Awards and Graduation Policy

Section 1 - About this Policy

Introduction

(1) This policy supports the Governance Rule and its associated Schedules. In the event of an inconsistency between lower-level policy documents and a Rule(s) or Schedule to a Rule(s), the Rule(s) made by Council prevails to the extent of the inconsistency.

Purpose

(2) This policy establishes the University of Newcastle's (University) requirements and responsibilities for:

a. the conferral of awards;
b. graduation ceremonies;
c. graduation documents;
d. academic dress; and
e. award abbreviations.

Scope

(3) This policy applies to award types offered by the University as listed in the Governance Rule.

(4) The awards approved by the University are listed in Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 of this Policy.

Section 2 - Awards

(5) The awards referred to in this policy and its schedules may be conferred and awarded to students who have satisfied the provisions of this policy and any other relevant rules, policies, schedules, or other requirements.

Part A - CONFERRAL

Eligibility

(6) A student will be eligible for conferral of an award when they have satisfied the requirements of their program.

(7) For coursework programs, the University will monitor student progression each term to identify students who are eligible for conferral.

(8) For Higher Degree by Research programs, students will be identified as eligible for conferral in accordance with the Higher Degree by Research Policy and Procedure.

(9) Notwithstanding a student's eligibility under Clause 6, an award will not be conferred where:

a. an allegation of student misconduct has been made against the student in accordance with the Student

Conduct Rule or any other relevant policy document; and

b. the investigation of the allegation, or an appeal regarding the outcome remains ongoing.

Approval

(10) For coursework programs:

a. the conferral of awards will be approved by the Vice-Chancellorr under delegated authority; and
b. the University Registrar will ensure that conferrals are recorded in the student records system.

(11) For Higher Degree by Research programs:

a. the conferral of awards must be jointly approved by the Vice-Chancellor and the Director, Graduate Research under delegated authority;
b. the Director, Graduate Research must ensure that conferrals are recorded in the student records system.

Reporting

(12) The names of all graduates and the awards conferred will be reported annually to Academic Senate and the Council by the University Registrar.

(13) The details of graduates who completed their studies at Newcastle Australia Institute of Higher Education (NAIHE) will be reported annually to NAIHE's Examination Board by the University Registrar.

Part B - POSTHUMOUS AWARDS

(14) A posthumous award may be conferred on a student who has passed away prior to completing the requirements of their program. In such circumstances, the award is conferred in recognition that, if not for their passing, the student would likely have successfully completed the program.

(15) The President Academic Senate holds delegated authority to waive program requirements to allow a posthumous award to be conferred in accordance with this Part.

(16) A posthumous award must only be conferred with the knowledge and consent of the student's next of kin (as defined in the Deceased Students Reporting Procedure).

(17) For coursework programs, a posthumous award may be conferred where:

a. the student had one term of study (full-time equivalent) or less remaining to complete in their program; and
b. the relevant College Pro Vice-Chancellor, on the advice of the Program Convenor, is satisfied that the student had demonstrated capacity to complete the program and would likely have done so if not for their passing.

(18) Where the requirements of clause 17 are not met, the Program Convenor may recommend that the student be conferred a relevant exit award, provided that:

a. the exit award is an approved exit pathway from the student's program;
b. the student has satisfied the requirements for the exit award; and
c. the student's next of kin have consented to the conferral of the exit award.

(19) For Higher Degree by Research programs, refer to the Higher Degree by Research Policy and Procedure.

Part C - DISTINCTION AND HONOURS

(20) The University may confer the following types of awards ‘with Distinction’ where a student meets the eligibility requirements as set out in clause 21:

a. AQF Level 7 Bachelor Degree;
b. AQF Level 9 Masters Degree (Coursework);
c. AQF level 9 Masters Degree (Extended).

(21) To be eligible for their award to be conferred ‘with Distinction’, a student must:

a. complete at least 50 per cent of their program at the University of Newcastle; and
b. achieve a minimum Cumulative GPA of 6.0 based on all studies undertaken in their program.

