

Structuring Coursework Programs Policy

Section 1 - Policy Statement

(1) The Structuring Coursework Programs Policy describes the principles and requirements for the structure of coursework programs at ACU.

Section 2 - Policy Scope

(2) This Policy applies to:

- a. all award coursework programs including Undergraduate Certificate, Diploma, Advanced Diploma, Associate Degree, Bachelor Degree, Bachelor Honours Degree, Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma and Masters Degree (Coursework);
- b. foundation and university preparation programs;
- c. microcredentials; and
- d. short courses.

(3) The following course types are excluded from this Policy:

- a. all courses which meet the standard for classification as research degrees or professional doctorates under the [Australian Qualifications Framework](#) (AQF) which are covered by the [Higher Degree Research Regulations](#).

Section 3 - Definitions

(4) The terms used in this Policy and the associated guidelines are consistent with the [Glossary of Student and Course Terms](#). In addition, the following words and expressions in this Policy have the meanings listed below:

Term	Definition
Credible assessment	means the minimum assessment needed to reliably and validly determine achievement of defined learning outcomes

Section 4 - Principles

(5) Course structures at ACU will be consistent and comply with the [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021 \(Cth\)](#) and the [Australian Qualifications Framework](#) (AQF) at the relevant level.

(6) Under the [AQF Qualifications Pathways Policy](#), ACU is responsible for specific attention to identifying, developing and documenting qualification pathways.

(7) Courses names will be consistent with the [Award Nomenclature Policy](#).

(8) Courses will be approved and reviewed in accordance with the [Course Accreditation, Amendment and Review Policy](#).

(9) Courses will be structured to support students to achieve learning outcomes that are consistent with the relevant AQF Level Criteria and ensure students develop:

- a. knowledge and skills appropriate to the discipline that are required for employment, further study and for registration or accreditation, where relevant;
- b. generic skills including critical thinking and information literacy skills that support independent life-long learning, English language proficiency and effective communication; and
- c. the University's graduate attributes.

(10) ACU's commitment to pursuing truth in every field of knowledge, as well as promoting the dignity of all people and the common good, prepares graduates who are knowledgeable, articulate and innovative. Graduates will be recognised for their skill in thinking systematically and critically, in gathering and evaluating evidence from many and diverse sources, and in applying ethical principles to decision making for a variety of professions and industries.

Section 5 - Award Course Classification and Requirements

(11) Each coursework course leading to an award must comply with the following schema:

Award	AQF Level	Minimum Total CP	Min Duration of FT Study	Exit Qualifications
Undergraduate Certificate	AQF 5, 6, or 7	40 cp	One semester	
Diploma	AQF Level 5	80 cp	Two semesters	
Advanced Diploma	AQF Level 6	120 cp	Three semesters	Diploma where embedded in the Advanced Diploma
Associate Degree	AQF Level 6	160 cp	Four semesters	Diploma and Advanced Diploma where embedded in Associate Degree
Bachelor Degree	AQF Level 7	240 cp	Six semesters	Diploma, Advanced Diploma and Associate Degree where embedded in the bachelor Degree
Bachelor Honours (end-on) Degree	AQF Level 8	80 cp	Two semesters	
Bachelor Honours (embedded) Degree	AQF Level 8	320 cp with completion of 80 cp in identified honours studies	Eight semesters	
Graduate Certificate	AQF Level 8	40 cp	One semester	
Graduate Diploma	AQF Level 8	80 cp	Two semesters	Graduate Certificate where embedded in the Graduate Diploma

Award	AQF Level	Minimum Total CP	Min Duration of FT Study	Exit Qualifications
Masters (Coursework) Degree	AQF Level 9	80 cp with cognate Bachelor Honours degree or credit for prior learning	Two semesters	Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma where embedded in the Masters degree
		120 cp with cognate Bachelor degree or credit for prior learning	Three semesters	Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma where embedded in the Masters degree
		160 cp	Four semesters	Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma where embedded in the Masters degree

Section 6 - Clustered Qualifications

(12) Clustered qualifications will either be:

- a. nested qualifications which will be structured with articulation pathways between ACU awards at the same or different AQF levels to enable multiple entry and exit points; or
- b. integrated qualifications which will be purposely designed to enable explicit articulation pathways and will comprise ACU awards at more than one AQF level and/or qualification type.

(13) Where there is any reduction in the volume of learning, clustered qualifications must be structured to ensure that students achieve the learning outcomes specific to the AQF level, qualification type and discipline for each ACU award in the cluster.

