Bachelor Honours Degree (AQF Level 8) Policy

1. DEFINITIONS

Bachelor Honours Degree (AQF Level 8) is typically equivalent to one year of full-time study, normally taken after the completion of a three year bachelor degree, referred to as “end-on honours”. For the Bachelor Honours degree the University grants the award of the Bachelor of X (Honours).

A Bachelor Honours degree (AQF Level 8) of four of more years in length may be studied concurrently with the Bachelor degree, with the honours typically included in the final year/s of the program, referred to as “concurrent honours”. In a concurrent Bachelor Honours Degree there is no differentiated study program and all students awarded the degree receive one award the Bachelor of X (Honours). The requirements for the “concurrent honours” program are set out in the Bachelor Degree (AQF Level 7) Policy.
The term "embedded honours" refers to the award of Honours on the basis of a differentiated study program within a Bachelor degree (AQF Level 7) program which is four or more years (full-time equivalent) in length. Students who meet specified admission criteria may apply to change programs to the AQF Level 8 Bachelor Honours degree and on successful completion receive one award the Bachelor of X (Honours). The requirements for the “embedded honours” program are set out in the Bachelor Degree (AQF Level 7) Policy.

Dissertation refers to a coherent exposition of a research study in which the research objectives, relationship to other scholarly work, methodology and strategies employed and the results obtained are identified, analysed and evaluated.

Higher Degree by Research (HDR) means a higher degree by research that is a Research Masters or Research Doctorate. A Research Masters means a Level 9 qualification as described in the Australian Qualifications Framework and where a minimum of two-thirds of the program of learning is for research, research training and independent study. A Research Doctorate means a Level 10 qualification as described in the Australian Qualifications Framework and where a minimum of two years of the program of learning, and typically two-thirds of the qualification, is research.

Honours Program Director refers to the academic staff member appointed by the Group Board to convene and direct a particular Bachelor Honours degree program.

Honours Milestones Plan refers to a checklist for the student, supervisor and Honours Program Director to use in planning and managing a student’s progression and completion of the honours program.

2. POLICY PURPOSE

This policy aims to provide a framework for the structure and award of the Bachelor Honours degree that ensures transparency and equity across all disciplines in the requirements for completion of the award of Bachelor degree (Honours) and provides the basis upon which valid comparison of honours results from different disciplines can be made.

3. AIMS OF THE BACHELOR HONOURS DEGREE

The Bachelor Honours degree at Griffith is designed to:

- provide an educational experience in which high quality students acquire a more advanced level of skills and knowledge;
- provide high quality students with research training through supervision by academic staff who are engaged in research in an environment that supports high rates of completion;
- prepare high quality graduates to enter a higher degree by research or to undertake research related tasks within the workplace; and
- provide a pathway to the University’s Master Degree (Research) or to its Doctoral programs.

4. AQF LEVEL 8 BACHELOR HONOURS DEGREE LEARNING OUTCOMES

The Bachelor Honours degree is located at level 8 of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). A Bachelor Honours degree is designed and accredited to enable graduates to demonstrate the learning outcomes expressed as knowledge, skills and the application of knowledge and skills specified in the AQF level 8 criteria and the Bachelor Honours degree descriptor as set out below:
Graduates of a Bachelor Honours degree will have coherent and advanced knowledge of the underlying principles and concepts in one or more disciplines and knowledge of research principles and methods.

Graduates of a Bachelor Honours degree will have:
- cognitive skills to review, analyse, consolidate and synthesise knowledge to identify and provide solutions to complex problems with intellectual independence
- cognitive and technical skills to demonstrate a broad understanding of a body of knowledge and theoretical concepts with advanced understanding in some areas
- cognitive skills to exercise critical thinking and judgement in developing new understanding
- technical skills to design and use research in a project
- communication skills to present a clear and coherent exposition of knowledge and ideas to a variety of audiences

Graduates of a Bachelor Honours degree will demonstrate the application of knowledge and skills:
- with initiative and judgement in professional practice and/or scholarship
- to adapt knowledge and skills in diverse contexts
- with responsibility and accountability for own learning and practice and in collaboration with others within broad parameters
- to plan and execute project work and/or a piece of research and scholarship with some independence

In its program approval and review processes the University assures itself that every student undertakes a coherent program of study that supports the development of the learning outcomes specified for the Bachelor Honours degree, the discipline and The Griffith Graduate.