(22) Students who complete a degree under an approved articulation agreement, where less than 50% of their units are completed at the University, may be eligible to be awarded their degree ‘with Distinction’, provided they achieve a minimum GPA of 6.0 based on all studies undertaken in the program.

(23) A Cumulative GPA will be calculated for each graduating student to determine their eligibility to be awarded their degree ‘with Distinction’, as per the Grade Point Average (GPA) Calculation Procedure.

(24) The Bachelor of Medical Science and Doctor of Medicine – Joint Medical Program is not eligible to be awarded ‘with Distinction’.

Awarding Honours

(25) The University will confer AQF level 8 Bachelor (Honours) awards as either:

a. an ungraded Bachelor Honours Degree; or
b. a graded Bachelor Honours Degree.

(26) A graded Bachelor Honours Degree will be awarded with one of the following classes, based on the criteria in clauses 28 and 29:

a. Honours Class I;
b. Honours Class II Division 1;
c. Honours Class II Divsion 2; or
d. Honours Class III (end-on Honours only).

(27) The attributes for each class of Honours are specified in Table 1.

Table 1 – Attributes of Bachelor Honours Classes

Class	Attributes
Honours Class I	Outstanding standard in research and reporting indicating comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the relevant field of study; demonstration of an outstanding level of academic ability; mastery of skills*; and achievement of all assessment objectives. In addition, if embedded Honours, an outstanding performance throughout the program.

Class	Attributes
Honours Class II Division 1	Excellent standard in research and reporting indicating a very high level of knowledge and understanding of the relevant field of study; demonstration of a very high level of academic ability; sound development of skills*; and achievement of all assessment objectives. In addition, if embedded Honours, an excellent or outstanding performance throughout the program.
Honours Class II Division 2	Very good standard in research and reporting indicating a high level of knowledge and understanding of the relevant field of study; demonstration of a high level of academic ability; reasonable development of skills*; and achievement of all assessment objectives. In addition, if embedded Honours, a very good to excellent performance throughout the program.
Honours Class III	Satisfactory standard in research and reporting indicating an adequate knowledge and understanding of the relevant materials; demonstration of an adequate level of academic ability; satisfactory development of skills*; and achievement of most assessment objectives.

*Skills are those identified as required to meet the AQF level 8 program learning outcomes.

(28) For end-on Bachelor Honours programs, the class of Honours to be awarded to each student will be determined in accordance with Table 2.

Table 2 – Graded Honours Criteria – End-on Honours

Overall Mark	Honours Class Awarded
85% or above	Honours Class I
75% to 84%	Honours Class II Division 1
65% to 74%	Honours Class II Division 2
50% to 64%	Honours Class III
0% to 49%	Fail

(29) For embedded Bachelor Honours programs, the class of Honours to be awarded to each student will be determined in accordance with Table 3.

Table 3 – Graded Honours Criteria – Embedded Honours

Weighted Average Mark (WAM)	Honours Class Awarded
77 – 100	Class I
72 – 76	Class II Division 1
67 – 71	Class II Division 2
<67	Ungraded

Part D - DISPLAY OF ABBREVIATED QUALIFICATIONS (POST-NOMINALS)

(30) It is recommended that staff and Alumni observe the Conventions and Protocols for Displaying Qualification Abbreviations.

(31) The approved abbreviations for awards from the University are provided in Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 of this policy.

Section 3 - Graduation

Part E - GRADUATION CEREMONIES

(32) Graduates will be invited to attend a graduation ceremony.

(33) The Vice-Chancellor approves the dates and locations of each graduation ceremony on the recommendation of the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic & Global).

(34) The Chancellor, or another person appointed by the Council, is the Presiding Officer at the graduation ceremony. The Presiding Officer is authorised by the Council to present graduation documents to graduates at the ceremonies.

