

2004



**Queensland
Government**

Department of
Education and the Arts

Guidelines

for the

Accreditation of Higher Education Courses

offered by

Non-University Providers





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Education and the Arts

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Copies of this document may be obtained from:

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Education Queensland
Floor 18, Education House
30 Mary Street
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Part 1

Introduction

PART 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.0 LEGISLATIVE & POLICY CONTEXT

1.1 Legislative Context

Higher education is traditionally and predominantly offered by universities which, by virtue of the Acts under which they are established, are the accrediting authorities for the courses they offer. Under the *Higher Education (General Provisions) Act 2003* (the Act), providers other than universities must not confer or use higher education awards unless they are authorised to do so. Higher education awards are a degree, status, title or description of associate degree, bachelor, master or doctor, or any other award classified as higher education in the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF).

The Act provides that the governing body of a non-university provider may apply in writing to the Minister for Education for accreditation of a higher education course. The Minister may accredit a higher education course only if satisfied that the course and the way of delivering it are appropriate to the type of award to which the course leads.

There are penalties specified in the Act for offering an unaccredited higher education course, and conferring a higher education award unless the course leading to the award is accredited. There are also penalties in the Act for conferring a higher education award without an associated accredited course.

These accreditation guidelines have been developed by the Office of Higher Education (OHE) and approved by the Minister for Education pursuant to the provisions of the *Higher Education (General Provisions) Act 2003* and replace all earlier procedures for the accreditation of higher education courses proposed to be offered by non-university providers.

1.2 The National Context

While the guidelines outlined in this document for the accreditation of higher education courses have been developed under specific Queensland legislation, they are part of a pattern of similar arrangements that are in place throughout Australia.

Nationally, higher education approval processes are underpinned by the *National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes** (National Protocols). The National Protocols were approved by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) on 21 March 2000 and are a key element of a national Higher Education Quality Assurance Framework for Australian higher education, which includes the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA). They were designed to promote common principles, criteria, processes and standards in higher education approval processes throughout Australia.

The Queensland Act refers specifically to the criteria mentioned in the National Protocols in relation to higher education approval processes. Protocol 3 of the National Protocols ("Accreditation of higher education courses to be offered by non self-accrediting providers") sets out the following broad accreditation criteria:

* <http://www.curriculum.edu.au/mctyapdf/protocols.pdf>

- The course design and content should satisfy the requirements set in the AQF for the award level;
- The course should be comparable in requirements and learning outcomes to a course at the same level in a similar field at Australian universities;
- The delivery arrangements, including matters of institutional governance, facilities, staffing, and student services are appropriate to higher education and enable successful delivery of the course at the level proposed; and
- The provider should have appropriate financial and other arrangements to permit the successful delivery of the course, and is a fit and proper person to accept responsibility for the course.

These guidelines provide further detail in relation to the above criteria.

1.3 The Enrolment of International Students

Institutions wishing to offer courses of study to overseas students in Queensland must become registered under the state *Education (Overseas Students) Act 1996*. This state legislation dovetails with the *Commonwealth Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000*.

A course will not be registered in Queensland to enrol overseas students unless it is firstly accredited or authorised by the Minister.

Information on becoming a registered provider of courses to overseas students may be obtained from

Office of Non-State Education
Level 18 Education House
30 Mary Street, Brisbane Qld 4000
(PO Box 33, Brisbane Albert Street Qld 4002)
Telephone: (07) 3237 0901
Facsimile: (07) 3237 0004

2.0 THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF ACCREDITATION

Accreditation provides certification that the standards of a course are appropriate to the award to which it leads and that the course and the methods adopted in delivering it are likely to achieve the purpose for which the course was or will be introduced.

The purposes of state accreditation of higher education courses offered by institutions and bodies other than universities are:

- to protect the standing and quality of higher education awards in Queensland;
- to assure the general public, the educational community, government and other agencies, employers and students that the courses accredited are appropriate to the award conferred;
- to ensure comparability of awards in higher education, and facilitate national and international recognition of awards; and

- to assist institutions to implement appropriate credit transfer between courses within nationally endorsed guidelines.

The guidelines outlined in this document are designed to ensure that higher education courses accredited by the Minister for Education are comparable in requirements and learning outcomes to courses at the same level in a similar field at Australian universities. To this end, these guidelines:

- require the review of the course by an independent course assessment panel, with appropriate expertise relevant to the field of study in which the course is being offered;
- include criteria requiring benchmarking of courses and outcomes against the broader higher education sector, and universities in particular; and
- outline the process by which the course is to be monitored annually, and re-evaluated after a specific period, before consideration is given to whether or not the course will be reaccredited.

3.0 CONVENTIONS IN THIS DOCUMENT

Part 3 of these guidelines details the criteria for accreditation of higher education courses offered by non-university providers. Each criterion in this section has been broken up into 'What' and 'How' segments. The 'What' explains the type of information the criterion refers to. The 'How' serves as a guide for applicants to the type of information that should be provided in order to satisfy the criterion requirements.

The accompanying Explanatory Notes outline the rationale for each criterion and provide a context for applicants' responses in their submissions. This section provides the 'Why'.

Terminology

Although there is some variation in terminology relating to higher education courses, in this document:

A "course" is a sequence of study leading to the award of a qualification.

A "unit" is a distinct module (component) of study within a course. Each unit is identified by its title and contributes a fixed percentage towards the requirements for an award. Units are typically completed in one semester.

"Provider" is a reference to the term non-university provider in the *Higher Education (General Provisions) Act 2003*. It means a person or an organisation, other than a university or overseas higher education institution, as defined in the Act, that provides, or proposes to provide a course of higher education.

Part 2

Guidelines for Accreditation

PART 2 - GUIDELINES FOR ACCREDITATION

1.0 THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

1.1 Role of the Office of Higher Education

The Office of Higher Education (OHE) assists the Minister in carrying out the accreditation responsibilities under the *Higher Education (General Provisions) Act 2003*. The Office is responsible for advising the Minister on accreditation matters including developing and recommending guidelines to enable the Minister to fulfil responsibilities as the accrediting authority. OHE recommends to the Minister the composition of course assessment panels for the Minister's approval. OHE also provides administrative and secretarial support to individual course assessment panels which are formed to assess courses, visit institutions and give advice to the Minister on individual accreditation applications. OHE may seek information from and about and give advice to applicants for accreditation on aspects of the accreditation process.

The OHE accreditation team responds to inquiries and lends assistance to providers, course assessment panels, other agencies and the public on accreditation matters. Applicants preparing an accreditation submission should communicate with a team member on any queries related to the process. A specific team member will have responsibility for the administration of an application and the assessment process. Any communication between providers and a course assessment panel should be via this person. The accreditation team may provide basic initial assistance to a provider in formatting a submission, transmit recommendations on behalf of course assessment panels as required elsewhere in these guidelines, and operate as a 'critical friend' to providers. However, it should be clearly understood that staff of OHE do not make accreditation recommendations or decisions.

For information on the accreditation of higher education courses, please contact the:

Office of Higher Education
Education Queensland
Level 18, Education House
30 Mary Street, Brisbane Qld 4000
(Postal Address: PO Box 33, Brisbane Albert Street Qld 4002)
Telephone: (07) 3237 0390

Email: Enquiries.OFFICEHE@qed.qld.gov.au

1.2 Timelines for the Accreditation Process

1.2.1 Forward Planning

As a general rule, applicants should allow at least ten months from their submission of an application to OHE to a decision being made by the Minister for Education.

An additional 3 – 6 months lead-time should be allowed for marketing of the course subsequent to accreditation approval.

In general, an applicant should propose to offer a course for the first time approximately 18 months after submission of an application for accreditation.

In planning for the introduction of new courses, applicants should also be aware of the following:

- QTAC generally requires providers to submit requests for entry in the QTAC handbook by March of the year before the proposed offering of the course.
- Students are required to submit applications through QTAC by the end of September of the year prior to entry to the course.

Until the Minister has formally accredited a course, applicants must not offer the course, including through advertisements and on websites. The fact that a QTAC, marketing or semester commencement-related deadline is approaching will not be sufficient reason to request that a course assessment process be expedited, as the onus is on the applicant to allow sufficient time for the process to run its course.

1.2.2 Marketing during Accreditation Process

Applicants in the process of accreditation should refrain from making any public statement or advertisement that falsely implies a course is accredited, or that the applicant is authorised to confer the award, until the Minister has formally granted accreditation of a course. This includes advertising or promoting a course as 'subject to approval'. The *Higher Education (General Provisions) Act 2003* contains penalties for offering or advertising the offering of a course or the conferring of an award before it has been accredited. The provisions of the *Fair Trading Act 1989* may also apply .

1.2.3 Indicative Timeline

An indicative timeline for a typical course assessment process is set out below.

1. OHE normally completes the **preliminary review of initial documentation** within **one month** of the date of submission to the Office.
2. If a request is made by OHE for **further information or clarification** of the submission documentation, providers normally have **one month** to respond, however this can be extended by negotiation with the Office. If an extension is not negotiated, and **three months** elapse from the date of the request without the applicant replying to the request, the application is deemed to be withdrawn.
3. Once the provider has submitted complete documentation, and the preliminary review has determined the application forms an adequate basis for consideration by a course assessment panel, OHE will **assemble the course assessment panel** and recommend its appointment to the Minister. This may take up to **two months** from the time the preliminary review process is complete.
4. Once the panel is appointed, the **process of meetings** to consider the submission will be undertaken. This process continues until the panel feels able to make a recommendation to the Minister on the proposed course(s). A typical process will involve three panel meetings, with four to six weeks between meetings, and will include a site visit to the provider's premises. Normally, this stage of the process should be completed within **three to four months**. The duration of this stage depends largely upon the comprehensiveness and clarity of the submitted information, and the evidence that the criteria for accreditation are satisfied.

5. Once the final meeting has taken place, a **report of the course assessment panel** will be prepared, summarising the panel's deliberations and making recommendations. The completion of this report should occur within **three weeks** of the final meeting.
6. On completion of the report, OHE will provide a **copy to the provider** and **invite comments** for referral to the Minister along with the report. The provider will be given **two weeks to notify OHE** of its intention to formally respond, and a further **six weeks to provide a written response** to the Office on the report. These timelines can be negotiated with OHE in appropriate circumstances.
7. Once the provider has submitted a formal response to the report, the report and response is sent to the **Minister for consideration**. This administrative process may take up to **six weeks**.

Note: These timelines may vary significantly and are designed as a guide only. Multiple course and concurrent applications may extend the times. Well developed submissions and curriculum may expedite processes. In all cases, the OHE will endeavour to complete processes in the shortest possible time, while preserving the integrity of the process.

1.2.4 Additional Considerations

Please note that while OHE strives to complete course assessment processes as quickly as possible, there are a range of variables of which applicants should be aware, including:

- Requests from the panel for further information or clarification of aspects of the submission. This can lead to further meetings or extra time for consideration of new material;
- Availability of panel members. Panel members other than chairs are usually acting on a voluntary basis and must negotiate time to attend to panel duties, which often means a limited range of dates for members to meet and consider material, especially during university examination periods in June/July and October/November;
- Processing workflow peaks. A large percentage of applications are for proposed course offerings in the following year, leading to peaks towards the end of each year; and
- Ministerial approvals. The Minister is required to appoint the panel at the beginning of the process, and consider whether to grant accreditation at the conclusion. Variables such as Parliamentary commitments may affect timelines for these approvals.

1.3 Fees

The *Higher Education (General Provisions) Act 2003* mandates the payment of a fee for processes relating to applications for accreditation of higher education courses offered by non-university providers.

The amount of the fees are set out in the *Higher Education (General Provisions) Regulation 2004* which is available through OHE or online at www.legislation.qld.gov.au/Legislation.htm

It should be noted that the fees are non-refundable.

1.4 Stages in Initial Accreditation

Step 1

Development of an Application

Development of an application for accreditation involves the preparation by the applicant of a detailed and fully documented submission on the proposed course(s).

The applicant must have in place a formal structure to oversee the development of the course and the course submission (refer criteria in Part 3).

The submission document should make written comment on each eligibility criterion specified in Part 3 of these guidelines in sufficient detail to indicate compliance with all the criteria. Wherever possible, written claims should be supported by evidence, or be able to be otherwise substantiated by a course assessment panel.

It may be appropriate for an applicant to seek expert assistance in developing a submission document.

Applicants should contact the OHE accreditation team at the commencement of the development process, and apprise them of progress to facilitate forward planning.

Step 2

Submission of Initial Documentation

The applicant should present the following items to OHE:

- one copy of the submission;
- an accompanying letter signed by the governing body or senior officer authorised by the governing body of the applicant formally requesting that the submission be assessed; and
- the completed application form and accompanying application fee. The application form includes an attestation that the applicant is a fit and proper person to accept responsibility for a higher education course (see Appendix 2)

The Office of Higher Education will acknowledge in writing receipt of these items.

