



Chinese Medicine
Accreditation
Committee

Approach for establishing assessment teams for Chinese medicine

January 2021

1. Purpose

Under section 42 of the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (the National Law), as in force in each state and territory, the accreditation function includes 'assessing programs of study (programs), and the education providers that provide the programs, to determine whether the programs meet approved accreditation standards.

The Chinese Medicine Accreditation Committee (the Committee) exercises the accreditation function under the National Law; to support this, the Committee appoints and trains assessors and establishes assessment teams (assessment teams).

Assessment teams are responsible for assessing education providers and their Chinese medicine programs against the *accreditation standards for Chinese medicine* and must report their findings to the Committee.

This procedure outlines the main considerations for the Committee when it is establishing an assessment team.

2. Factors to consider when establishing an assessment team

The Committee will generally establish an assessment team for each program undergoing an accreditation assessment. The Program Accreditation Team maintains a database of accreditation assessors that have been trained and may be selected to an assessment team.

2.1 Individual assessor attributes considered in establishing an assessment team

The Committee has agreed that each assessment team:

- a. will generally comprise two or three assessors, including an assessor who is a member of the Committee, and
- b. is composed so that the combination of assessors gives coverage of the following areas:
 - sound knowledge of Chinese medicine clinical practice and experience in clinical education
 - current registration with the National Board in each division(s) of the *Chinese Medicine register of practitioners* (the register) relevant to the program being assessed
 - sound knowledge of the Australian higher education system and experience in developing and delivering higher education in Australia
 - knowledge of education theory and experience in education design and assessment, and/or
 - sound knowledge of biomedical and clinical sciences.

When an education provider offers programs in more than one division of the register (acupuncture, Chinese herbal medicine and Chinese herbal dispensing divisions), the Committee may establish a single assessment team that includes one or more assessors who are Chinese medicine practitioners and who are registered with the National Board in each of the divisions of the register relevant to the programs being assessed.

This means **there may be more than three assessors on a team** when an education provider applies for accreditation assessment of programs in more than one division of the register.

2.2 Actual and perceived conflict of interest and bias

The National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (National Scheme) must operate in a transparent, accountable, efficient, effective and fair way, as outlined in section 3 (3) of the National Law.

In exercising functions delegated to them under the National Law (through the Committee), assessors must act honestly, in good faith, with integrity and with a reasonable degree of care, diligence and skill (section 234(2)).

Assessors should avoid situations where their private interests may conflict, or might reasonably be perceived to conflict, with the public interest and their ability to impartially fulfil their official duties.

The *Guidelines for accreditation of education and training programs* (the Guidelines), as adopted by the Chinese Medicine Accreditation Committee, outline that:

Before and during their appointment, each assessor must disclose:

- a. *any personal or professional interest or duty relevant to the performance of 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 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 Program Accreditation Team keeps a record of the self-identified conflicts of interest or bias for each assessor.

3. Adopting a consistent approach to consideration of factors when establishing an assessment team

The Committee considers each of the following questions in order:

1. Which assessors have declared a relevant conflict of interest or bias in relation to the program?
2. From the remaining shortlist, which assessors work in the same state or territory as the location where the program is delivered?
3. Which assessors cover the individual assessor attributes needed to establish an assessment team?
4. Are any assessors on the shortlist already assigned to established assessment teams? If yes, which teams?
5. Are any assessors on the shortlist associated with each other through employment, business arrangements or a personal relationship?
6. Are any assessors on the shortlist a member of the Committee?

3.1 Consideration of individual attributes

Which assessors have declared a relevant conflict of interest or bias in relation to the program?

The Committee **will not** consider any assessor who has declared a relevant conflict of interest or bias when it is establishing an assessment team. These people are removed from the shortlist of potential assessors for the team being established for that program.

From the remaining shortlist, which assessors work in the same state or territory as the location where the program is delivered?

Whenever practicable, the Committee **will not** consider any assessor who works in the same state or territory as the location where the program is delivered. These people are removed from the shortlist of potential assessors for the team that is being established for that program.

