



# Guidelines for accreditation of education and training programs

**For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice, Chinese medicine, medical radiation practice, paramedicine and podiatry**

July 2020

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**The Accreditation Committees for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practice, Chinese medicine, medical radiation practice, paramedicine and podiatry have adopted a common approach to accreditation of education and training programs under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory (National Law).**

This document sets out detailed information about the approach these committees use to assess, accredit and monitor education and training programs in their respective professions. Further details are available in profession-specific policy and procedure documents published on each committee's webpage.

## 1. Purpose

This document intends to assist:

- education providers seeking accreditation (and maintaining accreditation) of their programs
- assessment teams evaluating programs for accreditation purposes
- members of the Accreditation Committees in their decision-making, and
- other interested stakeholders.

## 2. Governance structures and roles relevant to accreditation of programs

The accreditation of programs in each profession covered by these guidelines involves:

- a. the relevant Accreditation Committee
- b. accreditation assessors and assessment teams, and
- c. Ahpra's Program Accreditation Team.

### 2.1 The Accreditation Committee

The National Law requires each National Board to decide whether accreditation functions for the profession it regulates will be carried out by an external accreditation entity (council) or a committee established by the National Board.

The National Boards for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practice, Chinese medicine, medical radiation practice, paramedicine and podiatry each established a committee (the Accreditation Committee) to carry out the accreditation functions for their respective profession. More information about each Accreditation Committee, including its terms of reference, is available under *Accreditation* on the respective National Board's website.

Accreditation Committees are a special type of committee under the National Law as they are established by a National Board but, once established, they exercise accreditation functions and make decisions directly under the National Law. They do not require delegation of functions or decision-making power by the National Board.

The Accreditation Committee generally relies on reports from assessment teams to determine whether programs meet the approved accreditation standards. Each Accreditation Committee:

- develops accreditation standards for approval by the relevant National Board
- assesses education and training programs, and education providers that provide the programs, to determine whether the programs meet approved accreditation standards
- accredits education and training programs and notifies the relevant National Board about its accreditation decisions, and
- makes recommendations and gives advice to the relevant National Board about matters relevant to education and training in the respective profession.

The National Law separates decisions by accreditation authorities about accreditation of programs from decisions by National Boards about recognition of qualifications for registration of graduates. Under this structure:

The Accreditation Committee:

- makes decisions about accreditation of programs, and
- notifies the National Board of its accreditation decisions.

The National Board:

- receives notice of accreditation decisions from the committee
- makes decisions about approval of accredited programs as providing qualifications for registration in the relevant profession, and
- makes decisions about registration of individual graduates.

More specific information about the roles and composition of each Accreditation Committee is available in its terms of reference.

## 2.2 Accreditation assessors and assessment teams

Ahpra, in partnership with the Accreditation Committee, recruits and trains accreditation assessors.

Each Accreditation Committee calls for applications from individuals seeking appointment as accreditation assessors.

Following a standard recruitment process including interviews, Ahpra appoints applicants identified by the Accreditation Committee as having the required qualifications, skills and experience.

The recruitment process also includes probity checks, such as a criminal history check and declaration of private interests.

Each successful applicant must:

- complete assessor training, and
- sign a confidentiality agreement.

Subject to approval by the Accreditation Committee, Ahpra appoints each assessor for three years. Each assessor must refresh their assessor training to be eligible for re-appointment for a further three years.

The confidentiality agreement is legally binding and covers confidentiality, privacy and intellectual property matters and remains effective even after the assessment is completed.

Before and during their appointment, each assessor must disclose:

- a. any personal or professional interest or duty relevant to their responsibilities as an assessor, and
- b. any other matters that may influence or be perceived to influence their ability to perform their responsibilities objectively.

The Accreditation Committee will, in consultation with the Program Accreditation Team, take all reasonable steps to manage any actual, perceived or potential influence on the ability of any assessor to fulfil their responsibilities objectively.

