

Pathways Procedure

Procedure No: POA140408000

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Introduction

This procedure aims to provide clear direction to staff involved in the development and administration of the range of pathway types (single and multiple pathways). This procedure should be read in conjunction with the *Courses and Pathways Policy; Annual Course Monitoring: Courses and Pathways Review Procedure; Contracts Policy, Student Assessment and Progress Policy and Course Cancellation and Student Transition Arrangements Policy*.

Pathways are important to the Australian tertiary education sector. Pathways are described as ‘links or clear and intentional articulation of learning and students between two cognate courses - departure and destination’ (AQF Council).

VU is able to capitalise on its multi-sectoral university status by intentionally scaffolding and linking learning between courses. This will ensure that pathways are seamless and accessible, and that key transition points along the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) are supported.

At VU pathways are highly valued and are:

- purposefully designed to support VU students in their lifelong learning;
- an important aspect of VU partnership and engagement strategies;
- structured to maximise student success and retention;
- co-developed as an integral part of departure and destination courses (ie. reduce repetition of learning, build in foundational knowledge);
- approved in conjunction with course approvals;
- based on block credit arrangements for full study periods (eg. Diploma provides the basis for credit for 1st year of a cognate Bachelor course);
- based on completion of the departure course to maximise credit; and
- administratively streamlined through guaranteed entry on completion of all admission requirements.

This procedure applies to course to course linkages underpinned by a formal Pathway Agreement, which will include specification of course credit and course admission requirements. This effectively commits the University to comply with the provisions of the Pathway Agreement for a period of time, generally a maximum of five years. An annual monitoring process will validate the currency of pathway credit arrangements and admission requirements. This annual monitoring process will also inform review and renewal of partnership arrangements with external organisations.

The steps in this procedure are:

- intention to develop a pathway;
- development and approval of a pathway;

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- monitoring and reviewing of a pathway; and
- deletion of a pathway.

Guidelines (including forms and frequently asked questions) to support implementation of this procedure can be accessed from: <http://intranet.vu.edu.au/caps/Pathways.asp>

Partnership arrangements VU partners with external organisations to facilitate a range of value-added activities such as course pathways. Partnership arrangements are confirmed in a Partnership Agreement (refer to *Contracts Policy*). If a pathway involves an external partner a Partnership Agreement must be in place. Pathways, where negotiated with an external partner, are included as an attached schedule to the Partnership Agreement. This schedule will detail aspects such as credit and remaining units required to complete the destination course, admission requirements, potential student demand, timeframe anticipated for student uptake (critical for pathways marketed to international students), and marketing and co-badging expectations and accountabilities.

In recognition of the diversity of partnerships there are four categories of pathways each requiring consideration of differing complexity and risk to support quality outcomes.

Category	Type of pathway	Partnership Agreement	Risk level
1	VU to VU	No	Minimum
2	Australian TAFEs and/or Universities to VU	Yes	Low
3	Australian Registered Training Organisations (RTO) or private higher education providers to VU	Yes	Medium
4	International on and off shore education providers to VU	Yes	High

Table 1: Pathway Categories

Guiding principles

Governance Oversight

The Education and Research Board (ERB) is the custodian of the Pathways Procedure. It oversees the formal pathways of the University through its committees and relationship with Faculties.

Legislative and policy compliance

To maintain processes as outlined in the AQF Qualifications Pathways Policy and VU legislation and policies and to ensure the oversight of formal pathways of the University.

Quality assurance and continuous improvement

To maintain VU's commitment to quality assurance and continuous improvement as reflected in its cyclical process of Plan, Do, Review, and Improve (PDRI), which is imbued within a range of review processes.

Risk analysis and mitigation

To ensure that potential risks to VU associated with Pathway Agreements are adequately considered:

- Category 1 (minimum risk): VU to VU;
- Category 2 (low risk): Australian TAFEs and universities;
- Category 3 (medium risk): Australian Registered Training Organisations (RTO) and private higher education providers; and
- Category 4 (high risk): International on and off shore education providers to VU.

Roles, responsibilities and accountabilities

To clarify roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of individuals and committees/boards related to pathway development, approval, monitoring and deletion processes.

Responsive processes

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The Pathways Procedure has been designed to support Faculty responsiveness to the oversight of formal pathways and their relationship to educational benchmarks to ensure quality outcomes.

