Curriculum Architecture Policy

Section 1 - Purpose

(1) This Policy governs the design and structure of Macquarie University's award courses.

(2) This Policy provides a consistent and coherent structure for courses and programs, which supports the quality and integrity of the University's academic offerings and helps to provide students with an exceptional academic experience.

(3) This Policy aligns with the strategic priorities of the University as outlined within:

a. Our University: A Framing of Dynamic Futures;
b. The Macquarie Advantage Education Strategy; and
c. Indigenous Strategy 2026–2030.

Scope

(4) This Policy applies to:

a. all award courses of study (courses) accredited by the University, and their constituent components (units of study, majors and specialisations), including:
    i. courses delivered with a third-party provider; and
    ii. courses delivered onshore, at an offshore delivery location or delivered entirely through an online platform; and
b. The following non-award programs delivered by Macquarie University College:
    i. Standard Foundation or Intensive Program;
    ii. UniReady; or
    iii. Masters Qualifying Program.

(5) Transnational education (TNE) courses or programs where a Macquarie University degree is awarded are in scope for this Policy. However, necessary variations to this Policy may be approved by Academic Senate and included within specific TNE agreements as required to allow for local context and processes while also ensuring legislative and regulatory responsibilities are being met.

(6) This Policy does not apply to:

a. The Doctor of Philosophy, Master of Philosophy, and Master of Research degrees;
b. Macquarie University College non-award programs not listed in clause 4(b); and
c. any other Macquarie University non-award course or program.

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Section 2 - Policy

Part A - Qualifications

(7) The University delivers a range of courses that lead to designated Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) higher education awards as well as non-award programs to support access to AQF award courses for students who do not meet admission requirements to their desired award course. The qualifications covered within this Policy, and their relevant AQF levels, are:

AQF level	Qualification Type
Non-award	Standard Foundation Program Intensive Program UniReady Masters Qualifying Program
No specified level – may be level 5, 6 or 7	Undergraduate Certificate
Level 5	Diploma
Level 6	Associate Degree (exit award only)
Level 7	Bachelor Degree
Level 8	Bachelor (Honours) Degree Graduate Certificate Graduate Diploma
Level 9	Masters Degree (Coursework) Masters Degree (Extended)

(8) The University also delivers a suite of Double Degrees that enable students to undertake an integrated course that leads to the attainment of two AQF awards at the same time.

(9) Where appropriate, awards that align sequentially may be structured in a manner that courses at lower qualification levels are 'nested' within courses leading to a higher qualification enabling multiple entry and/or exit points for students.

(10) The name of each award must accurately reflect the relevant AQF level and nature of study undertaken.

Part B - Course Structure and Design

(11) All courses and programs must align with the relevant structural requirements appropriate to the award type set out within this Policy and Procedure unless otherwise approved by Academic Senate. The structural elements available to be used within each award type, and the relevant minimum or maximum credit point requirements, are outlined in Schedule 1 - Course structural requirements and options.

(12) All courses must have specified course learning outcomes and a volume of learning aligned to the relevant AQF level of the specific award and be approved by Academic Senate. Courses must be designed to enable achievement of course learning outcomes within the specified volume of learning.

(13) All courses and programs delivered by Macquarie University should be purposefully designed in a manner that provides clarity, coherence and supports student success and progression. To achieve this the following principles should be applied in the design of a course or program:

a. Clarity and navigability – courses should have simple, straightforward structures that are easily understood by students.
b. Visible learning gain – courses should be designed to scaffold and progress student learning and skill

development in increasingly more complex and challenging environments, enabling students to recognise how they develop depth and breadth of knowledge and capability over time.

c. Assurance of learning – courses should be designed to assure achievement of course learning outcomes and protect award integrity.
d. Meaningful choice – where appropriate, student agency is provided to select areas of study from a limited and curated selection of options that optimise impact and value and support student success.
e. Graduate readiness – courses should be designed to enhance post-study success through the embedding of authentic experiential learning.
f. Lifelong learning – where relevant, courses should be designed to support student mobility across time and tertiary harmonisation, including consideration of appropriate exit awards, entry points and credit optimisation.

(14) To support student mobility, tertiary harmonisation and optimisation of credit transfer, a student may qualify for an award with a variation of study to that represented in the structural design requirements set out in Schedule 1. Permitted variations, where applicable, are outlined in Schedule 2 - Variation to unit level requirement allowances. In all instances, any approved variations must still require students to meet the course learning outcomes and overall volume of learning requirements, and for any credit recognition to be in accordance with the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy.

Section 3 - Procedures

Part C - Volume of learning

(15) All courses and programs are structured to meet a total volume of learning that is represented in an overall credit point (cp) requirement that is a multiple of 10. Credit point value/s for each qualification type that ensure alignment with AQF requirements are outlined in Schedule 1.

Units of Study

(16) All courses and programs comprise units of study ('units'), which have a designated credit point value that contributes towards the achievement of the total credit points required to attain an award.