Which assessors cover the individual assessor attributes needed to establish an assessment team?

To ensure the right balance of membership on an assessment team, the Committee must consider the relevant competencies, expertise and attributes of each assessor and ensure assessors cover the areas identified at section 2.1.

Note: The Program Accreditation Team carries out the steps outlined in 3.1 above before presenting an annotated shortlist of suitable assessors to the Committee for consideration.

3.2 Consideration of team attributes

When identifying possible combinations of assessors that could be drawn from the shortlist of assessors who are suitable for the assessment team, the Committee may wish to consider other factors that may impact on the performance and bias of the assessment team as a whole:

Are any assessors on the shortlist already assigned to established assessment teams? If yes, which teams?

The Committee identifies if any of the shortlisted assessors are already appointed to any established assessment teams. The Committee may wish to consider spreading the assessment team workload between assessors to avoid delays in assessments being completed.

Where a potential assessor is on an established team undertaking an assessment that will run concurrently with one being planned, the Committee may need to consider removing the person from the "short-list" of potential assessors until their workload permits them to undertake another assessment.

Are any assessors on the shortlist associated with each other through employment, business arrangements or a personal relationship?

The Committee should avoid appointing assessors who are associated with each other outside their role as an assessor as such associations are likely to lead to perceptions of bias. If there are enough assessors on the shortlist, people who are associated with each other outside their role as an assessor may be removed from the shortlist so only one of the associated people remains on the list.

Are any assessors on the shortlist a member of the Committee?

Each team needs to include a member of the Committee.

When assessing applications for accreditation, the Committee should avoid appointing more than one assessor who is a member of the Committee. This removes the risk of the Committee being inquorate if members need to be absent to manage the risk of claims of apprehended bias when the Committee makes its decision. This may not always be avoidable, and the risk is then managed through the usual meeting processes.

3.3 Other considerations

The Committee may, at its discretion, request the Program Accreditation Team source potential assessors through external regulators (such as TEQSA) or the assessor lists for other health professions supported by the Program Accreditation Team.

All assessors, regardless of where they are sourced, are required to carry out relevant training conducted by Ahpra's Program Accreditation Team.

3.4 Establishing a proposed assessment team

After considering the factors above, the Committee will have potential combinations of assessors who are suitable for the assessment team. If there are sufficient assessors on the shortlist, only one Committee member should remain on each potential combination of assessors. While the Committee will need to establish the proposed assessment team based on those potential combinations, it needs to identify one or more reserve assessor(s) who the Program Accreditation Team can substitute if any assessor is unavailable or if issues are raised during the final check described below. This will minimise delays in finding alternative assessors.

After establishing each assessment team, the Committee will select one assessor from the established team as assessment team leader.

The assessment team leader will generally be an assessor who has sound knowledge of education and an understanding of accreditation processes – this person does not need to be a registered practitioner or a member of the Committee.

4. Final check with assessors selected for proposed assessment team

After considering the factors above, the Committee will decide on the assessors it has selected for the proposed assessment team.

Before giving the relevant education provider written notice about the proposed team, including the names and relevant background of each assessor, the Committee should request that the Program Accreditation Team advises each assessor of their selection. Each assessor should then submit details of any matters that they think may influence or be perceived to influence their ability to fulfil their responsibilities objectively on that team.

If any assessor gives details of any such matters, the 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.

5. Check with the education provider regarding proposed assessment team

The education provider may, after being notified about the proposed team, submit details of any matters that they consider may influence or be perceived to influence their ability to fulfil their responsibilities objectively on that team.

If an assessor is not available or there are matters that they or the education provider consider may influence or be perceived to influence their ability to fulfil their responsibilities objectively on that team, the Program Accreditation Team will substitute that assessor with one of the reserves without seeking approval from the Committee. If a Committee member is selected and is not available, or the education provider considers the Committee member will not be able to fulfil their responsibilities objectively on that team, the Program Accreditation Team will liaise with the Chair (or Deputy Chairs) as appropriate to replace the Committee member on the team. The Program Accreditation Team will advise the Committee of any changes to proposed teams at its next meeting.