5. STRUCTURE AND REQUIREMENTS

In accrediting a Bachelor Honours degree, the Programs Committee and the relevant Group Board, establishes the award and the requirements that need to be attained for the conferral of the award. The requirements normally include one or more of the following:
- Core Courses
- Elective Courses
- Research component.

In approving the structure and requirements of the Bachelor Honours degree the Programs Committee is to assure that the amount and type of research provides adequate preparation for research at a higher qualification level (Masters Degree Research or Doctoral) demonstrated by the execution of a piece of research.

5.1 Length and Components

An Honours degree consists of 80 credit points (CP) of work, equivalent to one year of full-time study, or two years part-time.

An Honours degree must include at least a 40 CP supervised research component leading to a dissertation, or a comparable activity in the visual, performing or creative arts. An Honours degree may include coursework (core and/or elective courses), which may include research preparation courses, supervised reading courses, and colloquia, which are assessed.

While it is permissible for an Honours degree to be comprised of 80 CP of dissertation, it is recommended that some coursework be included to allow students to extend their knowledge of the discipline.
5.2 Program Title and Award Nomenclature

An Honours degree is normally an additional year related to a particular bachelor degree. In this case the program title is Bachelor of X (Honours) and the award is Bachelor of X (Honours) [classification], where Bachelor of X is the related undergraduate degree.

5.3 Restrictions on the Structure of the Honours Degree

These restrictions apply both to the approved structure of an Honours degree and the candidature program approved for an individual student.

The coursework of an Honours degree may include:

▪ courses taken from a postgraduate degree (AQF Level 8 & 9) and
▪ Honours courses from another Honours degree within the University or at another university;

where such courses provide a coherent and good quality degree and/or candidature which meet the aims of the Honours degree as set out in section 3.0. Where such courses are included in an Honours degree or candidature, the Honours Program Director must ensure the conditions specific to Honours candidature management as set out in section 8 are applied to these courses and be satisfied that the standard of assessment is undertaken at Honours level.

All coursework included in an Honours degree or candidature must meet the assessment conditions in section 9.1.

5.4 Credit and Recognition of Prior Study

An Honours candidate may be granted credit for up to 20 credit points of honours level courses or postgraduate courses which have been undertaken in other degrees at this or another University prior to admission to the Honours degree.

The student’s grade in a course for which credit is given shall be included in the calculation of the Honours classification.

Credit will only be given where:

▪ the Honours Program Director considers that the prior study has been undertaken and assessed at a level applicable to an Honours candidature;
▪ the granting of credit does not compromise the coherence and quality of the Honours degree or the student’s candidature;
▪ the prior study for which credit is given has been completed within the maximum time allowed for the completion of an honours degree, that is three years (refer section 8.3); and
▪ sufficient information is available about the assessment of the prior study to satisfy the assessment conditions in section 9.1.

Credit may not be given for bachelor degree (AQF level 7) coursework.

6. SUPERVISION

The Honours dissertation is normally undertaken at the University. Honours candidates will have one supervisor, however an additional supervisor may be appointed where appropriate. The honours supervisor is to be qualified in the relevant discipline at Masters level or higher for the purpose of supervising the Honours dissertation, normally involved in research and a member of the Group and/or School that hosts the honours degree in which the student is enrolled. If approval is given for an Honours dissertation to be undertaken at another institution, at least one dissertation supervisor must be an academic staff member of Griffith University.

The responsibilities of the Honours Program Director in relation to the Honours Dissertation and Supervision are set out in the Role Statement Honours Program Director:
7. ADMISSION

7.1 Application for Admission

A person wishing to undertake a Bachelor Honours degree program is advised to obtain information about admission and candidature requirements, possible Honours research topics and potential supervisors before lodging their application. This information is available from a Student Centre and/or the relevant Group or School.

A graduate of another recognised higher education institution may apply for admission to an Honours degree.

