

BPPE(Hons) - Your questions answered

The Program

What is an Honours program?

Honours at UQ can take two different forms:

- An additional one year of study following a 3 year bachelor's degree; or
- A single qualification of at least four years duration.

The BPPE(Hons) is the second of these: the *entire program* is an Honours program, and everybody who satisfies the program requirements will graduate with a Class of Honours. The fourth year is not the 'Honours year'; it is part of the entire BPPE(Hons) program.

How does Honours grading work? Is it based on a cumulative GPA of all subjects or only those taken in the Honours year?

Your program rules show how your Class of Honours is calculated.

If you commenced in 2017 or 2018 and remain under these rules, your Class of Honours is calculated on the basis of the GPA over 40 units of the highest graded courses at level 2 or higher from the program, with the 40 units identified as all level 3 and 4 courses completed, along with the highest graded level 2 courses. For example if you have completed 36 units of Level 3 and 4 courses, 4 units of Level 2 courses will count towards your Class of Honours calculation.

If you commenced in 2019 or have transitioned to the 2019 rules, your Class of Honours is calculated on the basis of the GPA over 32 units of the highest graded courses at level 2 or higher from the program, with the 32 units identified as all level 3 and 4 courses completed, along with the highest graded level 2 courses. For example if you have completed 20 units of Level 3 and 4 courses, 12 units of Level 2 courses will count towards your Class of Honours calculation.

Please refer to the UQ Policy and Procedures Library, section [3.50.12 Bachelor Honours Degrees](#) for further detail about Honours classification. Here are the current cut-offs:

GPA	Class of Honours
6.200 – 7.000	Class I
5.650 – 6.199	Class IIA
5.000 – 5.649	Class IIB
4.000 – 4.999	Class IIIA
<4.000	Class IIIB

Source: UQ Policy and Procedures Library <<https://ppl.app.uq.edu.au/content/3.50.12-bachelor-honours-degrees>> accessed June 12 2019.

If you major in one of the three disciplines (Politics, Philosophy, or Economics), can you do your Honours in that discipline?

No, you **cannot** enrol in the disciplinary Honours years. This is because the BPPE(Hons) integrates three discipline areas, whereas the other Honours programs have different entry requirements and different structures from the fourth year of the BPPE(Hons) degree.

How late is too late to declare/change your major?

Majors should be declared as early as possible and at the latest prior to enrolling in Semester one of year two, as this is when Part D or major course selection choices (Part C) are made according to the program planner. Note that you can opt to pursue a “no major” pathway.

For any queries you may have about the administration of your program, please contact the BEL Faculty Student Experience Team to be put in touch with your dedicated Student Experience Officer for the BPPE(Hons) program. Your Student Experience Officer can provide expert information on a wide range of matters relating to your program including but not limited to: declaring or changing your major; understanding your program rules and requirements; transitioning from the pre-2019 rules to the 2019 onwards requirements; credit; and, program planning. The easiest way to contact your Student Experience Officer is by emailing bel@uq.edu.au.

PPES 4201 Team Project & PPES4202 Thesis

Should I select Thesis or Team Project?

You have the opportunity to select either:

- PPE4202 PPE Thesis (6 units); or
- PPE4201 Team Project (2 units) with any two other eligible courses.

There is **no** requirement or expectation that students seeking first-class Honours should select the PPE Thesis.

Students in both courses are trained in appropriate research and delivery methods, and some training sessions may be combined.

Neither course has a final exam.

If you prefer Team Project (2 units), you will need to decide on two other courses from Part D of the course list.

When do we choose between Thesis and Team Project?

Your selection of PPE Thesis or Team Project will impact on your course selection from Year 4, Semester 1 and *probably Year 3, Semester 2*. You should contact bel@uq.edu.au for program planning advice if you are concerned or not following your program plan.

You need to make the final decision when you are enrolling in your Year 4, Semester 2 courses. We encourage you to think about this long before the Semester 2 enrolment due date.

