

# GUIDELINES FOR HIGHER DEGREES

## (CONSOLIDATED – 2009)

With the proliferation of proposals for graduate programs of varying lengths, entry level, and year level of subjects coming before the Academic Programs Committee, it was felt necessary in 1998 to produce a set of guidelines to help Faculties in preparing proposals, and to assist the Committee's work in scrutinising them. In 2002, the "Robinson Report" introduced a major revision of the guidelines for coursework Masters degree, and this in turn generated a succession of policy documents to guide implementation, especially on subject levels and on articulation between the different levels of postgraduate study. In 2005, the Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies produced guidelines for doctoral degrees, which necessitated some rethinking of the University's guidelines for professional doctorates, which, in turn, produced new guidelines to cover all doctoral programs in the University. In 2007, with the advent of the Melbourne Model, the guidelines for Masters degrees were revised further to accommodate the particular demands of professional entry Masters degrees, the definition of "graduate" and "postgraduate" was revised with the distinction between them loosened up, and guidelines were developed for Masters level (i.e. second cycle) programs using the nomenclature of Doctor. In 2009, there was a further revision around the guidelines for allowing credit for undergraduate subjects in graduate programs. All these policies are consolidated below into a single set of guidelines for the University's higher degree programs.

The guidelines are intended to be prescriptive and to provide a firm framework for the development of graduate courses. However, there may need to be exceptions to some guidelines in particular cases (e.g. because of the requirements of professional accreditation, or because of the nature of particular disciplines). Such exceptions will be rare and a strong case must be made for them.

### 1. Graduate/Postgraduate Certificates and Diplomas

#### 1.1 *General Description*

- 1.1.1 Graduate/Postgraduate Certificates and Diplomas are courses that are normally taken as the first level of study after an undergraduate degree.
- 1.1.2 The term "Graduate" in the title of a certificate or diploma denotes a course that does not require that the undergraduate degree was in the same discipline area, and so does not build on study in the initial degree.
- 1.1.3 The term "Postgraduate" in the title of a certificate or diploma denotes a course that assumes and builds on study in the initial degree.
- 1.1.4 Graduate/Postgraduate Certificates are normally 50 points in length (i.e. half an EFT year's load).
- 1.1.5 Graduate/Postgraduate Diplomas are normally 100 points in length (i.e. an EFT year's load)

#### 1.2 *Entry requirements*

- 1.2.1 The minimum entry requirement for Graduate Certificates/Diplomas is normally a pass-level undergraduate degree in any discipline.
- 1.2.2 The minimum entry requirement for Postgraduate Certificates/Diplomas is normally a pass-level undergraduate degree in a cognate area.
- 1.2.3 In some cases, substantial professional experience at a high level may be considered equivalent to an undergraduate degree.

#### 1.3 *Level of subjects*

- 1.3.1 Graduate Certificates/Diplomas may draw on undergraduate subjects (including pass-level subjects), in particular either a major sequence of study or later-year undergraduate subjects, provided that a case is made that they produce a coherent program appropriate for graduates. A Graduate Diploma should not consist entirely of earlier-year undergraduate subjects.

- 1.3.2 Postgraduate Certificates/Diplomas should consist of at least 50% of subjects that are offered beyond pass undergraduate level (i.e. at honours or graduate level).
- 1.3.4 Masters level subjects may be taken at Postgraduate Certificate/Diploma level, provided that students have the appropriate background to succeed in the subject.

#### 1.4 *Articulation*

- 1.4.1 A (Post)Graduate Certificate may be the first fifty points of a (Post) Graduate Diploma award, students being given fifty points credit within the Diploma, whether they have taken out the Certificate or not.
- 1.4.2 When a (Post)Graduate Certificate is the first fifty points of a (Post)Graduate Diploma,
- if there are no internal progression requirements within the Diploma after fifty points, the entry requirements for the Certificate should be the same as for the Diploma
  - if a student progressing from the certificate to the Diploma must reach a certain level of performance, students enrolled in the Diploma must meet the same requirement after fifty points to progress.
  - if the entry requirements for the Certificate and the Diploma are different because special background (e.g. professional experience) is necessary for undertaking the second half of the Diploma, students must meet this requirement before progressing from the Certificate to the Diploma.

## 2. **Masters degrees**

### 2.1 *General Description*

A Masters degree involves at least a fifth year of learning at tertiary level. In the Melbourne Model, this is normally in the configuration of a three-year undergraduate degree, followed by a two-year Masters degree.