(14) The lower award in nested coursework programs will count in full towards the higher award.

(15) Where a nested qualification exists, a candidate who enrolls directly into a higher level program but does not complete the program requirements may be awarded a lesser qualification if the requirements for such an award are fulfilled.

(16) Clustered qualification requirements:

Award	Course combination		Other limits
Double Bachelor Degree	Two Bachelor degrees	320 cp	A maximum of 80 cp may be cross-credited from each single Bachelor Degree towards the requirements of the Double Bachelor Degree
Bachelor and Masters	Bachelor degree (cognate) and Masters degree	240 cp for the Bachelor Degree 80 cp for the Masters Degree	Any acceleration into the 80 cp Masters degree must be achieved by undertaking 500-level units or above from the Masters degree in the final year of Bachelor degree No more than 40 cp of nominated 300 or 400- level units may be substituted by the nominated Masters units

Section 7 - Specialisations, Majors and Minors

(17) A specialisation or major is a sequence of units that follow a coherent sequence which culminates in advanced level units that deepen the understanding of a discipline or field of study.

(18) A specialisation must:

- a. be defined in the course completion requirements;
- b. be an area of special or focused study or sub-discipline within a course, which will be recognised in accordance with the [Award Nomenclature Policy](#); and
- c. consist of not less than one-half of the total credit points required for the award.

(19) A Bachelor, Double Bachelor or Bachelor Honours Degree major must:

- a. be defined in the course completion requirements;
- b. include 80 cp in prescribed units in one discipline or approved interdisciplinary area; and
- c. normally includes no more than 20 cp at 100-level and no fewer than 20 cp from 300-level.

(20) A Bachelor, Double Bachelor or Bachelor Honours Degree minor must comprise:

- a. 40 cp in prescribed units in one discipline; and
- b. normally includes at least 10 cp at 100-level and at least 20 cp at 200-level or above.

Section 8 - Units

(21) The standard credit point value of units is 10. Units worth multiples of 10 (e.g. 20, 40) are permitted to support the research component of a coursework program or the development of advanced practice.

(22) The credit point value of any microcredential must be either five (5), two (2) or one (1) credit point(s) in accordance with clause (23) of this Policy.

(23) The expected volume of learning is 15 hours per credit point which is inclusive of timetabled learning and teaching activities, independent study and assessment. The volume of learning for a standard 10 credit point unit will typically be 150 hours.

(24) There are three types of units:

- a. Specified units which are compulsory;
- b. Core curriculum units which are compulsory in undergraduate coursework programs; and
- c. Elective units.

(25) The number of electives and the pool from which electives are chosen must be specified in the course rules and can either be:

- a. a set of units defined in the course rules; or
- b. units which may be drawn from other ACU programs to fulfil the requirements of the program.

(26) Prerequisites must only be specified where there is an essential requirement for learning outcomes to have been achieved before a student is permitted to enrol in the subsequent unit.

(27) Incompatible units must be identified in the course rules. No unit may be used to meet an award requirement if it contains a substantial amount of the same material as another unit being used towards that award.

(28) Units will be coded and named in accordance with the [Coding and Naming of Units Guideline](#).

(29) The characteristics of units at each level will be:

100-level	Introductory units: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Normally undertaken in the first year of undergraduate study (or equivalent)• Provides students with foundational discipline knowledge and skill development to allow broad application with support• Will have limited or no prerequisites
200-level	Intermediate units: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Normally undertaken in the second or third year of undergraduate study (or equivalent)• Assists students to build on, develop and integrate their discipline knowledge and skills in familiar contexts• May require prerequisites in cases where discipline-specific introductory knowledge or skills is essential
300-level	Advanced units: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Normally undertaken in the third or fourth year of undergraduate study (or equivalent)• Enables students to demonstrate independent application of discipline knowledge and skills in familiar contexts• May require prerequisites in cases where discipline-specific introductory or developing knowledge or skills is essential
400-level	Specialised undergraduate units: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Normally undertaken in the fourth full-time study year and/or an Honours program at AQF Level 8• Enables students to demonstrate independent application of discipline knowledge and skills in unfamiliar and/or professional contexts• May require prerequisites in cases where discipline-specific knowledge skills is essential
500-level	Foundational postgraduate units: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Normally undertaken as part of graduate certificates and graduate diplomas at AQF Level 8• Engaging with new discipline knowledge and skills at an advanced level or deepening existing knowledge and skills within discipline and/or professional contexts• Normally have no prerequisites, though any prerequisites or corequisites must also be at 500-level
600-level	Specialised postgraduate units: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Normally undertaken as part of Masters by Coursework degrees at AQF Level 9• Apply advanced knowledge, skills and well-developed judgement as part of becoming an autonomous, adaptable and responsible practitioner• These units may have prerequisites in cases where discipline-specific advanced knowledge or skills are necessary

Section 9 - Sub-Bachelor Degrees

(30) The objective of Diploma, Advanced Diploma and Associate Degree qualifications at ACU is to:

- qualify students against the relevant AQF Level (5-6);and
- provide a pathway and credit into a Bachelor Degree; or
- provide complementary study to students enrolled in a Bachelor Degree; or
- provide an exit qualification for students who meet the requirements of an embedded lower-level qualification.

