Program Accreditation Procedure

1 Purpose

To outline the process to accredit new programs.

2 Scope

This Procedure applies to all Award and Non-Award Coursework Programs, including Higher Degree by Research (HDR) programs, offered by the University.

3 Procedure overview

This Procedure outlines the process to accredit new programs at the University.

4 Procedures

All new programs are designed and developed consistent with:

1. the *Australian Qualifications Framework* and associated guidelines and principles;

2. the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021*, as regulated by the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency;

3. any relevant standards for external recognition, registration or accreditation of the proposed program or for potential Graduates; and

4. the University's Coursework Curriculum Design Policy and subordinate Procedures.

In the case of Academic Programs that are the responsibility of UniSQ College or the Graduate Research School, the respective Head of College or Dean replaces the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs) in the processes detailed in this Procedure.

4.1 General timelines

In consultation with the Academic Board Secretariat and Dean (Academic), the Academic Quality Unit establishes and publishes timelines annually in December, covering two (2) calendar years, to ensure timely development and progression of proposals to meet the required approval dates.

4.1.1 Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC) timelines

For all QTAC listed programs, the following approval timelines provide the University with sufficient time to request the addition of programs to QTAC:

- programs offered in the first half of the year - accredited by 31 August of the previous Academic Year

- programs offered in the second half of the year - accredited by 30 November of the previous Academic Year.

4.1.2 Direct entry publication

For programs not offered through QTAC where Students are admitted to the University via direct entry applications, timelines are determined by Academic Affairs, in consultation with Student support services, to ensure sufficient time has been allocated for approval and publication.

4.1.3 New program development timelines

All new program developments should be planned and progressed to allow sufficient time for informed consideration of, and decision-making based on, the merit and academic integrity of program developments and their associated resource and other implications.

4.2 Expedited approval pathway

4.2.1 Grounds for request

An expedited approval pathway enables new programs to be considered outside of the standard committee approval processes. Grounds for requesting an expedited pathway include:

1. the need to address professional accreditation body requirements

2. the development of new strategic programs to address sector or government changes to avoid putting the University at significant risk or financial loss

3. a request from the University's executive.

Where changes to an existing program initiate a new program accreditation process in accordance with the Program Change, Suspension and Discontinuation Procedure, the expedited approval pathway can be used.

4.2.2 Approving an expedited pathway request

For Academic Affairs-based requests, an expedited pathway is made in writing by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs) to the Provost for approval. The request outlines:

1. the reasons for requesting expedition;

2. the consequences if the expedited process is not followed; and

3. the anticipated accreditation or approval date.