Acronyms

AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
CAMS	Course Approvals and Management System
CAPS	Courses and Pathways Services
CID	Centre for International Development
DVC	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
ERB	Education and Research Board
FBOS	Faculty Board of Studies
FCC	Faculty Courses Committee
FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education
HOS	Head of School
MCD	Marketing and Communications Department
OICE	Office for Industry and Community Engagement
PDG	Pathway Development Group
PVC	Pro Vice-Chancellor
VE	Vocational Education
VU	Victoria University
VUI	Victoria University International

Definitions

Articulation	Articulation enables students to progress from a completed qualification to another with credit in a defined qualification pathway (AQF Council). At VU we also define articulation as progress, with credit, from one completed unit to another.
Block credit	Block credit refers to the negotiation of course articulation arrangements that maximise credit being given for whole stages or levels of a qualification (ie. semester or first year of study) rather than credit across a number of study periods in a destination course.
Cluster	Refers to VU's Industry and Community Clusters (ICC) which are a coherent grouping of courses across the AQF in strategic industry/community profiles based on synergy of intent, purpose and alignment of articulation potential.
Cluster Champion / Co- Champion	A Cluster Champion is a senior influential VU leader appointed to focus on delivering internal and external priorities of their assigned Industry and Community Cluster. Responsibility includes articulation of a Cluster Vision, influencing consolidation and development of a sustainable course profile, building productive staff partnerships and collaborations across educational units and enhancing VU's engagement with communities, industries and enterprises.
Cognate course	Courses that relate to the same or similar discipline or industry area. Courses and pathways review Monitors the quality of courses and associated pathways 'in-cycle' (eg. every five years) as well as 'out-of-cycle' for courses and/or pathways.
Course	A structured program of learning built around a range of specific learning outcomes usually delivered in or by an educational training institution through an approved curriculum.
Course mapping	Credit negotiated between issuing organisations towards AQF qualifications at any level, vertical or horizontal, will take into account the comparability and equivalence of the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning outcomes • volume of learning • program of study, including content, and • learning and assessment approaches (AQF) Any credit will also need to align to any professional body requirements.

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Head of Faculty	The position responsible for overall management of Faculty such as Dean, Executive Dean or Associate Director.
Partnership Agreement	Formal documentation of a partnership arrangement between VU and an external partner that is approved by relevant delegates of VU and the external partner organisation. These regularly include schedules that detail specific activities such as Pathway Agreements.
Pathway	Pathways allow students to move between two cognate courses – departure and destination - and throughout qualification levels with full or partial recognition for the qualifications and/or learning outcomes they have achieved.
Pathway Agreement	Formal contract specifying details of credit arrangements and admission requirements between the departure and destination courses for the approved period, generally five years. This Agreement would be included as a Schedule in a Partnership Agreement.
Pathway Credit Database	VU system for recording formally approved pathways.
Pathway Development Group	Group of stakeholders with expertise and knowledge in the content area and of the process which is convened to map equivalence between departure and destination courses for the purpose of identifying equivalence and indicative credit resulting in a pathway; and have expertise for determining admission requirements for all student cohorts including international students.
Pathway Proponent	A proponent can be any member of the University community including Principal Officers (Vice Chancellor/Deputy Vice Chancellor/Pro Vice Chancellor); Senior Manager (Head of Faculty, School or Unit); Cluster Champion/Co-Champion or University staff members
Principal Officer	Senior manager specified in procedures as responsible for approving steps in process particularly those related to Partnership Agreements. Examples include Deputy Vice Chancellor and Pro Vice Chancellor.
Strategic Partnership Manager	VU manager responsible for managing and liaising with external partner organisations. Examples are OICE, VUI/CID.
Transition Arrangements	Arrangements that apply to a cohort or individual student where their course or pathway has been deleted. Transition may include transfer to an alternate course (with relevant advanced standing) or continuance in their old course.

Overview of pathways process

Pathways have a 'life cycle' which aligns to VU's commitment to continuous improvement of Plan, Do, Review and Improve (PDRI). The following outlines the key steps in the pathways lifecycle including identifying a strategic opportunity (intention to develop a pathway); development and approval; monitoring and review which may result in the deletion of a pathway.

1. Intention to develop a pathway is the formal identification and notification of an intended pathway between departure and destination courses, and communication with possible collaborators and stakeholders from interested Faculties. Notice to Develop reports are forwarded to Course and Pathway Services (CAPS) for reporting purposes.
2. Development and approval of a pathway defines credit arrangements and admission requirements between departure and destination courses. This is documented and approved by the FCC's associated with both the departure and destination courses when a VU to VU pathway. Details of approved pathways and Pathway Agreement documents are recorded on the VU Pathways Credit Database which is managed by CAPS. The VU Pathways Credit Database can be accessed at: <http://wcf.vu.edu.au/pathways/login/index.cfm>
3. Monitoring and review of a pathway ensures annual check on the currency of the pathway including alignment of departure and destination courses, credit arrangements and admission requirements. It also involves monitoring and reviewing student progress and outcomes to ensure pathways are meeting intentions and expectations.

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4. Deletion of a pathway is based on sound evidence and consultation with key stakeholders from collaborating Faculties and external partners (where applicable). It involves formal notification to key stakeholders, partner organisations and university units; communication of transition arrangements to pathway students; and removal of specific pathway information from the range of university publications.

Pathways process steps

To facilitate an understanding of the process steps, all steps have been colour coded to indicate whether the process described is a management (blue) or governance (grey) process.\

New Pathway		Monitor and Review	Deletion	Deletion in Extraordinary Circumstance
Intention	Development and Approval			
Proponent	Pathways Development Group	Course Coordinator/Program Manager	Head of School	Deputy Vice Chancellor
Head of School	FCC (Category 1: departure and destination course) (Category 2-4: destination course)	Head of School	FCC (Category 1: departure and destination course) (Category 2-4: destination course)	
Head of Faculty (Category 1 and 2) Deputy Vice Chancellor (Category 3 and 4)	FBOS (destination course)	Head of Faculty (destination course)	FBOS (destination course)	

1. Intention to develop a new pathway

This first step involves consideration by management to commit to a new pathway. Given the possible risk and financial cost to the University in developing a pathway consultation, endorsement and approval of an intention to develop will vary according to the pathway category. Table 2 provides a summary of the consultation, endorsement and approval requirements. Following are the procedural actions to develop and approve the intent.

- 1.1 A potential pathway can be identified through:
 - course development and included in course notifications and approval where possible
 - approval of new departure or destination courses
 - annual course monitoring and review
 - discussions with an external partner
- 1.2 The pathway proponent identifies the need for a pathway/s and discusses with the Head of School (destination course/s).
- 1.3 **For Category 1 Pathways (VU to VU)**
The Head of School (destination course) consults with the Head of School (departure course) and both must endorse the *Intention to Develop a New Pathway* (refer Guidelines) to proceed further. The Head of Faculty (destination course) approves the intention to develop.
- 1.4 For:

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- **Category 2 Pathways (TAFEs and Universities)**
- **Category 3 Pathways (private RTOs and HE providers)**
- **Category 4 Pathways (international on and off shore providers)**

The Head of School confirms the pathway category; determines if there is an existing *Partnership Agreement* in place; and consults with key stakeholders including the external partner and VU Strategic Partnership Manager to scope the requirements and inform future processes. On the basis of a positive outcome of the consultation the Head of School endorses the *Intention to Develop a New Pathway* (refer Guidelines). The Deputy Vice Chancellor approves the intention to develop a pathway with this external organisation.

- 1.5 In the event that there is not a *Partnership Agreement* in place for:
- Category 2 and 3 the Office of Industry and Engagement (OICE) should be consulted
 - Category 4 Victoria University International (VUI) or Centre for International Development (CID) should be consulted.
- 1.6 After approval pathway development can proceed. The approved *Intention to Develop a New Pathway* documentation is forwarded to CAPS for recording and reporting purposes.

Pathway Category	Recommended Consultation	Endorsement	Approval
1. VU to VU	Cluster Champion/Co-Champion	Heads of Schools (departure and destination course)	Head of Faculty
2. Australian TAFE and Universities to VU	Cluster Champion/Co-Champion VU Strategic Partnership Manager	Head of School (destination course)	Deputy Vice Chancellor
3. Australian RTOs and private HE providers to VU	Cluster Champion/Co-Champion VU Strategic Partnership Manager	Head of School (destination course)	Deputy Vice Chancellor
4. International on and offshore education providers to VU	Cluster Champion/Co-Champion VU Strategic Partnership Manager	VUI or CID Head of School (destination course)	Deputy Vice Chancellor

Table 2: Approval of an Intention to Develop a New Pathway

2. Pathway development and approval

Pathway Development

- 2.1 Following approval to develop a pathway the Head of School establishes a Pathways Development Group (PDG).
- 2.2 The membership of the PDG will comprise, as a minimum, representatives from both the departure and destination courses with expertise in the educational content and standards of each course.
- 2.3 The PDG maps equivalence of learning outcomes and assessment between the departure and destination courses, recommends equivalence and documents the outcomes in the *Courses and Pathways Mapping* form (refer Guidelines).

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2.4 The PDG considers and agrees on credit levels, including block credit arrangements, and admission requirements. Note VUI or CID must be consulted by the PDG for pathways associated with Category 4 in order to support admission processes.

2.5 These decisions are detailed in the *Pathway Agreement* form (refer Guidelines).

Pathway Approval

2.6 The convenor of the PDG forwards both the *Courses and Pathways Mapping* and *Pathway Agreement* forms to the FCC (destination course) for endorsement...

2.7 For VU to VU pathways, each FCC associated with the departure and destination courses/s is required to endorse the level of credit and admission requirements.

2.8 Once endorsed the FCC refers the *Pathway Agreement* to the FBOS (destination course) for approval.

2.9 Where a *Pathway Agreement* is not approved by the FBOS, specific reason and rationale is provided to the appropriate Head of Faculty on issues to consider in the event that the Faculty wishes to resubmit the *Pathway Agreement* for consideration.

2.10 Following FBOS approval the *Pathway Agreement* is forwarded to CAPS for registration on the VU Pathways Credit Database and notification of approval to:

- all relevant parties at VU including MCD, VUI or CID; and
- in the case of Partnership Agreements, VU Strategic Partnership Manager to facilitate communication with partner organisation. Minor Amendment of a Pathway

2.11 A minor amendment to a pathway may be identified as a result of the monitoring and review process.

2.12 A minor amendment could include minor changes to course/unit codes and/or titles for either departure or destination courses.

2.13 Approval of a minor amendment to a pathway is subject to the following criteria:

- when the departure or destination course has been approved as a replacement course (ie. minor amendment)
- that the changes will not impact on the existing approved credit levels or admission requirements

2.14 The Head of School endorses the *Minor Amendment to a Pathway form* and forwards to the Head of Faculty for approval.

2.15 In the event that one or both of the criteria cannot be met, the pathway will need to be developed and approved, as detailed earlier on this page.

3. Monitoring and review of pathways

A pathway is monitored annually and must be re-approved or deleted within a five year period. As such this part of the procedure should be read in conjunction with the Annual Course Monitoring and Courses and Pathways Review procedure. The following details the processes involved in annual monitoring and comprehensive review of a pathway.

Annual Monitoring of Pathways

3.1 The annual monitoring of pathways performance will determine whether the pathway is declared as active, or amended/deleted after consideration of the following:

- currency of departure and destination courses;
- validity of credit arrangements;
- applicability of admission requirements; and
- number of students who have accessed the pathway in the past year.

3.2 The Course Coordinator/Program Manager responsible for the destination course will undertake the review and will draw on pathways data and consult on the pathway performance with key stakeholders relevant to the pathway category.

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3.3 Based on the outcomes of the monitoring process the Head of School (destination course) recommends to the Head of Faculty one of the following actions.

That the pathway:

- continue and is included in the Annual Pathways Declaration; or
- requires minor amendments (refer to Step 2 in this procedure); or
- needs to be re-developed and approved (refer to Step 2 in this procedure)
- is deleted (refer to Step 4 in this procedure)

3.4 The Head of Faculty approves the Annual Pathways declaration.

3.5 Following the annual Pathways Declaration CAPS will:

- update the VU Pathways Credit Database
- communicate the outcome to all key stakeholders. This will ensure that the implications of any proposed changes to the pathway are considered and finalised (eg. pathway student access, marketing, partner expectations).

Comprehensive Pathways Review

3.6 The Comprehensive Pathways Review will determine whether the pathway should be reapproved. The review criteria will include evaluation of the performance of the pathway including viability, sustainability, conversion rates and ongoing demand from both domestic and international students (as is applicable). The performance of pathway student progress rates and results should also be considered.

3.7 The Course Coordinator/Program Manager responsible for the destination course will undertake the review and will draw on pathways data and consult on the pathway performance with key stakeholders relevant to the pathway category.

3.8 Based on the outcomes of the review the Head of School (destination course) recommends to the Head of Faculty one of the following actions:

- approval for the pathway to continue for another 5 years
- minor amendment to the pathway (refer to Step 2 in this procedure)
- replacement of the pathway (refer to Step 2 in this procedure)
- deletion of the pathway (refer to Step 4 in this procedure)

3.9 Once the action is approved documentation is forwarded to CAPS who will:

- update the VU Pathways Credit Database
- communicate the outcome to all key stakeholders.

This will ensure that the implications of any proposed changes to the pathway are considered and finalised (eg. pathway student access, marketing, partner expectations)

4. Pathway deletion and notification

4.1 Reasons for considering the deletion of a pathway may result from:

- changes to the departure or destination course that render the Pathway Agreement invalid
- review of pathway performance data (eg. activity) and outcomes that indicate a negative trend
- changes to a Partnership Agreement that render the pathway invalid.

4.2 Faculties must develop and communicate to students, pathway transition arrangements for deleted pathways. Deletion of a pathway will impact on students who are:

- currently enrolled, or who have recently completed, the departure course; OR
- completing preparatory departure courses with an expectation of being able to access the pathway.

