



australian
pharmacy
council

AUSTRALIA/ NEW ZEALAND PHARMACY DEGREE PROGRAMS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this handbook is to provide an overview of the accreditation processes used by the Australian Pharmacy Council (APC) to assure quality for pharmacy degree programs in Australia and New Zealand.

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Australia / New Zealand pharmacy degree programs

The Australian Pharmacy Council (APC) accredits pharmacy education programs in Australian and New Zealand universities and we assess the competency of Australian intern and overseas pharmacists.

Our evidence-based processes ensure graduating and overseas pharmacists have the skills and knowledge to deliver effective healthcare that meets the changing needs of the community and that their skills and expertise meet public safety standards.

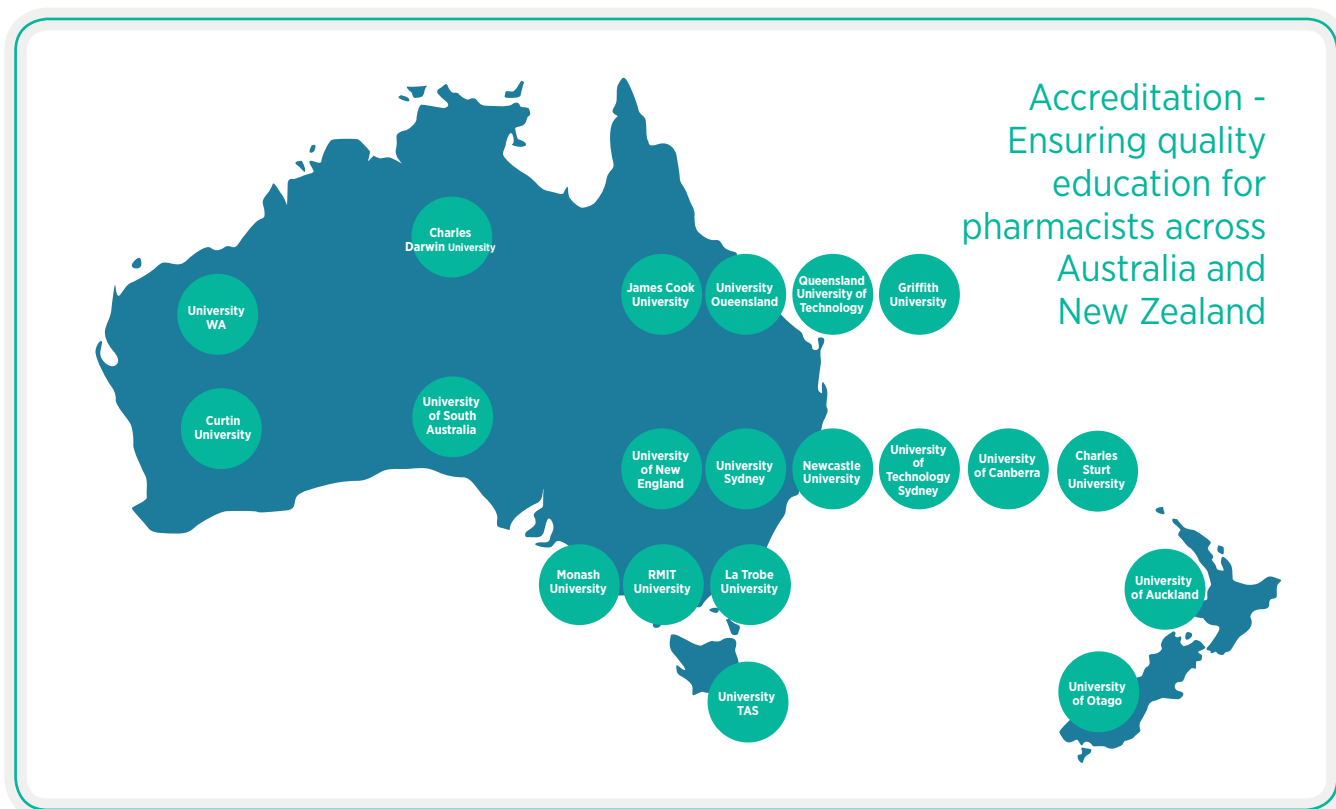
Under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (NRAS), the APC will carry out the following functions until July 2019:

- » accrediting pharmacy schools and programs; intern training programs; and accrediting organisations to assure quality control for continuing professional development activities
- » written examinations on behalf of the **Pharmacy Board of Australia (PBA)** that must be passed by intern pharmacists prior to sitting the final oral competency assessment
- » assessing the qualifications and skills of overseas trained pharmacists and international students graduating from an Australian pharmacy program to determine their eligibility to apply to commence the registration process.

