

## UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

### POLICY ON CO-BADGED QUALIFICATIONS AND JOINT OR JOINTLY AWARDED QUALIFICATIONS (“JOINT DEGREES”)

#### Introduction

1. The University faces increasing numbers of requests for joint offerings. These appear to come in three forms: programmes which lead to the award of *co-badged qualifications* - but which are awarded by one institution which recognises the contributions of one or more partner institutions by co-badging; programmes which lead to the *joint award* of a single qualification by more than one institution; and programmes that lead to *double degrees* - that is to the award of a qualification by each of the participating institutions - or in other words two qualifications. The third category, which was popular for a time in Western Europe, is now less frequently encountered and has fallen out of favour.
2. Joint offerings are being increasingly seen as a strategy for internationalisation and/or a vehicle for enhancing the student experience.
3. The Department of Higher Education & Training appointed a task team in 2013 to draft proposals for national policy on joint degrees; the task team has reported but policy proposals have yet to be announced by the Minister (March 2015).

#### Defining terms

4. The following terms are defined with reference to degrees; but they could apply equally to diplomas or higher certificates.

##### **Co-badged degrees**

Co-badged degrees are awarded at the successful completion of one HEI's degree programme to which one or more partner institutions (usually an HEI or more than one HEI) have contributed parts. The degree-awarding and enrolling institution takes responsibility for the curriculum, and the contribution of the other institution(s) is limited to

- (a) providing a course or courses which the degree-awarding institution recognises towards the degree; and/or
- (b) providing co-supervision (in the case of a research student)

in terms of a collaboration agreement.

Upon completion of the study programme, the successful student is awarded a single degree and a single degree certificate issued by and signed by the degree-awarding and enrolling HEI, but bearing the badge(s) of the other institutions in recognition of their contribution under a formal collaboration agreement.

### **Joint degrees**

A Joint degree is awarded at the successful completion of a jointly-offered single study programme offered collaboratively by two (or more) HEIs. The programme will

- (a) involve time spent by the student at both (or all) institutions; and
- (b) feature a jointly-developed and integrated curriculum; or
- (c) a single research topic resulting in a single dissertation (master's degrees) or a single thesis (PhDs).

The partnership programme agreement will typically provide for the recognition by each participating HEI of the time spent (where a minimum period of registration is required) and the work done at the other HEI(s) towards the jointly-developed and integrated curriculum for a single qualification. The Student will typically study/undertake research at the two (or more) partnering HEIs. Upon completion of the study programme, the student is awarded

- a single degree certificate issued and signed jointly by all HEIs involved in the programme; or (now more frequently, following the EU Lisbon declaration)
- two (or more) national certificates issued by each collaborating institution attesting to the award of the qualification, with the proviso that each certificate must refer to the joint nature of the qualification and specify that the qualification is being conferred in conjunction with another institution

and where in either case the certificate or certificates are accompanied by what is termed a *diploma supplement* that explains the nature of the joint programme and that the joint programme led to a single piece of work and a single, jointly awarded qualification.

Senate agrees that a further detail needs to be added to all such agreements, namely that candidates who are awarded a joint degree be required to ensure that the way they use the credential makes clear that this is a single qualification: thus a graduate of a joint PhD between UCT and ANOU (another University) would not style herself PhD(*UCT*), PhD(*ANOU*) but would have to do so as PhD (*UCT & ANOU*).

### **Double degrees**

Double degrees are the outcome of double programmes of study offered collaboratively typically by two higher education institutions (A and B) in terms of a partnership agreement. They typically feature jointly-developed and integrated curricula and agreed-on credit recognition. The successful student

- (a) spends a stipulated minimum period at each institution;
- (b) satisfies the degree requirements of both institutions;
- (c) gets credit from institution A for work done at B, for up to an agreed proportion of the work done at B;
- (d) gets credit from B for work done at A, for up to an agreed proportion of the work done at A.

