

FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES - HONOURS PROVISIONS 2014

1. Rationale and principles

- (1) These provisions set out the basis for implementation of the [Faculty resolutions](#) relating to honours.
- (2) Honours degrees in the Faculty are appended honours degrees: that is, honours consists of an extra year's full-time study appended to the pass degree.
- (3) The honours year is both a capstone to an undergraduate degree and a preparation for postgraduate study. It may be the culmination of a student's formal education or the first step on a path to an academic career. In either case, it is a valuable qualification for careers within and outside the academy.
- (4) Honours is an intensive program of advanced study with research at its centre. Students undertake coursework, usually within the framework of seminar classes, and research and write a substantial thesis on a topic that they work out in collaboration with a supervisor, who is a specialist in the relevant field. The program requires students to take advanced classes in one discipline or area of study and to apply the methods of a discipline actively.
- (5) Honours students in the Faculty engage in depth with the problems and research processes of a discipline (such as Philosophy) or a coherent interdisciplinary subject area (such as International and Comparative Literary Studies).
- (6) Students who wish to continue studying a variety of subjects in more depth than a pass degree permits should consider a Master's degree rather than honours.

2. Honours program requirements

- (1) Students enrolling in the honours program before 1 January 2017 must have completed 48 senior credit points (normally, eight units of study) at an average of 70% or better in the subject in which they intend to take honours.
- (2) Students enrolling in the honours program after 1 January 2017 must have completed a major at an average of 70% or better in the subject in which they intend to take honours.
- (3) Some departments or programs may expect incoming honours students to have completed advanced senior units of study designed to prepare students for the honours program. These are sometimes referred to as "honours entry" units but are not part of the honours program.
- (4) All honours programs will involve a mix of seminars and a thesis. Some also require additional work in forms appropriate to the discipline in question (for example, placements).
- (5) All honours students must submit between 30,000 and 39,000 words of written work or its equivalent.
- (6) There are two typical models for honours programs.

- (a) Three seminars and a shorter thesis (12,000 to 15,000 words or the equivalent if written in a language other than English);
- (b) Two seminars and a longer thesis (18,000 to 20,000 words or the equivalent if written in a language other than English).

3. Responsibilities of departments and programs

- (1) The Chair of department or director, in the case of interdisciplinary programs, is responsible for ensuring that the department or program responsibilities listed in this clause are discharged.
 - (a) Depending on the organisational structure, this may involve some or all of the responsibilities being discharged by an honours co-ordinator, or a departmental committee or both.
 - (b) Where such arrangements are implemented, they must be explained clearly to students.
- (2) Departments and programs are responsible for:
 - (a) ensuring that applicants for admission to honours are properly qualified, in terms of admission requirements and proposed research topic;
 - (b) ensuring the project proposed is appropriate for an honours thesis and can be undertaken with available time and facilities;
 - (c) ensuring the candidate receives proper supervision throughout the research and writing of the thesis;
 - (d) ensuring examination and assessment processes are consistent with the [Coursework Policy 2014, Part 14](#);
 - (e) informing candidates of applicable requirements and conventions relating to the length, presentation, production and submission of the thesis;
 - (f) encouraging supervisors to participate in appropriate training activities;
 - (g) providing opportunities for the development of profitable intellectual relationships among honours students and staff;
 - (h) encouraging honours students to participate in appropriate departmental, school, or faculty activities;
 - (i) informing students of all ethical requirements relevant to their research, including requirements for Ethics Committee approvals, and assisting them to meet these requirements;
 - (j) monitoring the student –supervisor relationship and working to resolve any problems with it;
 - (k) making honours candidates aware of people within the department or program, Faculty and wider University to whom they can turn for advice;
 - (l) ensuring that honours candidates are made aware of relevant University policies and procedures.

Note: All University policies and procedures are available from the [Policy Register](#). (www.sydney.edu.au/policies)

4. Responsibilities of supervisors

Supervisors are responsible for:

- (a) ensuring that honours students are aware of the standards expected for an honours thesis;
- (b) identifying with the student the particular research methods and analytical skills that will need to be developed;
- (c) negotiating with the student a plan for researching and writing the thesis, which may include a deadline for submitting a complete draft and arrangements for supervision meetings;
- (d) making themselves available to meet with a thesis student for half an hour every two weeks, on average, during term time, noting that meetings may be shorter or less frequent earlier in the program and longer or more frequent in the later stages of the thesis;
- (e) returning written work with constructive criticism within two weeks or any shorter agreed time;
- (f) providing the student with feedback on progress, identifying problems and suggesting ways of addressing them;
- (g) providing appropriate and timely advice on requirements of content, style, presentation and production of the thesis;
- (h) working with the student to prepare any necessary applications for ethics approval;
- (i) being aware of the support services for students available within the University and directing students to them where appropriate;
- (j) informing the Chair of Department or honours co-ordinator of any problems which occur during the writing or researching of the thesis; and
- (k) ensuring that appropriate records are created and maintained.

