

# Changes to Discipline Titles Guideline

## Section 1 - SUPPORTING PRINCIPLES

### Rationale and Scope

(1) The School titles that were introduced following Academic Reorganisation in 2007 were in some cases broad-scoping titles that could encompass the range of constituent and cognate disciplines.

(2) Discipline titles are important to the University and its students by providing a sense of the discipline and subjects in teaching and research that exist in a particular School. The withdrawal in 2004 of the long Unit title (Ancient History 110, for example) and leaving only the short Unit title (ANCH110, for example) meant that the range of Disciplines offered by a School can be opaque, especially to a prospective Student investigating whether UNE is an attractive option for a study program.

(3) Discipline titles also provide an important sense of identity to academic staff and Students, and most Schools (where the School is an amalgam of disciplines) have Convenors to represent within the School the pedagogy, traditions and viewpoints of the Discipline and its constituent members.

(4) Therefore, Discipline titles are very important to the academic staff and Students and changes to them should be considered carefully and collegially.

(5) Additionally, there is an organisational and financial implication as a University's definition of a Discipline may affect the Commonwealth funding for that Discipline group through Commonwealth Supported Place (CSP) (HECS) and the Research Training Scheme (and other research funding schemes. Accordingly, changing a Discipline title is not always without significant implications.

(6) Changes to Discipline titles were previously subject to the endorsement of the Academic Board and the approval of the Council. This is no longer the case and is only required for changes to the current School titles. However, changes to Discipline titles do require appropriate processes for discussion and consent.

(7) These Guidelines aim to provide advice on the factors and procedures to be undertaken when considering a change to a Discipline title.

### Guiding Factors

(8) In making a decision to change a Discipline group title, Convenors and the relevant Head of School should consider the impact of any decision on the following:

- a. whether the decision to change can avoid excessive cost to staff and student morale in the School and within the Discipline, especially where Discipline titles (some of which are ancient) are earnestly and even jealously regarded;
- b. any implications to the University Strategic Plan and the School Plan resulting from new Discipline titles that might suggest a different teaching and/or research direction for the School and the Discipline;
- c. whether the change of Discipline title requires a re-evaluation of the current cluster funding bands used by the Commonwealth to determine funding;

- d. the financial implications at University and School levels (both for teaching and research) where a funding band is also to be changed as a result of a change to Discipline title; and
- e. the cost of the organisational workload of alterations to student and planning databases etc.

## **Section 2 - OPERATING GUIDELINES**

### **Changing Discipline title only**

(9) Any proposal to change a Discipline title should determine at a very early stage whether the change may have implications for cluster funding bands. This should be fairly easy to assess — a change from Chemistry to Chemical Sciences, for example, remains clearly within the current cluster bands. Alternatively, a change from Botany to Horticulture might imply a change from a Science cluster banding to an Agriculture cluster banding. The situation may rely on whether a change of cluster is being actively sought but the implications should be verified irrespective of intent. Advice can be sought from Business Intelligence and Data Governance.

(10) The timing of a proposal is also important given statutory requirements for units to be notified to the Commonwealth well before the start of the new calendar year, and the organisational workflow deadlines used for marketing, planning, student, and academic administration. Advice on appropriate timing can be obtained from the University Secretariat (for governance) and the Information Management group of Student Success (for the other considerations).

(11) A proposal to change a Discipline title may, subject to the extent of the proposed change, create considerable debate. The proposal may derive from any part of the University but, as a collegial matter, it should be for the members of the Discipline group (preferably with participation by course and research students in the Discipline) to discuss and then have their views and proposals transmitted to the Head of School by the Convenor.

(12) A proposal that may impinge on other Disciplines (Behavioural or Mental Health titling on Psychology/Behavioural Science, for example) should be discussed at an early stage with appropriate colleagues. Additionally, appropriate local professional and/or community groups might be consulted. It would be appropriate for the Convenor to undertake these discussions while ensuring that the Head of School is kept informed at all times.

(13) Once an appropriate title has been agreed by the Discipline group (and whether any potential impingement issues with other Schools and/or Disciplines have been resolved or remain) the Convenor will agree with the Head of School an appropriate mechanism within School governance for the proposal to be discussed and determined.