Section 10 - Undergraduate Certificates

(31) The objective of Undergraduate Certificates at ACU is to:

- develop introductory knowledge of a discipline; and

- b. provide a pathway and credit into an existing undergraduate course.

Section 11 - Bachelor, including Double Bachelor Degrees

(32) The objective of Bachelor Degrees at ACU is to:

- a. qualify students who apply a broad and coherent body of knowledge in a range of contexts;
- b. qualify graduates to undertake professional work by providing professional experience, community engagement and/or volunteer work opportunities throughout the course; and
- c. provide a pathway for further learning.

(33) All Bachelor and Double Bachelor degrees require the inclusion of:

- a. the core curriculum;
- b. specified units;
- c. elective units; and
- d. any professional experience units as required by external accreditation agencies.

(34) The core curriculum, which emphasises critical judgment, clear expression, ethical decision-making and concern for others must comprise three units (30 cp in total):

- a. two core curriculum units (20 cp in total) that are common to all Bachelor and Double Bachelor programs; and
- b. a core curriculum community engagement unit (10 cp), specific to each program that must be identified as part of the course approval process.

(35) Any exemption from the standard Bachelor and Double Bachelor degree structure must be approved in accordance with the [Course Accreditation, Amendment and Review Policy](#) and will only be made where:

- a. accreditation by external agencies precludes their inclusion; and/or
- b. where there are exceptional circumstances under an educational partnership agreement.

(36) The learning outcomes and compulsory requirements of each component of a Bachelor Degree must be satisfied in a Double Bachelor degree including:

- a. the Core Curriculum of three units (30 cp in total) which may be undertaken in either Bachelor degree or spread across the Double Bachelor degree;
- b. the compulsory units; and
- c. any external accreditation requirements.

(37) Each Bachelor degree course must include:

- a. a maximum of one half of the total cp in introductory units at 100-level; and
- b. at least one half of the total cp in advanced level units at 200-level or above, including at least 40 cp of 300-level and/or 400-level units.

(38) In addition to the requirements of clause (37) of this Policy, from 2023, any new or revised Bachelor degree course must include at least 40 cp of elective units which may be drawn from other ACU programs unless an exemption for externally accredited courses is granted by the Provost.

(39) No Bachelor or Double Bachelor degree may contain 500-level units or above.

(40) Consistent with the credit provisions of the [Academic Regulations](#), a maximum of 80cp may be cross-credited from each single Bachelor Degree towards the requirements of the Double Bachelor Degree.

Section 12 - Bachelor Honours Degrees

(41) The objective of Bachelor Honours Degrees at ACU is to:

- a. allow students to build on the knowledge gained in the Bachelor Degree;
- b. develop students' knowledge of research principles and methods for further study at higher degree level and for wider application; and
- c. provide a pathway to higher degrees by research.

(42) Bachelor Honours Degrees can either be:

- a. End-on Fourth Year programs undertaken after completion of an appropriate undergraduate Bachelor's degree; or
- b. Embedded Honours programs equivalent to at least a fourth year of study at Bachelor level in which Honours units are taken either in addition to or in place of some of the requirements of the third and fourth years of the Bachelor degree.

(43) Honours programs will be a minimum of 80 credit points comprising:

- a. a research methodology coursework component which will be a minimum of 10 cp at 400-level;
- b. a research project unit or units resulting in the production of an Honours Thesis or alternative form of presentation which will constitute a minimum of 30 cp; and
- c. the remainder made up of advanced coursework and/or professional training at 400-level.

(44) 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;
- 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 for critical identification of 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.

Section 13 - Graduate Certificates and Graduate Diplomas

(45) The objective of Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma programs at ACU is to provide:

- a. postgraduate opportunities in professional fields for students;
- b. training in professional fields where projects and investigations are applied and oriented to professional practice; and

c. a pathway to further postgraduate study.