Current members of the APC include Australian pharmacy professional bodies, academic bodies, the **Pharmacy Council of New Zealand (PCNZ)**, and other members of the Australian pharmacy profession.

The APC utilises an expert Accreditation Committee to apply approved accreditation standards to programs required for individuals to gain and maintain registration as a pharmacist as well as further enhance their practice.

APC accredited programs of study are approved for registration in Australia by the Pharmacy Board of Australia. In New Zealand, the Pharmacy Council of New Zealand accredits programs of study based on recommendations made by the APC.



Purpose of accreditation by the APC

The APC accreditation process is designed to provide assurance to regulators, the profession and the public that standards for pharmacy education are being applied and evaluated rigorously across Australia, New Zealand and internationally.

Our guidelines and procedures have been benchmarked to ensure that they are in line with world's best standards. The national and international organisations referenced when developing APC guidelines and procedures include the following:

1. The World Health Organisation (WHO)
2. The International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) and its International Forum for Quality Assurance for Pharmacy Education
3. Similar pharmacy education accreditation bodies worldwide including those in the USA (ACPE), Canada (CCAPP) and the UK (GPhC).
4. Health education accreditation bodies in Australia including the AMC (medicine), and ANMAC (nursing and midwifery).
5. The Tertiary Education Quality Assurance Agency (TEQSA) and the Higher Education Standards Panel (HESP)
6. Other groups such as the Council of Pharmacy Schools (CPS), the World Federation for Medical Education, the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy and the European Association of Faculties of Pharmacy.

Our accreditation standards and procedures also provide the basis for judgments made by pharmacy registration and other authorities in other countries on the quality of pharmacy education delivered by accredited providers.

Accreditation and higher education quality assurance

Quality assurance remains an essential feature of higher education in Australia and New Zealand.

In Australia, universities are accredited by Commonwealth education agencies. The universities in turn self-accredit their courses. Consistent with this notion of self-accreditation, universities have established internal quality processes involving self-review and external review of courses and departments on regular cycles.

In 2011 TEQSA, was established and superseded Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) as the regulatory and quality agency for higher education in Australia. We have a Memorandum with TEQSA which was signed in 2017.

In New Zealand, the Committee on University Academic Programs (CUAP) is a standing committee of the New Zealand University Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC) and represents the interests of New Zealand's eight universities. For any new program proposed, the CUAP and Pharmacy Council of New Zealand (PCNZ) approval requirements must be satisfied.

We regard the role of accreditation as integral to the higher education quality framework. We expect pharmacy schools to have in place mechanisms for self-review consistent with universities' quality frameworks and TEQSA requirements. Nevertheless, we reserve the right to ensure that we are able to conduct our reviews in a manner which allows us to inquire into any aspect of pharmacy schools and to allow us to make independent recommendations and conclusions.

APC wants to ensure that pharmacy graduates possess the knowledge, skills and attributes which enable them to:

- » commence practice safely and effectively under the supervision of a preceptor in their intern training year;
- » practice safely and effectively without supervision in community and/or hospital pharmacy settings after a period of supervised practice and additional experiential training; and
- » practice in a manner which meets the needs of all patients including those from culturally diverse backgrounds.

The expected educational outcomes are detailed in the Accreditation Standards for Pharmacy Degree Programs in Australia and New Zealand (Accreditation Standards). These were last reviewed in 2012.

A school satisfying the Accreditation Standards will have the processes, resources and expertise necessary for effective self-review and appropriate response. Pharmacy schools are best placed to assess their own strengths and weaknesses and to develop strategies to address weaknesses.

Schools must provide reports on action undertaken to address any specific conditions and/or monitoring requirements to the APC Accreditation Committee, as well as providing an annual report.

1 A 'pharmacy school' may be an autonomous faculty or school of pharmacy. It may also be a school of health sciences or similar, which provides a pharmacy course within a departmental or multidisciplinary organisational structure.

