



University of
South Australia

Bachelor honours degree programs

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AMENDMENTS:

- Registrar - April 1995
- Academic Board Resolution 96/6/130
- Registrar - December 1996
- Registrar - August 1998
- Registrar - November 1999
- Registrar - November 2000
- Academic Board Resolution 2001/9/178
- Director: Student and Academic Services - September 2004
- Director: Student and Academic Services - June 2005
- Academic Board – September 2006
- Academic Board – May 2007
- Academic Board – June 2008
- Director: Student and Academic Services – October 2009
- Academic Board – September 2013
- Vice-Chancellor – December 2019
- Registrar and Director: Student and Academic Services – January 2023

REFERENCE AUTHORITY: Director: Student and Academic Services

CROSS-REFERENCES:

- [Assessment Policy and Procedures \(AB - 68\)](#)
- [Code of Good Practice: research in honours degree programs](#)
- [C-16: Honorary academic titles](#) and [Guidelines for Adjuncts](#)
- [RES-2: Human Research Ethics](#)

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Scope

This policy explains the structures, procedures, and assessment framework for Bachelor Honours Degree programs at UniSA. Bachelor honours degree programs meet the Australian Qualifications Framework level 8 *specification for Bachelor honours degrees*, provide advanced knowledge and skills for professional practice and/or highly skilled work, and are a pathway to research and further learning.

Definitions

The University of South Australia offers three models of Bachelor Honours programs:

a. Honours Degree

The honours degree is a separate, stand-alone one-year program of advanced studies in research and professional practice, for students who demonstrate a high level of achievement on completion of their pass degree program.

b. Degrees with Honours

Degrees with honours are programs of four years duration that include a minimum of one year of advanced studies in research and professional practice to students who demonstrate a high level of achievement in the initial years of the program. Students who do not meet entry criteria for the honours component, or choose not to proceed to honours, exit into and complete a related pass degree program.

c. Professional Degrees with Honours

Professionally accredited degrees with honours are programs of four years duration that include a minimum of one year of advanced studies in research and professional practice.

Bachelor honours degree programs

Generic term used to refer to all types of honours programs.

Policy

1. Program Structure

- 1.1 The undergraduate awards of the University will include bachelor honours degree programs.
- 1.2 All bachelor honours degree programs will have a graded honours component comprised of at least 36 units with honours level outcomes.
- 1.3 All bachelor honours degree programs must include:
 - a. training in research principles and methods, and ethics; and
 - b. a research component leading to the production of an assessable outcome, known as the 'honours research project'.
- 1.4 The honours research project will contribute a minimum of 13.5 of the 36 units in an *honours degree* and 9 of the 36 units in the final year of a *degree with honours* or *professional degree with honours* program.
- 1.5 The honours research project will normally be a maximum of 1000 words per unit value up to a maximum of 18,000 words or equivalent. It may take the form of:
 - a. a thesis, or
 - b. one or more refereed (or equivalent) publications of equivalent merit to a thesis, or
 - c. one or more artefacts and supporting exegesis, or
 - d. an advanced professional practice research report, as defined in the program rules.

- 1.6 The honours research project will provide students with the opportunity to understand and apply a range of analytical, cognitive and research design skills, and will:
- have clearly defined objectives that reflect national standards of good practice in the provision of an honours award; and
 - be achievable within the time available; and
 - be consistent with the University's policy and guidelines on ethics, and
 - be supported by adequate facilities and infrastructure.
- 1.7 A full-time candidate in an *honours degree* will normally complete the program in one academic year.
- 1.8 A part-time candidate in an *honours degree* will normally complete the program in a maximum of two academic years.

2. Admission

2.1 Honours degree

Candidates for admission to honours degrees will normally have a grade point average of 5 or above in an undergraduate program relevant to the intended field of honours.

2.2 Honours component of degrees with honours

- Candidates for admission to the honours component of degrees with honours will normally have a grade point average of 5 or above by the end of the penultimate year of the program. The University will invite candidates to enrol in the honours component prior to the start of the final year of the program.
 - Where a student is transferring from another university into the honours component of a degree with honours, the student will be required to demonstrate a grade point average equivalent to 5 or a credit grade.
- 2.3 Where a student has transferred from another university but has completed at least 18 units of the relevant pass degree at the University of South Australia, eligibility for entry to the honours degree or the honours component of a degree with honours will be calculated using the GPA of the UniSA courses only, and will not include courses for which credit has been granted.
- 2.4 Where a student has completed additional courses that would not be required for the award of a relevant single degree either because they are enrolled in a double degree program, or are enrolled in more than one program, these courses will not be included in calculating a GPA to determine eligibility for:
- entry to the relevant *honours degree* or *degree with honours* component, or
 - awarding of the relevant degree with honours.
- 2.5 Where discretion is required to determine which courses should be included in meeting the requirements for the award of a single degree, the course that would yield the highest possible GPA will be selected for the purposes of the calculation.

