



FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

HONOURS POLICY*

* This policy document has been compiled by combining the recommendations relating to Honours contained in the final report of the 1996 Review of Teaching, presented to Faculty Board and approved at that time, and in the Guidelines for Assessment Practices that were approved by Faculty Board in March 2005. Minor modifications have been made to the 1996 report to reflect current administrative arrangements (eg "department" has been replaced by "discipline", "subject" by "course", etc). The recommendations have also been grouped under various headings, for ease of use.

The two documents from which these recommendations are drawn are available for consultation separately on the Intranet, or by clicking on the following links:

[1996 Review of Teaching](#)

[Guidelines for Assessment Practices](#)

Recommendations

The following recommendations relating to the Honours program have been approved by Faculty Board and thereby constitute Faculty policy.

I. Eligibility

1. That the minimum standard of achievement for entry to all Honours degrees in the Faculty be a credit average in the required major sequence for the ordinary degree.
2. That disciplines may set entry requirements and levels of achievement greater than the minimum, subject to (i) approval (in the case of additional points and levels of achievement) by Faculty Board and (in the case of quotas) by Faculty Board and Council, and (ii) adequate notice being given to students.

II. Workload

3. That Honours workloads be based on the same point system as undergraduate workloads.

[All Faculty undergraduate courses taught and assessed in the English language require either two or three tasks of students per semester with a combined total number of words in the range 1200 (minimum) and 1500 (maximum) per load point; where one of the tasks is an examination, it should contribute to the total at the rate of 1000 words per hour of the examination.]

4. That the Faculty require (i) Honours students to write a dissertation of at least 15,000 words, and that (ii) as far as is practicable departments limit all Honours course work to the first semester to allow students to devote the whole of second semester to the preparation of the dissertation.
5. That the Honours dissertation be defined in Faculty rules as a written report on a research topic conducted independently under the guidance but not at the behest of a supervisor.
6. That all Honours assessment schemes weight the dissertation as worth no less than 40% and no more than 60% of a student's overall achievement.

III. Assessment

7. That supervisors be precluded from assigning to dissertations marks or grades that may contribute formally to students' overall results.
8. That where disciplines are not able to provide double marking for all work assessed for Honours, (i) no whole component of a student's program be assessed entirely by one person, and (ii) the Education Committee be informed of and approve the alternative arrangements.
9. That marks obtained through the double marking process for the Honours dissertation and course work be submitted to the discipline's Honours Co-ordinator, who has the responsibility for reconciling the two marks, as appropriate. (If the Honours Co-ordinator is one of the markers, this task of reconciling marks should be undertaken by an independent third party.)
10. That procedures for resolving significant discrepancies be initiated when the two marks obtained for a piece of work at Honours level (course work, dissertation) either (i) belong to different grade categories (ie are across grades) or (ii) differ by more than 5% within the same grade.

11. That the following steps be undertaken to resolve significant discrepancies between Honours marks (as defined in Recommendation 10) :
 - Step 1 : where possible, discussion should take place between the two markers, initiated by the Honours Co-ordinator (or independent third party where the Honours co-ordinator is one of the assessors) ;
 - Step 2 : if this discussion fails to resolve the discrepancy, then a third marker should be sought, whose assessment of the piece of work (dissertation or course work) will be entirely independent, ie will be undertaken without any knowledge of the two existing assessments;
 - Step 3 : if two of the resultant three marks fall within a 5% range and lie within the same grade, then those two marks should be averaged to produce the final mark for that particular piece of work ;
 - Step 4 : if all three marks are significantly divergent (ie show a significant discrepancy, as defined above), then the two highest marks should be averaged to determine the final mark for that particular piece of work.
12. That, subject to University policy regarding supplementary assessment*, work produced for Honours not be redeemable.

[* For students who obtain a final mark in the range 45-49%]

IV. Provision of Feedback to Students

13. That disciplines establish grading criteria for all Honours work, to be supplied to students and used as a matter of course by all those involved in the marking of an Honours assessment task.
14. That students be informed of grades for all components of Honours assessment (including the dissertation), as they become available, with disciplines retaining discretion as to whether or not they release the actual marks.
15. That all Honours course work be returned to students in a timely manner, and in normal circumstances no later than 4 weeks after the completion of a component of the Honours program, with an indication of the grade awarded (in cases where scripts are not annotated, students should be provided with feedback in the form of comments, along with the grade).

V. Determination of Results

16. That each discipline in the Faculty develop written guidelines [for internal use] specifying the discipline's policy on the exercise of discretion in determining final results for Honours, including a specification of the mark range for which such consideration would apply.
17. That marks for the individual components of Honours assessment be fixed in advance of the Examiners' Committee meeting, and that any consideration given to adjusting the final mark and grade should not involve retrospectively changing the marks already determined for those individual components.

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