The Accreditation Committee establishes assessment teams to:

- a. evaluate information provided by an education provider about its program against the approved accreditation standards, and
- b. work in partnership with the Program Accreditation Team to provide the Accreditation Committee with a report of the assessment team's evaluation findings.

The composition of each assessment team will reflect the relevant Accreditation Committee procedures published on each of the committee's webpages.

## 2.3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and cultural safety

Each Accreditation Committee has agreed to work in partnership with other key stakeholders to develop, implement and monitor the National Scheme's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Cultural Safety Strategy 2020–2025 (the strategy). As part of this work, the Accreditation Committees and assessment teams, in fulfilment of their roles, will have due regard to the principles and practice of self-determination and leadership for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

## 2.4 Ahpra's Program Accreditation Team

Ahpra's Program Accreditation Team manages the delivery of accreditation functions for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practice, Chinese medicine, medical radiation practice, paramedicine and podiatry professions in partnership with the Accreditation Committees.

The Program Accreditation Team provides expert advice and guidance, and operational and secretariat support, to the Accreditation Committees and assessment teams and manages nationally consistent service delivery

policies, processes and documentation, to deliver a coordinated and consistent experience for education providers.

The Program Accreditation Team also supports the Accreditation Committees to monitor (see Section 3.3 Monitoring of approved programs of study) approved education programs and respond to issues in a timely and appropriate way to manage risk to public safety.

Ahpra's Program Accreditation Team provides a dedicated case manager to each program. The case manager works closely with the assessment team and is the primary point of contact for the relevant education provider.

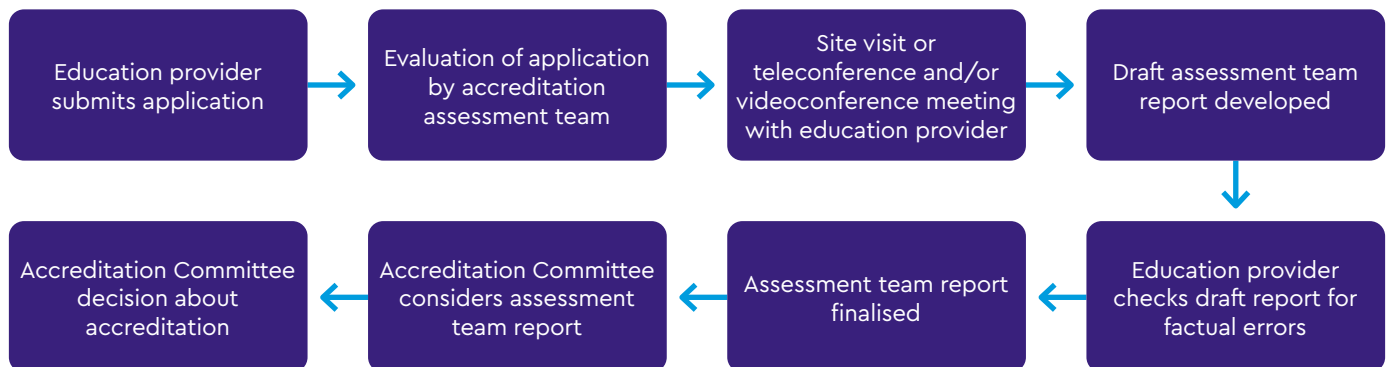
## 3. Program accreditation

Accreditation of programs involves three areas of activity:

- 3.1 *Assessment of programs*, and the education providers delivering the programs, against the accreditation standards
- 3.2 *Decisions about accreditation of programs*, and
- 3.3 *Monitoring of accredited programs* and the education providers delivering them to ensure the committee continues to be satisfied the program and education provider meet the accreditation standards.

### 3.1 Assessment of programs

This diagram shows the key stages in the assessment of programs.



