POLICY: Postgraduate Course and Unit Viability

Policy Group(s)	Group C: Administration – 1: Academic (Ref: C1/0210.1)
Related Policy:	Risk Management – Teaching Continuity Policy Course Assurance Arrangements Domestic Student Grievance Procedures – Non Academic Overseas Student Grievance Procedures – Non Academic
Commencement Date: February 2009	**Review Date:** February 2010; February 2015

POLICY STATEMENT

Intent: The postgraduate courses offered by Christian Heritage College (CHC) are designed to provide students with experiences which are rich and varied in their scope and nature. A factor which contributes to these experiences is the interaction which occurs during class contact time in units offered in the Internal or Intensive mode within postgraduate courses. Such interaction may include presentations, seminar discussions and group interaction and debate.

For postgraduate students the number of students with whom students can interact is a consideration for the viability of those courses and units.

This policy is intended to provide guidelines regarding the actions to be taken in response to postgraduate courses and units which have low enrolments, and the parameters at which these actions are to apply.

Scope:

All postgraduate courses and units offered by CHC.

Restrictions: Nil

Exclusions: Nil

Objectives:

1.   To provide guidelines for the actions to be taken in response to postgraduate courses which have low enrolments.

2.   To provide guidelines regarding the parameters that will trigger such actions.

3.   To assist CHC in its forward planning and marketing.

Policy Provisions:

1.   **General**

   1.1.   CHC academic staff are committed to student-centred learning which is focussed on what the student needs to do in order to learn, rather than on delivering content *per se*.

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1.2. Many of the postgraduate courses offered by CHC exist within nested arrangements – for example, a Graduate Certificate comprises the first stage of either the Graduate Diploma or Masters – or draw upon a common pool of units which are utilised across CHC courses. Thus, the units that are offered by CHC's Schools – Business, Education, Ministries and Social Sciences – are shared across a number of courses within those Schools and across other CHC schools, with very few being undertaken by a single course group. For this reason, the issue of unit viability must also be considered alongside that of course viability.

2. **Course viability**

2.1. Schools will consider the issue of the viability of postgraduate courses in the School Annual Reports submitted each year to the Academic Board.

2.2. The consideration of the viability of postgraduate courses will be on a longitudinal basis and will be judged over the period of the preceding three years.

2.3. Initial assessments of the viability of postgraduate courses will be made by the Dean of the School in which the courses are housed and measured against the provisions of the Business Plans for the courses.

2.4. The CHC Executive will report to the CHC Council, which will make all final decisions regarding the viability of postgraduate courses.

2.5. In the event that postgraduate courses are deemed to be not viable, CHC will, depending upon the stage of the accreditation periods applying to such courses:

2.5.1. Cancel the courses and enact the provisions of its Course Assurance Arrangements;
2.5.2. Apply to the Queensland Office of Higher Education for 'teach out' arrangements; or
2.5.3. Facilitate the completion of students' courses within the accreditation periods.

2.6. In the case of 2.5.1 above, the cancellation of postgraduate courses will occur at the end of an academic year only due to constraints such as course offering imperatives, marketing campaigns and publications.

3. **Unit viability**

3.1. Each School is responsible for the planning of the units it offers, and the mode in which they are offered, in its postgraduate courses in each academic semester.

3.2. The consideration of the viability of postgraduate units will be on a longitudinal basis and will be judged over the period of the preceding three years/offerings by the number of students who are enrolled in the unit.

3.3. Viability of units will be considered both by individual mode of study (Internal, Intensive and External) and as a whole unit according to the number of students who are enrolled in the unit.

3.4. Decisions regarding the viability of units are to be made within the timeframe required for DIISRTE publications; September for Semester 1 and March for Semester 2 and Semester 3 (Summer).

3.5. In planning the units to be offered in its postgraduate courses, each School is to consider the enrolments in those courses in relation to the breadth and scope of the units to be offered, in order that enrolments in each unit are of a level to render the unit viable.