Step 3

Preliminary Review of Initial Documentation

The preliminary review is an administrative arrangement for the assistance of the applicant. Its purpose is to save time by ensuring the required information is available in accordance with these guidelines for the formal consideration by a course assessment panel and to save unnecessary costs in relation to the course assessment process (see section 1.3, Fees). In carrying out the preliminary review, OHE does not seek to assess whether a submission meets the approved criteria set out in Part 3 of this document.

Usually, the preliminary review of the initial documentation submitted is undertaken by the staff member of OHE responsible for providing secretarial support to the course assessment panel.

Following the preliminary review, OHE may:

- arrange for the formal commencement the course assessment process with the appointment of a course assessment panel by the Minister; or,
- seek further information if it appears that the submission does not provide an adequate basis for a panel's consideration.

If the submission is not acceptable in its initial form, or there is too little information provided, OHE will inform the applicant of the steps to be taken or additional information required.

If further information is requested, no other steps will be taken by OHE until:

- the information is forthcoming in a satisfactory form, incorporated in revised submission documentation; or
- the information is not supplied by the applicant, and three months elapse from the date of the request without the applicant replying to the request for additional information, in which case the application is deemed to be withdrawn, unless otherwise negotiated; or
- the applicant contests the need to supply additional information, or supplies only part of the information requested or supplies the information but in an unsatisfactory form, in which case two options are available to the applicant:

- (i) make a case for and negotiate a further period in which to comply with the request to submit additional information; or
- (ii) indicate in writing that the applicant wishes to have the course assessment process formally commenced using the information supplied to date.

OHE will notify the applicant seeking accreditation of the number of copies of the modified submission required to be sent to the panel members (with the panel members' permission) or to OHE for distribution to course assessment panel members, together with an outline of the likely timetable for the whole process.

Step 4

Course Assessment Panel

The Minister will appoint a course assessment panel to assess an application for accreditation.

Functions

The primary role of a course assessment panel is to:

- evaluate and report to the Minister on whether the course submitted for accreditation and the way of delivering it are appropriate to the type of award to which the course leads, and the course satisfies the relevant criteria in the National Protocols (s.47(2) of the Act); and,
- recommend whether or not the course should be accredited, along with any recommended conditions arising from its consideration.

In the process of making its assessment the course assessment panel will inspect the facilities necessary for the course, and seek any further information relevant to the assessment.

The onus is on the applicant to inform themselves about requirements for courses in the higher education sector and to demonstrate to the panel their capacity as a higher education provider.

Appointment

As accrediting authority, the Minister appoints the course assessment panel, on the recommendation of OHE. The OHE will send the proposed list of members of a course assessment panel to the applicant for comment prior to recommending a panel's appointment to the Minister. An applicant may express any concerns or reservations it may have about any of the proposed members in writing, and these concerns will be transmitted when the final recommendation on a panel composition goes to the Minister.

Applicants should be clear that the Minister reserves the right to make the final choice on composition of all course assessment panels. The composition of course assessment panels is not open to veto by applicants or other bodies.

The approved composition of the panel will be made known to applicants.

Membership

There is no set requirement as to the number of members that will be appointed to a course assessment panel. The number of fields in the proposed course, the mode of delivery, and the extent to which curricular requirements within a particular field are already broadly recognised in higher education or need to be developed and evaluated, will be relevant factors in determining the number of members appointed.

OHE may consult with a range of bodies, as it sees fit, in developing a recommendation for a course assessment panel.

Applicants are invited to propose the areas of expertise and the kinds of institutions/organisations and professional or industry bodies that might be appropriately represented on the course assessment panel, within the parameters of membership categories indicated below.

A course assessment panel is established:

- independently of any single agency or institution/organisation, to provide a weight of impartial expertise, and not represent any sectional interests,
- to provide a breadth of knowledge and expertise relevant to the fields of study, and depth of experience in the design and delivery of higher education courses, and
- to be of sufficient standing to have a high degree of credibility in the academic and general communities, and in relevant professions, industries and callings.

Members of a course assessment panel may be drawn from a range of areas including:

- higher education institutions;
- public and private Vocational Education and Training institutions;
- professional or other relevant associations;
- practitioners in the particular area;
- potential public and private employers of graduates from the course; and
- community interest groups.

For courses to be offered by distance education, online or flexible delivery an appropriate person experienced in the design and delivery of courses in that mode of teaching will be included.

Because of the benchmarking requirements in the accreditation criteria, ordinarily a course assessment panel will comprise a majority of higher education academics.

The chair of the panel will usually be a senior academic currently or recently employed in an academic institution other than the applicant. Primarily, the chair will be selected for their expertise and experience in the evaluation and accreditation of higher education courses within universities, and may have expertise in the relevant profession, industry or calling.

The panel has power to seek additional advice from persons outside its membership wherever it considers this to be necessary.

Responsibilities and Conduct

Members of a course assessment panel are expected to hold in confidence all information submitted by applicants and all information pertaining to the panel's deliberations. If members receive comments or questions from or about the applicant from which a course is being considered for accreditation, they should refer them to the staff in OHE or the panel chair. Members should refrain from discussing the panel's deliberations outside the panel. Applicants should never contact members of a course assessment panel individually, but rather should direct any matters for panel members through the panel secretary in OHE.

Members invited to accept nomination to serve on a course assessment panel themselves are asked to consider potential conflicts of interest and themselves refuse invitations to join a course assessment panel if a serious conflict of interest might be possible. Such situations could arise where members have an active affiliation with the applicant being evaluated, such as having recently been or currently being students or employees of the applicant seeking accreditation, or where they have served as paid or unpaid consultants to the applicant, or where any other set of circumstances including close personal relationships, might inhibit their ability to evaluate objectively.

It is the nature of peer assessment that panel members may be drawn from institutions that offer programs in the same or similar fields of study as the applicant. While this is both common and expected, if there is a reasonable apprehension that such a panel member may not, or does not, bring to the assessment process a fair and unprejudiced mind, a conflict of interest may exist.

Members are also asked to disqualify themselves from membership of a particular course assessment panel if they have developed strong negative opinions about the type of course (or type of applicant) seeking accreditation, or would have serious difficulty judging objectively a particular applicant about which they have already formed a strong impression.

The chair of the panel may seek disqualification of a member by the Minister should any of the above matters eventuate or become known.

It is a requirement that panel members sign a declaration to maintain confidentiality and also declare any conflicts of interest. Members must disclose any information that they may have or acquire during the process relating to the applicant being a fit and proper person to offer higher education.

Step 5

Panel Meetings

First Meeting

At its first meeting, the panel will conduct a detailed discussion of the application submission, and assess whether sufficient written evidence is presented that the application satisfies the criteria for accreditation. The panel will identify any issues, points of clarification or further information it wishes to seek from the applicant.

The first meeting will include an applicant presentation, which is an opportunity to present the proposal broadly to the panel. Ordinarily, the presentation will be made by key senior representatives of the applicant organisation, including the person/s directly involved in the development of the proposal, and those with overall responsibility for the delivery of the program/s. Applicants should restrict the overall number of representatives to no more than

four. Following the presentation, the panel may question the representatives in relation to the issues, points of clarification or further information it has identified.

If, following consideration of the application, the applicant's presentation, and further discussion, the panel considers that the application clearly does not meet the criteria for accreditation, the panel has discretion at this step in the process to finalise its deliberations and prepare its report recommending to the Minister that accreditation be refused. In such a circumstance, Step 6 will not be taken.

Requests for Information or Responses to Issues

The panel through OHE may write to an applicant seeking further information or detail on any aspect of the submission, whether related to information in the submission which needs clarification or amplification, or to make inquiries beyond the material submitted about aspects of the organisational culture and operation that the applicant may not have addressed explicitly. The panel may also seek responses from the applicant to specific issues raised at the first or subsequent meetings.

Subsequent Meetings

Written responses to requests for information or responses to issues will be considered at a subsequent meeting or meetings, where warranted.

Step 6

Site Visit

This visit is arranged in consultation with the applicant and should, where possible, occur during term time or at other times when teaching and administrative staff are available and students are attending classes.

The format for the visit will be negotiated with the applicant, but will include typically:

- time for the panel to question features of the applicant's submission;
- an inspection of physical facilities (including library, classrooms, any clinics and laboratories, computer laboratories, and administration);
- viewing of documentation relevant to the submission including promotional material, handbooks, assessment items; and
- separate meetings with key academic staff, other staff involved in the delivery of the course and students and recent graduates (if relevant) in the field of study proposed for accreditation, without the presence of the key proponents.

While site visits are interactive processes, comments made during the course of the process do not constitute the panel's final assessment.

Step 7

Report Preparation

When the panel is satisfied that either:

- (i) there is sufficient evidence that the applicant satisfies the criteria for accreditation; or
- (ii) there is insufficient evidence to support accreditation and the applicant cannot demonstrate that they are likely to be able to provide this within one year from initial submission (s.47(6) of the Act),

then a formal recommendation or recommendations concerning accreditation is formulated for the Minister's consideration.

The report to the Minister contains an overview of the findings, comments and recommendations of the course assessment panel, together with detailed notes of the findings, comments and recommendations of the panel made during its meetings, and lists any conditions or required actions it recommends to the Minister in relation to the application before it.

Step 8

Consultation and Feedback

Prior to transmitting the course assessment panel's report to the Minister, OHE will furnish a copy of the report and recommendations to the applicant.

The applicant has two weeks from the date of dispatch of the report in which to notify its intention to respond formally on the panel's assessment or make any other comment on the report or recommendations. A timeframe for the response will be negotiated with OHE. This response will be sent to the Minister with the course assessment panel's report for the Minister's consideration and deliberation.

Step 9

Options for Accreditation Outcomes

On the basis of the material presented, the Minister shall either:

(i) Approve Accreditation

The Act allows for accreditation for a period of up to five years, after which the course may be assessed for reaccreditation for further periods of up to five years. Shorter periods of accreditation may be approved by the Minister if considered appropriate on the basis of a course assessment panel's findings.

The Minister may attach conditions that are relevant and reasonable to an accreditation based on a course assessment panel's recommendations. However, the Minister cannot grant conditional accreditation where criteria are not satisfied. Conditions may relate to the further development of delivery arrangements and curriculum as a program develops, or to quality improvement, and may require a follow-up visit by the course assessment panel. Typically, providers may be asked to report on conditions as part of the Annual Reporting process. Where conditions are set, there should be a clear timeline for their satisfaction, and any subsequent action in the event of non-compliance should also be specified.

or

(ii) Refuse Accreditation

As specified in section 47(5) of the Act, if the Minister decides to refuse to grant the application, the Minister must as soon as practicable give the applicant an information notice about the decision. Applicants should note that the Act provides that a person who is aggrieved by a decision of the Minister under the Act may appeal against the decision to the District Court. Appeal provisions are specified in Part 6 of the Act.

Written notification of the Minister's decision is mailed to the applicant promptly after the decision is made, together with an information notice stating reasons for the decision.

Withdrawal of Applications

It is open to an applicant to withdraw an application at any time prior to a decision by the Minister.

2.0 RECOGNITION OF INTERSTATE ACCREDITATION

Interstate non-university providers intending to offer a course in Queensland that is already accredited in their home jurisdiction can apply for accreditation in Queensland through a mutual recognition process. The mutual recognition process acknowledges the accreditation of the course and some aspects of the provider by the other jurisdiction. Course assessment panels will accept the accredited status in another jurisdiction as evidence that certain accreditation criteria are satisfied, and will only need to evaluate the following types of criteria:

- Arrangements in Queensland for organisation, administration and governance.
- Financial capacity to deliver the course.
- Staff in Queensland, and their links to the parent organisation.
- Facilities and resources to deliver the course in Queensland.
- How the quality and review system operates in Queensland.
- Student support and welfare systems in Queensland.

Applicants will still need to submit a complete application, including full documentation of the course and arrangements for its delivery, to the Office of Higher Education.

In the main, the Steps in the accreditation process detailed above will still apply for applications for mutual recognition. Typically, however, the course assessment panel appointed by the Minister would not exceed three members, and may comprise only one member. In most cases, one panel meeting and a site visit, often combined, will suffice for the panel to arrive at a recommendation.

An indicative time-line for the mutual recognition process would be:

1. OHE completes the **preliminary review of initial documentation** within **one month** of the date of submission to the Office.
2. If a request is made by OHE for **further information or clarification** of the submission documentation, the applicant responds within **one month**.
3. Once the applicant has submitted complete documentation, OHE will **assemble the course assessment panel** and recommend its appointment to the Minister. This may take up to **six weeks** from the time the preliminary review process is complete.
4. Once the panel is appointed, the **meeting and site visit** are scheduled and conducted. This may take up to **six weeks** from the panel's appointment.
5. Once the final meeting has taken place, a **report of the course assessment panel** will be prepared, summarising the panel's deliberations and making

recommendations. The completion of this report should occur within **two weeks** of the final meeting.