The Academic Quality Unit informs the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs) of the decision of the Provost regarding the request to expedite.
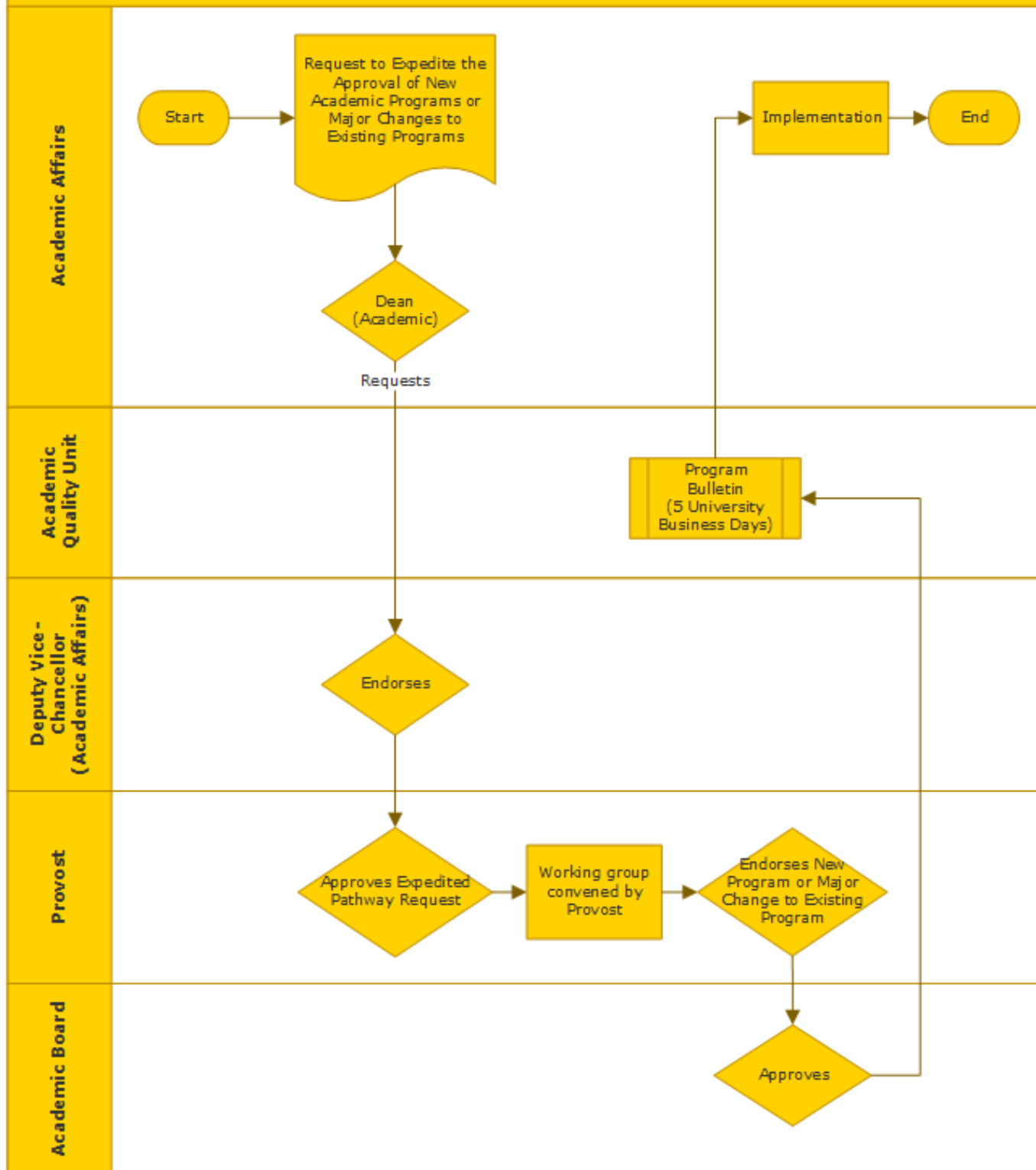
4.2.3 Expedited pathway working group

If approved, an expedited pathway requires the establishment of a working group. The working group comprises of the following members:

Chairperson	Working group members
Provost	Chairperson, Academic Board
	Chairperson, Education Committee
	Deputy Chairperson, Academic Board
	Deputy Chairperson, Education Committee
	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs)
	Other relevant staff as determined by the working group Chairperson.

The expedited approval process replaces step 5 in the table in section 4.3.5. Any decisions made by the working group to recommend a new program to Academic Board for approval will be reported to the next scheduled meeting of Education Committee for noting.

Expedited Approval Pathway

Academic Affairs

Start → Request to Expedite the Approval of New Academic Programs or Major Changes to Existing Programs → Dean (Academic)

Requests

Implementation → End

Academic Quality Unit

Program Bulletin (5 University Business Days)

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs)

Endorses

Provost

Approves Expedited Pathway Request → Working group convened by Provost → Endorses New Program or Major Change to Existing Program

Academic Board

Approves

4.3 New program accreditation

This section applies to all new programs, including proposals to create a Double Degree and proposals to establish a Dual Award or Joint Degree, by arrangement with one or more partner

institutions.

It is recommended that for all new programs, a Program Development Team is constituted (refer to the Program Development Team Schedule).

4.3.1 Program responsibility

All programs have a program owner who is responsible for the documentation and records required to support the program throughout its lifecycle. In the case of Double Degrees, responsibility is determined by the owner of the component program that is professionally accredited. If both programs are professionally accredited, then the owner of the component program appearing first in the Award title is responsible.

4.3.2 Program accreditation stages

Summary of program accreditation stages		
Stages	**Accreditation of a new program**	**Approval authority**
Stage 1 - Approval to develop a new program	Initial program proposal	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs) following consideration at Vice-Chancellor's Executive
Stage 2 - Program development and accreditation	Program accreditation documents - program proposal and program outline	Academic Board
	Study Components contained in the program accreditation documents	Academic Board
	Courses contained in the program accreditation documents	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs)

4.3.3 Stage 1 - Approval of proposal to develop a new program

The table below sets out the linear steps in the program proposal approval process.

