



# TERMS & CONDITIONS

for Open  
Access

SEPTEMBER 2019

Award Protocol

## Award Protocol

### 1. Purpose of the Protocol

The purpose of this protocol is to guide the provision and support of undergraduate and postgraduate Awards. The protocol is intended as a bridge between the formal agreements between OUA and the Providers that govern the provision of individual study Units and the longer-term obligation of the Provider to students who undertake studies with the intention of taking out an Award, and to the other Providers that credit these Units to a recognised Award.

By making these obligations explicit, the protocol:

- protects the interests of OUA students,
- protects the interests of the Provider and OUA,
- underpins the reputation and continuity of OUA programs, and
- provides surety to the Provider concerning their longer term commitments to students, and to other Higher Education Providers.

### 2. Definitions

Capitalised terms used in this Award Protocol have the meanings given below. Where a term is also defined in Clause 27 of the Agreement, the definition in the Agreement takes precedence.

#### Award

An Award is a sequence of studies approved by the governing body of a Provider as leading to an Award of that Provider once successfully completed. An Award is commonly described by an Award structure, rules governing the combination and selection of Units and requirements concerning the time taken to complete the program.

#### Closure Date

The date following the public announcement of the closure or a major change to an Award up to which time OUA students can apply to the Provider to be enrolled in the Award in the form and structure published in the OUA website and/or Handbook prior to the change.

#### Course, Course of Study

A program of study undertaken at a Provider that leads to an Award. See also definition of 'Award', 'Program' and 'Unit'.

#### Critical/Thematic Unit

A Unit that is incorporated in foundation, major, or minor streams offered by one, or more than one Provider.

#### Life of an Award

The number of years that a Provider is obliged to accept enrolments from OUA students.

#### Maximum Study Time

The number of years set by AQF (generally 10 years for a bachelor degree and 3 to 6 years for postgraduate degrees) and allowed by a Provider for a student enrolled in an Award to satisfy the requirements of the Award. The Maximum Study Time is not necessarily the same as the Minimum Life.

#### OUA Academic Programs Committee

The Academic Programs Committee (APC), or equivalent, is an operational committee of OUA established under the HESA with the responsibility for advising the Chief Executive Officer of OUA on matters concerning:

- the range and profile of OUA Accessed Units and programs;
- standards and practices in open and flexible education including Quality Assurance procedures with particular reference to online

learning, educational technologies, assessments and student engagement; and

- related matters referred to it by the Chief Executive or the Board of OUA.

#### Program

A sequence of studies, including Units access to which is provided through Open Universities Australia, which if successfully completed leads to an Award.

#### Session

A session refers to the academic term in which most OUA classes are held. OUA offers three 14-week sessions each year.

#### Study Period

The 13 week academic term or semester in which a Unit of study is offered through OUA four times each year. Most OUA undergraduate programs have Units offered in these study periods.

#### Unit

A single Unit of Study offered over a Study Period/Session. Some Providers use the term 'course' or 'subject' to describe what in this protocol is called a Unit.

### 3. Protocols

An application to list an Award for offering through OUA will be considered by OUA if the Provider is a signatory to this protocol, the Award is an approved Award of the Provider, and the request is accompanied by a signed proforma from the Provider's nominated policy representative.

The application to offer an Award through OUA will be reviewed by the OUA Academic Programs Committee, or equivalent, which will make a recommendation to the Chief Executive Officer based on the market potential, appropriateness of the online program for OUA's student population and integration with the general body of OUA Programs. OUA will formally advise the Provider's nominated policy representative of the acceptance or otherwise of an Award for inclusion in the OUA Program.

Once an Award is approved for offering through OUA it will be published on the OUA website ([www.open.edu.au](http://www.open.edu.au)). The Provider will supply full details of the Award, its contributing Units and the academic and administrative contacts for inclusion on the website and in the OUA Handbook and update this information annually and on request according to OUA's publishing schedule.

OUA will advise OUA Students or potential students of the options available to them of enrolling in single Units, working towards an Award without committing to a particular one, or registering in a specific Award. OUA's aim in doing this is to ensure students are well informed of the consequences of their decisions, while retaining flexibility. OUA students may apply to the Provider to be registered in an Award listed in the OUA Website at any time during the life of the Award, provided any minimum requirements of the Provider for number of Units already successfully completed are met.

The Provider will review the academic content, structure and quality of their Awards and the outcomes for OUA students as part of their normal review processes. Each Provider will provide OUA with their forward schedule of reviews (if available) and invite comment from OUA on matters pertaining to OUA Students. OUA may be offered and provide input to the review and receive a summary of findings and recommendations relating to OUA Students.

The structure of an Award may be changed during the Life of an Award as a consequence of the review process or for other reasons. OUA Students, subject to their not exceeding the Maximum Study Time

allowed for the Award, have the right to complete the Award without disadvantage, although it may need to be completed according to the revised structure. This includes the specific right to complete any Award in accordance with the prevailing requirements for entry into a relevant profession. To exercise this right, students may be required to register their intent to complete an Award.

OUA has prime responsibility for communicating to students and other Providers changes made to the structure of a particular Award. OUA will discuss the implications of any changes with the Provider and reach agreement with the Provider on how the changes are to be communicated to students and to the other Providers.

In the event of a major change to the structure of an Award or a decision to discontinue the Award the Provider is obliged to establish transition arrangements for OUA Students who:

- have registered their intent to complete the Award, or another Provider's Award that incorporates one or more of the Units to be discontinued;
- have not registered their intent to complete an Award but can establish that they have commenced one or more streams in the Award with the intention of receiving credit in the Award or in another Provider's Award that incorporates one or more of the Units to be discontinued; or
- for other reasons can demonstrate hardship because of the proposed change.

The transition arrangements together with action plans covering students and any affected Providers, will be the subject of a transition agreement between OUA and the Provider. The additional costs of implementing the transition agreement will be borne by the Provider.

The transition agreement will encompass:

- The provision of advisory information and assistance to identified groups of OUA Students.
- An agreed date following the public announcement of a major change to the Program (known as the Closure Date) up to which time OUA Students can apply to the Provider to register their intent to complete an Award.
- The provision through OUA of the Units (or agreed equivalent Units) needed to complete the Award for a period of time beyond the closure date.
  - The provision through OUA of any critical/thematic Units (or agreed equivalent Units) required by other Providers' Awards for a period of time beyond the Closure Date. This period of time will be negotiated with OUA acting on behalf of, and in consultation with, affected Providers.
  - How the parties will comply with any transition out obligations in the Agreement.