

## **ACADEMIC BOARD – 8/04 (23 SEPTEMBER 2004)**

### **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POST/GRADUATE CERTIFICATES, POST/GRADUATE DIPLOMAS AND MASTERS COURSES**

#### **Principles of Selection**

All Selection is subject to the Principles of Selection:

1. The University is committed to maintaining high international academic standards in its courses.
2. The University will select from those students likely to succeed in its courses.

#### **Configuration of post/graduate programs**

A basic pattern in many faculties for post/graduate qualifications is that a Masters degree is the fifth year of study, following on from a (three-year) undergraduate degree, and a fourth year of study, or a combination of fourth-year study and work experience. This fourth year might be

- An honours year
- A post/graduate certificate and work experience
- A post/graduate diploma
- A post/graduate diploma, in which there has been fifty points credit given for a previously completed post/graduate certificate.
- The first year of a two-year Masters program

This paper is concerned with these last two pathways.

In most cases, a post/graduate certificate is the first half of a post/graduate diploma, and, where there is a 200-point Masters program, the post/graduate diploma is the first year of the two-year program. Thus questions of articulation arise: a person completing the two years to take out a Masters degree may only apply and be selected once for the whole program, or she/he may apply and be selected up to three times (for the post/graduate certificate, for the post/graduate diploma (in which she/he will be given credit for the post/graduate certificate), and for the one-year Masters. Since the initial decision as to which program to enrol in is often arbitrary or based on pragmatic considerations of time or finance, a basic principle of equity is that no student should be advantaged or disadvantaged by deciding to enrol initially in one or the other program.

#### **Post/Graduate Certificate – Post/Graduate Diploma**

Since post/graduate certificates are normally the first fifty points of the related post/graduate diploma, it would be normal to expect that they would have the same entry requirement, since students will have equal likelihood of success in proceeding through the longer program, unless there are special requirements for undertaking the work in the second half of the program (e.g. work experience, research training, achievement at a certain level).

However, post/graduate certificates are often taken by students as a return to study after several years away. Faculties, wishing to encourage such students into further study, may well set the entry requirement level so as not to be too restrictive (while still giving the students likelihood of success). Under these circumstances, students can undertake fifty points of subjects and then both they and the Faculty can decide whether it is

worth their going on. This sometimes results in different entry requirements for post/graduate certificates and post/graduate diplomas, although students are doing exactly the same subjects, since Faculties want to increase the likelihood that those who enrol for the full 100 points are performing at a high level by the end of the program. In these cases, on equity grounds, students who have enrolled in the post/graduate diploma, should be required to meet the same progression requirements after fifty points as students who have enrolled in the post/graduate certificate.

Thus there are three possible scenarios:

1. The post/graduate certificate is the first half of the post/graduate diploma, and there are no internal progression requirements:

*In these cases it is recommended that the entry requirements for the post/graduate certificate and the post/graduate diploma should be the same.*

2. The post/graduate certificate is the first half of the post/graduate diploma but they have different entry requirements, and students from the post/graduate certificate must perform at a certain level to be permitted into the post/graduate diploma.

*In these cases, it is recommended that a student within the post/graduate diploma must meet the same requirements to progress after fifty points of study as a student having completed the post/graduate certificate. (Students who do not reach the required level would take out the post/graduate certificate as an exit award.)*

3. The post/graduate certificate is the first half of the post/graduate diploma, but the entry requirements are different because the second half of the post/graduate diploma requires particular background study or experience not contained in the post/graduate certificate:

*In these cases, it is recommended that a student must meet the post/graduate diploma entry requirements (or their equivalent) before being permitted to enrol in the course, even after completing the post/graduate certificate. (The student may have demonstrated the capacities required through her/his work in the postgraduate certificate, but this should be treated as a special case for exemption.)*

There is also a possible fourth scenario where the post/graduate certificate is not identical with the first part of the post/graduate diploma, in which case, none of the above apply, and there may well be quite different entry requirements, and no credit given for the post/graduate certificate in the post/graduate diploma.

### **Post/Graduate Diploma - Masters**

Many Masters courses come in two versions, a one-year course that requires a post/graduate diploma (or post/graduate certificate and/or work experience) for entry, the other a 200 point course that includes the post/graduate diploma as its first year. The number of 200-point courses appears to be growing, since visa (and PR) requirements make them favoured by international students. Again, the arbitrariness of whether a student enrolls initially in the post/graduate diploma or the 200-point Masters program makes it necessary to ensure that there is equity between students who make one or the other choice.

The possible scenarios here parallel those above with the post/graduate certificate to post/graduate diploma articulation. They are:

1. The post/graduate diploma is the first hundred points of a 200-point Masters, and there are no internal progression requirements to proceed to the second year for students enrolled in the Masters:

*In these cases it is recommended that the entry requirements for the post/graduate diploma and the 200-point Masters should be the same.*

2. The post/graduate diploma is the first 100 points of a 200 point Masters but they have different entry requirements, and students from the post/graduate diploma must perform at a certain level to be permitted into the Masters:

*In these cases, it is recommended that a student within the 200 point Masters must meet the same requirements to progress to the second year of study as a student having completed the post/graduate diploma. (Students who do not reach the required level would take out the post/graduate diploma as an exit award.)*

3. The post/graduate diploma is the first half of the 200-point Masters, but the entry requirements are different because the second year of the Masters requires particular background study or experience not contained in the post/graduate diploma:

*In these cases, it is recommended that a student must meet the Masters entry requirements (or their equivalent) before being permitted to enrol in the course, even after completing the post/graduate diploma. (The student may have demonstrated the capacities required through her/his work in the post/graduate diploma, but this should be treated as a special case for exemption.)*

### **Conditions for Selection/Transfer with advanced standing.**

In all of the above situations, students applying for the more advanced award in which they will be given full credit for the award already completed are effectively applying for a transfer, even though they may have completed and taken out the lower award several years earlier. On the principle that one cannot gain credit within a course for an award that is an entry requirement, a post/graduate certificate cannot be an entry requirement for a related post/graduate diploma if the student is to be given credit. Thus the move from the post/graduate certificate to the post/graduate diploma must be treated as a transfer. **It is vital that the conditions for transfer be made explicit within the course proposal, and be made clear to students.** On the principles outlined above, in the second scenario students enrolled in the post/graduate diploma will have to meet the same requirements. In the third scenario, the students enrolled in the postgraduate diploma will already have met the requirements, and so it is especially important that it is made clear under what conditions students who have completed the post/graduate certificate will be permitted to enrol in the post/graduate diploma.

The same applies for students moving from a post/graduate diploma into a two-year Masters. However, since there is normally a one-year version of the Masters year available, the post/graduate diploma with any special conditions attached can be an entry requirement to the one-year program, and the move can be handled easily in this way.

**Note:** The Nicholas paper discusses a number of matters other than articulation between the different levels of post/graduate courses, but these are all dealt with more comprehensively elsewhere, either in the Guidelines for Higher Degrees or in the “Robinson report” on coursework Masters and the subsequent Academic Board paper on subject levels. Indeed the Nicholas paper in a number of cases clearly contradicts the policy outlined in those documents, e.g. “It is not possible to transfer credit from a Graduate Diploma to a Masters” (if a Graduate Diploma is the first part of a 200-point Masters, it is possible to gain full credit for it in the 200-point degree); or “an applicant with a Graduate Diploma must complete at least 150 points in the Masters degree, of which 100 must be at Masters level” (there are a number of approved Masters program, particularly in the Faculty of Economics and Commerce, in which there is direct entry from a Graduate Diploma (or Graduate Certificate and work experience) into a 100-point Masters.)

