Course Design Standards

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	15 April 2029

Section 2 - Purpose

(1) These Standards outline the University's requirements for course and subject design in accordance with the principles detailed in the Course Design Policy and should be read in conjunction with the Assessment Policy and the Assessment Standards.

Section 3 - Scope

(2) Refer to the Course Design Policy.

Section 4 - Key Decisions

Key Decisions	Role
N/A	N/A

Section 5 - Policy Statement

(3) Refer to the Course Design Policy.

Section 6 - Procedures

Part A - Course and Subject Delivery Modes

(4) Courses and subjects at La Trobe are 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):

a. Face-to-Face
b. Online
c. Online Asynchronous
d. Online plus placement/ intensive

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e. Multi-Modal
f. Research Training (for research courses only)

(5) In order for the University to meet its obligations under Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Regulations 2001, courses should be designed to ensure that international students can enrol in two thirds of subjects where the primary mode of delivery is face-to-face (see Enrolment Procedure and CRICOS Checklist).

Part B - Designing for Course Progression

(6) In order to promote steady student progression, courses are designed to avoid requirements for the subject rules listed below, unless there is a pedagogical reason for their inclusion:

a. Prerequisite Subject
b. Corequisite Subject
c. Incompatible Subject
d. Equivalent Subject

(7) Where corequisite and/or prerequisite rules are necessary, they may take any of the following forms:

a. must have passed a specified subject/s;
b. must have passed a specified number of credit points;
c. must be admitted in a course and/or enrolled in a specified subject/s.

(8) Where technical or contractual constraints (e.g. specific third party delivery arrangements) present a barrier for the application of any subject rules, equivalent progression controls must be documented and managed through approved partnership or operational arrangements.

Part C - Graduate Capabilities

Overview

(9) 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 and valued in society.

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

(11) 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.

La Trobe Graduate Capabilities

(12) 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 D - Intended Learning Outcomes

(13) Intended Learning Outcomes articulate the knowledge and skills that students develop and demonstrate in their course through the learning and teaching activities, and are embedded in the following course components:

a. course (CILOs)
b. sub-subjects (SSILOs)
c. subjects (SILOs)
d. majors (MILOs) (where applicable)

(14) Intended Learning Outcomes of any course component must scaffold progressive learning and support students to apply the knowledge and skills required for successful completion of the course.

(15) Intended Learning Outcomes encompass discipline and generic outcomes, including:

a. specialised knowledge and skills, together with their application, from the relevant discipline/s;
b. generic skills and their application in the context of the discipline/s;
c. knowledge and skills required for employment and/or further study related to the discipline, including those required to be eligible to seek registration to practise where applicable; and
d. skills in independent and critical thinking suitable for life-long learning.

(16) Course design must include all course components, assessment, and learning activities required for students to demonstrate the Intended Learning Outcomes specified for the course.

(17) Except where mandated by the requirements of accreditation bodies, subjects and courses have minimum and maximum SSILOs, SILOs, MILOs and CILOs as follows:

Item	Minimum ILO	Maximum ILO
Sub-Subject	1 SSILO	1 SSILO
Subject	3 SILOs	5 SILOs
Major	3 MILOs	5 MILOs
Course of 60 credit points or less	3 CILOs	5 CILOs
All other courses (including double degrees)*	5 CILOs	8 CILOS

(18) *CILOs for double degrees are written specifically for the double degree rather than a merger of CILOs from the component degrees. The number of CILOs may exceed eight (8) only where required by professional accrediting bodies.

Part E - Employability

(19) In accordance with the La Trobe Employability Framework 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.

(20) All Bachelor's and Master's by coursework awards (excluding nested awards such as Diplomas, Associate Diplomas, Graduate Certificates and Graduate Diplomas) have at least one authentic work-integrated learning (WIL) component, which may be a project or a work-based activity (placement). The La Trobe Employability Framework provides guidance on the design and implementation of WIL experiences.

(21) In some courses, a thesis, equivalent portfolio of works, or research project may be recognised as a WIL component where it demonstrably meets the criteria for authentic, externally contextualised learning as set out in the La Trobe Employability Framework.

Part F - Assurance of Learning Outcomes

(22) Students' achievement of CILOs is assured through designated supervised assessment tasks, known as assurance checkpoints (see Definitions and the Assessment Standards).

(23) While supervised assessment can occur in any subject, it must be included in capstone subjects and, wherever practicable, in the compulsory WIL component of each course. Where it is not practicable to include supervised assessment in the WIL component of a course (e.g. in some forms of project-based WIL), alternative supervised assurance checkpoints should be identified elsewhere in the course.

Capstone Subjects

(24) Capstone subjects require the synthesis and application of knowledge and skills acquired throughout the student's learning in a course. Capstone subjects:

a. may focus on theoretical or applied knowledge, and/or on the application of professional skills;
b. must include at least one supervised hurdle task, which functions as the minimum supervised assurance checkpoint for the course (see Assessment Standards); and
c. must align assessment design and weighting with the Assessment Standards, including rules regarding timing, early assessment, and maximum task weights.

Capstone Requirements in Courses

General

(25) Capstone subjects:

a. assess learning within courses and majors at the highest AQF level of the award; and
b. must be designed as core subjects for a course or major.

(26) Where capstones are in majors, they map to Major Intended Learning Outcomes (MILOs).