Steps	Responsibilities
1. Initial program proposal	Requires submission of an initial program proposal template. Initial program proposals are also required for new Double Degrees which use existing programs. Proposals should include:

	Discipline Environmental Analytics Report (provided by the Academic Quality Unit); and proposed membership of the Program Development Team, if constituted.
2. Consultation and submission	Following appropriate consultation within the Academic Division, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs) forwards the proposal to the Provost for discussion.
3. Approval authority	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs) in consultation with Vice-Chancellor's Executive
4. Program bulletin	Submitted by Academic Affairsa to the Academic Quality Unit for release to the University community. The program bulletin provides an opportunity for interested parties to offer feedback on the proposed curriculum. Normally, the feedback period will be a minimum of five (5) University Business Days.
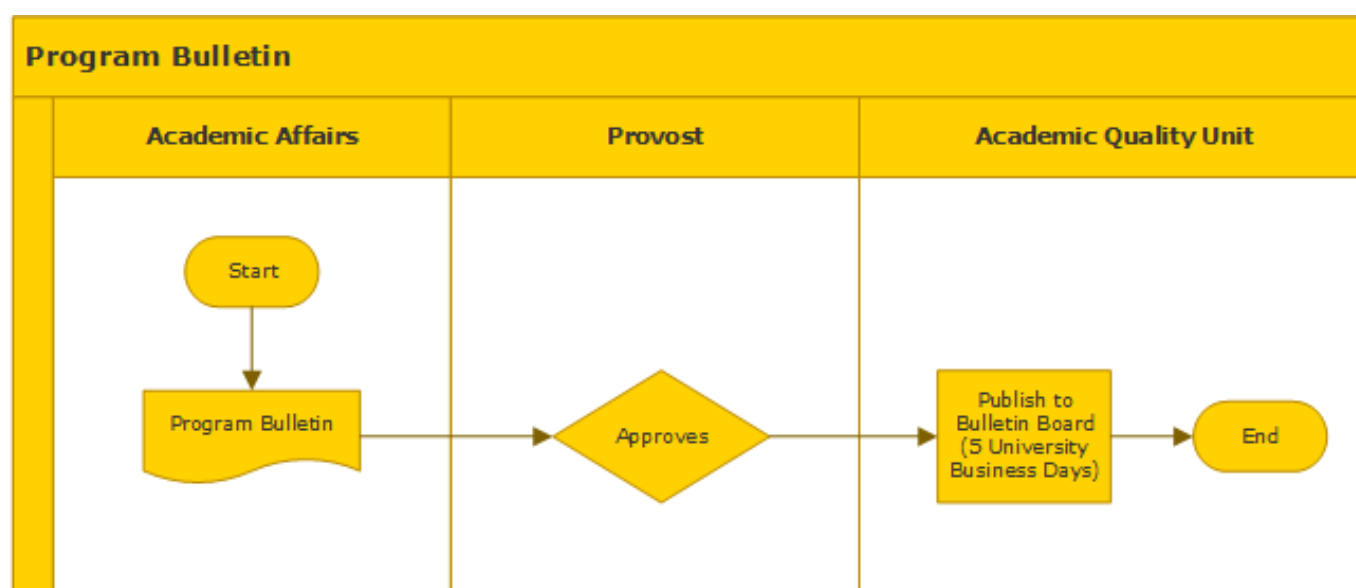
4.3.4 Approval to market a proposed program subject to final approval

Following consultation with the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Engagement), the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs) may make a request to the Provost to market a proposed new program prior to the final accreditation approval.

If approval is given by the Provost to market a new program prior to final accreditation approval, no offers into the new program can be made to Applicants until the program has been formally accredited by the University.