An application for admission to an Honours degree program must be made on the appropriate application form and lodged with a Student Centre by the closing date. Applications received after the closing date may be accepted where there are places available. Admission to the Honours program may be available in Trimester 1 or Trimester 2.

An application for admission to an Honours degree program should include a proposed dissertation topic and, where applicable, proposed courses for the coursework component. The application may include preferences for proposed supervisors.

An applicant seeking recognition of prior learning must lodge an application for credit accompanying the application for admission (refer section 5.4).

The Honours Program Director is responsible for considering applications and selecting candidates for admission to the honours degree in accordance with this policy, including any detailed admission requirements approved for the specific Honours degree and published in the Programs and Courses website.

7.2 Selection

In considering an application for admission to an Honours degree, the Honours Program Director shall consider:

7.2.1 The UG record of the applicant - The normal standard for eligibility for admission is a GPA of at least 5.0 (credit level) over the second and third year of the Bachelor degree.

In exceptional cases an offer may be made to admit an applicant whose levels of achievement fall below this admission standard on the basis of other considerations as set out in Section 3.8 of the Undergraduate Programs Admission Policy.

Programs Committee may approve admission requirements in addition to, or in place of the general Honours admission standard for a specific Honours degree on the recommendation of the relevant Group Board;

7.2.2 The suitability of the proposed dissertation topic, the resources available to support the candidature and the availability of appropriate supervision; and

7.2.3 The preparedness of the applicant to undertake the degree in terms of the elapsed time since the prospective candidate qualified for the award of a Bachelor degree and the academic preparation provided by the bachelor degree for the candidate’s proposed dissertation topic.

7.3 Approval of Dissertation Topic and Supervision

In approving an application for Honours candidature, the Honours Program Director also approves the dissertation topic and supervisor(s), ensuring that processes for obtaining ethics clearance have been complied with, and advises the applicant. The offer of admission letter includes:

- the coursework in which the candidate is to enrol;
- confirmation a supervisor and dissertation topic shall be allocated to the candidate;
- the submission date for examination of the dissertation;
- the requirement to complete an Honours Milestones Plan to manage their progress in the honours program; and
- the enrolment status of the student as full-time or part-time and the anticipated completion date.
By accepting the offer of Honours candidature and enrolling in the degree, the candidate also accepts the dissertation topic and supervision (refer section 8.1 for changing dissertation topic and/or supervisor).

8. CANDIDATURE MANAGEMENT

8.1 Approval of Honours Candidature Program; Approval of Changes

A student is admitted to an Honours degree to undertake a specified program of coursework (where applicable) and a specified dissertation topic with a specified supervisor(s) as approved by the Honours Program Director.

A candidate who wishes to vary the schedule of coursework or the dissertation topic or supervision arrangements approved on admission must seek the approval of the Honours Program Director.

A candidate who wishes to vary the schedule of coursework must submit a revised study program for approval by the Honours Program Director. Where the Honours Program Director gives approval for the proposed change, the student is responsible for altering their enrolment by the dates specified in the Student Administration Policy.

Approval will not be given for an Honours candidate to repeat a course for which a grade of 4 or higher has been awarded.

8.2 Enrolment

Upon accepting the offer of Honours candidature and enrolling in the program the candidate must complete an Honours Milestones Plan in consultation with their Honours Supervisor.

The Honours Milestones Plan is a checklist for the student, supervisor and Honours Program Director to use in planning and managing a student’s progression and completion of the honours program.

8.3 Maximum Completion Time

In order to be eligible for the award of a Bachelor (Honours) degree, the maximum time for satisfying the requirements, including any coursework for which credit is given, is three (3) years. The period refers to elapsed calendar years starting from the year in which admission to the program was accepted and is inclusive of periods of leave of absence, discontinuation or exclusion.

8.4 Withdrawal from a Course

A candidate seeking to withdraw from a course without enrolling in another course in its place is required to notify the Honours Program Director of their intention and to propose a revised study program, which will enable them to fulfil the requirements of the Honours degree, for approval by the Honours Program Director.

A student who withdraws after week 8 in a course in either Trimester 1 or 2 shall be deemed to have failed the course and shall receive a grade of "Withdrawal with Failure" (WF).

