

Course Design Policy

Section 1 - Key Information

Policy Type and Approval Body	Academic – Academic Board
Accountable Executive - Policy	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
Responsible Manager - Policy	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching)
Review Date	29 August 2028

Section 2 - Purpose

(1) This Policy provides the overarching principles by which the University's coursework subjects and awards are designed and delivered.

(2) In addition to aligning with the University's key teaching and learning frameworks and strategies, this Policy supports the University's compliance with the Australian Qualifications Framework, the [Higher Education Standards Framework \(2021\)](#), and the [Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000](#) (ESOS).

(3) This Policy should be read in conjunction with:

- the current version of the [La Trobe Course Architecture](#), which provides course structure details for all coursework course archetypes and sub-subject architecture (microcredentials);
- the [Assessment Policy](#), in particular the [Assessment Standards](#);
- the [Course and Subject Management Policy](#), which outlines processes for course and subject approval, monitoring and review;
- the [Library and Digital Learning Resources Policy](#).

Section 3 - Scope

(4) This Policy applies to:

- all coursework awards (undergraduate and postgraduate) of the University;
- microcredentials.

Section 4 - Key Decisions

Key Decisions	Role
Ensure Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) and Subject Intended Learning Outcomes (SILOs) align with approved La Trobe Graduate Capabilities.	Course Coordinator
Waive Subject Rules in exceptional cases	Subject Coordinators

Section 5 - Policy Statement

(5) in addition to external regulatory instruments all subjects and coursework awards of the University are designed to align with the principles and standards outlined in this Policy and:

- a. the [La Trobe Course Architecture](#);
- b. the La Trobe Teaching Framework (link forthcoming);
- c. the [La Trobe Employability Framework](#).

Principles

(6) Courses and subjects demonstrate contemporary academic and industry relevance:

- a. course design is informed by industry and student input, along with national and international comparators, as prescribed under the [Course and Subject Management Policy](#) and outlined in the [La Trobe Employability Framework](#);
- b. subject learning materials are relevant to the field and inclusive of contemporary and emerging scholarship;
- c. courses develop the skills and knowledge for professional practice in relevant disciplines, and meet registration and recognition requirements of accrediting bodies where required.

(7) Courses and subjects are supported by the deployment of appropriately qualified staff (as outlined in the [Academic Staff Qualifications Policy](#)) and fit-for-purpose learning environments. Course and subject design is student-centred, inclusive and responsive to diverse learner needs:

- a. subject rules are limited to those critical for progression through levels of study;
- b. multiple perspectives, particularly those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, are integrated with curriculum design across subjects and courses as appropriate;
- c. students are provided with learning materials in a timely manner, and access is enabled through digital versions wherever possible, as outlined in the [Library and Digital Learning Resources Policy](#);
- d. subjects and courses are designed to enable achievement of learning outcomes, regardless of mode, teaching period or location of study;
- e. student workload is set appropriately to the level and learning outcomes of courses and subjects.

(8) Curriculum is coherent and fosters a deep approach to learning:

- a. learning activities, teaching methods and assessment are aligned;
- b. the approach to curricula privileges active, authentic and engaged learning experiences, and encourages independent and critical thinking;
- c. subjects within courses are sequenced to foster progressive learning with breadth and depth appropriate to the type and level of the course;
- d. courses and subjects lead to the acquisition of the La Trobe Graduate Capabilities and fulfilment of all Intended Learning Outcomes;
- e. development of concepts, skills and awareness in academic integrity, and the appropriate use of Artificial Intelligence tools, are integrated throughout courses and at appropriate points in subject design.

(9) Course and subject design are informed by robust review and consultation (as set out in the [Course and Subject Management Procedure - Approvals](#) and the [Course and Subject Management Procedure - Monitoring and Review](#)).

Section 6 - Procedures

Part A - Course and Subject Delivery Modes

(10) Courses and subjects at La Trobe may be designed for and delivered in a variety of modes (where approved under the [Course and Subject Management Procedure - Approvals](#)) as follows (for full descriptions see Definitions section in this Procedure):

- a. Face to Face;
- b. Online;
- c. Online Asynchronous;
- d. Online plus placement/ intensive (course-level only);
- e. Multi-Modal;
- f. Research Training.

(11) In order for the University to meet its obligations under ESOS, courses should be designed to ensure that international students can enrol in two thirds of subjects that are delivered face-to-face (see [Enrolment Procedure](#)).

Part B - Subject Standards

(12) These standards must be applied across all subjects to create an engaging, inclusive, and innovative learning experience and should follow the Prepare, Engage, and Review phases outlined in the La Trobe Teaching Framework (link to be provided).

Subject Workload - Volume and Type of Learning

(13) In designing a subject consideration should be given to the proportion of structured and unstructured learning required of a student. Definitions and examples of structured and unstructured learning are given in Table 1.(These categories cannot be applied to thesis or placement subjects.)