Note: See [University Recordkeeping Policy](#) and [Recordkeeping Manual](#).

5. Responsibilities of students

- (1) Students are solely responsible for:
 - (a) enrolling in honours units and varying their enrolment when required or appropriate; and
 - (b) the content, style, presentation and production of the thesis that is finally presented.
- (2) Students are also responsible for:
 - (a) devoting sufficient time to the thesis, including ensuring that there is sufficient time to write it up;
 - (b) ascertaining applicable requirements for content, style, and presentation of the thesis;
 - (c) negotiating with the supervisor a plan for researching and writing the thesis, which may include a deadline for submitting a complete draft and arrangements for supervision meetings;

- (d) drawing the attention of either or both of their supervisor or honours co-ordinator to problems;
 - (e) identifying and, if necessary using, mechanisms that exist to help with student- supervisor difficulties;
 - (f) familiarising themselves with relevant University policies and procedures, and Faculty and departmental requirements; and
- Note:** All University policies and procedures are available from the Policy Register. (www.sydney.edu.au/policies/)
- (g) working with their supervisors to prepare any necessary applications for ethics approval.

6. Joint honours programs

- (1) The Faculty permits individually tailored joint honours programs for students whose scholarly interests and research projects are strongly interdisciplinary.
 - (a) Students seeking to enrol in joint honours must meet the honours program requirements for each subject area.
 - (b) Enrolment in such programs is at the discretion of the relevant honours co-ordinators.
 - (c) Credit for the Equivalent Full-Time Student Load (EFTSU) will be divided equally between the departments regardless of the number of seminars the student takes in each.
- (2) The relevant honours co-ordinators must ensure from the outset of a joint honours program that satisfactory arrangements, consistent with procedures for other students in their respective programs, are in place for marking the joint honours thesis.
 - (a) This is especially important where a thesis requires specialist technical knowledge or knowledge of a language other than English. For example: a thesis written in German by a student undertaking joint honours in German and Government and International Relations will need to be able to be read, in German, by examiners from both departments.
- (3) Students who wish to take joint honours in two programs must work with the honours co-ordinators of both departments to devise a plan of study that has a level of coherence comparable to that of honours taken in a single program.
 - (a) In collaboration with the honours co-ordinators the student must complete a Plan of Study in the form set out in Schedule 1.
 - (b) The Plan of Study must be agreed and submitted to each of the honours co-ordinators, with a copy retained by the student.
 - (c) The Plan of Study will constitute an agreement between the student and the staff members, and between the departments and will be referred to in the case of disagreement.
- (4) Any joint honours program must include a thesis of at least 12,000 words which is worth at least 40% of the final honours mark.
- (5) Supervision arrangements for joint honours programs must be negotiated and agreed upon by all parties at the beginning of the student's program.
- (6) A joint honours thesis must be supervised jointly by a staff member in each department, although the responsibility need not be shared equally.

- (7) There are three typical models for joint honours programs.
- (a) Two seminars, each worth 20% of the final mark, and a long thesis (18,000 to 20,000 words) worth 60%.
 - (i) If one of the seminars is from a department which normally requires three seminars, and so offers seminars that require less work, the scale of assessments in that seminar may need to be increased to bring the total amount of written work within the 30,000 to 39,000 word range.
 - (b) Three seminars, each worth 20% of the final mark, and a short thesis (12,000 to 15,000 words) worth 40%.
 - (i) This option is appropriate for programs involving most School of Language and Cultures departments and English or Philosophy (but not both).
 - (ii) This option may not be appropriate for programs involving the School of Social and Political Sciences departments, History and other programs that normally require a long thesis.
 - (c) For joint honours in English and Philosophy: two seminars in English (each worth 15 % of the final mark), two seminars in Philosophy (each worth 15% of the final mark) and a short thesis (12,000 to 15,000 words) worth 40%.
- (8) A thesis written in a joint honours program must be assessable in both fields of study. The thesis will be due on the earlier of the dates for thesis submission in the relevant departments or programs.
- (9) The Pro-Dean (Academic), in consultation with the relevant Chairs of Department and Heads of School, will be responsible for mediating any disputes over joint honours programs of study.