(17) All units must be used in the Core Zone or Foundation Zone of at least one course.

(18) Units within courses and programs will generally be in multiples of 10cp. However, in appropriate circumstances units may be valued as multiples of 5cp where greater modularisation is desired or to meet volume of learning requirements for specific external accreditation requirements, such as placement hours.

(19) To meet volume of learning requirements, a 10cp unit equates to 150 hours of student workload, including scheduled and unscheduled learning activities and time assigned for completion of assessments. Where a lower or higher credit point value is assigned to a unit, the volume of learning must be adjusted proportionally.

(20) In some instances, such as to meet specific institutional or external accreditation requirements, a 0cp unit may be approved as part of a course structure. Where a 0cp unit is utilised, justification for the inclusion and the associated student workload must be considered as part of the approval process.

(21) In some instances, a 0cp unit/s may be considered to count towards unit of study level requirements. In these instances a course may be approved where a proportional reduction in credit points is allowed to reflect the volume and level of study undertaken within the 0cp unit/s.

(22) Units are classified as meeting a specified level of learning appropriate to the AQF level of the course in which they are positioned and the stage of the course in which they are delivered. Principles for determining the appropriate

level of a unit are outlined in Schedule 3 - Unit of study level principles.

Part D - Undergraduate course structures

(23) Undergraduate Bachelor courses are structured around a progressive framework of unit of study levels, commencing at 1000-level and advancing one level for each 80 credit points of the course, unless otherwise indicated.

(24) All undergraduate courses must contain a Core Zone comprising Essential Units and if relevant, a Core Major, that align with the minimum and maximal credit point value requirements at each relevant level of the course.

(25) All undergraduate courses must have a minimum requirement of Essential Units undertaken by all students in the course at each unit of study level as outlined within Schedule 1 to support Assurance of learning across the course.

(26) All Core Majors used in undergraduate courses will have an 80cp structure as outlined in Schedule 1, unless utilised within a course greater than 240cp in volume where a different structure is required to meet external accreditation requirements.

(27) In some instances, a course may utilise a limited option set of Essential Units to:

a. enable a streaming of students towards specific discipline fields covered within the Core Majors; and/or
b. provide for a differentiated level of knowledge or skills requirements to be addressed.

(28) A course may utilise an Elective Zone to provide additional options for students to add depth and/or breadth of study in a chosen field/s. The Elective Zone may:

a. allow open choice for a student to enrol in any unit in which they are eligible, provided they meet relevant unit level requirements; or
b. be limited to electives from a specified option set/s of units and/or Elective Majors; or
c. provide the option to students to select from either a or b.

(29) Where an Elective Zone is utilised, a selection of Elective Majors can be offered to students that have a 60cp structure that:

a. are derived from all or some of the Core Majors offered within the course; and/or
b. curated from Elective Majors derived from Core Majors offered in other courses where these are suitably cognate to that course.

(30) All Elective Majors will be purposefully designed by the faculty selecting the appropriate removal of units to achieve the required volume reduction while still ensuring the structure enables students in a cognate area to be successful. A derived Elective Major will bear the same name as the Core Major.

(31) All undergraduate courses must have an identified Capstone unit that contributes to the assurance of course learning outcomes. The Capstone must be at the highest unit of study level within the course structure.

(32) All undergraduate courses of greater than 80cp in volume should also incorporate Keystone units at a minimal rate of at least one (1) every 80cp across the course to support Assurance of learning and visibility of learning gain to students, with the exception of the final 80cp where a Capstone unit is used.

(33) Where awards are nested, a Keystone unit of the higher level qualification may serve as the Capstone unit of the lower qualification. Keystone units may also be embedded within the highest level of each Core and Elective Major to support Assurance of learning.

(34) All Bachelor courses and Bachelor (Honours) courses, with the exception of those that are a stand-alone 80cp structure and courses offered through Open Universities Australia, must incorporate a University approved experiential education unit as designated by Academic Senate (such as Future Ready or PACE) to support the implementation of quality experiential education and enhance employability outcomes. This unit may also serve as the Capstone unit.

Part E - Postgraduate course structures

(35) All postgraduate courses are designed in Zones that equate to multiples of 40cp.

(36) Each Zone is classified as one of the following:

a. Foundation – provides fundamental knowledge and skills required to support student success across other Zones of the course.
b. Core – provides essential units undertaken by all students within the course.
c. Specialisation – provides focused depth in a specific area of study.
d. Elective – provides an opportunity for students to select additional units of study from a curated set of options, or where available, to select an additional Specialisation from a curated set.

(37) Where an Elective Zone is part of a course structure this may:

a. allow open choice for a student to enrol in any unit in which they are eligible, provided they meet relevant unit level requirements; or
b. be limited to electives from a specified option set/s of units and/or Specialisations; or
c. provide the option to students to select from either a or b.

(38) If an existing Graduate Certificate structure is deemed to be attractive and appropriate to be offered to students within an Elective Zone of a course, this structure can be listed as a Specialisation option within the Elective Zone.