What is the significance of an accredited pharmacy degree program?

Accreditation is implemented to assure the quality of education and training provided to pharmacy students and to ensure that a program will deliver to the standards agreed for registration. It also helps universities promote development in the quality of their pharmacy programs and encourages innovation.

To be eligible to become a registered pharmacist in Australia, graduates must have completed an approved program of study. That is, the program must be both accredited by us and approved by the Pharmacy Board of Australia.

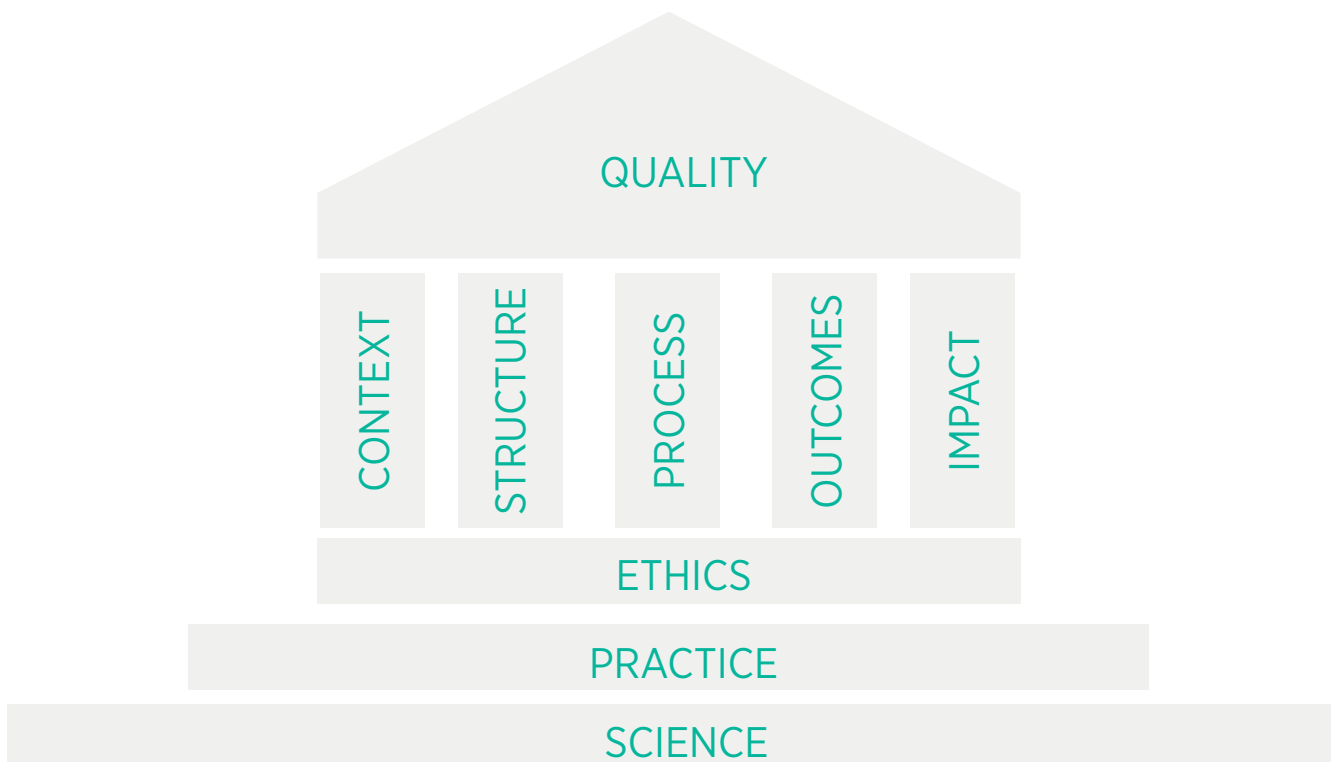
Our work ensures students who graduate from accredited pharmacy programs are able to commence an intern training program with the requisite knowledge and skills.

The focus of the accreditation process is therefore on both the pharmacy program and the education provider (university), but we recognise the standards of TEQSA and the Higher Education Panel as part of our processes.

Accredited pharmacy degree programs

Accredited pharmacy degree programs

Diagram 1: International Pharmaceutical Federation, “Quality Assurance of Pharmacy Education; the FIP Global Framework,” The Hague, 2014.