Following approval to market a new program prior to final accreditation approval, the Academic Quality Unit informs the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs), relevant Head of School/College and Student Services of the decision of the Provost.
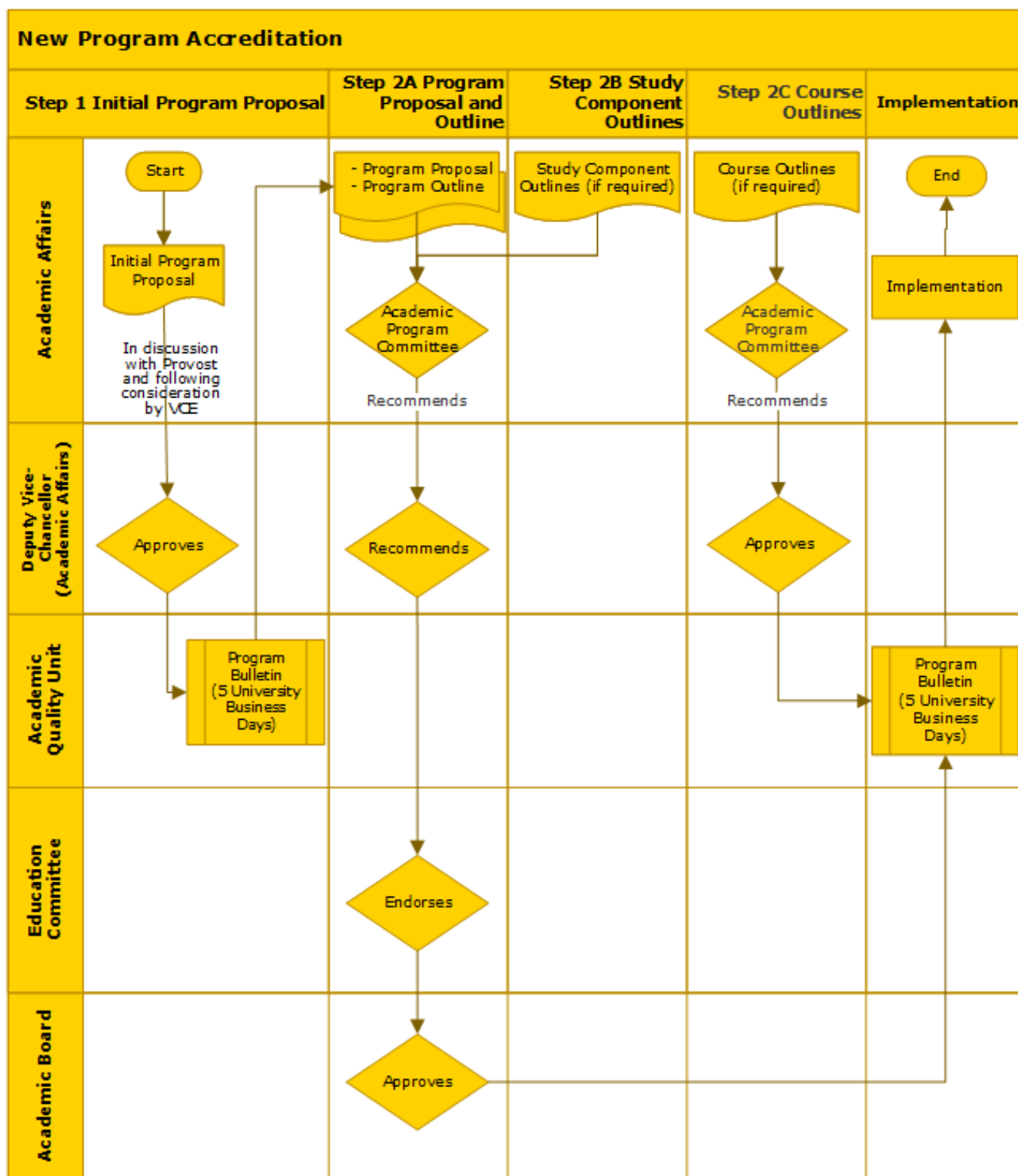
4.3.5 Stage 2 - Program development and accreditation documentation

The table below sets out the linear steps in developing and approving the accreditation documentation. For Coursework Programs, Curriculum Design and structure must comply with the Coursework Curriculum Design Policy and subordinate Procedures.

Steps	Resources and Responsibilities
1. Program	**Program Proposal template** Provides information on the academic rationale for the introduction of the program and the design and development process, including the consultation undertaken in support of the proposed program
2. Program outline	**Program Outline template** Provides a detailed description of the proposed new program that is used to assess the academic integrity of that program and forms the basis for provision of information to Students, prospective Students, the University community and the broader community concerning the program
	Study Components All proposed new Study Components in the program are documented using the Study Component Outline template and added to the program outline as appendices
	Course Outlines All proposed new Courses in the program are documented using the Course Outline template and added to the program outline as appendices, except where the proposed Course is to be approved subject to further documentation
	Course Synopses In some circumstances, it may not be possible to fully develop and document new Courses to be undertaken in the second or subsequent years of offer of a proposed new program. In these cases, a Course synopsis can be substituted for the relevant Course outline when documenting the new program
3. Consultation and	All program proposals must be considered by the:

