POLICY

Policy Title: Management of Honours Candidature, Grading of Honours Performance and Student Support.

Descriptors: 1) Honours  2) Supervision  3) Grading  4) Student Support

Category: Academic

1. Title
Management of Honours Candidature, Grading of Honours Performance and Student Support

2. Purpose
The purpose of this policy is to outline the management of Honours candidature, including supervision, the grading of Honours performance and the support available to students enrolled in these programs.

3. Organisational Scope
These guidelines relate to the management of students enrolled in Honours degree courses in all faculties of the University.

4. Policy Statement
Edith Cowan University is committed to the provision of a high quality research training environment that supports high rates of completions. The University will provide supervision, services and facilities that will enable Honours students to complete high quality research in a timely manner.

5. Definitions
Honours students are those students enrolled in Bachelor Honours degrees. *

* NOTE: In the discipline of Engineering it is customary practice, and consistent with the expectations of Engineers Australia, that all fourth year students complete a project and only those students who demonstrate high overall performance are then enrolled in and awarded an Honours degree.
6. **Principles**

A Bachelor Honours degree is normally the equivalent of four years higher education study. There are two categories of Honours programs at the University:

- one-year Honours programs that follow the completion of a three-year undergraduate Bachelors degree; and
- Honours programs that are integrated within four-year Bachelor degrees

Schools (Faculty in the case of the Faculty of Regional and Professional Studies) coordinate Honours programmes and provide student support. The Faculty Research and Higher Degrees Committees manage the assessment of Honours theses.

7. **Policy Content**

7.1 **Supervision of Honours candidates**

Honours students must have one supervisor who is a staff member of the University and normally a member of staff of the faculty and school which 'own' the award in which the student is enrolled. Additional supervisors, however, may be appointed where appropriate.

The principal supervisor will bear primary responsibility for oversight of the student’s progress in relation to the thesis and will sign-off on nomination of research proposal reviewers, thesis examiners and will provide to the Faculty Research & Higher Degrees Committee each semester a report on the student’s academic progress in relation to their thesis.

Supervisors of Honours students would normally be expected to have a higher degree by research, however, may have other qualifications.

7.2 **Approval of Research Proposal and Ethics Requirements**

Honours students are required to present and defend a research proposal at a seminar or committee. The proposal is reviewed by two independent reviewers who may be internal or external to the University. The research proposal is approved at school/faculty level and appropriate ethics requirements must be completed prior to the commencement of data collection.

It is expected that research proposal approval, and appropriate ethics requirements will be finalised within the first semester of equivalent full time study.

7.3 **Examination of Theses**

The distribution of theses to examiners and return of examination reports to the Faculty Research & Higher Degrees Committee is via the Faculty Higher Degrees Office so that the process can be tracked.

The thesis is examined by two examiners who are not supervisors of the thesis, preferably one of whom is external to the University. In Engineering only First Class and Upper Second Class Honours theses will be assessed by a second examiner.

Students are required to address comments by the examiners by either change to the thesis or justification as to why the comment does not require change, to the satisfaction of the supervisor, before a student is cleared for graduation.
7.4 Grading of Honours Performance
The Honours grade is based on both coursework and thesis. In a standard-one year Honours program, the weighting of assessment for these components will be in proportion to the credit points of the coursework and thesis units. In professional four-year Honours programs, the coursework average is based on at least two core coursework units. The coursework and thesis marks are combined in proportion to their credit point values in determining the overall mark and Honours grade.

Students should refer to the Faculty in which they are enrolled for specific guidance in regard to policy which governs their discipline.

Examiners reports provide both a grade level and percentage mark for the thesis. A common examiner’s examination report form is in use across all faculties.

Where the two examiners’ reports have a discrepancy of more than 10%, the thesis will normally be sent to a third examiner. In these cases, the final mark for the thesis component will normally be based on the average of the two closest grades.

To clarify the application of this guideline, three examples are provided:

**Example 1**
First examiner 80%
Second examiner 60%
Third examiner 76%
In this case the two closed marks are averaged ie the first and third examiners, as the Second Examiner is considered to be the outlier. \((80+76)/2 = 78\%\) for the thesis component.

**Example 2**
First examiner 60%
Second examiner 80%
Third examiner 60%
In this case the two closest marks are averaged ie the first and third examiners, as the Second Examiner is considered to be the outlier. \((60+60)/2 = 60\%\) for the thesis component.