- 2.1.1 Depending on the entry requirements, Masters degrees can be 100 points (i.e. an EFT year's load), 150 points (i.e. 1.5 years EFT load) or 200 points (i.e. two years EFT load), or in some cases longer, particularly in professional-entry Masters, where there may be a requirement for additional study to meet professional accreditation requirements, research training prerequisites, or some other desired outcome.
- 2.1.2 The first fifty points of a Masters degree is frequently also available as a (Post)Graduate Certificate, and the first hundred points as a (Post)Graduate Diploma. It is thus relatively common for there to be two versions of a Masters with different lengths, one that is purely the final year (100 points) and another longer one that incorporates the (Post)Graduate Certificate (in a 150-point Masters) or (Post)Graduate Diploma (in a 200+-point Masters). At times there are even three versions with different lengths, depending on previous study.

### 2.2 *Entry pathways*

- 2.2.1 The minimum entry requirement for a Masters degree will differ depending on the length of the program.
- 2.2.1.1 For 200+-point programs, the minimum entry requirement will be an undergraduate degree:
- Preliminary studies in related disciplines may or may not be required;
  - Achievement at a certain level (e.g. H2B) may or may not be required
- 2.2.1.2 For 150-point programs, the minimum entry requirement will be;
- a (Post)Graduate Certificate in a cognate area; or
  - at least one year of relevant professional experience.
- 2.2.1.3 For 100-point programs, the minimum entry requirement will be
- an honours degree in a cognate area;

- 100 points of postgraduate study (i.e. a (Post)Graduate Diploma) in a cognate area;
- a combination of at least one year of professional work experience and 50 points of postgraduate study (i.e. a (Post)Graduate certificate) in a cognate area; or
- at least two years of relevant professional experience, if the undergraduate degree was in a cognate area.

2.2.2 When a cognate undergraduate degree is four years or longer, there may be a reduced requirement on the length of the Masters, e.g. a 150-point Masters following a four-year undergraduate degree, or direct entry into a 100-point Masters.

2.2.3 Where professional work experience is an element of the pathway, only relevant, documented professional work experience will be allowed. The relevant professional work experience should not be gained concurrently with the Masters degree, but must be met as a prerequisite for entering the course.

### 2.3 *Level of subjects*

2.3.1 A Masters degree will consist of a coherent program of study designed to achieve outcomes appropriate to two years of study beyond an undergraduate degree. Professional-entry Masters programs must demonstrably achieve academic and professional outcomes appropriate to Masters level.

2.3.2 Program coherence is demonstrated by clarity of the Masters-level outcomes and the way in which each element in the program contributes to them.

2.3.3 Subjects at Masters level may cover similar material to undergraduate subjects, particularly in professional-entry programs, but will be at a level appropriate for the graduate cohort in terms of sophistication of content and the demands made on students: this will be reflected in subject objectives, generic skills outcomes, content descriptions, presentation, and expectations in assessment.

2.3.4 Consistent with the requirements for Postgraduate Diplomas, up to 50% of the first year of a two-year Masters may be undergraduate subjects.

2.3.5 Subjects in Masters programs can be taught across levels 4 and 5, provided that students have the appropriate background to succeed in the subject, and the subject contributes to a coherent program to achieve the Masters-level outcomes.

### 2.4 *Credit for undergraduate subjects in Masters (second-cycle) degrees*

2.4.1 In Masters degrees of two years or less no credit will be given for subjects taken in an undergraduate degree. In some cases it may be appropriate to give exemption from taking a compulsory subject to students who have completed similar material in their undergraduate program, but students in degrees of 200 points or less should be required to undertake all the points of study required to take out the Masters

2.4.2 Credit for undergraduate subjects will be permitted for subjects in a professional entry second-cycle course longer than two years (200 points) provided that the subjects for which credit is being given are not in the final two years (200 points) of the course. Where possible, the undergraduate subjects for which credit is given should be part of a planned pathway leading to the Masters program.

### 2.5 *Articulation*

2.5.1 A (Post)Graduate Certificate or (Post)Graduate Diploma may be the first part of a Masters degree, providing that the Certificate or Diploma program is both coherent in itself and contributes to achieving the outcomes of the Masters program.

2.5.2 If the first part of a Masters program can be awarded as a certificate or diploma "exit award", it must be approved as a separate course (although it should be included on the same Major Change form) and have a separate

CRICOS code. Such a program must meet the guidelines for (post)graduate certificates and diplomas (above).

