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Faculty of Arts and Education

Review of Honours – Briefing Paper

Jodie Boyd, with Sarah Paddle and John Billinghurst

December 2009
Executive Summary & Recommendations
Honours degrees have recently become the focus of review at a number of Australian universities for two principal reasons:

- the challenges of making the 4th year Honours intelligible within Bologna style / internationalised context
- the perception that uptake of Honours is declining and the potential impact of this on subsequent admissions to higher degrees by research.

The challenges of the Bologna Process have been settled with the decision by all Australian universities to retain the Honours year as the principal pathway to research higher degrees. The Australian Higher Degree Graduate Statement has been settled upon as the means by which the Honours degree is to be made intelligible overseas and a viable option of study for international students in Australia.

Declining enrolments in Honours has increased competition for high achieving students among universities. The perception of a decline in Honours enrolments has encouraged a number of universities to enhance the attractiveness of the Honours year by:

- Increasing emphasis on its importance to research pathway and access to HDR scholarships – as distinct from professional pathways
- Implementing strategies that emphasise Honours cohort experience regardless of discipline – ie. identifying Honours as cohort of high achievers with consequent prestige and benefits
- Increased number of scholarships to encourage enrolment in Honours (rather than awards at end of Honours year)
- Proactive strategies intended to identify and channel high achieving students to honours earlier in undergraduate course

The consequences for Deakin Honours enrolments are:

- Decline due to increased competition from other universities seeking to lure high quality students into their Honours programmes.
- Significant impact on progression of students to Higher degrees by research because of impact on scholarship rankings (honours students outrank masters’ student in scholarship qualification)
- Increased potential to market Honours degree as potential pathway to Masters coursework (ie advanced standing in professional qualifications – get it quicker)
- Increased potential to market generic skills of Honours degree to majority who do not wish to progress down research pathway.

Recommendations

1. Develop clear and specific Faculty policy on advanced Standing of Honours in Masters’ degrees (esp those leading to professional standing – ie Museum Studies)
2. Proactive recruitment by selective invitation rather than blanket advertising of Honours programme to all students regardless of achievement and recruitment process that relies on students’ approach.
3. Counter concentration of Honours numbers in large urban centres with distance and regionally targeted scholarship programmes – respond to regional disadvantage with regard to rankings for Commonwealth scholarships.

4. Clarify 3 pathways from honours degrees–eg
   a. honours as enhanced path to professional coursework – (ie Hons & Masters give edge);
   b. as a research path directly qualifying to phd or enhanced standing in research masters; vocational –
   c. as a ‘topping’ year providing greater in depth knowledge and generic research and large project management skills vocationally valuable

5. link honours students to units that provide generic skills components as marketable to employers

6. Implement a means of distinguishing and rewarding high achievers earlier than 3rd year– (eg. Dean’s Scholars / prizes) –

7. Improve generic or centralised profile of Honours on Deakin web homepage –eg a central source of information with links to separate schools – (currently very difficult to find on web pages unless searching specifically for it – needs an entry in undergraduate Handbook (only info is ‘an honours year is available’).)
Honours in the Faculty of Arts and Education

1. Background

1.1 Deakin
Deakin graduates progression into further study in Arts and Education has been well below state and national figures although this trend seems to have been reversed according to 2007 GDS data.

Reasons for decline in Arts Honours enrolment

Assoc. Dean Teaching & Learning - Plan for Honours Recruitment - August 24 2007:
• recruitment / marketing process
• lack of on campus information, advice or support from student administrative centres
• lack of cohort experience on campus for most disciplines
• poor information on articulation into Masters’ (coursework, research & combined) programmes

Table 1: Deakin, State, National comparison – progression of graduates to further study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Humanities</th>
<th>% to further study</th>
<th>Arts</th>
<th>% to further study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deakin University</td>
<td>38.6%</td>
<td>Deakin University</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>42.3%</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2007 GDS data (on 2006 graduates)
Note: the survey instrument was broadened in 2007 to include students who continue with further part-time study in addition to full-time study and this may account for the significant increase between 2006 and 2007 in Arts in particular, reflecting the high proportion of postgraduate students who study part-time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Humanities</th>
<th>% to further study</th>
<th>Arts</th>
<th>% to further study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deakin University</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
<td>Deakin University</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>45.6%</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>44.1%</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>33.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2006 GDS data (on 2005 graduates)

Table 2: 3rd year Bachelor of Arts students progression to honours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year enrolled – Bachelor of Arts</th>
<th>Total no. BA completions</th>
<th>No. enrolled in honours (in subsequent year)</th>
<th>Proportion of 3rd year students progressing directly to honours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>349 (345)</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>353 (334)</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>347 (351)</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>328</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>TBA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Deakin Planning Unit
Table 3: Bachelor of Arts Honours completion rate by total enrolment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. enrolled in honours</th>
<th>No. completed honours</th>
<th>Completion rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>37 (35)</td>
<td>53.6% (51.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>44 (47)</td>
<td>53% (56%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>69 (105)</td>
<td>29 (53)</td>
<td>42% (50.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>TBA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>97</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Deakin Planning Unit

1.2 Deakin Planning Unit

1.3. General
Since 1997 there has been a nearly 30% decline in higher degree by research enrolments nationally. Further, Australia’s share of the stock of PhD enrolments is well below that of major competitor countries. (http://www.dest.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/60B678C2-47CF-425E-8F57-9AA6664792EE/23170/058MFarrowProfessionsAustralia.pdf)

University of Queensland Faculty Board noted that Honours enrolments were declining and so the reduction in students coming through the Honours system may have some impact on research higher degree enrolments. The Dean reported that a study of entry qualifications of commencing research higher degree candidates at Australian National University showed only 20% of these commencing candidates to hold an Honours class I. (UQ Research Higher Degree Cttee – Minutes – Meeting 1/08 14 March 2008. http://www.uq.edu.au/academic-board/docs/rhdc/minutes/2008/rhdc_minutes_1_2008.pdf.)