What exactly is a Thesis and what is the expectation for BPPE(Hons) students?

PPES4202: A Thesis is an independent piece of research of between 8,000-10,000 words. Assessment is based primarily on the Thesis, but some marks may be allocated to achieving milestones (key steps toward a Thesis being reached) by a certain date.

The expectation for the PPE Thesis is that you select a wicked policy problem, and write an individual thesis that reflects the politics, philosophy and economics aspects of that problem. The PPE Thesis students will have a regular seminar at which they will discuss research methods, logistical aspects of thesis writing, and have an opportunity to obtain feedback from disciplinary experts. There will be an information session for interested students in November 2019.

How and when should a potential supervisor be approached?

As the PPE Thesis is structured differently from other thesis programs at UQ, you will not approach supervisors individually. Instead, you will obtain feedback from disciplinary experts at your regular PPES4202 seminar.

Has the GPA cut-off for a Thesis been confirmed?

As an exception to the standard rule, students who commenced in the BPPE(Hons) program in 2017 and 2018 are permitted to undertake the Thesis provided that they have a passing GPA (i.e. 4.0).

Students commencing from 2019 onwards must meet the GPA restriction of 6.25 to undertake PPES4202.

Do we have designated coursework as a part of the 6-unit Thesis subject or is that decided by your Thesis supervisor?

PPES4202 PPE Thesis contains no coursework. Attendance at regular seminars to discuss research methods, logistical aspects of writing a thesis, and to obtain feedback is expected.

How do we write a Thesis proposal, and does it have to contain any specific information?

You don't need to write a Thesis proposal. At the information session in November 2019, a list of wicked problems will be available. You should choose one problem, provide a tentative title for your thesis, write up to 100 words of description confirming the availability of source material, and submit this to the Course Coordinator before the end of 2019.

How is the Thesis marked? How do grades for the Thesis contribute to the Honours GPA?

The Thesis will be marked by two examiners drawn from Politics, Philosophy and Economics, depending on the thesis topic. The average mark is used as the final mark.

The grade for the Thesis (6 units) counts as three eligible two-unit level 4 courses in calculating the program GPA.

Will a PPE Thesis facilitate a post-graduate pathway into each of the respective disciplines?

It is not the Thesis alone that facilitates entry to postgraduate programs. Completion of the four-year BPPE(Hons) program, regardless of whether you take the Thesis or the Team Project, will open pathways to enrolment in Masters programs across UQ and elsewhere.

Entry into a PhD program in each of the three disciplines may be possible with the Team Project, or may require completion of the Thesis, depending on the discipline you are interested in. Please check with the administering School regarding eligibility and entry requirements for a PhD program.

Are there awards or prizes currently available for BPPE(Hons) students?

The RW Staveley Prize, an award of around \$1000, is given to the student with the best performance in the suite of PPES coded courses, PPES1101 Politics, Philosophy, Economics 1, PPES2101 Politics, Philosophy, Economics 2, PPES3101 Politics, Philosophy, Economics 3, and PPES4101 Politics, Philosophy, Economics 4. (Richard Staveley inspired many UQ students from the 1960s to the 1990s, and former students have donated to the fund.)

Team Project

What is involved in Team Project?

The exact format and scheduling of class contact for PPES4201 will depend on numbers enrolled. The Team Project involves groups of three or four students participating in a group presentation and writing a research report.

While assessment is still being determined, it will likely be based on participation and presentation in and on an individual essay, a component of the larger written research report. A panel of staff from the three PPE schools will assess the presentations and reports.

Topics will be provided by the Course Coordinator.

Although teamwork is involved in both the presentation and the report, your final grade for the course will depend more on your individual contribution to each.

There will be class contact early in the semester to form the groups and discuss group dynamics.

PPES4999 - Professional Practicum

Does it exist, and how/when can we do it?