If there are special circumstances accompanying the withdrawal, the student may be granted withdrawal without failure, under the provisions of the Student Administration Policy (sections 7.5, 7.6 and 7.7). The Honours Program Director may make a recommendation to the Manager of the relevant Student Centre concerning an application from an Honours candidate for withdrawal from a course due to special circumstances.

8.5 Leave of Absence

An Honours candidate may not take leave of absence from the degree without the approval of the Honours Program Director.

The Honours Program Director may grant a candidate a period of leave of absence of up to two trimesters from the degree. The maximum duration for such periods of leave shall not total more than two trimesters for any one candidate in a particular Honours degree.

In considering requests for a period of leave of absence, the Honours Program Director will take into consideration:
- the stage of the candidate in the degree;
- the timing of courses within the degree and the availability to the candidate of appropriate courses on the resumption of study;
- the effects of a period of leave on the dissertation research; and
- the requirement to complete the degree within the three-year period (refer section 8.3).

8.6 Candidate Termination

Enrolment in an Honours degree shall be cancelled and the candidature terminated, if:

- the candidate advises that they wish to withdraw from the Honours degree; or
- the candidate withdraws from all courses without having obtained leave of absence from the degree; or
- the candidate withdraws from the dissertation; or
- the candidate fails to lodge their Honours dissertation by the prescribed due date, including any approved extensions.

8.7 Consequences of Failure/Withdrawal with Failure

8.7.1 Failure in a coursework course

If an Honours candidate fails a coursework course, either by withdrawing from the course after the final date for withdrawal without failure and is given a grade of "Withdrawal with Failure" (WF), or by failing to complete all assessment items for the course and is given a grade of "Fail - No Assessment Submitted" (FNS), or by being awarded a fail grade (1, 2 or 3) normally the student is not permitted to repeat the failed course or undertake an alternate course. (Refer to Student Administration Policy section 7.5 for withdrawal without failure in special circumstances). The consequence is that the student has not completed the required 80 CP of the degree and so is not awarded the Honours degree. In this case, the student's academic record will show the final grade for all courses attempted, including the dissertation, and including the fail grade and the student's enrolment is cancelled and honours candidature terminated.

In special circumstances, the student may be permitted to repeat the failed course or to undertake an alternate course as a replacement for the failed course. The Honours Program Director may recommend this course of action to the Chair, School Assessment Board provided that:

- the student has only failed one course;
- there are extenuating circumstances which contributed to the fail grade; and
- the student can complete the replacement course within the three-year time limit.

Where the candidate has been permitted to repeat the failed course or undertake an alternate course, all attempts at coursework courses will be included in the calculation of the Grade Point Average (refer section 9.5).

8.7.2 Failure in the dissertation

Where a student is given a fail grade for the Honours dissertation, the Honours degree will not be awarded, the student's academic record will report the fail grade for the dissertation and the student's enrolment will be cancelled and honours candidature terminated. In accordance with the Assessment Procedure for Staff, resubmission of the honours dissertation is not permitted.

8.8 Readmission

Where a student has at least one grade in the Honours degree and has withdrawn from the degree, if the student seeks to be readmitted to the Honours degree, then one of two situations must apply in order for the readmission to be approved by the Honours Program Director:

1) The student is able to resume their candidature and complete the candidature requirements within three years from the date of first enrolment. In this case, the Honours Program Director may approve the readmission, possibly with a modified schedule of coursework and possibly with a changed dissertation topic and supervisor, provided that the Honours
Program Director considers that the student has a reasonable expectation of completing the candidature successfully.

2) The student is not able to complete the candidature within three years from the date of first enrolment. In this case, the Honours Program Director may approve admission to a new Honours candidature such that the student undertakes 80 CP of study subsequent to the readmission. Coursework previously completed may not be included in the approved study program or contribute towards the Honours classification. A new dissertation topic must be approved. The student is required to complete the new candidature within three years from the time of readmission.

9. ASSESSMENT

Assessment practices within the University are based on the general principles of criteria based assessment. The assessment plan for an Honours course is documented in the Course Profile. The criteria by which examiners are asked to evaluate an Honours dissertation are set out in Section 18 of the Guidelines for Undertaking a Dissertation in Bachelor (Honours), Graduate Diploma and Masters Degree Programs.