1.4 Responses

ALTC Project - Nature and Roles of Arts Degrees in Contemporary Society:
A national scoping project of Arts programs across Australia – Case Study – Advanced Studies. (See Appendix 1)

The case study notes the declining number of Arts honours enrolments and notes the implications for future higher degree by research enrolments. The case study describes the strategies implemented by University of Sydney, University of Wollongong, ANU and University of Tasmania to attract, enrol and retain high achieving and quality Arts honours students.

ALTC – ANU Scoping Study– ‘The Role of Honours in Contemporary Australian Higher Education’ (see Appendix 2)

Project funded in 2007 (report pending) will look at the following questions related to variations in honours enrolment:
- What are the progression rates into Honours programmes across disciplines and across institutions?
- What are the demographic profiles of enrolments within and across institutions and disciplines, with particular reference to proportion of international students?
- What motivations and aspirations exist across disciplines and institutions for student enrolment in Honours programmes? For example, are students undertaking Honours to lengthen their undergraduate experience, to position themselves to do research or enhance employment prospects?
1.5 Key Issues:

- declining honours enrolments will have a major impact on the University’s Honours profile and subsequently on progression to PhD programmes (Agenda Paper 20 PRC 07/322).
- falling numbers of undergraduates undertaking honours will diminish next cohort of PhD enrolments contributing to concerns that there will be insufficient numbers of PhDs to replenish academic ranks thinned by incipient retirements (Campus Review, 8 April 2008)
- declining honours enrolments nationally have led increased efforts by other universities to attract and retain high quality students in Honours programmes

2. Implications of Bologna / Melbourne Model for 4th year Arts Honours

2.1 Issues Raised by European Bologna Process with regard to its 3 cycle structure (3+2+3) – (The main objectives of the Bologna Process are listed in Appendix 3)

The use of Australian honours degrees as direct entry points to doctoral studies may be problematic in Europe, since the pathway to doctoral studies within the Bologna Process will be through a masters qualification (3+2) (The Bologna Process and Australia: Next Steps, April 2006).

The ANU suggests that the Australian Honours degree needs to be re-positioned if it is to add value to students’ degrees and provide mobility in international context. ‘The ANU believes that it is most important to position Australia’s, and individual institutions’ responses to the Bologna Process, within the growing international comparison between Bologna frameworks and North American frameworks. In particular, the issue of three-year versus four-year undergraduate programs, the frequent international incomprehension of the virtues of the Australian Honours year, and the varying lengths and statuses of Masters degrees need to be reconsidered at this time of growing international debate over qualification frameworks. Issues of the lack of recognition of Australian three-year degrees by North American institutions, for instance, raise important issues of credibility and restrain the mobility of our students at the present time. The issues relating to North American qualification frameworks need to be interleaved within our discussions about our relation to emerging European frameworks.’ (ANU - Response To The Discussion Paper - The Bologna Process And Australia: Next Steps)

The University of Western Sydney identified the honours degree as unique to the Australian sector as an undergraduate qualification, often providing a pathway to doctoral studies. The Bologna 3+2 model may mean that the honours programs will need to be defined and treated as “postgraduate” rather than “undergraduate” (The University Of Western Sydney (Uws) Response To “The Bologna Process And Australia: Next Steps).

2.2 Melbourne Model

The University of Melbourne has introduced six three-year 'new generation' undergraduate degrees – arts, biomedicine, commerce, environments, music and science. These are built on a 3+2 model similar to, though not an exact replica of, the Bologna model.

The Honours programme has been retained and marketed as a pathway to higher degree by research. Honours is marketed as a pathway into further study with Arts Honours graduates
eligible to apply for entry into graduate research study such as the Masters of Arts by research or PhD degree (See Appendix 3A)

The Chair of the Interim Board of Undergraduate Studies on Friday 9 February 2007, reported as follows:
It is necessary for every new generation degree to have honours. Every major must have an honours year or pathway to a research higher degree (RHD). Masters programs should have an exit year after one year of study resulting in a postgraduate diploma which provides appropriate preparation for a research higher degree.
The Chair also noted in response to a query raised at the previous meeting that honours degrees under the Melbourne Model require a fourth year of study and are generally viewed as preparatory for RHDs. It is not possible to undertake such honours degrees in conjunction with a bachelors degree.
(http://www.unimelb.edu.au/about/governance/docs/InterimBUGS_Minutes_02.07.pdf)

2.3 Other Responses

Monash University
Announced on 6 October 2008 the Monash Passport, offering a ‘professional degree from day one’ in contrast to University of Melbourne’s 3 year generalist degree. A key feature heavily marketed by Monash is its emphasis on undergraduate research options of which a re-positioned honours programme is its principal selling point.

