

Subject Descriptions and Outlines Policy

Abstract

The policy described in this document applies to Subject Descriptions and Subject Outlines for all coursework subjects offered by the University and should be read in conjunction with the Policy for the Assessment of Coursework Subjects and the Procedures for Assessment of Coursework Subjects.

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	Policy amendment approved	15/10/2014
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Approved by	Academic Board Meeting 11/4, 21 September 2011 Resolution 11/66.3	
	Latest amendment: Council (COU/14-5/106) and Director, Governance Support Unit (see change history for details)	
Implementation Officer	Director, Institute for Interactive Media and Learning	
Relevant to	Staff and students	
Related documents	Standing Delegations of Authority Faculty Management UTS Code of Conduct Student Charter Policy for the Assessment of Coursework Subjects Procedures for the Assessment of Coursework Subjects Publication of Official UTS Award Course Information Vice-Chancellor's Directive Faculty award course change process-post accreditation course change approvals, documents by Faculty (staff only) Student Rules General Rules See also: Managing your course	
Legislation		
File number	UR 11/1285	
Superseded documents	Coursework assessment policy and procedures manual (2002, as amended April 2009 pp17–18)	

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to describe the minimum requirements for Subject Descriptions approved by Faculties and Subject Outlines that are distributed to students. A Subject Outline distributed to students is an official document that represents an understanding between UTS and the students undertaking a subject. Teaching and assessment in the subject are conducted as specified in the Subject Outline, based on the Faculty approved Subject Description.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all staff responsible for preparing, assessing, approving or administering Subject Outlines or managing Subject Outline data and all students in receipt of Subject Outlines.

3. Definitions

Subject Description: The subject description is the official description of a subject that is approved by Faculty Board, according to the minimum requirements for subject descriptions.

Subject Outline: The Subject Outline is an official document that is distributed to students in accordance with this policy. Subject Outlines contain information from the Subject Description, along with additional information for students that is updated each semester.

4. Policy principles

4.1 Subject Description and Subject Outline approval requirements and processes should facilitate the design of subjects that support high quality student learning. Subject documentation should demonstrate alignment between the learning objectives of a subject, its content, teaching and learning activities and assessment.

4.2 While course approval processes address approval the level of an entire course curriculum, students complete courses by doing subjects. Approval of Subject Descriptions and Subject Outlines should consider how subjects

contribute to the course(s) of which they are part, enable students to achieve course-level educational aims and graduate attributes and relate to the [UTS model of learning](#).

4.3 Subject Descriptions are approved at Faculty level, reflecting the view that Faculties are best placed to determine the disciplinary and/or professional currency and quality of subjects and their alignment with courses offered by the Faculty. Subject Descriptions for approval must provide sufficient information for Faculty Boards to assess and approve the subject. While this policy specified minimum requirements for approval of all UTS coursework subjects, each Faculty may specify additional requirements.

4.4 Each Faculty should have procedures that enable subjects and their Descriptions and Outlines to be regularly reviewed and updated. Procedures for enabling subject coordinators to update the Faculty-approved components of Subject Outlines should create an effective balance between maintaining alignment between courses and subjects and enabling subject innovation and responsiveness to feedback. While Subject Descriptions must be approved by Faculty Boards, Faculty Boards may delegate authority to approve specified changes to subjects.

4.4 Subject Outlines are intended to inform students about the overall expectations and requirements of subjects in which they are enrolled, including subject assessment requirements. Students may also be provided with additional information about specific assessment tasks or other requirements and with subject-relevant advice in class or online. Any such additional information should be consistent with the information provided in the official Subject Outline.

5. Policy statements

5.1 Authoritative sources of subject information

The UTS CASS/CIS data collection is used as the primary and authoritative source of official award course information. See [Publication of Official UTS Award Course Information Vice-Chancellor's Directive](#).

The Course Information System (CIS) provides the standard format minimum requirements for approval of Subject Descriptions by Faculty Boards and for Subject Outlines distributed to students, (templates available on the CIS website).

Subject Outlines and related additional information provided to students by Faculties must be consistent with Subject Descriptions approved by Faculties and with the course and subject information data recorded in CASS/CIS and published in the UTS Handbook (refer [Rule 3.2.3](#)).

5.2 Faculty approval of Subject Descriptions

Full Subject Descriptions are approved by Faculty Boards. They must be reapproved at minimum once every five years, normally in line with reaccreditation of the course(s) of which they are part. Faculties may determine any shorter period of time for reapproval.

5.3 Minimum information for Faculty approval of Subject Descriptions

Subject Descriptions must contain the following minimum information for approval by Faculty Boards.

