

Distinctive Graduate Qualities Policy

INTRODUCTION

The University is committed to providing an excellent education and experience for students, which is in line with its mission and values. To that end, the University has developed an overarching set of Distinctive Graduate Qualities that will maximise the potential for Graduates to make valuable contributions to the future of Australia and other communities that they may serve.

Based upon an analysis of future social and workforce requirements partnered with the University's values, Distinctive Graduate Qualities inform curriculum design, extra-curricular activities, and students' critical self-reflection of their learning journey.

Distinctive Graduate Qualities manifest as graduates seek to improve the world we live in by drawing upon their University learning. As such, the Distinctive Graduate Qualities will apply to students enrolled in Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses, inclusive of coursework and research. Given that Distinctive Graduate Qualities are not addressed or assessed solely through course curriculum, they may apply irrespective of the level or volume of the course. A student's attainment of the Distinctive Graduate Qualities will be enhanced through longer periods of learning and at higher levels of learning.

STATEMENT OF AUTHORITY

The authority behind this policy is the [Charles Darwin University Act 2003](#) part 3, section 15.

COMPLIANCE

This is a compliance requirement under the:

- [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\)](#);
- [Australian Qualifications Framework](#)

INTENT

The purpose of this policy is to define the distinctive qualities exemplified by the University's higher education bachelor degree graduates.

RELEVANT DEFINITIONS

In the context of this document

Academic Accreditation means the process for approval by an accrediting authority of a program of learning leading to an AQF qualification using the quality assurance standards for the relevant education and training sector;

Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) means the framework for regulated qualifications in the Australian education and training system, as agreed by the Commonwealth, State and Territory ministerial council with responsibility for higher education;

Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) means the Australian Government’s national regulator for Australia’s vocational education and training sector;

Course means a formally approved/accredited programme of learning that leads to the award of a qualification;

Higher Degree by Research (HDR) means post-graduate degrees that require a major research component and may include subjects to develop research and critical analysis skills;

HE Course means a course that is accredited by an Accrediting Authority, and results in a Higher Education Award recognised by the Australian Qualification Framework;

Student means a person enrolled in a formal program of learning in an educational institution and/or a workplace setting;

Unit offering means an accredited unit (code and title), teaching period (year and semester), location and modality (internal, external or intensive); and

VET Course means a course that is either included within National Training Packages, or separately accredited by ASQA, and results in a Vocational Education and Training (VET) Award recognised by the AQF.

POLICY

Distinctive Graduate Qualities

The suite of Distinctive Graduate Qualities includes four (4) determined by the University, and one (1) determined by each individual student.

- **CDU graduates are adaptable in complex, dynamic and challenging environments** – Interpreted broadly, this attribute includes changes that are human, environmental and technological. Adaptability may be fostered through developing the habit and skills for critical inquiry and consequential and/or anticipatory action.
- **CDU graduates are committed to professionalism and ethical values** – The majority of the University’s Higher Education coursework degrees are professionally accredited. However, the concept of professionalism and ethical values is not limited to operating within the code of conduct or other regulatory dimensions of a professional body. Rather, it extends to a multidisciplinary understanding of professional and ethical challenges and responsibilities.
- **CDU graduates are appreciative and understanding of Indigenous Australians** – Students will develop an informed understanding of Australia’s Indigenous peoples, the gap between their situation and those of non-Indigenous Australians, an appreciation of the mutual benefits that can arise from closing these gaps, and a commitment to act accordingly, irrespective of a student’s cultural background or identity.
- **CDU graduates are committed to a sustainable world** – Interpreted broadly, this attribute includes sustainability of the environment (for example food production), cultures (for example languages) and businesses, and addressing the tensions between these in a manner that ensures the long-term survival of the human race.

- **Student-identified Distinctive Graduate Quality** – Each student is required to self-identify a graduate quality that they will commit to developing during the course of their studies. The Distinctive Graduate Quality should meet the following criteria:
 - Aspirational for the student;
 - Ethically sound; and
 - Aligned to the requirements of the near-future world.

Each student will identify this Distinctive Graduate Quality in the first four (4) weeks of the first semester of a course. Assistance is available to the students through the Distinctive Graduate Qualities website as well as advice and support from academic staff members on request.

The purpose of this Distinctive Graduate Quality is to encourage a proactive approach to, and ownership of, the student’s own learning journey in a manner that is tailored to the needs and aspirations of the individual learner.

