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Research School of Accounting

Honours Program Guidelines 2017

1. THE HONOURS YEAR

These guidelines describe the requirements of the Honours program undertaken by students who wish to complete the Accounting Honours Specialisation (ACCT-HSPC). This Honours specialisation is taught by the Research School of Accounting. The Honours year in the Research School of Accounting involves advanced studies in the fields of accounting, information systems, management, marketing, international business, commercial law and taxation. Private sector employers, such as public accounting firms, banks, management consultants, stock brokers; and public sector employers, such as Commonwealth, state, territory and local governments, place a high value on advanced studies. The exposure to research through an honours program opens a pathway to higher degree studies, such as a Masters or PhD degree, in addition to career opportunities not generally available to pass degree students.

2. ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

An AQF Level 7 Bachelor Degree, or international equivalent, completed within the last two years that satisfies the admission requirements described in the Accounting Honours Specialisation below:

- An accounting major or equivalent with a weighted average mark equivalent to an ANU 70 per cent calculated from the 36 units (i.e. 0.75 EFTSL) of courses eligible for inclusion in an ANU accounting major or equivalent, excluding 1000-level courses (i.e. introductory undergraduate courses), with the highest marks.
- The number of places available in the program may be limited by the Dean due to supervisory capacity, and the admission to Honours is with the written approval of the Honours Convener.

3. PROGRAM STRUCTURE

To complete an Honours degree with the Accounting Honours Specialisation, students enrol in the particular Honours program consistent with their completed pass-level degree. Students who have completed a Bachelor of Accounting at the pass-level (AQF Level 7) enrol in the Bachelor of Accounting (Hons) program (HACCT). Students who have completed a Bachelor of Commerce at the pass-level (AQF Level 7), or any other degree satisfying the entry requirements to the Accounting Honours Specialisation, enrol in the BComm (Hons) program (HCOMM). The Accounting Honours Specialisation exists as an approved sequence of courses and thesis that satisfies the requirements of the particular Honours program.

The program involves four advanced courses and the completion of a research thesis as follows:

Semester 1 2017

- Three courses (comprising 6 units each) as follows:
 1. [BUSN4013](#) Seminar in Research Methods in Commerce
 2. [BUSN4007](#) Analysis of Financial Reporting
 3. [EMET4007](#) Econometric I: Econometric Methods or [STAT4038](#) Regression Modelling, or approved alternate Statistics / Econometrics Course(s).
- Preparation and presentation of thesis proposal (part of the assessment for [BUSN4013](#))

Semester 2 2017

1. [BUSN4010](#) Special Topics in Commerce
- Completion of Honours Thesis – **Due 12 noon Wednesday Oct 25 2017**

The thesis component of the program requires enrolment in [BUSN4500](#) Accounting Honours Thesis (24 units). Students will enrol in this course in both semesters, with a 6 unit weighting in Semester 1, and an 18 unit weighting in Semester 2.

4. MAJOR DISCIPLINES

Research in the Honours year builds on undergraduate studies in auditing, financial accounting and reporting, and management accounting. Areas of interests include, but are not restricted to, auditor's independence, assurance services, external reporting, international accounting, capital markets and accounting, corporate governance, accounting regulation, accounting history, taxation policy, sustainability accounting and reporting, financial management and organisational performance in private, public and not-for-profit sectors.

5. THE THESIS

The Thesis Document

The thesis is a critical part of the program because it provides evidence of the student's ability to undertake original research under supervision. The research thesis is developed over the entire year with the main emphasis occurring in the second semester.

Each student must present a thesis proposal to the School in their first semester (this normally occurs during the final weeks of the course [BUSN4013](#) Seminar in Research Methods in Commerce). The

proposal outlines the problem to be researched, the motivation for the research, proposed research method, data sources and the work completed to date. The purpose of this presentation is to provide the student with valuable, timely feedback and advice on their choice of topic, the work completed so far, and the work required for completion of the thesis.

It is always a challenge to identify and develop a relevant and interesting research topic. The staff in our School will assist students on topic selection. The following are some examples of previous thesis topics:

- *The Disclosure of non-GAAP Measures in IPO Prospectuses after the Relaxation of SEC Interpretive Guidance: Informative or Opportunistic Misreporting?*
- *Investment Banking Incentives and Analysts Optimism: The Effect of Global Settlement*
- *Earnings Management and the Chinese Split Share Reform*
- *Do Public Signals of Earnings Management Incentives Affect Analysts Forecast Efficiency*
- *Antecedents of Budget Goal Difficulty*
- *Australian Multinational Enterprises and International Acquisitions: An Investigation of Tax-Motivated Income Shifting'*
- *Excess CEO remuneration and monitoring by non-executive directors*
- *Have Auditors become more Conservative during the Global Financial Crisis?*
- *Did the adoption of IFRS reduce home country bias in investment portfolio allocations?*
- *Corporate Visibility, Imitation and Environmental Disclosure*

Supervision

A supervisor is appointed after consultation with the student, the Honours Coordinator and relevant staff. Not all staff members will be available to act as supervisors in a particular semester / year. Supervisor selection is important and students should be encouraged to initially discuss their research interests with a wide range of staff.