1. Subject Name
2. Subject Number
3. Credit Points
4. Pre-requisite and co-requisite subject(s), if applicable
5. Other requisites (eg work experience, placements), if applicable
6. Anti-requisite(s), if applicable (subjects which cannot be counted for credit with this subject, typically those which are equivalent)
7. Subject replaces, if applicable
8. Teaching organisational unit
9. Subject Coordinator (at time of approval)
10. Subject Level (undergraduate or postgraduate)
11. Course Name(s)
12. Course Structure(s) or Substructure(s) that the subject should be added to (CASS study packages)
13. Subject summary description for the Handbook
14. Learning objectives/outcomes of the subject (learning objectives/outcomes describe what students will be able to do or understand on the completion of a subject) *
15. Contribution of the subject to course aims and graduate attributes and relevance to the UTS model of learning
16. Modes of offering, including each mode of offering and its requirements in terms of the way that the subject is delivered (weekly classes, block, online, distance, etc)
17. Teaching and learning activities, including a general description of the types of activities inside and outside class time

18. Subject content: a description of the content areas and indicative topics at time of approval
19. Details of assessment items including:
 - a. a descriptive heading for each item
 - b. clear links between the assessment item and subject learning objectives/outcomes
 - c. the weighting of each assessment item
 - d. nature and extent of group work or collaboration required for each item
20. Minimum requirements for passing the subject
21. Result type
22. Indicative texts and other required readings, along with examples of other references used to develop the subject.

Each Faculty may specify additional minimum information that must be provided for approval in that Faculty.

5.4 Changes to Faculty-approved subject information

Each Faculty will have a clear process for approval of necessary changes and updates to the subject information that is originally approved by Faculty Board and is included in outlines provided to students. The procedure should enable subject coordinators to update subjects to maintain currency and be responsive to feedback, while maintaining subject quality and the integrity of the course to which the subject contributes. The process should be reviewed at least once every five years.

Each Faculty process will specify the levels of and types of changes that require full Faculty Board approval, and the types of changes that may be approved at other levels, while maintaining consistency with relevant university level Rules, policies and procedures and with Faculty course change approvals.

5.5 Subject Outlines provided to students

The approved Subject Outline distributed to students must contain the following minimum information. Changes to items with * must be approved through the Faculty's process for approving changes referred to in 5.4. Subject coordinators may make changes to other items, subject to maintaining consistency with Faculty and course level directives, processes and guidelines.

1. Subject Name and Number *
2. Credit Points *
3. Prerequisites and corequisites *

4. Subject description provided in the UTS Handbook *
5. Learning objectives of the subject (learning objectives describe what students will be able to do or understand on the completion of a subject) *
6. Contribution of the subject to relevant course aims and students' graduate attribute development *
7. How this offering of the subject is delivered (weekly classes, block, online, distance, etc — different modes of offering may have different Subject Outlines *
8. Teaching and learning activities *
9. Subject content
10. Details of assessment items including:
 - a. a descriptive heading for each item *
 - b. clear links between the assessment item and subject objectives *
 - c. the weighting of each assessment item *
 - d. due dates
 - e. nature and extent of group work or collaboration required for each item *
 - f. a description of the task, sufficient to inform students about the nature and scope of the task. The description will also make reference, if applicable, to any additional information that will be provided about assessment task requirements, such as detailed assignment briefs (see section 5.6)
 - g. word limits or equivalent, if applicable
 - h. assessment criteria, unless these are provided in the additional information referred to in 5.6 and point f above
11. Clear details of any minimum essential requirements for each item
12. General assessment information that will be provided, either for each item, or in a section on general assessment information that applies to all assessment items in the subject:
 - a. feedback processes, including normal maximum time for provision of feedback
 - b. late submission penalties if applicable or a reference to any course/Faculty guide where these are stated

- c. statement on the use of plagiarism detection software, if applicable
 - statement on moderation of marks between markers, if applicable
 - d. provisions for student negotiation of assessment tasks, if applicable
 - e. material or equipment that is permitted to be brought into an examination room, if applicable. This must be specified in the Subject Outline and in the examination paper. Where a variation to the approved material or equipment shown in the Subject Outline becomes necessary during the teaching period, the variation must be approved by the Subject Coordinator and notified to all students enrolled in the subject at least two weeks before the commencement of the examination period ([Rule 9.3.3](#))
 - f. Information about supplementary assessments, if applicable
13. A list of any minimum subject requirements (Practicals, compulsory assessment items, etc) *
 14. Any prescribed attendance requirements and a statement that students who do not satisfy the prescribed attendance requirements may be refused permission to be considered for assessment, to attempt an assessment task, or to sit for examination in the subject ([Rule 3.8](#))
 15. Essential references, including any required textbooks and other required readings. All Subject Outlines must reference the [Policy for Assessment of Coursework Subjects](#) and [Procedures for Assessment of Coursework Subjects](#) as required reading
 16. Contact details for the subject coordinator and other teaching staff
 17. A statement about learning and assessment arrangements for students with disabilities or special needs ([Rule 8.2](#)). This statement should:
 - a. briefly outline the procedure by which students apply for special arrangements;
 - b. include the name(s) and contact details of the Faculty Academic Liaison Officer(s).

Each Faculty may specify additional minimum requirements for Subject Outlines for subjects offered by that Faculty.