Who in APC makes decisions on accreditation?

All APC accreditation decisions are made by the APC Accreditation Committee, who operate under the delegation of the APC Council through a By-Law approved by the APC Council.

The APC Accreditation Committee is a skills-based committee consisting of practitioner, academic and community members and it meets up to six times a year.

APC staff are unable to make accreditation decisions on behalf of the Accreditation Committee, but will advise the Committee based on evidence and precedence. The Committee reports to the APC Council through the APC CEO.

Risk-based decision making

The Accreditation Committee uses a risk-based decision making framework for all pharmacy degree programs, Intern Training Programs and CPD accrediting organisations.

This framework allows up to six years accreditation for a program that is deemed 'Low Risk'. A program considered 'Medium' or 'High Risk' may be accredited for a shorter period of time. The accreditation period may then be extended over time to the full six years as conditions and/or monitoring requirements are met to the satisfaction of the Committee.

How to apply for accreditation?

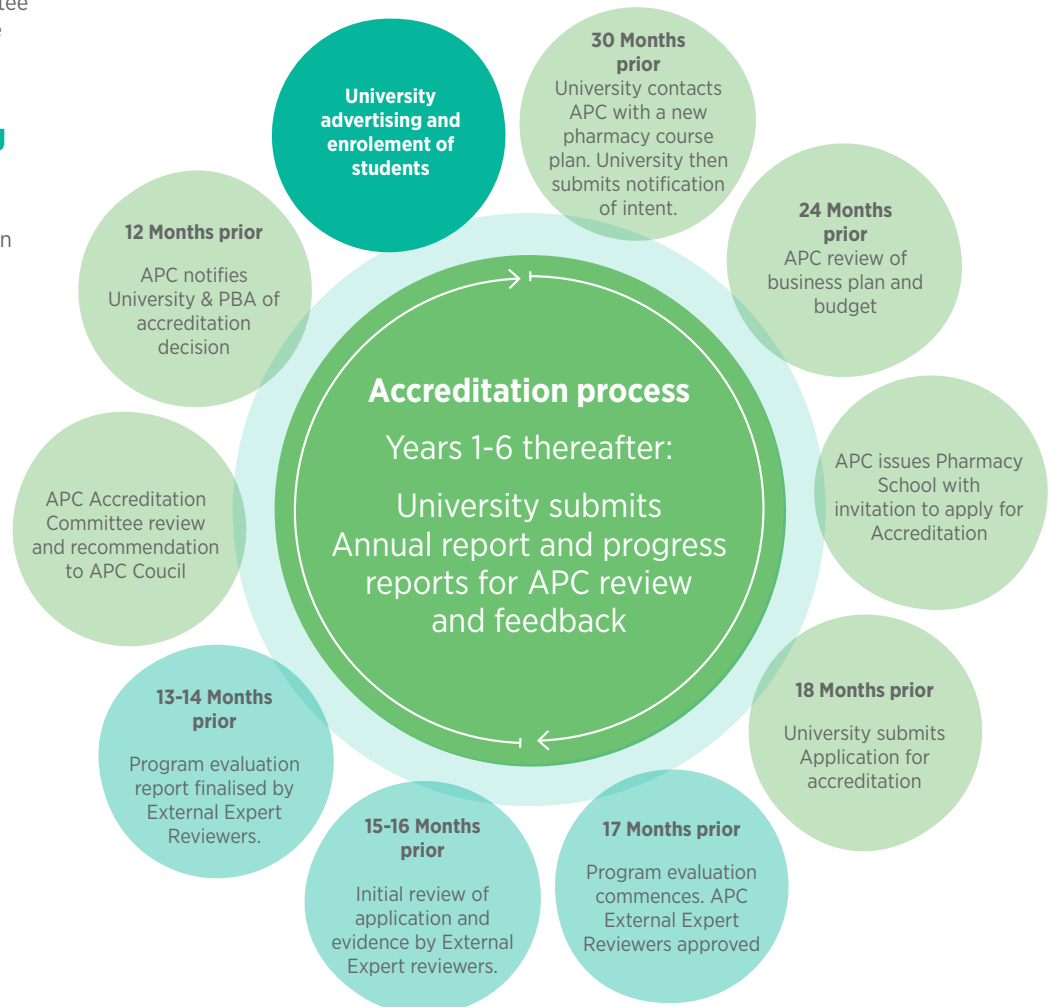
Contact us

accreditation@pharmacycouncil.org.au

We recommend that you discuss your intent to launch a new program early in the planning phase to avoid any delays with accreditation prior to you being able to advertise the program. Please note that APC does not grant retrospective approval of pharmacy degree programs.