3.5.1. A unit is deemed to be economically viable if it has an enrolment of five or more students in either the Internal or Intensive mode;
3.5.2. A unit is deemed to be pedagogically viable if it contains an appropriate number of

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students to provide student-centred learning. This may be as small a number as one student, depending on the type of unit (for example, Internship) and the nature of the unit outcomes. Where fewer than five students enrolled in a unit, the Academic Board may request a Dean to demonstrate that the unit is pedagogically viable.

3.6. If a unit which is offered as part of a postgraduate course has an enrolment of fewer than five students each year for the previous three year/offering period, a review will occur to determine if the unit is to be offered. The Dean of the relevant School and the Executive will conduct this review.

3.7. Outcomes of this review are reported to Academic Board. If a unit which is offered in the Internal or Intensive mode as part of a postgraduate course is not considered to be economically or pedagogically viable, a range of contingency plans may be enacted in order to achieve viability and ensure that students receive experiences which are appropriate in both nature and scope. This may include offering the unit in the External mode only.

Supporting Procedures and Guidelines:

1. **Course viability**

   1.1. In determining the viability of courses offered, reference will be made to the number of new enrolments, the number of continuing enrolments and the number of course completions over the preceding three years measured against the Business Plan for the course.

   1.2. The levels at which a course is offered may be considered to be not viable are as follows, aggregated over three years:

      1.2.1. New enrolments: 10
      1.2.2. Continuing enrolments: 20
      1.2.3. Course completions: 5

   1.3. In the preparation of the School Annual Report, Deans will make an assessment as to the viability of each course offered by his/her School measured against the provisions of the Business Plan for each course. This data, as well as the outcome of the assessment and any strategies to improve course viability, will be included in the School Annual Report.

   1.4. After considering the data and conclusions contained in the School Annual Report, the Executive will make recommendations to Council who will determine whether to continue or to discontinue the course offering.

   1.5. If Council decides that a course is viable, the Dean of the School will meet with the Marketing Coordinator and the Registrar to discuss further strategies for attracting increased enrolments into the course, and with academic and administration staff involved in the implementation of the course to discuss strategies to increase the rates of course progression and completion.

   1.6. If a decision is made that a course is not viable, the Registrar will inform the Marketing Coordinator and the Student Administration Office that no new enrolments are to be accepted into the course as from the beginning of the next academic year.

2. **Course non-viability**

   2.1. In the event that a course is cancelled, the Course Assurance Agreement will be enacted. The Registrar will contact the students enrolled in the course with instructions regarding the accessing of the Course Assurance Arrangements.

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2.2. In the event that students will not complete their course requirements within the accreditation period of the course, and Executive determines that the number of students is sufficient to justify the facilitating of students' completion of the course, application will be made to TEQSA for the accreditation of the course in the Internal mode for 'teach out' purposes only.

2.3. In the event that students will complete their course requirements within the accreditation period of the course, and Executive determines that the number of students is sufficient to justify the facilitating of students' completion of the course, no application will be made to TEQSA upon the expiration of the accreditation of the course.

3. Unit viability

3.1. As a general guide, unit enrolments of five and above are deemed to render a unit both economically and pedagogically viable.

3.2. At the end of Week 2 of each semester Deans will provide Executive with a list of units for offering in the subsequent semester. Where an analysis of the unit enrolments across the previous three (3) offerings reveals enrolments of fewer than five, the Dean will provide Executive with a rationale for the continued inclusion of the unit for the semester unit offerings. The Executive will consider the following elements when determining the offering of a unit:

3.2.1. The status of the unit within its course (that is, if the unit is required for students' course progression and/or completion or is an Elective unit);

3.2.2. The availability of a comparable unit to students, in either level or content, at CHC or another higher education institution via cross-institutional enrolment arrangements;

3.2.3. If the unit is required for a small number of students' course progression, if that progression has been interrupted due to student factors such as a leave of absence or prior failure of unit(s);

3.2.4. Whether the unit remains pedagogically viable (see Supporting Procedures and Guidelines 4);

3.2.5. Whether the units remains economically viable.

The Executive will communicate the decision regarding the offering of the unit to the Dean and the required adjustments in the unit offerings will be made.