5.6 Additional information about assessment tasks and requirements

Where assessment task information is extensive, for example involving detailed project briefs, it may be provided to students in documentation that is additional to the Subject Outline.

Information about assessment criteria must be provided to students either in the Subject Outline or as part of this additional information.

Where additional assessment information is provided to students, to be used in conjunction with the Subject Outline, it must be referred to in the Subject Outline and be entirely consistent with the Subject Outline and this policy. Further, it is subject to the same Rules and procedures applicable to the Subject Outline.

Any additional information must be provided by the first teaching week of the subject, except with the permission of the relevant RAO.

5.7 Additional required information that may be contained in a course or Faculty student guide

The following additional information must be provided to students either in the Subject Outline, or, if the same information is applicable to all subjects in a course or Faculty, in a course or Faculty student guide that is referred to in all Subject Outlines.

1. Result types and grade descriptors
2. Instructions on how and to whom students submit their assessment items
3. Policy on late submission/extension availability
4. Special consideration
5. Processes for the collection and return of assessment tasks
6. Referencing requirements
7. Guidance on copyright, plagiarism and intellectual property issues pertinent to the subject and beyond those in the Policy and Procedures for Assessment of Coursework subjects.

5.8 Further information

Further subject information may be provided to students in the form of detailed subject guides, tutorial guides, laboratory manuals, information provided through UTSONline, etc. Any additional information contained in these materials must be consistent with the information in the Subject Outline.

6. Roles and responsibilities

6.1 Deans

The Dean of a faculty is appointed by the Provost and is accountable for the academic standing and overall management and leadership of the faculty. The accountabilities of Deans can be found in the UTS governance requirements for Faculty Management. With regard to Subject Outlines, they are responsible for:

- Ensuring that the Faculty Board approves Subject Descriptions.

- Determining Faculty processes for approval of Subject Outlines, including the processes and relevant levels of authority required to update Faculty-approved material.

Ensuring that Subject Coordinators distribute Subject Outlines in accordance with [Rule 3.7.3](#).

6.2 Faculty Boards

Faculty Boards are responsible for approving Subject Descriptions and approving the Faculty processes for changes to Faculty-approved subject information included in Subject Outlines.

6.3 Responsible Academic Officers

Responsible Academic Officers (RAOs) are appointed by the Vice-Chancellor or Deputy Vice-Chancellor on advice from the Dean. The [responsibilities of Responsible Academic Officers](#) can be found in the UTS governance requirements for Faculty Management.

6.4 Subject Coordinators

Subject Coordinators are responsible for:

- Preparing the Subject Outline for distribution to students for each teaching period, in accordance with University and Faculty rules, policies, procedures and directives. This includes ensuring that the Subject Outline is prepared using the CIS Subject Outlines system.
- Ensuring that the Subject Outline is prepared in sufficient time for subject Assessors to meet their responsibilities — normally at least two weeks prior to the first week of teaching.
- Making the Subject Outline prepared using the CIS Subject Outlines system available before the first week in which the subject commences, or the equivalent in block or other modes of delivery, to all students enrolled in the subject ([Rule 3.7](#)).
- Providing access to the Subject Outline on UTSONline, except where it is impractical to do so.
- Responding to reasonable requests from Special Needs staff, Library alternative formats staff and Academic Liaison Officers for earlier provision of information (such as required texts and readings) necessary to meet the needs of students with disabilities and other special needs enrolled in the subject.
- Ensuring that any additional assessment and other information is consistent with the Subject Outline.

- Ensuring that the Subject Outline is regularly updated to reflect updating of the subject to maintain currency and respond to feedback on the subject from students and other source.
- Submitting changes that require a change to any Faculty-approved subject information, in accordance with processes approved by the Faculty.
- Ensuring that all staff teaching or assessing in the subject, including tutors, demonstrators and markers, are provided with the Subject Outline and briefed, wherever possible, on its contents and the requirements for students.
- Responding to reasonable requests for clarification of the Subject Outline from subject teaching staff and students.

6.5 Subject teaching staff

All subject teaching staff, including tutors, demonstrators and markers, are responsible for:

- Ensuring that they are familiar with the contents of the Subject Outline.
- Ensuring that any advice that they provide to students is consistent with the information provided in the Subject Outline and any additional assessment or course or Faculty-level information.

6.6 Students

Students are responsible for:

- Ensuring that they read the Subject Outline and are familiar with all subject requirements.
- Complying with subject requirements as published in the Subject Outline and any additional assessment information and any UTS, Faculty or Course student guide or other information that is referred to in the Subject Outline.

7. Acknowledgements

No acknowledgements.

8 Version control and change history

Effective date	Version	Approved by, resolution number (date)	Amendment
01/12/2011	1	Academic Board, AB 11/66.3 (21/09/2011)	New Policy.
01/12/2014	1.1	Council, COU/14-5/106 (15/10/2104)	Consequential changes to align with changes to Student Rules.
		Director, Governance Support Unit	Changes to Senior Executive titles and editorial updates related to migration of web content.