Honours Programs:

A feature of this is the uncoupling of Honours from the current four year model, allowing students to undertake research training at various points in their coursework programs.
Monash has also mooted the possibility of piloting a new Bachelor of Philosophy (Hons) (PhB) degree program in selected disciplines for students with ENTERs or equivalent of at least 99. This could also apply to internal entrants with a HD average, which would allow students to design an individual academic program in consultation with an academic advisor and include a guaranteed expectation of Honours. Monash also announced its plan to create ‘an Honours school that brings together the entire Honours cohort regardless of discipline’.
(Monash Honours Passport Project Plan – See Appendix 4)

Re-positioned Monash Honours programmes have featured heavily in recent marketing of the Monash Passport
‘Under the changes, Monash will overhaul its honours program, cutting out some smaller courses and allowing high-performing students to enter research as early as their first undergraduate year.’ (The Age 6 October 2008)
‘If you want to embark upon undergraduate research as part of Australia’s largest suite of Honours programs, then Monash University is the place to be.’ (From The Monash Passport – The World is in Your Campus)
‘A new class of Honours’
In order to give talented undergraduates the opportunity to conduct significant research projects as part of their degree, Monash has redeveloped its Honours program –providing dozens of new scholarships, improved mentoring and a wider range of research options.
Monash wants to be one of the world’s leading providers of Honours education – enabling leading students to complete the Honours program and make a significant contribution to research’. (pamphlet)

‘Professor Shoemaker said Monash's restructure of honours united and sought to capitalise on the growth of existing programs where honours numbers have been increasing by 10per cent
or more a year. He said there was a new focus on identifying honours students as a cohort that could present and share their research with each other across faculties. Honours students also would be able to enjoy the support usually reserved for PhD students, such as expanded library and online privileges, and would be encouraged to seek publication of their research in journals. The traditional three-year bachelor plus one honours year still would be offered, along with embedded courses in areas such as health science. However, students with high tertiary entrance scores or strong performance in first year would be able to apply for a four-year honours program with research work. "If you want to grow the best possible cohort of PhD students, I don't know how you can begin that better than by giving more weight to research at an undergraduate level," Professor Shoemaker said. "It is a tailored honours approach rather than a fixed, inflexible one."” (“Research honours for Monash undergrads”, The Australian 1 October 2008).

Griffith University

In addition to offering a 4th year discipline based Arts Honours degree, Griffith has set up the Griffith Honours College (GHC) which is aimed at high achieving school leavers and scholarship students grouped together as a single cohort regardless of faculty / discipline. It offers mentoring, networking and leadership skills and encourages / expects students accepted to the generic college to take up discipline based Honours. GHC is not directly associated with the University’s undergraduate honours degree program but serves to groom students to that end. GHC applicants do not need to already be in an undergraduate honours degree to be part of the College.

The GHC has been given a high visibility profile on Griffith’s website homepage. (See Appendix 5)

Griffith Honours College had its first intake of students in 2008. It is aimed at –
- High achieving commencing students, including school leavers, non-school leavers and International students
- Griffith Connect Scholarship recipients
- Sir Samuel Griffith Scholarship recipients

Honours College students are required to participate in compulsory components:
- Honours College Orientation
- Honours College Leadership Development Program
- Honours College Mentoring Program
- Honours College Symposium
(http://www.griffith.edu.au/griffith-honours-college)

University Of Western Australia

UWA is currently reviewing its Honours programmes and has announced in October its intention to launch a four-year bachelor of philosophy honours degree and to abandon its integrated Honours degrees in favour of 4th year honours.

Review of Course Structures -Recommendations:
- there will be just five three-year undergraduate courses, with a 4th (Hons) year available
- A new four-year Bachelor of Philosophy (Honours) Degree will be available to outstanding students with a TER of at least 98 or very high performance in the first year of
undergraduate study. It will include an intensive research focus and arrangements for a study abroad experience. 
(http://www.coursestructuresreview.uwa.edu.au/_nocache/?a=84109)

2.4 Honours Scholarships

The Deakin Honours Scholarships is offered University wide to high achieving undergraduate students. At present there are 12 scholarships available to be spread between all Faculties offering 4th year honours. There are no Faculty of Arts / Ed specific honours scholarships offered. There are no privately funded scholarships available.

Appendix 5A sets out the range of Honours scholarships offered by selected other universities. The Honours scholarships listed are those funded by the Universities and exclude privately funded honours scholarships. Monash has a significant number of university funded Honours scholarships aimed at encouraging high quality students to continue to Honours. It also has a number of regionally focused honours scholarships. University of Melbourne has few university funded honours scholarships but a significant number of privately funded honours scholarships. Other universities have a range of equity and access scholarships and additional privately funded bursaries and scholarships.

2.5 Key Issues / Outcomes

- Responses to Bologna related mainly to internationalisation of education / mobility of degrees (international marketability). Response has been directed by effort to place clear value of honours and its place within ‘internationalised’ degrees that are intelligible within Bologna system.
- Bologna / Melbourne Model challenges and declining Honours enrolments have prompted re-positioning of Honours as a marketing lure for stronger students.
- Honours strongly marketed by Melbourne, Monash & UWA as pathway to research higher degrees – distinct from professional (Masters) pathway. Griffith using honours College to attract and funnel quality students but emphasising vocational / employment outcomes.
- Re-positioning of Honours as an attempt to lure better quality student and establish on research path earlier than 4th year – Scholarships enhanced to attract and retain honours students.
- Proactive early identification and recruitment of potential honours students as means of ensuring future articulation to research higher degrees.

3. Internationalisation / Transportability of Honours degree

3.1 Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement

Students graduating from Australian universities are to receive a statement explaining the qualification they receive in simple terms that describe the system in which it was obtained in a consistent way for potential employers and other higher education institutions. The statement will be in addition to degree certificates and academic transcripts, and will be based on nationally agreed specifications. It represents Australia's response to the Bologna process and the European Diploma supplement.

The recent Development of a National Diploma Supplement Project identified the need for a clear explanation of the Australian Honours degree as part of students’ academic transcripts. ‘There needs to be clarity around the nature of Honours and the level of Honours awarded,
since this varies in the higher education system in Australia and could cause confusion’. (Proposal for an Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement – Final Report, May 2008)

In September 2008, federal Minister for Education Julia Gillard announced the introduction the Statement saying that the move would "make Australian qualifications recognised and renowned throughout the world". Gillard said graduation statements had the potential to make Australian awards better understood internationally, enhancing the international mobility of Australian graduates and Australia's competitiveness in the international higher education market (World University News September 7 2008).