(14) Total study hours (structured + unstructured) must not exceed 120 hours for a 15 credit point (CP) subject and should be allocated as follows:

- a. total structured learning activities should normally comprise 24-36 hours and should not exceed 48 hours per semester for a 15CP subject;
- b. the balance of hours should be used for unstructured learning. Readings may be considered as part of unstructured study.

(15) Any requirements for a greater proportion of structured hours in a subject due to disciplinary or accreditation requirements should be outlined during the subject approval process but limited wherever possible.

(16) For more detail on planning student workload see Teaching Hours Guidance Note (staff only – under review).

Table 1 - Structured and Unstructured Learning

Type of Learning	Descriptor
Structured	Scheduled Learning Activities Timetabled, synchronous, instructor-led learning sessions that occur at a specific time and location (physical or virtual).

Type of Learning	Descriptor
	<p>Unscheduled Learning Activities</p> <p>Structured learning tasks that are not timetabled. These are part of the formal learning design and are typically asynchronous. They may include short videos, interactive modules, required discussion board participation, or formative quizzes.</p>
Unstructured	<p>Self-Directed Study</p> <p>Self-directed study or learning activities are in addition to the required scheduled or unscheduled learning activities. This includes preparing and completing assessments, reviewing materials, conducting independent reading or research, practicing discipline-specific skills, exploring supplementary resources, and managing study planning and organisation.</p>

Design Standards

All Subjects

(17) Subjects will be designed to allow students to navigate content independently with clear, logical structure and sequencing, while incorporating [Universal Design](#) principles to ensure accessibility for students with diverse needs.

(18) Subjects must include a mix of content formats (e.g., videos, readings, quizzes, and forums) and utilise collaborative and interactive tools to promote active engagement, enrich the learning experience, and build a sense of community.

(19) Learning content must include detailed instructions and objectives to guide students through activities and assessments and to support independent learning.

(20) To assist students to develop confidence and autonomy as learners subjects will embed opportunities for reflective learning and self-assessment with feedback.

Additional Requirements for Online Asynchronous Subjects

(21) Online asynchronous subjects should be separated into modules, topics or sections so students can progress at their own pace while meeting deadlines for assessments.

(22) Each content section must include at least one interactive element (e.g., quizzes, polls, discussions, or collaborative tasks) that requires students to actively engage with the material in addition to passive reading or viewing.

Delivery Standards

(23) Subjects will be designed within a single, consistent LMS site, ensuring all students have equitable access to the same learning experience. Separate LMS sites may be established for fully asynchronous instances.

(24) Learning resources should be digital and freely accessible wherever possible, with minimal need for physical textbooks or external navigation.

(25) Subject information, learning content and resources must be made available in the LMS at least two (2) weeks prior to the commencement of subject delivery. This includes:

- a. all unscheduled learning materials, including a list of required and recommended readings, wherever possible as direct links to digital editions*;
- b. other contextual subject information including:
 - i. subject code, name and description;
 - ii. Subject Coordinator and teaching staff details including email address;
 - iii. welcome text, including how to get help;

- iv. SILOs*;
- v. explicit guidance on workload expectations to help students balance unstructured/self-directed study;
- vi. all requirements for completion including any mandatory participation in labs, placements etc*;
- vii. a schedule of teaching activities, including assessment descriptions and due dates (see also Assessment Standards);
- viii. information regarding any specialist equipment or technology required, including software and internet requirements*;
- ix. a brief contextualised response to feedback received through the Student Feedback on Subjects (SFS) survey on the previously taught instance of the subject*.

* This information may be uploaded via the Subject Learning Guide.

(26) Links to the following are provided as standard in the University LMS template:

- a. academic support resources (including academic integrity);
- b. technology support services;
- c. student support services;
- d. Library services.

(27) Structured learning activities must be designed to incorporate active learning strategies that encourage collaboration, problem-solving, and application of knowledge.

(28) Online learning content should be presented in focused and engaging asynchronous formats that are appropriate for the level of the material and intentionally designed to support effective learning.

(29) Regular announcements or updates will be used to create a sense of connection and keep students informed.

Additional Requirements for Online Asynchronous Subjects

(30) Interactive asynchronous tools, such as discussion forums, reflective journals, and collaborative documents, will be incorporated to support learning and maintain engagement.

(31) Scheduled voluntary sessions may be offered at regular intervals throughout the teaching period to clarify information already presented in the LMS or to answer student questions; these sessions must not introduce new content.

Part C - Subject Rules

(32) La Trobe University is committed to promoting steady student progression. Accordingly, the University only supports the imposition of the subject rules listed below where there is a pedagogical reason for their inclusion:

- a. Prerequisites;
- b. Corequisites;
- c. Incompatible Subjects;
- d. quotas.