**Example 3**
First examiner 80%
Second examiner 60%
Third examiner 70%
In this case where the Third Examiner’s result is equidistant between the First and Second Examiners’ scores, all three examiners marks are averaged as it is not possible to exclude an obvious outlier.
\((80+60+70)/3 = 70\%\) for the thesis component.

The Faculty Higher Degrees Committee will recommend to Boards of Examiners the Honours grade using the overall mark derived from the coursework and thesis marks using the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Mark Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Class</td>
<td>80+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Second Class</td>
<td>70 to 79.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Second Class</td>
<td>60 to 69.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Class/Pass</td>
<td>50 to 59.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: In Engineering, a Pass degree is awarded rather than a Third Class Honours degree.
7.5 **Recording the Result on the Transcript**

The grade of Honours will be printed on the final academic transcript and recorded on the student’s official record in the Student Record System. The final percentage will be recorded in the Student Record System.

8. **Student Support**

Honours students will be supported through information, funding, facilities and services through the faculties and schools.

Faculties should consider the level of research support funding they are able to provide to students enrolled in Honours programmes.

8.1 **Common Rooms**

The University should ensure that there is one generic common room provided for Honours (and postgraduate research) students at each campus. The common rooms should have 24-hour access. Faculties should aim to provide faculty higher degree common rooms if a significant number of their students are located at any particular place.

8.2 **Computing Assistance**

Honours students should have access to on-campus computer labs adequately equipped with research and other software and other facilities such as printing. After hours access to computer labs should be available to all Honours students.

Information about access to computer systems should be provided by the Faculty Higher Degree Office, and should be included in the orientation packages.

8.3 **Library Services**

Honours students should have access to the following services:

- A library orientation tour
- A reader education tutorial focusing on information sources available and relevant to their particular area of study.
- An appropriate range of on-line electronic information sources
- Reciprocal borrowing from other WA libraries, where available.
- Inter-library Loan and document delivery services.

8.4 **Orientation, Information and Communication**

- Orientation sessions for commencing Honours (and postgraduate research) students will provide information about the research process, supervision, research funding support, access to general facilities, computing assistance and library services.

- Induction must include training relating to the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, research ethics (including ethical requirements for studies involving humans and animals), requirements for privacy and confidentiality, occupational health and safety, environmental protection matters and the University's mechanism for dispute resolution.

- Each faculty should nominate a member of staff responsible for coordination and liaison on Honours support. This person would normally be designated as the Faculty Higher Degrees Officer.
8.5 **Quality Assurance**
Faculties and Schools have the primary responsibility for ensuring the appropriate provision of facilities, funding and services required in order for Honours and Postgraduate research students to complete their research programs.

8.6 **Grievance Procedures**
Honours students experiencing difficulties with supervision should, in the first instance, attempt to resolve the problem through discussion with their supervisor(s). In the event of an unsatisfactory outcome, or if the student does not feel discussion with the supervisor is possible, he or she should then discuss the matter with the Head of School. If the problem cannot be resolved through discussion at these levels, the student may lodge a written complaint with the Associate Dean (Research and Higher Degrees) of the Faculty. Following the investigation of the matter by the Associate Dean or nominee, a decision in writing will be provided to the student. If the student is dissatisfied with the decision, an appeal may be lodged with Student Central within 15 business days from the date of notification.

Complaints regarding supervision should be resolved as early as possible during the enrolment process and in accordance with the grievance procedures outlined above. Following submission of the thesis for examination, the student may appeal against aspects of the examination process in accordance with the review and appeal process as outlined in the Edith Cowan University (Admission, Enrolment and Academic Progress) Rules, but not against aspects of supervision.

9. **References**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Code:</th>
<th>AC068</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy Owner:</td>
<td>Dean, Graduate Research School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approved by:</td>
<td>Vice-Chancellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date Approved:</td>
<td>December, 2007 (AB112/07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revision Date:</td>
<td>November, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amendments:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related Policies/Documents:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. **Contact Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact Person:</th>
<th>Manager (Graduate Research School)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Telephone:</td>
<td>6304 3907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email address:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:k.leckie@ecu.edu.au">k.leckie@ecu.edu.au</a>@ecu.edu.au</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>