2.6 Professional degrees with honours

Admission requirements for professional degrees with honours will be determined and approved as part of the program rules.

3. Supervision

- 3.1 Academic Units will appoint Program Directors to monitor the supervision of students in the research component of bachelor honours degree programs, as outlined in the [Code of Good Practice: Research in honours degree programs](#).
- 3.2 A principal supervisor and a co-supervisor, where required, will be appointed for each student in a bachelor honours degree program.
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- 3.3 The principal supervisor and co-supervisor must have completed a research degree, or have completed a Masters degree with a research component, or have completed a Bachelor (Honours) degree and gained additional research experience.
- 3.4 The principal supervisor must have relevant knowledge, expertise and interest in the student's research topic, access to adequate resources, and sufficient time to provide proper supervision, taking account of their total workload, including the supervision of other students.
- 3.5 The principal supervisor should be appointed as soon as a student enrolls in an honours degree program or the research component of degree with honours or professional bachelor honours program, to assist with the development of an appropriate research proposal.
- 3.6 UniSA encourages external contributors such as industry leaders, to participate in supervision. Where appropriate, external contributors are appointed and referred to as Associate supervisors.
- 3.7 If the principal supervisor will be absent for four or more weeks, the Academic Unit will appoint an associate supervisor following consultation with the student, before the principal supervisor becomes absent.
- 3.8 Supervision will be conducted in accordance with the [Code of Good Practice: Research in honours degree programs](#).

4. Assessment

- 4.1 In accordance with the requirements outlined in the University's [Assessment Policy and Procedures \(AB - 68\)](#), students in bachelor honours degrees must be informed in writing of the assessment requirements no later than one week prior to the commencement of honours studies. This includes the weighting of the coursework and research components in the program.
- 4.2 Students who are required to present research seminar(s) will have this assessed as part of the relevant component of the bachelor honours degree program.

5. Secondary assessment

Secondary assessment is available in the honours coursework component of bachelor honours degrees in accordance with the *Assessment Policy and Procedures (AB - 68)* and specific program rules.

6. Re-examination of an honours research project

- 6.1 Students are entitled to request re-examination of an honours research project on the basis that:
 - a. the examiner substantially misinterpreted the work, or
 - b. the specified assessment requirements were not adhered to.
- 6.2 The student should lodge a re-examination request with the relevant Executive Dean, or delegate.
 - 6.2.1 If the Executive Dean, or delegate, allows a re-examination, they will arrange for the appointment of an alternative examiner. This examiner will be external to the University, will submit a report under the same conditions as the original examiners, and will not have access to the original examiners' reports.

7. Academic Progress

- 7.1 The Program Director and principal supervisor are responsible for review and assessment of academic progress, in accordance with [Code of Good Practice: Research in honours programs](#).

7.2 If the student is not making satisfactory progress, the program director and the principal supervisor will consult with the student at the earliest possible opportunity to determine the most appropriate intervention.

7.3 Unsatisfactory progress in bachelor honours degree programs will be managed in accordance with the University's *Assessment Policy and Procedures (AB - 68)*.

8. Academic Integrity

Academic integrity in bachelor honours degree programs will be managed in accordance with the *Assessment Policy and Procedures (AB - 68)*.

9. Leave of Absence

Leave of absence in bachelor honours degree programs will be managed in accordance with policy [A48 Enrolment](#).

10. Examination of an honours research project

The following arrangements apply to the bachelor honours degree programs.

10.1 Mode of examination

The Academic Unit will either:

- a. appoint two examiners for all honours research projects, at least one of whom must be external to the University,
- Or
- b. appoint two internal examiners, and arrange for a representative selection of honours research projects in the program to be externally moderated at the time of examination, in order to validate the standard of internal assessment.

10.2 Appointment of examiners

- 10.2.1 To ensure that the assessment process is free from any conflict of interest, the program director, in conjunction with the Executive Dean, or delegate, will nominate the examiners for the honours research project.
- 10.2.2 All examiners must have appropriate qualifications and experience to examine an honours research project.
- 10.2.3 Neither the principal nor any co or associated supervisor may be an examiner.
- 10.2.4 The program director will forward to the examiner(s) a letter outlining the:
 - a. stated objectives of the honours research project
 - b. criteria for assessment
 - c. Assessment Framework (see Appendix A of this policy)
 - d. Return date and contact person for any matters requiring clarification.