6. On completion of the report, OHE will provide a **copy to the provider** and **invite comments** for referral to the Minister along with the report. The provider will be given **two weeks to notify OHE** of its intention to formally respond, and a further **six weeks to provide a written response** to the Office on the report. These timelines can be negotiated with OHE in appropriate circumstances.
7. Once the provider has submitted a formal response to the report, the report and response is sent to the **Minister for consideration**. This administrative process may take up to **six weeks**.

Note: These timelines may vary significantly and are designed as a guide only. Well developed submissions may expedite processes. In all cases, the OHE will endeavour to complete processes in the shortest possible time, while preserving the integrity of the process.

Once accredited in Queensland, interstate providers will need to comply with the Act's annual reporting requirement, and reaccreditation will entail the same process as will apply to providers originating from Queensland.

3.0 MARKETING OF ACCREDITED STATUS

Applicants must ensure that marketing of their education and training services is carried out with integrity and accuracy. No false or misleading comparisons shall be drawn with any other provider or their courses, nor should applicants make any inaccurate claims of accreditation status of courses or their association with any other provider or organisation.

Applicant publications, statements and advertising should describe accurately the applicant, its operations and its accredited courses. Such information should include the expiry date of the accreditation of courses.

In cases where a course is accredited for offering by distance education, is delivered through more than one site, or in association with another entity, the responsibility for and oversight of advertising and recruitment materials for the course on each site rests with the accredited entity.

4.0 CHANGES DURING THE PERIOD OF ACCREDITATION

4.1 Amend or Cancel Accreditation

The Minister may amend or cancel an accreditation if the Minister is satisfied on reasonable grounds, following a reassessment of the accreditation made in accordance with the guidelines outlined in this document, that the standard of the course or the way in which it is being delivered or the ability (including financial ability) of the applicant to deliver the course no longer justifies the course's continued accreditation (s.56 of the Act). The Minister may also change the conditions of accreditation if there is a reasonable basis to make the change.

The Minister reserves the right to reconsider the accreditation status of a course at any time, and may call for a course assessment panel to be formed to give advice on re-evaluation of a decision when the Minister believes this is warranted. If such a step is contemplated, clearly

specified reasons related to the criteria for accreditation will be provided to an applicant and the applicant's comment will be sought before any such decision is made.

Such action may follow from concerns identified in a provider's annual report to the Minister, or as a result of investigations of a complaint or grievance against the provider.

4.2 Major Change

Major changes to a course or a provider's operation may affect the accreditation status of the course. If a provider is in doubt about whether proposed changes fall into the category of major change, the applicant should contact OHE for advice.

The annual reporting process provides an opportunity for providers to identify key issues and advise any plans for major change.

Major changes include, but are not limited to:

- significant change in educational requirements, in terms of a significant departure in content or mode of delivery to that proposed in the most recent accreditation application (eg adding distance education offering, or deleting or adding a course major);
- change in location (eg moving to a new site, adding an additional site or deleting an existing site);
- change in the legal status, sponsorship or control of the applicant or change in relations with other bodies (eg merger with another body, change in ownership, contracting with another body or person to deliver a significant portion of the degree program, withdrawal of affiliation or recognition by a key professional body);
- substantial change in physical plant, clinics, laboratories or libraries (eg closure of computer facilities on site, natural disaster necessitating reconstruction of laboratories or clinics);
- substantial change involving students, teaching staff, administration, governing body (eg significant reduction in number of full-time staff, substantial change in student admission policies or student grading systems; substantial revision in size and composition of governing body);
- substantial change in financial/ethical arrangement (eg declaring bankruptcy, serious legal, financial or ethical investigations, misrepresentations to students and public).

While plans for major change are evolving, providers are advised to undertake early consultation with OHE to avoid any subsequent misunderstanding. When definitive plans have been formulated, but before the change is implemented, a formal request to have the change approved should be submitted. Depending on the nature of the change, the Minister may approve the change within the current accreditation period or require that a new application for accreditation be submitted. In circumstances where a new accreditation process is necessary and accreditation is subsequently approved, the duration of the new accreditation will be up to the duration remaining of the initial accreditation period.

This provision is in no way intended to inhibit new initiatives or changes in course curriculum. The normal evolution of a course in response to initiatives and review is not considered a major change. The Minister recognises that change within accredited courses is inevitable, and necessary to maintain relevance of the course.

4.3 Monitoring of Changes

Although neither the Act nor these guidelines intend a formal audit process, the Act does provide that the Minister can examine a provider's operation at any reasonable time, or request information or records, to consider whether the accreditation criteria continue to be satisfied. This allows for any necessary follow up on the matters mentioned above.

Part 3

Criteria for Accreditation

PART 3 - CRITERIA FOR ACCREDITATION

1.0 PREAMBLE

This section of the guidelines outlines minimum criteria for the accreditation of courses leading to higher education awards. These criteria include a range of expectations about the structure and content of the course itself, the organisational infrastructure and facilities appropriate to support higher education courses, and policies and practices relating to students and staff. It is the responsibility of the applicant to be familiar with these criteria and with practices and standards generally in the higher education sector and in the particular field of study and discipline area of the proposed course.

A course assessment panel must satisfy itself that the application for accreditation of a course to lead to a higher education award meets the following criteria with respect to the standard and quality of the course and the capacity of the applicant to deliver it.

2.0 GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

2.1 Fit and Proper Person

What

The applicant must be a fit and proper person to establish and operate an institution offering higher education programmes.

How

Submissions for accreditation must be accompanied by a signed proforma declaration from the relevant owner, director, president, chief executive officer or similar person attesting to the applicant's status as a fit and proper person, as well as those of its directors, officers and substantial shareholders. A full guideline for determining whether an applicant is a fit and proper person is attached at Appendix 2.

Applicants are required to disclose their prior history of applications for accreditation in all jurisdictions, including the outcomes of such processes, in the submission document.

2.2 Statement of Mission or Purpose and Objectives

What

A statement of mission or purpose defines the basic character of an applicant and includes a brief description of:

- its course offerings and their purposes;
- the students for whom the courses are intended;

- the geographic area served by the applicant (or the particular constituency it serves); and,
- an account of how the applicant fits within the higher education community.

How

The submission document should include a clear, concise, accurate and realistic statement of mission or purpose and objectives which have characteristics commonly associated with higher education. A course assessment panel will expect evidence that the statement:

- has been formally adopted by the applicant's governing body;
- is available publicly, particularly to prospective and existing students;
- is used to guide the direction of the education provided; and
- is, or will be, updated and reviewed periodically to ensure that it continues to portray accurately the applicant and the courses which are accredited.

2.3 Organisation, Administration and Governance

The applicant must provide evidence that demonstrates there is sufficient control over administration and curriculum to allow educational objectives to be achieved.

2.3.1 Governing Body

What

There should be a properly constituted governing body, with clearly defined legal responsibility for the course and with the authority to establish, review and implement basic policies to govern and carry out the mission of the applicant. The governing body should include public members and be sufficiently independent of the administration and ownership of the applicant to assure the integrity of the academic programs. The governing body must be informed about and endorse the accreditation application.

How

The applicant should provide details of the roles and responsibilities of the governing body, its relationship to other bodies involved in the organisation, and the names and backgrounds of members. A diagrammatic representation of the governance structure is useful to a course assessment panel. Importantly, lines of authority between owner (in the case of a private provider), governing body, and executive staff should be explicit.

2.3.2 Legal Status

What

An applicant must have a formally incorporated or established legal status, for example it must be a company, incorporated association or statutory body.

How

Submission documents should include the following information:

- if company, registered name, ABN and office of company (attach copy of certificate of incorporation);
- if incorporated association, registered name and office of association (attach copy of certificate of incorporation);
- if statutory body, details of the Act of Parliament or Order establishing the body (as appropriate).

Note: For applicants operating under business/trade names, names and addresses of persons conducting the business should be supplied. A copy of the certificate of registration of the business/trade name is also required.

2.3.3 Administrative Arrangements

What

There should be in place structures and personnel appropriate for implementing the applicant's educational plans and policies.

How

The applicant should describe how administrative processes support academic and teaching processes. In particular, clearly explain how responsibilities have been allocated to implement policies and procedures in relation to: students; human resources; facilities and infrastructure; and marketing and promotion.

2.3.4 Oversight of Educational Process

What

There must be an academic body with overall responsibility for the educational process, including student progress, assessment and appeal policy and processes, approval of course documentation and delivery arrangements, and course monitoring and review arrangements. Academic staff should provide substantial input into this body.

How

The applicant should describe clearly and succinctly the membership, roles and responsibility of the body responsible for oversight of the educational process. The body

should include academic staff teaching and coordinating the course/s, and external members, including academics and relevant industry or professional representation.

2.3.5 Oversight of the Course

What

Applicants must have a body responsible for the oversight of the course itself, including the implementation of on-going academic monitoring, review and development of curriculum, and day-to-day delivery.

How

Applicants must supply evidence of the establishment and activity of an appropriately composed 'course advisory committee' or equivalent.

Membership of the body may vary depending on the course area in question but must include an appropriate balance between staff of the provider and external members relevant to the discipline drawn from recognised higher education institutions, the professions and industry, as well as curriculum design/development expertise.

A diagrammatic representation of the oversight of the educational process is helpful to course assessment panels. This could include lines of responsibility and reporting.

2.3.6 Monitoring of Outcomes (see also section 3.3.1)

What

Applicants should have in place mechanisms and processes for monitoring and evaluating course outcomes that involve the relevant bodies responsible for oversight of the educational process and the course itself.

How

The description of the role and functions of the bodies responsible for oversight of the educational process and the course itself, should include clear information on their roles in monitoring and evaluating outcomes and instigating action arising from the evaluations. The strategies employed for monitoring outcomes should be detailed in the applicant's response to section 3.3.1, "Methods for Evaluating, Monitoring and Changing the Curriculum". However, it would be useful for a panel if links between the strategies and the roles of the respective bodies are made apparent.

2.3.7 Strategic Planning

What

Applicants should have in place a strategic planning process that interprets the mission and purpose of the institution into achievable goals.

How

Details of the applicant's strategic plan should be included in the submission document, together with information on how the strategic plan is implemented and progress reviewed. The bodies responsible for oversight of the educational process should be involved in developing, implementing and reviewing the strategic plan. The strategic plan may include development plans for staff, facilities, research activities and the like.

2.3.8 Avenues for Review of Decision-Making

What

The applicant must have in place mechanisms and processes for reviewing academic and administrative decisions.

How

The submission should contain information as to what avenues are provided to students and staff for review of administrative and educational decisions. There should be an indication of the bodies responsible for reviewing decisions, and the processes to be employed, including recourse to external mediation.

2.4 Relationships with Other Bodies

What

Applicants should have appropriate and continuing relationships and channels of communication with other institutions of higher education (particularly universities), and with relevant professional bodies.

How

Applicants should supply formal documentation of existing relationships with other bodies and outline the nature of expected linkages where these are in development.

For courses intended to provide professional registration or lead to professional practice, applicants should supply evidence that graduates will be eligible for membership of nationally registered professional organisations. In these circumstances, documented support for the course from relevant key industry/professional bodies is required.

2.5 Financial and Business Systems, Practices and Planning

2.5.1 Financial Viability

What

The financial standing and on-going viability of the applicant must be sufficient to permit the successful delivery of the course for the proposed period of accreditation.

Applicants must be willing to undertake confidential disclosure of their financial and business operations.

How

The OHE will appoint an independent expert to obtain verification that the financial basis for the operation is satisfactory, that there is appropriate allocation and use of resources to support the course proposed for accreditation, and that the applicant has sound business practices and systems in place. The expert reports to the panel.

The review will include scrutiny of: the corporate structure and associated matters, including the relationship between the institution and other entities such as funding bodies and the degree awarding body; the business environment and operations, including the financial performance, audit and business operations; and the systems in operation, including financial, audit and non-academic quality assurance systems. The nature and scope of audit activities and compliance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles will be a particular focus.

The reviewer will visit the applicant's premises to view records and consult with relevant staff, and may require access to the applicant's accountant or business advisor. Applicants will need to provide evidence such as financial statements audited in compliance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles, budgets and other financial documents, and business plans.

Following accreditation of a course, a provider will undergo a full financial review every three years. If accreditation of further courses is sought in the interim, a financial review will not be conducted, and an assessment panel will not need to include information regarding financial viability in its report to the Minister on that course.

The course assessment panel may request the reviewer to examine any specific aspects of the applicant's financial or business arrangements.

Providers are required to advise the Minister, either through their annual report to the Minister or otherwise in writing, if during the period of accreditation there are any major changes in financial status or any factors which impact on their capacity to deliver the courses.