3.2 Intergovernmental Agreements regarding Australian Honours degrees

The internationalisation of Australian higher education is being assisted by DETYA through arrangements for the international recognition of qualifications. Of note is the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, known as the Lisbon Recognition Convention. This Convention, which has been signed by most of the Council of Europe members, the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States, provides a framework for the assessment and recognition of higher education qualifications.

The recognition arrangements set out in the Lisbon Recognition Convention will help facilitate the recognition of other parties’ academic qualifications in Australia and the recognition of Australian academic qualifications in other parties, thereby providing support for the marketing and internationalisation of Australian education and professional services. The National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR) in DETYA will act as the national information centre for the purposes of the Lisbon Recognition Convention. (http://www.dest.gov.au/archive/highered/enews/01/enews01.htm)

In recent years NOOSR, in consultation with the AVCC, has negotiated five Memorandum of Understandings with Germany, France, Italy, Malaysia and Thailand. The MOUs with Malaysia, Italy and Germany include recommendations to awarding institutions regarding an appropriate level of recognition of qualifications. The MOUs with France and Thailand agree to work towards a broad framework for cooperation on the mutual recognition of educational awards issued by institutions from countries.

Malaysia

Malaysia’s recognition of Australian higher education qualification occurs on a degree-by-degree and institution by institution basis. This method of assessment reduces the range of degrees that Malaysian students are prepared to take in Australia and results in significant compliance costs for Australian universities. For example, Malaysia only recognises 14 of Australia’s 29 Bachelor of Law degrees, effectively excluding 15 universities from this aspect of the Malaysian market. Malaysia’s lack of recognition of the comparability of Australian degrees with those awarded by other foreign countries is a further issue which reduces the value of the qualification obtained by the student and disadvantages Australian providers. Malaysia does not distinguish between the Australian Honours Bachelor degrees and the three-year Bachelor degree with Honours offered by other foreign universities such as those in the United Kingdom. The mainstream Bachelor degree in the UK is the Honours Bachelor degree, which is usually of three years’ duration. An Australian Honours Bachelor degree requires an additional year of independent research and only students with strong academic results can undertake an Honours year.
Admission of Australian Students and Graduates
Holders of an Australian Bachelors degree awarded after three years of study should be eligible
- for admission to the German Hauptstudium with advanced standing in accordance with the profile of their prior studies, or
- for admission to graduate studies (Magister/Master programs) in accordance with the profile of their prior studies.

Holders of an Australian Bachelors degree with Honours, with thesis or research project and the classification “First Class” or “Second Class, Upper Division” may be considered for candidature for doctoral studies in Germany.

Holders of an Australian Masters degree by research should be eligible for candidature for doctoral studies in Germany (Doktorand).

(Australian – German Academic Links Agreement - Recommendations For Admission To Higher Education Studies (8 September 2000))

Austria

Australian Students and Graduates
Holders of an Australian Bachelor’s degree awarded after three years of study should be eligible
• for admission to the Austrian Diplomstudium with advanced standing in accordance with the profile of their prior studies, or
• for admission to graduate studies (Magister/Master programs) in accordance with the profile of their prior studies. Holders of an Australian Bachelor’s degree with Honours, with thesis or research project and the classification, First Class or Second Class, may be considered for candidature for doctoral studies in Austria.

Holders of an Australian Master’s degree by research should be eligible for candidature for doctoral studies in Austria.

(http://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/documents/policies_programs/international/cagreements/AustrianAppendix.pdf)

3.3 Fourth Year Honours Degrees overseas

Scotland, New Zealand, Malta, South Africa, Ontario (Canada) and Singapore share similar degree structures – a three year pass/ordinary degree with the option of an additional fourth year for ‘honours’.

See Appendix 6 for descriptions of degree and requirements.

3.4 Key Issues / Outcomes

- Graduate statement has been implemented as the Australian response to the Bologna Process and the Diploma Supplement with a specific goal of making Honours comprehensible in European context and therefore transportable.
- Internationally, the Honours as a 4th year ‘add on’ to a Bachelor’s degree is formally recognised with some exceptions (Malaysia), but not generally understood
Variations of the 4th year Honours degree exist in Scotland, Malta, South Africa, New Zealand, Singapore and in some areas of Canada. A thesis, or research component is not a prerequisite of the Canadian and Singapore degree.

4. Articulation of Honours degrees to Masters’ by Coursework degrees

4.1 Confusion regarding hierarchy of Honours and Masters’ degrees

As a pathway to research, the Honours degree outranks the Masters degree. For example, if applying for admission to do a PhD the holder of a Masters’ degree must demonstrate equivalence to a H1 Honours degree. The points of distinction are the research components and the ungraded pass given to Masters’ degree holders (insert Deakin HDR qualification)

For example Charles Darwin University requires the following qualification for admission to its PhD

- ‘Successful completion of a Masters by Research Degree is considered equivalent to a First Class Honours.
- To be deemed equivalent to a First Class Honours, the research component of an alternative coursework based degree must comprise at least 0.5FTE and must be achieved with a High Distinction level result overall. Where the alternative coursework based degree is not awarded with a merit based grade or the grade achieved is less than a High Distinction evidence of publication output as detailed below is essential in order to be considered for First Class Honours equivalence.’

Zeegers and Barron (‘Honours: a taken-for-granted pathway to research?’, 2008) states that there is a rise in numbers taking up established Honours pathways to research degrees compared with possibilities open to students via Masters degrees. It is one point in possible pathways to higher research degrees where an undergraduate degree (a Bachelor with Honours) outranks a postgraduate degree (Masters).