(35) Graduates may choose to attend the graduation ceremony, defer attendance to a future graduation ceremony, or request their graduation documents to be issued after the scheduled ceremony if they do not attend.

Recognition Ceremonies Conducted by Partner Institutions

(36) Partner institutions may hold recognition or prize giving ceremonies to celebrate the achievements of students based at those institutions. Prize giving or recognition ceremonies are not official graduation ceremonies.

(37) Senior officers of the University, including the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Chancellor or any College Pro Vice-Chancellor or Division Pro Vice-Chancellor are encouraged to attend as invited guests at prize giving or recognition ceremonies, but do not officiate at such ceremonies.

(38) Certificates of Participation or Recognition Certificates may be presented at recognition ceremonies. Testamurs of the University must only be presented at formal graduation ceremonies of the University.

(39) Graduates must wear academic dress at recognition ceremonies, unless otherwise permitted by the partner institution. The hire of academic dress is arranged by the partner institution.

(40) Plans by a partner institution to hold a recognition ceremony, or requests for University involvement at such ceremonies, should be communicated to the University Registrar as soon as possible to ensure that the University's support and involvement is coordinated.

Part F - GRADUATION DOCUMENTS

(41) Graduation documents must conform to the requirements specified in Standard 1.5 of the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021.

(42) Graduation documents issued by the University include a testamur, academic transcript, and Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement (AHEGS).

(43) The University may issue graduation documents in printed and/or verified digital format. Digital copies are issued via the My eQuals platform.

(44) Graduation documents will not be released to a student students if the student is indebted to the University and/or has not made arrangements to discharge such a debt.

Testamurs

(45) The testamur is the official award certificate issued by the University.

(46) Graduates will be presented with a printed copy of their testamur at a graduation ceremony, unless:

a. the graduate has requested an early release of their testamur, in which case the graduate will receive their testamur prior to their graduation ceremony and will receive a congratulatory certificate at their ceremony; or
b. the graduate has elected not to attend a graduation ceremony, in which case the graduate must nominate an alternative means to receive their printed testamur (eg via post).

(47) Graduates will also be provided with a verified digital copy of their testamur via the My eQuals platform.

(48) Multiple printed copies of a testamur will not be provided.

(49) A graduate may request a replacement printed testamur, subject to the original being returned to the University, where:

a. the graduate has changed their name and has provided appropriate supporting documentation; or
b. the original printed testamur is damaged;
c. the original testamur contains an error or is otherwise flawed.

(50) A graduate may request a replacement printed testamur where the original printed testamur has been lost or destroyed, subject to provision of appropriate declarations and supporting documentation.

(51) A prescribed fee may be charged for replacement testamurs. This fee must be either paid or waived before a replacement testamur will be provided.

Academic Transcripts

(52) The academic transcript is an official record of studies undertaken at the University and will indicate the date on which the student was qualified and conferred in their program.

(53) Graduates will be issued with an official printed and/or verified digital copy of their academic transcript as part of their graduation documents.

(54) Graduates may request additional copies of their academic transcript for a prescribed fee, which must be either paid or waived before the copies are provided.

AHEGS

(55) AHEGS documents must conform with the requirements for an Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement as specified by the Department of Education.

(56) Graduates will be provided with a verified digital copy of their AHEGS document as part of their graduation documents.

(57) Graduates may request printed copies of their AHEGS document for a prescribed fee, which must be either paid or waived before the copies are provided.

Part G - ACADEMIC DRESS

(58) Members of the University will appear in academic dress in accordance with this policy when attending public occasions convened for academic purposes and on such other occasions as the Council may appoint.