Addressing Distinctive Graduate Qualities

Student exposure to the factors that will help them develop the Distinctive Graduate Qualities will be primarily through the formal course curriculum. However, the University learning experience is not limited to curriculum, and some aspects of the Distinctive Graduate Qualities may be facilitated through extra-curricular activities.

Development of the Distinctive Graduate Qualities by students is holistic and the methods by which they may be promoted are cumulative, rather than exclusive.

Curriculum Units

Wherever appropriate, generic and disciplinary interpretations of Distinctive Graduate Qualities will be addressed through course units, including research projects and theses. This may be by way of aligned unit learning outcomes, content, learning activities and methods of learner engagement.

In the case of VET courses, where the curriculum is largely determined through the national Training Packages, a larger emphasis may be placed upon using methods of training delivery to incorporate a focus on the Distinctive Graduate Qualities.

Extracurricular Activities

From time to time, the University will provide extra-curricular activities to students (such as Orientation activities, public seminars, professional training opportunities and community service activities) to assist a student in developing the Distinctive Graduate Qualities.

Course Accreditation and Distinctive Graduate Qualities

All new course proposals should demonstrate how students would be encouraged to develop the Distinctive Graduate Qualities. It is not necessary to demonstrate in definitive terms a causal relationship between the University’s formal learning activities and the measured acquisition of the Distinctive Graduate Qualities. Rather, course proposals must demonstrate that the students are exposed to factors that compel them to reflect upon their personal relationship with the Distinctive Graduate Qualities, and its evolution over time.

This exposure may be through a combination of:

- Common, core and specialist elective units, including capstone units and other work integrated learning units;
- Research; and
- Other associated extracurricular activities.

Assessment of Distinctive Graduate Qualities

Distinctive Graduate Qualities are aspirations measured formatively rather than summative destinations measured summatively, hence they are qualities rather than outcomes. Progress is measured against previous status, both quantitatively and qualitatively, over time – including through self-assessment, rather than on a scale towards a fixed end end-point, such as 100%.

The two (2) primary methods by which the University will determine that the graduate has made progress towards the Distinctive Graduate Qualities, is set out below.

- **Satisfactory Course Progress** – Each accredited course provides the necessary conditions for students to progress in their personal development against the University’s four (4) Distinctive Graduate Qualities. Course progression does not address the student self-identified Distinctive Graduate Quality. Accordingly, satisfactory progress in the course will be regarded as satisfactory minimum progress against the Distinctive Graduate Qualities.
- **Self-Reflection and Peer Feedback** – Development towards the Distinctive Graduate Qualities is open ended and influenced by factors broader than the curriculum. As such, while satisfactory course progression ensures a minimum standard of attainment, the University encourages students to pursue a higher standard.

Each student must provide a critical reflection of their progress against each of the Distinctive Graduate Qualities at the end of each semester. Self-reflection will be strengthened through a process of peer feedback, whereby students work together to explore the meaning, relevance and development of Distinctive Graduate Qualities.

This provides the student with a means of determining change over time, and academic staff members with a means for validating that progress.

Recognition of Distinctive Graduate Qualities

The extent of progress against the Distinctive Graduate Qualities are commensurate with the level of the Award conferred and will be listed on the graduate’s Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement (AHEGS).

ESSENTIAL SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Internal

[Common Course Rules - Associate Degree](#)

[Common Course Rules - Bachelor Degree](#)

[Common Course Rules - Bachelor Honours Degree](#)

[Common Course Rules - Diploma](#)

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[Common Course Rules - Doctor of Philosophy](#)

[Common Course Rules - Graduate Certificate](#)

[Common Course Rules - Graduate Diploma](#)

[Common Course Rules - Masters by Coursework](#)

[Common Course Rules - Masters by Research](#)

External

[Australian Qualifications Framework](#)

Document History and Version Control

Last amendment:	15 Dec 2017	Next Review:	Mar 2020
Sponsor:	Pro Vice-Chancellor, Education and Student Success		
Contact Officer:	Pro Vice-Chancellor, Education and Student Success		

Version	Date Approved	Approved by	Brief Description
1.00	29 Mar 2017	Academic Board	Creation of original document and upload to CDU website.
1.01	20 Jun 2017	Governance	Minor changes to wording, grammar and formatting
1.02	15 Dec 2017	Governance	Conversion to new Governance template due to new University branding