### Establishing due date for application for accreditation of a new program

An education provider seeking accreditation of a new program must contact Ahpra's Program Accreditation Team and provide the following information to assist in scheduling a due date for the application for accreditation:

- a. contact details for the person who will be the primary contact for correspondence related to accreditation of the program
- b. the date the first students will start the new program
- c. the standard length of the program from beginning to completion
- d. the registration status of the provider (i.e. is the provider listed on TEQSA's National Register or ASQA's National Register), and
- e. any other details the education provider considers relevant to scheduling the due date for the application.

The Program Accreditation Team, in partnership with the Accreditation Committee, will consider the information, confirm the due date for the application for accreditation and provide the education provider with:

- details on how to apply including accreditation fees
- the approved accreditation standards
- the application form, and
- indicative timeframe for each stage of the accreditation assessment.

The education provider advises the Program Accreditation Team if the date and indicative timeframe is acceptable or requests a change to the due date or indicative timeframe.

The Program Accreditation Team, in partnership with the Accreditation Committee, will consider any request and advise the education provider if the request has been approved by the committee or seek to negotiate a due date and timeframe that is acceptable for both the education provider and the committee.

## **Establishing the assessment team**

After an acceptable due date and indicative timeframe for the application is confirmed with the education provider, the Accreditation Committee establishes the assessment team.

The Accreditation Committee normally selects two or three trained accreditation assessors to form each assessment team and identifies one assessor as the assessment team leader.

Where the program of study of more than one profession is being assessed, the respective Accreditation Committee may seek to use joint assessment teams to reduce the regulatory burden on education providers.

The Program Accreditation Team sends details about each selected assessor, including their name and relevant background, to the education provider. The education provider has an opportunity to provide details of any matters that it considers may influence or be perceived to influence, the ability of any selected assessor to fulfil their responsibilities objectively. In such circumstances, the Accreditation Committee and the Program Accreditation Team will manage any actual, perceived or potential influence on the ability of the assessor to fulfil their responsibilities objectively before establishing the assessment team.

## **Applying for accreditation**

The education provider must complete and submit its application for accreditation (application) by the due date.

The application form requires the education provider to explain how they meet each accreditation standard and provide the expected information for the relevant criteria. The accreditation standards document lists the expected information and provides guidance on how to present the explanation and expected information.

The Program Accreditation Team checks each application has been completed in accordance with the instructions and contacts the education provider if there are gaps with their application. The education provider may need to re-submit their application.

If the application is complete, the Program Accreditation Team sends it to the assessment team.

## **Evaluation of application**

Each assessor evaluates the application and assesses the program and provider against the approved accreditation standards. The Program Accreditation Team convenes a meeting for the assessors to:

- a. discuss their individual findings, and
- b. identify the aspects of the program and provider they need to assess during a site visit or other meeting with the education provider.

## **Site visit and/or teleconference/videoconference with education provider**

The assessment team carries out a site visit and/or meets with the education provider by teleconference/videoconference to complete the assessment of the education provider and program against the accreditation standards.

The Program Accreditation Team, in consultation with the assessment team and the education provider, coordinates planning for the site visit and/or teleconference/videoconference, including the agenda.

The agenda will identify the aspects of the program and education provider that the assessment team needs to assess during the site visit and/or teleconference/videoconference.

## **Draft assessment team report**

The Program Accreditation Team works in partnership with the assessors to prepare a draft assessment team report after the site visit and/or teleconference/videoconference. The assessment team approves the draft report before the Program Accreditation Team sends it to the education provider.

The Program Accreditation Team asks the education provider to review the draft report and to advise them, in writing and within a defined time period, of any factual errors in the draft report. The education provider cannot introduce new information or evidence at this stage. The Program Accreditation Team works in partnership with the assessment team to address advice from the education provider about any factual errors.

## Finalising the assessment team report

The Program Accreditation Team works in partnership with the assessment team to finalise the assessment team report to be submitted to the Accreditation Committee.

The final assessment team report:

- a. sets out the assessors agreed evaluation findings for each accreditation standard
- b. provides recommendations to the Accreditation Committee about whether, on the basis of their evaluation, the education provider and its program has met each accreditation standard, and
- c. may recommend that the Accreditation Committee imposes conditions and/or establishes specific monitoring requirements.