Initial accreditation process

An indicative timeline for a new program is detailed below:



Accreditation cycle

Pharmacy Degree programs may be granted a maximum accreditation period of up to six years. Our Accreditation Committee uses a risk-based decision making framework to determine the period of accreditation. The cycle can be up to six years for low risk programs.

Accreditation definitions:

Under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, APC may accredit a program of study with or without conditions, or choose to not accredit the program.

Accredited	The pharmacy degree program has met all 36 standards
Accredited with Conditions	The pharmacy degree program substantially meets the standards and can fully meet the standards within a reasonable period of time.
Not accredited	The pharmacy degree program is not accredited

Maintaining accreditation

To maintain the accreditation of your program, you should be aware of your responsibilities regarding reporting and site evaluations. We have outlined these in our **Accreditation Monitoring and Quality Assurance policy**.

Re-accreditation process

Education providers will be re-accredited based on the process described in the diagram below, which begins approximately 12 months before the accreditation period is due to expire.

A Site Evaluation Team (SET) visit is a crucial aspect of the accreditation process. SET members include three individuals with expert knowledge in relation to pharmacy education and practice, as well as an APC Auditor. A site audit takes place over 2 to 3 days and includes interviews with key program staff, students, graduates and stakeholders, as well as an inspection of program facilities.

SET initial feedback

Prior to conclusion of the site visit, the Site Evaluation Team will record:

- » overall findings and conclusions concerning the strengths and weaknesses of the school;
- » and identification of any Accreditation Standards which it concludes the school does not meet.

This record of findings may contain recommendations relating to the matters addressed by the Accreditation Standards.

The SET will conduct a closing meeting with the Head of the School (and any other key program staff invited by the education provider) prior to departure to provide initial feedback on its findings and recommendations. Both parties should understand that conclusions and recommendations conveyed at the meeting are draft and may be modified, and that the final accreditation decision will be made by the Accreditation Committee (not the SET).

Draft SET report

Within 20 business days of the completion of the site visit, the APC Auditor will complete a draft report outlining the SET assessment of the program and provider against all 36 accreditation standards.

The draft report is sent to SET members for review and is then provided to the Head of School for comment on errors of fact.

A school's response to SET report

The Head of School's comments are forwarded by the accreditation team to the SET Chair, for consideration and preparation of comments. The SET Chair will present the report to the Accreditation Committee for consideration in conjunction with the Head of School's response. This is usually done via short teleconference directly with the Accreditation Committee.

Consideration by Accreditation Committee

The Accreditation Committee reviews the SET report and the response of the Head of School. The Accreditation Committee reserves the right to seek further information on any matter prior to making a decision.

The Final Audit Report and errors of fact are then considered by the Accreditation Committee, and a decision is made regarding the accreditation status of the program, the accreditation period and any ongoing Conditions or Monitoring Requirements placed on the program. This information is provided to the education provider and the Pharmacy Board of Australia via an Accreditation Outcome Notification (AON) within 15 business days of the Accreditation Committee meeting.

The Accreditation Committee may decide to:

- » accredit a pharmacy program with conditions for a period of up to six years or a lesser period dependent on the risk evaluation
- » accredit a pharmacy program OR
- » accredit a pharmacy program with conditions (for a period of up to six years or a lesser period dependent on the risk evaluation) OR;
- » not to accredit a pharmacy program (and refer the recommendation not to accredit the program to the APC Council
- » Should the Accreditation Committee choose to not accredit a program, the Accreditation Committee Chair and CEO will arrange a meeting with the Head of School and other senior staff as necessary

Notification of accreditation decision (Accreditation Outcome Notification)

