

Accreditation in the National
Registration and Accreditation
Scheme (NRAS):
A snapshot 2021/22



**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 2022.

Contents

Introduction	2
Contact us	2
Accreditation	3
Intersection between accreditation and registration functions	5
Accreditation activities 2021/22	6
Accreditation activity data over time	7
What's new in accreditation	7
What's new in accreditation	8
Overseas qualified practitioner assessments	9
Further details about work in accreditation	10

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 practise the profession in Australia.

Who performs accreditation?

Six accreditation committees and ten accreditation councils perform accreditation in the National Scheme.

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?



- Exercises accreditation functions required by the National Board
- Develops and reviews accreditation standards
- Provides advice to National Board on accreditation matters
- Assesses education providers/ programs of study against accreditation standards
- Accredits programs of study
- Monitors accredited programs
- May assess overseas-qualified practitioners and/or accrediting and examining authorities to provide advice on practitioners' knowledge, clinical skills and professional attributes

- Decides on its Accreditation Authority (council or committee)
- Approves accreditation standards
- Develops/reviews registration requirements and standards with wide public consultation
- Considers advice from Accreditation Authority
- Approves or refuses to approve an accredited program of study as providing a qualification for the purposes of registration
- Uses assessment advice to determine whether overseas qualified practitioners are qualified for registration

- Enters into contracts with accreditation councils
- Establishes procedures for development/review of accreditation and registration standards
- Provides support and advice to National Boards/Accreditation Committees in exercising their functions
- Publishes up to date list of approved programs
- Establishes/administers procedures for registration applications and other matters relating to health practitioner registration including overseas qualified practitioners



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) 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.



