



Course Design Procedure

Policy supported	Course Design Policy
Procedure Code	ACA-HE-08
Procedure owner	Principal
Responsible Officer	Principal
Approving authority	Principal
Contact Officer	Academic Dean
Approval date	20 November 2019
Commencement date	21 November 2019
Review date	3 years – April 2020
Version	2019.1
Related Documents	Academic Quality and Governance Framework Academic Continuous Improvement Policy Academic Continuous Improvement Procedure Quality Assurance Framework External Moderation and Benchmarking Policy External Moderation and Benchmarking Procedure Student Assessment Policy Student Assessment Procedure

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Procedure is to outline the protocols associated with the **Course Design Policy**, the intent of which is to provide a framework for the design and development of courses delivered by the Australian Institute of Higher Education Pty Ltd ('the Institute') to ensure the quality and relevance of the courses.

2. Scope

This Procedure applies to all staff members and external contributors involved in the design and development of existing or new courses for the Institute.

3. Definitions

See the **AIH Glossary of Terms** for definitions.

4. Actions and Responsibilities

4.1 Course Design and Development Process

4.1.1 Step 1: Initial review of feasibility and approval to proceed

Before changes are made to an existing course or a new course is designed and developed, a feasibility study should be performed by the Marketing department. The feasibility study should then be presented to the Executive Management team for endorsement before being submitted to the Board of Directors for final approval. Once final approval is received, development work can commence.

The feasibility study should include:

- A product overview;
- Market research including a competitor analysis, target market, typical target market demographic and level of education and expected marketing approach;
- General information about careers, job growth and expected salary for graduates;
- Projected student numbers;
- A financial model including the costs for development of the course and projects revenue and ongoing costs.

4.1.2 Step 2: Development of Course Rationale, Learning Outcomes, Units and Sequencing

Once the design and development of a new or existing course is approved, the Academic Team can commence work on deciding on the units, learning outcomes and the unit sequencing. A course rationale will need to be prepared explaining the reasons for the design and development of the curriculum for a new course or the justification for any changes to an existing course. The course rationale will be presented at the first Course and Advisory Review Committee (CARC) meeting.

4.1.2 (i) Course Rationale

The development of existing courses or creation of new courses must be made based on curriculum reasons, not administrative reasons. The development of an existing course is a serious decision as it creates a considerable amount of work, will have an impact on existing students required to transition and can trigger provider default under Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) regulations.

The course rationale must include the reasons as to why the course units and learning outcomes are important.

4.1.2 (ii) Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes describe significant and essential learning that a student is expected to achieve by the end of the course or unit. The preparation of learning outcomes can assist academics in designing and developing course and unit content, teaching and learning resources, and assessment methods. There needs to be constructive alignment of the graduate attributes, course learning outcomes, unit learning outcomes, assessments, industry standards, and the Higher Education Threshold Standards and Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) requirements.

‘Constructive alignment is a design for teaching in which what it is intended students should learn [learning outcomes], and how they should express their learning [summative assessment], is clearly stated before teaching takes place. Teaching is then designed to engage students in learning activities that optimise their chances of achieving those outcomes, and assessment tasks are designed to enable clear judgments as to how well those outcomes have been attained.’ ([Biggs 2014](#))