2.5.2 Contingency Planning

What

Applicants should have in place effective plans for providing for students in the event that the course cannot continue to be delivered, for whatever reason including financial failure or cancellation of accreditation.

How

The submission should detail the contingency plans of the applicant, including evidence of agreements with other providers. The contingency plan might include 'teach out' arrangements with other like institutions, and be complemented by membership of academic and fee assurance schemes.

The financial reviewer may inspect any contingency plans an applicant has in place.

2.6 Staff

2.6.1 Numbers of Staff

What

There are to be sufficient full-time and part-time staff employed by the applicant and available for teaching and management of the educational programs and students.

Applicants will limit program offerings to those they can staff adequately.

How

For each major discipline area, there should be a senior full-time academic staff member with responsibility for coordinating the implementation, delivery and development over time of courses in the area, and providing academic leadership. The staff member should have postgraduate qualifications, experience in curriculum design, teaching and coordination experience and demonstrated scholarship in the discipline area. Seniority may also be denoted by experience in higher education institutions, and position in the provider's organisation.

For each course, there should be a full-time academic staff member (level B equivalent or above) responsible for the day to day implementation and delivery of the program.

There should be designated staff responsible for the delivery of the core teaching areas of the proposed course.

Provided an applicant satisfies the above criteria relating to senior academic staff members, and there are designated staff for the core teaching areas of the proposed course, a course assessment panel will accept a workforce development plan in lieu of full staffing details, in cases where an applicant has not yet appointed the full complement of staff. The workforce development plan should indicate, for each component of the course, the requisite

qualifications and experience of teaching staff and their employment status. It should include evidence of how and when suitable staff will be recruited as well.

Information on staff teaching in the proposed course could be provided in the format presented in 2.6.2 below. For senior staff, full CVs should be included with the submission documentation.

2.6.2 Level of Qualifications

What

As a general rule, other than senior staff, teaching staff should hold a qualification above the level of the award for which accreditation is sought, in an area relevant to the area in which they will teach.

Where staff qualifications do not meet the standards outlined above, then evidence should be provided of appropriate alternative professional standing or experience. A detailed explanation of how other exceptions are handled should be provided, for example, arrangements to upgrade qualifications of existing staff.

How

For each staff member, the submission documentation should provide information on:

- Employment status (full-time, contract etc.), and length of service
- Coordination and teaching roles, including the units taught
- Formal qualifications (level, awarding institution, areas of expertise)
- Relevant professional standing or experience
- Evidence of research, scholarly or professional activity (publications, membership of professional bodies)

The following format may be useful for providing staff details

| Name | Employment status | Position / Role | Qualifications | Research, scholarly or professional activity | Subjects taught |
|------|-------------------|-----------------|----------------|--|-----------------|
| | | | | | |

2.6.3 Verification of Qualifications

What

Applicants should have in place a system for verification of the bona fides of all qualifications of their staff.

How

The submission should describe the process used to authenticate qualifications of staff responsible for teaching. Course assessment panels may request that an applicant attest to the accuracy of the details contained in the submission.

2.6.4 Staff Development

What

Applicants must develop and implement written procedures and policies for stimulating and supporting the ongoing professional development of staff, including the provision of study leave.

There must be a budgetary commitment to staff professional development.

How

The submission should describe briefly research, staff development and exchange programs relevant to the professional development of staff and include details of budget allocated for this purpose. A staff development policy, including criteria for eligibility and procedures for accessing professional development support, should be included in the submission. The staff development policy should be an element of the applicant's strategic plan for development as a higher education provider.

3.0 EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

3.1 General

What

Applicants should detail sufficient information on the educational requirements of the proposed course to facilitate an accurate assessment of the course.

How

The following sections of the Guidelines provide further information on how applicants can provide evidence that criteria relating to educational requirements are satisfied.

3.2 The Course

3.2.1 Level of Award

What

Applicants should

- indicate the proposed level of the award and duration of the course, and
- describe how the course outcomes match the characteristics for the level of the course defined in the Australian Qualifications Framework.

How

Guidelines for qualifications in the AQF can be found in the Australian Qualifications Framework Implementation Handbook, obtainable from the AQF secretariat, or online at www.aqf.edu.au/pdf/handbook.pdf. The outcomes from the proposed course should be mapped against the relevant AQF guideline. Tabular form can be an effective means of demonstrating equivalence.

3.2.2 Proposed Title of Award

What

Applicants should nominate a proposed title for the higher education award, consistent with nomenclature used in the higher education sector.

How

The applicant should demonstrate how the title of the proposed award equates to other like awards in the higher education sector, and how the title reflects the course's content and major fields of study.

3.2.3 Nominated Authority Making Award

What

Applicants must identify a suitably constituted entity that will be making the proposed award to students.

How

It is usual practice in universities for higher education awards to be offered by the governing body of the university. The submission should denote what body in the organisation will be conferring the award, and if it is not the governing body, how the role is delegated.

3.2.4 Rationale for the Course Overall

What

For each course, applicants need to provide an overall statement which explains the philosophical basis of the course, the relationship of the content to that philosophy, and identifies the underlying body of knowledge on which the course is based.

How

The rationale will vary depending on the nature of the course and field of study. If it is a relatively new field, in academic terms, the rationale might require an extensive statement, extending from philosophical underpinnings to current practice. If the course is highly specialised, the rationale should explain its relationship to the broader field of study of which it is a part.

The rationale for the course should also provide a link between the mission or purpose of the provider and the course itself, and be consistent with the provider's strategic plan.

3.2.5 Statement of Objectives

What

The applicant will need to provide a statement of objectives for the course in terms of the educational and occupational outcomes for graduates.

How

Applications should specify attributes that graduates will possess on completion of the course, in relation to:

- acquisition of a body of knowledge;
- professional/technical or other job-related skills; and
- generic skills, attitudes and values.

The objectives should:

- be consistent with the applicant's mission and purpose;
- maintain consistency with the characteristic outcomes of the award level in the AQF; and
- link to the course rationale, and individual unit descriptions and assessment strategies.

3.2.6 Entry Requirements

What

Applicants must set entry requirements for a course that ensure that students entering the course have an adequate basis of prior knowledge or skills on which to undertake successfully the studies which are proposed in the course.

How

The course submission should:

- provide details on the standard educational qualification required for admission, and on special admission categories or alternative entry arrangements – a copy of the applicant's admissions policy and published statements concerning admission requirements should be provided;
- include details of any arrangements for articulation into the course, particularly from non-higher education programs;
- if the entry requirements are lower than the sectoral norm, explain how the graduate outcomes are going to be attained; and
- describe procedures for verifying the credentials presented by applicants for a course of study.

3.2.7 Workload for the Course

What

The workload and duration of the course should fall within the normal range for the field of study concerned at the level of award, and be sufficient to enable the goals of the course realistically to be met.

How

The submission should provide:

- details on workload and duration of the course including an explanation of the system used by the applicant, and the relative weighting of course components (it is normal to use a credit point system to describe the workload for the course and its constituent subjects/units); and
- evidence of compatibility with national professional standards (where applicable) and with similar courses in the higher education sector.

3.2.8 Course Structure and Content

What

The submission must explain how all the major areas of study relevant to the stated rationale are covered in the course, and show that there is an appropriate mix of components for the level and field of study. It should also demonstrate that the course has an appropriate balance between the areas of study identified in the application.

How

The submission will need to include a flowchart or table of the sequence of the course, semester by semester, showing:

- sequence of units;
- core and elective subjects offered;
- pre- and co-requisites; and
- any exit points which provide a qualification(s).

In this context, details of contact teaching hours for lectures and tutorials, and requirements for practical work/field/internship should be included.

An indication of the stages in development of specialised and generic skills and knowledge in relation to the sequence of the course is useful to a panel.

This section should also include an overview of the assessment strategy, showing how the nature, variety and timing of assessment items provide evidence of the development of skills, knowledge and attributes in students.

Subject Outlines

Subject outlines for each subject/unit should show the scope of each subject and its relationship to the overall course objectives. The outlines need to show the links between the subject objectives and the assessment criteria and methods, and how these flow from the overall course objectives. While the format of subject outlines is not fixed, subject outlines need to show:

| COURSE SUBJECT DETAILS | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Subject Name | State the name of the subject. The title should be appropriate to the content of the subject. |
| Nominal duration & weight | Provide the nominal duration and the percentage of the course (eg in terms of credit points). Where relevant, provide the teaching contact hours involved in the subject. |
| Development Responsibility / | Provide the name(s) of staff who will be responsible for the subject. |

| | |
|---|--|
| Subject Coordinator | |
| Teaching Staff | Provide names of teaching staff. |
| Pre-requisites | Specify, if applicable, the pre/co-requisite course subjects required to undertake the subject. |
| Course Subject Purpose | Specify whether the subject is core or elective. Outline the contribution of the subject to the overall course outcomes and provide a satisfactory rationale for including the subject in the course, for locating it at a particular stage in the course and for its status (core or elective) and workload. |
| Text Requirements | Provide details of set and recommended texts required. |
| Outcomes | List the learning outcomes and objectives for each course subject. Objectives for the subject should be clearly described and clearly specify desired learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, generic and technical/ specialist skills, personal and intellectual development. |
| Content | Provide a week-by-week description of the content/underpinning knowledge covered in the subject relevant to the achievement of the learning outcomes and the knowledge and skills developed throughout the subject. Subject content should be appropriate to the purpose, level and weighting of the subject, and consistent with the achievement of the learning outcomes. |
| Assessment | Describe in detail, including conditions under which assessment will take place and how the learning outcomes for the unit will be assessed. Assessment/evaluation methods should be appropriate to the learning outcomes of the subject and demonstrate clearly how the learning outcomes for the subject will be judged. |
| Delivery of Subject | |
| Delivery strategy | Identify the delivery strategy for the subject including face-to-face, mixed, on-line, interactive learning modes, on-job, practicums etc. Teaching approaches should be relevant to the content and consistent with learning outcomes. |
| Academic & General Resource Requirements | List the general resource requirements and if applicable, specialised facilities and equipment essential to delivery. Identify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) the required learning resources; (ii) recommended learning support material; (iii) recommended readings which have currency and relevance to the subject; (iv) IT learning resources and associated requirements; and (v) specific personnel requirements such as access to appropriately qualified practitioners or technicians (eg laboratory staff). |

The panel needs to be satisfied that each subject has been considered in its own regard. It is expected that differentiation in rationale, objectives, outcomes and assessment will occur.

Applicants should avoid a 'cut and paste' approach to unit outlines. If there is a degree of uniformity in units, the submission should explain the pedagogic reason for this.

Specialised/Professional Skills

These skills should be clearly specified in the course submission, as should their progressive development throughout the course.

Where a course leads to professional practice of any kind, the match between the professional/technical skills to be taught in the course, and those required for practice, will need to be demonstrated.

Specific objectives for any practical training, along with details of the arrangements for such training, its supervision and assessment, will be required.

3.2.9 Modes of Study

What

The submission must indicate the study modes in which the course is to be available.

How

Applicants must supply:

- details about the modes of study proposed to be used in delivering the course and its components, such as full-time, part-time, internal, external, etc.
- evidence that students enrolled in courses offered in concentrated or abbreviated time frames are able to achieve the learning outcomes for the course.

3.2.10 Methods of Delivery of Course Content

What

The submission must indicate the proposed delivery methods for the course, including any methods specific to particular components, and demonstrate the appropriateness of the methods.

How

Submissions must:

- identify the delivery modes used to deliver the course, such as on campus, distance, online, etc
- provide evidence of how the use of library and information resources are integrated into the learning process.

3.2.11 Assessment of Student Progress

What

Submissions should show evidence of a range of assessment modes for the curriculum which are valid, fair, reliable and flexible.

Applicants should have in place processes for ongoing external monitoring of assessment.

How

The overall assessment philosophy should be explained in the body of the submission, indicating how the approach/s will provide evidence of the achievement of the learning outcomes of the proposed course. This should be continued through to individual unit outlines, where each assessment item, or event, is mapped against learning outcomes.

External monitoring of assessment can take place through a number of mechanisms, such as external marking and setting of some exams or papers. Mechanisms should include benchmarking against the university sector.

3.2.12 Course Implementation and Resourcing

What

It is expected that applicants are able to demonstrate that resource implications of the course have been adequately addressed.

How

The submission should identify the

- proposed source(s) of funding for the course;
- anticipated student enrolments;
- level of fees to be charged to students;
- year in which the course is planned to begin;
- year in which the first students should complete the course; and enrolment projections for the length of the accreditation period (normally 5 years);
- any expected load shift, for example, student articulation from existing programs.