(33) Subject rules are set only where there is a compelling pedagogic reason or, in the case of quotas, logistic reasons. Incompatible Subjects, for example, are appropriate only where necessary to prevent students from repeating content already passed; Equivalent Subjects are appropriate where a subject code is replaced by a new subject code.

(34) Prerequisites, Corequisites, Incompatible Subjects and quotas are published in the Course Handbook and relevant subject-specific materials.

(35) Co- and Prerequisite rules may take any of the following forms:

- a. requires Subject Coordinator's approval;
- b. must have passed a subject;
- c. must have passed a specified number of credit points; or
- d. must be enrolled in a subject or course.

Conditions that Justify Quotas

(36) A quota may be placed on a subject only where the subject:

- a. is taught by an intensive teaching method that necessarily limits the number of students who can be accommodated;
- b. is based on a clinical or practical placement; or
- c. requires the use of specialist teaching space or online space (e.g., for Auslan subjects) that can accommodate only a certain number of students.

Waiving of Subject Rules

(37) Credit awarded in recognition of study outside the University can satisfy a prerequisite.

(38) Subject rules may be waived only in exceptional circumstances, normally where it can be demonstrated that the requirements and/or conditions reflected in the rules have been met.

(39) Subject rules may be waived by Subject Coordinators. Details of the waiver, including the reasons for it, must be documented and placed on the appropriate student file. Where rules are regularly waived, these will be removed (as outlined in the [Course and Subject Management Procedure – Approvals](#)).

Part D - Employability

(40) To ensure the alignment of La Trobe courses with real-world demands and to support graduate employability all courses are designed to meet the Minimum Employability Curriculum Standards outlined in the [La Trobe Employability Framework](#).

(41) All courses are designed to scaffold the development of employability capabilities across the length of a course by embedding career-focussed and industry-relevant learning experiences throughout the curriculum.

Part E - Intended Learning Outcomes

(42) Except where mandated by the requirements of accreditation bodies, all subjects and courses must have Intended Learning Outcomes as follows:

- a. each subject must have a minimum of three (3) and a maximum of five (5) Subject Intended Learning Outcomes (SILOs);
- b. each course must have a minimum of five (5) and a maximum of eight (8) Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs).

(43) These limits also apply to double degrees. CILOs for double degrees must be written specifically for the double degree rather than a merger of CILOs from the component degrees.

Part F - Graduate Capabilities

(44) Graduate Capabilities (GCs) are interdisciplinary skills, knowledge and abilities that equip students to live and work in a rapidly changing and complex world. They are desirable and transferable attributes sought by employers.

(45) The GCs encapsulate for both students and the wider community the defining characteristics of a La Trobe graduate and describe a set of characteristics that are designed to be transferable beyond the disciplinary context in which they have been developed.

(46) The GCs provide a broad framework and are intended to be interpreted and defined more precisely in the context of each academic discipline or course.

(47) The design of courses, learning activities and assessment tasks will ensure that graduates have achieved CILOs that address the La Trobe GCs, in addition to the requirements of the relevant academic discipline or profession, and any professional accreditation requirements.

(48) GCs are explicitly and progressively developed through constructive alignment of CILOs, SILOs and associated assessments.

(49) Teaching, learning and assessment of the La Trobe GCs is assured through the course and subject approval, monitoring and review processes, and the monitoring of student learning experiences through student feedback mechanisms.

(50) This Procedure defines the GCs and who is responsible for their development in courses and subjects.

Responsibilities for Embedding the Graduate Capabilities

(51) When developing a new course or reviewing an existing course, Course Coordinators should:

- a. ensure the GCs are:
 - i. embedded in CILOs and SILOs;
 - ii. progressively developed throughout the course;
- b. undertake course mapping that demonstrates alignment between course CILOs and SILOs;
- c. undertake ongoing monitoring and responsibility for student achievement of the GCs in their course.

(52) When developing a new subject or reviewing an existing subject, Subject Coordinators will:

- a. confer with the Course Coordinator to identify the GCs to be developed within the subject;
- b. ensure each of the GCs identified is addressed in the SILOs and explicitly assessed;
- c. ensure that the GCs are constructively aligned with CILOs, SILOs and assessment activities;
- d. inform students explicitly about GCs embedded in the subject:
 - i. at the commencement of the subject;
 - ii. on the subject site in the Learning Management System (LMS) and Subject Learning Guide; and
 - iii. in assessment tasks that assess the GCs.