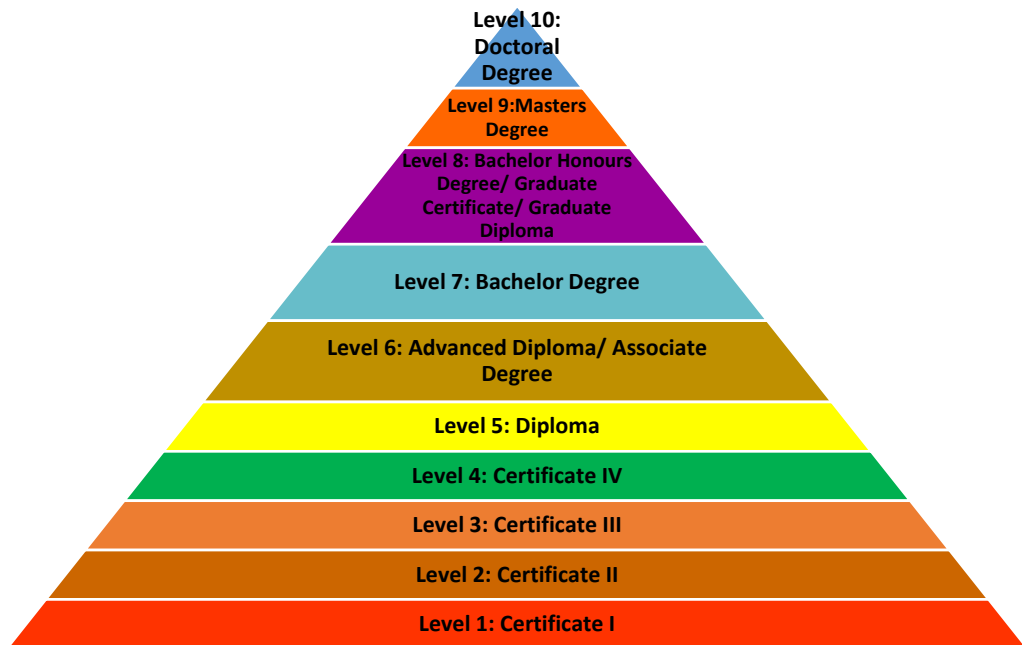
Constructive Alignment Process

Before commencing the development of learning outcomes there needs to be an understanding of the desired qualities of the graduate as defined by the Institute. Once there is an understanding of the graduate attributes, the course learning outcomes can be developed that align with the graduate attributes. Planning backwards from the course learning outcomes, aligning learning outcomes for the units can be developed.

When developing unit and course learning outcomes, *Bloom’s categories of learning* is to be considered. The learning outcomes are to represent the process of learning which typically starts with knowledge and moves through to evaluation. Learning outcomes need to be measurable, realistic and achievable.

During the development of course and unit learning outcomes, the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) course level descriptors are to be considered. The course level descriptors are available on the AQF website (<http://www.aqf.edu.au>). **Figure 1** provides a diagrammatical representation of the course levels.

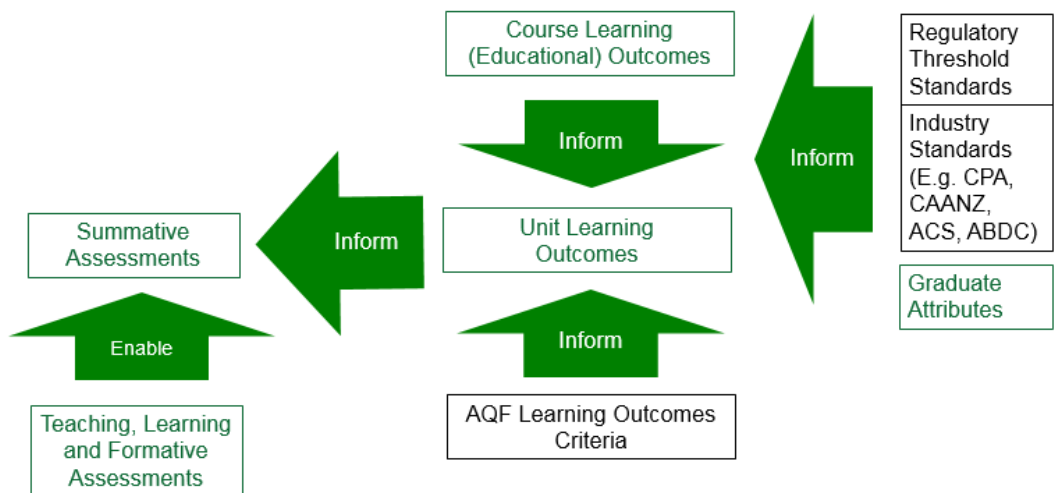
Figure 1: AQF Course Levels



The Higher Education Threshold Standards and any professional body/industry standards requirements are also to be kept in mind when developing course and unit learning outcomes.

