



University of
Southern
Queensland



2024

A Guide to the UniSQ Graduate Excellence Award

Previously the UniSQ Phoenix Award

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The Graduate Excellence Award

The University of Southern Queensland has administered the Graduate Excellence Award (previously the UniSQ Phoenix Award) since 2012. As one of the [Student Awards](#) offered at the University, the Graduate Excellence Award is earned through sustained effort. The Award's purpose is to acknowledge the rich and varied endeavours students undertake alongside their academic studies, and encourage the development of skills, attributes, and personal qualities necessary for effective study, success in the workplace, and good citizenship.

The UniSQ Graduate Excellence Award recognises well-rounded, career-ready students who have gone above and beyond their curricular activities to demonstrate the six Graduate Skills. Students demonstrate initiative and engage in a diverse range of extra and co-curricular activities that develop these skills, and their activities are assessed across three categories:

- Professional Development,
- Extra-curricular Achievement,
- Contribution to the Community.

Eligible activities are awarded points, where students must achieve 1000 points (minimum of 250 in each category) in order to complete the Award. See [Activities](#) for more information about activity criteria and point allocation. Once point requirements have been met, students then engage in reflective practice to examine how each Graduate Skill was demonstrated and developed through their activities.

By actively participating in the Award, students build their unique skillset, gain knowledge about their chosen field and the wider community, form new connections, and engage with the full UniSQ experience. By developing both themselves and their future career outcomes, Graduate Excellence Award students set themselves apart from their peers and find success individual to their goals.

How long does it take to complete the Award?

There is no minimum or maximum timeframe for completing the Award. Activities can be submitted for assessment as long as a student is actively enrolled at UniSQ. Typically, students may take the duration of their program (an estimated one to four years) to meet all requirements.

Completing the Award

Upon completing the Graduate Excellence Award, students are formally recognised for their achievement and presented with an official certificate and full Activity Transcript from their time undertaking the Award.

The Graduate Excellence Award is also recognised on the Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement (AHEGS), where it will be listed on a student's statement alongside their higher education qualification.

1. Activities

What is a Graduate Excellence Award activity?

An activity is defined as any extra or co-curricular undertaking that is not a direct requisite of a student's coursework. For example, volunteering, attending conferences, and completing other accredited training (see [Activity Categories](#) for more examples of frequently submitted activities). As each student's interests and projected journey are unique, there is no set "activity list" to be completed, and students are expected to find and engage in activities of their choosing.

However, students are encouraged to shape their Award with intention by considering what activities, skills, and attributes will be most impactful towards their desired career path. [One-on-one appointments with UniSQ Careers and Employability are available](#) to assist them in identifying these activities (e.g. internships) and for further career conversations.

Activity Categories

Activities must align with one of the following three categories:

1. Professional Development

Activities that develop or enhance your professional skills and career outcomes.

2. Contribution to the Community

Service-based activities which provide benefit to the University or wider communities.

3. Extra-curricular Achievement (Training and Certification)

Activities such as accredited training, including programs, modules, certificates, and qualifications.

Please note: these categories are broad and there can be crossover for some activities. Our Assessment team exercises discretion in these instances and will work with students to assign all activities suitably.

Please see Table 1 below for a sample of frequently submitted activities for each category. This is not an exhaustive list.

Table 1: Frequently submitted activities

Professional Development	Contribution to the Community	Extra-Curricular Achievement
Conferences	Community sport and coaching	Certificates and Diplomas
Internships	Relay 4 Life, Vinnies Community Sleepout, 40-Hour Famine etc.	CPR, First Aid, Mental Health First Aid training etc.
Mentoring programs (Mentor and Mentee)	UniSport Nationals (Players and Captains)	MATE Bystander Program
Renumerated work (up to 500 hours)	UniSQ Student Representation (e.g. SRC Members)	Other accredited online modules (e.g. LinkedIn Learning, HarvardX)
UniSQ Leadership Excellence Academy	Volunteering	UniSQ Ally Training and Network

Activity Points

Eligible activities are awarded points. These can range from approximately 1 – 300 per activity (subject to assessment).

Students **must** achieve 1000 points to meet the point requirement of the Award. A minimum of 250 points in each activity category must be met, where the final 250 points can be accumulated across all three categories.