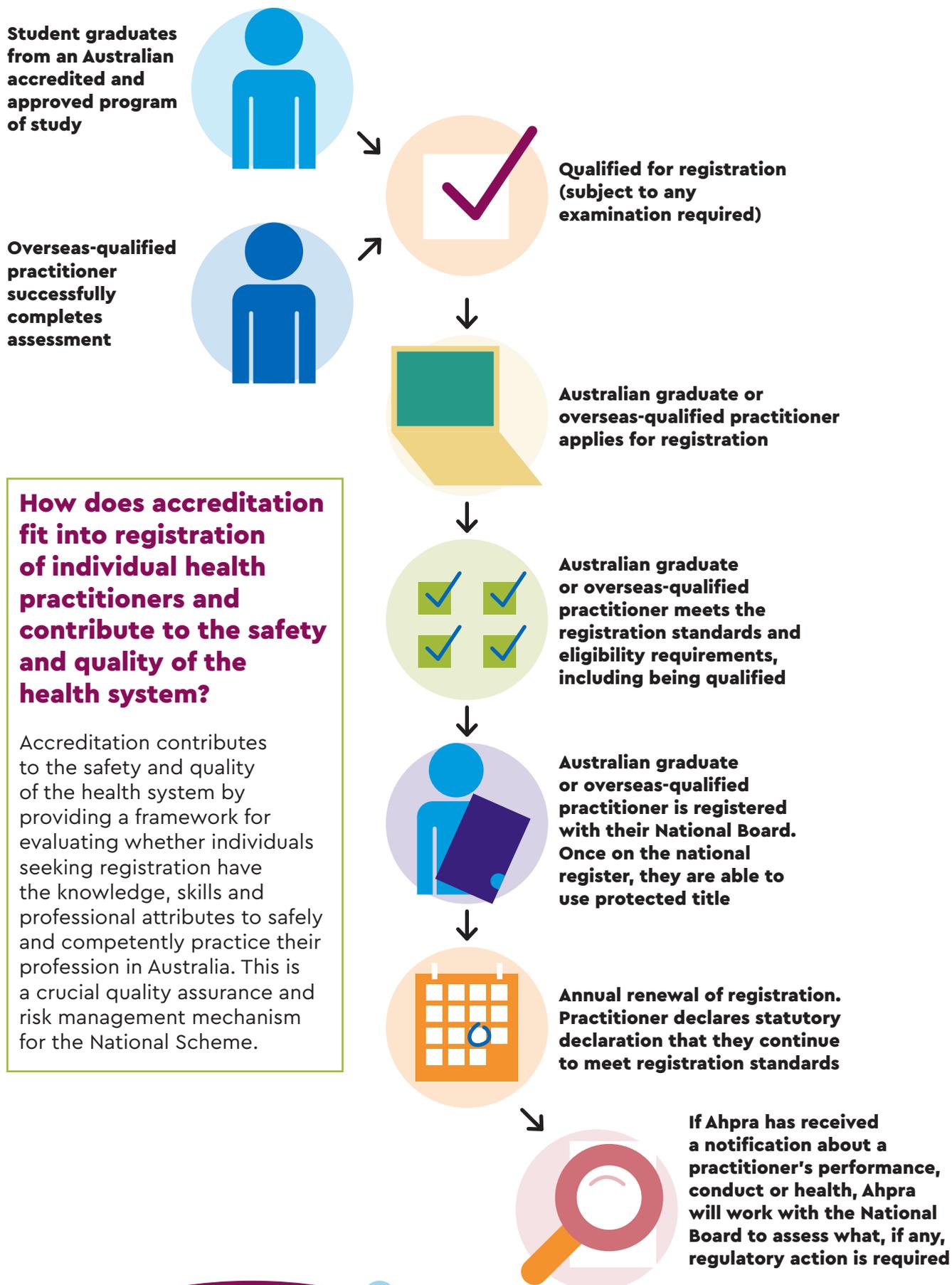
Accreditation Committee

The Ahpra Board established the Accreditation Committee (the Committee) consistent with Ministerial Council Policy Direction 2020-1 to provide independent and expert advice on accreditation reform and other National Scheme accreditation matters to National Scheme entities (National Boards, Accreditation Authorities and Ahpra).

The Committee publishes a [communiqué](#) after each meeting.

Intersection between accreditation and registration functions

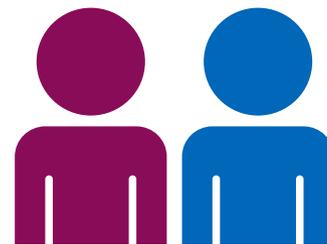
Lifecycle of a health practitioner



Accreditation activities 2021/22

Program accreditation activities

59 new programs accredited
138 programs re-accredited
682 programs monitored
115 site visits undertaken



Practitioner assessment activities

14,613 overseas-qualified health practitioners assessed



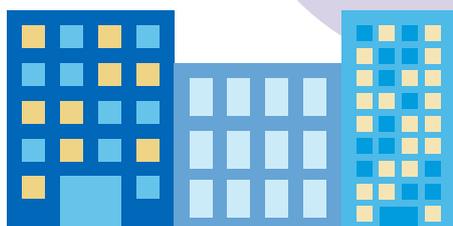
Overall program accreditation at 30 June 2022

840+ accredited programs
130+ providers offering accredited programs



Accreditation standards

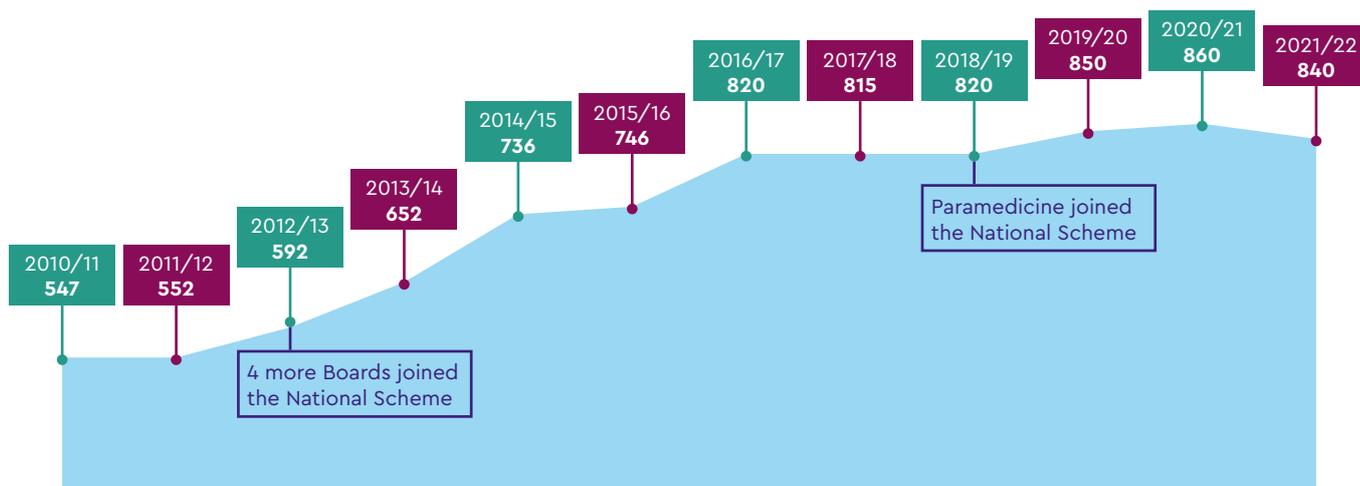
4 standards currently under review



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

Establishment of the new independently chaired Accreditation Committee

Ahpra announced the membership of the independently chaired Accreditation Committee and published the approved terms of reference on 11 August 2021.