The assessments and teaching and learning activities will then be informed by the course and unit outlines. The development of teaching and learning activities is covered in Step 5 and the development of assessments is covered in Step 6. For existing courses, the alignment of summative assessments will take place in Step 2.

Figure 2: Constructive Alignment Process Diagram



4.1.2 (iii) Types of Units

There are three types of units:

Core Units: These are compulsory units that have to be undertaken by all students in a particular course, unless the student has been granted credit transfer or advanced standing for the unit. A definitive characteristic of core units is that the achievement of the objectives of the course depends upon these units.

Elective Units: Elective units are units that are not core units but which are undertaken to complete the required number of units for the degree. Elective units may be selected from an approved list for each course. The rationale for determining whether one unit or more within a course can be an elective includes but is not limited to consideration of whether a unit supports but is not critical to the objectives and rationale of the course.

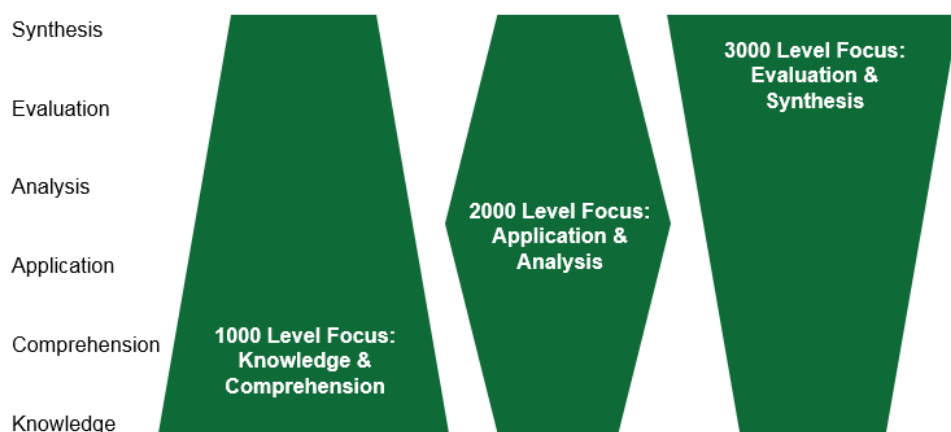
Integrative Units: A unit that integrates a wide variety of prior learning outcomes and objectives, and is based on knowledge and skills drawn from units undertaken before the integrative unit. Not all courses require an integrative unit. Integrative units could include a problem based unit, capstone unit or internship unit. Integrative units can be either core or elective units.

4.1.2 (iv) Levels of Units

The institute adopts Bloom's categories of learning in its curriculum development. In practice, the entire hierarchy of Bloom's taxonomy needs to be applied in every unit irrespective of its level.

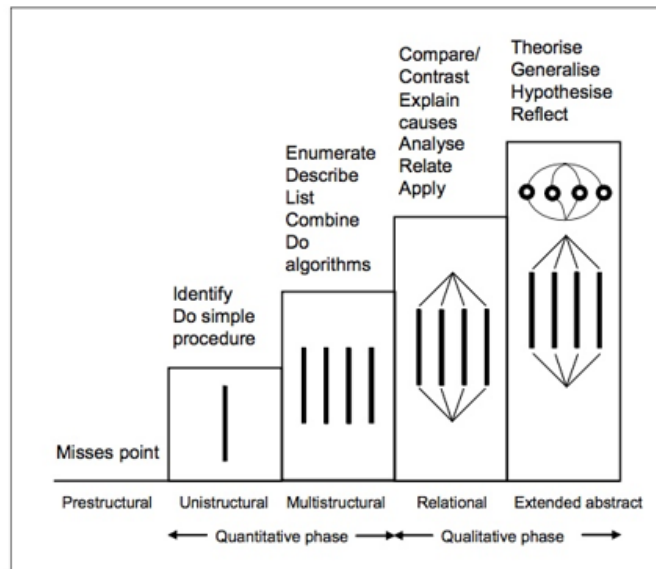
The critical thinking skills of application and analysis cannot take place without having acquired comprehension of knowledge on a topic. Therefore, unit learning outcomes should cover all levels of Bloom's between them albeit with a focus as prescribed in **Figure 3** for Level 100/1000, 200/2000 and 300/3000 level units. Summative assessment marks may be weighted to achieve the required focus at each level. For example, 100/1000 Level summative assessments might award more marks at the knowledge and comprehension level.