7. Marking honours theses

- (1) Each thesis must be examined by at least two examiners, who will be members of academic staff other than the student's supervisor.
- (2) Each examiner must write a detailed report on the thesis, at least one page in length.
- (3) The student will be provided with copies of each examiner's report, but not the raw mark recommended by him or her.
- (4) The supervisor will be provided with copies of each examiner's report, including the raw mark recommended.
 - (a) These must be provided before any meeting to finalise marks is held.
 - (b) The supervisor may comment on, question or challenge the examiners' reports.
- (5) If the raw marks recommended by the examiners differ by 10 marks or less, the thesis will be awarded the average of the two marks provided that, if the marks fall within different grades, the honours co-ordinator will consult the two examiners to agree on the appropriate final mark and grade.
- (6) If the raw marks recommended by the examiners differ by more than 10 marks:
 - (a) the honours co-ordinator will request a written report (but no mark) from the supervisor, to clarify the contribution of the thesis;

- (b) the honours co-ordinator will then consult the original examiners to attempt to reach agreement on an appropriate final mark and grade;
 - (c) if no agreement is reached, the honours co-ordinator will appoint a third examiner, who will provide a further recommended mark; and
 - (d) the honours co-ordinator will then consult all three examiners to agree on the final mark.
- (7) The honours co-ordinator will maintain a record of all discussions with examiners relating to the final mark.

8. University medal

- (1) A University medal may only be awarded by decision of the Faculty Honours Board in formal meeting.
 - (2) The Faculty Honours Board may award a University medal if:
 - (a) the student has an overall fourth year honours mark of 90 or higher. For the avoidance of doubt, this includes a mark of 90; and
 - (b) in the pass degree:
 - (i) the student has a weighted average mark of 80 or higher; or
 - (ii) has shown ever improving academic performance rather than intermittent excellence;and
 - (c) the department's citation makes a convincing case that the student's academic accomplishment is genuinely exceptional.
- (3) In departments where there is more than one student with a mark of 90 or higher, the department must explain why the medal candidate is outstanding even in the company of other 90+ students.
- (4) Departments should not reflexively nominate all 90+ students for medals.

9. Faculty Honours Board

- (1) There will be a Faculty Honours Board ("the Board") which will:
 - (a) certify the honours results of all departments and programs in the Faculty; and
 - (b) decide to whom University medals will be awarded.
- (2) The Board will consist of:
 - (a) the Pro-Dean (Academic), as Chair;
 - (b) the honours co-ordinators or chairs of every department or program with honours students whose results are under consideration; and
 - (c) where there is a single honours co-ordinator for an entire School, the relevant Chairs will also attend.
- (3) The Board will meet twice each year, at the end of each semester.
- (4) Before each meeting, honours co-ordinators or Chairs of departments must prepare citations for each student recommended for award of a University medal, using the form set out in Schedule 2.

- (5) Each citation must include:
- (a) the student's overall Honours D mark;
 - (b) the thesis mark;
 - (c) the student's seminar marks;
 - (d) the weightings of the seminar and the marks;
 - (e) the student's pass degree weighted average mark;
 - (f) an explanation, for a non-specialist, of what makes the student's academic accomplishments exceptional, including qualitative comments rather than generic superlatives; and
 - (g) an outline of the process by which the department arrived at the recommendation.
- (6) Citations must be received by email in the Faculty Office by 9.00 am on the Monday before the Board meets.
- (7) Before the meeting:
- (a) the Associate Dean will collect all citations and distribute copies to members of the Board; and
 - (b) Faculty staff, in consultation with the Pro-Dean (Academic) will prepare a spreadsheet showing the honours results from each program.
- (8) At its meeting the Board will:
- (a) consider, and if appropriate certify as valid, the numerical marks and corresponding awards submitted by each department or program; and then
 - (b) discuss the merits of each candidate for a University medal and decide to whom medals should be awarded.
- (9) Decisions to award a University medal must be:
- (a) taken in relation to each candidate one by one;
 - (b) made by show of hands, not ballot; and
 - (c) determined by a simple majority of Board members, with no casting vote in the event of a tie.
- (10) The Faculty will retain the citation forms, in accordance with the [University Recordkeeping Policy](#) and [Recordkeeping Manual](#).