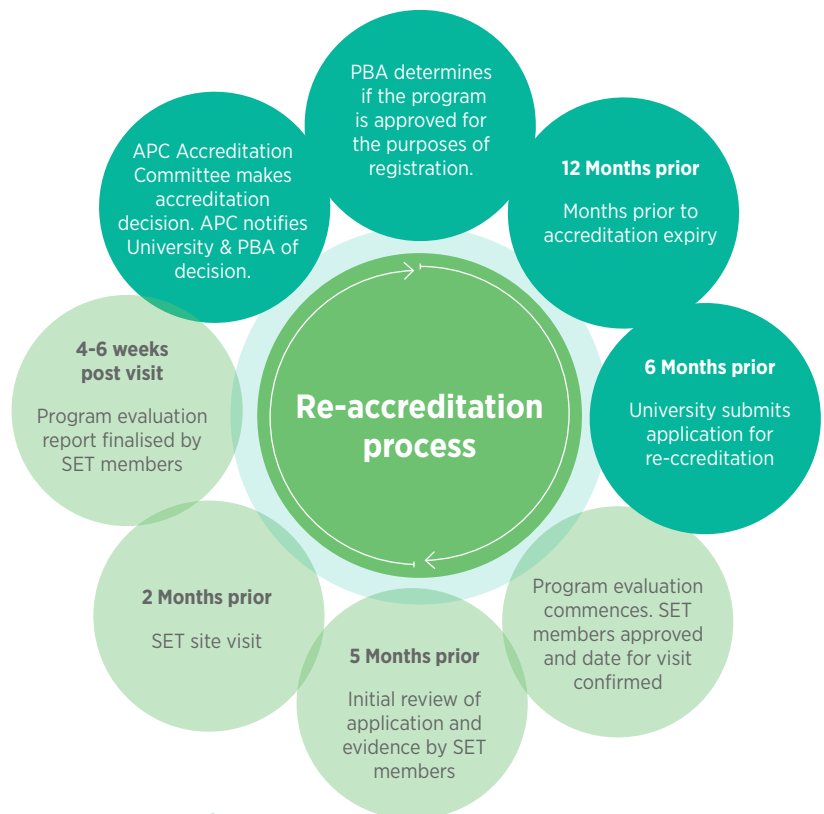
The Executive Director Professional Services will notify the program of the outcome of the accreditation decision by way of an Accreditation Outcome Notification (AON). The AON will also be submitted to the Pharmacy Board of Australia. For New Zealand programs, see the PCNZ process on their [website](#).

Schools that have monitoring requirements or conditions placed on their accreditation must respond within the timeframes outlined in the AON. Based on feedback from the Council of Pharmacy Schools, we have aligned these dates to three, six or 12 month periods, dependent on the requirements to meet the condition (s), and/or monitoring requirements(s) to align with upcoming Accreditation Committee dates.

Approval by the Pharmacy Board of Australia

An accreditation decision by the APC Accreditation Committee is a final decision in regard to accreditation, dated as per the AON date. For the purposes of registration of graduates, a program must be approved by the Pharmacy Board of Australia. This is outlined in the NRAS Health Practitioner National Law.

We cannot confirm the dates by which the Pharmacy Board will consider an AON, and recommend that Schools check the AHPRA website.



Key documents:

Documentation	Description	Location
Application for Accreditation/ Reaccreditation	Application template to be completed by the university and forwarded to APC with any additional evidence supporting the application	Internal document- Provided upon request
Site Evaluation Team (SET) Audit Schedule	APC provides a draft audit schedule template to the university when providing the application template. The university is required to arrange interviews with specific parties as requested by APC and provide further detail to APC prior to the site audit taking place.	Internal document - Provided upon request
Application appendices	Evidence provided by the university to support their submitted accreditation application	University provides to APC in an agreed electronic format (eg. Dropbox)
'Accreditation Standards for Pharmacy Programs in Australia and New Zealand (APC Standards)'	The 36 Standards used as the basis of degree program accreditation	www.pharmacycouncil.org.au
Accreditation Standards for Pharmacy Programs in Australia and New Zealand Evidence Guide 2014	The evidence guide to be used in conjunction with the Accreditation standards	www.pharmacycouncil.org.au
Appeals Policy	Outlines the independent review process that we follow when you request a review of a decision we have made regarding your accreditation status.	www.pharmacycouncil.org.au
Accreditation Marketing Policy	Provides clear guidance on how you are able to market your accredited pharmacy education programs and CPD activities.	www.pharmacycouncil.org.au
Accreditation Quality Assurance and Monitoring Policy	Outlines the quality assurance and monitoring activities that we undertake to ensure your ongoing compliance with our standards, guidelines and policies	www.pharmacycouncil.org.au
Risk-based Decision Making Framework	The Accreditation Committee uses a risk-based decision making framework for all its decision-making on pharmacy degree programs, Intern Training Programs and CPD accrediting organisations.	www.pharmacycouncil.org.au