10.3 Criteria for assessment

An honours research project will be assessed on the following criteria:

- 10.3.1 the student's ability to articulate the nature and scope of the research in accordance with the stated objectives of the honours research project; and
- 10.3.2 the extent to which the honours research project achieves the stated objectives; and
- 10.3.3 the student's ability to demonstrate a critical appreciation of the literature relevant to the honours research project; and

- 10.3.4 the extent to which the student has developed a consistent and coherent argument relevant to the field of study; and
- 10.3.5 the student's capacity to demonstrate critical analysis in applying research approaches and, where appropriate, interpreting results; and
- 10.3.6 the quality of the presentation of the honours research project, including where appropriate:
 - a. clarity of expression
 - b. the relevance and accuracy of citations, references etc., and
 - c. the accuracy and appropriateness of the presentation of results; and
- 10.3.7 the quality of artefacts, if any, including:
 - a. the conceptual understanding of the relevant field
 - b. the ideas and/or imagination demonstrated
 - c. the technical competence
 - d. the resolution of the artefacts
 - e. the complexity and difficulty demonstrated; and
- 10.3.8 the student's adherence to standards of academic integrity outlined in the *Assessment Policy and Procedures (AB - 68)*.

10.4 Examiners' reports

- 10.4.1 Examiners are expected to return their reports within four weeks of receiving the honours research project for examination.
- 10.4.2 The principal supervisor will be given the opportunity to comment on the examiners' reports.
- 10.4.3 The examiners' reports will be provided to the student to foster the learning experience.

10.5 Specified amendments

In the case of specified amendments, the program director will receive the revised honours research project with a statement from the principal supervisor confirming that all revisions and corrections have been made satisfactorily.

10.6 Resolving discrepancy

- 10.6.1 Where there is a discrepancy of more than one grade between two examiners' recommendations, the relevant Executive Dean, or delegate, will appoint a third examiner whose mark will stand, regardless of whether it is higher or lower. No further re-examination will be allowed.
- 10.6.2. The third examiner may be from within UniSA or external to UniSA, and must have expertise in the area of assessment.
- 10.6.3 The third examiner will not be provided with details of the student's original assessment.

11. Determination of final grade of honours

- 11.1 The honours research project grade and honours coursework grades will be combined using the GPA formula specified in the *Assessment Policy and Procedures (AB - 68)*.
- 11.2 The final grade of honours will be determined by the Academic Unit, referring to Appendix A: *Assessment Framework for bachelor honours degree programs*.

12. Appealing the final grade of honours

The student may lodge a formal appeal against their final honours grade with the Director: Student and Academic Services in accordance with the appeal procedures specified in the *Assessment Policy and Procedures (AB - 68)*.

13. Lodgement of the honours research project

A bound or electronic copy of the honours research project, amended as necessary after review, will be lodged with the Program Director, become the property of the University, and held within the relevant Academic Unit. This copy must include an appropriate record of artefacts. Where the work cannot be easily replicated the Program Director will advise on the appropriate medium for a record of the work to be lodged.

APPENDIX A: Assessment framework for bachelor honours degree programs

Honours Grade and Notation	Notional Mark	Standard of work	Grade Point Average Range
First Class Honours (H1)	80 – 100%	Work of exceptional quality showing clear understanding of subject matter and appreciation of issues; well formulated; arguments sustained; figures and diagrams where relevant; appropriate literature referenced; strong evidence of creative ability and originality; high level of intellectual work.	6.5 - 7
Second Class Honours 2A (H2A)	70 -79%	Work of high quality showing strong grasp of subject matter and appreciation of dominant issues though not necessarily of the finer points; arguments clearly developed; relevant literature referenced; evidence of creative ability and solid intellectual work.	5.5 – 6.49
Second Class Honours 2B (H2B)	60 – 69%	Work of solid quality showing competent understanding of subject matter and appreciation of main issues though possibly with some lapses and inadequacies and with clearly identifiable deficiencies in logic, presentation or originality; some evidence of creative ability; well prepared and presented.	4.75 – 5.49
Third Class Honours (H3)	≤ 59%	Adequate report, reasonable quality but showing a minimal understanding of the research area with major deficiencies in content or experimental rigour; little evidence of creative ability or original thought. Sufficient to merit only a pass mark.	≤ 4.74