



# Guidelines for UNE Courses and Units to Facilitate Compliance with the Australian Qualifications Framework (Approved by Academic Board)

## Introduction

The second edition of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) was released in January 2013: <http://www.aqf.edu.au/>

The implementation arrangements of the AQF are that (p. 103):

- All requirements of the AQF will be met from 1 January 2015.
- From 1 January 2015, all new enrolments will be in qualifications that meet the requirements of the AQF. From this date, students already enrolled in qualifications may complete the qualification in which they enrolled or may transfer without disadvantage to an equivalent qualification that meets the requirements of the AQF. Authorised issuing organisations will have publicly available policies or procedures to assist with this transition.

For UNE, given internal and external reporting deadlines, all courses incorporating amendments for AQF compliance must be submitted to the Academic Board's Academic Program Committee (APC) by 30 April 2014.

These guidelines:

- Outline the requirements for the development and design of all coursework, undergraduate and postgraduate courses at UNE in accordance with the requirements of the AQF.
- Provide advice as to the structure of courses offered by UNE in relation to the volume and scaffolding of learning.
- Specify the correlation between units and AQF levels.

## 1 AQF Compliance of UNE Courses

- 1.1 All UNE courses are required to meet the specifications of the AQF, in terms of their duration (volume of learning), expressed in equivalent full-time years, and level, expressed in terms of course learning outcomes.
- 1.2 All courses are to be AQF-compliant by 1 January 2015 unless there is inconsistency between a professional accredited course and AQF compliance, in which case APC must be notified by 30 April 2014<sup>1</sup> (or preferably earlier).
- 1.3 Courses will comprise a number of units, each with a specified credit point value; the sum of the credit points of all units within a course will be the volume of learning for that course.
- 1.4 Where applicable, course content will be structured so that students progress from introductory material to more advanced material throughout their program of study. This will be reflected through the learning outcomes and graduate attributes of the units at each level, with alignment with course aims, learning outcomes and graduate attributes and the relevant AQF qualification descriptors.

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<sup>1</sup> The Academic Registrar may vary this date if the proposed liaison between individual professional accrediting bodies and Universities Australia is delayed.

## 2 Course Aims, Learning Outcomes and Graduate Attributes

- 2.1 Using the AQF descriptors, all courses are to be reviewed to ensure they demonstrate knowledge and skills relevant to the discipline and that they comply with the appropriate AQF level. Courses may need to be amended to ensure they are compliant with the AQF criteria.
- 2.2 Course aims, learning outcomes and graduate attributes are required as part of the new and amended course approval process. From 2013, where available, these will be displayed in the Course and Unit Catalogue through a 'Course Outcomes' tab for each course.

## 3 Units

- 3.1 Units are the building blocks of courses. Course learning outcomes and graduate attributes (knowledge and skills) are achieved by completing a package of units at specified levels.
- 3.2 To facilitate AQF compliance of all UNE courses by the deadline, the following unit numbering procedures must be adhered to (Table 1). The correlation between unit levels and AQF levels in Table 1 will enable Schools to clearly demonstrate that unit learning outcomes are at the appropriate level and that the relationship between unit and course learning outcomes is transparent. It will also remove ambiguity that could arise if units at the same AQF level had varying levels of learning outcome.

**Table 1. Correspondence between UNE Unit Levels and AQF Levels**

UNE Unit Level	AQF Level
100	5 - Diploma
200	6 - Advanced Diploma/Associate Degree
300	7 - Bachelor
400	8 - Bachelor Honours/Graduate Certificate/Graduate Diploma
500	9 - Master
600	10 - Doctoral