The following table may assist:

| TYPE OF STUDENT | Domestic | | | | International | | | | TOTAL |
|---------------------------------|----------|-----|----------|-----|---------------|-----|----------|-----|-------|
| | External | | Internal | | External | | Internal | | |
| | F/T | P/T | F/T | P/T | F/T | P/T | F/T | P/T | |
| Commencing | | | | | | | | | |
| Continuing (excl Final Year) | | | | | | | | | |
| Articulation | | | | | | | | | |
| Final Year | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | | | | | | | | | |

3.3 General Educational Practices and Standards

3.3.1 Mechanisms for Evaluating, Monitoring and Changing the Curriculum

What

There should be mechanisms in place for the ongoing evaluation, monitoring and revising of the curriculum.

How

The submission should provide details on the mechanisms:

- to monitor and evaluate course effectiveness and curriculum continuously, including regular evaluation of student feedback.
- for students, employers and professional bodies to comment on curriculum design, delivery and outcomes.
- to monitor student pass rates in individual course components and attrition rates and investigating where these are inappropriate.
- for benchmarking against and ongoing monitoring of similar courses nationally and overseas.

These mechanisms will include the activities of the bodies outlined in sections 2.2.4 to 2.2.6 above. The links to the roles of these bodies should be made apparent.

The submission should also include examples of tools used to collect evaluation data.

3.3.2 Relationships with Students

Contract and Rights of Appeal

What

Applicants need to ensure that their contract with students is explicit, that there are avenues whereby students may have grievances on administrative and academic decisions reviewed by a formal process which has a measure of independence from organisational management and that these avenues are made known to students.

How

The submission should provide:

- detail of existing policies on the selection of students; assessment, grading, and requirements for the awards; and the review of academic progress
- evidence of publication of these policies and their availability to students
- information on policies and procedures with respect to students rights and responsibilities and processes by which students can have administrative and academic grievances heard and reviewed.

A right of review of management decisions to the governing body might be an appropriate arrangement, provided there is a measure of independence between the governing body and management.

Recognition of Prior Learning & Credit Transfer

What

Applicants should have policies on RPL and credit transfer that are consistent with practice in the higher education sector, and any national guidelines, such as those developed by the Australian Qualifications Framework Advisory Board and the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee.

How

The submission should:

- clearly describe the policies for RPL and the transfer and acceptance of credit.
- include published advice to students on the policies.

Where patterns of transfer from other providers are established, efforts to formulate articulation agreements should be demonstrated. Where appropriate, articulation arrangements with other courses offered by the applicant should also be explained.

Charges and Refunds

What

There should be complete and clear disclosure of all charges to students, including refund policies and procedures, which state clearly and unambiguously the circumstances resulting in a charge and the requirements for a refund.

How

Applicants should provide evidence of disclosure of all charges to students, including refund policies and procedures.

Student Support Services

What

The applicant should make available adequate services to students to permit successful completion of the course, including access to general services such as financial planning, in addition to academic support and appropriate learning resources and support services. There should be adequate activities undertaken by the applicant regarding the orientation of commencing students. Students should have confidential access to these services.

Counselling services should exist and should provide support, assistance in developing learning skills and vocational support including, where appropriate, career counselling.

How

The submission should provide information on key support services available to students (orientation activities, counselling, other support services including assistance with learning skills and study difficulties, financial and health services).

If the applicant does not offer key student support services, the submission should outline how its students can access them elsewhere on a regular dependable basis.

3.3.3 Physical Resources and Facilities

Libraries and Information Resources

What

Applicants must have:

- library and information resources of sufficient relevance, quality, depth, diversity and currency of holdings, available to support the course offered and to support the updating of staff knowledge and skills
- adequate space to house the information resources, equipment and library personnel and to accommodate students and staff in an environment appropriate for study and learning.

- resources in the library that are identifiable, adequately catalogued (preferably on an automatic system), and accessible at times which suit student needs. There should be:
 - lending service arrangements and opening hours appropriate to the delivery of the course;
 - appropriate computer hardware and software, audio-visual and multimedia resources and equipment, and other aids to support the learning needs of students and staff;
 - training provided to library users on how to access library services and facilities; and
 - a professionally trained librarian with overall responsibility for coordinating library resources.

How

A course submission should include:

- Details of information resources including:
 - a basic suite of electronic full text material;
 - a collection of print resources covering text books and recommended readings;
 - electronic course readings (journal articles, papers, book chapters etc.); and
 - a broad range of resources providing knowledge that is broader and deeper than the prescribed course readings.

Note: In assessing the adequacy of library holdings, a course assessment panel will regard relevant electronic resources as equivalent to print materials, but only as long as they represent at least an equivalent information gathering experience.

- An evaluation of the adequacy of library and information resources to support the delivery of the proposed course.
- Details of an information resources development plan that includes:
 - a systematic approach to evaluating the extent to which the information resources and service delivery meet client needs;
 - a mechanism for responding to that evaluation, including collection development programs to respond to shortfalls; and
 - an appropriate supporting budget and timelines to achieve development milestones.
- Applicants will be expected to comment on the progress of their information resources development plan in annual reports and Reaccreditation Reports.

Information resources will be further evaluated during the site visit.

Physical Facilities and Equipment

What

General physical and consumable resources necessary to deliver the course of study at the level proposed need to be made available to students. These resources include teaching rooms and facilities such as equipment, laboratories, workshops, computing facilities and

other instructional resources. Applicants must have the capacity to maintain premises, equipment and materials at the level required to support the conduct of the particular course of study.

How

Submissions should include a description of physical resources and facilities to support the courses offered, including:

- teaching rooms;
- audio-visual and instrumental equipment;
- computer facilities; and
- public and recreational spaces for student use.

Physical resources and facilities will be evaluated during the visit to the applicant.

4.0 ANY OTHER MATTERS

The course assessment panel may comment on any other matter relevant to the successful offering of the course.

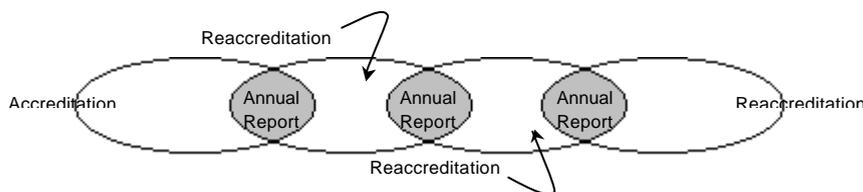
Part 4

Reaccreditation

PART 4 - REACCREDITATION

1.0 THE REACCREDITATION PROCESS

Reaccreditation is linked to the annual reporting process, which is detailed in a separate guideline. Annual reporting is an on-going monitoring exercise that allows for a lesser focus on inputs and a greater focus on outcomes and future developments in reaccreditation processes. In other words, a picture will have evolved through the annual report process that is summarised by providers in their Reaccreditation Reports. Key issues will have been identified and addressed through the annual reporting process, which can inform this summary.



1.1 Documentation

Although the reaccreditation process concentrates more on outcomes and future developments, the Act still requires that the Minister must be satisfied that the course and the way of delivering are appropriate to the award, having regard to the criteria in the National Protocols before reaccreditation will be granted. Therefore, a complete submission is required, addressing all the criteria for accreditation. This also provides the 'benchmark' for the subsequent reaccreditation process, and for evaluating any major changes during the period of accreditation.

In addition, and most importantly, applicants for reaccreditation must supply a Reaccreditation Report. This Report will be the document the assessment panel concentrates on and should provide information compiled from Annual Reports, and evidence that:

- the applicant's mechanisms and processes for evaluating and reviewing the course, and monitoring course outcomes, are effective;
- mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the delivery of the course are effective, and;
- the applicant is progressing in achieving their strategic aims.

Further details of the information required in the Reaccreditation Report are contained in section 2 of this part of the guidelines.

1.2 Indicative Timeline

An indicative timeline for a typical course assessment process is set out in the Guidelines for Accreditation. The timelines for reaccreditation will be comparable to those for initial accreditation. The Office of Higher Education will advise providers 18 months in advance of the expiry of a current accreditation of the date by which reaccreditation applications should be submitted to ensure continuance of accreditation.

1.3 Stages in Reaccreditation

Step 1 Development of an Application

Development of an application for reaccreditation involves the preparation by the applicant of a detailed and fully documented submission on the accredited course(s), and a Reaccreditation Report.

The submission document should be based upon the initial accreditation document, incorporating any changes to provider, course and delivery arrangements since initial accreditation. These changes should have been noted in annual reports.

Step 2 Submission of Initial Documentation

The applicant should present the following items to OHE:

- one copy of the submission and Reaccreditation Report;
- an accompanying letter signed by the governing body or senior officer authorised by the governing body of the applicant formally requesting that the application be assessed; and
- the completed application form and accompanying application fee. The application form includes an attestation that the applicant is a fit and proper person to accept responsibility for a higher education course (see Appendix 2)

The Office of Higher Education will acknowledge in writing receipt of these items.

Step 3 Preliminary Review of Initial Documentation

The preliminary review is an administrative arrangement for the assistance of the applicant. Its purpose is to save time by ensuring the required information is available in accordance with these guidelines for the formal consideration by a course assessment panel and to save unnecessary costs in relation to the course assessment process (see Part 2, section 1.2, Fees). In carrying out the preliminary review, OHE does not seek to assess whether a submission meets the approved criteria.

The preliminary review of the initial documentation submitted is usually undertaken by the staff member of OHE responsible for providing secretarial support to the course assessment panel.

Following the preliminary review, OHE may:

- formally commence the course assessment process with the appointment of a course assessment panel by the Minister; or,
- seek further information if it appears that the documentation does not provide an adequate basis for a panel's consideration.

If the submission is not acceptable in its initial form, or there is too little information provided, OHE will inform the applicant of the steps to be taken or additional information required.

If further information is requested, no other steps will be taken by OHE until:

- the information is forthcoming in a satisfactory form, incorporated in revised documentation; or
- the information is not supplied by the applicant, and three months elapse from the date of the request without the applicant replying to the request for additional information, in which case the application is deemed to be withdrawn, unless otherwise negotiated; or
- the applicant contests the need to supply additional information, or supplies only part of the information requested or supplies the information but in an unsatisfactory form, in which case two options are available to the applicant:
 - make a case for and negotiate a further period in which to comply with the request to submit additional information; or
 - indicate in writing that the applicant wishes to have the course assessment process formally commenced using the information supplied to date.

OHE will notify the applicant seeking accreditation of the number of copies of the modified documentation required to be sent to the panel members (with the panel members' permission) or to OHE for distribution to course assessment panel members, together with an outline of the likely timetable for the whole process.

Step 4

Course Assessment Panel

The Minister will appoint a course assessment panel to assess an application for reaccreditation. The process of appointment, membership considerations and conduct of the panel remain the same as for initial accreditation.

Functions

The primary role of a course assessment panel is to:

- evaluate and report to the Minister on whether the course submitted for reaccreditation and the way of delivering it continue to be appropriate to the type of award to which the course leads, and the course continues to satisfy the relevant criteria in the National Protocols (s.47(2) of the Act); and,
- recommend whether or not the course should be reaccredited, along with any recommended conditions arising from its consideration.

In the process of making its assessment the course assessment panel will inspect the facilities necessary for the course, and seek any further information relevant to the assessment.

The onus remains on the applicant to inform itself about requirements for the monitoring, review, and quality assurance and enhancement of courses in the higher education sector and to demonstrate its capacity to continue to deliver the course or courses.

Step 5**Evaluation of Documentation**

The course assessment panel will meet to conduct a detailed study of the Reaccreditation Report. The panel will also consider curriculum documentation, and a report from the OHE on any action arising from the applicant's annual reports, and any conditions that may have been imposed on the previous accreditation. The panel will accept that core aspects relating to the provider were satisfactory at the time of accreditation, noting any changes to these advised in annual reports. The panel will assess whether sufficient written evidence is presented that:

- the course continues to satisfy the criteria for accreditation;
- the applicant's mechanisms and processes for evaluating and reviewing the course, and monitoring course outcomes, are effective;
- arrangements for delivery of the course continue to satisfy the criteria for accreditation; and
- the applicant is progressing in achieving their strategic aims.

The panel through OHE may write to an applicant seeking further information or detail on any aspect of the submission, whether related to information in the submission which needs clarification or amplification, or to make inquiries beyond the material submitted about aspects of the organisation and operation that the applicant may not have addressed explicitly.

If it considers that the documentation before it demonstrates that the applicant clearly does not continue to meet the criteria for accreditation, the panel has discretion at this step in the process to finalise its deliberations and prepare its report recommending to the Minister that reaccreditation be refused. In such a circumstance, Step 6 will not be taken.

Step 6**Site Visit**

This visit is arranged in consultation with the applicant and should, where possible, occur during term time or at other times when teaching and administrative staff are available and students are attending classes.

The format for the visit will be negotiated with the applicant, but will include typically:

- a brief presentation by the applicant on the reaccreditation report, including changes to the course and delivery arrangements since accreditation, and their strategic development.
- time for the panel to question features of the applicant's documentation;
- an inspection of physical facilities (including library, classrooms, any clinics and laboratories, computer laboratories, and administration);
- viewing of documentation relevant to the submission including promotional material, evidence of course and learning outcomes monitoring; and
- separate meetings with key academic staff, other staff involved in the delivery of the course and students and recent graduates in the field of study proposed for accreditation, without the presence of the key proponents.

Site visits are interactive processes, however, comments made during the course of the process do not constitute the panel's final assessment.

Step 7

Report Preparation

When the panel is satisfied that either:

- (i) there is sufficient evidence that the applicant satisfies the criteria for accreditation; or
- (ii) there is insufficient evidence to support reaccreditation and the applicant cannot demonstrate that they are likely to be able to provide this within one year from initial submission (s.47(6) of the Act),

then a formal recommendation or recommendations concerning reaccreditation is formulated for the Minister's consideration.

The report to the Minister contains an overview of the findings, comments and recommendations of the course assessment panel, together with detailed notes of the findings, comments and recommendations of the panel made during its meetings, and lists any conditions or required actions it recommends to the Minister in relation to the application before it.

Step 8

Consultation and Feedback

Prior to transmitting the course assessment panel's report to the Minister, OHE will furnish a copy of the report and recommendations to the applicant.

The applicant has two weeks from the date of dispatch of the report in which to notify its intention to respond formally on the panel's assessment or make any other comment on the report or recommendations. A timeframe for the response will be negotiated with OHE. This response will be sent to the Minister with the course assessment panel's report for the Minister's consideration and deliberation.

Step 9

Options for Decisions on Reaccreditation

In response to a course assessment panel report, options open to the Minister are:

(i) Approve Reaccreditation

Courses are generally accredited for a period of up to five years, after which they may be assessed for reaccreditation for further periods of up to five years. Shorter periods of accreditation may be approved by the Minister if considered appropriate on the basis of a course assessment panel's findings.

The Minister may attach conditions that are relevant and reasonable to an accreditation based on a course assessment panel's recommendations. However, the Minister cannot grant conditional accreditation where criteria are not satisfied. Conditions may relate to the further development of delivery arrangements and curriculum as a program develops, or to quality improvement, and may require a follow-up visit by the course assessment panel.

Typically, providers may be asked to report on conditions as part of the Annual Reporting process. Where conditions are set, there should be a clear timeline for their satisfaction, and any subsequent action in the event of non-compliance should also be specified.

or

(ii) Refuse Reaccreditation

As specified in section 47(5) of the Act, if the Minister decides to refuse to grant the application, the Minister must as soon as practicable give the applicant an information notice about the decision. Applicants should note that the Act provides that a person who is aggrieved by a decision of the Minister under the Act may appeal against the decision to the District Court. Appeal provisions are specified in Part 6 of the Act.

If an applicant is refused reaccreditation, any subsequent applications will be treated as an application for accreditation and will be considered in accordance with the guidelines for accreditation.

Withdrawal of Applications

It is open to an applicant to withdraw an application at any time prior to a decision by the Minister. If an applicant withdraws a reaccreditation application, any subsequent application will be treated as an application for accreditation and will be considered in accordance with the guidelines for accreditation.

2.0 ASSESSMENT OF REACCREDITATION APPLICATIONS

The following information is to guide applicants in preparing Reaccreditation Reports to accompany applications for reaccreditation. The emphasis is on providing evidence to a course assessment panel on aspects of the applicant's operation in relation to quality assurance mechanisms and strategic planning. The aim is to establish that the accredited course and its delivery remain, and are likely to continue to be, compliant with the accreditation criteria, through the effective operation of the provider's own quality systems.

In a broader sense, the reaccreditation process includes demonstrating the applicant is maintaining or enhancing a higher education culture. The key to maintaining or enhancing a higher education culture is through meaningful interaction with the broader higher education sector, and is reflected in the commitment of management and staff to these relationships. A higher education culture is also characterised by a commitment to free inquiry and participation in the generation of knowledge in relevant fields.

2.1 Quality Assurance Processes

What

Quality assurance processes have operated to monitor the outcomes of the accredited course and resulted in changes where appropriate.

How

Providers of accredited higher education courses should have in place processes for monitoring the outcomes of the courses. These would include collecting and evaluating data on:

- academic outcomes, such as pass/fail rates, array of grades, progression and retention rates
- benchmarking against other higher education institutions, particularly universities
- external review processes
- graduate outcomes, including subsequent progress in further study in other institutions
- employer and professional satisfaction
- graduate satisfaction
- student evaluation of course surveys

The Reaccreditation Report should present the results of monitoring, and evidence of how the results were considered and informed curriculum review and appraisals of delivery.

2.2 Curriculum Review**What**

The applicant should demonstrate how mechanisms for curriculum review have enabled it to keep abreast of scholarship in the relevant field/s.

How

The applicant will have in place mechanisms for employers and professional bodies to comment on curriculum design, and for benchmarking against and ongoing monitoring of similar courses nationally and overseas. There will also be avenues for academic staff of the institution and the broader sector to have input to curriculum design and review.

The Reaccreditation Report should document how these mechanisms have been effective, what sort of input and feedback has been received, and how this has been reflected in curriculum review. Any future directions in curriculum development arising from this process should also be described.

2.3 Staff Development**What**

Staff involved in the delivery, design and review of the course have maintained currency of scholarship and contributed to the body of knowledge relating to the course, and more broadly in associated research fields.

How

The applicant's staff development policy should be encouraging and supporting staff in enhancing their scholarship in relevant fields of study. The policy should be contributing to the applicant's strategic plan for development as a higher education provider.

The Reaccreditation Report needs to include details of staff development activities since the last accreditation process, including which staff undertook what activity, how the activity enhances their scholarly development, and what the provider's contribution to the activity was. The Report should also include details of publications, conferences or research projects staff have been involved in

What

Staff involved in the delivery of the course have enhanced their teaching skills.

How

Applicants will have procedures for monitoring the teaching performance of staff, such as through student evaluation of teaching surveys. This should be an integral part of a provider's quality assurance framework. The Reaccreditation Report should demonstrate how teaching performance has been monitored, how data collected was evaluated and the findings acted upon. The Report should show what developmental strategies have been employed to enhance staff teaching performance, including what staff have undertaken development activities, and how the provider supported them.

2.4 Strategic Planning**What**

The applicant's strategic plan and quality assurance proposals for the forthcoming period of accreditation.

How

A strategic plan for the applicant's development as a higher education provider will have been submitted with the initial accreditation application, post 2004, or in the case of providers accredited before 2004, will form part of the reaccreditation submission.

The strategic plan should demonstrate how the provider will achieve the educational objectives articulated in its statement of mission or purpose, including timelines for the achievement of particular milestones.

The strategic plan should include quality assurance strategies and achievement indicators. Indicators might relate to student demand for courses, progression, retention and completion rates, as well as graduate satisfaction and employment rates

The reaccreditation report will show how the applicant has progressed towards achieving strategic goals in the preceding period of accreditation, and indicate the goals for the forthcoming accreditation period and strategies for achieving these goals.

2.5 Physical Infrastructure and Information Resources Development Plan

What

The applicant has progressed in the development of physical infrastructure and information resources to support delivery of the course.

How

A physical infrastructure and information resources development plan will have been submitted with the initial accreditation application, post 2004, or in the case of providers accredited before 2004, will form part of the reaccreditation submission.

Plans will include timelines for the achievement of certain milestones, sufficient budget allocations to support the development of infrastructure, and link to course review and development.

**Appendix
1**

Explanatory Notes for Criteria for
Accreditation

1.0 PREAMBLE

Part 3 of these guidelines detail the criteria for accreditation of higher education courses offered by non-university providers. To further assist applicants, this section explains the rationale for each criterion and provides a context for applicants' responses in their submissions. Part 3 provides the 'What' and 'How', and this section provides the 'Why'.

2.0 GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

2.1 Fit and Proper Person

According to the *National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes*, applicants for higher education accreditation must meet a 'fit and proper person' test. A full guideline for determining whether an applicant is a fit and proper person is attached at Appendix 2.

2.2 Statement of Mission or Purpose and Objectives

An applicant's commitment to higher education will be a key factor in the capacity of the applicant to deliver the course. The course assessment panel needs to satisfy itself that an applicant seeking accreditation has defined its mission or purpose and these are consistent with the provision of higher education. The aims articulated in the statement will define the applicant's higher education outcomes.

2.3 Organisation, Administration and Governance

2.3.1 Governing Body

The governing body must have the expertise to determine policy and direction for the institution, and assume ultimate responsibility for the course and its delivery. It is important that the governing body not be tied too closely to the corporate entity, particularly in for profit organisations, to ensure it can act in the best educational interests of the applicant. It is acknowledged that governance arrangements may vary according to the nature of the provider.

2.3.2 Legal Status

There must be a legally liable entity that can be held responsible for the course and its delivery under the Act, and which issues the award. This will be the body that 'contracts' with the Minister to deliver the accredited course in the approved manner. In the event that a course cannot be delivered for whatever reason, the legal entity will be held responsible for the welfare of students and staff, and the acquittal of contingency plans.

2.3.3 Administrative Arrangements

Delivery of higher education includes taking responsibility for the effective administration of students, staff and facilities, and for marketing and promotion of the provider's programs. Administrative arrangements include personnel and systems.

2.3.4 Oversight of Educational Process

It is a core value of higher education that teaching staff play a central role in the design and evaluation of courses, and in determining academic policies. These policies and mechanisms should be consistent with practice in the broader higher education sector, and benchmarked against this practice. This assists the provider to develop an inclusive higher education culture.

2.3.5 Oversight of the Course

Bodies such as course advisory committees, are common throughout higher education and have a role both in the development of a course and in monitoring its operation.

At this level in the organisational structure, there should be external input from the wider higher education sector and relevant professions, industry and the community to bring to bear a range of opinion and experience on course structure and content and on the educational principles and concepts underlying the operation of the course.

2.3.6 Monitoring of Outcomes (see also section 3.3.1)

How a course achieves its stated outcomes is a key indicator of the quality of the program and its delivery. Course outcomes are a core consideration of the reaccreditation process, and providers will need to be able to provide evidence to assessment panels that outcomes are being achieved. To provide such evidence, effective mechanisms and processes need to be in place.

2.3.7 Strategic Planning

A strategic plan describes how a provider is going to achieve its mission and purpose, and provides evidence of planning to an assessment panel. It would be usual for a strategic plan to include staff or workplace development plans, and facilities development plans. If the institutions mission includes research activities, this would be incorporated in the strategic plan. The strategic plan links to the monitoring of outcomes referred to above, and would form a central part of the providers annual report to the Minister.

2.3.8 Avenues for Review of Decision-Making

It is an expectation that an applicant will employ principles of natural justice in dealing with staff and students, and for review of administrative and educational decisions. There should be recourse to external persons or bodies to ensure transparency of appeals procedures.

2.4 Relationships with Other Bodies

Ongoing exposure to critical peer review and to current scholarship is fundamental to maintaining the currency of the skills and knowledge of teaching staff and of course content.

Effective relationships with other higher education providers, particularly universities, is an essential means of maintaining this exposure.

Where a course is intended to provide professional registration or lead to professional practice, consultation with professional organisations in the process of course development is crucial to ensuring the course's currency.

2.5 Financial and Business Systems, Planning and Practices

2.5.1 Financial Viability

In the interests of student welfare and public confidence in the higher education sector, the capacity of the applicant's financial and business arrangements to enable to sustain the delivery of the course must be considered.

It is essential that the applicant demonstrate that its fiscal resources are sufficient to allow the objectives of the course to be achieved, and its financial and business systems and practices engender confidence that the accredited standard of education can be maintained for the proposed period of accreditation.

2.5.2 Contingency Planning

In becoming a higher education provider, the applicant takes on certain responsibilities for the welfare of students, and for the reputation of Australian higher education. Part of this responsibility is ensuring that, in the event that the accredited course can no longer be offered, there are arrangements in place for students to continue their studies, or to receive a full refund of fees. Providers enrolling overseas students have to be members of a fee assurance fund, and there are schemes in operation to assist with placing students in other institutions in the case of institutional failure etc. This criterion is intended to extend such arrangements to all students, and to go further in requiring applicants to plan against such eventualities. Formal agreements with other institutions to take on students is one means of providing contingency arrangements for students. Any arrangements should apply no matter what the circumstances leading to the inability of the provider to continue offering the course, including cancellation of accreditation.

2.6 Staff

2.6.1 Numbers of Staff

A key to developing a higher education culture is to have senior staff who can provide academic leadership involved in the oversight of courses. This will assist the provider in ensuring curriculum delivery and review is conducted according to higher education best practice. While it is acknowledged that providers will employ a number of sessional and casual teaching staff, and that this can provide valuable external input to the educational programs, there must be a core of full-time staff with a commitment to the institution to provide continuity and a sense of collegiality.

'Scholarship' in relation to staff refers to the core higher education requirement of maintaining a connection with the underpinning knowledge of a field of study or practice, and contributing to its development. In particular, it is critical that this connection remains up to date and staff are cognisant of the latest developments.

2.6.2 Level of Qualifications

There is an expectation that staff engaged in the delivery of higher education will have some experience in university teaching. The requirement for postgraduate qualifications ensures that staff have a knowledge of research practices and of maintaining scholarship. The minimum requirement for a qualification one level above that being taught is to ensure confidence in the expertise and knowledge of the teacher.

2.6.3 Verification of Qualifications

Reporting of qualifications in public documents must conform to the standards for nomenclature accepted in the public higher education sector. Any claims to overseas qualifications will have to be recognised within the Guidelines published by the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition. The provider must exercise due diligence in establishing the bona fides of all staff.

2.6.4 Staff Development

On-going professional development and updating of skills of staff is essential to ensure relevant knowledge and appropriate levels of qualification are maintained. Non-university providers are not expected to engage in pure research, but, as mentioned above, it is essential that staff involved in the development, review and delivery of courses are up to date on the latest developments in their field, and contribute to the maintenance and development of the body of knowledge underpinning the field. It is expected that providers demonstrate support for staff, both financially and 'in kind' in professional development activities. Where staff do not have the requisite level of formal qualification, they should be actively encouraged to undertake further studies. To maximise teaching outcomes, staff should also be encouraged to develop their teaching skills.

3.0 EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

3.1 General

Before it will recommend accreditation, a course assessment panel must be satisfied that the proposed course:

- is in a field of study underpinned by a coherent body of knowledge, supported by a valid theoretical framework, and a substantial body of scholarship and/or reflective professional practice;
- is comparable in requirements and learning outcomes to a course at the same level in a similar field at Australian universities, with regard to:
 - the overall goals for the course;
 - course entry requirements;
 - the breadth and depth of course content;
 - the structure of the course in terms of the mix of general and specialised skills and knowledge;
 - the levels of skills and knowledge developed;
 - the duration and workload of the course; and

- the methods of delivery and assessment;
- satisfies the requirements set in the AQF for the award level; and
- is supported by general educational practices and standards adequate to maintain the offering of the course.

3.2 The Course

3.2.1 Level of Award

It is a core requirement of accreditation under the National Protocols that higher education courses offered by non-university providers match the AQF guidelines for the level of the award. This is a key factor in ensuring consistency of outcomes from Australian qualifications, and maintaining the quality framework for Australian higher education.

3.2.2 Proposed Title of Award

It is important for students, employers and other higher education institutions to know what fields of study are denoted by an award title. This helps with application and admissions processes, credit transfer etc, and assists employers to identify suitable candidates.

3.2.3 Nominated Authority Making Award

The body conferring the award is attesting that all the requirements for the award have been satisfied. It must be in a position to make this judgement, and to take legal responsibility for the award testamur.

3.2.4 Rationale for the Course Overall

The panel must be satisfied that the field of study in which the course is proposed does indeed constitute a coherent body of knowledge, supported by an appropriately developed theoretical framework, and a substantial body of scholarship and/or reflective professional practice. The course must have demonstrable educational value, comparable to a course leading to a similar award in an Australian university.

The course must also make a positive contribution to the achievement of the provider's strategic aims.

3.2.5 Statement of Objectives

Courses proposed for accreditation must have outcomes consistent with higher education generally, and in keeping with national policy. The applicant must have a clear view of, and be able to demonstrate, how course objectives are to be achieved, and learning outcomes are to be produced. In the reaccreditation process, providers will be required to report on their success in achieving objectives and learning outcomes.

3.2.6 Entry Requirements

Outlined in the AQF Implementation Handbook are the indicative entry requirements set for each higher education award, and applicants should have regard to these in formulating the admission requirements for a course. It is recognised that entry requirements may vary according to the field of study in which an award is being developed, and the particular client group for whom the course is being developed. Of particular concern is that students enter the course with realistic prospects for success, and that they graduate with the stated attributes.

3.2.7 Workload for the Course

The AQF provides indicative guidelines on the appropriate duration of courses for each higher education award. These will, however, vary according to the field of study, and to the level of prior knowledge students bring to a course.

In setting the workload for the course, the applicant should take account of the AQF standard, the requirements of any employer or professional association, the level of prior assumed knowledge for the course, and comparable courses in universities.

3.2.8 Course Structure and Content

The course submission must demonstrate a coherent structure to the course overall. In particular it should show how separate areas of study are integrated and that these areas in themselves are logical and coherent.

Unit outlines provide the definitive information on structure, content, outcomes and assessment. From unit outlines a panel should be able to see the internal logic of how a course is put together, whether content is comprehensive and current and will produce the stated outcomes, and how assessment will provide evidence that students have acquired the necessary knowledge, skills and competencies.

3.2.9 Modes of Study

Courses need to be adequately delivered in the modes proposed and the submission must show that there are sufficient resources to enable satisfactory delivery of the course in these modes.

3.2.10 Methods of Delivery of Course Content

Methods of delivery need to be relevant to the learning outcomes specified for each course component, and take account of the overall requirements for the development of a range of specialised and generic skills and attributes.

The applicant must have the necessary resources and expertise to deliver the course in the methods proposed.

3.2.11 Assessment of Student Progress

Assessment modes should, where appropriate, include a variety of approaches including student projects and essays, ongoing assessment during the course and more formal examinations. Assessment modes should be appropriate to the objectives of the course overall, test the skills and knowledge developed in the course at each stage, and be able to test the higher order learning outcomes of the course. Assessment should promote both facilitation of the progressive development of knowledge and the demonstration of specified levels of competency.

3.2.12 Course Implementation and Resourcing

Applicants should be offering courses only if they have the necessary resources to implement them. The financial review will investigate the applicant's financial viability in some depth, but the assessment panel needs to see, in broad terms, how the course is to be mounted. Projected enrolment numbers and information on a cohort's progress will give the panel an idea of the numbers of students that need to be catered for, in teaching spaces, information resources, IT facilities etc.

3.3 General Educational Practices and Standards

3.3.1 Mechanisms for Evaluating, Monitoring and Changing the Curriculum

Evaluating, monitoring and reviewing the curriculum are essential to ensuring effectiveness and relevance of the course, and are a core component of a provider's quality assurance. Integral to the process should be benchmarking with other higher education providers, in particular universities. The increasing internationalisation of higher education means providers should be looking at benchmarking with international providers as well.

The mechanisms will be part of the oversight undertaken by the provider's committee structure, and external input will be crucial to maintaining currency and comparability with other courses.

Monitoring learning outcomes, and benchmarking these, will be a central aspect of curriculum evaluation and review.

The outcomes of these processes will form the basis of provider's annual reports to the Minister, and of the reaccreditation process.

The monitoring and review mechanisms would form part of a providers quality system. While the actual nature of the systems a provider utilises will vary according to circumstance, Australian Universities Quality Agency Audit (AUQA) have developed hallmarks of a quality system that would be common to all providers.

- Management and ownership recognise that attention to quality is essential and central, and are committed to quality in a way that other staff see as collaboration, not an imposition.
- The quality system combines QA and planning. The core components of a quality system are effective processes, clear and precise descriptions of which must be widely available.
- Balance. Quality and its assurance involve both professional and management functions. There is need for balance between the management and collegial emphases. The

Appendix 1 – Explanatory Notes for Criteria for Accreditation

maintenance and improvement of quality require professional commitment in the context of well-designed systems and processes.

- Proximity. Responsibility for academic quality is located as close as possible to the academic activities of teaching, learning, and scholarship.
- Feedback. Quality assurance is a continuous, active and responsive process. Critical evaluation of performance and the actions that flow from this should be a regular and progressive feature of academic work.
- The system is evidence-based. Data ('indicators') are collected, analysed, disseminated and used. This feedback loop, leading to the modification of ideas and activities and to active sharing and dissemination of good practice, is central to the proper operation of quality assurance systems. The indicators of effectiveness are the academic outcomes of the teaching, learning, and scholarship activities.
- Standards. Outcomes specifications make reference to standards.
- There is a balance of central and local action and responsibility, in the case of large institutions.
- There is positive support for QA activities, including funds as necessary.
- The quality system encourages a 'double positive' attitude: we are doing well but can do better.
- The quality system has a demonstrably positive effect on the academic activities, and this effect is widely known and acknowledged.
- The centrality of staff satisfaction and staff development are recognised, in the context of the institution's objectives.
- The quality system permits, supports and provides a safety net for risk-taking.
- Externality. Effective quality assurance in HE requires the use of external academic and professional points of reference. An institution's academic work and its processes for guaranteeing the quality of that work must be responsive to the national and international contexts. The desires and needs of the full range of stakeholders are addressed, and their satisfaction monitored.
- External reference is assisted by the involvement of the institution's staff in outside professional activities, and the use of external participants in the internal quality assurance processes.

(Extracted from the Australian Universities Quality Agency Audit Manual, Version 1)

3.3.2 Relationships with Students

Providers enter into a contract with students when they enrol in their programs, and it is important that the terms of the contract are clear, transparent and equitable. Policies in relation to dealing with students are an integral part of the contract. The overarching principles of relationships with students are based on natural justice, and considerations of their welfare. In terms of acceptable practice, there is no great variation in the higher education sector, and providers should base their policies and practices on the sectoral norms.

3.3.3 Physical Resources and Facilities

Libraries

There is an onus on the accredited provider of higher education courses to make the necessary arrangement for students to access the information resources required to complete their program of studies. Providers are expected to have their own information resource infrastructure, including library facilities with hard-copy holdings, access to relevant full-text journals (hard copy or on-line), access to computers, study areas, and qualified staff to maintain the facilities. While it is acceptable that these facilities can be augmented by negotiating access to public universities' information resources, this does not abrogate the provider's basic responsibility.

The negotiation of formal borrowing arrangements with other libraries is encouraged to enhance the quality of resources and services available to students and staff. Notwithstanding these arrangements, however, applicants must satisfy the course assessment panel that they have adequate library holdings immediately available on site in support of the course offered.

Physical Facilities and Equipment

Physical facilities and equipment are both an intrinsic part of delivering a course to achieve stated outcomes, and a reflection of the provider's commitment to quality higher education. As with the provision of information resources, it is not sufficient to rely on facilities outside the institution that might be accessible to students, although these might augment the provider's own facilities. Maintenance of facilities is an important aspect of delivering a course. Physical facilities should be provided with a view to both academic outcomes, and the welfare of students. Providers should establish and maintain a physical environment conducive to higher education studies.

**Appendix
2**

Fit and Proper Person Guideline

Background

The *Higher Education (General Provisions) Act 2003* (the Act) establishes the framework for accreditation of non-university providers in Part 4, and in section 47 (Decision on application) specifies that the Minister is to grant an application for accreditation ‘having regard to the relevant criteria mentioned in the *National Protocols*’.

According to the *National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes*, a criterion for accreditation is that the applicant is a fit and proper person to accept responsibility for the course. This requirement is framed in the following terms:

Protocol 3 – The accreditation of higher education courses to be offered by non self-accrediting providers

3.16 – Jurisdictions should use appropriate investigatory mechanisms to ensure financial probity and ensure that an applicant is a fit and proper person to establish and operate an institution offering higher education programmes.

3.18 – Applicants should be required to disclose their prior history of applications for accreditation in all jurisdictions, including the outcomes of such processes, as a condition of making an application.

Definition of fit and proper person

For the purpose of offering accredited higher education courses in Queensland, an applicant or provider will be considered to be a fit and proper person:

- If they have no charges or convictions for offences listed in the appendix to this guideline;
- If they are not an undischarged bankrupt or someone who has certain arrangements outstanding under the *Bankruptcy Act 1966* (see appendix, section 4);
- If they or any provider with which they have been associated, have never been suspended or removed from any register of higher education or vocational education and training courses or providers for breaches of accreditation or registration legislation or conditions.

This status must be maintained at all times during the period of accreditation.

The terms “**applicant**” and “**provider**” include: an officer, a director, or substantial shareholder who is in a position to influence the management of the applicant or provider.

“**Substantial shareholder**” is defined as a shareholder who owns 15% or more of the applicant entity or is entitled to receive 15% or more of any dividend paid by the entity.

Procedure for determining whether an applicant is a ‘fit and proper person’

Each application for accreditation must be accompanied by a signed cover sheet including a declaration from the relevant owner, director, president, chief executive officer or similar person attesting to the applicant’s status as a Fit and Proper person, as well as that of its directors, officers and substantial shareholders.

