



# Higher Education Courses Approval and Review procedure

## Section 1 - Preamble

(1) This Procedure is effective from 1 March 2022.

## Section 2 - Purpose

(2) This Procedure documents the University's higher education courses approval and review processes. (Refer to the [Academic Programs Approval and Review website](#))

## Section 3 - Scope

(3) This Procedure applies to higher education award courses and non-award offerings offered by the University.

## Section 4 - Policy

(4) This Procedure is pursuant to the [Higher Education Courses policy](#).

## Section 5 - Procedure

### Course Approvals

#### Approvals

(5) Proposals for new courses, and revisions and continuations of existing courses require two stages of approval:

- a. Strategic approval: based on consideration of the fit of the proposal with the University's strategic direction and anticipated financial viability. A Course Reference Group may also be established to assist the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic in the evaluation of course proposals.
- b. Academic approval: to ensure compliance with academic requirements of the University and the [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#).

(6) Proposals for discontinuations of existing courses require strategic approval only.

#### New award courses

(7) Approval of new award courses require both strategic approval and academic approval. Strategic approval is required before academic approval is granted.

(8) Strategic course proposals will be:

- a. developed by faculties, using the approved strategic course proposal template
- b. endorsed by the Executive Dean
- c. endorsed by the Pro Vice-Chancellor Researcher Development in the case of higher degrees by research (HDR), and courses intended as HDR pathways
- d. approved by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic on strategic grounds.

(9) A course risk rating will be assigned to each course as part of the strategic approval process. The process and criteria for assigning risk ratings will be approved by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic.

(10) Academic course proposals will be:

- a. developed by faculties using the approved academic course proposal and course specification templates
- b. endorsed by the Faculty Board
- c. approved by the Academic Board on academic grounds.

(11) New award courses will normally be approved for six years. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic may approve a shorter approval period on request from the Faculty.

(12) Proposals for new combined courses where one or both component courses are also new will be developed and approved using the processes set out in clauses 7-11.

### **New combined award courses from existing award courses**

(13) Proposals for new combined award courses created from existing approved award courses will be:

- a. developed by faculties using the approved new combined course proposal template
- b. endorsed by the relevant Faculty Executive Dean/s
- c. approved by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic on strategic grounds
- d. approved by the Academic Board on academic grounds.

### **Award course revisions**

(14) Proposals for revisions listed in clauses 15 and 16 to award courses will be developed by faculties using the approved course revision proposal template and endorsed by the:

- a. Faculty Executive Dean
- b. Pro Vice-Chancellor Researcher Development in the case of HDR or pathways to HDR.

(15) The following revisions to existing award courses require strategic approval by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic:

- a. course or award title
- b. arrangements for course delivery by or with third parties, including Deakin's controlled entities
- c. location or mode of delivery including online
- d. academic calendar used for course delivery
- e. addition of new fully-nested Graduate Certificates or Graduate Diplomas to existing Masters course
- f. other changes that introduce new or revised course requirements that may disadvantage enrolled students.

(16) The following revisions to existing award courses require academic approval by Academic Board (in addition to strategic approval if also listed in clause 15):

- a. course or award title
- b. admission and selection criteria
- c. course structure, duration or academic calendar used for delivery
- d. addition of new fully-nested Graduate Certificates or Graduate Diplomas to existing Masters course
- e. other changes that introduce new or revised course requirements that may disadvantage enrolled students, where academic in nature.

(17) Faculty Boards approve proposals for:

- a. any changes to award courses not covered by clauses 15 or 16
- b. new or revised units or micro-units that result in credit towards an award course unless they result in a revision to a course covered by clauses 15 or 16.

(18) The Pro Vice-Chancellor Researcher Development approves any changes to HDR courses not covered by clauses 15 or 16.

### **Non-award offerings**

(19) New or revised non-award offerings that may lead to admission to an award course require academic approval by the Academic Board.

(20) New or revised non-award offerings offered without charge require strategic approval by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic.