The La Trobe Graduate Capabilities

(53) The La Trobe Graduate Capabilities are defined as:

- a. Communicating and Influencing: the capacity to use personal presence, empathy, listening and questioning to engage others and effectively express information through presentation and written communication;

- b. Cultural Capability: using knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, contexts and understandings to enrich discipline knowledge and capacity to work in culturally sensitive, appropriate and ethical ways;
- c. Critical Thinking and Evidence-Based Inquiry: the ability to reason, question, analyse, integrate and synthesise learning, knowledge and data from a range of sources to generate solutions, draw connections across fields of knowledge and support decision making;
- d. Creativity and Innovation: the ability to challenge norms and apply imagination and creativity to innovate and solve multifaceted problems;
- e. Leadership and Teamwork: the ability to effectively lead, motivate and collaborate with others and work as part of a diverse team; and
- f. Ethical and Social Responsibility: the ability to evaluate the ethical, social and/or environmental implications of making decisions in both professional and personal contexts.

Part G - Quality Assurance and Review

(54) The overall design of subjects and courses and is approved and reviewed through the processes outlined in the [Course and Subject Management Policy](#).

(55) Individual elements of subjects and courses are also monitored and assured through processes outlined in the [Assessment Policy](#) and the [La Trobe Employability Framework](#).

Section 7 - Definitions

(56) For the purposes of this Policy:

- a. course modes:
 - i. Face-to-Face: all subjects within the course are delivered in person with the requirement to attend at a specific study location;
 - ii. Online: all subjects are delivered online without the requirement to attend a specific location. It may consist of a combination of Online and Online Asynchronous subjects.
 - iii. Online Asynchronous: all subjects within the course are delivered online without the requirement to attend at a specific time. All subjects must be Online Asynchronous.
 - iv. Online Plus Placement/Intensive: all subjects within the course are delivered online with the requirement of in person attendance for specific intensive activities, such as clinical workshops or work integrated learning (e.g. field or industry placement);
 - v. Multi-Modal: the course consists of any combination of Face-to-Face, Online, Online Asynchronous or Multi-Modal Subjects and/or Research Training;
 - vi. Research Training: involves substantial independent and original research undertaken under academic supervision, culminating in the submission of a thesis for examination.
- b. Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs): brief statements defining the knowledge, skills and dispositions that a student should have attained and can reliably demonstrate at the end of a course of study;
- c. Corequisite: a condition that must be met in order for a student to enrol concurrently in a designated subject. The condition may relate to enrolment in a course or in another subject.
- d. Equivalent Subjects: the subjects that arise through the creation of a new subject code for an existing subject. Under the Equivalent rule, students who completed a subject when it had the old code will be deemed to have completed the subject with the new code. Equivalent Subjects are also Incompatible with each other.
- e. Incompatible Subjects: subjects that cover substantially the same content or that represent a single subject by different names or codes;

- f. Prerequisite: a condition that a student must meet before the student may enrol in a designated subject. The condition may relate to enrolment in a course or, more usually, in another subject.
- g. quota: a limit on the number of students who may enrol in a subject, often accompanied by conditions (e.g. preference may go to students enrolled in a particular course);
- h. subject: a unit of study involving students in a series of learning activities, the outcomes of which are assessed;
- i. Subject Intended Learning Outcomes (SILOs): brief statements defining the knowledge, skills and dispositions that a student should have attained and can reliably demonstrate by the end of a subject;
- j. subject modes:
 - i. Face-to-Face: all scheduled teaching and learning activities take place in an in-person setting at an assigned day/time and location and at a physical location either on or off campus (e.g. placements or field trips). Supporting learning materials will be available online.
 - ii. Online: teaching and learning takes place online through virtual meeting software, requiring students to be present at assigned days and times. Interaction with instructors and peers is 'live' in an online environment and all learning materials are available online.
 - iii. Online Asynchronous: students participate in self-paced learning activities, without scheduled classes but guided by set deadlines. Interaction with both instructors and peers occurs in an online environment and all learning materials are available online.
 - iv. Multi-Modal: teaching and learning takes place via a combination of Face to Face and Online (Synchronous and/or Asynchronous) delivery. There is a requirement to engage Face to Face (on or off campus) on specific days and times. When not meeting in person, students and instructors will interact online, either through scheduled synchronous sessions or asynchronous activities. All learning materials are available online.
- k. Subject Rules: rules that govern admission to subjects, either by requiring enrolment or by prohibiting enrolment;
- l. Teaching Period: the time between the beginning of the first teaching session and the end of the last teaching session in any given subject;
- m. withdrawn: removed from a student's active enrolment.

Section 8 - Authority and Associated Information

(57) This Policy is made under the [La Trobe University Act 2009](#).

(58) Associated information for this Policy includes:

- a. the La Trobe Course Architecture via the [Course Architecture intranet](#);
- b. [Education and Experience Plan 2030](#);
- c. [Indigenous Strategy 2022-203](#);
- d. [La Trobe University Employability Framework](#);
- e. Teaching Hours Guidance Note (link forthcoming).

Status and Details

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Responsible Manager - Policy	Sharna Spittle Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching)
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