

The University of Newcastle

GUIDELINES FOR THE APPROVAL OF AND VARIATION TO ACADEMIC SUBJECT CODES ON NUSTAR

PREAMBLE

At the commencement of the 2002 academic year, the new set of Academic Subject Codes was introduced as required by the Academic Senate. The process from which these changes occurred commenced in June 2000, when Academic Senate requested that the then Director, Institutional Research “bring forward a revised list of subject codes conforming to the needs of NUSTAR and DETYA by (the) end of June 2000.”

Over the next 18 months, discussions and consultations occurred with many staff from almost all of the Schools and Faculties within the University. The final listing of Academic Subject Codes was signed off late in 2001. However the on-going protocols have not been developed.

In my report to Senate in July 2001, I noted two areas where decisions regarding the on-going management arrangements of the ASCs were still undecided:

1. *“Protocols as to how new subject areas will be established or currently approved Academic Subject Codes will be disestablished are yet to be addressed. The intention would be that the recently approved Academic Subject Codes would remain in place for the next two years and then reviewed during 2003, to determine if any changes were needed for 2004*
2. *It is also unclear at this stage who would be responsible for the allocation of the course codes when new courses were proposed by Faculties. The former President of the Academic Senate, Professor Hilary Winchester, had agreed that the allocation of the course is an administrative exercise rather than an academic one. However it may be expeditious for the process if the Faculty requesting the establishment of a new course also recommend a new code in line with the agreed principles. The Faculty may also choose to defer that decision to an administrative unit prior to the request going forward. In either case, there would need to be some form of “sign-off” that the course code allocated is valid. The Academic Senate may need to make a ruling on this matter.”*

With the introduction of NUSTAR in July 2001, the University took the opportunity to rationalise the large number of discipline areas represented in its course codes.

By “conforming to the needs of... DETYA”, it was intended that the new subject codes would conform to the Australian Standard Classification of Education (ASCED). This classification system had been developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, in consultation with DETYA (now DEST) specifically pertaining to the education sector. University’s had been requested to comment on a number of occasions as to the structure, terminology and usefulness of this classification. The final classification provided for 12 Broad Fields of Education and around 70 Narrow Fields.

This University, at the commencement of 2001, used this new classification system to codify each of its courses’ Discipline Group code and each of its programs’ Field of Study. Again there was wide consultation and validation by the Schools and Faculties.

NUSTAR provides a structure whereby courses are grouped into “Subject areas”. Each “subject area” can be the responsibility of only one Academic Organisational Unit (AOU). The intention would be that any particular discipline, taught within the University, would be sourced from a single School or Department. Other default information such as HECS Band and Discipline Group code are also stored against the “subject area”.

Implementation in 2001

The implementation in 2001, broadly speaking, attempted to:

- ensure that those subject codes that represented things other than discipline areas became obsolete e.g. *CCEB* (representing a centre of study) and *BAVA* (representing the program in which courses would be taken);
- limit the range of disciplines to the Narrow Field of Education if possible i.e. about 70; and
- retain those Subject Area codes which did represent specific discipline areas e.g. *EDUC*.

Some former subject codes were modified to cover much narrower areas of study e.g. *GEOG* had previously been used for both Physical and Human Geography. Under the new structure, *GEOG* would only represent Human Geography, with *GEOS* representing Geoscience i.e. both Physical Geography and Geology (*GEOL* thus becoming obsolete).

There were a number of instances where the same Narrow or Detailed Fields of Education were being taught by more than one AOU within the University. This was particularly evident with courses taught at the Central Coast campus by campus-based AOU's and those taught by the Enabling Programs Unit (now English Language and Foundation Studies (ELFS) Centre). It was therefore necessary to provide separate codes for each of the various Schools for areas of study that were essentially the same e.g. *EDUC* for the School of Education and *EDST* for the School of Humanities, both representing the discipline of *Education*. A number of these compromises were reached during the consultation phase.

As noted in the report to Senate in July 2001, the intention would be that the approved Academic Subject Codes would remain in place for two years and then be reviewed during 2003 to determine if any changes were needed for 2004. This assumed that the devised listing of Academic Subject Codes covered all discipline areas taught within the University for every School and for every Field of Education.