(59) The academic dress for the Chancellor, Deputy Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, members of the Council, staff and other authorised persons is as follows:

a. the Chancellor - the accustomed robes of that office, decorated in gold;

b. the Deputy Chancellor - the accustomed robes of that office, except that on a ceremonial occasion and in the absence of the Chancellor the Chancellor's robes may be worn by the Deputy Chancellor; and in the absence of both the Chancellor and the Deputy Chancellor such robes will be worn by the person appointed by the Council to preside at the occasion;
c. the Vice-Chancellor - similar to that worn by the Chancellor but decorated in silver;
d. members of the Council - the habit of their degree or, if any such member is not a graduate, a black Master's gown, with front panels and shoulder cover in cardinal red silk, and a cap as worn by Masters of Arts of the University of Cambridge;
e. Honorary University Fellows – a gown of black cloth, a hood as worn by Masters of Arts of the University of Cambridge, lined with the appropriate colour;
f. staff of the University who are graduates - the habit of their degree;
g. any other person not being a graduate, authorised by the Council - a plain black Master's gown and cap as worn by Masters of Arts of the University of Cambridge.

(60) The academic dress for graduates of the University is outlined in Table 4. For information on the academic dress for a specific award, refer to Schedules 1 and Schedule 2.

Table 4 – Graduate Academic Dress

Award	Academic Dress
Higher Doctoral Degree	A festal gown of cardinal red cloth, with a hood of garnet cloth lined with silk cloth of the appropriate colour, and a black velvet bonnet with a gold cord.
Doctors of Philosophy	A gown of garnet cloth faced with silver grey to a width of 10 cm, with a hood of garnet lined with silver grey and a black velvet bonnet with a silver cord.
Professional Doctoral Degrees	A festal masters style gown of dark blue faced with silver grey, with a hood of garnet cloth lined with silver grey and a black velvet bonnet with a silver cord.
Master of Philosophy	A gown of black cloth and a black cap as worn by Masters of Arts of the University of Cambridge, and a hood of garnet lined with silver grey.
Masters (Coursework) and Masters (Extended)	A gown of black cloth, a hood as worn by Masters of Arts of the Univeristy of Cambridge lined with the appropriate colour, and a black cap as worn by Masters of Arts of the University of Cambridge.
Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate	The habit of their degree. Postgraduates who hold no former degree will wear a gown of black cloth and a cap of the style worn by Bachelors of Arts of the University of Cambridge.
Bachelor Degree	A gown of black cloth, a black cap and hood of the style worn by Bachelors of Arts of the University of Cambridge lined (unless otherwise indicated) to a depth of 15 cm with the appropriate colour.
Associate Degree	Graduates who hold no former degree will wear a gown of black cloth and a cap of the style worn by Bachelor of Arts of the University of Cambridge.
Advanced Diploma and Diploma	Graduates who hold no former degree will wear a gown of black cloth and a cap of the style worn by Bachelor of Arts of the University of Cambridge.
Undergraduate Certificate	Graduates who hold no former degree will wear a gown of black cloth and a cap of the style worn by Bachelor of Arts of the University of Cambridge.
Enabling programs and other non-award programs	Graduates who whold no former degree will wear a gown of black cloth in the Cambridge style as worn by graduates holding the degree of Bachelor.

(61) In addition to the academic dress for their award, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduates may wear one of the following stoles:

Table 5 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stoles

Stole	Description
Aboriginal Stole	Faced with three vertical stripes of equal width in black, yellow and red; worn around the neck over the gown and hood, with the black stripe to the outside and the red stripe to the inside.
Torres Strait Islander Stole	Faced with three vertical stripes of equal width in green, white and blue; worn around the neck over the gown and hood, with the blue stripe to the outside and green stripe to the inside.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stole	Faced on one half with three vertical stripes of equal width in black, yellow and red, and on the other half with three vertical stripes of equal width in green, white and blue; worn around the neck over the gown and hood, with the black yellow and red stripes to the right and the green, white and blue stripes to the left.

Colours

(62) Academic dress colours are defined in Tables 6 and 7, with reference to:

a. the British Colour Council Dictionary of Standard Colours, 2nd Edition, 1951 (B.C.C.); or
b. the Australian Standard 1700S – 1985, Colour Standards for General Purposes (A.S.C.).