- 3.3 While a particular unit should correspond to a specified AQF level, some learning outcomes of the unit may be more closely aligned with a higher AQF level. In such instances, the majority of the learning outcomes of the unit (and the assessment in the unit) should situate the unit at the AQF level indicated by the unit code.
- 3.4 By 30 April 2014:
  - (a) All units offered by UNE from 1 January 2015 are to be reviewed in relation to the AQF descriptors to ensure they comply with the appropriate AQF level. Units may need to be amended and recoded to align with the AQF levels.
  - (b) The learning outcomes of all units must have been checked and assigned to the appropriate AQF level by both the Unit Coordinator and the Course Coordinators of awards in which the unit is offered. The first digit of the three-digit unit number must reflect the level, as per Table 1.
  - (c) For each unit not presented to APC, a declaration signed by the Unit Coordinator and relevant Course Coordinators must be lodged with APC to the effect that the unit complies with Sections 3.4(a) and 3.4(b). The declaration template is appended (Appendix 1).
- 3.5 Effective immediately, the learning outcomes of new units brought to APC for approval, must correspond to the appropriate AQF level. The first digit of the three-digit unit number must reflect this level, as per Table 1.

- 3.6 Course amendments should indicate whether the unit numbering complies with AQF levels or whether this will be completed by 30 April 2014 by way of further course and unit amendments.
- 3.7 **Units in professionally accredited courses.** Where the guidelines outlined above are inconsistent with the unit numbering or learning outcome requirements mandated by professional bodies for accredited courses, these guidelines will not apply for those courses. In such circumstances, APC must be informed by 30 April 2014 using the declaration form in Appendix 1 (Section 3.4c), together with supporting documentation outlining the accreditation requirements.

## 4 Program Structure

- 4.1 The design of a course must enable students to achieve the learning outcomes for both the qualification type and the discipline. The number of units at particular levels will depend on whether the qualification is designed to deepen existing knowledge and skills or whether it is designed to broaden students' knowledge and skills in a different discipline.
- 4.2 Unit learning outcomes and graduate attributes should be mapped to the course learning outcomes and course graduate attributes to demonstrate their fulfilment at the appropriate AQF level once a course is successfully completed.
- 4.3 Guidelines for the number of units at different AQF levels for each qualification type are shown in Tables 2 and 3. Schools may be able to justify meeting the AQF level qualification types in a different way to that described below, but they will need to provide a strong pedagogical argument to justify their decision to do so.
- 4.4 Schools should refer to the AQF (see web link in Introduction) for specific details on these and other course requirements.

### Undergraduate Award Structure

- 4.5 Some disciplines use a structure that includes a sequence of 100, 200, 300 and above units, others use a model of introductory and advanced-level units. Both models can demonstrate scaffolding of learning.

### Postgraduate Award Structure

- 4.6 The Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma are AQF level-8 qualifications. Masters Degrees are level 9. It is suggested that the Graduate Certificate and the Graduate Diploma can be used either for extension of the undergraduate discipline to provide further specialist knowledge, or for conversion for students entering from a non-related discipline area to enable them to undertake a scaffolded program of learning.
- 4.7
  - (a) Graduates of a Masters Degree (Research) must demonstrate advanced knowledge of research principles and methods applicable to the field of work or learning, and plan and execute a substantial piece of research.
  - (b) Graduates of a Masters Degree (Coursework) must demonstrate knowledge of research principles and methods applicable to a field of work and/or learning, and demonstrate planning and execution of a substantial research-based project, capstone experience and/or piece of scholarship (minimum of 12 credit points at level 9).
- 4.8 All Doctoral Degrees must demonstrate that graduates have a substantial knowledge of research principles and methods applicable to the field of work or learning and produce a substantial and original contribution to knowledge and/or professional practice.