(21) All other proposals for new or revised non-award offerings require approval by Faculty Boards.

### **Micro-units**

(22) Specific requirements and responsibilities for micro-units will be determined by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic and will:

- a. ensure that the academic integrity of the micro-unit and destination degrees is maintained
- b. maintain flexibility and efficiency in the delivery of micro-units
- c. be scaled to be commensurate with the volume of learning and the delivery models for micro-units.

(23) All proposals for new or revised micro-units, excluding Deakin Professional Practice Credentials, require approval by Faculty Boards and endorsement by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic. On approval, Faculties will report micro-unit approvals and revisions for recording in a central register by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic.

(24) Approval for new and revised Deakin Professional Practice Credentials is as specified in the [Deakin Professional Practice Credentials procedure](#).

### **Partnerships**

(25) Where a proposal for a new course or revision to an existing course involves an academic partnership relating to course delivery the academic partnership must be approved in accordance with the [Academic Partnerships procedure](#).

### **Course and unit reviews**

(26) A tiered approach to reviews is implemented to ensure the ongoing viability, quality and strategic alignment of courses offered by the University. This includes:

- a. ongoing monitoring and review of the quality of units including micro-units (under clauses 29-30)

- b. ongoing monitoring of course development and delivery by course teams
- c. annual reviews of coursework programs (under clauses 31-32)
- d. periodic comprehensive (major) reviews of coursework programs which are required before course continuation (under clauses 33-36)
- e. reviews of HDR courses (under clauses 40-43).

Reviews may result in the discontinuation, suspension or revision of courses, units or micro-units.

(27) Course teams will develop a plan for each coursework program or group of related coursework programs that includes evidence of course performance and priorities for improvement. Course and unit reviews are conducted with reference to the course plan/s.

(28) The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic will provide an annual report to Academic Board summarising the outcomes of major and annual reviews and external professional accreditation of courses and actions arising from those reviews.

### **Unit monitoring and review**

(29) The quality of units, including micro-units in coursework programs or HDRs will be monitored through the administration of an approved student survey in accordance with the [Evaluation of Teaching and Units procedure](#) and other evidence of student engagement and achievement.

(30) Schools and relevant course teams will review the outcomes of the student survey and evidence of unit performance each time a unit is offered and the Unit Chair will develop and implement a plan to address issues identified with reference to criteria stipulated by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic and faculty. Where negative outcomes are sustained, the unit may be discontinued or intakes into the unit may be suspended until issues are addressed to the satisfaction of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic.

### **Annual course reviews – coursework programs**

(31) Faculties will conduct annual reviews of courses or groups of related courses in accordance with the approved course risk rating as follows:

- a. High risk: Faculties will conduct full annual course reviews of all courses with high risk rating. The results of these reviews will be provided to Faculty Boards, and to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic as part of the annual course portfolio review process.
- b. Medium risk: Faculties will review any courses or groups of related courses with medium risk rating with regard to the criteria leading to the medium rating. The results of these reviews will be provided to Faculty Boards, and to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic as part of the course portfolio review process. Faculties may also choose to conduct full annual course reviews of medium-risk courses.
- c. Low risk: Annual review of low-risk courses is not mandatory, but faculties may choose to conduct reviews as part of their internal quality assurance processes.

(32) The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic will conduct an annual course portfolio review which will consider:

- a. the faculty's overall course portfolio strategy
- b. the results of reviews of medium and high-risk courses as specified in clause 31. Repeated negative annual course review outcomes may trigger a major course review or course discontinuation
- c. other courses selected by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic.

### **Major course reviews – coursework programs**

(33) Faculties will conduct major reviews of each course and prepare reports in accordance with an approved

template. These reviews will take place usually every six years and at least every seven years. The reviews will be informed by:

- a. recommendations from panels convened for the purpose
- b. external referencing of the success of student cohorts and student satisfaction against comparable courses
- c. external referencing of assessment methods and grading (under clauses 45-47)
- d. strategic priorities of the University
- e. the results of regular interim monitoring of the quality of teaching, student progress and unit delivery.