(46) Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma programs enable the candidate to make a contribution to knowledge and practice in a discipline or profession through coursework or a combination of coursework and a research component.

(47) Each Graduate Certificate course must include:

- a. a minimum of 30 cp of specified units; and
- b. the pool from which the elective is chosen will normally be no more than 20 cp of selected units.

Section 14 - Masters Degree (Coursework) Degrees

(48) Masters Degree (Coursework) programs enable graduates to make a contribution to knowledge and practice in a discipline or profession through coursework or a combination of coursework and a research-based component.

(49) The objective of Masters degree (coursework) programs are to provide:

- a. postgraduate opportunities in professional fields for students;
- b. training in professional fields where projects and investigations are applied and oriented to professional practice; or
- c. a pathway to higher degrees by research.

(50) Students of a Masters Degree (Coursework) are required to plan and execute a research-based project, capstone experience and/or piece of scholarship of at least 20 cp.

(51) Where a Masters Degree (Coursework) provides a pathway to higher degrees by research, it must be:

- a. structured to include 10 cp of research methods; and
- b. the research-based project, capstone experience and/or piece of scholarship in clause (50) of this Policy must result in an original piece of supervised scholarship that is externally and independently assessed.

Section 15 - Foundation and University Preparation Programs

(52) The objective of Foundation and University Preparation programs at ACU is to:

- a. prepare students for further study;
- b. develop effective English language skills, where relevant; and
- c. provide a pathway to ACU undergraduate awards.

(53) Foundation and University Preparation programs are non-award and are not aligned with AQF levels.

(54) Foundation Studies program(s) must be designed in accordance with the [National Standards for Foundation Programs](#).

Section 16 - Microcredentials

(55) The objective of microcredentials at ACU is to:

- a. focus on attainment and application of knowledge and skills related to employability; and/or
- b. be counted as continuing professional development points for recognition by external professional bodies.

(56) Microcredentials will be structured to:

- a. lead to credit towards a unit or an ACU higher education award;
- b. normally align with AQF level 8 qualifications; and
- c. be completed in less than six months but may extend to up to 12 months.

(57) Microcredentials must have a designated volume of learning expressed in the form of a total number of hours of study which equates to a credit point value in accordance with clauses (24) and (25) of this Policy.

(58) Microcredentials must:

- a. be credibly assessed; and
- b. be the same standard of learning as other ACU units at the relevant level measured by the equivalence of learning outcomes, volume, depth and breadth of content and assessment requirements.

(59) Microcredentials may be:

- a. studied individually; or
- b. stacked with other microcredentials into the equivalent of 10 cp to be eligible for credit; or
- c. stacked as modularised components of an ACU award course.

Section 17 - Short Courses

(60) The objective of short courses at ACU is to improve or support an individual's progress towards work, career and/or personal goals.

(61) Short courses are not an accredited higher education award; nor aligned with AQF levels.

(62) Short courses must have clearly articulated learning outcomes and may be developed for:

- a. cohorts in an organisation;
- b. professional development and/or staff training purposes; or
- c. for general offering.

(63) In order for a short course to be eligible for specified credit:

- a. they must be credibly assessed; and
- b. the standard of learning, volume of learning and learning outcomes must be the same or higher as the ACU unit(s) in accordance with the [Recognition of Prior Learning Policy](#).

Section 18 - Revisions Made to This Policy

(64) The revision table includes revisions up until this document was migrated into the current policy platform. Any later changes will show in the Status and Details tab.

Date	Major, Minor or Editorial	Description of Revision(s)
29 June 2016	Minor	Specification of the length and credit point requirements for the Double Bachelor award; specification of the conditions for the use of prerequisites; and the requirement for incompatible units to be identified in the course rules.
17 March 2021	Minor	Clarification of the requirements for a specialisation in Masters (Coursework) courses; Template update; related policy names update.
16 November 2022	Major	Major review. Rescission of the Guidelines for Bachelor and Bachelor Double Degrees, Guidelines for Honours Programs, Guidelines for Postgraduate Coursework Programs. Incorporation of non-award coursework programs.

Section 19 - Associated Information

(65) For related legislation, policies, procedures, guidelines and any supporting resources please refer to the Associated Information tab.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	19th December 2023
Review Date	7th January 2025
Approval Authority	
Approval Date	19th December 2023
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Responsible Executive	Timothy McKenry Chair, Academic Board
Responsible Manager	Gerard Goodwin-Moore National Manager, Student Policy and Appeals
Enquiries Contact	Kerry Blair Policy and Projects Officer <hr/> Student Administration