submissions	1. school Learning, Teaching and Student Success Committee
	2. Head of School/College
	3. Dean (Academic)
	4. Academic Program Committee
4. Recommendation	**Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs)** Reviews the documentation for completeness and, if satisfied, recommends the program to the Chair of Education Committee for consideration by that Committee
5. Endorsement by Education Committee	**Chairperson of Education Committee** Determines if the accreditation documentation is incomplete or underdeveloped and delays the consideration of the proposal by the Education Committee until such time as the Academic Program Committee has responded to the Chairperson's concerns regarding the completeness of the accreditation documentation
	Education Committee Considers the academic merit of the proposed program and, if satisfied, endorses its accreditation
6. Notification	**Secretary of Education Committee** Sends notification of endorsement of the proposed program to Academic Affairs and, where appropriate, to the Dean (Pathways Education) following approval of the committee minutes by the Chairperson
7. Approval by Academic Board	**Academic Board** Considers the academic merit of the proposed program on the basis of the accreditation documentation and any issues raised by the Education Committee
8. Notification	**Secretary of Academic Board** Sends the approved committee minutes to Academic Affairs and, where appropriate, the Dean (Pathways Education) who advise key stakeholders responsible for program implementation. Any queries in relation to the accreditation documentation are referred to the Academic Quality Unit

New Program Accreditation

Step 1 Initial Program Proposal	Step 2A Program Proposal and Outline	Step 2B Study Component Outlines	Step 2C Course Outlines	Implementation

Academic Affairs

Start

Initial Program Proposal

In discussion with Provost and following consideration by VCE

- Program Proposal
- Program Outline

Study Component Outlines (if required)

Course Outlines (if required)

End

Academic Program Committee — Recommends

Academic Program Committee — Recommends

Implementation

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs)

Approves

Recommends

Approves

Academic Quality Unit

Program Bulletin (5 University Business Days)

Program Bulletin (5 University Business Days)

Education Committee

Endorses

Academic Board

Approves

4.4 New programs annual summary report

An annual summary report of all new programs, Majors and Specialisations approved by Academic Board in the previous year is compiled by the Academic Quality Unit and submitted

for noting to the first meeting of the calendar year of the Board and Council.

4.5 HDR programs

For the purpose of this Procedure, HDR programs are divided into two types:

1. programs that include required Coursework; and

2. programs that are entirely Research and contain no related Coursework.

4.5.1 Endorsement of programs with Coursework requirements

For programs that include required Coursework, the processes described in section 4.3 of this Procedure are followed with the inclusion of an additional step: all documentation is considered by the University's Research Committee before endorsement by Education Committee and approval by Academic Board.

Summary of HDR program with Coursework accreditation			
Stages		**Final endorsement authority**	**Approval authority**
Stage 1 - Initial program proposal		Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)	Provost, following endorsement by Vice-Chancellor's Executive
Stage 2 - Program development and accreditation	Program accreditation documents: program proposal and program outline	Research Committee Education Committee	Academic Board

4.5.2 Endorsement of Research-only programs

For programs that are entirely Research and contain no required Coursework, the University's Research Committee replaces the role of Education Committee. Documentation for this type of program is endorsed by Research Committee before approval by Academic Board.

Summary of Research-only HDR program accreditation		
Stages	**Final endorsement authority**	**Approval authority**
Stage 1 - Initial program proposal	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation), following endorsement by

		Vice-Chancellor's Executive
Stage 2 - Program accreditation documents: program proposal and program outline	Research Committee	Academic Board

4.6 Non-Award Programs

In general terms, Non-Award Programs follow the process set out in section 4.3 of this Procedure but using the expedited approval pathway.

4.6.1 Endorsement and approval rationale

When endorsing and approving the establishment of a Non-Award Program, the expedited pathway working group must be assured that the program:

1. is planned with advice from relevant internal and external experts;

2. complies with University Policies and Procedures, external standards and requirements;

3. draws on curriculum resources already available within the University, where applicable;

4. takes account of current best practice in the area and is aligned to the needs of industry, community, Students and the professions;

5. equips Students with knowledge and skills which will be of value to the community, and which promote lifelong learning; and

6. demonstrates a sound educational rationale for which the program content and structure are fit for purpose.

5 References

Nil.

6 Schedules

This procedure must be read in conjunction with its subordinate schedules as provided in the table below.

