

Academic Standards Policy

1. Background

Gateway Business College (GBC), as a Higher Education Provider, strives to deliver higher education courses of outstanding academic quality and standards in accordance with the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011 (TEQSA Act 2011) and the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021* (HES Framework).

All aspects of GBC's higher education operation, including the quality of academic courses and their delivery, and the effectiveness of academic procedures and processes, is continually monitored, reviewed and improved to ensure that academic standards remain high and compliant.

2. Purpose

This policy establishes a procedural framework for maintaining high academic standards at GBC that comply with and continue to meet the requirements of the *Higher Education Standards Framework*. It identifies the responsibilities of the Academic Board and the academic committees of the Teaching and Learning Committee, the Course Advisory Committee and the Course Monitoring Committee.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all GBC staff and students, and external members of the Academic Board, academic committees and Corporate Governance Board.

4. Definitions

Academic Board: The Academic board is 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 staff: Staff engaged in higher education teaching, learning and research as employees of GBC.

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

Course Coordinator: A senior academic staff member responsible for the management, coordination and delivery of a course at GBC. A Course Coordinator is expected to hold a PhD, and is responsible for supervising academic staff teaching within a course of study, developing course design and content, reviewing course design and content, teaching into a course of study, remaining research active and contributing to the improvement of academic standards.

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Dean: The most senior member of academic staff at GBC, and the main point of contact between the Corporate Governance Board, the Academic Board, academic committees and teaching and learning staff.

Graduate attributes: The capabilities and characteristics that GBC students are expected to develop throughout their program of study and demonstrate on graduation.

Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 (HES Framework): The regulatory standards that represent the minimum acceptable requirements for the provision of higher education in or from Australia by higher education providers registered under the TEQSA Act 2011.

Higher Education Workforce Plan: A planning document that outlines GBC's higher education workforce recruitment strategy over a 5-year period in alignment with GBC's strategic objectives as a higher education provider. The *Higher Education Workforce Plan* identifies the academic and student support staffing complement needed to meet the requirements of projected student enrolment numbers and higher education course delivery.

Student: A person currently enrolled in a GBC course of study.

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

Teaching and Learning Plan: A 5-year planning document that identifies the strategic objectives and activities that inform teaching and learning practice and course delivery at GBC.

5. Principles

GBC maintains academic standards through a range of institutional mechanisms which include:

- Academic governance: leadership and oversight of academic activities by the Academic Board
- Academic monitoring committees: Teaching and Learning Committee, Course Advisory Committee, Course Monitoring Committee
- Academic benchmarking: internal and external referencing activities
- Course development, course approval, course review and ongoing improvement processes
- Higher Education teaching and learning quality assurance processes
- Processes that support student participation, progression and completion
- Research and scholarship quality assurance processes
- Institutional quality assurance systems
- Policy and procedure frameworks, compliance review and updates
- Risk management framework for academic standards and course delivery

Academic standards are upheld and protected by a policy framework which establishes and maintains:

- Academic integrity
- Academic freedom
- Academic critical inquiry

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- Admissions requirements and English language entry requirements
- Orientation, transition and academic skills support for students
- International student support
- Course Design – constructively aligned learning outcomes and assessment, course content, structure, delivery modes
- Adequate learning resource provision
- A sufficient, qualified and experienced teaching and learning staff complement
- Ongoing professional development for teaching and learning staff
- Wellbeing support and safety provisions for students and staff
- Channels for feedback and student representation
- Access to grievance, complaints and appeals resolution.

6. Procedures

6.1 Governance and accountability

The Academic Board is the highest authority responsible for the oversight of academic standards at GBC, as delegated by the Corporate Governance Board. The Academic Board provides academically-informed advice to the Corporate Governance Board.

The Academic Board is responsible for ensuring that GBC complies with the academic standards established by the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA), HES Framework and Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) - 2021.

In order to maintain high academic standards and quality, the Academic Board is responsible for:

- Supervising and approving academic course development
- Reviewing and approving new course proposals, including curriculum (learning outcomes, subjects, course content, assessment strategies)
- Approving and overseeing the implementation of academic processes and practices
- Reviewing and approving academic policies and procedures for compliance and best practice
- Ensuring courses and academic practices are benchmarked internally and against other higher education providers
- Monitoring, reviewing and improving academic courses of study in response to student, staff and stakeholder feedback
- Monitoring, reviewing and improving student attrition, retention, teaching and learning resources, teaching and learning practices, student support services, admissions processes, academic skills support in line with best practice, benchmarking and stakeholder feedback. Reporting on this to the Corporate Governance Board and making recommendations accordingly.
- Engaging in Higher Education Workforce Planning (recommending workforce positions and candidates)
- Approving the Higher Education Workforce Plan in consultation with the Corporate Governance Board
- Reviewing and approving the Teaching and Learning Plan
- Establishing committees to provide support and advice to the Academic Board and reviewing the reports provided by these committees
- Overseeing student grievances and appeals processes

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- Ensuring that academic staff are supported in the development of their discipline research and teaching and learning scholarship
- Ensuring that high standards of academic integrity are maintained at GBC.

6.2 Course design

Course design, development and approval is subject to a rigorous process of scrutiny and review. An approved and accredited course of study is subject to ongoing review and continual improvement processes. For more detailed information consult *the Course Development and Approval Policy* and *Course Review and Continual Improvement Policy*.

GBC engages internal and external expertise in the development of new courses and the review of courses in delivery mode to ensure high academic standards are maintained, regulatory requirements are met and students are engaged in higher education courses that are aligned to graduate employment opportunities.