### **Major course review panels composition**

(34) Faculty Boards establish panels to undertake major course reviews. The panels comprise:

- a. Core members – required for all panels
  - i. a senior Faculty academic (e.g. Associate Dean, Teaching and learning, Head of School)
  - ii. at least one external Advisory Board member who is representative of employer groups or professions that employ graduates of the course or discipline
  - iii. an academic staff member from another School in the Faculty
  - iv. a current student of the course
  - v. a graduate from the course
- b. Additional members – at Faculty Board discretion
  - i. additional Advisory Board members
  - ii. an academic from another university with expertise in a related discipline
  - iii. a representative of the professional association (where appropriate)
  - iv. additional students and/or graduates of the course
  - v. other members as required who are not members of the course team.

(35) The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic in consultation with faculties will prepare annual schedules for major course reviews. The DVCA may grant a full or partial exemption from a major course review where a course has undergone a review by a professional accreditation body in the previous 12 months or in other exceptional circumstances.

(36) Major course review reports will include proposals and timelines for changes to courses and other actions to improve course quality where issues have been identified.

### **Course continuations**

(37) All existing courses must be approved for continuation before the expiry of the previous approval period (normally six years). Faculties will develop applications for course continuation in accordance with an approved template. Applications will be accompanied by a major course review report developed in accordance with clauses 33-36.

(38) Proposals for course continuation require endorsement by Faculty Boards and approval by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic on strategic grounds and by the Academic Board on academic grounds.

(39) Interim course continuations may be granted in exceptional circumstances by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic.

### **Reviews of higher degrees by research**

(40) The Research and Research Training Committee will monitor the performance of HDRs and conduct periodic

quality assurance reviews as appropriate.

(41) The Research and Research Training Committee will review the research training activities of faculties and institutes annually in accordance with a process approved by Academic Board.

(42) The Research and Research Training Committee will report annually to the Academic Board in relation to the performance of HDRs, the outcomes of quality assurance reviews and research training reviews.

(43) Comprehensive reviews of HDRs will be conducted every five years. The reviews will be informed by:

- a. recommendations from panels convened for the purpose by the Pro Vice-Chancellor Researcher Development that include members external to the University
- b. external referencing of the success of student cohorts and student satisfaction against comparable courses
- c. strategic priorities of the University
- d. the results of regular interim monitoring as set out in clauses 40 and 41.

### **Reviews by professional accreditation bodies**

(44) Faculty Boards provide to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic annual reports on new or continuing courses that have undergone a review by a professional accreditation body in the previous 12 months.

### **External referencing of assessment – coursework programs**

(45) During the period for which a course has been approved, faculties will:

- a. externally reference assessment methods and the grading of student achievement using a methodology approved by the Faculty Board (or nominee) which meets or exceeds the requirements set out in clauses 46 and 47, and
- b. report on the outcomes and resulting improvements to assessment in the next major course review report.

(46) The methodology adopted for external referencing of assessment will meet the following requirements:

- a. Sufficient units and, if relevant, micro-units will be selected from the course or suite of related courses to demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes related to discipline knowledge, problem solving, critical thinking and communication (in line with the [Australian Qualifications Framework \(AQF\)](#) specifications).
- b. External reviewers will be selected who are suitably qualified and have current knowledge and skills in the relevant discipline and experience of course leadership.
- c. The reviewers will evaluate the validity of assessment tasks and level of achievement demonstrated in samples of student work (de-identified where possible) with reference to nationally agreed external standards (including the [AQF](#) and discipline standards where applicable).
- d. The reviewers will be provided with necessary contextual information, including the learning outcomes, the University's grading schema and marking criteria/rubrics.
- e. The review will involve the verification of student grades or the remarking of work with grades and marking removed.

(47) Appropriate adjustments to the requirements specified in clause 46 may be made where student outputs are assessed in real time (e.g. performances). Other variations to the requirements specified may be approved by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic (or nominee) on a case-by-case basis. Professional accreditation may satisfy the requirements of clause 46.