(39) The structural requirements and Zone options for postgraduate courses are outlined in Schedule 1.

(40) In designing a postgraduate course, each unit must be distinct to a single Zone, unless part of a Specialisation where a unit may exist in more than one Specialisation.

(41) In some instances, a course may utilise a limited option set of Essential Units within the Core Zone to:

a. enable a streaming of students towards specific Specialisations; and/or
b. provide for a differentiated level of knowledge or skills requirements to be addressed.

(42) All postgraduate courses of 80cp or more must have an identified Capstone unit that contributes to the assurance of course learning outcomes, unless Assurance of learning can be demonstrated through a highly structured course design.

(43) All postgraduate courses of >80cp in volume should also incorporate Keystone units at appropriate stages within the course to support Assurance of learning and visibility of learning gain to students. Where awards are nested, a Keystone unit of the higher-level qualification may serve as the Capstone unit of the lower qualification.

Part F - Double degree course structures

(44) In general, double degrees will comprise two undergraduate degrees, or two postgraduate degrees.

(45) In some limited cases a double degree may incorporate an undergraduate and postgraduate degree combination.

This will only be approved in exceptional circumstances such as if this combination supports the timely progression of students through to a professional qualification, or qualifications in areas of institutional and/or national priority.

(46) All double degrees are purposefully structured as a double degree with course learning outcomes that reflect the integrated learning of both fields of study and a volume of learning that enables students to meet the course learning outcomes within an appropriate timeframe which are approved by Academic Senate.

(47) A double degree does not have to be identical in structure to the constituent singles degrees, but should:

a. align to each relevant constituent single degree in a manner that allows for representation of these degrees to be seen as equivalent, including meeting all relevant external accreditation requirements;
b. ensure any options provided to students within the double degree, such as Majors or Specialisations, are curated specifically for the context of the double degree. This may mean there are fewer Major or Specialisation options than are available for selection within the relevant single degree;
c. ensure that units taken from each constituent single degree do not duplicate learning of knowledge and/or skills unnecessarily; and
d. is consistent with the principles of unit of study level requirements outlined in Schedule 1 for the relevant degree types within the double degree combination to ensure alignment with attainment of relevant AQF level/s.

(48) Where feasible, a double degree may contain a single Capstone that enables a student to integrate their expertise across both discipline fields. Where this is not feasible, such as to maintain external accreditation requirements and/or Assurance of learning, the course structure should enable opportunity to showcase integrated application of knowledge and skills from both discipline fields where possible.

(49) Where feasible, a double degree may contain shared Keystone units that reflect the integrated, staged learning across both discipline fields.

(50) All undergraduate double degrees will have one (1) University approved experiential education unit as designated by Academic Senate (such as Future Ready or PACE) unit. This may serve as the Capstone for one of the constituent courses, or for the double degree as a whole.

Part G - Non-award program structures

(51) All non-award programs should, where possible, consist of Essential Units undertaken by all students.

(52) In some instances, a limited option set of Essential Units may be used to:

a. enable a streaming of students towards specific discipline fields that may require differentiated admission requirements; and/or
b. provide for a differentiated level of knowledge or skills requirements to be addressed.

Part H - Distinctiveness across course structures

(53) It is recognised that units will often be shared across more than one course, particularly in the first year of a course or a foundational zone, and that this offers benefits to students obtaining introductory knowledge and skills that are transferable across disciplines, supports student mobility and enhances course viability and sustainability. However, each course should demonstrate clear distinctiveness from others through the application of the following principles:

a. That a course reflects an overall pattern of study that makes it clearly distinct from any other course and

provides clarity to a potential student who may be choosing between degrees as to the difference between them.

b. Core Majors and Specialisations must have a structure that is at least 50% distinct from any other Core Major or Specialisation within that course.
c. Students can only complete a second Major or Specialisation where at least 75% of the units are distinct from all other units undertaken as part of their overall credit point requirements.

(54) Where a unit is recognised to be contributing to more than one (1) Major or Specialisation a student must complete an additional unit of the same unit of study level to fulfil the volume of learning requirement for the course.

Section 4 - Definitions

(55) The following definitions apply for the purpose of this Policy:

a. Assurance of learning means the verification that students have met all requirements for eligibility for an award.
b. Capstone means a Core Zone unit undertaken at the end of the course that is designed to enable a student to demonstrate integrated and synthesised application of knowledge and skills obtained across the duration of a course and contribute to assuring course learning outcomes have been met.
c. Keystone means a unit undertaken at the end of a stage or component of a course that is designed to enable a student to demonstrate integrated and synthesised application of knowledge and skills obtained across the course to that point, provide feedback on progression to meeting course learning outcomes and contribute to Assurance of learning.
d. Future Ready means a unit that is designed to meet institutional standards for the implementation of quality experiential education and enhance employability outcomes.
e. PACE means a Professional and Community Engagement program unit including experiential learning activity/s, that is approved by the University and carried out in conjunction with an external organisation or by an internal University partner.

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