

# Masters by Coursework Policy

## Section 1 - Background and Purpose

(1) This Policy provides guidance on the Masters by Coursework qualification and should be read in conjunction with the Australian Qualifications Framework descriptors for Masters by Coursework.

(2) Coursework Masters degrees will comply with the Australian Qualifications Framework descriptors.

## Section 2 - Scope

(3) Applies to:

- a. All campuses
- b. All Masters by Coursework programs, including distance education and those taught off-shore
- c. Students enrolled in Masters by Coursework programs and staff involved in teaching, administering and supervising those students.

## Section 3 - Policy Statement

(4) Coursework Masters degrees will comply with the descriptors for learning outcomes contained in the Australian Qualifications Framework which forms the basis of the TEQSA Qualifications Standards. This means that the learning outcomes for the award are required to be aligned to Level 9 of the AQF.

(5) There are two types of Masters by Coursework that comply with the AQF:

- a. 100% Coursework subjects
- b. Coursework subjects making up more than one third of the program with a research component making up the remainder

### Course Duration

(6) Following a 3 year Level 7 qualification in a non-cognate discipline (or equivalent combination of study and professional experience), Masters degrees must be 2 years (Equivalent Full Time) in duration or 240 credit points. If the Level 7 qualification is in the same discipline area they may be 1.5 years EFT (or 180 credit points).

(7) Following a 4 year Level 8 qualification in a non-cognate discipline, Masters Degrees must be 1.5 years EFT in duration (180 credit points). If the prior 4 year Level 8 study is in the same discipline area they may be 1 year EFT (120 credit points).

### Award Outcomes

(8) To ensure that the award outcomes are consistent with AQF Level 9, Colleges will ensure that at least 1 year EFT (120 credit points) of any Master's subjects will have intended learning outcomes at this Level, whether the Degree is 1, 1.5 or 2 years in duration. With the exception of Graduate Entry Masters programs, the remainder of 1.5 and 2 year

programs would normally be at AQF Level 8.

### **Graduate Entry Masters**

(9) In the case of graduate entry or conversion Masters degrees it is permissible to include up to four subjects with introductory content (knowledge) within a 2 year Masters award. These four subjects should have learning outcomes equivalent to no less than AQF level 7.

(10) Where possible, any such subjects should have components of assessment distinct from those for undergraduate students reflecting the more advanced learning outcomes expected of students with prior undergraduate qualifications, in skills and application of knowledge and skills.

### **Nested Qualifications**

(11) Nesting of awards such as Level 8 Graduate Certificates or Graduate Diplomas within Masters degrees is permitted as long as the requirements for 'Award Outcomes' are met (120 credit points at AQF Level 9).

### **Credit for Previous Study**

(12) Students who undertake postgraduate subjects as elective studies towards the award of an undergraduate degree may not be granted credit for these subjects in a following Masters degree. If they have completed a subject core to the Masters degree that has counted towards a previous undergraduate award, they should be directed to an alternative subject to ensure they attain the required number of credit points for the award of the Masters degree.

(13) Coursework Masters programs are approved by Academic Board through the Coursework Committee and the Course Portfolio and Scholarships Committee of the Senior Executive Group.

## **Section 4 - Procedure**

### **Course Duration**

(14) Following a 3 year Level 7 qualification in a non-cognate discipline, Masters degrees must be 2 years in duration. If the Level 7 qualification is in the same discipline area they may be 1.5 years.

(15) Following a 4 year Level 8 qualification in a non-cognate discipline, Masters Degrees must be 1.5 years in duration. If in the same discipline area they may be 1 year.

### **Admission**

(16) Normally this will be at a minimum the completion of a Bachelor Degree or equivalent combination of study and work experience. Selection is at the discretion of the School that offers the program and the criteria will differ from course to course.

### **Admission - English Language Competence**

(17) The University's [English Language Entry Requirements Policy](#) establishes the minimum English language standards for admission as a postgraduate student at a minimum of IELTS 6.5 or equivalent.