However it is evident that with the University's restructure, the current array of Academic Subject Codes does not adequately cover the offerings of the new Schools.

Current Information on the Distribution of Academic Subject Codes

Attached are two reports showing the distribution of Academic Subject Codes firstly by School and Faculty and secondly by Field of Education. These reports try to provide the matrix for the allocation of Academic Subject codes, across the Fields of Education and across the Schools.

The counts indicate the number of courses that, in 2002, have students enrolled in them. It can be seen from these statistics that many Academic Subject areas generally have more than say 15 courses when they are fully established. In 2000 it was suggested that perhaps 20 courses may provide a boundary at which to decide whether a new subject area was required or not.

It is obvious in the Schools of Language and Media, Liberal Arts and less so in Social Science that there are a number of Academic Subject areas that currently do not have 20 courses in which students are enrolled. Likewise in the Central Coast School of eBusiness and Management at the Ourimbah campus there are small numbers of courses for several Academic Subject areas.

Guidelines

1. Academic Subject Codes (ASCs) should broadly cover one of the Narrow Fields of Education (NFOE) listed in the Australian Standard Classification of Education (ASCED). Where Detailed Fields of Education (DFOE) are covered by an ASC, the other DFOEs within the same NFOE should be covered by at least one other ASC, if indeed the University teaches in those disciplines.

Where the University teaches very few courses in a particular Field of Education, an ASC may be used to cover those courses which may be in another DFOE or NFOE depending on the level of detail covered by the ASC e.g. 'FOOD' is defined as covering the DFOE 030307 – *Food Processing Technology*, but a small number of its courses deal with Food Science covered by the DFOE 019905 – *Food Science & Biotechnology*. Likewise 'LEIS' defaults to the DFOE 092100 – *Sport and Recreation*, but a number of its courses are defined by the DFOE 090399 – *Studies in Human Society not elsewhere classified*. In these cases, ASCs have been used across a variety of Fields of Education in order to limit the creation of new ASCs for the sake of uniquely covering a small number of courses (where that is generally less than 15 courses - see 3(d) below).

2. Each Detailed Field of Education should be the responsibility of only **one** Academic Organisational Unit or School. Exceptions have been allowed for campus based Schools and where courses at different levels (Enabling, undergraduate or postgraduate) are the responsibility of different Schools.
3. New ASCs can be created when:
 - a. the new ASC replaces either one or more of the current approved ASCs as it is deemed more appropriate e.g. *RELI* to replace *IRES*;
 - b. no current ASC uniquely covers the DFOE or NFOE;
 - c. a change in School structure requires a new code to be initiated to cover either a DFOE or a NFOE; and
 - d. an ASC is deemed to be too broad to clearly define at either the DFOE or NFOE. However the new ASCs should have at least 15 courses.
4. An ASC can be deleted when:
 - a. it has been replaced by a more appropriate ASC; and when
 - b. a change of School structure provides an opportunity to rationalise the listing of ASCs.
5. The following process will apply for changes to be made to the list of ASCs:
 - a. the request should come from the Head of School, through the Pro Vice-Chancellor, in which the ASC is to be created or deleted;
 - b. where responsibility for an ASC is shifted from one School to another, the agreement between the Heads of School concerned should accompany the request to the appropriate Pro Vice-Chancellor (or Pro Vice-Chancellors where more than one Faculty is involved). The date of effect should also be the first day of the first term in the next academic year;
 - c. the request is to be made to the President of the Academic Senate through the Vice-President (University Services) providing a justification for the change according to the guidelines above;
 - d. the President of Academic Senate will report approved changes to the next meeting of Academic Senate;
 - e. notification of approved changes should be promulgated to the appropriate staff concerned with enacting these changes e.g. Student Records, the relevant Faculty Student Service Managers.
6. Changes shall take effect, as follows:
 - a. under normal circumstances, a full review of all ASCs shall occur every two years;
 - b. the new ASC shall take effect from the first day of the first term in the next academic year;
 - c. the deletion of the ASC shall take effect from the last day of the last term of the current academic year.

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