APC Accreditation Standards for pharmacy degree programs

There are 36 standards that cover a range of key areas including:

- » Governance, Structure and Administration
- » Resource Allocation and Management
- » Curriculum
- » Program Students
- » Quality and Risk Management

The Standards have been developed through a wide consultation process involving face-to-face workshops with key stakeholders and successive phases of public consultation. Our degree standards are accompanied by an **Evidence Guide** which was produced following stakeholder consultation with universities. They provide examples of evidence that may be submitted to support the application against each Standard.

Site Evaluation Team (SET)

The role of the SET is to evaluate degree programs that lead to registration as a pharmacist in Australia and New Zealand. The SET members are responsible for assessing a program and the provider against the APC Accreditation Standards. They do this by reviewing the written application and supporting documentation, via observations made during the site audit and questioning undertaken during the audit interviews.

We will assemble a Site Evaluation Team (SET) for re-accreditation and new accreditation applications. A SET consists of three suitably qualified professional members with experience in the following:

- » Organisation, curriculum and structure of undergraduate pharmacy courses.
- » Current professional requirements for practice.
- » Education quality assurance and APC accreditation processes.

We maintain a pool of suitable professional SET members including university academics and community and hospital pharmacy representatives. Taking into consideration the overall composition of the team, individual SET members will be selected for a particular review on the basis of their expertise and lack of material conflict with the program under review. They are appointed according to our SET Selection Policy and with consideration of any potential conflict identified by the education provider.

The nominated SET membership will be communicated to the school to seek their approval of the final composition of the SET, review the date and to begin making arrangements for the site visit

The Chair of the SET will be a senior academic who has considerable experience in accreditation.

In addition to the three professional members, the APC provides a trained quality auditor who also acts as the secretariat for the SET, providing orientation for the members prior to the site visit, assisting the university in resolving scheduling issues during the visit and by being on-hand to provide assistance to the SET team.

The APC auditor is responsible for compiling the first draft of the report for circulation to the SET members.



Outcome-based standards

Not prescriptive

Encourage innovation in program delivery

Conflict of Interest

We are fully aware of the importance of independence in our accreditation work. Members are selected on the basis of the individual expert contribution they bring to the SET. The APC Conflict of Interest Policy is **available here**. All SET members sign a Confidentiality Agreement and Contract with APC, and are bound by our rules of engagement.

Site Evaluation Team Selection Policy

The selection of SET members takes into consideration the following;

- » Relevant skills and experience
- » Knowledge and understanding of national law, accreditation processes and APC standards
- » Ability to apply analytical thinking about university education systems and processes
- » Ability to work in a collaborative and engaging manner
- » Awareness of cultural and other sensitivities

Site Evaluation Team expressions of Interest

If you would like to become a future member of a Site Evaluation Team please contact us and a member of our accreditation team will provide further information. We aim to ensure that all newly appointed Heads of Schools of Pharmacy have an opportunity to be part of a SET within 24 months of their appointment. (where schedules allow)

Roles and Responsibilities



Set Chair

Leads the discussion interviews and decisionmaking

Maintains a holistic view of the accreditation materials and program requirements



Set Members

SET members support the SET Chair

Provides specialist expertise and input



APC Auditor

Participates in discussion, interviews and decisionmaking

Maintains a focus on the quality of process within the program

Ensures Consistency in application of the Accreditation standards



APC Coordinator

Provides administrative support to SET members and APC Auditor

Coordinates and plans the SET visit

Notification of Change to a program

We strive to maintain an open and ongoing dialogue with all of our accredited providers. This in turn allows us to communicate effectively and efficiently regarding any planned program changes.

You are responsible for contacting us regarding any proposed change(s) to your program. If you are considering a change to your program please contact us early in the planning process to avoid any delays in accreditation approval.

Proposed changes are to be submitted on the Notification of Change template for consideration by our Accreditation Committee. The Committee will determine if the change is considered to be 'minor' or 'major' using the criteria below.