The assessment team approves the final assessment team report before it is submitted to the Accreditation Committee for their consideration.

## 3.2 Decisions about accreditation of programs

### Accreditation Committee decision about accreditation

The Accreditation Committee considers the content of the final assessment team report and makes a decision about accreditation of the program. The committee will be able to clarify aspects of the report with the assessors as part of their consideration of the content of the assessment team report.

The Accreditation Committee may decide to accredit the program, with or without conditions. The committee may also decide to refuse to accredit the program.

The Accreditation Committee may decide to accredit the program if it determines that, on the basis of the assessment team's findings, the education provider and program meet all accreditation standards.

The Accreditation Committee may propose to impose conditions on accreditation of a program if it determines that, on the basis of the assessment team's findings:

- a. the education provider and program substantially meet the approved accreditation standards, and
- b. the imposition of conditions will ensure all approved accreditation standards are met within a reasonable time.

The Accreditation Committee may propose to refuse to accredit a program if it determines that, on the basis of the assessment team's findings:

- a. the education provider and program have not substantially met the approved accreditation standards, or
- b. despite the imposition of conditions, the education provider and program will be unable to meet the approved accreditation standards within a reasonable time.

The Program Accreditation Team sends the education provider advice about the Accreditation Committee's decision, the reasons for its decision and a copy of the accreditation report including any proposed conditions.

If the Accreditation Committee proposes to refuse to accredit the program or proposes to impose conditions on accreditation of the program, the advice will invite the education provider to make a submission about the proposed refusal decision or the proposed imposition of conditions.

The Program Accreditation Team will provide any submission from the education provider to the Accreditation Committee for consideration.

## Reviewing any submission from the education provider

The Accreditation Committee, in consultation with the Program Accreditation Team, will consider any submission from the education provider about the proposed decision or the proposed conditions and may:

- a. confirm its decision or proposed conditions, or
- b. change its decision or proposed conditions.

The Program Accreditation Team sends the education provider advice about the Accreditation Committee's decision, the reasons for its decision and a copy of the final accreditation report including any confirmed conditions.

## Final accreditation report

If the Accreditation Committee decides to impose conditions on accreditation of the program, or to establish specific monitoring requirements, the final accreditation report includes:

- the conditions and/or specific monitoring requirements, and
- the timeframe in which the education provider must respond to the conditions and/or any specific monitoring.

If the Accreditation Committee decides to refuse to accredit a program, it sends notice of the decision to the education provider and includes the reasons for the decision. The Accreditation Committee will outline how the education provider may apply for an internal review of the decision.

The Accreditation Committee must advise the National Board of its accreditation decision and provide a copy of the final accreditation report to the Board.

More specific information is provided in the Accreditation Committee procedures published on each committee's webpage.

## 3.3 Monitoring of approved programs of study

This diagram shows the key stages of the Accreditation Committee's approach to monitoring approved programs of study.



### Overview

The National Law outlines the committee's responsibility to monitor approved programs of study and the education providers offering them, to ensure the committee continues to be satisfied the program and provider meet the accreditation standards. The committee may impose conditions or revoke accreditation of a program if it finds the program or provider is no longer meeting the standards.

Monitoring provides an opportunity for early intervention by the committee if concerns are raised about an approved program, and maximises the likelihood that students who are undertaking study in that program can complete their studies and graduate with a qualification that will be recognised by the National Board for the purposes of registration in the health profession.

The Accreditation Committee monitors whether the program and education provider continue to meet the accreditation standards, including by:

- a. evaluating responses from an education provider to the specific and routine monitoring requirements that the committee has established for a program, and
- b. evaluating other information about an education provider and/or its accredited programs that comes to the committee's attention, such as advice from TEQSA or ASQA, complaints or concerns about an education provider, details published by the education provider, the government, the respective professional association, reports in the media or staff advertisements.



