

Program Quality Assurance and Re-accreditation Procedure



1 Purpose

To outline the process for monitoring the quality of the University's Coursework and Higher Degree by Research (HDR) programs and the relationship to the re-accreditation of these programs.

2 Scope

This Procedure applies to all Coursework and HDR programs offered by the University.

3 Procedure Overview

This Procedure outlines the processes to monitor and re-accredit University programs.

4 Procedures

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

4.1 Review cycles

In addition to annual program-level reviews, the University has a two-stage process to monitor the quality of its program:

- Stage 1: ongoing review conducted three (3) years after the initial offering of the program or three (3) years after a comprehensive program review; and
- Stage 2: comprehensive program review conducted five (5) years after the initial offering of the program or five (5) years since the last comprehensive program review. An extension of up to two (2) years may be granted by the Provost.

4.2 Academic Board approval

Based on the recommendations of the comprehensive program review, Academic Board determines if the program should be re-accredited for another five-year period.

4.3 Minimum requirements

Terms of Reference (refer to *Related forms, links and websites* in Section 7) establish the minimum requirements for reviews of the three program types, namely:

1. Coursework Programs;
2. HDR programs; and
3. Professionally accredited programs.

4.4 Responsibility for program quality assurance and re-accreditation

The responsibility for managing the program quality assurance process resides with the responsible faculty. All Coursework Programs must have a comprehensive program review and the re-accreditation finalised within a five-year period unless an extension has been granted.

It is expected that the faculty will appoint a staff member to coordinate the program quality assurance activities for the faculty and ensure compliance with re-accreditation requirements.

4.5 Re-accreditation extensions

Following consultation with Academic Board, the Provost can approve extensions to the re-accreditation period, normally on one of the following grounds:

1. facilitation of the grouping of discipline-related programs
2. alignment of a comprehensive review with a professional accreditation review
3. where issues or strategic needs have been identified by Academic Board which warrant further investigation to re-accredit the program. This is to be completed in consultation with faculties and schools.

4.6 Exemptions

The following programs are not required to participate in the program quality assurance process:

1. programs that have been approved for discontinuation and are in the process of being taught out; and

2. Double Degrees which are reviewed via their component degrees.

Programs that have been suspended are required to participate in the program quality assurance process, unless there is clear indication that the suspension is a precursor to discontinuation.

4.7 Professionally accredited programs

As per the *Higher Education Standards Framework*, if a program is accredited with a professional body which requires professional accreditation in order for Graduates to practice in the professional field, the program is only required to undertake the Interim Program Review and a Comprehensive Program Review with an Internal Reviewer (see section 4.11.1 below).

If a program is accredited with a professional body but professional accreditation is not required for Graduates to be able to practice in the professional field, the Provost, in consultation with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs), will determine the type of Comprehensive Program Review to be completed.

4.8 Review components

Program reviews include all Nested Qualifications, Study Components (Majors, Minors, Specialisations and Courses within the program), any campus, teaching location, delivery mode or partner, and any associated Double Degrees. While the review will pay particular attention to the component of the Double Degree program directly related to the degree program under review, the Double Degree should also be considered holistically.

4.9 Planning and timeframes

In collaboration with the faculties, the Academic Quality Unit oversees a three-year and five-year schedule of reviews for all programs.

The schedule of reviews is updated annually and approved by the Provost. A University-wide schedule will be circulated to the faculties at the beginning of each Calendar Year.

4.10 Three-year interim program review

Based on the review schedule maintained by the Academic Quality Unit, in collaboration with the faculties, the Education Committee undertakes the Three-Year Interim Program Reviews.

Using the program data packages prepared by the Academic Quality Unit, the Education Committee considers the quality of all programs scheduled for interim review and provides advice to the Provost on the following:

1. timelines for the comprehensive program review; and
2. whether a comprehensive program review is to be conducted as an internal or external review.

4.11 Comprehensive program review overview

Comprehensive program reviews ensure:

1. all programs are broadly reviewed every five (5) to seven (7) years so that recommendations can be made to Academic Board to re-accredit the programs;
2. stakeholder feedback and input from Employees across the University, current and former Students, education partners and providers are sought, considered and addressed; and
3. compliance with external regulatory requirements outlined by the *Higher Education Standards Framework* and the *Australian Qualifications Framework* are met.

Where the program is reviewed out of cycle for strategic purposes, the Provost, in consultation with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs), will determine whether the program completes the Comprehensive Program Review with an Internal Reviewer or External Panel.

4.11.1 Comprehensive Program Review (Internal Reviewer)

The internal review process enables the University to review professionally accredited programs to ensure that there is internal alignment and compliance with regulatory requirements.

At a minimum, the internal review must be conducted by a reviewer who is a senior academic with relevant academic experience and expertise, including in University management, and has served as a member on at least one program quality assurance Review Panel within the higher education sector. The reviewer is appointed by the Provost, in consultation with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs).

Where a panel is required for a Comprehensive Program Review (Internal Reviewer), panel membership and terms of reference beyond the minimum requirements will be determined by the Provost, in consultation with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs).

Faculties, or at the request of the reviewer, can nominate additional panel members if it is deemed that specific knowledge critical to achieving the terms of reference of the review would otherwise be lacking.

Once constituted, the Internal Review Panel is empowered to consult widely but not to co-opt others to its membership or to modify the terms of reference.

4.11.2 Comprehensive Program Review (External Panel)

For all programs which are not externally reviewed through a robust professional accreditation process, a Comprehensive Program Review with an External Panel must be conducted prior to being re-accredited by the University.

At a minimum, panel membership must consist of:

1. a panel Chairperson who is a senior academic with relevant experience and expertise, including in University management, and has served as a member on at least one program quality assurance Review Panel within the higher education sector;
2. two (2) other members who are senior academics with relevant discipline experience;
3. a University-level committee representative, such as a member of Education Committee or Academic Board; and
4. current or former Students enrolled in the program, or a Student Guild representative when no current or former Students have nominated to participate on the panel.

Panel members must not have been involved in the management or teaching of the program under review within five years (5) of the review date.

The final composition of the external Review Panel and terms of reference beyond the minimum requirements are determined by Provost, in consultation with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs).

Faculties can nominate additional panel members if it is deemed that specific knowledge critical to achieving the terms of reference of the review would otherwise be lacking (e.g., industry expertise, complementary discipline expertise where a suite of programs is being reviewed, local or regional expertise where a multi-campus program is being reviewed).

External program review processes are confidential. External Review Panel members are required to sign a confidentiality agreement regarding the matters raised and discussed.

The external Review Panel is empowered to consult widely but not to co-opt others to its membership or to modify the terms of reference.

4.12 Comprehensive program review process

4.12.1 Submissions to the review

The Faculty invites submissions to the review from members of the University community and any other stakeholders identified by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs). The call for submissions is made simultaneously with the preparation of the portfolio.

A separate call for submissions to the review is sent to current Students and recent Graduates who should also be informed that their submission will be available to the reviewer or Review Panel, and who may also request that their submission is de-identified.

While any party within the University community may make written submissions to the comprehensive program review, the reviewer or Review Panel will determine which parties are interviewed.

4.12.2 Review portfolio

The comprehensive program review portfolio is the complete set of documentation about the program provided to the reviewer or Review Panel at least four (4) weeks prior to the review.

At a minimum, the comprehensive program review portfolio consists of the following:

1. information on the following topics for each program under review:
 - a. history of the program;
 - b. details of the teaching team;
 - c. changes to the program since the last review and justifications; and
 - d. future directions for the program;
2. a response to the data analysis report (compiled by the Academic Quality Unit and supplied to the reviewer or Review Panel as a separate document); and
3. any submissions to the review.

4.12.3 Review event

The review event comprises an intensive program of interviews with relevant parties, discussions and deliberations.

The University's preference is for the review event to be conducted face-to-face at one or more of the teaching locations but acknowledges technology may be utilised to facilitate the presence of one or more panel members or interviewees.

At a minimum, the reviewer or Review Panel must meet with the following groups:

1. Provost or nominee;
2. managing faculty's senior officers;

3. Student and alumni representatives;
4. industry representatives;
5. teaching team;
6. professional staff supporting the program; and
7. representatives of relevant service areas.

At the end of the review event, the reviewer or Review Panel must give an oral presentation of their preliminary findings and draft recommendations to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs) and relevant Head of School. Any feedback and actions arising from the presentation are to be addressed by the reviewer or Review Panel for finalisation of the final report. The final report must be submitted to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs) no later than four (4) weeks from the review event, and a copy provided to the Provost.

4.12.4 Review Report

The Review Report must address each of the terms of reference in relation to the evidence presented in the comprehensive program review portfolio and during the review event.

The reviewer or Review Panel Chairperson is responsible for developing and providing a preliminary Review Report using the University's template. In the case of Review Panels, the Chairperson must ensure that all panel members agree with the contents of the report or are given the opportunity to register a minority view, prior to finalisation of the report.

4.12.5 Faculty Response Action Plan

After receiving the final Review Report, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs) forms a panel to review the findings and to prepare the faculty's Response Action Plan to address the reviewer or Review Panel's recommendations.

For each recommendation, the Response Action Plan must include:

1. responsibility for implementation;
2. timelines for implementation; and
3. budget implications for implementation.

The Response Action Plan must be completed no later than 12 weeks after receiving the Review Report. The Review Report and Response Action Plan are submitted to the appropriate faculty Academic Program Committee or Learning, Teaching and Student Support Committee

for faculty review, prior to submission to Education Committee via the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs).

Education Committee will consider the documents and make a recommendation to Academic Board in response to the Review Report and Response Action Plan.

4.12.6 Final consideration by University committees

Upon receipt of the final Review Report, Response Action Plan and recommendations from Education Committee, Academic Board makes a determination on two aspects of the comprehensive program review outcome:

1. to endorse the Response Action Plan and the timeline for its implementation; and
2. to approve the re-accreditation of the program for up to five (5) years.

Academic Board may grant provisional re-accreditation if the recommended changes to the program are of a substantial nature or if it considers the Response Action Plan is inadequate.

Alternatively, considerations regarding the suspension or discontinuation of the program under review can be undertaken by Academic Board.

4.12.7 Implementation of the Response Action Plan

Responsibility for implementing the outcomes of the comprehensive program review rests with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs).

Any curriculum changes identified in the Response Action Plan must be undertaken in accordance with the Program Change, Suspension and Discontinuation Procedure.

For the following two (2) years, or until all response actions have been implemented, the faculty must provide an annual update to Education Committee and Academic Board on progress towards implementing the Response Action Plan.

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	Director (Academic Quality Unit)
Policy Type	University Procedure
Policy Suite	Academic Programs and Courses Quality Policy
Subordinate Schedules	
Approved Date	5/4/2022
Effective Date	5/4/2022
Review Date	5/4/2025
Relevant Legislation	Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021
Related Policies	Coursework Curriculum Design Policy
Related Procedures	Coursework Curriculum Design and Structure Procedure
Related forms, publications and websites	Australian Qualifications Framework Comprehensive Program Review Terms of Reference Coursework Curriculum Design and Structure Schedule
Definitions	<p>Terms defined in the Definitions Dictionary</p> <p>Course</p> <p>A discrete element of a program, normally undertaken over a single Teaching Period, in which the Student enrolls, and on completion of which the Student is awarded a grade.</p> <p>Coursework</p> <p>A method of teaching and learning that leads to the acquisition of skills and knowledge and does not include a major research component.</p> <p>Coursework Program</p> <p>A sequence of study consisting predominantly of Coursework.</p> <p>Double Degree</p> <p>Two individually approved programs undertaken concurrently. The</p>

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.

[Graduate](#)

A Student upon whom Council has conferred an Award.

[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.

[Major](#)

A coherent set of at least eight (8) which provides depth of study within a specific subject area or discipline.

[Minor](#)

A coherent set of at least four (4) Units which provides a sub-disciplinary focus and allows a Student to extend or complement their Major or Discipline Study Courses.

[Nested Qualifications](#)

A set of programs of study that are offered sequentially and which allows a Student to progress from a lower level qualification into a higher level qualification to enable multiple entry and exit points. Programs at the lower qualification levels are described as 'nested' within the programs leading to qualifications at the higher levels.

[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.

[Specialisation](#)

	<p>A coherent set of at least four (4) Units in a postgraduate program which provides a disciplinary focus for Student study.</p> <p>Student</p> <p>A person 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.</p> <p>University</p> <p>The term 'University' or 'USQ' means the University of Southern Queensland.</p>
	<p>Definitions that relate to this procedure only</p> <p>Internal Reviewer</p> <p>A senior academic staff member appointed by the Provost, in consultation with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs), to review a program or group of programs.</p> <p>Review Panel</p> <p>A group of academic staff (a majority internal to the University) appointed by the Provost, in consultation with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs), to review a program or group of programs.</p>
<p>Keywords</p>	<p>Comprehensive program review, interim program reviews, internal and external reviewer, faculty response action plan, quality assurance, re-accreditation, review portfolio, Review Panel</p>
<p>Record No</p>	<p>21/302PL</p>