Major Change	Minor Change
<p>A major change in an accredited pharmacy program includes any significant changes to the existing program or factors relevant to its delivery, as identified in the Accreditation Standards. A major change may include (but is not limited to) the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Change in award title » Change in course length » Significant change in curriculum content and/or structure » Significant change in teaching methods and/or assessment » Significant change in the human and/or financial resources available for delivery of the course » Significant change in institutional settings and/or the establishment of an additional geographic location at which the program is offered. <p>Please note that a major change could be any one or a combination of any of the above.</p> <p>If the change is deemed a 'major change' and warrants a re-assessment of the accreditation status of the school, this may be resolved by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. a written submission using the NoC form; AND 8. the undertaking of an external expert academic review OR a SET audit. 	<p>A minor change in an accredited pharmacy program includes any change to an existing program or factors which will not overtly alter its delivery. A minor change may include (but is not limited to) the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Change in program director or Head of School » Changes in teaching staff » Increase or decrease in student intake. <p>Please note that a minor change could be any one or a combination of any of the above. Minor changes do not include changes to the content of individual units of study which occur as the result of normal educational development and quality assurance processes.</p> <p>Notification of a minor change is important, and will be noted by the Accreditation Committee. However, notified changes deemed as 'minor change' will not initiate a review of the accredited program.</p>

Please note: If the proposed program change(s) are considered by our Accreditation Committee to be 'major', the process of program review will incur a Notification of Change fee (as outlined under 'Fees').

Annual reporting

All accredited degree programs are required to submit an Annual Report as part of ongoing program monitoring. These annual reports are used by us to note any changes to student numbers or program staff resources.

The Annual Report also provides an opportunity for you to advise us of any previously unreported changes as well as any future plans for the program. We will provide an Annual Report template to you by email in the second half of each calendar year.

Revocation of accreditation

The APC requires accredited universities to aspire to the highest levels of quality and have a vested interest in ensuring that their professional courses meet the requirements and expectations of external stakeholders, including authorities maintaining Standards for the registered professions.

In view of the above the APC will seek cooperative solutions where it has been determined that:

- » a pharmacy school has failed to provide timely reports, comply with requests for information, or satisfactorily address conditions which have been placed upon the granting of accreditation or approval; or
- » a pharmacy school fails to meet the requisite standards and there is no reasonable assurance that the school is taking, or has the capacity to take, necessary remedial action.

In the event of the above, APC may revoke or deny accreditation or approval in the event of the Council being unable to be satisfied as to the university's commitment and capacity to remedy deficiencies within a reasonable period. In such cases, the APC Accreditation Committee will refer the recommendation not to accredit the program to the APC Council. It is likely that the Accreditation Committee Chair and CEO will arrange a meeting with the Head of School and other senior staff as necessary to discuss the proposed outcome

Appeal of decisions

The APC has an appeals policy that outlines how a School can appeal an accreditation decision. Any School can make an appeal under the grounds outlined within the policy, which is **available here**.

Accreditation staff and contacts

APC Accreditation team	
Executive Director Professional Services (EDPS)	<p>The role of the EDPS is to lead the professional services business unit within APC which includes accreditation, assessment and examinations. The EDPS represents APC on various external stakeholder groups and is the project lead on APC accreditation and assessment projects.</p> <p>The EDPS participates in site audits for pharmacy educational programs as APC Auditor.</p> <p>The EDPS provides high level advice and guidance to the APC Accreditation Committee.</p>
Accreditation Senior Pharmacist	<p>The Senior Pharmacist Accreditation provides accreditation advice to the Accreditation Committee, responds to external stakeholder matters regarding accreditation, develops APC policies and procedures for accreditation processes, provides guidance for the Accreditation Coordinator, and provides profession-specific advice to the EDPS.</p> <p>The Accreditation Senior Pharmacist participates in site audits for pharmacy educational programs as APC Auditor.</p>
Accreditation Coordinator	<p>The role of the Accreditation Coordinator is to provide administrative support to all stakeholders in the accreditation process. The Accreditation Coordinator plans all aspects of site audits, coordinates with education providers and SET members and provides Accreditation Committee decisions to the Pharmacy Board of Australia.</p>

Australian Pharmacy Council

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