## Specific and routine monitoring requirements

When the Accreditation Committee advises an education provider of its decision to accredit the program, with or without conditions, the committee will provide details of the specific and routine monitoring requirements that the committee has established for that education provider, including routine annual monitoring. These requirements are updated at least once each year based on information submitted by the education provider.

The specific and routine monitoring requirements established by the Accreditation Committee will generally include:

- a. responses to any conditions imposed by the Accreditation Committee on standards that are not fully met
- b. responses to any specific monitoring requirements established by the Accreditation Committee for standards that are met if there are risks that specific aspects may not continue to be met
- c. provision of key statistical data and other details as part of routine annual monitoring
- d. written notice of any planned and/or implemented changes to an accredited program, and
- e. responses to any request by the Accreditation Committee for information as required to ensure the committee continues to be satisfied that the accreditation standards are being met by the program and education provider.

## Responding to conditions and specific monitoring requirements

If a program is accredited with conditions and/or specific monitoring requirements, the Accreditation Committee will advise the education provider about the conditions/specific monitoring requirements and due dates for responses.

The conditions/specific monitoring requirements may require the education provider to respond:

- a. in writing
- b. at a monitoring visit, and/or
- c. at a meeting with the Accreditation Committee, including teleconference, videoconference or face to face discussions with representatives of the education provider.

## Responding to routine annual monitoring requirements

All education providers must submit key statistical data and other details to the Accreditation Committee in the form of a routine annual monitoring submission. The Program Accreditation Team will work with all providers to ensure this information is submitted within agreed timeframes for consideration by the Accreditation Committee.

## Written notice about planned or implemented changes

The education provider is required to notify the committee in writing about:

- a. any changes to an approved program, where the change means students will complete a program that is different in any way to the program that was assessed and accredited
- b. changes to any aspect of the education provider's governance or operations that may impact on its ability to continue to meet the accreditation standards.

## Other information that comes to the committee's attention

The Accreditation Committee may become aware of matters relevant to its accreditation of a program through means such as advice from TEQSA or ASQA, complaints or concerns, advertisements or details published by the education provider, the government, the respective professional association, or reports in the media.

If the Accreditation Committee becomes aware of such matters, it may establish specific monitoring to submit information to ensure the committee continues to be satisfied that the program and provider are meeting the accreditation standards, and when any such information may need to be submitted.

## Option to require a full assessment against the accreditation standards

The Accreditation Committee may determine at any time that a full assessment against the accreditation standards is required to enable the committee to decide whether the standards continue to be met.

## Evaluation of monitoring response

The Accreditation Committee may decide to evaluate the education provider's response to conditions, or to specific or routine monitoring requirements (monitoring response) at a meeting or select assessors to evaluate the monitoring response.

If the committee decides to evaluate the monitoring response at a meeting, the Program Accreditation Team prepares an agenda paper to accompany the response.

If the committee decides to select assessors to evaluate the monitoring response, the Program Accreditation Team works in partnership with the assessors to finalise a monitoring evaluation report that sets out the assessors' agreed evaluation findings for each condition or monitoring requirement.

### **Accreditation Committee decisions following evaluation of the monitoring response**

The Accreditation Committee evaluates the monitoring response or considers the content of the monitoring evaluation report, makes determinations about the accreditation standards relevant to the response and confirms or changes the accreditation status of the program.

In confirming the accreditation status of the program, the Accreditation Committee may agree to continue to accredit the program with or without conditions. The Accreditation Committee may continue to impose conditions if the committee determines that, on the basis of the monitoring response:

- a. the education provider and program substantially meet the approved accreditation standards, and
- b. the continued imposition of conditions will ensure all approved accreditation standards are met within a reasonable time.

The Accreditation Committee may also establish specific monitoring requirements if the committee determines that, on the basis of the monitoring response, there are risks that specific aspects of the accreditation standards may not continue to be met.

