Development of ACU National UniStep-up Programs Guideline

Section 1 - Introduction

(1) ACU supports the establishment of a small number of high-quality programs that enable year 11/12 secondary school students to study nominated ACU introductory units.

(2) Such secondary school students may be participants in Uni Step-Up programs that either:

a. enable year 11/12 secondary students from situations of disadvantage to experience tertiary study or
b. that provide for year 11/12 secondary students demonstrating excellence in designated areas of study

Section 2 - Objectives and Scope of Uni Step-up Programs

(3) It is anticipated that most Uni Step-Up programs will be developed through external partnership arrangements – for example with secondary schools, Catholic Education Offices or other diocesan agencies, TAFE or private VET providers. The term 'partner' in this document refers to any one or more organizations which fit this context. Wherever possible, sponsorship for the programs should be developed, and the term extends to relevant sponsoring organizations.

Section 3 - Purpose of Guidelines

(4) These Guidelines are designed to:

a. assist Faculties that may be contemplating the development of Uni Step-Up programs by providing a framework for such development; and
b. establish a structure within which such programs should operate.

Section 4 - Proposal to Offer a Uni Step-up Program

(5) There will be a preliminary and final proposal developed for all approved Uni Step-Up programs. The preliminary proposal should be endorsed by the Executive Dean of the Faculty before entering the detailed negotiation stage. The final proposal should be submitted to the Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) through the Executive Dean and be approved, before commitment made to any secondary school or other partner.

(6) The preliminary proposal will address such of the following as are relevant:

a. The purpose of the program:
    i. For whom the program is to be offered and a rationale for its introduction/continuation;

ii. The key stakeholders, particularly partners in the proposed program;
iii. The equity or excellence issues that the program aims to address;
iv. The relationship of the University with the nominated partners.

b. Relationship of the program to the strategic directions of the University
   i. How the intent and design of the program will fit with the strategic direction of the Faculty;
   ii. How the program will support the ACU Mission, Identity and Values and enhance the reputation of the University;
   iii. The benefits to the Faculty offering the program.

c. Relationship to the strategic directions of relevant partners
   i. The anticipated educational benefit to partner organisations, students and their communities.

d. Preliminary financial plan
   i. Anticipated costs including coordination;
   ii. Anticipated fee income, sponsorship or other manner of ameliorating costs.

(7) The final proposal will address such of the following as are relevant:

a. Operational Plan
   i. The intended location and mode of teaching, both of which should support the strategic directions of the Faculty and partners and be appropriate to the needs of the intended students;
   ii. Entry requirements/selection criteria;
   iii. Units to be offered;
   iv. Recognition of the program by State education board/university tertiary entry authority;
   v. Credit to be granted by ACU in the event of subsequent enrolment;
   vi. Anticipated enrolments;
   vii. Co-ordination and management arrangements;
   viii. Marketing strategies;
   ix. Review and evaluation methodologies.

b. Financial Plan
   i. Anticipated costs including coordination;
   ii. Funding through fees, sponsorships, partnerships or otherwise;
   iii. How the program will be sustained for at least five years in total, and its sustainability and potential independence from association with one or more staff members who initially establish the program, particularly if the proposer should no longer be able to support it.

(8) Approval will normally be given for a maximum of two years in the first instance, with annual review and the possibility of annual extension.

Section 5 - Potential Participants

(9) Uni Step-Up programs are available to students undertaking concurrent year 11/12 secondary school studies.

Section 6 - Roles and Responsibilities

(10) Participation in tertiary studies concurrently with senior secondary school studies creates a significant workload for students. Therefore students must be carefully selected and fully supported, within each of their university,

secondary school/TAFE/VET and family environments. The respective roles and responsibilities of these parties and of sponsoring organizations are:

(11) ACU:

a. Provides/negotiates details of the program and the roles and responsibilities of all parties.
b. Nominates its Uni Step-Up program co-ordinator with whom any partner organisation will liaise: normally this will be the Assistant Head of School or the Course Adviser responsible for the corresponding tertiary course in which relevant units are offered.
c. Identifies the credit that will be granted to students who successfully complete the Uni Step-Up program and thereafter gain entry to the nominated tertiary course.
d. In conjunction with the partner(s) provides and implements clear criteria for the selection of students: where relevant, such criteria must be consistent with relevant State education authority requirements.
e. Enrols the students on a non-award basis.
f. Provides details of units to be offered, their time, mode and place of offering, learning objectives, content, assessment and related requirements (eg equivalent to information contained in tertiary Unit Outlines).
g. Publicises the program, eg through School/Faculty website and, in conjunction with partners, in the formulation of relevant informational or marketing materials.
h. Provides relevant organizational/administrative/academic information and an orientation program for students.
i. Provides students with an ID card and library access.
j. Provides ongoing support to students through the academic staff member responsible for each available unit and the program co-ordinator.
k. Maintains a record of the students' results and notifies the result (via a certificate of completion) to each student, but does not retain such a record as part of its student record system.
l. Initiates a review of the program.