**Table 2. Structure of Undergraduate Awards**

<b>Qualification Type</b>	<b>AQF Level</b>	<b>Credit Points (cp)</b>	<b>Unit Composition</b>
Diploma	5	48	All 100 level or scaffolded 100, 200, 300
Advanced Diploma	6	72-96	Between 36 cp and 48 cp at 100 level and remainder at 200 and 300 level
Associate Degree	6	96	Between 36 cp and 48 cp at 100 level and remainder at 200 and 300 level
Bachelor Degree (3 years)	7	144	Maximum of 60 cp at 100 level, at least 36 cp at 300 level and maximum of 12 cp at 400 level
Bachelor Degree (4 years)	7	192	Maximum of 60 cp at 100 level and at least 72 cp at 300 level; 400 level units may be included to maximum of 24 cp
Combined Bachelor Degree (4 years)	7	192	Maximum of 72 cp at 100 level to allow sufficient scope for introductory units in both components of combined degree; at least 24 cp at 300 level in each component of degree, and maximum of 24 cp at 400 level
Double Degree (5 years)	7	240	Maximum of 72 cp at 100 level, and at least 24 cp at 300 level in each component of degree; maximum of 24 cp at 400 level
Embedded Honours Degree	8	192	Maximum of 60 cp at 100 level, minimum of 36 cp at 300 level, a minimum of 36 cp at 400 level, and a maximum of 12 cp at 500 level Must demonstrate knowledge of research principles and methods and application of knowledge and skills to plan and execute project work and/or piece of research and scholarship (minimum 12 cp) at 400 level or above. Calculation of Honours level should be on final year results or must be justified by benchmarking with other universities that offer same program
Bachelor Honours Degree	8	48	At least 36 cp at 400 level, and maximum of 12 cp at 500 level Must demonstrate knowledge of research principles and methods and application of knowledge and skills to plan and execute project work and/or a piece of research and scholarship (minimum 12 cp) at 400 level or above

NB: the Joint Medical Program is currently under review with the University of Newcastle and will have the same structure as agreed by both institutions.

## 5 Course Mapping, Admission, Advanced Standing and Exit Awards

- 5.1 It is recognised that students can be admitted into a Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma or Masters Degree with varying levels of prior learning which may enable them to meet the level-8 or 9 learning outcomes of the respective qualification type in varying periods of time (Table 4).
- 5.2 To accommodate multiple admission pathways within the one award and different volumes of learning, block advanced standing may be given as outlined in Table 5.

- 5.3 To allow students to exit early from a course of study with a lower level exit award where such exists, the sequence in which units are taken will need to be carefully prescribed in the course rules, and courses will need to be mapped appropriately in terms of the trimester offering of units.
- (a) To allow this to happen in the case of a nested set of Diploma, Advanced Diploma and Bachelor courses, a full-time student enrolled in a Bachelor course (level 7) should take mainly 100-level (level 5) units in the first two teaching periods in order to be able to exit with a Diploma, and mainly 200-level units (or 300-level units where 200-level units do not exist) in the third and fourth teaching periods in order to be able to exit with an Advanced Diploma.
  - (b) In the case of a nested set of Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma and Masters Degree courses, a full-time student with a Bachelor degree in a cognate discipline and enrolled in the coursework Masters (level 9) should take mainly 400-level (level-8) units in the first one or two teaching periods in order to be able to exit with a Graduate Certificate or Graduate Diploma (level 8).
  - (c) In cases where a student exits with a lower level award and then wishes to resume study towards the higher lever course, advanced standing may be given for the units at the lower level but only up to the number permitted under the rules for the higher level course.

**Table 3. Structure of Postgraduate Awards**

<b>Qualification Type</b>	<b>AQF Level</b>	<b>Credit Points</b>	<b>Unit Composition</b>
Graduate Certificate	8	24-48	Minimum of 18 cp at 400 level, and maximum of 6 cp at 500 level
Graduate Diploma	8	48-96	Minimum of 30 cp at 400 level, and maximum of 18 cp at 500 level May include lower level units to facilitate admission from a different discipline
Masters Degree (Coursework)	9	48-96	Minimum of 36 cp at 500 level, and maximum of 12 cp at 600 level Graduates must demonstrate knowledge of research principles and methods and application of knowledge and skills to plan and execute substantial research-based project, capstone experience and/or piece of scholarship
Masters Degree (Research)	9	48-96	Minimum of 36 cp at 500 level, and maximum of 12 cp at 600 level Graduates must demonstrate advanced knowledge of research principles and methods and application of knowledge and skills to plan and execute substantial piece of research. A Masters Degree (Research) requires a minimum of two-thirds (67%) research.
Doctoral Degree	10	144-192	An assumption has been made that all Doctoral Degrees must comply with Research Training Scheme as well as AQF, therefore a minimum total of two-thirds (67%) research is required. Graduates must demonstrate a substantial and original contribution to knowledge and/or professional practice