Typically, the student will spend at least an extra year. For example if A and B each require a minimum of two years for the degree (or in HEQF terms, 360 credits towards a master's or doctoral degree) then student will spend at least three years and complete 540 HEQF credits.

Upon completion of the study programmes, the successful student receives degrees issued separately by each of the two institutions involved in the programme. The certificates may or may not be co-badged, depending upon the agreement between the institutions (such degrees are sometimes referred to as *dual* degrees).

### **Double counting of credits**

**Double-counting** of credits involves the recognition towards A's degree of credits obtained by the student at B towards the degree to be awarded, (or awarded) by B. The extent to which double counting of credits is allowed will vary on a scale from 100% where in effect two degrees are awarded for one piece of work to a much smaller percentage.

### **International Joint degrees**

*Joint degrees* offered collaboratively by two (or more) HEIs in different countries. The degree will be accredited in both (all) countries.

### **International Double degrees**

*Double degrees* offered collaboratively by two (or more) HEIs in different countries. Each HEI's degree will be accredited in its country.

## **Policy and legislation**

5. No explicit government policy exists in South African for joint offerings. The DHET is developing policy for joint degrees (March 2015). Each public Higher Education Institution (HEI) is required to make the following declaration when submitting its annual Higher Education Management Information Systems (HEMIS) student returns on which input, and some forms of output, subsidy are based:

*All students are bona fide students registered only at the University of Cape Town and are not registered for the same course at another public or private institution as part of collaboration agreement*

*Course* in this context is ambiguous: it may refer to what HEMIS defines as an *instructional offering* (at UCT a *course*, and at some HEIs a *module*) or it may refer to a *programme of study leading to a qualification*.

*Co-badged* joint offerings appear to present no problem in this regard, but *joint degrees* and *double degrees* require a university to qualify this statement.

6. The legislation (the Higher Education Act, 101 of 1997) on the other hand contains the following section:

**38. Cooperation between public higher education institutions**

- (1) *Public higher education institutions may co-operate with each other in any manner to achieve the optimal utilisation of resources and the performance of their functions.*
- (2) *Public higher education institutions may establish regional or national structures to assist and facilitate the co-operation contemplated in subsection (1).*
- (3) *The Minister may provide financial incentives to such structures and to public higher education institutions participating in such structures to achieve the aims of such co-operation.*

The provision in this Act that empowers HEIs to award qualifications does not contemplate a *joint degree* or a *double degree* award; section 65B provides as follows

*A public higher education institution may, subject to its institutional statute and this Act, award diplomas and certificates and confer degrees.*

The Act goes on (S 65D (i)) to provide that

*No person may offer, award or confer a degree, or a higher education diploma or a higher education certificate, provided for on the HEQF unless such degree, diploma or certificate is registered on the sub-framework for higher education on the National Qualifications Framework contemplated in section 1(b) read with section 13(1)(h) of the National Qualifications Framework Act.*

It is not clear that this means that a *joint offering* would have to be approved by the DHET, accredited separately by the CHE/HEQC and registered as such on the HEQF sub-framework but we do not believe that it would as UCT would be awarding an approved, accredited and NQF registered qualification.

The Act goes on in S 66 to provide:

**66 Offences**

- (1) *Any person other than a higher education institution, who, without the authority of a higher education institution-*
  - (a) *offers or pretends to offer any higher education programme or part thereof;*
  - (b) *purports to confer a qualification granted by a higher education institution, or in collaboration with a higher education institution; or*
  - (c) *purports to perform an act on behalf of a higher education institution,*

*is guilty of an offence and is liable on conviction to a sentence which may be imposed for fraud.*

The HEQS-F does not provide for *double degrees*.

## 7. The UCT Institutional Statute

The University's Institutional Statute contains provision regulating the recognition of work done elsewhere and limits double *counting of credits* to no more than 50% of the work required for a degree to be awarded by UCT. Paragraph 47 of the Institutional Statute deals with this and is reproduced below. Paragraph 57 must be read together with paragraph 4 of the UCT Institutional Statute.

### 47. *Award of credits and exemptions*

- (1) *Subject to subparagraphs (2), (3) and (4) the senate may –*
  - (a) *grant credit for a course prescribed for a degree, diploma or certificate to a student who has completed a course or courses or other work which the senate considers equivalent at another university or elsewhere;*
  - (b) *grant exemption from a course prescribed for a degree, diploma or certificate to a student who has completed a course or courses or work which the senate considers equivalent at another university or elsewhere; and*
  - (c) *accept as part of the period of attendance and registration prescribed for a degree, (other than an honours bachelor), diploma or certificate, a period or periods of attendance and registration, at another university or elsewhere.*
- (2) *The senate may not grant credit for more than half of the courses prescribed for the degree, diploma or certificate in question in respect of a course, or courses, or other work completed at another university, or elsewhere.*
- (3) *A candidate for a degree, diploma or certificate must attend at and be registered as a student of the University -*
  - (a) *for a one year programme, for a full academic year;*
  - (b) *for a three year programme, for at least two academic years one of which must be the final year;*
  - (c) *for a four year programme, for at least the final two years; and*
  - (d) *for a five or six year programme, for at least three academic years including the final two years.*
- (4) *The combined periods of attendance and registration at the University and at another university or elsewhere accepted by the senate for this purpose must be not less than the minimum period prescribed by the senate for the degree, diploma or certificate in question.*
- (5) *The senate may -*
  - (a) *grant credit for a course prescribed for a degree, diploma or certificate to a student who has completed the course, or an equivalent course, while registered at the University for another degree, diploma or certificate; and*

- (b) *accept, as part of the period of registration prescribed for the degree, diploma or certificate, all or part of a period of attendance at the University while registered for another degree, diploma or certificate, provided that where the degree, or degrees, diploma or diplomas, certificate or certificates concerned has or have been conferred or awarded the senate may not -*
- (i) *grant credit for more than half of the prescribed courses except to the extent that it grants credit for courses previously completed over and above the requirements prescribed for the completed degree, diploma or certificate; or*
- (ii) *accept as part of the prescribed period of attendance and registration -*
- (aa) *for a one year programme, any period;*
- (bb) *for a three year programme, more than one and a half years;*
- (cc) *for a four year programme, more than two years; or*
- (dd) *for a five or six year programme, more than three years.*

### **The Board for Graduate Studies (BfGS)**

8. The BfGS at its meeting on 26 September 2011 considered this question. The BfGS agreed to submit to the Senate Executive Committee (SEC) a proposed framework for joint offerings allowing
- A) for ***co-badged*** postgraduate qualifications (i.e. where the degree is awarded by one HEI with co-badging of one or more partner HEIs); or
- B) for ***joint postgraduate qualifications*** (i.e., where the degree
- is awarded by joint decision,
  - or by simultaneous or parallel decisions, of more than one HEI;
  - where one degree is conferred, after examination and approval by each participating HEI,
  - is awarded with appropriate certification (either a certificate from each participating HEI), and with a single transcript document/supplement and a licence to use a post-nominal of a form that does not convey that more than one degree has been awarded - eg a UCT and XYZ PhD degree would entitle the holder to use: PhD (*UCT & XYZ*); and

**Provided** that participation has been substantial by each HEI (i.e., this must be present for co-badging and must be present for a joint qualification); and

**Provided** that UCT should neither participate in arrangements designed to double-dip on state subsidy nor in arrangements that lead to the award of two (or more) degrees for a single piece of work.

### **International trends**

9. A recent note by the Institute of International Education (IIE) refers to a recent (September 2011) new report, *Joint and Double Degree Programs in the Global Context*, released by the IIE and the Freie Universität Berlin. The note states

*“The Report finds that a growing number of universities around the world are developing joint and double degree programs, and that nearly two-thirds of the responding institutions reported that they launched these new degree programs in the past decade. The study finds that a development that largely started in Europe in the 1990s has now become an increasingly important global trend, with 95 percent of the nearly 250 respondents in 28 countries saying they want to develop more joint and double degree programs. The study, based on a survey conducted in spring 2011, assesses the current landscape of joint and double degree programs and identifies the challenges, opportunities, motivations, and impact of developing such programs. The report presents findings from a global perspective, as well as country-specific trends for the six countries with the highest number of institutions responding to the survey: Australia, France, Germany, Italy, the UK, and the U.S. This study builds on a 2009 policy study by IIE and the Freie Universität Berlin, funded by the EU-U.S. Atlantis Program of the U.S. Department of Education’s Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) and the European Commission. While the earlier survey focused exclusively on transatlantic joint and double degree programs, the new study expands the scope of the research and aims to assess the global landscape of collaborative degree programs. The 2009 project resulted in a survey report, Joint and Double Degree Programs in the Transatlantic Context, and a book, Joint and Double Degree Programs: An Emerging Model for Transatlantic Exchange, which features practical recommendations for developing and delivering collaborative degree programs between U.S. and European universities.”*

10. This report, while acknowledging the limits of the survey on which it was based, showed increasing numbers of both international joint degrees and international double degrees being offered.
11. This report canvasses the extent to which double counting of credits is being permitted under double degree agreements. The following is an extract from the report:

*Sixty-six percent of respondents confirmed that their institution has rules or limits with regards to the double counting of credits within joint or double degree programs. Many responses cited a preexisting institutional policy regarding double credit counting, which assisted in the implementation of a rule, while others emphasized the need to discuss such regulations at the onset of partnership negotiations. Among top*

*respondents, the majority of most countries' institutions have established rules or limits for the double counting of credits. Sixty-six percent of U.S. respondents, 76 percent of German respondents, 92 percent of Australian respondents, 55 percent of Italian respondents, and 56 percent of UK respondents answered in the affirmative. Notably, the majority of responding institutions from France (57 percent) reported not having established rules for this purpose.*

The report gives a sample of respondents' views on the question of double counting of credits under double degree programmes; here are some

*"Rules are established at the school level. One year's work is counted at both institutions, allowing 2 master's degrees in 3 years." —Respondent from the U.S.*

*"Credits obtained abroad are recognized by both mother and partner institutions. Decision about courses to be taken abroad is made in advance." —Respondent from Poland*

*"Academic Board policy on joint academic programs has been in place for some years (for both research and coursework degrees). However, clear policy in relation to dual degrees is currently under development by the Provost's Office. This policy will carefully address the issues of double counting and cross-crediting within dual degree."*

The issue appears not to have resolved itself into coherent practice even countries with nearly 20 years of double degrees.

### **Previous Proposals**

12. First, following the BfGS recommendation, SEC and Senate agreed to a framework for
  - a) Co-badged qualifications;
  - b) Joint qualifications; and
  - c) Double qualifications

and that agreements might be for structured programmes, or for individual students.

13. SEC agreed that the nature of UCT's PhD suggested that *co-badged* or *joint degrees* should be considered in suitable circumstances, but that programmes at the doctoral level for *double degrees* should not be pursued.

### **Senate Policy**

14. The Senate has agreed
  - (a) that UCT will where appropriate enter into agreements with local and international universities for **joint degrees as defined above**;
  - (b) that where UCT does so, the examining procedure must be provided for in the agreement;



- (c) that the examining procedure may involve each university deciding independently on the award of the degree, but must involve a joint system of examination;
- (d) that the award may be at one institution only (in which case the award will not be a joint degree) though this should be avoided if at all possible;
- (e) that where a joint qualification is awarded this be certificated by each, but in such a way as to show that the award was for work done jointly at the participating universities and that certificates be accompanied by an explanatory diploma supplement; and
- (f) that UCT should not consider proposals for double degrees in the immediate future.

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revised 15 March 2015