By signing the declaration, the signatory is giving consent to OHE to investigate the status of the applicant/provider in relation to matters listed in the Appendix to this guideline, if necessary. This might entail Police and ASIC (Australian Securities and Investments Commission) searches, as well as exchanges of information with higher education or VET (vocational education and training) sector accreditation/registration agencies in other

jurisdictions. In all cases, however, the primary onus will be on the signatory to disclose any relevant matters of which s/he is aware.

Through the Annual Reporting process, providers will be asked to attest to their continued status as fit and proper persons to deliver the higher education courses for which they hold accreditation.

In the event that the Office, or a Course Assessment Panel formally appointed to advise the Minister, has concerns about any aspect of an application or existing accreditation in terms of the 'fit and proper person' provisions, the OHE will verify the conviction or charge status, or the circumstances of removal or suspension from a register, of the relevant individual and formally advise the applicant/provider in writing of the nature of the concern, and invite a written response. The applicant/provider will have a minimum of 30 days to respond to the letter.

At the end of this process, the OHE will brief the Minister on the outcome of any investigations and the applicant/provider's response. If the concern arises during the application stage, the Minister will be asked to make a decision on whether consideration of the application should continue given the charge or conviction, or other circumstances. Once an accreditation has been granted, the Minister will be asked to make a decision on whether additional conditions should be added to the accreditation (for example, the removal of the individual concerned from the organisation), or whether the accreditation should be withdrawn. The authority to so cancel an accreditation or set further conditions is provided by sections 52 (Grounds for cancellation) and 57 (Changing conditions) of the Act, and is subject to the 'Show cause' and appeal requirements of the Act.

Responsibility for Staff

While the Fit and Proper person provision does not extend to staff of the provider, other than those defined above, the responsibility for ensuring the appropriateness of staff rests with the provider. Providers should have in place mechanisms for screening staff prior to employment, and procedures to ensure staff remain fit for their duties.

APPENDIX – PRESCRIBED OFFENCES UNDER THE QUEENSLAND HIGHER EDUCATION ACCREDITATION FIT AND PROPER PERSON GUIDELINE

1. Tertiary accreditation legislation

QLD: *Higher Education (General Provisions) Act 2003*

Training and Employment Act 2000

ACT: *Tertiary Accreditation and Registration Act 2003*

NSW: *Higher Education Act 2001*

VIC: *Tertiary Education Act 1993*

TAS: *Universities Registration Act 1995*

SA: *Training and Skills Development Act 2003*

WA: *Higher Education Act 2003*

NT: *Education Act*

COMMONWEALTH: *Higher Education Support Act 2003* (for application to external territories).

NEW ZEALAND: *Education Act 1989*

A Ministerially-appointed course assessment panel may also consider applicant or provider breaches of repealed legislation which preceded any of the above Acts.

2. Criminal Code

| Section | Offence |
|-----------|--|
| 363A | Abduction of child under 16 |
| 216 | Abuse of intellectually impaired persons |
| 307 | Accessory after the fact to murder |
| 351 | Assault with intent to commit rape |
| 350 | Attempt to commit rape |
| 306 | Attempt to murder |
| 412 | Attempted robbery |
| 209 | Attempted sodomy |
| 321 | Attempt to injure by explosive or noxious substance |
| 416 | Attempts at extortion by threats |
| 211 | Bestiality |
| 321A | Bomb hoaxes |
| 419(3)(b) | Burglary with a circumstance of aggravation, that is, with violence, or while armed, or in company, or with damage |
| 215 | Carnal knowledge with or of children under 16 |
| 363 | Child stealing |

Appendix 2 – Fit and Proper Person Guideline

| | |
|------------|---|
| 408D | Computer hacking and misuse |
| 221 | Conspiracy to defile |
| 238 | Contamination of goods |
| 364 | Cruelty to children under 16 |
| 240 | Dealing in contaminated goods |
| 415 | Demanding property, benefit or performance of services with threats |
| 355 | Deprivation of liberty |
| 315 | Disabling in order to commit an indictable offence |
| 326 | Endangering life of children by exposure |
| 319A | Endangering safety of persons travelling by aircraft |
| 421(2) | Entering premises and committing indictable offences |
| 324 | Failure to supply necessaries |
| 488 | Forgery and uttering |
| 408C | Fraud |
| 320 | Grievous bodily harm |
| 239 | Hoax contamination of goods |
| 222 | Incest |
| 210 | Indecent treatment of children under 16 |
| 319 | Intentionally endangering safety of persons travelling by railway |
| 354 | Kidnapping |
| 354A | Kidnapping for ransom |
| 313 | Killing an unborn child |
| 229B | Maintaining a sexual relationship with a child |
| 322 | Maliciously administering poison with intent to harm |
| 303, 310 | Manslaughter |
| 228 | Obscene publications and exhibitions |
| 318 | Obstructing rescue or escape from unsafe premises |
| 213 | Owner etc. permitting abuse of children on premises |
| 514 | Personation in general |
| 417 | Procuring execution of deeds etc. by threats |
| 218 | Procuring sexual acts by coercion etc. |
| 217 | Procuring young person etc. for carnal knowledge |
| 359E | Punishment of unlawful stalking |
| 349 | Rape |
| 411(1),(2) | Robbery |
| 352 | Sexual assaults |
| 316 | Stupefying in order to commit an indictable offence |

| | |
|------|----------------------------------|
| 219 | Taking child for immoral purpose |
| 417A | Taking control of aircraft |
| 320A | Torture |
| 300 | Unlawful homicide |
| 208 | Unlawful sodomy |

3. Drugs Misuse Act 1986

| Section | Offence |
|---------|--|
| 6 | Aggravated supply of dangerous drugs |
| 8 | Producing dangerous drugs (1 st schedule drug in excess of 3 rd schedule quantity) |
| 5 | Trafficking in a dangerous drug |

4. Bankruptcy Act 1966

You must also advise the Office of Higher Education if, at the time of making the application, or at any time during the process or any subsequent period of accreditation, you are, or become, an undischarged bankrupt, or have executed a deed of arrangement under Part X of the Bankruptcy Act 1966 where the terms have not been fully complied with, or have creditors who have accepted a composition under Part X where final payment has not been made under the composition.

5. Other jurisdictions

'Prescribed offences' and relevant bankruptcies (and related arrangements), will include comparable offences and bankruptcies (and related arrangements) in other jurisdictions.

**Appendix
3**

Modified Accreditation
Procedures for Established Non-
University Providers

Background

In most cases, the Office of Higher Education administers the course accreditation process. However, the Minister for Education has approved a special modified procedure that devolves some operational responsibilities for course assessment to certain established institutions. This arrangement was approved when the 1993 Act and the current Procedures were introduced, for institutions that had established records as higher education providers and significant experience of the government's accreditation processes at the time. Currently, there is one institution operating under these modified procedures.

The modified accreditation procedures involve:

- Ministerial appointment of panel members to assess a course submission taking into consideration the membership recommendations of the institution;
- Consideration of the course documentation by the panel, leading to the preparation of a report and recommendation on the course which is given to the institution's governing body; and
- Formal transmission of the panel's report and the recommendation of the institution's governing body to the Minister for consideration.

The same accreditation criteria apply, and the Minister remains the decision maker in respect of both the appointment of the course assessment panel and the final accreditation decision.

The modified accreditation process can provide a means of acknowledging the diversity of providers in terms of their relative development.

Eligibility to Operate the Modified Process

A course assessment panel can recommend to the Minister as part of its findings with regard to accreditation of a course or courses that a provider is eligible to operate the modified accreditation process. To be deemed eligible, the provider must:

- have an established record as a provider of a number of accredited courses leading to higher education awards, over a minimum period of ten years;
- have significant experience of higher education accreditation procedures, which includes a record of successful reaccreditation without major qualification for the majority, if not all, of the institution's courses;
- have demonstrated to the satisfaction of a number of course assessment panels that there are no matters of concern related to the general requirements for the provider's operation (statement of mission; organisation, administration and governance; relationships with other bodies, financial standing and staffing arrangements), as outlined in the relevant guidelines. These requirements must be maintained by the institution at the standard outlined in the guidelines over the ten year period, and be subject to a quality assurance process operated by the institution;
- provide evidence of satisfactory general educational practices and standards (mechanisms for evaluating, monitoring and changing the curriculum; relationships with students; and physical resources and facilities), as outlined in the guidelines. The evidence must show how the institution has successfully achieved its stated mission and outcomes. The institution's general educational practices and standards must, in addition, be comparable to those operating in Australian universities.

In considering whether to allow an institution to operate a modified accreditation process for its courses, the Minister requires evidence that the institution has in place a range of on-going quality assurance measures in the following areas:

- the design and delivery of courses,
- student assessment methods;
- communication with and relationships with students;
- the number, quality, range of expertise and on-going development of relevant staff, and monitoring of their performance;
- measures for gathering, and acting on, feedback from students, employers and other stakeholders such as professional and industry bodies;
- external benchmarking of courses and outcomes;
- the adequacy of resources to support the courses; and
- financial viability

The nature and effectiveness of the institution's measures in these areas will be subject to review through processes established by the institution for ongoing quality assurance and for periodic external formal review of its courses, academic units, or of the institution as whole.

An institution deemed eligible to operate the modified process will be advised in writing by the Minister, and must provide written advice that they accept the offer. Once an institution has commenced operating the modified process, they can revert to the standard process by written request. The Minister may withdraw the institution's eligibility to operate the modified process if the reasonable opinion is formed that the institution no longer satisfies the criteria for eligibility.

Modified Process

The modified accreditation process for a course involves the following stages:

(i) *The preparation by the institution of a detailed and fully documented submission on the proposed course*

In developing a course submission, the institution will need to give particular consideration to the criteria for the accreditation of higher education courses specified in the relevant guidelines, and to demonstrate how the course proposed, and the arrangements for offering it, satisfy those criteria. Although suggested headings for the preparation of submissions are provided in the guidelines, the institution is free to determine the most appropriate format for its submission, as long as all required accreditation criteria are addressed.

(ii) *The establishment by the institution's governing body of a course assessment panel*

A crucial factor in the accreditation process is the establishment of an independent course assessment panel to assess a submission for accreditation.

(a) Role and Function

The functions and role of the course assessment panel remain the same for the modified accreditation process as for the standard process, and are detailed in the relevant guideline.

(b) Membership

In addition to the membership provisions for course assessment panels in the guideline, a course assessment panel for a modified process may include a senior academic member of staff from the institution with expertise in the field of study in question (for example Dean, Head of School or Head of Division) and a member of the academic staff having a major involvement in the course. There must, however, be more external members on the committee than internal members. Course assessment panels are designed to provide, regardless of the interests of individual members, a weight of disinterested expertise.

It is common practice in the selection of course assessment panels to include at least one senior academic from interstate with experience relevant to the course, with a view to providing some degree of national quality assurance and giving balance to local expertise.

(iii) *The approval by the Minister for Education of the composition of the course assessment panel*

The institution will need to submit to the Office of Higher Education its proposal for the membership of the course assessment panel, which will be forwarded to the Minister for Education for consideration and approval.

The Minister is free to add a nominee or nominees to any course assessment panel, or to alter the composition of a panel, if considered necessary.

(iv) *The submission on the course to be provided direct to the course assessment panel by the institution*

The institution will make its course submission direct to the course assessment panel. However, one copy of the initial submission should be supplied to the Office of Higher Education along with the recommended panel membership. Three copies of the final version of the submission, incorporating any changes arising from the assessment process, should be supplied to the Office of Higher Education at the conclusion of the assessment process.

(v) *Administration of the assessment process by the institution*

Under these procedures, the operational responsibilities for the assessment process are devolved to the institutions themselves. This involves responsibility for all arrangements for meetings of the course assessment panel and provision of necessary administrative and secretarial support for the panel's operation and the preparation of its report. All costs of the process, including any payments to panel members, are borne by the institution.

(vi) Preparation and submission of a report by the assessment panel to the institution's governing body, as to whether the course meets the required accreditation criteria specified in the relevant guideline and any qualifications to that recommendation.

Course assessment panels will be expected to recommend in one of the following forms:

- accreditation for up to five years without qualification; or
- accreditation with qualification, together with advice on how and when changes required to address such qualification are to be effected; or
- that the course not be accredited.

(vii) Transmission by the institution's governing body of the assessment panel's report to the Minister through the Office of Higher Education, together with any comments the governing body has on the report.

The National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes require that a course assessment panel report to the Minister, as the legally authorised decision maker. In the case of institutions operating the modified process, the governing body will transmit the panel's report to the Minister, together with any comments it wishes to make in relation to the recommendations of the panel.

(viii) A decision by the Minister on the accreditation of the course

The Minister may take advice on the panel's report and consider the comments of an institution as the Minister deems necessary. The decision by the Minister will be made in terms of the same three options outlined above, and communicated to the institution in writing.