4.3 The Head of School completes the Notification to Delete a Pathway form (refer Guidelines) and consults with key stakeholders (as noted in Table 2) relevant to the pathway category.

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- 4.4 For VU to VU pathways, each FCC associated with the departure and destination courses endorse the notification and forward to FBOS associated with destination course for approval of deletion of the pathway.
- 4.5 Following FBOS approval the Faculty advises CAPS to delete information from the VU Pathways Credit Database with details of the Pathway Agreement termination date.
- 4.6 After deletion from the database CAPS notifies the following key stakeholders:
- FBOS for associated departure course or equivalent;
 - VU Strategic Partnership Manager; and
 - collaborating areas such as MCD and VUI or CID.
- 4.7 The VU Strategic Partnership Manager is responsible for formally advising the partner organisation and updating the Partnership Agreement as appropriate with respect to this outcome. Deletion of pathways in for exceptional and extraordinary circumstances A Pathway Agreement that forms part of a Partnership Arrangement may be deleted by a Principal Officer on advice from the VU Strategic Partnership Manager who acts on behalf of the Faculties associated with the pathway. This would require CAPS to remove all details of agreed pathways from the VU Pathways Credit Database, and MCD to remove all details from associated marketing materials and channels. The VU Strategic Partnership Manager is responsible for formally advising the partner organisation and updating the Partnership Agreement as appropriate with respect to this outcome.

Pathway Category	Recommended Consultation	Endorsement	Approval
1. VU to VU	Cluster Champion/Co-Champion	Heads of Schools (departure and destination course)	FCC (departure and destination courses) FBOS (destination course)
2. Australian TAFE and Universities to VU	Cluster Champion/Co-Champion VU Strategic Partnership Manager	Deputy Vice Chancellor	FCC (destination course) FBOS (destination course)
3. Australian RTOs and private HE providers to VU	Cluster Champion/Co-Champion VU Strategic Partnership Manager	Head of School (destination course)	Deputy Vice Chancellor
4. International on and offshore education providers to VU	Cluster Champion/Co-Champion VU Strategic Partnership Manager	VUI or CID Deputy Vice Chancellor	FCC (destination course) FBOS (destination course)
5. Exceptional and extraordinary circumstances		OICE VUI CID	Deputy Vice Chancellor

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Pathway Procedure: Intent, development, approval, review and deletion

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Key Stakeholders	Head of School	Head of Faculty	DVC	FCC and FBOS	CAPS
Rationale	Action new , re-approved or deletion of pathways	Align pathway to Faculty priorities Assess risk associated with pathway category	Align to VU priorities Assess risk associated with pathway category	Assess educational quality of pathway Align to Faculty strategic direction and course profile	Facilitate consultation Update CAMS and VU Pathway Credit Database
Documentation	Develop: <i>Intention To Develop A Pathway</i> Annual Pathway Declaration <i>Minor Amendment to Pathway</i> Pathway transition documentation			Minutes of FCC	Maintain copies of: <i>Intention To Develop a Pathway Pathways Agreements</i> Annual Pathway Declaration <i>Minor Amendments to a Pathway</i> <i>Notification of Deletion of a Pathway</i> AND Minutes of FBOS
Recommended Actions and Outputs	Endorse: <i>Intention To Develop A Pathway</i> Annual Pathway Declaration <i>Minor Amendment to Pathway</i>	Approve: <i>Intention To Develop A Pathway (Category 1)</i> <i>Minor Amendment to Pathway</i>	Approve: Partnership Agreement and Pathway Schedule <i>Intention To Develop A Pathway (Categories 2, 3 and 4)</i> In extraordinary circumstances approve: deletion of Pathway Agreement from Pathway Credit Database	Assess: <i>Courses and Pathways Mapping</i> <i>Pathway Agreement</i> <i>Notification of Deletion of a Pathway</i> Advise FBOS	Advise and consult: On all steps in the process Administer: Changes in database

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Templates

Insert list and links to relevant templates.

Templates can be found at [insert link to templates].

References

This procedure is required to support the following:

- Course and Pathways Lifecycle Policy

Supporting Documents

The following documents have been referenced in this procedure:

- *Insert reference link to the relevant Victoria University documents which supports this procedure*

Procedure Control

Procedure Owner: *Position title only*

Policy Owner: *Position title only*

Date Approved by Policy Owner:

Date Effective:

Procedure History:

Version	Approved By	Approval Date	Effective Date	Summary of Changes
Version 1.1				
Version 1.2		02 April 2014		Procedure copied to new template