(12) Secondary School, TAFE or VET provider:

a. Nominates a contact person who liaises with ACU co-ordinates the program within the secondary school/institution and assists with the facilitation of organisational aspects of the program (eg ensuring students are enabled to attend information/orientation sessions, student completion of feedback surveys, contribution by the school/institution to review of the program).
b. Publicises/promotes the program within the school and to families as considered appropriate, and invites applications which must be endorsed by the student and the principal (and, if the student is under 18 years of age, by a parent or guardian of the student).
c. In conjunction with the University, provides and implements clear criteria for the selection of students: where relevant, such criteria must be consistent with relevant State education authority requirements.
d. Advises applicants of the outcome of the selection process.
e. Nominates a school/institution mentor for each student: the school mentor will normally be a teacher in a discipline area relevant to the Uni Step-Up studies: they will monitor the student's progress at school, as well as in their UniStep-Up studies; provide assistance/guidance (eg re obtaining references, texts, overcoming logistical problems); where appropriate, provide/arrange counseling; and monitor inter-relationships with school colleagues not participating in the Uni Step-Up program.
f. Participates in a review of the program.

(13) Other partner with a sponsorship/funding role:

a. Liaises with ACU and the secondary school/institution regarding the proposed program and funding issues.
b. Liaises with the secondary school/institution regarding policy and organisational issues from their respective

perspectives.

c. Assists in publicizing/promoting the program.
d. Participates in a review of the program.

(14) Student:

a. Applies to participate in the Uni Step-Up program and in doing so undertakes to abide by the program rules.
b. If selected:
    i. chooses their unit from those available;
    ii. attends the Uni Step-Up program orientation and makes themselves familiar with the associated details/requirements;
    iii. attends classes and undertakes associated unit requirements, including submission of assessment and attendance at examinations;
    iv. complies with relevant ACU policies, procedures and provisions of the Student Conduct Policy;
    v. maintains regular communication with both the University and school/institution coordinators of the Uni Step-Up program and their school/institution mentor regarding their progress in University and school studies;
    vi. participates in a review of the program (eg through a feedback survey or interview or focus group discussion).

(15) Family:

a. If the student is under 18 years of age, endorses student's application if agreeable to the student participating in the Uni Step-Up program.
b. Supports the student and monitors their progress in relation to both secondary and university studies.
c. Maintains contact with the school/institution mentor regarding the student's progress and contacts the mentor if they perceive any problems arising.
d. Where necessary, arranges adequate transport to and from relevant venues (eg ACU campus) for classes and examinations.

Section 7 - Negotiations with Partners

(16) Establishment or facilitation of student participation in a Uni Step-Up program should normally be undertaken as a result of an approach to the University from a secondary school or other partner, or an initiative by a member of academic staff in negotiation with a secondary school/other partner.

(17) The resultant agreement for a Uni Step-Up program must be signed normally by the Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) on behalf of the University and the secondary school/institution Principal or equivalent on behalf of the school/institution and other partners. Where a partner offers financial support, the partner must normally also sign the agreement to that effect.

(18) Negotiations with proposed partners should result in a clear specification of matters such as:

a. the criteria and processes for selection of students to participate in the Uni Step-Up program;
b. the units available to such students and their semester and mode of offering: such units will be limited to nominated first year units;
c. the number of student places available in the Uni Step-Up program generally and in individual units offered within the program;

d. the place at which the students will pursue the program;
e. any constraints regarding class times when the units will be available;
f. the support to be provided to participants by the school/institution or other partner and ACU ;
g. financial responsibilities of partners and participants;
h. promotional/marketing responsibilities of all parties.

(19) A Uni Step-Up program is not normally available to individual students, independent of an ACU partner agreement.

Section 8 - Units that may be taken

(20) Units offered within a Uni Step-Up program will be the same in regard to objectives and content as the relevant tertiary units and Uni Step-Up students will normally attend the same classes as the undergraduate students and will undertake the same assessment, including examinations.