3.3. If a unit which is offered as part of a postgraduate course is not considered to be economically viable, the following contingency plans may be enacted in order to achieve viability.

3.3.1. The number of elective unit choices made available to students can be managed in order to achieve viability in a smaller range of units;

3.3.2. Units which involve students in nested course arrangements can be combined and unit sequences revised where applicable to achieve viability in a smaller range of units;

3.3.3. For units which are offered in the External mode, students can be redirected from the Internal or Intensive mode and engage in the experiences offered by that mode of offering;

3.3.4. The use of the Moodle e-learning platform will ease the pedagogical challenges of small on-campus classes by providing students with engagement in a variety of interactive learning experiences.

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4. Principles of pedagogical viability

4.1. The University of New South Wales[1] has identified a number of pedagogically sound activities associated with student centred learning (see table below). Check marks indicate the strategies that may be employed in classes as small as one student. *Any* combination of strategies could be employed in classes with three or more students.

4.2. There are particular units in which one-on-one mentoring-type pedagogy is appropriate: for example, a Practicum unit, a Supervision unit or an Independent Studies unit. In such units, students work on a project basis that is supervised by one or more staff often in addition to an external advisor with specific expertise in the student's chosen study.

4.3. In general it is also anticipated that the pedagogical challenges of very small on-campus classes will be eased with the implementation of Moodle as a learning management system. In particular Moodle will allow internal and external students to interact via synchronous or asynchronous discussion groups. Also, the electronic environment will allow development of pedagogically sound interactive learning opportunities (e.g. interactive quizzes – often supplied by publishers).

Strategy	Example	Could be used in a class of one
Problem solving – let students discover information	Give student(s) a problem and ask them to develop an approach to solving a problem	✓
Provide opportunities for students to debate an issue	Let students gather information in defence of a particular point of view	
Use guided brainstorming to introduce or reflect on a topic	Record students' ideas on a topic without discussion or evaluation (can move on to discussion and evaluation later)	
Use questions to promote discussion and encourage debate	Questions may come from lecturer or student(s). Discussion/debate between student and lecturer – a mentor-type relationship	✓
Promote discussion about the subject outside the classroom	Devise tasks that require engaging with others, e.g. interviewing members of the community or field of education	✓
Use role-play exercises	Develop role-play case studies	
Have students keep a journal for the duration of the unit	Student(s) can keep a reflective journal	✓
Provide opportunities for 'hands-on' experience	Develop relevant activities (such as site visits) or experiences (such as action learning)	✓
Encourage interaction using strategies such as 'think, pair, share'	Give students opportunities to engage with a partner, then other partners to reflect on subject matter. Generally need a minimum of four students for this activity	

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[1] University of New South Wales, 'Learning and teaching induction booklet for new academic staff', section 3, pp. 83-84

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POLICY FURTHER INFORMATION

Relevant Commonwealth/ State Legislation	Nil

ACCOUNTABILITIES

Implementation:	Executive
Compliance:	Executive
Monitoring and Evaluation:	Executive
Development/Review:	Policy Committee
Approval Authority:	Executive
Interpretation and advice:	Registrar

WHO SHOULD KNOW THIS POLICY?

Deans of Schools
Boards of Studies
Executive
Academic Board
CHC Council

EFFECTIVENESS OF THIS POLICY

Performance Indicators:	• Regular review of courses and units to determine viability
Other	
Definitions and Acronyms:	CHC – Christian Heritage College
	TEQSA – Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency

APPROVAL – section maintained by the Registrar

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REVISION HISTORY – section maintained by the Registrar

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