The supervisor will help the student to identify and define a research topic, to identify an appropriate research methodology and requisite research materials/data. Students will be responsible for keeping in contact with the supervisor. They can expect to attend meetings with the supervisor, for example at least once a month, to discuss the work done and to plan for subsequent work. Students will also be expected to keep in touch with the supervisor through the exchange of written work and/or via email. Communication through the exchange and discussion of written work provides evidence of the work done and ideas pursued.

Students should discuss the work schedule with their supervisors and set out a timetable for preparation and completion of the thesis. The following is a typical example of the work schedule that students will be expected to follow during the honours year:

1 st month	Selection and definition of topic, initial discussion with supervisor
2 nd – 3 rd month	Exploration of literature, the context of the topic and research method
4 th month	Presentation of thesis proposal
4 th – 7 th month	Collection and analysis of data, thesis writing
8 th month	Additional research and writing up the first draft of the thesis
9 th month	Rewriting and submission of final draft

The schedule above is a guide only. Some topics may require an earlier start to the data collection and analysis process.

Thesis Preparation

Thesis structure may vary between research topics and fields. Accordingly, this section provides general guidelines on this area. However, the instructions below regarding format, the content of title pages and thesis length are mandatory.

Format

The thesis is to be printed on white A4 paper. Text is to be double-spaced, with margins of 3 centimetres on all sides. Pages are to be printed on one side only. Text is to be in a standard, readable 12 point font. No exceptions to this format will be considered.

Structure

Thesis structure is largely up to the candidate and supervisor, however, the following structure is deemed appropriate:

- Title Page
- Declaration of Originality
- Acknowledgments
- Abstract
- Table of Contents
- Table of Tables
- Table of Figures
- Chapters (including introduction and conclusion)
- References
- Appendices

Title Page

The title page should list the title of the thesis in full, your name and degree and a submission date and statement “This thesis is submitted as a partial requirement for the degree of Bachelor of XXXX (Honours) at The Australian National University”, such as shown on page 5 (assuming the candidate is enrolled in the Bachelor of Commerce (Honours)).

Declaration

Students are required to precede the main thesis document with a declaration of content originality. The declaration certifies that the thesis is the author’s own work and that all sources have been cited.

Acknowledgments

This section allows the author to thank others for their assistance in researching and writing the thesis.

Length

The thesis has an upper limit of 100 typed A4 pages. All tables, diagrams, figures, charts or exhibits should be included within the page limit. This limit excludes references and bibliographies,

appendices, table of tables, table of figures and table of contents. Theses should not exceed this limit, nor fall significantly below it. No thesis will be accepted if the length limit is exceeded.

Title of Thesis in Bigger and Bold Font

Your Full Name

This thesis is submitted as a partial requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Commerce
(Honours)

The Australian National University

Month, Year

Referencing

All unoriginal material must be adequately referenced. The citation method must be consistent throughout the thesis. Students are advised to select a referencing method which is consistent with the published literature in their discipline and consult their supervisors for the appropriate method.

Binding and Submission – Due 12 noon Wednesday October 25 2017

Students must submit four bound copies of their thesis. The two copies for examination should be spiral bound and the remaining two must be cloth-bound before submission. It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that they allow enough time between conclusion of writing and the binding process. Binding must be robust enough to allow for easy perusal of the material. After marking, students may submit errata sheets as part of their library copies.

Examination

An assessment panel consisting of three members is appointed to examine the theses. Two of the panel members will examine each thesis with the third member as Chair of the panel.

Expectations Regarding the Scholarly Quality of the Thesis

The thesis should represent an original contribution to knowledge in a business-related discipline. The research question(s) considered should be clearly and precisely stated early in the first chapter of the thesis. The subsequent review of the literature, theory/hypothesis development and analysis of empirical evidence should be related clearly to the research question(s) identified in the first chapter of the thesis, and conclusions drawn must include a consideration of the extent to which the thesis has contributed to knowledge relevant to the stated research questions.