(27) Capstone learning and assessment collectively address all Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs). The supervised assurance checkpoint(s) do not need to assess every CILO individually but must be sufficient to assure achievement of the CILOs at the award level. Multiple capstone subjects may be required if all CILOs cannot be addressed in one capstone.

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Credit Point Requirements

(28) Capstone subjects must be a minimum of 15 credit points. The capstone requirements of different awards are as follows:

Award Level	Award Type	Capstone Minimum Requirements
Undergraduate award of 360 credit points or more (including embedded honours)	No major	15 credit points in course core
Undergraduate award of 360 credit points or more (including embedded honours)	Includes major(s)	15 credit points in each major (capstone/s may also be a course core subject where conditions are met)
Double degree awards	N/A	30 credit points of capstone study in majors or course core subjects, with at least one capstone associated with each component course
Postgraduate award (AQF Level 9)	N/A	15 credit points in course core subjects

Exemptions from Capstone Requirements

(29) The following awards are exempt from capstone requirements:

a. award courses with 45 credit points or more of placement, an industry project, or thesis (or equivalent portfolio of work) at the final year level; and
b. honours (stand-alone) courses (thesis subjects [or subjects comprising an equivalent portfolio of works] are not defined as capstones).

(30) In all other awards achievement of all CILOs must be assessed through appropriately weighted supervised assessment conducted in the final teaching period(s) of the course (see also Assessment Standards). This includes:

a. embedded honours, where the capstone must normally be included in the undergraduate/AQF Level 7 of the course; and
b. nested (entry and exit) awards.

Part G - Subject Standards

Design Standards

All Subjects

(31) Subjects are 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.

(32) Learning content includes detailed instructions and objectives to guide students through activities and assessments and to support independent learning.

Delivery Standards

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

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

(35) All governed content in the LMS must align with approved data in CourseLoop.

(36) Subject information, assessment details, and an overview of weekly learning activities are made available in the LMS at least two (2) weeks prior to the commencement of subject delivery (see also Assessment Standards).

(37) Detailed learning materials (e.g. weekly readings and lecture content) may be updated during the teaching period, provided that:

a. all materials are available to students at least two weeks prior to the relevant teaching session; and
b. students are given clear information about expected workload and timelines.

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

a. academic support resources (including for academic integrity)
b. technology support services
c. student support services
d. library services

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

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

Quotas

(41) An enrolment 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.

Part H - Subject Workload - Volume and Type of Learning

(42) In designing a subject, consideration is given to the proportion of guided and self-directed learning required of a student. Definitions and examples of guided and self-directed learning are given in Table 1 (these categories are not applied to placement or thesis subjects [or subjects with an equivalent portfolio of works).

(43) Total study hours (guided + self-directed) do not exceed 120 hours for a 15-credit-point (CP) subject and are allocated as follows:

a. total guided learning activities normally comprise 24-36 hours and do not exceed 48 hours per semester for a 15CP subject; and
b. the balance of hours are used for self-directed learning. Prescribed readings may be considered as part of self-directed study.

(44) Any subject design that exceeds the hours listed above must outline and provide supporting documentation for the relevant disciplinary or accreditation requirements during the subject approval process; however this should be limited wherever possible.

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Table 1 – Guided and Self-Directed Learning

Type of Learning	Descriptor
Guided	Scheduled Learning Activities. Timetabled, synchronous, instructor-led learning sessions that occur at a specific time and location (physical or virtual).
	Unscheduled Learning Activities. 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.
Self-Directed	Self-directed study that is in addition to the required guided scheduled or unscheduled learning activities. This includes preparing and completing assessments, reviewing materials, undertaking prescribed or independent reading or research, practicing discipline-specific skills, exploring supplementary resources, and managing study planning and organisation.

Section 7 - Definitions

(45) For the purposes of these Standards:

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 (or equivalent portfolio of works) for examination.
b. 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.
c. 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.
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.
e. generic skills: key academic skills that students should develop during their course such as skills in academic discourse and literacy/numeracy, communication and interpersonal skills, critical thinking and analysis, and technical skills in the application of common tools.
f. Incompatible Subjects: subjects that cover substantially the same content or that represent a single subject by different names or codes.
g. Major Intended Learning Outcomes (MILOs): brief statements defining the knowledge, skills and dispositions that a student should have attained and can reliably demonstrate at the end of a major.
h. 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.

i. 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).
j. sub-subjects: subjects with a weighting under 15 credit points that are assessed and which, in approved sequences, may be used to apply for credit towards an award of the University.
k. subject: a unit of study involving students in a series of learning activities, the outcomes of which are assessed.
l. 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.
m. 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 plus placement/intensive: as with online definition above with the addition of required placements/intensives.
    iv. 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.
    v. 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.
n. subject rules: rules that govern admission to subjects, either by requiring enrolment or by prohibiting enrolment.
o. teaching period: the time between the start of teaching and the end of teaching for any given subject.

Section 8 - Authority and Associated Information

(46) These Standards are made under the La Trobe University Act 2009.

(47) Associated information includes:

a. the La Trobe Course Architecture via the Course Architecture intranet
b. Indigenous Strategy 2022-2030
c. La Trobe Employability Framework
d. Guidelines: Structured and Unstructured Teaching and Learning Hours

Status and Details

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