(14) Once the School has determined its position on the proposal, the Head of School then agrees with the Dean an appropriate mechanism within Faculty and University governance for the proposal to be discussed. Typically, this would be an endorsement of the proposal by the Dean to the Academic Board Standing Committee.

(15) The Academic Board has the final determination on the form and content of the University's academic program for teaching and research and will endorse proposal to ensure that the proposal is accepted and implemented campus-wide. The approval of the Council is not required at this level but the Chair of Academic Board will report the change to the Council. The University Secretariat will promulgate the change to the campus.

### **Changing Discipline title and the Cluster Band**

(16) Where changes to a Cluster Band are sought (or are consequent to) a change in Discipline title, there may be major implications for University resources and for Students. Accordingly in these circumstances, Convenors must seek the engagement of the Head of School who will advise the Dean of the School's intention to seek guidance and possible modelling of the implications of a Discipline title change.

(17) It will be for the Dean to determine at this point whether to:

- a. allow the guidance and modelling to be sought; or
- b. disallow the guidance and modelling search and determine that a Discipline title change only is to be considered.

(18) In making this determination the Dean will give consideration to the University, Faculty and School plans and whether changes to cluster bands may be advantageous or disadvantageous to those plans.

(19) Guidance and modelling will be conducted on the request of the Head of School to Corporate Planning and Analytics and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research for Excellence in Research Australia (ERA) implications. The results of the guidance and the modelling will be submitted to the Dean and the Head of School (who will consult with the Convenor on the outcomes).

(20) It is important to note by all parties that changes, especially to HECS bands, may have significant consequences for Students and any speculation that bands for Students already in courses (or for prospective Students intending to enter affected courses) will generate considerable angst and adverse publicity. Accordingly, the utmost sensitivity is recommended. Any research is to be advertised as speculative research only (not a forgone decision) that will include a consultative, fully informed and coordinated process that will include appropriate advice and information for Students and how any effects on them will be managed and, if necessary, mitigated.

(21) On the basis of the guidance and modelling the Head of School will, in consultation with the Convenor, decide whether to seek further progress in the proposal in the current form (or decide to proceed with title change only). If it is decided to progress the matter further in the original form, Dean will seek the advice of the Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Committee on whether, and how, to proceed.

(22) Subject to Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Committee endorsement the guidance in 14-15 now applies.

(23) Once the School has determined to proceed on the basis of detailed guidance it will consult with stakeholders including:

- a. Faculty
- b. School(s)
- c. Policy and Governance Unit
- d. Academic Board
- e. Research Services
- f. Student Success
- g. Marketing and Public Affairs
- h. Financial Performance and Analytical Services
- i. Student representative bodies

(24) On the consequences and implementation of the change. The School will submit its report on the consultations and proposals via the Dean to the Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Committee.

(25) The Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Committee will advise the Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer on the impacts of the proposed change to resources, planning and University workloads. The Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer may direct that only a Discipline title may be changed but not the bands, in which case the proposal will be referred to the Academic Board Standing Committee for its endorsement then reporting to the Council (as detailed at 14).

(26) If changes to the bands are acceptable, the Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer shall issue appropriate instructions for the changes' implementation and report accordingly to the Council.



## Status and Details

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## Glossary Terms and Definitions

**"School"** - Is an organisational unit comprising academic staff in related fields of study who are responsible for teaching and research in those academic fields together with support staff. Each School also has lead management for the design and delivery of the courses within its responsibility.

**"Unit"** - Is a part of a course with a code, title and credit point value for which a result is recorded on a student's academic record.

**"Student"** - Is an admitted student or an enrolled student, at the relevant time: 1. an admitted student is a student who has been admitted to a UNE course of study and who is entitled to enrol in a unit of study or who has completed all of the units in the UNE course of study; 2. an enrolled student is a student who is enrolled in a unit of study at UNE.

**"Commonwealth Supported Place (CSP)"** - Is a place that is subsidised by the Australian Government and only available to domestic students. In a CSP students only pay the student contribution amount set by the University, for their units of study.

**"Faculty"** - An organisational unit consisting of a group of related Schools, which is responsible for coordinating the management and quality of the teaching and research conducted by those Schools