Figure 3: Guide to Application of Learning Taxonomy



For Level 400/4000 and 500/5000, curriculum development should be based around the works of Biggs and Tang (refer to **Figure 4: Biggs and Tang Taxonomy**).

Figure 4: Biggs and Tang Taxonomy



Source: Biggs, J. Tang, C. (2007) *Teaching for Quality learning at University*. 3e. Maidenhead. Open University Press.

One of the most effective ways of stimulating students to work at the different learning levels is the use of what is often termed Bloomian Action Verbs. For example the use of the verb ‘list’ in an assessment question will trigger a knowledge response. Similarly, an instruction to ‘describe’ will bring a response at the comprehension level. Bloomian Action Verbs are also used in learning outcomes and these verbs inform and help form the alignment between unit learning outcomes and summative assessments. Bloomian Action Verbs are available from a variety of [academic](#) and [popular](#) sources.

Levels of Units in More Detail

Unit codes in the hundreds represent units under the old course structure being phased out. Unit codes in the thousands represent current units.

Award courses will usually consist of units from the levels indicated in **Figure 5: levels with a course**.

Figure 5: Levels within a course

Award	Level(s)
Diploma	100/1000
Associate Degree	100/1000 & 200/2000
Bachelor	100/1000, 200/2000 & 300/3000
Graduate Certificate	400/4000
Graduate Diploma	400 /4000
Masters	400/4000 & 500/5000

100/1000 level units: 100/1000 level units, designated by the leading numeral 1, are defined by assessment items and learning outcomes that refer to the development of **knowledge and comprehension** of subject matter taught. Learning outcomes of these units include being able to define the knowledge area, being able to relate and review different areas of the unit’s content area, the ability to discuss and recognise principles and topic areas taught, and the ability to explain and identify specific content knowledge.

200/2000 level units: 200/2000 level units, designated by the leading numeral 2, are defined by assessments items and learning outcomes that refer to the **application of knowledge and the ability to analyse** and distinguish between different bodies of knowledge. The learning outcomes include being able to criticise and debate between opposing and contrasting areas and therefore prepare reports purporting to support these arguments.

300/3000 level units: 300/3000 level units, designated by the leading numeral 3, are defined by assessments items and learning outcomes that **synthesize and evaluate** the unit's content areas. The learning outcomes include being able to construct new implications and understanding stemming from the learnt body of knowledge, and being able to apprise and compare different areas of knowledge.

400/4000 level units: 400/4000 level units, designated by the leading number 4, are defined by assessments and learning outcomes that allow a student to extend their knowledge in a discipline and apply this knowledge. At this level the lecturer fulfils more of a facilitator and mentor role. Learning outcomes are aimed at high level thinking, often student driven and related to an area of specialisation or new knowledge.

500/5000 level units: 500/5000 level units, designated by the leading number 5, are defined by assessments and learning outcomes that are student directed and reflect a sophisticated understanding of the discipline area. At this level the unit is about advanced knowledge in a specialist area, and a student working at the forefront of an academic discipline.

4.1.3 Step 3: Internal Course Approval and External Review

There are five stages in the course approval and external review process as outlined in **Figure 6**. Each stage allows for feedback on the course proposal and an opportunity for refinement before final submission to the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA).

Figure 6: Course approval and external review stages



The following documents are required for each stage of the review and approval process before work can commence on finalising submission documentation for TEQSA:

- Course Rationale;
- Constructive alignment mapping;
- Unit Guides;
- Course admission information;
- Delivery mode details;
- Study patterns;
- Projected student numbers for 5 years ;
- Projected staff numbers, their highest level qualification and the units being taught.