Other relevant considerations include:

- **Demonstrated communication skills:** the thesis must be professionally presented and written in scholarly English. Candidates should aim to have prepared a complete draft of their thesis in sufficient to allow detailed proof-reading and editing. Tables and figures should be clearly and consistently labelled (learning how to use 'styles', 'captions' and 'cross-references' in a word-processing package will assist greatly in this regard). In-text references, and those provided in the bibliography/reference list should be formatted consistently and unambiguously.
- **Originality of Contribution:** The thesis is an addition to knowledge in a specific topic area. The thesis contributes by extending knowledge and understanding about a problem, process or phenomenon. It is your responsibility to demonstrate this originality both in your review of prior research literature and in your presentation of the thesis itself. In this context, all material drawn from or based upon existing studies must be appropriately and clearly cited in the usual fashion. Such disclosures are *not limited* to references to prior *published* work. If data (or part thereof) was collected and/or processed by a person other than the candidate, this must be disclosed. The purpose of this is to clarify the candidate's contribution to the thesis.
- **Internal and External Validity:** There should be a clear logical connection between the research question(s) and the specific propositions/hypotheses/arguments advanced in the thesis. This does not imply that candidates must formally state hypotheses and test them. It is recognised that research in some disciplines/fields is not suited to a formal hypothesis testing methodology. However, all quality research should be structured and argued such that the relation of each paragraph to the purpose of the thesis is clear. Furthermore, the relationship between empirical evidence presented (regardless of whether such evidence is of a quantitative or qualitative nature) and the stated research question(s) must be clearly identified, and any limitations of the empirical proxies employed must be acknowledged and explained.

- **Statistical Modelling/Evidence (where relevant):** Statistical methods employed should be appropriate to the nature of the data examined. The statistical method used should be described, and the properties of data to which the method is applicable identified. Prior to testing, the properties of the sample should be analysed and possible breaches of the properties assumed by the statistical method employed identified, discussed and where possible supplementary testing methods considered. Results should be presented professionally in tabular form and discussed with specific reference to the relevant table(s). See journal articles relevant to the topic for examples of professionally presented tables. Candidates should not simply 'cut and paste' the raw output from a statistical application (e.g. SPSS, Stata) into their thesis (some editing will be needed). Sensitivity analysis is usually highly desirable.
- **Candidates are not assessed on whether the hypotheses/propositions/arguments are supported by your evidence.** If the empirical evidence presented fails to support the hypotheses proposed, this is not in itself a problem. Candidates should discuss and analyse their evidence in a balanced fashion, and where hypothesis have not been supported, consider possible reasons for this.

6. ETHICAL CLEARANCE

Any research involving humans, including research conducted through the use of questionnaires survey, interviews or experiments, needs to be reviewed by the ANU Human Research Ethics Committee before it commences. Students whose research requires ethical clearance have to submit an application via the ANU Research Enterprise System ARIES. This generally includes a completed application form and a copy of the research instrument such as the questionnaire or interview questions. The on-line application form is self-classifying in respect of the level of ethical risk into three-levels:

2. Low-risk protocols E1 (Expedited Level 1 – E1) engage participants only in activities that they would encounter in normal everyday life.
3. Low-risk protocols E2 (Expedited Level 2 – E2) engage participants who are fully competent and not vulnerable in research settings that are in a relatively benign way not what the participants would encounter in everyday life.
4. High-risk protocols (Full review - F) engage participants who are in some way vulnerable, or research settings that a particularly unusual or uncomfortable.

Most the applications in the College of Business and Economics will fall into the Level E1 will be reviewed and approved by the Chair of the ANU Human Research Ethics Committee. A low-risk protocol will normally entail no request for adjustment. If no adjustment is requested, a low-risk protocol normally will be approved within 5 working days of submission. However, low-risk protocols (Level E2) will be considered and approved by a Delegated Ethics Review Committee (DERC) during the set meeting times. High-risk protocols will be considered and approved by the ANU Human Research Ethics Committee

Students are advised to plan ahead in the early stage of their thesis development to take into consideration the time required for ethical clearance (see <https://services.anu.edu.au/research-support/ethics-integrity/before-you-begin>)

Further information regarding human research ethics and application procedures can be found at ANU Research Office web site <https://services.anu.edu.au/research-support/ethics-integrity>

7. GRADE STRUCTURE

A candidate's final Honours grade will be determined by the weighted average marks awarded in the various courses and thesis completed. The relevant weights reflect the number of units attaching to the course / thesis. The thesis has a total weighting of 24 units, and thus represents 50% of your overall Honours grade. The following grade structures apply to the thesis, coursework units and the final mark:

- First Class Honours (80% and above)
- Second Class Honours, Division A (70%-79%)
- Second Class Honours, Division B (60%-69%)
- Third Class Honours (50%-59%)
- Fail (Less than 50%)

8. SCHOLARSHIPS

A number of scholarships and prizes ranging up to \$15,000 in value are awarded specifically to both Australian and international Honours students. Further information can be found on the [College of Business and Economics Honours Scholarship](#) webpage.

9. REIMBURSEMENT OF THESIS PRODUCTION EXPENSES AND TEXTBOOK COSTS (MAX \$750)

The School will reimburse candidates for the costs of thesis production (binding / printing etc) and for the cost of textbooks prescribed in courses enrolled under the Honours program up to a maximum of \$750. You will need to present invoices / receipts to make a claim under this provision. A copy of the reimbursement claim form is provided in the Orientation Pack.

10. SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

The University offers a number of support services for students. Information on these is available online from <http://students.anu.edu.au/studentlife/>