Masters by Coursework is the vehicle professional qualification and for some graduate 'conversion courses' where graduates of any discipline do a masters program instead of another undergraduate degree to achieve professional accreditation (such as in accountancy). Entry to Coursework Masters’ degrees is generally via a three-year bachelor degree.

As an Honours degree is completed as an undergraduate course, a postgraduate Masters qualification is generally perceived in the broader world of employment as the ranking qualification. Consequently, there is a disincentive for students to do Honours if they do not wish to pursue higher degrees by research, especially as Honours is not required for entry to most Masters’ by coursework degrees.

4.2 Financial Issues – Honours v Masters

The principal incentives for students to undertake Honours if not intending to pursue research pathway has been

a) to underscore the vocational skills and career opportunities with which Honours equips its graduates (although professional experience and vocational placement are not generally part of the Honours experience (AHA 2005/2006).

b) to emphasise that Honours are funded by Commonwealth as undergraduate courses in contrast to higher costs associated with coursework Masters for which
Commonwealth scholarships are generally unavailable. (APAs available on for PhD or Masters by Research)

c) privileged access to research oriented higher degree Commonwealth scholarships (Zeegers 2008)

A compilation of DEST data sets in relation to enrolments in Honours programs in Australian Universities in 2005 shows that there is a concentration of numbers in the larger urban centres, not in rural and regional universities. Consequently, rankings for scholarships are skewed away from regional and rural universities (Zeegers and Barron 2008).

4.3 Options for building on an Honours degree into coursework Masters

Honours can be articulated to Masters degrees / provide a student with advanced standing in Masters’ by Coursework degrees as follows:

Deakin University

The Guide does not outline a specific policy relating to articulation of Honours degrees into coursework Masters’ degrees.

Individual disciplines offer different information with Honours identified in only a few as grounds for advanced standing, for example:

‘The Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma and the Masters course in International Relations comprise a suite of fully articulated courses. Successful completion of the Graduate Certificate of International Relations will lead to admission into either the Graduate Diploma of International Relations or the Master of Arts (International Relations) with up to 4 credit points of advanced standing. Successful completion of the Graduate Diploma of International Relations or equivalent will lead to admission into the Master of Arts (International Relations) with up to 8 credit points of advanced standing. **For the masters degree, honours graduates may be awarded up to 8 credit points of advanced standing.**’


Latrobe University

Entrance Requirements

Entry to a Coursework Masters degree should be broadly by the routes set out below or routes acceptable to Faculty Boards.

(i) Completion at a suitably high level of a Bachelors degree or Graduate Diploma in a discipline relevant to the proposed study may allow entry to a Coursework Masters.

(ii) Completion at a suitably high level of a Bachelors degree with Honours or a Postgraduate Diploma in the relevant discipline may allow entry to a Coursework Masters, normally into Part II of a course which has a Part I/Part II structure.

Monash University

Master by Coursework

Entrance level: normally a relevant bachelor degree or equivalent.

Duration: two standard semesters full-time equivalent when entering with a relevant four-year undergraduate degree or three semesters full-time equivalent when entering with a relevant three-year bachelor degree.

4.4 Key Issues / Outcomes
• Assumption that Honours is natural path to research – articulation to Coursework Masters not clearly represented as possible pathway for Honours degree holder.
• Deakin Arts Ed Faculty lacks a standard policy on advanced standing to Coursework Masters – different policies associated with different disciplines with no clear policy regarding Honours degree holders
• Articulation of Honours to coursework Masters at other universities dependent on structure of masters course – advanced standing generally granted – either semester or credit based.
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Appendix 5A: Honours Scholarships at Selected Universities - Chart

Appendix 6: 4th Year Honours degrees overseas - chart
The issue: Interviews and round table meetings frequently referred to declining numbers of honours students in Arts disciplines and attracting and meeting the needs of exceptional students

University of Sydney offers an Honours preparation program. This is a program that prepares undergraduate students for honours study in the second year of study

Students must complete the honours preparation or pre-requisite units of study to be eligible for Final Honours Year. These units are listed in the discipline honours website and in the Faculty Handbook. Typically, pre-honours prerequisite units begin in the second year of an undergraduate degree and continue into the third year.

However, not all disciplines offer pre-honours prerequisite units. Pre-honours prerequisite units can often count towards a major or extended major in the field of study. Students must complete a major in the area they intend to study their Final Honours Year. Students must check the particular discipline as to whether pre-honours prerequisite units can count towards a major or extended major.

A minimum weighted average mark (WAM) of 65% is required across all units taken within an undergraduate degree, but a minimum of 70% in subjects completed in the subject area of the discipline of intended honours study (pre-honours units or pass stream units). Contact the discipline honours coordinator for queries in relation to any variation from these requirements.


In addition, University of Sydney also has a 3-year Bachelor of Arts (Advanced) (Honours), with students accelerated through first year so that the Honours year was integrated as the third and final year of the program.

The Bachelor of Arts (Dean’s Scholars) program at the University of Wollongong is a restricted undergraduate degree with a quota and admission is subject to interview for those coming into the program at first year. A UAI of at least 93 (or equivalent for non-HSC admissions) is required for admission to the Degree High achieving students can enter the program after their first year provided they have an average of 80% and after interview. The Degree is available to single-degree Arts students only. Students must maintain a Distinction (75%) average to remain in this degree program. If, at the end of the academic year, the average is below 75, students will be transferred into the Bachelor of Arts degree. The degree program provides a facilitated path through the Bachelor of Arts, with ‘value-adding’ along the way. The Dean’s Scholars Degree offers a challenge to high-achieving students. With the approval of Program Heads, students admitted to the Degree have the opportunity to attempt subjects not normally available to first year students, and to perform above the level normally expected at first year. They will be granted extended subject loads, enabling them, if they choose, to complete the degree in under the normal three years. On successful completion of the first part of the course Dean’s Scholars will be guaranteed admission to Honours. The Honours year may be their fourth year, or it may begin in their third year of study.