- 2.5.3 When a (Post)Graduate Certificate is the first fifty points or a (Post)Graduate Diploma is the first 100 points of a Masters degree:
- If there are no internal progression requirements within the Masters before the final 100 points, the entry requirements for the Certificate or Diploma should be the same as for the Masters.
  - If a student progressing from the Certificate or Diploma to enrolment in the Masters must reach a certain level of performance to be accepted, students who have enrolled directly into the Masters program must meet the same requirement to progress to the final part of the program.
  - If the entry requirements for the Certificate or Diploma are different from those for the Masters because special background (e.g. professional experience, research training) is necessary for undertaking the Masters, students must meet this requirement before progressing from the Certificate or Diploma to the Masters.

### **3 Second-Cycle degrees using the nomenclature of “Doctor”**

#### **3.1 *General Description***

While post-undergraduate, second-cycle professional degrees are usually given the degree nomenclature of Masters, in some cases where the length of the program takes students markedly beyond the fifth year of study that is characteristic of Masters degrees, and where there is strong international precedent for the use of the term, a second-cycle professional degree may use the degree nomenclature of “Doctor”. This will not in itself confer the right on a graduate to use the honorific title of “Doctor”, since the use of the honorific is in most cases controlled by outside accrediting bodies governing the profession.

- 3.1.1 In proposing this nomenclature, evidence that the use of “Doctor” is standard practice in major international jurisdictions in which graduates may be employed (e.g. USA) will be required.
- 3.1.2 A professional degree using the degree nomenclature of “Doctor” will consist of at least 300 points of study at graduate level.
- 3.1.3 Such a degree will meet professional accreditation requirements at a notably high level.

#### **3.2 *Entry pathways***

The minimum entry requirement will be an undergraduate degree:

- Preliminary studies in related disciplines may or may not be required;
- Achievement at a certain level (e.g. H2B) may or may not be required.

#### **3.3 *Level of Subjects***

- 3.3.1 A professional degree using the “Doctor” nomenclature will consist of a coherent program of study designed to achieve outcomes appropriate to at least three years of study beyond an undergraduate degree.
- 3.3.2 Program coherence is demonstrated by the clarity of the outcomes and the way in which each element in the program contributes to them.
- 3.3.3 All subjects will be at graduate level. Subjects may cover similar material to undergraduate subjects but will be pitched appropriately for the graduate cohort in terms of sophistication of content and the demands made on students: this will be reflected in subject objectives, generic skills outcomes, content descriptions, presentation, and expectations in assessment.

## **4 Doctorates**

### **4.1 *General description***

- 4.1.1 Doctorates are degrees built around original and significant research that makes a major contribution to knowledge for the discipline or for professional practice.
- 4.1.2 Doctorates may consist entirely of research (e.g. most Ph.D programs) or they may consist of both coursework and a research component (professional doctorates).
- 4.1.3 A doctoral program is normally at least three years EFT study.

#### 4.2 *Entry requirements*

- 4.2.1 The entry requirement for a doctoral program will normally be a Masters degree or a four-year Bachelor honours degree (first or second class, upper division), *and* demonstrated capacity to undertake significant research in the proposed doctoral field.
- 4.2.2 The demonstration of research capacity may be through research training, previous study, advanced professional practice, professional publications, or creative achievements.
- 4.2.3 Professional doctorates normally require a substantial period of professional practice for entry.

#### 4.3 *Subject Level*

- 4.3.1 Subjects that form part of the assessed requirements of doctoral degrees must be at least at Masters level, but doctoral students must achieve in them beyond the normal expectations of Masters students.
- 4.3.2 No subject that forms part of the assessed requirements of a doctoral degree may also be offered to students below Masters level (e.g. at Postgraduate Diploma level).
- 4.3.3 If there is a coursework component, as in professional doctorates, part of this assessed component must consist of doctoral level study, available only to doctoral students.

#### 4.4 *Articulation*

- 4.4.1 No credit can be given in a doctorate for studies undertaken in a Masters degree that is recognised for purposes of meeting the entry requirement.
- 4.4.2 Masters candidates may transfer to a doctoral program if they are already eligible for the doctorate (e.g. have an honours undergraduate degree at an appropriate level), and they can demonstrate the viability of their work to fulfil doctoral outcomes.

### **5 Titles of awards**

The names of awards should not be restricted to generic titles.

### **6 Courses with Low Enrolments**

If a course has low enrolments for a year, its retention should be reviewed by the Faculty concerned.