are independent of the student and external to the student's supervisor group. At least one examiner must hold a qualification that is at least AQF level 9 or equivalent. An examiner who does not hold this qualification must be supervised by a staff member with a minimum AQF level 9 degree or equivalent, as per the [Higher Education Academic Teaching Requirements Procedure](#). The examiners will be selected by the Honours course coordinator or thesis coordinator in consultation with discipline-specific staff.
2. In addition, a minimum of two suitably qualified, independent assessors must be used for any other subjectively assessed tasks that represent 15% or more of the total course result. For tasks comprising less than 15% of the total course result, the Honours course coordinator has discretion to decide whether one assessor is appropriate. The approach to assessment must be the same for all students in an Honours cohort.
3. Clear and explicit criteria for assessment must be provided to students and examiners.
4. Extensions to the submission date of the thesis or creative/practical work with exegesis may only be granted with the approval of the Honours course coordinator in exceptional circumstances that could not reasonably be foreseen. Extensions will not be approved for delays related to data collection or computer malfunctions.
5. Details of late submission penalties must be provided to students in the Honours handbook/unit description(s).
6. Each Institute must have a defined process for resolving grade discrepancies of greater than 10 percentage points between examiners. The process must be described in the Honours handbook/unit descriptions and applied consistently.
7. Assessment tasks must be subject to regular review/moderation to ensure consistency of assessment between assessors, across years, across cohorts, and between different tasks.

Grade

1. An overall grade for Honours will be determined using a weighted average percentage for all graded units in the course.
2. Possible grades for Honours are outlined in Schedule 1A – Federation University Australia Academic Regulations 2022.
3. To obtain an Honours degree, students must pass every coursework unit and achieve a minimum of 50% in the examined thesis or creative/practical work with exegesis.
4. The Honours course coordinator is responsible for compiling and formally recording grades for all assessment tasks relevant to the discipline they are responsible for. This responsibility can be delegated to a unit coordinator for individual unit elements.

Honours documentation

1. Institutes must provide students with written information (in the form of a handbook, webpage, or other appropriate publication) on the aims, nature, structure, and benefits of the Honours course.
2. The Honours handbook/unit description(s)/Moodle page(s) must include information regarding:
 - unit requirements;
 - responsibilities of supervisors and students;
 - thesis or creative/practical work and exegesis requirements (including style guide and word limit);
 - guidelines for activities such as laboratory, field or studio work, or attendance at research seminars;
 - weighting of the various components of the course;
 - assessment details, procedures, criteria, and submission dates;
 - the timeframe for marking the thesis or creative/practical work with exegesis;
 - penalties for late submission;
 - the process for handling a discrepancy of the thesis or creative/practical work with exegesis grade (where greater than 10 percentage points).

Supporting documents

- [Academic Governance Policy](#)
- [Approval and Maintenance of Higher Education Courses Procedure](#)
- [Higher Education Assessment \(inclusive of FedTASKs\) Procedure](#)
- [Higher Education Domestic Student Admission: Selection and Offers Procedure](#)
- [Higher Education Academic Credit Transfer Procedure](#)
- [Higher Education Deferral or Leave from Studies Procedure](#)
- [Higher Education Examinations Procedure](#)
- [Higher Education Special Consideration Procedure](#)

Responsibility

- The Pro-Vice Chancellor, Learning and Teaching (as the Approval Authority) is responsible for monitoring the implementation, outcomes, and scheduled review of this guideline.
- The Chair, Curriculum Committee (as the Document Owner) is responsible for maintaining the content of this guideline as delegated by the Approval Authority.

Promulgation

This guideline will be communicated throughout the University community via:

1. Distribution of e-mails to the Executive Deans of the Institutes and other relevant University staff.
2. An announcement in 'FedNews', FedEngage, and through the University Policy – 'Recently Approved Documents' webpage.

Implementation

This guideline will be implemented throughout the University via:

1. A FedNews announcement and on the 'Recently approved documents' page on the University's Policy Central website.

Records management

Document Title	Location	Responsible Officer	Minimum Retention Period
Record of results to be awarded to students for each component of study	University's approved records management system	Honours course coordinator	Permanent
Honours-related documentation including thesis, artwork, video or sound recordings, specimen collections	University's approved records management system	Honours course coordinator	Retain until organisational use has concluded