NOTES

Date	Amendment	Made By
17 February 2015	Links in <i>Related Documents</i> updated to reflect new <i>Coursework Policy 2014</i>	Zoe Morrison
29 June 2016	New minimum entry Honours Program requirements updated following Academic Board approval on 29 June 2016	Danielle Seesink

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences - Honours Provisions 2014

Date adopted: 28 April 2014

Date commenced: 28 April 2014

Date amended: 06 September 2016, commencing 26 September 2016

Approved by: Professor Barbara Caine
Dean, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Signature:

Related documents:

[Coursework Policy 2014](#)

[Assessment Procedures 2011](#)

[University Recordkeeping Policy](#)

[University Recordkeeping Manual](#)

SCHEDULE 1

JOINT HONOURS PLAN OF STUDY FORM

This form should be completed by the student and the Honours Coordinators for the two departments, programs or schools involved. Sections marked with an asterisk need to be completed by the Honours Coordinators. The student and the two Honours Coordinators should each retain a copy.

GENERAL

Name of Student:

Departments/programs involved:

- 1.
- 2.

ASSESSMENT STRUCTURE

What assessment structure will this plan of study follow?

- Joint Honours in two programs, at least one of which requires a long thesis (18,000-20,000 words):
 - 1 seminar from each program, each worth 20% of the final Honours mark
 - A thesis of 18-20,000 words, worth 60% of the final Honours mark
- Joint Honours in two programs (one of which may be English or Philosophy, but not both), each of which requires a shorter thesis (12,000-15,000 words):
 - 1 seminar from one program, worth 20% of the final Honours mark
 - 2 seminars from the other program, each worth 20% of the final Honours mark
 - A thesis of 12,000-15,000 words, worth 40% of the final Honours mark
- Joint Honours in English and Philosophy:
 - 2 seminars from English, each worth 15% of the final Honours mark
 - 2 seminars from Philosophy, worth 15% of the final Honours mark
 - A thesis of 12,000-15,000 words, worth 40% of the final Honours mark
- Other

SEMINARS

List two or three or four seminars, depending on the option selected in section B

Seminar 1

Seminar title:

Instructor:

Department:

*Assessment components (including word limits) and their weighting:

*Are the above assessments and weightings the same as those for other students taking this seminar, or have they been modified to fit this Joint Honours plan of study?

*If so, please explain how.

Seminar 2

Seminar title:

Instructor:

Department:

Assessment components (including word limits) and their weighting:

*Are the above assessments and weightings the same as those for other students taking this seminar, or have they been modified to fit this Joint Honours plan of study?

*If so, please explain how.

Seminar 3 (if applicable)

Seminar title:

Instructor:

Department:

*Assessment components (including word limits) and their weighting:

*Are the above assessments and weightings the same as those for other students taking this seminar, or have they been modified to fit this Joint Honours plan of study?

*If so, please explain how.

Seminar 4 (applicable only in cases of Joint English-Philosophy Honours)

Seminar title:

Instructor:

Department:

*Assessment components (including word limits) and their weighting:

*Are the above assessments and weightings the same as those for other students taking this seminar, or have they been modified to fit this Joint Honours plan of study?

*If so, please explain how.

THESIS

Thesis topic:

Supervisors:

How often will the student meet each supervisor?

Will the student meet each supervisor separately or together?

What language will the thesis be written in?

*List any additional requirements (conferences, monthly workshops, literature reviews, progress reports, etc) peculiar to either department and their dates.

*When will the thesis be submitted?

*By what date must examiners submit their reports on the thesis?

*Will the marking of this thesis require specialist technical knowledge or expertise in a language other than English?

*If so, what arrangements are in place to ensure that the thesis is marked in a manner consistent with the procedures for other students in the same departments?

DECLARATIONS

Student

I am satisfied with the above arrangements

.....

Sign and date

Staff

We are satisfied that the program of study described in this form is appropriate for a Joint Honours degree, and that the arrangements for supervision and assessment of the student's thesis are sound and fair.

Honours Coordinator for Department/Program/School 1

.....

Sign and date

Honours Coordinator for Department/Program/School 2

.....

Sign and date

SCHEDULE 2

CANDIDATE CITATION FOR UNIVERSITY MEDAL

Student's name and student ID number:

Department/program:

Student's overall Honours D result:

Student's thesis mark:

Student's seminar marks (include names of seminars):

Weighting of seminar and thesis marks in this department or program:

Student's pass degree WAM:

Please explain, for colleagues in other fields, what makes this student's accomplishments in this field exceptional:

Please outline the process by which the department or program arrived at its medal recommendations: