

Accreditation in the National
Registration and Accreditation
Scheme (NRAS):
A snapshot 2020/21



**Ahpra
& National
Boards**

Introduction

The National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the Scheme) was established by the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (the National Law) in July 2010.

The Scheme is multi-professional, regulating over 800,000 health practitioners in 16 professions. The accreditation functions in the National Law include developing accreditation standards, accrediting programs of study against approved accreditation standards and assessing overseas-qualified practitioners.

Accreditation is integral to the Scheme as it is the key way to ensure that individuals seeking registration have the knowledge, skills and professional attributes to safely and competently practise their profession in Australia.

Snapshot of Accreditation is a yearly summary of whole of scheme information about accreditation activities. This version is current at 30 June 2021.

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Contact us

Please contact Ahpra on **1300 419 495** or visit our website **www.ahpra.gov.au**.

This document was prepared by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency in collaboration with National Boards and the Health Professions Accreditation Collaborative Forum



HEALTH
PROFESSIONS
ACCREDITATION
COLLABORATIVE
FORUM

Australia's accreditation authorities
for regulated health professionals



Ahpra
& National
Boards

Accreditation

What is it?

Program Accreditation

Program accreditation is the process of assessing whether an educational program of study and the education provider that provides the program produce graduates who have the knowledge, skills and professional attributes to safely and competently practise the profession in Australia.

Practitioner Assessment

Practitioner assessment is the process of assessing whether an overseas-qualified practitioner has demonstrated the knowledge, clinical skills, and professional attributes to safely and competently practice the profession in Australia.

There are six accreditation committees and ten accreditation councils exercising accreditation functions in the National Scheme. (see: www.ahpra.gov.au/Accreditation/Accreditation-Authorities)

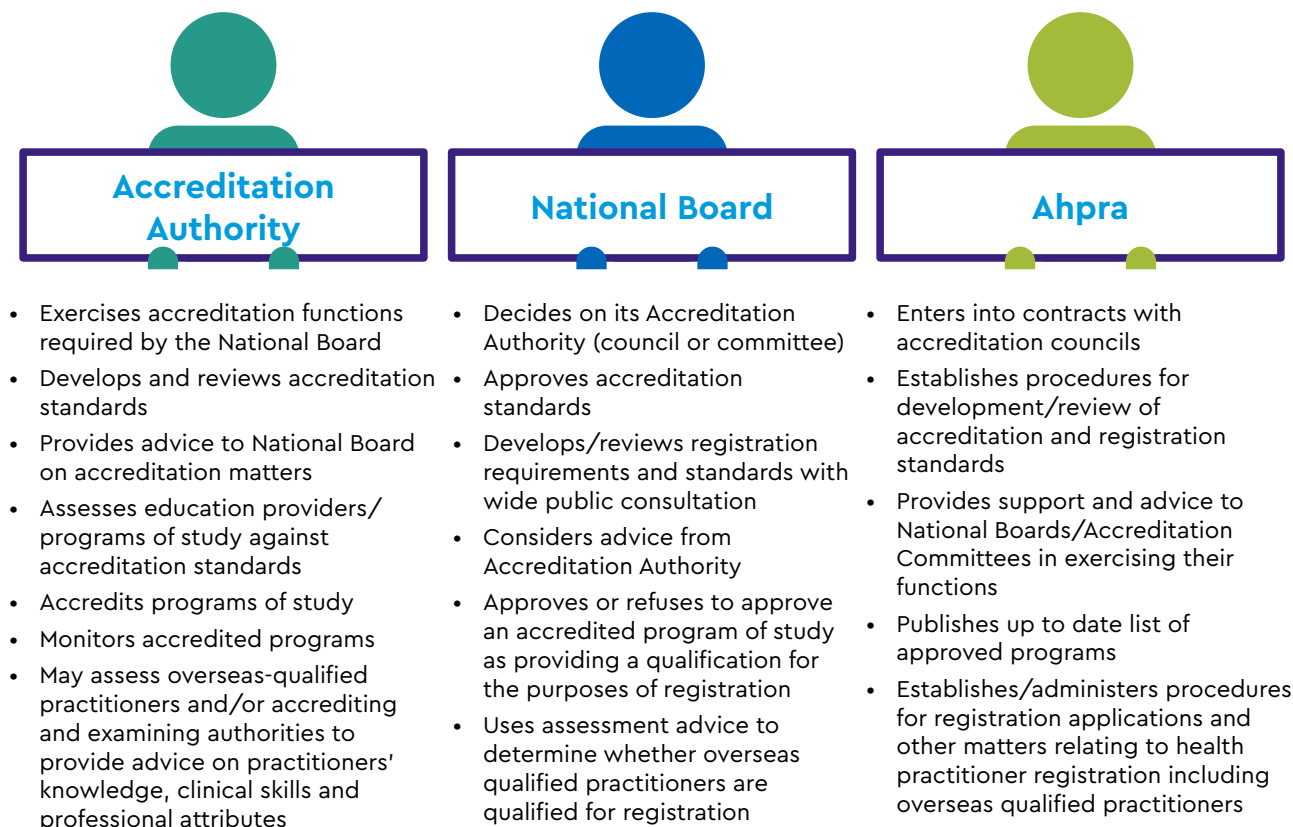
Accreditation Committees:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Accreditation Committee
- Chinese Medicine Accreditation Committee
- Medical Radiation Practice Accreditation Committee
- Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Committee (Assessment of overseas qualified nurses and midwives)
- Paramedicine Accreditation Committee
- Podiatry Accreditation Committee

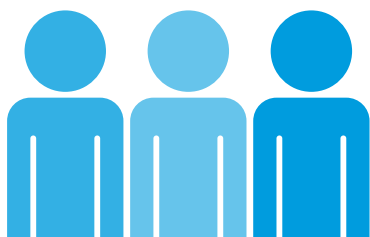
Accreditation Councils:

- Council on Chiropractic Education Australasia
- Australian Dental Council
- Australian Medical Council
- Australian Nursing & Midwifery Accreditation Council
- Occupational Therapy Council of Australia
- Optometry Council of Australia and New Zealand
- Australian Osteopathic Accreditation Council
- Australian Pharmacy Council
- Australian Physiotherapy Council
- Australian Psychology Accreditation Council

Accreditation in the National Scheme: Who does what?



Other bodies involved in accreditation



Accreditation Liaison Group

The National Boards, Accreditation Authorities and Ahpra have established an Accreditation Liaison Group (ALG) to facilitate effective delivery of accreditation within the National Scheme. The ALG is a committee of the Forum of NRAS Chairs and, as an advisory group, it provides an important mechanism to consider shared issues in accreditation across National Boards, Accreditation Authorities and Ahpra. The ALG has developed a number of [reference documents](#) to promote consistency and good practice in accreditation while taking into account the variation across entities. These documents have been approved by National Boards and Accreditation Authorities.



The Health Professions' Accreditation Collaborative Forum

The [Health Professions' Accreditation Collaborative Forum](#) (HPACF), formerly known as the Health Professions' Accreditation Councils' Forum, is the coalition of the entities appointed by the National Boards as Accreditation Authorities for the professions regulated under the National Law. The HPACF has been meeting regularly since 2007, before the commencement of the Scheme, to consider matters of common interest, principally matters concerning the accreditation of education and training programs in the regulated health professions and advocating for good accreditation practices. The HPACF engages with Ahpra and the National Boards. The HPACF publishes a [communiqué](#) after each meeting.



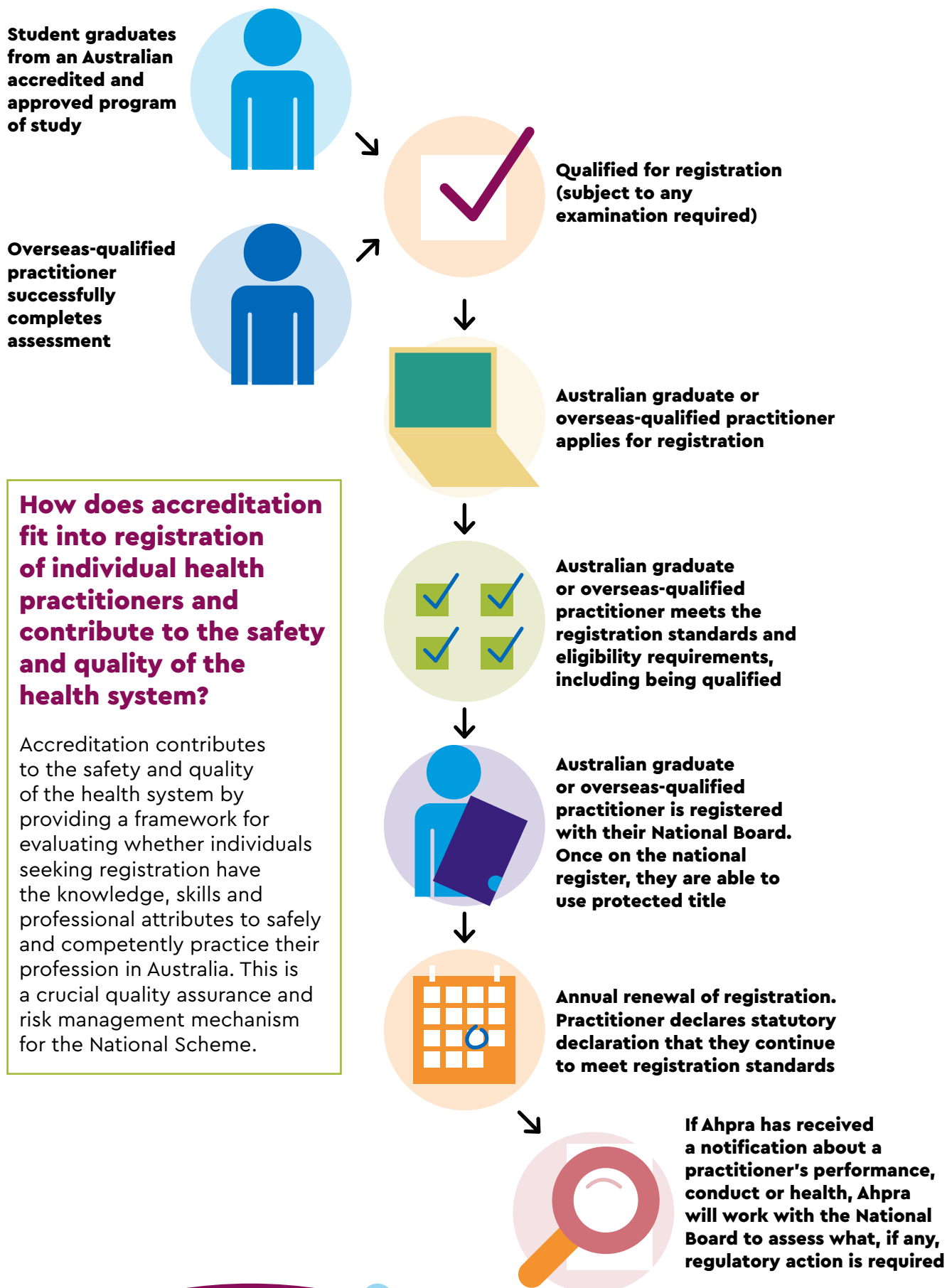
Ahpra's Accreditation Advisory Committee

Ahpra's [Accreditation Advisory Committee](#) (AAC) is a standing committee of the Agency Management Committee. The AAC has been meeting regularly since April 2018 to provide oversight and leadership on accreditation governance, accountability and transparency issues and a scheme-wide perspective on Ahpra's management of contracts for the performance of the accreditation functions. The AAC publishes a [communiqué](#) after each meeting.

In February 2021, Ahpra and the National Boards received Ministerial Policy Direction 2020-01 requiring the Ahpra Agency Management Committee (AManC) to establish a new independent accreditation committee to provide independent and expert advice on accreditation reform and other National Scheme accreditation matters to National Scheme entities including National Boards, Accreditation authorities and Ahpra. AManC decided to discontinue the Accreditation Advisory Committee (AAC) when the new committee was established. The final meeting of the AAC was in April 2021 and its oversight and accreditation governance functions have reverted to AManC.

Intersection between accreditation and registration functions

Lifecycle of a health practitioner



How does accreditation fit into registration of individual health practitioners and contribute to the safety and quality of the health system?

Accreditation contributes to the safety and quality of the health system by providing a framework for evaluating whether individuals seeking registration have the knowledge, skills and professional attributes to safely and competently practice their profession in Australia. This is a crucial quality assurance and risk management mechanism for the National Scheme.

Accreditation activities 2020/21

Program accreditation activities

56 new programs accredited
113 programs re-accredited
639 programs monitored
114 site visits undertaken



Practitioner assessment activities

5,326 overseas-qualified health practitioners assessed



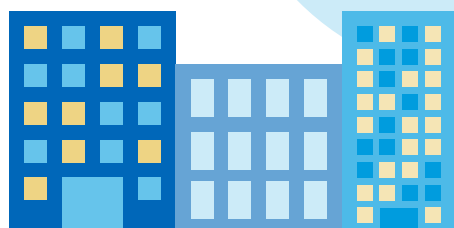
Overall program accreditation at 30 June 2021

860+ accredited programs
130+ providers offering accredited programs



Accreditation standards

2 new standards published in 2020/21
9 standards currently under review



Links to new standards

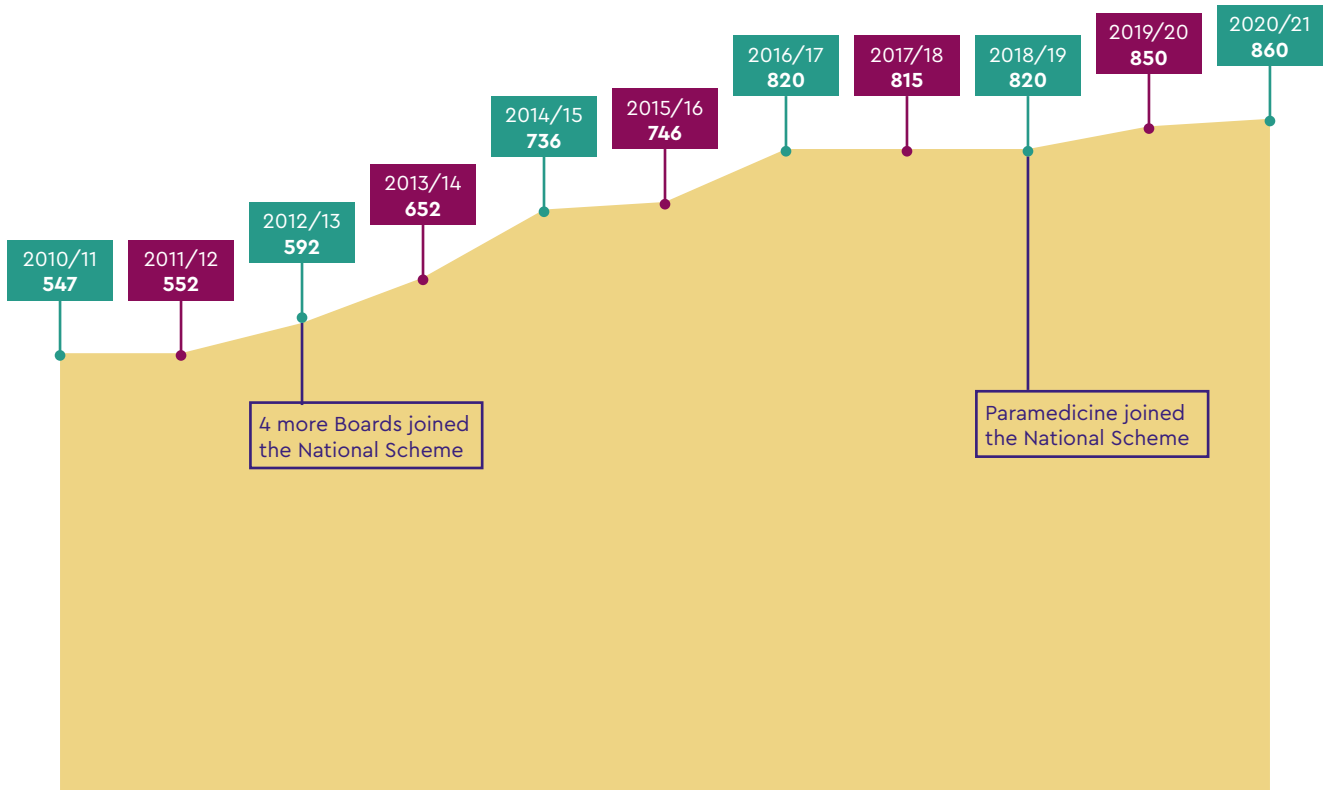
[Midwife Accreditation Standards \(2021\)](#)

[Osteopathic Accreditation Standards \(2021\)](#)

Accreditation standards are used to assess whether a program of study, and the education provider that provides the program of study, provides graduates of the program with the knowledge, skills and professional attributes to practise the profession

Accreditation activity data over time

Number of accredited courses by year since the National Scheme began



What's new in accreditation



Accreditation Policy Direction

Ahpra and National Boards received *Policy direction 2020-01 Establishing an independent accreditation committee* (Accreditation Policy Direction) from Health Ministers on 19 February 2021.

The initial priority in implementing the policy direction was finalising proposed terms of reference for the new independently chaired accreditation committee and circulating them to relevant stakeholders for feedback and inviting relevant stakeholders to nominate members to the new committee, consistent with Ministers' responses to the ASR final report released on 12 February 2020.

Ahpra's Agency Management Committee will confirm appointments to the committee and approve the terms of reference in July 2021.

COVID-19 and accreditation

Accreditation outcomes during COVID-19

Since March 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged the health and education sectors and required Accreditation Authorities, National Boards, and Ahpra to work collaboratively to respond to the challenge of disruptions to clinical education and significant changes to program delivery while holding public safety at the core of all activities.

Accreditation Authorities continue to build upon their existing good processes and relationships to implement COVID-19 specific monitoring that is critical in assuring graduate competence.

Accreditation Authorities and their National Boards work together and maintain close communication to ensure the risks of students not achieving the required clinical capabilities are monitored and managed accordingly.

To monitor and manage risks associated with downstream impacts of COVID-19, from November 2020 the reports under the agreements and terms of reference include a section on COVID-19 responses as part of Authorities accreditation reporting.

National Scheme entities continue to provide support for and guidance about responses to the impact of COVID-19. In early 2021 a high-level principle was developed to support consistent messages/advice to education providers about program changes to accommodate students in approved programs who remain offshore in 2021.

Jointly developed guidance documents

During 2020 and 2021 National Boards, Accreditation Authorities and Ahpra have reviewed and updated jointly developed guidance documents, including the updated [*Communication between Accreditation Authorities and National Boards about accreditation and program approval decisions and changes to accreditation standards – a guidance document about good practice*](#), which was approved and published on the Ahpra website in late 2020. The guidance promotes role clarity, transparency, trust and collaboration between National Boards and Accreditation Authorities.

Accreditation agreements and terms of reference

The agreements with external Accreditation Authorities (agreements) and terms of reference (TOR) for accreditation committees that commenced in July 2019 are central to achieving progress on key issues, including through reporting against key performance indicators (KPIs).

Ahpra, National Boards and Accreditation Authorities have worked collaboratively through the ALG to refine the reporting model and develop initial guidance on expectations and suitable evidence of achievement for five key performance indicators. The initial evidence guide was used by Accreditation Authorities for their March 2021 reports and continues to be refined and developed.

The cost of accreditation: 2020 supplementary report published

In 2016 a report titled the [*Cost of Accreditation in the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme \(the National Scheme\)*](#) was developed. The report focused on accurately describing the costs of accreditation in the National Scheme.

After the report was published in 2016, Accreditation Authorities, National Boards and Ahpra committed to publishing updated costs data in future years. The supplementary report (2020 report), which builds on the 2016 report, was published in November 2020. The 2020 report adds income, expenditure and activity information for the 2016/17 and 2017/18 financial years to relevant sections of the 2016 report. It also gives a five-year data series to show the peaks and troughs of the work involved in accreditation within the National Scheme and points to efficiencies overtime.

Overseas qualified practitioner assessments



9 Accreditation Authorities assess overseas-qualified practitioners seeking registration in a registered health profession in Australia

Council on Chiropractic Education Australasia

Australian Dental Council

Australian Medical Council

**Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Committee
(Assessment of overseas qualified nurses and midwives)**

Occupational Therapy Council of Australia Ltd

Optometry Council of Australia and New Zealand

Australian Osteopathic Accreditation Council

Australian Pharmacy Council

Australian Physiotherapy Council

Overseas-qualified practitioners seeking registration in other registered health professions in Australia are assessed when they apply for registration

Further details about work in accreditation

Each Accreditation Authority, the HPACF and Ahpra publishes information on their websites:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Accreditation Committee

<https://www.atsihealthpracticeboard.gov.au/Accreditation/ATSIHP-Accreditation-Committee.aspx>

Chinese Medicine Accreditation Committee

<https://www.chinesemedicineboard.gov.au/Accreditation/Committee.aspx>

Council on Chiropractic Education Australasia

<http://www.ccea.com.au/>

Australian Dental Council

<http://www.adc.org.au/>

Australian Medical Council

<http://www.amc.org.au/>

Medical Radiation Practice Accreditation Committee

<https://www.medicalradiationpracticeboard.gov.au/Accreditation/Accreditation-Committee.aspx>

Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Committee (Assessment of overseas qualified nurses and midwives)

<https://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Accreditation/Assessment-of-overseas-qualified-nurses-and-midwives.aspx>

Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council

<http://www.anmac.org.au/>

Occupational Therapy Council of Australia Ltd

<http://otcouncil.com.au/>

Optometry Council of Australia and New Zealand

<http://www.ocanz.org/>

Australian Osteopathic Accreditation Council

<https://osteopathiccouncil.org.au/>

Paramedicine Accreditation Committee

<https://www.paramedicineboard.gov.au/Accreditation/Accreditation-Committee.aspx>

Australian Pharmacy Council

<http://pharmacycouncil.org.au/>

Australian Physiotherapy Council

<http://www.physiocouncil.com.au/>

Podiatry Accreditation Committee

<https://www.podiatryboard.gov.au/Accreditation/Accreditation-Committee.aspx>

Australian Psychology Accreditation Council

<http://www.psychologycouncil.org.au/>

Health Professions Accreditation Collaborative Forum

<http://www.hpacf.org.au/>

Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency

<https://www.ahpra.gov.au/Accreditation.aspx>