Course design and development processes ensure:

- All aspects of a course are benchmarked (see *Benchmarking Policy*)
- Admission requirements and pathways are aligned to academic preparation and proficiency levels for successful student participation
- Qualifications and learning outcomes are aligned to AQF levels
- Learning outcomes and assessments are aligned to AQF levels
- Course content and structure demonstrates progressive and coherent teaching and learning
- Course content is engaged with contemporary knowledge and scholarship, academic theory, concepts and critical inquiry, industry practice
- Eligibility for professional accreditation
- Staffing requirements for teaching and learning are adequately identified.

6.3 Teaching and learning quality and standards

Teaching and learning quality and standards are maintained through leadership and oversight by the GBC Academic Board. Responsibility for the day-to-day monitoring, review and improvement of teaching and learning quality and standards is delegated to the Teaching and Learning Committee, Course Advisory Committee and Course Monitoring Committee. For more detailed information consult the *GBC Corporate Governance Charter* and *Academic Governance Policy*.

The Dean, Course Coordinators and all teaching and learning staff are responsible for ensuring that high standards in teaching and learning quality are continually maintained.

GBC recruits outstanding teaching and learning staff, whose qualifications, experience and professional expertise support the delivery of higher education courses engaged with contemporary disciplinary knowledge, ongoing scholarship and developments within the professional sphere. Led by the Dean and Course Coordinators, GBC teaching and learning staff have the knowledge and skills to meet the educational needs of students, including the ability to engage students in intellectual knowledge and academic critical inquiry at a level appropriate to the course of study. For more detailed information consult the *Higher Education Workforce Plan*, *Higher Education Workforce Policy*, *Teaching and Learning Plan*, *Teaching and Learning Policy*.

GBC is committed to small class sizes to maintain high standards in teaching and learning and support strong student academic outcomes.

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A program of professional development ensures teaching and learning staff maintain high level knowledge and skills in contemporary higher education practice, including teaching for student engagement, adapting teaching methods to meet the diverse needs of the GBC student cohort, best practice assessment strategies and activities. For more detailed information consult the *Professional Development Policy*.

GBC provides learning resources that meet course requirements, support teaching and learning activities and enable students to participate fully in class, study and research. This includes well-maintained and accessible teaching rooms, on-campus and online library resources, the Moodle LMS to supplement face-to-face teaching and learning, student access to hardware and software resources specific to subject requirements and assessment tasks, on-campus study spaces.

Student Feedback on Teaching Surveys are implemented in each subject each semester to obtain data on the impact of GBC's strategies for maintaining high academic standards and meeting student needs; for internal benchmarking purposes, quality assurance and improvement processes.

6.4 Benchmarking and external referencing

GBC conducts benchmarking activities with a focus on external referencing comparative analysis to ensure our academic standards are comparable to other education providers within the Australian higher education sector. This includes universities, private higher education providers, sector standards and best practice guidelines.

Benchmarking conducted by GBC for all courses of study compares:

- Course design: course content, structure, admission requirements and pathways, learning outcomes, assessment strategies, student workload, delivery modes, teaching and learning activities, exit pathways, qualifications, professional accreditation requirements, graduate employment opportunities
- Learning resources and facilities
- Teaching and learning staff qualifications, expertise, experience
- Teaching and learning practice
- Rates for student progression and completion, attrition, retention, academic achievement levels, student experience and satisfaction
- Internal moderation of student assessment tasks and final grades.

The GBC Course Advisory Committee is responsible for conducting external course benchmarking activity on courses in development, and on accredited courses as part of the regular review cycle. For more detailed information consult the *Course Development and Approval Policy* and *Course Review and Continual Improvement Policy*.

The GBC Course Monitoring Committee is responsible for conducting internal and external benchmarking activity on rates for student progression and completion, attrition, retention, academic achievement levels, student experience and satisfaction.

The GBC Teaching and Learning Committee is responsible for conducting internal and external benchmarking activity on teaching and learning staff qualifications, expertise and experience, teaching and learning practice, learning resources and facilities, assessment and moderation.

The three (3) academic committees work together to review benchmarking activity

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findings, report the findings to the Academic Board and recommend strategies to improve academic standards.

For more detailed information consult the *Benchmarking Policy*.

6.5 Moderation of assessment tasks and final grades

To ensure consistent academic standards are maintained in the award of marks and grades, GBC moderates all student assessment tasks. For more detailed information consult the *Moderation Policy*.

GBC is committed to ensuring the grading system provides accurate reports of student learning achievements that are valid and reliable representations of each student's capabilities in relation to clearly articulated learning outcomes, assessment criteria and standards. We are committed to ensuring these grades are consistent with national and international benchmarks and that grades are comparable across the courses we deliver. For more detailed information consult the *Award of Grades Policy*.

7. Records

Records associated with this policy will be maintained according to the Records Management Policy.

8. Related legislation

- Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) Act 2011
- TEQSA Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021
- Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF).
- The National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 (the National Code 2018)

9. Review

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

Version Control

| Document History | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------|
| Document Name | Copyright Policy | | |
| Document Code | GGB006 | | |
| Document Owner | CEO | Date Developed | 11.07.2017 |
| Approval | Academic Board | Date of Approval | 01.03.2017 |
| Related Documents | Academic Integrity Policy Compliance Framework Policy Intellectual Property Policy Research Ethics and Integrity Policy Staff Academic Misconduct Policy Student Academic Misconduct Policy Teaching and Learning Policy | | |

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| Version No. | Summary of Changes | Date |
|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 1. | | 01.03.2017 |
| 2. | Policy Reviewed and new policy code applied, details of policy related record and Related legislation inserted | 23.03.2023 |