PPES4999 is an elective course which will be offered for the first time in Semester 2 2020. Entry to the course will be by application and subject to a student securing or having completed a suitable internship. Some of the programs offered by the BEL Faculty's Student Employability Team (SET) may be able to count towards the course. Further details on PPES4999 will be sent to students in October 2019 with an information session to follow in November 2019. Professor Alicia Rambaldi is the Course Coordinator in 2020.

PPES4101 - Politics, Philosophy, Economics 4

What will this course contain, and will it be directly related to the Thesis or Team Project? Will this course prepare us for Honours via literature review or research skills/data analysis?

There's no connection between PPES4101 and the Thesis. The delivery and content of PPES4101 will follow the same approach as the other PPES courses. There is currently no plan to incorporate the teaching of research skills or data analysis into the course.

Suitable training in research and presenting written work is provided in the Thesis and in the Team Project. The expected level of analysis in Thesis or Team Project is consistent with the level of training provided.

PPES4201 Team Project

Current course description of PPES4201:

A capstone course that requires students to work in teams and to identify and address one of the world's 'wicked problems' from an integrated perspective across political, philosophical and economic considerations. Team presentations are made to a panel drawn from senior academics within the university. Students are also required to write an individual assignment focusing more specifically on one element of the team project, enhancing the analysis of either the political, philosophical or economic aspect.

Disclaimers:

Class size may affect team size, team composition and the number of teams. Class size may also affect the form and scheduling of presentations.

The required word length of an individual's written work will depend on its weight in the overall assessment. The higher the weight for written work, the longer the word length (i.e. the shorter the written assignment, the greater the weight of other assessment types).

The Course Coordinator will have some flexibility in setting exact assessment weights and formats.

Detailed marking rubrics are not yet available.

Key points:

1. Team Project combines *individual written work* and a *team presentation*. Good teamwork enhances the scores awarded to both. The team work is involved primarily in *doing* the assessable work well; team work itself is not *directly* assessed.
2. *Written work* is assessed individually.

Each team-member's individual research assignment should be around 2000+ words. These individual assignments are not chapters of a fully integrated research report; thus they are not marked as combined written work.

Duplication, of course, is not permitted, but two team members may approach the same issue in different ways or different issues in the same way.

Each student may write in report style or in essay style.

It is not required that individuals write in the style of their major, if any. The genre reflects the wicked problem, the team's indicative division of tasks, the approach the student takes, and the skill set of the student.

It is not required that each team member takes a different disciplinary perspective. (There is no need for a wicked problem to be divided on disciplinary lines where one does the economics, one does the politics and one does the philosophy.)

Each assignment may have a dominant disciplinary approach, but the expectation is that there would at least be some trans-disciplinary sensibility.

Teamwork and written work are related: discussion and the sharing of ideas should help each individual to (a) decide on a manageable aspect of a wicked problem to explore, (b) avoid duplication, and (c) write a better individual assignment. Students may cross-refer to another student's work. Students may exchange drafts and discuss issues with other team members, but the work submitted must in essence be the student's own.

As each student's single 2000+ word research assignment is marked separately, some part of its introduction needs to describe the role of this paper in the team's wider investigation of the wicked problem.

It is permissible for a team member to disagree with others in the team.

3. The *team presentation* is assessed as a collective piece of work with a group mark.

In the presentation the transdisciplinary aspects of the wicked problem are identified and enhanced.

The key findings of each individual assignment may be presented. How the individual components combine to form a bigger picture also may be presented.

Each team-member may take a different role (principal presenter, PowerPoint designer etc.); i.e. there is no requirement for each student to speak in public.

The Course Coordinator may decide to allow a wider range of presentation options (online, video etc.): TBA.

Better teamwork means a better overall presentation and a better collective score.

4. Other possible assessment.

The Course Coordinator may set (assessable, but low-weight) milestone tasks, such as submitting a document by a certain date indicating a clear assignment of sub-topics or sub-problems to each team member. It is unlikely that one wicked problem would be well analysed, e.g., via three economics-rich assignments, but the Course Coordinator would liaise with the team if this was proposed.