(21) Except in exceptional circumstances approved by the Head of School, a Uni Step-Up student may undertake only one unit in a semester.

Section 9 - Co-ordination within ACU

(22) To avoid multiple approaches from different ACU Schools, any proposals to offer a Uni Step-Up program should be discussed by the Head of School of the initiating School with other Heads of School on the relevant campus and with the Executive Dean. Planning to develop a program should normally commence a year in advance of its commencement. The initial intentions should be notified to other Schools and reported at the campus co-ordination/management meeting and the final proposal should progress through Faculty structures at least six months in advance of the program commencing.

(23) Where more than one School is intending to offer a program to any particular school community, a joint initiative should be developed. Where necessary or appropriate, the relevant Campus Dean with responsibility for that campus may assist to ensure that appropriate co-ordination occurs. The relevant Executive Deans should also be fully informed of the initiation of such proposals and will monitor and, if necessary, manage co-ordination across campuses.

Section 10 - Scholarships and Fees

(24) Students accepted in an equity-based Uni Step-Up program will be granted a scholarship by either ACU and/or a sponsor to cover the cost of tuition fees and the Student Services Fee.

(25) Students accepted into an excellence-based Uni Step-Up program may be required to pay tuition fees or may be granted a scholarship.

(26) All students in both equity- and excellence-based Uni Step-Up programs will be expected to meet other costs normally incurred in association with such study (eg costs of books, materials, field trips etc).

Section 11 - Academic record

(27) On successful completion of unit requirements, Uni Step-Up students will be issued with a certificate of completion of the requirements for the relevant unit.

(28) If a Uni Step-Up student withdraws from or fails a unit, the result will not be formally recorded in University

records.

Section 12 - Consideration of Uni Step-up Results for University Entry Purposes

(29) The secondary school accreditation authorities in each state/territory have different regulations regarding the calculation of students' tertiary entrance scores. Where provision exists for year 11/12 programs to be recognized by the state authority for tertiary entrance score purposes, ACU will complete the relevant processes to make application for such recognition in advance of the program being publicized or offered.

Section 13 - Credit for Uni Step-up Studies

(30) In accordance with the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy, if a student completes satisfactorily a unit as part of a Uni Step-Up program and subsequently gains entry to a course in which credit for the same or an equivalent unit is required, subject to the rules for that course, the student may be granted credit towards the course on the basis of a pass in a Uni Step-Up unit. The relevant credit notation will be recorded on the student's academic record.

Section 14 - Annual Review

(31) At the conclusion of each program cycle, the Uni Step-Up co-ordinator, together with representatives of all partner organizations, will review the operation and outcomes of the program and identify issues and opportunities for improvement. The review process will include the result of a survey of participants.

(32) The Head of School of each School that has offered a Uni Step-Up program will provide an annual evaluation report to the Executive Dean on the program offered. Such a report will include information such as:

a. uptake levels and completions (eg number of applications, offers, enrolments, completions);
b. performance/success rates internally among the year 11/12 participants and in comparison with students undertaking the unit(s) as part of a bachelor degree program;
c. costs incurred and income generated;
d. analysis of evaluations by students and representatives of partner organizations;
e. benefits gained by the University or reported by the students, parents, representatives of partner organizations or other relevant personnel;
f. subsequent enrolment patterns of students, if known;
g. impacts on staff workloads;
h. recommendations regarding future offerings.

Section 15 - Indicative Timeline

(33) The timing of the offering of units will differ for different programs and between states as year 11/12 students commence at different times. The following is an indicative timeline:

Activity	Timing
Planning and preliminary discussions with partner organisations	Typically commence by February and no later than April
Co-ordination with other Schools, through campus management/co-ordination committee and progression through Faculty structures	No later than june

Activity	Timing
Finalisation and approval of program	July
Promotion of availability to students selecting subjects for year 11 and again when selecting subjects for year 12	Commences following approval of final proposal
Orientation of participants prior to first unit offered	February - Semester 1 unit June - Winter school or Semester 2 unit November - Summer School unit
Review of program	Each unit is evaluated and the program reviewed when results are finalised
Submission of review report to Executive Dean	Within two months of program completion

Section 16 - Associated Information

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

Status and Details

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Effective Date	19th December 2023
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Responsible Executive	Julie Cogin Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
Responsible Manager	Martin Taylor Director, Strategy and Operations
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