Australian National University’s advanced program is the Bachelor of Philosophy. It has limited places and so requires a high entrance score. It is structured so that students are treated as honours students from the start. It has a large research component; from day one students...
have weekly contact with a mentor/supervisor. In first year students do normal Arts courses plus the advanced studies program. In the first semester students work together and learn research skills as well as choose their majors. In the second semester students’ work on their research projects, they work with their supervisor. Each semester students undertake a new research project.

The University of Tasmania has an Advanced honours cohort in the BA. These students are high level entry students and they can be very flexible with their program of study. For example they can overload or have prerequisites waived if there is something specific they wish to study. At the end of first year students must have a distinction average in order to continue in the program. Students who are not in the program and have achieved a distinction average are invited to enter the program. In 2008, there were 180 Advanced students in the Faculty. As part of the program, students have access to mentors and advanced seminars. This cohort is looked to form the basis of honours and postgraduate research positions. Students graduate with a BA Advanced Honours.

**Disclaimer**: The information described above emerged from interviews, discussions and observation of publicly available materials during the BA Scoping Project which commenced in March 2007 and concluded in August 2008. As a result, the practices described in this case study may not reflect current practices or institutional policy. They are a reflection of the understanding at the time the scoping project was in progress.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Australian Learning &amp; Teaching Council</th>
<th>DASSH</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support for this publication has been provided by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council Ltd, an initiative of the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Learning and Teaching Council.</td>
<td>The BA Scoping project was developed under the auspice of The Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (DASSH)</td>
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</table>
Appendix 2: ALTC - ANU Scoping Study– ‘The Role of Honours in Contemporary Australian Higher Education’

The Role of Honours in Contemporary Australian Higher Education
The Australian National University
Aims
This scoping study aims to map the range and diversity of Honours programs in different types of universities and disciplines across Australia and to identify the significant factors, policies and practices impacting upon quality learning and teaching in these programs. In particular, it will build upon recent scoping and policy revisions of Honours program undertaken within some universities. The questions the project will address in the mapping exercise are as follows:

Variations in Context

- How is the term Honours used across Australian undergraduate programs? For example, the notion of the “fourth year” in current university practice may mean different things depending upon the purpose and curriculum of the programme. At the same time we have ‘in-course’ Honours programs; is there any comparability between the various programs or are they doing radically different things?

- What are the variations in Honours degrees and degrees with Honours across both disciplines and institutions?

- What criteria are used for the appointment of Honours Supervisors?

- What supervisor support and development programs exist? For example evidence exists (Kiley & Mullins 2005) to suggest that many Australian doctoral supervisors’ and examiners’ first experience of supervising and examining comes from Honours. Hence an understanding of Honours supervision and support could have substantial long-term professional development benefits.

- How are Honours programs managed across different universities? Unlike both undergraduate and HDR programmes, where clearly defined organisational structures exist, Honours programmes appear to have a less clear cut organisational and structural identity. This may have implications for the strategic role of Honours in the University sector

Variations in Structure and Curricula

- What is the range of practices and structures used in Honours programs and do they differ from other coursework programs in the same discipline? It appears that some Honours programs aim to provide a bridge between undergraduate study and professional application whereas others aim to provide an entrée to a research degree.

- What are the roles of a thesis or dissertation in Honours courses?

- How are Honours programs graded and assessed?

- What do assessment criteria indicate as typical learning outcomes for Honours? Honours results are still used as the major criterion for entry into postgraduate research programs, hence, the nature of grading of Honours is a critical issue for selection purposes.
Variations in Enrolments

- What are the progression rates into Honours programmes across disciplines and across institutions?

- What are the demographic profiles of enrolments within and across institutions and disciplines, with particular reference to proportion of international students?

- What motivations and aspirations exist across disciplines and institutions for student enrolment in Honours programmes? For example, are students undertaking Honours to lengthen their undergraduate experience, to position themselves to do research or enhance employment prospects?

Variations in Outcomes

- In what ways do Honours programs articulate into postgraduate research degrees? Articulation from Honours to Higher Degrees by Research. Some existing research (Bourke et al., 2006) indicates that, from a sample of 800 entrants in PhD programmes (cross-institutional data), 46% entered through Honours qualifications. Of these, the institutional range was 27%-64%. The discipline range was from 20% (Education) – to 65% (Science/IT). This research also explored the relative performance of Honours background HDR candidates suggesting that there was no link between university examination committee decisions for HDRs (Accept as is, invite, require, revise/resubmit, fail) and entry qualification. Honours entry students tended to take longer to complete (8.4 semesters cf. 7.6 semesters or less for other entry modes). This should be qualified by noting that P/T students finish in fewer F/T equivalent semesters generally. (Bourke et al., 2006). Given the scope of this proposed project, building on these findings about the relative performance of Honours background HDR candidates relative to other entry groups will be the subject of a later investigation, however, the mapping of the articulation between Honours and a research degree will be critical.

- Is there a measurable graduate destination profile associated with completion of an Honours programme?

- What are the anticipated learning outcomes for students, other than those indicated by the assessment criteria?

- Are there variations in attrition rates from Honours programmes across institutions and disciplines?

Variations in evaluation processes

- What expectations do students have of Honours programs and what might they subsequently use them for?

- What are effective models of Honours courses, and what are the implications of these effective models for staff development for Honours coordinators and supervisors?