(18) Colleges may choose to request an increase in the minimum English proficiency in order to meet the specific demands of the particular courses or to be consistent with accepted standards and/or external professional requirements.

## **Coursework Component**

(19) The coursework component of a Masters by Coursework program normally is subject to the same policies and procedures as those for undergraduate programs. The same grading system is used, and students in postgraduate coursework subjects have the same access as undergraduate students to supplementary and special assessment.

## **College Masters by Coursework Committee**

(20) This committee shall be constituted by the College Academic Committee as required, and shall meet only if required to resolve differences of opinion between examiners on the final grade that should be awarded for the thesis/project, where the differences are unable to be resolved by other means.

(21) A meeting should be called by the Pro Vice-Chancellor of the College and concluded within one month of the necessity for a meeting being made known.

(22) There should be no fewer than three members of the committee, one of which should be the Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Coursework) of the College, the Head of the relevant School or a Professor of the relevant discipline.

## **Research Component Timing and Administration (if applicable)**

(23) The research component (thesis/project) of a Masters by Coursework (if applicable) may be completed in conjunction with the coursework component or after the coursework is completed.

(24) The School in which the course is conducted administers the examination of any product of research submitted as part of a Masters by Coursework.

## **Request to Submit a Project**

(25) In order to present a Project (as an alternative to a thesis) a student may be required to submit to the college a written request addressing the following:

- a. Details of the proposed format;
- b. Why the proposed material should be considered a research project;
- c. Why a conventional written thesis is unsuitable for the matter to be researched;
- d. How the project could be examined.

## **Research Supervision**

(26) All students who enrol to undertake a thesis/project for a Masters by Coursework qualification must have as a Principal Supervisor a member of the academic staff of La Trobe University who has either a Masters degree or professional or research experience sufficient in the view of the School to supervise the student's research.

(27) Students may also have a co-supervisor who may or may not be a member of staff at the University. The co-supervisor may provide additional input, support and direction to the research.

(28) The School will appoint the Principal Supervisor and any co-supervisor(s).

## **Withdrawal from Supervision**

(29) If the supervisor or co-supervisor needs to withdraw from supervision for any reason, that person would normally notify the Head of School of their withdrawal in writing, and the Head of School would identify a new supervisor for the student within one month of receiving this written advice.

## **Submission of a Thesis**

(30) To submit a thesis for a Masters by Coursework, students should follow the Masters by Coursework Thesis/Project Submission Guidelines.

(31) Colleges may elect to require students to submit their thesis in hard copy or as an electronic submission.

(32) Students must complete and submit the following to the School Office:

- a. A statement about Ethics Approval
- b. A Statement of Authorship
- c. The thesis, identified clearly with a title page or similar piece of identification, with presentation and title page contents as specified in the Guidelines.

(33) The student should prepare and keep an identical copy of the thesis for themselves.

(34) In the event that the thesis is submitted in hard copy, three copies must be submitted.

(35) Students may submit their research outputs in an alternative format according to the requirements of the discipline. In such cases, Colleges (with the input of the relevant School) may prepare such guidelines for alternative formats as required consistent with the level of work expected of a Master's degree candidate. The student may be required to submit a request in writing for use of an alternative format.

## **Submission and Examination of a Project**

(36) A project may be submitted for examination in the same manner to a thesis (as above) and including a title page as specified for a thesis. This may be suitable for a computer program or a film or audio recording, for example.

(37) When submitting a project in an alternative format for a Masters by Coursework, students should follow the Masters by Coursework Thesis/Project Submission Guidelines.

(38) Students should complete and submit the following to the School Office

- a. A statement about Ethics Approval
- b. A Statement of Authorship
- c. A durable record of the project: a written document of not more than 2000 words giving
  - i. a title page as specified for a thesis;
  - ii. an account of what was done, including reference to the processes involved; and
  - iii. the significance for practice of what was learned and/or produced.

(39) Colleges may elect to require students to submit their durable record in hard copy or as an electronic submission. If submitted in hard copy, three copies should be submitted.