7 Procedure Information

Accountable Officer	Provost
Responsible Officer	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs)
Policy Type	University Procedure
Policy Suite	[Academic Programs and Courses Quality Policy](#)
Subordinate Schedules	[Course Nomenclature and Coding Schedule](#)
Approved Date	13/3/2023
Effective Date	13/3/2023
Review Date	5/4/2027
Relevant Legislation	[Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021](#)
Policy Exceptions	[Policy Exceptions Register](#)
Related Policies	[Admissions Policy](#) [Assessment Policy](#) [Coursework Curriculum Design Policy](#)
Related Procedures	[Admissions Procedure](#) [Assessment Procedure](#) [Coursework Curriculum Design and Structure Procedure](#)
Related forms, publications and websites	[Australian Qualifications Framework](#) [Program Accreditation Hub](#) [School and College Leadership and Management Structures, Roles and Committees Model](#) [Coursework Curriculum Design and Structure Schedule](#)
Definitions	**Terms defined in the Definitions Dictionary**
	[Academic Program](#) An approved Higher Education Award of the University, consisting of a combination of Courses the successful completion of an offering of which, together with any credit transfers and Exemptions in accordance with the relevant requirements, will fulfil the prescribed requirements for that particular Award.

[Academic Year](#)

A period of time consisting of Semesters and Study Periods that all commence in the same calendar year.

[Admission](#)

The process of submission and assessment of applications for entry to study at the University.

[Applicant](#)

A person who applies for any program or Course of study offered by the University whether the application is made through the Queensland Tertiary Admission Centre (QTAC) or directly to the University.

[Award](#)

The qualification conferred upon a Student following the successful completion of an Academic Program. The categories of Award are listed in the Program Nomenclature Schedule.

[Award Program](#)

A sequence of study which leads to an academic qualification granted by the University and conferred by Council.

[Course](#)

A discrete element of a program, normally undertaken over a single Study Period, in which the Student enrols, and on completion of which the Student is awarded a grade.

[Coursework](#)

A method of teaching and learning that leads to the acquisition of skills and knowledge and does not include a major research component.

[Coursework Program](#)

A sequence of study consisting predominantly of Coursework.

[Curriculum Design](#)

The process of intentionally crafting the architecture of the entire suite of learning activities and experiences that a student will undertake in

order to successfully complete a program, courses or study component to achieve the stated learning outcomes.

Double Degree

Two individually approved programs undertaken concurrently. The requirements for each program and Major or Specialisation must be completed but by cross recognition of Courses and content between the two programs the two degrees can be completed more quickly if the necessary program structure is determined from the outset. Students receive two degrees and two Testamurs.

Dual Award

A partnership arrangement involving one or more Coursework Programs that leads to two separate Awards, one awarded by University and one awarded by the partner institution. There is usually a mutual recognition of Credit between the institutions to allow Students to complete both Awards in a shorter time than if they were completed separately.

Graduate

A Student upon whom Council has conferred an Award.

Head of School/College

An academic staff member responsible for the administration of the Course offerings in one or more discipline areas.

Higher Degree by Research (HDR)

A Research Doctorate or Research Masters program for which at least two-thirds of the Student load for the program is required as research work.

Joint Degree

The awarding of a single qualification which is jointly conferred by the University and one or more partner institutions. In such arrangements, each institution delivers their own courses/content.

Non-Award Program

A sequence of study which does not lead to an Award.

Policy

A high level strategic directive that establishes a principle based approach on a subject. Policy is operationalised through Procedures that give instructions and set out processes to implement a Policy.

[Procedure](#)

An operational instruction that sets out the process to operationalise a Policy.

[Research](#)

Research is the creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way to generate new concepts, methodologies, inventions and understandings. This could include the synthesis and analysis of previous research to the extent that it is new and creative.

[Student](#)

A person who is enrolled in a UniSQ Upskill Course or who is admitted to an Award Program or Non-Award Program offered by the University and is: currently enrolled in one or more Courses or study units; or not currently enrolled but is on an approved Leave of Absence or whose admission has not been cancelled.

[Study Component](#)

A coherent set of Courses that develop a particular academic theme. This includes Majors, Extended Majors, Minors and Specialisations.

[University](#)

The term 'University' or 'UniSQ' means the University of Southern Queensland.

[University Business Days](#)

The days of Monday to Friday inclusive between 9am and 5pm Australian Eastern Standard Time (AEST), with the exclusion of gazetted Public Holidays for the relevant campus location, plus the closure of the University between 25 December and 1 January in the following year inclusive as specified in the Enterprise Agreement, as well as any closure of the University either at one or several campuses in accordance with a direction of the Crisis Management Team.

Definitions that relate to this procedure only

Keywords	Accreditation, re-accreditation, Study Component, Higher Degree by Research, Award Program, Non-Award Program, Curriculum Design, Dual Awards, Joint Degree, Coursework Program, quality assurance, expedited pathway
Record No	19/694PL