**Table 4. Correlation between Admission and Volume and Scaffolding of Learning for AQF Level-8 and Level-9 Qualifications**

Admitted From	Volume and Scaffolding of Learning			
	Graduate Certificate AQF Level 8	Graduate Diploma AQF Level 8	Masters (Research) AQF Level 9	Masters (Coursework) AQF Level 9
AQF level 7 in same/related discipline	0.5 years; 18 cp at 400 level	1-2 years; scaffolding with 30 cp at 400 level	1.5 years; scaffolding with 36 cp at 500 level	1.5 years; scaffolding with 36 cp at 500 level
AQF level 7 in different discipline	0.5-1 year; scaffolding with 18 cp at 400 level	1-2 years; scaffolding with 30 cp at 400 level	2 years; scaffolding with 36 cp at 500 level	2 years; scaffolding with 36 cp at 500 level
AQF level 8 in same/related discipline	NA	NA	1 year; 36 cp at 500 level	1 year; 36 cp at 500 level
AQF level 8 in different discipline	NA?	NA?	1.5 years; scaffolding with 36 cp at 500 level	1.5 years; scaffolding with 36 cp at 500 level

**Table 5. Correlation between Admission, Block Advanced Standing, Volume of Learning and Course Credit Points for 96-cp Masters (Coursework) Degrees**

Admission Level	Block Advanced Standing	Volume of Learning	Course Credit Points
AQF level 7, different discipline	None	2 years (96 cp)	96
AQF level 8, different discipline	24 cp	1.5 years (72 cp)	96
AQF level 7, same/related discipline	24 cp	1.5 years (72 cp)	96
AQF level 8, same/related discipline	48 cp	1 year (48 cp)	96

## 6 Amendments to Associated Policies

- 6.1 The Advanced Standing Policy will need to be amended to provide Block Advanced Standing for prior relevant learning as part of a lower level award affecting the volume of learning required at the higher level. For example, a Masters Degree (level 9) can have a volume of learning of 1 year from a level-8 qualification, 1.5 years from a level-7 qualification in a cognate discipline and 2 years from a level-7 qualification in a non-cognate discipline.
- 6.2 The Assessment Policy will need to be amended to ensure that unit levels have corresponding appropriate levels of assessment.

## Administration

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<b>Approved by:</b>	Academic Board

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N Reid', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Professor Nick Reid  
Chair Academic Board



# Appendix 1: UNE Units and AQF Level

## Of the Guidelines for UNE Courses and Units to Facilitate Compliance with the Australian Qualifications Framework

### Instructions

This form should be completed either for units that have been checked against the AQF level criteria and comply with Table 1 but will not be presented as part of the academic approval process to APC by 30 April 2014, or those units in professionally accredited courses that are inconsistent with Table 1 due to requirements mandated by professional bodies. The form should be completed and signed by the Unit Coordinator and relevant Course Coordinators and lodged with APC by 30 April 2014.

**Table 1. Correspondence between UNE Unit Levels and AQF Levels**

UNE Unit Level	AQF Level
100	5 - Diplomas
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300	7 - Bachelors
400	8 - Bachelor Honours/Graduate Certificates/Graduate Diplomas
500	9 - Masters
600	10 - Doctorates

### Form to be Completed

Unit Code	Unit Title	AQF Level	Reason if Unit is not AQF-compliant

### Names and Signatures

Unit Coordinator	Signature: Date:
Unit Coordinator	Signature: Date:
Course Coordinator	Signature: Date:
Course Coordinator	Signature: Date: