

## Academic Critical Enquiry Policy

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### 1. Background

Academic critical enquiry is a core component of all higher education courses of study and research at Gateway Business College (GBC). Teaching and learning content and activities are designed to engage students with advanced knowledge, intellectual enquiry, independent thinking and critical analysis, and support the development and demonstration of critical enquiry as an academic achievement.

### 2. Purpose

This policy establishes guidelines for the inclusion of academic critical enquiry as a core component of higher education course content and learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities, scholarship and research at GBC.

### 3. Scope

This policy applies to GBC staff and students.

### 4. Definitions

**Academic Board:** The board responsible for academic governance at GBC. The Academic Board reports and advises the Corporate Governance Board on academic activity. This board oversees academic activities such as teaching, learning, scholarship, research, course approval, student outcomes, academic standards and academic policy.

**Academic critical enquiry:** Describes the analytic and research process of closely evaluating the key theories and ideas of a subject so as to consider the alternative and/or conflicting perspectives and understandings of an idea. Academic critical enquiry produces well-considered analyses that can challenge accepted ideas and spark new avenues of research and enquiry.

**Academic staff:** Staff engaged in higher education teaching, learning and research as employees of GBC.

**Assessment:** Teaching and learning activity that involves the evaluation of assessment tasks submitted by students against set criteria and standards that are aligned with learning outcomes. Assessment is a process that involves the development of assessment strategies, criteria and standards, marking rubrics, the marking of individual student assessments and providing appropriate feedback. Assessment also involves comparative grading and moderation.

**Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF):** The national framework that regulates Australian education and training qualifications.

**Collaboration:** The act of working jointly with at least one other individual to produce a single piece of academic work.

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**Subject:** A unit of study within a course in which a student enrolls.

## 5. Principles

GBC higher education courses of study support the development and demonstration of academic critical enquiry by students.

Academic critical enquiry is a core component of course design, course content, disciplinary scholarship and knowledge, teaching and learning activities and assessment strategies.

Academic scholarship and research conducted by GBC staff is engaged with critical enquiry.

In accordance with the *Academic Freedom Policy*, GBC academic staff and students are encouraged to engage with knowledge and ideas through free intellectual enquiry, independent thinking and critical analysis.

GBC fosters diversity in critical thought and opinion in teaching and learning, academic contexts, scholarship and research.

Academic staff and students are at all times expected to act with academic integrity when engaged in critical enquiry, in accordance with the *Academic Integrity Policy*.

## 6. Procedures

### 6.1 Critical enquiry as an academic mode

Critical enquiry is an academic mode of investigation and analysis that examines theories and concepts by considering alternative and/or conflicting perspectives and understandings. Questioning and challenging existing knowledge and ideas generates new ways of thinking, new knowledge and innovative problem-solving.

Teaching and learning activities at GBC engage students in academic critical enquiry that empowers them to question, explore, discover, problem-solve and innovate in their thinking and approach to disciplinary knowledge and subject material.

### 6.2 Enquiry-based learning

Students are encouraged to participate in a learning culture that fosters questioning and enquiry-based learning.

Teaching and learning activities and assessment tasks provide opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate critical enquiry and independent thinking skills.

### 6.3 Applied problem-solving

Teaching and learning activities and assessment tasks are designed to support students in the development and demonstration of applied problem-solving through critical enquiry.

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A critically dynamic academic learning environment engages GBC students in finding practical solutions, testing ideas and seeking innovative responses to professional, real-world contexts and situations.

### **6.4 Collaborative approaches**

Teaching and learning activities and assessment tasks ensure students participate in collaborative work with their peers. Collaborative approaches to learning are intended to generate exposure to and engagement with different viewpoints and critical thought in ways that produce strong, critically-informed academic outcomes. Collaboration occurs through classroom discussion and activities, online discussions and forums using the Moodle Learning Management System and group-based assessment tasks.

### **6.5 Governance and responsibility**

The GBC Corporate Governance Board is accountable for ensuring the development and maintenance of a higher educational environment in which academic critical enquiry informs course development, course design, teaching and learning, scholarship and research.

The GBC Academic Board is responsible for overseeing and monitoring the inclusion of academic critical enquiry in course design, teaching and learning activities, assessment strategies, learning outcomes, scholarship and research.

### **6.6 Research activity**

Academic critical enquiry is an important and invaluable part of research activity and practice, especially insofar as it generates new and original knowledge.

GBC supports academic critical enquiry through research activity by staff and students.

GBC ensures that staff who are engaged in research have access to the appropriate infrastructure and resources, including library and information technology resources.

GBC will fund the dissemination of new research, for example through conference attendance.

Research skills are incorporated into course curriculum and assessment tasks to ensure students develop research skills informed by academic critical enquiry.

GBC encourages research partnerships and collaborations.

### **6.7 Teaching and learning staff responsibilities**

Teaching and learning staff are expected to model strong academic critical enquiry skills in classroom contexts and support students in the development and demonstration of academic critical enquiry skills through classroom activities and assessment tasks.

GBC appoints teaching and learning staff who have the academic qualifications, advanced contemporary knowledge and skills to lead students in academic critical enquiry relevant to the discipline, intellectual level of the course and learning outcomes.

### **6.8 Course development and design**

Course development, including the development of learning outcomes, course content, teaching and learning materials and assessment strategies are designed to ensure that students are engaged in the development and demonstration of academic critical enquiry skills throughout their course of study.

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All courses delivered at GBC must:

- Meet the required Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) level criteria for the development of critical skills and knowledge and their application
- Demonstrate an engagement with advanced knowledge, intellectual enquiry, current knowledge and scholarship in the discipline, theoretical and conceptual frameworks, professional practice, industry requirements
- Support students in the development of independent critical thinking skills
- Enable the achievement of learning outcomes that demonstrate academic critical enquiry
- Be developed and taught by academic staff who have the qualifications, experience and expertise to lead students in academic critical enquiry
- Include classroom and assessment activities that allow students to develop and demonstrate academic critical enquiry skills and their application to knowledge
- Provide ongoing opportunities for students to participate in collaborative critical enquiry with their peers.

For more information, refer to the *Course Development and Approval Policy*, *Course Review and Continual Improvement Policy* and *Teaching and Learning Policy*.

### 7. Review

This policy will be reviewed by the Academic Board every three years, or more frequently should the Board deem it necessary.

Document History			
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1.	Policy renamed from 'Critical Inquiry Policy' 4. Definition; added information 6.4. Collaborative Approaches; revised information with additional details		