Deliverables

- A scoping report that charts the range and diversity of Honours programs within different disciplines and universities
• A sector-wide analysis of Honours assessment guidelines and examiner’s briefs reflecting diverse learning outcomes expected in Honours programs

• A cross-institutional, multi-disciplinary student evaluation of Honours programs

• Case studies of good practice in Honours curriculum design and pedagogical strategies

• Professional development resources and strategies for Supervisors and Coordinators

• A range of frameworks that captures the disciplinary and institutional breadth of Honours curriculum design and pedagogy

• A nation-wide collaborative interdisciplinary network for Honours Coordinators and materials for Carrick-sponsored workshops.

Project leader: **Dr Margaret Kiley** Australian National University  
**Dr Robert Cantwell** University of Newcastle  
**Professor David Boud** University of Technology Sydney  
**Dr Catherine Manathunga** University of Queensland

• Easily readable and comparable degrees - the foremost tools for achieving this are the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and the Diploma Supplement.
• Uniform degree structures - initially, it was agreed that the degree structure would be mainly based on a two-cycle model. The first cycle, lasting a minimum of three years, ends in a Bachelor-level degree. Masters degrees are the second cycle. There has since been agreement (Berlin 2003) to the inclusion of third cycle degrees (doctorates) within the Bologna framework.
• Establishment of a system of credits - such as in the ECTS system - many countries do not have a system of study credits and determine their degrees only in years or semesters. The objective of a establishing a system of credits is to promote widespread student mobility.
• Increased mobility - obstacles to the effective mobility of students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff will be removed.
• Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies - the European Network of Quality Assurance in Higher Education plays a key role in this.
• Promotion of the European dimension in higher education - closer international cooperation and networks; language and cultural education.

Pathways to a research degree

Honours
An honours degree is the most common pathway to graduate research for students graduating from Australian, New Zealand, Singapore, Sri Lankan and UK universities. In most cases, an honours degree is awarded after a fourth year of study, taken in addition to the three years of the standard bachelors degree. During the honours year, students undertake advanced coursework and complete a research project that counts towards at least 25 percent of the year's credit. With this foundation in research training, students who have achieved a sufficiently high mark are considered ready to enter the PhD program.

Masters degrees
For graduates of universities not using the honours system, described above, the usual pathway to graduate research is through a masters degree. The qualification must include a research project that comprises at least 25 percent of one year's credit.

Other qualifications
In some cases, a postgraduate diploma offers a similar program structure to the Honours year, and can serve as a pathway to graduate research studies.

Graduates who have completed certain professional degrees such as Bachelor of Medicine, Veterinary Science, Law, and Physiotherapy will be assessed individually.
Appendix 4: The Monash Honours Project (Extract)

THE MONASH HONOURS PASSPORT
PROJECT PLAN

Item 4.2.1 – tabled paper

The Monash Honours Project will examine the following mechanisms for increasing Honours participation:

• enhancing our current Honours offerings to attract at least 5 per cent of the student cohort creating opportunities to undertake advanced work at multiple points in a coursework program;

• piloting a new Bachelor of Philosophy (Hons) (PhB) degree program in selected disciplines for students with ENTERs or equivalent of at least 99. This could also apply to internal entrants with a HD average, which would allow students to design an individual academic program in consultation with an academic advisor and include a guaranteed expectation of Honours;

• supporting greater participation in Honours by the brightest and best students through the potential expansion of the Jubilee Scholarships program (with an appropriate fundraising strategy);

• investigating the provision of ICT or other support mechanisms or services to students;

• improving communication with highly-able prospective Honours students via mechanisms such as a dedicated website and direct contact;

• improving students’ and employers’ understanding of the ways in which Honours enhances the higher-order skills required for both further academic work and employment;

• encouraging highly-able undergraduates to participate in specially designed academic conferences;

• creating an Honours school that brings together the entire Honours cohort regardless of discipline;

• wherever possible, standardising assessment methodologies and quality measures across disciplines; and

• benchmarking Monash’s Honours programs with international partner universities.

The project’s success will be measured by the following KPIs and targets:

• participation in Honours increased to 5 per cent of the student cohort;

• the successful creation of a Monash Honours School;

• the successful creation of a new PhB (Hons) pilot in selected disciplines;

• Honours student satisfaction rates improved by 10% (measured via MEQ and CEQ analysis);

• increased transition rates between Honours and HDR at Monash; and

• increased realisation of Monash’s social justice mission (measured through an examination of thesis topics).
Appendix 5: Griffith Honours College