One or more of the consensus moderation processes specified in the Assessment Procedure for Staff are used to develop a common understanding of the standards that underpin comparability and ensure consistency of marking within the Bachelor Honours program.

9.1 Marking and Grading of Coursework

The relevant Group Board in approving the Course Profile approves the assessment strategy for each coursework course included in the Honours degree. Provisions related to supplementary assessment, special consideration and deferred assessment as specified in the Assessment Procedure for Staff apply to Honours coursework.

The Course Convenor for each course included in an Honours degree is required to implement the approved assessment strategy and to advise the Honours Program Director of the assessment outcome for each Honours candidate in the form of a percentage mark. The percentage marks are converted to recommended grades (7, 6, 5, 4, SUP, SSP 3, 2, 1, FNS, WF) for each course.

The recommended grade is based on the grade cut-offs applicable to the assessment outcomes for the student in the course as determined in accordance with the Assessment Procedure for Staff. The Dean (Learning & Teaching), on the recommendation of the School Assessment Board approves the grades and they are then listed on the student's academic record. Where a grade of Pass Conceded has been awarded at another institution this shall normally be treated as a fail grade and the provision of section 8.7 apply.

Where a postgraduate course or a course from another institution is included in an Honours degree or Honours candidature, or where a student is awarded credit for study undertaken prior to candidature, it is necessary that the assessment outcomes for the course conform to the above requirements. Courses from another institution for which transfer credit has been awarded (grade T = Transfer Credit) are not included in the GPA calculation.

9.2 Dissertation Examination

Where an Honours Program Director is also undertaking the role of dissertation supervisor or examiner, they have a responsibility to assess students’ progress and work fairly, objectively and consistently. If they consider they have a conflict of interest or a perceived conflict of interest they must act in accordance with the Conflict of Interest Policy and report the conflict to their Head of element.

Each School shall provide to Honours students and examiners a set of guidelines for examination of the Honours dissertation consistent with Guidelines for Undertaking a Dissertation in Bachelor (Honours), Higher Degree and Masters Degree Programs. An Honours candidate is required to prepare their dissertation in the required form and to submit it directly to the School Office (as advised) by no later than:

- Friday of the first week of June for students submitting in Trimester 1.
- Friday of the last week of October for students submitting in Trimester 2.
The Honours Program Director may approve an extension of time to submit the dissertation no greater than 20 working days on the grounds of illness, accident, disability, bereavement or other compassionate circumstances. In granting the extension the Honours Program Director is to ensure the length of the extension is commensurate with the time the student was unable to work on their dissertation and the extension does not unduly advantage the student over those who submitted in accordance with the University’s deadline.

Where an extension of the submission date is granted, students are advised that they may be ineligible for higher degree research scholarships as their honours results may not be available in time for the selection process.

Candidates may apply for special consideration in respect of their performance across the dissertation course/s in accordance with the Assessment Procedure for Students where there are exceptional circumstances. An application for special consideration should be provided with the dissertation to the examiners. Examiners are to advise whether the percentage marks for the dissertation are awarded with due consideration of the candidate’s circumstances.

The Honours Program Director will recommend to the Dean (Learning & Teaching) at least two examiners to assess the dissertation. Examiners external to the University may be appointed but normally, Honours dissertations are assessed by two internal examiners (staff of the University). In special cases as approved by the Dean (Learning & Teaching), additional examiners may be appointed to conduct the initial examination of the dissertation.

Each examiner shall provide a percentage mark to indicate their assessment of the dissertation in terms of the standard cut-offs for Honours classifications (refer section 9.5), together with a report. Consistent with the responsibilities of examiners as set out in the Assessment Procedure for Staff to provide feedback to students on their performance in assessment tasks the examiners' reports shall be provided to candidates after they have received advice of their Honours classification.

The dissertation supervisor may not be an examiner of the dissertation.

9.3 Marking and Grading of Dissertation Course(s)

The Group Board shall approve the criteria for examination of the dissertation, the methodology for calculating the minimum percentage for the dissertation, including the marks from each examiner and, where relevant, other components such as the supervisor's assessment, and the candidate's performance in the presentation of their dissertation in an Honours colloquia/seminar. The methodology shall be approved as part of the Program Proposal for an Honours degree. If a supervisor's assessment is included, this shall not contribute more than 30% of the total dissertation course assessment.