4.1.4 Step 4: Submission to the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA)

Once the course has been reviewed and approved internally and by an independent external reviewer, the templates provided by TEQSA will need to be populated for course accreditation or re-accreditation of existing courses. The institutes TEQSA Case Manager will provide specific details on what is required for submission. The information required may include:

- Information on the courses intellectual property ownership;
- Delivery mode details;
- Proposed commencement date;
- Study patterns;
- Evidence relating to Student Participation and Attainment Standards (Domain 1 of the HES Framework 2015, 1.1, 1.3.3, 1.4 and 1.5.3);
- Evidence relating to Learning Environment Standards (Domain 2 of the HES Framework 2015, 2.1);
- Evidence relating to Teaching Standards (Domain 3 of the HES Framework 2015, 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3.1) which may include:
 - Projected Staff Numbers
 - Projected Student Numbers
 - Constructive Alignment Mapping
 - Course Admission Information
 - Abbreviated CV's of Academic's
 - Unit Guides
- Evidence relating to Institutional Quality Assurance Standards (Domain 5 of the HES Framework, 5.1.2, 5.1.3, and 5.4 (if applicable));
- Evidence relating to Governance and Accountability Standards (Domain 6 of the HES Framework 2015, 6.2.1(i));
- Evidence relating to Representation, Information and Information Management Standards (Domain 7 of the HES Framework 2015, 7.1, 7.2.1-2);
- External Expert Reports;
- Course Advisory and Review Committee membership and minutes relating to course approval;
- Academic Board membership and minutes relating to course approval.

The Principal will be responsible for submitting the required documentation to TEQSA through the TEQSA provider portal.

4.1.5 Step 5: Development of Engaging Teaching and Learning Activities

Once TEQSA have approved the course accreditation or re-accreditation, work can commence on the teaching and learning activities. Please note, TEQSA may require a sample of teaching and learning activities as part of the course accreditation or re-accreditation process (Step 4). The institutes TEQSA Case Manager will provide details of the specific evidence required.

Teaching and learning activities need to be developed to enable students to be able to master the concepts and skills defined in the course and unit learning outcomes. The teaching and learning activities should be interactive and provide students with opportunities to deepen their understanding.

4.1.6 Step 6: Development of Informative Assessments

Please note, TEQSA may require a sample of assessments as part of the course accreditation or re-accreditation process (Step 4). The institutes TEQSA Case Manager will provide details of the specific evidence required.

Assessments need to be developed to allow for students to be able to demonstrate their understanding of the course and unit learning outcomes and allow for the provision of meaningful feedback to students. For further information on assessment requirements, refer to the ***Student Assessment Policy*** and associated Procedure.

For existing courses where assessment tasks have already been created, summative assessments should be mapped against learning outcomes to ensure constructive alignment as part of Step 2. This will allow for the identification of gaps or areas for improvement.

4.1.7 Step 7: Continuous Improvement

Course and unit learning outcomes, learning activities, and assessments will continuously be evaluated and benchmarked to allow for continuous improvement. For further information on the continuous improvement process refer to the **Quality Assurance Framework, Academic Continuous Improvement Policy** and associated Procedure, and the **External Moderation and Benchmarking Policy** and associated Procedure.

5. Version Control

This Procedure has been endorsed by the Australia Institute of Higher Education Principal as at April 2017 and is reviewed every 3 years. The Procedure is published and available on the Australian Institute of Higher Education website <http://www.aih.nsw.edu.au/> under 'Policies and Procedures'.

Change and Version Control				
Version	Authored by	Brief Description of the changes	Date Approved:	Effective Date:
2017-1	Registrar	New Procedure.	19 April 2017	20 April 2017
2019-1	Principal	Updated Titles from Policy owner and Responsible Officer from Executive Dean to Principal, and Contact Officer from Registrar to Academic Dean.	20 November 2019	21 November 2019