1. Griffith University Home Page – High Visibility Link to Honours College

2. GHC -main web page
## Appendix 5A: Honours Scholarships at Selected Universities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Scholarship</th>
<th>Special attributes</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deakin University</td>
<td>Deakin Honours Scholarships</td>
<td>To recognise and reward Deakin students who have achieved outstanding academic results throughout their undergraduate studies - awarded to students to undertake an end-on honours degree at Deakin.</td>
<td>Twelve allocated to faculties offering end-on honours degrees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monash University</td>
<td>Vice-Chancellor's Scholarships</td>
<td>This scholarship also carries considerable prestige, as it is highly competitive and awarded to the very best Honours students across the University Requires a GPA in the chosen discipline of at least 80%.</td>
<td>$3000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Kerr Scholarship</td>
<td></td>
<td>Eligibility is limited to students who have completed three years of an undergraduate course at Monash University Gippsland Campus in the School of Humanities, Communications and Social Sciences and wish to undertake an Honours year</td>
<td>$5,000 plus HECS exemption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUMCASS Honours Scholarships</td>
<td></td>
<td>Eligibility: Domestic and international full-fee paying students who are eligible to be accepted into the School of Humanities, Communications and Social Sciences's Honours program and who have completed a degree offered through the School. The award will be based on academic merit: it will be awarded to the applicant with the highest GPA calculated on the basis of the Honours entry requirements.</td>
<td>Two (2) scholarships of $4000 each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUMCASS/GESF (Gippsland Educational Scholarships Fund) Scholarships</td>
<td></td>
<td>Eligibility: Domestic and international full-fee paying students who are eligible to be accepted into the School's Honours program at the Gippsland campus and who have completed a degree offered through the School. GESF Scholarships will be awarded on the basis of merit and need.</td>
<td>Two (2) scholarships of $3,000 each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarship Type</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Amount</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students must make a case addressing how the award of this scholarship would facilitate their ability to successfully complete the Honours degree. Possible base(s) for the case may include: illness or disability, costs of carrying out proposed Honours project, financial hardship, family commitments, other special circumstances</td>
<td>Monash University Jubilee Honours Scholarship</td>
<td>45 scholarships of $5,000 per 48 credit points of study, up to a maximum of one year only.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To encourage high-achieving undergraduate students to continue into research programs. Available to students who have completed their undergraduate degree at Monash University or another university. Scholarships will be awarded to the highest achieving students who achieve a minimum of a high distinction (80%) grade average in previous tertiary studies.</td>
<td>Faculty of Arts Honours Merit Scholarships</td>
<td>$4,000 per 48 credit points of study to complete the degree for the highest achieving student, or $3,000 per 48 credit points of study all other students awarded the scholarship.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awarded to the highest achieving eligible students who achieve a minimum of high distinction (80 per cent) grade average in relevant studies</td>
<td>Faculty of Arts Honours Study Assistance Scholarships</td>
<td>$2,000 per 48 credit points of study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awarded to the highest achieving eligible students who receive a minimum of high distinction (80 per cent) grade average in previous tertiary studies</td>
<td>Faculty of Arts Disadvantaged Student Study Assistance Bursaries</td>
<td>$2,000 per 48 credit points of study</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>These scholarships enable high achieving undergraduate students currently enrolled at any higher</td>
<td>University of Melbourne Melbourne Honours Scholarships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Institution</td>
<td>Scholarship Program</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Amount</td>
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<tr>
<td>Griffith University</td>
<td>The Patience Thoms Honours Equity scholarships</td>
<td>For students taking their Honours program. Designed to assist high achieving students to proceed to an extra year of study to undertake a Bachelors Honours degree on completion of a Bachelors degree by providing financial support where there is evidence that the student may not proceed to enrol in an Honours program without the additional support.</td>
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<tr>
<td>UTAS</td>
<td>Andrew Inglis Clark Honours Scholarship In History.</td>
<td>Available to a student undertaking an honours project on Australian (including Tasmanian) legal, political and constitutional history, with preference to a project relating to Andrew Inglis Clark and making use of the resources of the University of Tasmania Library’s Special Collections. The scholarship will be awarded on the basis of the applicant's academic record in history and the quality of application</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LaTrobe</td>
<td>Cultural Environments And Heritage Honours Scholarship</td>
<td>These scholarships enable honours students to access the materials and expertise of some of Tasmania's leading cultural institutions. Participating organisations include the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, the Port Arthur Historic Site, and the State Library of Tasmania.</td>
<td>Up to eight awards are available Amount $4,000.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Grants (HYG) Scheme</td>
<td>students who demonstrate strong academic achievement in their undergraduate degree, AND financial need</td>
<td>$2000 will be awarded</td>
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### Appendix 6: 4th Year Honours degrees overseas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Thesis requirement</th>
<th>Articulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scotland</strong></td>
<td>The Scottish Bachelors Degree with Honours</td>
<td>The honours degree is typically offered through the equivalent of four years' fulltime higher education.</td>
<td></td>
<td>The honours degree is recognised as the normal entry to postgraduate study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>New Zealand</strong></td>
<td>Bachelors Degree With Honours</td>
<td>A bachelors degree may be awarded with honours to recognise advanced or distinguished study in advance of a level 7 bachelors degree. This may occur by: • recognising outstanding achievement in a 480 credit (or more) bachelors degree especially in relation to work of a research nature (typically at level 8); or • achieving 120 credits at level 8 following a level 7 bachelors degree (either as part of an integrated honours degree or as a separate qualification).</td>
<td>The fourth year of the programme normally involves further papers and a research project. The 4th year research thesis is usually of no more than 20,000 words</td>
<td>A person with a bachelors degree with honours may be permitted to enrol for a masters degree or a doctoral degree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Malta</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Undergraduate courses lead to a Diploma after 1 to 2 years, a Bachelor after 3 years and to a Bachelor Honours after 3 to 4 years. After another 1 to 1.5 years a Master can be obtained. A M.Phil. takes another 15 months to 2 years, a Ph.D. 3 to 5 years.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>South Africa</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Three year undergraduate courses lead to a First Degree.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ontario (Canada)</strong></td>
<td>Honours Bachelor's degree</td>
<td>Requires a minimum of four years of full-time study with a prescribed specialization.</td>
<td>consists of coursework, and there is no thesis requirement.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Singapore</strong></td>
<td>B.A. (Hons)</td>
<td>First class honours can be obtained by either thesis or completion at satisfactory level of 4000 level modules. Students required to declare themselves on Honours track in earlier years and complete pre-requisite modules. Honours is structured as a undergraduate or first stage level degree.</td>
<td>The Honours Thesis (HT) is not a compulsory requirement to be awarded an honours degree except in the case of first class honours. In order to attain a first class honours degree,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
students must pass the HT with at least A- and attain an overall CAP of 4.50 or higher.