Learning and Teaching - Academic Policy

/explore/policies-and-procedures/learning-and-teaching-academic-policy

Part A: Preliminary

1. Overview and purpose of policy

Learning and teaching are core activities at the University of the Sunshine Coast. The University is committed to international standards in teaching, delivering benefits and opportunities to students, graduates and the region. This policy identifies the principles informing, and key elements contributing to, excellent learning and teaching at the University.

2. Application of policy

It applies to all staff, students, decision-making and advisory bodies involved in the provision of undergraduate and postgraduate coursework programs, including Bachelor Honours programs.

This policy does not apply to higher degrees by research.

Part B: Policy

3. Principles Informing Learning and Teaching

The University will:

· sustain a community of enquiry that exemplifies freedom of thought, freedom of expression, and mutual respect;
· maintain academic standards;
· offer an inclusive and stimulating environment for learning and teaching, that recognises diversity;
· undertake student-focussed teaching;
· promote the nexus between teaching and research;
· maximise opportunities for students to enrol in, transition through, and successfully complete university studies;
· provide opportunities for students to participate in the functioning of the university at various levels and to offer feedback regarding learning and teaching;
· communicate to students the actions taken as a consequence of their feedback;
· support continuous review and improvement of all aspects of teaching; and
· integrate learning technologies into educational settings to increase student access and participation, and enhance student engagement.

4. Graduate Attributes

Programs, courses, University teaching and the learning experience will be informed by the Graduate Attributes, a combination of Graduate Qualities and Generic Skills, expressed through Program Learning Outcomes.

The University community, both students and staff, shares responsibility for fostering and realising the Graduate Attributes.

4.1 Graduate Qualities

4.1.1 The Graduate Qualities are themes that the University community values, and therefore seeks to foster through all of its programs and the student's broader experience at the University.

4.1.2 The University provides opportunities for students to be:

· Creative and critical thinkers, generating original ideas and concepts, and appreciating innovation and entrepreneurship;
· Empowered, having both the capacity and confidence to pursue the attainment of full potential;
· Engaged, contributing positively to diverse communities through service and leadership;
· Ethical, acting with integrity in intellectual, professional and community pursuits;
· Knowledgeable, building disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge through a scholarly approach incorporating global and regional perspectives; and
· Sustainability-focussed, responding to ecological, social and economic imperatives.

4.2 Generic Skills

4.2.1 Generic Skills are transferable skills that are valued by the University as being important outcomes of a University education. These skills are those identified as important by employers, government and the higher education sector.

4.2.2 Students will be supported to develop the following generic skills:

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· Communication
· Collaboration
· Problem solving
· Organisation
· Applying technologies
· Information literacy

4.3 Program Learning Outcomes

Program Learning Outcomes are the specific learning outcomes that are identified, mapped, taught, practised and assessed within each USC program. They incorporate the Graduate Qualities and Generic Skills interpreting them in relation to the disciplinary and interdisciplinary studies that inform the program.

5. Key elements of excellent learning and teaching
Excellent learning and teaching practices in the University are characterised and sustained by:

5.1 Students who:

· are challenged through discipline theories and contexts and encouraged to be critical thinkers, independent learners and effective communicators;
· see links between their studies and the region, global society and the workplace;
· adapt to the complexity and ambiguity of intellectual endeavours;
· engage respectfully with the viewpoints and arguments of others;
· are reflective, creative and open-minded;
· engage with learning technologies;
· comply with relevant legal, ethical and policy responsibilities; and
· strive to be engaged learners.

5.2 Lecturers and tutors who:

· take a scholarly approach to their teaching;
· display expert knowledge of and enthusiasm for their discipline;
· plan, design, manage, deliver, reflect upon and improve their teaching and curricula to enhance student learning;
· engage with current research and creative outputs to inform their teaching;
· respect contributions from, and encourage participation by, all students;
· provide advice to students regarding their academic work and academic choices;
· provide fair, critical, helpful and timely feedback on student work;
· make use of appropriate technologies and media to support and enhance learning, teaching, assessment and evaluation;
· comply with relevant legal, ethical and policy responsibilities; and
· strive to be excellent teachers.

5.3 Teaching which:

· engages students, fosters their curiosity, facilitates their learning and is student-focussed;
· recognises students' existing knowledge and experience;
· enables students to become independent and life-long learners;
· provides a range of suitable learning experiences, including collaborative learning, where knowledge can be tested and explored; and
· respects and supports the development of students as individuals.

5.4 Curricula which:

· contribute to students development of the Graduate Attributes;
· demonstrate sound design principles, aligning learning outcomes, learning and teaching activities and assessment tasks;
· are responsive to discipline, professional and employer needs and priorities;
· have regional, national and global relevance;
· equip students for life long learning;
· embed opportunities for work-integrated learning, service learning and global experience programs;
· incorporate rigorous review and improvement to deliver rich technology-mediated learning experiences;
· are supported and enhanced by the use of appropriate educational technologies; and
· incorporate rigorous review and improvement.

5.5 Learning environments which:

· provide infrastructure and services for both physical and virtual learning spaces, that meet the needs of students and staff;
· are designed to address reasonable student expectations of support, flexibility, accessibility and effectiveness;
· are free from harassment and discrimination;
· include learning spaces conducive to student engagement and collaboration; and
· are academically vibrant.

5.6 Institutional support which:

· enables staff to access relevant professional development opportunities in many contexts;

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- · encourages innovation and best practice;
- · fosters outstanding teaching practices;
- · promotes the strategic development and management of eLearning;
- · provides assistance for student learning; and
- · encourages and celebrates student academic achievement.

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