The Accreditation Committee may change the accreditation status of the program by:

- a. deciding to propose to revoke accreditation of the program if the committee determines that, on the basis of the monitoring response, the education provider and program no longer meet the accreditation standards
- b. deciding to accredit a program without conditions if the committee determines that, on the basis of the monitoring response, the education provider and program meet all the accreditation standards and it is not necessary to continue to impose any conditions.

The Program Accreditation Team will update the accreditation status report to reflect the Accreditation Committee decisions following its evaluation of the monitoring response.

### **Reporting on the Accreditation Committee's decisions following evaluation of the monitoring response**

The Accreditation Committee will advise the education provider and the National Board of its decisions following its evaluation of the monitoring response and provide copies of accreditation status reports.

If the Accreditation Committee decides to revoke accreditation of a program it must give written notice of the proposed decision to the education provider, including the reasons for the decision and outlining how the education provider may apply for an internal review of the decision.

### **Placing an end date on accreditation of a program**

The Accreditation Committee does not generally place an end date on the accreditation of a program. However, this does not mean a program is accredited indefinitely, rather it enables the Accreditation Committee to fulfil its monitoring obligations. A program remains accredited only if the committee continues to be satisfied the program and the provider meet the accreditation standards. If the committee has concerns about the program and the provider, an end date can be used to manage risk.

The Accreditation Committee may decide to specify an end date on the accreditation of a program when:

- a. an education provider advises the committee that a program is in teach-out – the end date will align with the anticipated timeframe for the last cohort of students to complete the program
- b. despite conditions, there are outstanding issues that mean the accreditation standards have not been met within a reasonable time – the end date will provide a reasonable period for the education provider to address the outstanding issues, or
- c. the committee identifies a high risk that the program is not providing students with the knowledge, skills and attributes to practise the profession competently and safely in Australia – the end date will reflect the level of risk.

More specific information, including detail about the process for internal review of accreditation decisions, is provided in the Accreditation Committee procedures published on each committee's webpage.

For information about indicative timeframes for the accreditation process contact the Program Accreditation Team.

## 4. Glossary

Term	Definition
<b>Accreditation authority</b>	An external accreditation entity; or an Accreditation Committee.
<b>Accredited</b>	Is a status applied when the program of study, and the education provider that provides that program of study, meet an approved accreditation standard for the profession.
<b>Accredited with conditions</b>	Is a status applied when the program of study, and the education provider that provides that program of study, substantially meet an approved accreditation standard for the profession and the imposition of conditions on the accreditation will ensure the program meets the standard within a reasonable time.
<b>Accreditation refused</b>	The program of study, and the education provider that provides that program of study, has not met an approved accreditation standard for the profession and is no longer accredited.
<b>Accreditation revoked</b>	The program of study, and the education provider that provides that program of study, no longer meets an approved accreditation standard for the profession and it is no longer accredited.
<b>Accreditation standard</b>	A standard used to assess whether a program of study, and the education provider that provides the program of study, provide persons who complete the program with the knowledge, skills and professional attributes necessary to practise the profession in Australia.
<b>Accreditation submission</b>	Evidence provided to the respective Accreditation Committee by the education provider to show how the program of study, and the education provider that provides the program of study, meets the standards.
<b>Education provider</b>	A university; or a tertiary education institution, or another institution or organisation, that provides vocational training; or a specialist medical college or other health profession college.
<b>Monitoring</b>	Activities by an Accreditation Committee so it continues to be satisfied a program and its provider meet the approved accreditation standards for the profession.
<b>Routine annual monitoring</b>	<p>Annual report submitted by education providers to the respective Accreditation Committee to allow the committee to track whether education providers are continuing to meet accreditation standards.</p> <p>The Accreditation Committees use routine annual monitoring to collect key statistical data and other details in a similar way that the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) collects information and data on education providers through its <a href="#">Provider Information Requests</a> and other mechanisms.</p>

### Review

**Date of issue:** July 2020

The guidelines will be reviewed from time to time as required. This will generally be at least every 5 years.