Table 6 – Academic Dress Colours – Gowns and Trims

Colour	Definition
Cardinal Red	B.C.C. 186
Garnet	B.C.C. 160
Black	A.S.C. N61
Silver Grey	B.C.C. 153

(63) The colour(s) of a graduate's hood will reflect the discipline content of their award.

Table 7 – Academic Dress Colours – Hoods

Discipline Area	Colour	Definition
Natural and Physical Sciences	Topaz	B.C.C. 4
Information Technology	Violet	B.C.C. 179 / A.S.C. P13
Engineering and related Technologies	Lapis Lazuli	B.C.C. 150
Architecture and Building	Garnet	B.C.C. 160
Medicine and Health Sciences	Rhodochrosite	B.C.C. 14
Nursing	International Orange	A.S.C. R11
Education	Shamrock	A.S.C. G23
Management, Commerce and Economics	Turquoise	B.C.C. 118
Arts, Psychology, Social Science and Social Work	Pearl	B.C.C. 151
Law	Waratah	A.S.C. R14
Indigenous Studies	Wattle and Waratah	A.S.C. Y12 and A.S.C. R14
Music	Lilac	A.S.C. P23
Visual Arts, Design and Communication Studies	Wattle	A.S.C. Y12

Section 4 - Schedules

(64) Schedule 1 of the Awards and Graduation Policy – List of Current Awards.

(65) Schedule 2 of the Awards and Graduation Policy – List of Disestablished Awards.

(66) Awards and Programs Schedule

(67) Doctoral Degree (Research) - Awards and Programs Schedule

(68) Doctoral Degree (Research) in Clinical Psychology - Awards and Programs Schedulee.

(69) Doctoral Degree (Research) by Prior Publication - Awards and Programs Schedule.

(70) Enabling Program Schedule.

(71) JMP - Joint Medical Program Schedule.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	19th October 2026
Review Date	19th October 2029
Approval Authority	Academic Senate
Approval Date	7th October 2026
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Responsible Executive	Belinda Yourn Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic & Global)
Enquiries Contact	John Radvan Senior Manager, Academic Governance & Compliance Student Central

Glossary Terms and Definitions

"Academic transcript" - An official record of studies at the University.

"Council" - The governing authority of the University established under section 8A of the University of Newcastle Act 1989.

"Graduate" - (Noun) Has the same meaning as in section 3(2) of the University of Newcastle Act 1989.

"University" - The University of Newcastle, a body corporate established under sections 4 and 5 of the University of Newcastle Act 1989.

"Award" - When referring to a University qualification, this term means an academic qualification approved by Academic Senate that is conferred when a student has met the relevant program requirements. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Cumulative GPA" - The Grade Point Average calculated over all units undertaken within the program as per the Grade Point Average (GPA) Calculation Guideline.

"Student" - A person formally enrolled in a course or active in a program offered by the University or affiliated entity.

"Student misconduct" - Academic misconduct, non-academic misconduct and/or research misconduct.

"Learning outcome" - In accordance with the AQF definitions, the expression of a set of knowledge, skills and the application of the knowledge and skills a person has acquired and is able to demonstrate as a result of learning.

"Officer" - Has the meaning given in the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth), or any replacing legislation.

"Program" - When referring to learning, a program is a sequence of approved learning, usually leading to an Award. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Program Convenor" - The academic staff member with overall responsibility for the management and quality of a program.

"Research" - As defined in the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, or any replacing Code or document.

"Staff" - Means a person who was at the relevant time employed by the University and includes professional and academic staff of the University, by contract or ongoing, as well as conjoint staff but does not include visitors to the University.

"Testamur" - A ceremonial document presented to a graduate upon the successful completion of their program.

"Unit" - When referring to an academic unit, unit means the proportional amount of academic credit allotted to a course. This term is used to define the requirements for a program award of the University and indicate a student's enrolment load. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Delegated authority" - refers to the specific description of the authority that is delegated or sub-delegated to a holder.