1000 Points

250	250	250	250
Professional Development	Contribution to the Community	Extra-Curricular Achievement	Student choice

What makes an activity eligible for Graduate Excellence Award points?

An activity is generally considered eligible for the Award if the following criteria are met:

1. The activity can be categorised as either Professional Development, Extra-Curricular Achievement, or Contribution to the Community.
2. The activity is completed while the student is actively enrolled at UniSQ.
3. The activity is not a direct requisite of the student's coursework.
4. The student can establish and justify (through written reflection) how the activity has developed and or demonstrated their Graduate Skills.
5. The student can provide sufficient verification documents to confirm their participation and level of involvement in the activity.

What makes an Activity Submission?

The following information is **required** to submit an activity for assessment for the Graduate Excellence Award:

- Full activity name,
- The activity provider,
- Date(s) and hours of the activity,
- A detailed description of a student's duties and broad tasks when undertaking the activity,
- Verification documents that are formally endorsed by the activity provider (see below).

The Activity Declaration Form also includes a notes section. It is **strongly encouraged** that participants make use of this section. Including further information here (see Notes for Reflection) will set a student up for success when completing their final reflection.

Verification Documents

Verification documents must be formally endorsed by the activity provider and provide the Assessment staff with adequate evidence to verify a student's involvement (including hours and broad tasks). This could include a signed statement from a supervisor, a certificate of participation, or a certificate of completion.

If adequate verification documents cannot be provided, an activity will not be eligible for the Graduate Excellence Award.

2. Graduate Skills

Participants are not required to engage all skills with every activity, but it is necessary that a minimum of one Graduate Skill is developed or demonstrated through each activity.

The [Graduate Attributes Policy](#) informs the following Graduate Skills recognised by the UniSQ Graduate Excellence Award:

- Discipline-specific expertise and industry knowledge;
- Research, analytical and evaluative skills;
- Digital literacy;
- Communication and interpersonal skills;
- Teamwork and leadership;
- Cultural awareness and capability;
- Ethical practice;
- Resilience and adaptability;
- Critical and creative thinking;
- Self-direction and resourcefulness.

3. Final Reflection

Notes for Reflection

When filling out an Activity Declaration Form, participants include notes for their final reflective essay. It is **strongly encouraged** that participants make use of this section. As the Award is designed to be completed over the course of a students' learning journey at UniSQ (an estimated one to four years), including specific and detailed notes is imperative for recalling activities undertaken at the beginning of the Award. This includes information such as:

- Identifying the Graduate Skills demonstrated and developed when undertaking the activity,
- Identifying the strengths, weakness, and challenges faced, as well as the activity's applicability to the participant's future career,
- Other detailed comments (e.g. personal thoughts or learnings) about the activity that will assist the participant in completing the final reflective essay at the end of the Award.

There are no specifications for (or limitations on) the shape these notes take. They can be individual and personal (dot points, sentences, paragraphs with headings etc.) based on what is most effective for each participant.

Reflective Essay

Students are required to engage in reflective practice upon achieving the point requirement for the Award. This takes the form of a final reflective essay of up to 2000 words (+/- 10%).

By drawing upon all the activities undertaken over the course of their time in the Award, students examine the Graduate Skills they demonstrated and developed, the challenges they faced, their personal strengths and weaknesses, and the applicability of their learnings to their future career journey. Any notes provided in a participant's Activity Declaration Forms will be provided to assist when completing the final reflective essay.

This essay is reviewed by the Graduate Excellence Award staff before being approved for assessment by a Panel. The assessment rubric for the reflective essay is available in the Graduate Excellence Award Online Portal.

4. Award Transcript

Upon completion, students receive a Graduate Excellence Award Transcript. This document outlines the Award's purpose and the framework on which it is based, providing an overall breakdown of a student's key skills and a complete list of their activities with relevant skill markers.

The Graduate Excellence Award “challenged me to ensure that I tried a lot of different things... I gave different leadership opportunities a go, and did volunteer, so it meant that my experience at uni was really full, and really exciting.”

Emma Baillie, 2023 Award recipient
(pictured right)



For further information please contact our
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