9.4 Appointment of Additional Examiner(s)

Where the spread of the marks awarded by the examiners is 10 marks or more, the Honours Program Director shall investigate and resolve the discrepancy. The following guidelines will normally be observed in dealing with discrepancies in dissertation marking -

- In the first instance, each examiner is requested to reconsider their result in the light of the report and result submitted by the other examiners whose identity shall remain confidential.
- In the event of the discrepancy still existing, an additional examiner (not the supervisor) shall be appointed. The additional examiner shall not be provided with the previous examiners' marks.
- Where an additional examiner is appointed, the final honours dissertation mark shall be decided by averaging the two closest results of the set of examiners.

9.5 Calculation of Honours Classification

The class of honours degree to be awarded each candidate will be determined on the basis of a Program GPA and a minimum percentage for the dissertation as described below.

The percentage mark for the dissertation is calculated from the individual examiners' marks and other components of the dissertation assessment where applicable, with weightings approved by the Group Board.
A candidate who achieves a Program GPA of less than 4 and/or less than 50% for the dissertation is not awarded the Honours degree.

9.6 Award of Honours Classification

The degree with honours may be awarded in classes - Class I, Class IIA, Class IIB, and Class III. The Honours Program Director recommends the Honours classification for each candidate calculated as described in section 9.5 to the Dean (Learning & Teaching) for approval via the School Assessment Board.

9.7 Role of Dean (Learning & Teaching)

The Dean (Learning and Teaching) is responsible for approving grades for all courses in the Honours degree, including the dissertation on the recommendation of the School Assessment Board. The Dean (Learning and Teaching) is also responsible for approving Honours classifications on the recommendation of the Honours Program Director via the School Assessment Board. Grades and classifications shall not be released to students prior to their approval by the Dean (Learning & Teaching).

The Dean (Learning & Teaching) is responsible for monitoring the assessment outcomes in each Honours degree, including the distribution of classifications, the standards implied by the classifications and the comparability of the standards across degrees.

9.8 Advice to Students

Following approval by the Dean (Learning & Teaching), each Honours candidate is advised of their Honours classification. The student's academic record shall include the grade awarded for each course undertaken as part of the Honours degree, including the overall grade for the dissertation, the title of the dissertation and the overall Honours classification.

9.9 Review and Appeals

In accordance with the Student Review and Appeals Policy an Honours candidate may apply for a review of a decision within 10 working days of notification of any of the academic decisions set out in the table below which affects their candidature.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision Type</th>
<th>Decision-Maker</th>
<th>Review Officer</th>
<th>Appeal Body</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rejection of application for admission to Bachelor (Honours) AQF Level 8 program (end-on &amp; embedded)</td>
<td>Honours Program Director</td>
<td>Dean (Learning &amp; Teaching)</td>
<td>An appeal may be lodged with the Queensland Ombudsman.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades awarded for a coursework component as provided for in the Assessment Procedure for Staff</td>
<td>Course Convenor</td>
<td>Chair, School Assessment Board</td>
<td>Dean, Learning &amp; Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honours Classification or the grade awarded for the dissertation</td>
<td>Honours Program Director</td>
<td>Dean (Learning &amp; Teaching)</td>
<td>University Appeals Committee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Refusal to grant leave of absence as provided for in Bachelor Honours Degree (AQF Level 8) Policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Termination of Honours candidature</th>
<th>Honours Program Director</th>
<th>Dean (Learning &amp; Teaching)</th>
<th>An appeal may be lodged with the Queensland Ombudsman</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The processes set out in the Student Review and Appeals Procedures apply.

10. **ROLE OF THE HONOURS PROGRAM DIRECTOR**

The role of the Honours Program Director is specified in the policy statement "Role Statement Honours Program Director".

11. **UNIVERSITY MEDAL**

Students who have completed the Bachelor Honours degree are eligible for consideration for the University Medal. Candidates for the award of the University Medal are determined in accordance with the University Medal Policy.