

UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE
ACADEMIC PROGRAMS COMMITTEE
GUIDELINES FOR SHEPHERDS

DEFINITION

A shepherd is a member of the Academic Programs Committee with designated responsibility for one or more faculties or graduate schools. A shepherd's role is to:

- provide curriculum advice in the design of new subjects and new course proposals;
- provide guidance on the approval processes to be followed for new course proposals and major changes to existing courses;
- ensure that the faculties/graduate schools use the correct pathway for approvals and the appropriate forms and assist with liaison between the faculty/graduate school and the committees, as requested;
- provide comments on proposed changes to legislation of an academic nature and;
- provide advice to the committee on submissions coming from the faculties on matters detailed above.

NEW COURSE PROPOSALS

For an overview of the approval process for proposals for new courses and major changes to existing courses, see the [Course Approval Process](#) and the [Process Timeline](#).

Shepherds must be very familiar with the course approval process. Their role is to work with faculty/graduate school staff in the development of subject and course proposals and give advice in accordance with policies approved by the Academic Board. They should provide advice to the faculty/graduate school/course standing committee on the completion of the appropriate form(s) and ensure that it is referred to the appropriate approving authority as detailed in the pathway approved by Academic Board.

For new course proposals **the following forms must be completed:**

- Concept proposal form
- New course proposal form

And, as required:

- Subject proposal form
- Subject change form

The concept proposal form is submitted to the Concept Proposal Committee for approval before the course proposal form is developed. The shepherd does not consider the concept proposal form.

The new course proposal form contains the academic components of the proposal. Faculties/Graduate Schools/Course Standing Committees (CSCs) may request advice from the Shepherd advice regarding the completion of the new course proposal form. The form is submitted to the Academic Secretary (acad-sec@unimelb.edu.au). Where there are matters requiring clarification arising from the contents of the new course proposal form, the Academic Secretary may seek the advice of the shepherd in resolving these queries or request the shepherd to liaise with the appropriate body (Faculty/Graduate School/CSC) to assist with this process.

The shepherd ensures that the proposal is complete, and assesses the information provided for each question in sections A and B of the form (with the exception of question A7. Entry Requirements and Draft Resolution on Selection, which is assessed by the Selection Procedures Committee). Section C relates to information required by the Student System. It is particularly important to ensure that the structure of the program is clear and coherent (confirming that points for value of subjects for each year of the course adds up to the requisite total, generally 100 points per year, and that the compulsory subjects are clearly indicated) and that the progression from one year to the next is clearly defined. The shepherd is required to make a written recommendation to the Academic Programs Committee (APC) on whether the proposal should be endorsed and will be asked to speak to his/her recommendation when the proposal is considered by the committee. The shepherd may choose to recommend that the APC:

- endorse the proposal without change;
- endorse the proposal with major/minor amendments as negotiated between the shepherd and faculty/graduate school; or
- return the proposal to the proponent(s) without endorsement.

CHANGES TO COURSES

1. Major Changes to Existing Courses

For major changes the following form must be completed:

- Major course change proposal form

And, as required:

- Subject proposal form
- Subject change form

The Concept proposal form must be completed where there are resource implications or the course is delivered by more than one faculty. The concept proposal form is forwarded directly to the Concept Proposal Committee for approval and is not considered by the shepherd.

Where major changes to a course are proposed, the above forms (as required) are submitted to the Academic Secretary, who forwards them to the appropriate committee(s).

Major Changes

The Towards 2011 Report recommended that faculties/ CSCs be given delegated authority to change compulsory subjects in a course (or stream/major/specialisation), provided that the changes do not constitute more than 25% of any year in the course (or stream/major/specialisation), and do not affect the structure or mode of delivery of the entire course.

Major changes which require the scrutiny of the Academic Programs Committee include:

- changes constituting more than 25% of any year in the course (or stream/major/specialisation);
- changes affecting the mode of delivery of the entire course;
- changes affecting the requirements for completion of a course, including: alterations to the overall structure and/or total duration of a course or a program/stream within a course;
- introduction or deletion of compulsory subjects;
- amendments affecting points values or the level of study of compulsory subjects;
- changes in honours requirements, including to year of entry into honours;
- major changes in mode of offering, e.g. introduction of distance delivery, introduction of intensive teaching,
- changes to transfer of EFTSL or changes to the involvement of another faculty, etc.
- change to the title of a program.

The faculty/graduate school/CSC may seek the advice and assistance of the shepherd with the completion of the Major course change proposal form. Shepherds should also advise the faculty/graduate school/CSC if they consider that the proposed change requires the submission of a concept proposal, where the faculty has not already done so.

The shepherd will examine sections A and B form (with the exception of question A10. Entry Requirements Change, which is assessed by the Selection Procedures Committee) of the proposal in detail and discuss any concerns with the relevant faculty/graduate school/CSC and attempt to resolve any difficulties before making a recommendation to the Academic Programs Committee. (Section C of the Major course change proposal form relates to information required by the Student System and does not require the scrutiny of the academic shepherd.)

Shepherds are required to make a written recommendation to the APC, on whether the committee should:

- endorse the proposal without change;
- endorse the proposal with major/minor amendments as negotiated between the shepherd and faculty/graduate school; or
- return the proposal to the proponent(s) without approval.

2. Changes Made by the Faculty under Delegated Authority

Minor changes made under delegated authority are no longer reported through Academic Programs Committee to the Academic Board quarterly. Instead the following reports will be required:

- **Annually (undergraduate programs) and biennially (graduate programs):** A report to the Academic Programs Committee on each course giving the course structure (as outlined in the current University Handbook) and noting any significant developments within it. These reports should be submitted to APC by 31 October each year. Further information about what is required,

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including a list of graduate programs to be examined in 2011, will be provided closer to the deadline.

- **Every four years commencing in 2012:** a report on each course as outlined above including all subject descriptions. This will allow subjects to be examined for consistency with University guidelines.

The role of shepherds in assessing the reports is yet to be confirmed.

3. Urgent & Late Changes

This process is conducted entirely by email in order to expedite matters.

Urgent or late changes which may include minor matters that ordinarily would be handled by a faculty/graduate school/CSC under delegated authority (e.g. assessment changes made after publication of the handbook) are sent directly to the secretary of the APC (via the late-change@unimelb.edu.au email address). Late changes in new-generation undergraduate degrees must be endorsed by the Chair of the relevant CSC before submission.

The secretary of the APC will forward the proposal to the shepherd, who assesses the late change, taking into account the timing of the change, the rationale for the change, its impact on students and particularly the impact on course planning. Shepherds need to be assured that the proposed changes are justified. It is essential that wherever possible students are not disadvantaged by late changes and in reviewing the request shepherds are required to ensure that this is the case. The shepherd makes a recommendation directly to the President of the Academic Board via email, copied to the secretary. The change is reported to APC at the subsequent meeting.

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