(40) The student should prepare and keep an identical copy of the durable record of the project for themselves.

## **Examination of the Research Component**

(41) At least two examiners are appointed by the Head of School in conjunction with the Principal Supervisor to examine the thesis/project. A person who has supervised or co-supervised or has otherwise been involved in the preparation of the thesis/project cannot be an examiner.

(42) Examiners must have either a Masters degree or professional or research experience sufficient in the view of the School to examine the thesis/project.

(43) Examiners may be staff of the University or persons external to the University.

(44) In addition, Schools may also choose to conduct an oral examination of the student's research.

## Requirements to Qualify for the Award

(45) A student may qualify for the award on the successful completion of all coursework subjects and the research component (if applicable). Successful completion of the research component alone is not sufficient to qualify for the award.

## Research Component Grades

(46) The grades that can be awarded for the research component as part of a Masters by Coursework are as follows:

A	80-100
B	70-79
C	60-69
D	50-59
N	<50
P	Ungraded Pass

## Differences of Opinion Between Examiners

(47) If the appointed examiners' recommendations differ, the Subject or Course Coordinator should facilitate a discussion between the examiners. If this discussion does not resolve the matter, the Subject or Course Coordinator should request the College Academic Committee to form a College Masters by Coursework Committee to facilitate a final outcome.

## Disputes and Grievances

(48) Disputes and grievances between students and staff or students and students should be managed using the University's Student Complaints Management Policy and associated Procedures and Guidelines.

(49) Every effort should be made to resolve any problems as close to the source as possible, prior to bringing it to the attention of the College Complaints Officer (as per the above mentioned Policy and procedures).

# Section 5 - Definitions

(50) For the purpose of this Policy and Procedure:

- a. Durable record of the project: a written document of not more than 2000 words giving
  - i. a title page as specified for a thesis
  - ii. an account of what was done, including reference to the processes involved and
  - iii. the significance for practice of what was learned and/or produced.
- b. Equivalent Full Time: Refers to the volume of learning rather than duration of studies. For example, two years EFT is 240 credit points of study, but courses may be fast tracked to be completed in less than two years real time.
- c. Graduate Entry Masters: Used to describe Masters degrees that allow entry from Bachelor degrees (or equivalent combination of study and professional experience) in a non-cognate discipline area. Under AQF

requirements these programs are usually of 2 years EFT duration. (Also referred to as conversion Masters).

- d. Nested qualifications where two or more courses of different levels in the AQF are combined in a way where sub-qualification categories are fully articulated within the higher qualification categories. It is not possible to nest undergraduate programs (AQF Levels 5-7) into postgraduate programs (AQF levels 8-10).
- e. Project: A material product or artefact in an alternative format to a conventional thesis. The project must form a contribution to professional and scholarly knowledge in a discipline or a body of work at an equivalent level as a conventional thesis. Examples include a computer program, audio work and/or recordings, visual performance and/or recordings, an exhibition or installation, or a series of experiments. Projects may be ephemeral or experiential.
- f. Thesis/Project: the output of the research activity undertaken by a student enrolled in a Masters by Coursework.
- g. Thesis: A written document containing a proposition maintained by argument, contributing to knowledge in a particular field.

## Section 6 - Stakeholders

Responsibility for implementation – Collegs Pro Vice-Chancellors; Heads of School.

Responsibility for monitoring implementation and compliance – Academic Board; Education Committee; Coursework Committee.

## Status and Details

<b>Status</b>	Current
<b>Effective Date</b>	22nd November 2016
<b>Review Date</b>	15th March 2017
<b>Approval Authority</b>	Academic Board
<b>Approval Date</b>	20th November 2016
<b>Expiry Date</b>	Not Applicable
<b>Unit Head</b>	Nicolette Lee Executive Director, Quality and Standards +61 3 9479 6480
<b>Author</b>	Nicolette Lee Executive Director, Quality and Standards +61 3 9479 6480
<b>Enquiries Contact</b>	Quality and Standards