The Committee held their first meeting in September 2021 and have met 4 times since being established. The Committee have published an initial [work plan](#) and confirmed timelines for its work.

More information about the Committee can be found [here](#).

Collaboration between the National Scheme and the Commission

National Boards, Accreditation Authorities and Ahpra agreed to work collaboratively with the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Healthcare (the Commission) on a project to develop a cross-profession good practice framework on communication for safety that considers the role of the Commission, Accreditation Authorities and National Boards.

The framework will build upon the Commission's [Framework for Communicating for Safety](#) and the relevant accreditation standards, professional capabilities/competencies, and National Boards' codes of conduct. The work is due to be completed in 2023.

Jointly developed guidance documents

National Boards, Accreditation Authorities and Ahpra have reviewed and updated jointly developed guidance documents. 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](#) was approved and published on the Ahpra website in late 2021. The guidance promotes role clarity, transparency, trust and collaboration between National Boards and Accreditation Authorities.

Accreditation Authority reporting under agreements and terms of reference

The agreements and terms of reference require Accreditation Authorities to report on a six-monthly basis against the key performance indicators (KPIs) and provide key activity data.

Ahpra, National Boards and Accreditation Authorities continued to work collaboratively in 2021 and early 2022 to refine the reporting model and initial evidence guide to enhance expectations and suitable evidence of achievement of relevant KPIs.

The refined reporting model was implemented in November 2021.

What's new in accreditation

Enhancing the transparency, reporting and comparability of accreditation funding and costs

During 2021 Accreditation Authorities and National Boards through the ALG endorsed an Ahpra led project to engage a subject matter expert who has relevant expertise to progress work related to accreditation funding and costs. This project will provide a report setting out research findings, analysis (including economic analysis) and detailed advice to Ahpra about:

1. enhancing the transparency, reporting and comparability of accreditation funding and costs
2. possible approaches to identifying "hidden" or indirect accreditation costs
3. cost methodologies that would enable the most accurate reporting by accreditation authorities and comparative analysis by Ahpra of accreditation costs in the National Scheme
4. further development of funding and fee setting principles including advice on whether funding principles should take into account the relative equity positions of the National Board and accreditation authority
5. whether the findings and analysis (including economic analysis) support a comparable approach to the relative proportions of income from education providers and National boards between accreditation authorities, and
6. the economic considerations that should inform a funding model for accreditation in the National Scheme.

Work is scheduled to commence in the second half of 2022.

COVID-19 and accreditation

Accreditation Authorities, National Boards and Ahpra continue to work together to monitor and respond to the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 on the health and education sectors. This includes ensuring students are achieving the capabilities required for safe and competent practice before graduation, despite ongoing changes to program delivery during the pandemic.



HPACF IPE project

The HPACF endorsed its 2022–23 workplan in April 2022 which includes a project to Develop Consensus Interprofessional Education (IPE) guidance to describe Interprofessional collaborative practice principles, interprofessional education and assessment tools. The project includes a research component and the development of exemplars for completion in 2023.

Priority areas for accreditation in the National Scheme

Other priority areas of work for accreditation in the National Scheme include:

1. enhancing the transparency, reporting and comparability of accreditation funding and costs
2. the establishment of cross-profession policies and guidelines for accreditation standards development and assessment
3. clarification of the roles of accreditation bodies and education regulators to avoid duplication
4. strengthening the role of consumers as a key stakeholder in accreditation systems
5. maintaining the focus on outcomes-based approaches to accreditation
6. the role of competency standards in accreditation, and
7. interprofessional education and collaborative practice.

HPACF Cultural Safety Training for accreditation teams

The HPACF issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) in November 2021 seeking interest from Indigenous owned organisations to develop cultural safety training specifically designed for the role of accreditation teams assessing health practitioner education and training programs for accreditation.

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

11 assessment activities

Australian Dental Council

3,257 assessment activities

Australian Medical Council

4,484 assessment activities

Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Committee

(Assessment of overseas qualified nurses and midwives)¹

3,387 assessment activities

Occupational Therapy Council of Australia

235 assessment activities

Optometry Council of Australia and New Zealand

78 assessment activities

Australian Osteopathic Accreditation Council

4 assessment activities

Australian Pharmacy Council

1,211 assessment activities

Australian Physiotherapy Council

1,946 assessment activities

Overseas-qualified practitioners seeking registration in other registered health professions in Australia are assessed as part of the registration process.

¹ Nursing and Midwifery Board has established a committee to oversee the assessment of overseas qualified nurses and midwives.

Further details about work in accreditation

Each Accreditation Authority, the HPACF and Ahpra publishes information, including current accreditation standards and contact details 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>