A document written by each student reflecting on how effective the teamwork was, and why, and what each student learned about the process.

5. Team formation.

The target size for a team is three or four. Student reps have suggested that students can form pairs, but that two pairs can be combined into a team by the Course Coordinator. This appears workable and a good starting procedure, especially if all students can find their own partner.

As far as is practicable, equity will apply in determining the composition of teams.

FAQs for PPES4201

Does my score for my written work depend on the quality of the written work done by the rest of the team?

No, at least not directly. Each student's written work is marked separately. However, poor teamwork may lead to poor group discussions of the wicked problem and a poor division of labour, which may indirectly affect the quality of each individual student's written work.

Is Team Project a Thesis cut into three or four pieces?

No. A thesis is written as an integrated whole and is marked as a whole.

I'm deciding whether to enrol in Thesis or Team Project. How does the required word length and workload of Team Project (2 credit units) compare with Thesis (6 credit units)?

Writing a Thesis of 8000-10 000 words requires advanced skills in organising and integrating a complicated and interconnected set of arguments. Time management and high communication skills are required. Although the GPA requirement of 6.25 does not apply to students doing Thesis in 2020, students with a lower GPA should consider carefully whether they have these skills.

In Team Project there are other assessment tasks not required in Thesis, such as a presentation. A more diverse range of assessments in Team Project spreads risks. Remember that the ability to work in teams is valued by employers.

If you intend further academic studies (e.g. a Masters), Thesis can open more opportunities, provided you can show that you have high-level research abilities.

A risk-averse student without a clear ambition towards higher research-intensive studies would be wise to select Team Project and two other courses from Part D. Please contact the BEL Faculty at bel@uq.edu.au should you require program planning advice.

How much freedom do I have to choose who is in my team?

You are allowed to form a pair with someone who shares an interest in a wicked problem and you believe you can work with well. However, teams need diversity, and the Course Coordinator may add someone or a pair to form a better balanced team.

How much freedom do I have to pick a wicked problem?

A menu of wicked problems is copied below. (It applies to both Thesis and Team Project.) If you want more options, the approval of the Course Coordinator will be needed.

Enough people need to be willing to form a team. There cannot be a team of one member. Some students may end up not working on their most preferred wicked problem.

Even if you find an appealing wicked problem area of interest, the more detailed formulation of specific research questions will be a separate step that will be explained in class contact.

What if I realise that I need to change what direction my assignment should take? Or what if I come to realise during the semester that I disagree with my team?

Discuss this with your team (you might persuade them) and then with the Course Coordinator if your change of strategy is significant. Disagreements, if justified in the assignment, are allowable, and wicked problems could indeed provoke them.

Examples of 'wicked problem' cluster areas

Note: many of these could be tackled/analysed at local, national or international level.

Sustainability challenges

- including Murray-Darling Basin, energy policies, climate change policies, environmental pollution, biodiversity protection, waste management & circular economy, access to scarce natural resources

Prevention or cure in social policy and public health

- including social policy issues on drugs/alcohol, child protection, domestic violence, chronic disease prevention, homelessness, mental health intersection with other issues

Socio-economic inequalities in theory and practice

- including conditional welfare payments; 'deep disadvantage', poverty and inequality; place-based community development strategies; employment precarity; regulating powerful corporations; regulating rent-seeking behaviours

Security and safety

- including perceptions about refugees, anti-terrorism programs, cyber-security challenges, mass surveillance technologies

Culture, fairness and mobility: negotiating equity and opportunity

- including Indigenous issues and self-management, gender equality, anti-discrimination frameworks, multiculturalism and immigration, tolerance of diversity

Regulating innovation and communication

- including regulating digital platforms, regulating free speech/censorship on internet and e-media, regulating artificial intelligence

Careers

For career questions we recommend you speak to [Linda McConnell](#) in the BEL SET Team. Part of the career action plan you received when you commenced the program was to book regular one-to-one consultations with Linda.