## Course discontinuations and suspensions of intake

(48) Proposals to suspend intake to or to permanently discontinue a course may arise from annual or major course reviews or other faculty or University reviews. Faculties will develop proposals for course discontinuation or suspension of intake in accordance with an approved template. The proposal will include a transition plan, endorsed by the Faculty Board, to ensure that students are not disadvantaged by any change. Discontinuation or suspension of intake proposals require endorsement by Faculty Executive Dean (and, in the case of HDRs, the Pro Vice-Chancellor Researcher Development) and approval by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic.

## Responsibilities to students affected by coursework discontinuations or revisions

(49) Students affected by course discontinuations or revisions include those enrolled in the course, on intermission from the course, who have been offered a place in the course or who have deferred an offer of a place in the course.

(50) Students affected by the revision of a course will be transferred to the revised version of the course at the earliest opportunity where practical.

(51) Students affected by the discontinuation of a course will be provided with reasonable opportunities to complete the course, or to transfer to an equivalent or suitable alternative course. The period during which students must complete a discontinued course will be determined by the Faculty Board. This will be the time needed for enrolled part-time students to complete the course, up to twice the full-time equivalent duration of the course.

(52) The faculty will contact students affected by the discontinuation or revision of a course to provide reasonable notice of the change and advise them of available options and the maximum period for completion (in the case of discontinued courses), taking into account the University's obligations under the [Education Services for Overseas Students \(ESOS\) Act](#). Where these obligations are unclear, faculties should seek advice from the University's International Quality and Compliance Unit. Deakin International will contact international students who have not yet enrolled.

(53) Individual study plans will be developed for students enrolled in a discontinued course or whose progress may be affected by a course revision.

(54) When approval is granted for the discontinuation of a course or suspension of intake, no new offers will be issued for places in the course for enrolment periods from the date of approved suspension or discontinuation. The Faculty Executive Dean may make exceptions for students who are likely to incur significant costs as a result of the discontinuation or suspension of the course.

(55) Students who transfer to an alternative course will be granted credit for units deemed equivalent that they have completed as part of the discontinued course, in accordance with relevant University policies and procedures.

(56) Students who do not wish to continue at the University will be refunded fees they have paid for the discontinued or suspended course, except for any units they have attempted.

## Section 6 - Definitions

(57) For the purpose of this Procedure:

- a. combined course: approved combination of courses of the University that leads to the conferral of two awards in accordance with Regulation 17 – Combined Courses, Dual Courses and Joint Courses of the [Academic Board Regulations](#).
- b. coursework program: a course of study excluding higher degrees by research.
- c. course team: a group of at least four continuing or fixed-term (term of three years or greater) Academic staff

members, including representatives from each campus on which the course is offered and at least one active researcher, appointed by the Faculty Board to coordinate the design, ongoing development and review of a course.

- d. Executive Dean: includes any Institute Director.
- e. faculty: means an academic organisational unit established as a faculty in accordance with regulation 16 of the [Council Regulations](#). For the purpose of this Procedure, faculty includes any institute established by Council in accordance with regulation 17 of the [Council Regulations](#) and is approved to offer specific categories of higher education courses.
- f. Faculty Board: includes any institute board of studies.
- g. higher degrees by research (HDR): academic awards of the University, as specified in [Schedule A: Higher Education Award Courses](#) of the [Higher Education Courses policy](#).
- h. higher education award course: a course that leads to a higher education award of Deakin University including an award offered jointly with a partner institution.
- i. micro-unit: a type of unit with clearly articulated learning outcomes which are assessed and which leads to the award of a micro-credential
- j. non-award offering: a course, unit or module, excluding micro-units, offered by Deakin University that does not lead to an award of the University.
- k. unit: a component of a program of study having a discrete designated code and title in which students enrol and complete specific requirements as defined in the [Academic Board Regulations](#).



## Status and Details

<b>Status</b>	Current
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