

# Graduation and Awards Policy and Procedure

## 1. Introduction

The Australian Performing Arts Conservatory (APAC) Graduation and Awards Policy and Procedure sets out the principles, scope, purpose, policy statements, procedures and responsibilities relating to the conferral of awards upon students who satisfy the relevant course requirements, including the control and integrity of documentation.

### 1.1. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy and Procedure is to ensure that APAC's approach to the conferral of awards complies with mandated higher education standards, including aligning with the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), and to ensure that academic standards are maintained and documentation relating to the conferral of awards is securely controlled.

### 1.2. Scope

This Policy and Procedure applies to students, staff, and members of APAC's decision-making bodies.

### 1.3. Principles

- APAC's Academic Board approves the structure of award courses, the standard requirements for their completion, including maximum time for completion, and the titles of the awards resulting from completion of a specified number and sequence of units;
- APAC's Board of Directors confers awards on the advice of the Academic Board, and may correct or rescind an award that has been conferred;
- Students who have met the requirements for the completion of their award course, who have complied with all APAC policies and procedures applicable to students, and who have paid all fees due to APAC, are entitled to have the award associated with that course conferred upon them;
- Effective administration systems enable the secure control of documentation, including the testamur, relating to the conferral of award; and
- Conferral of an award entitles a graduate to a testamur, specifying the award conferred the date of conferral, the name of the graduate and the conferring institution.

## 2. Policy Statements

### 2.1. Academic Standards and Course Completion

Conferral of an award entails that a student has successfully completed a prescribed course of study which embeds appropriate academic standards, both in its component parts and as a whole, and has demonstrated appropriate levels of academic achievement. The Academic Board ensures, through its processes for approving award courses and their constituent units,

that appropriate academic standards are embedded and that the requirements of the AQF are met.

This process includes approving the structure of award courses, the standard requirements for their completion, including maximum time for completion, and the titles of the respective awards resulting from their completion. Relatedly, the Academic Board determines the standards by which the level of academic achievement, in the sequence of units constituting an award course, is determined.

Formal accreditation of approved award courses is the responsibility of TEQSA, and that accreditation must be secured before the respective award course is offered. In order to have completed an award course, a student must have successfully completed the sequence of units that constitute an accredited award course and have met the published course requirements from the relevant Course Outline.

## **2.2. Information and Transparency**

APAC ensures transparency regarding award course completion. Comprehensive and accurate information regarding the structure of award courses and the requirements for course completion is published in the relevant Course Outlines and available to students and prospective students, with all such information deriving from a single source of truth.

Prospective students and students are thus made aware, prior to the commencement of their course, what they must do to complete an award program, both in regard to the units constituting an award course and the course overall.

Student progress in award courses is effectively tracked from study period to study period, sometimes triggering interventions to correct sub-optimal enrolment choices. The effective tracking of student progress enables APAC to determine whether a student has met the requirements for completion of the award course in which they are enrolled.

Information regarding student progress, including units completed and grades achieved is securely held in the student management system, and forms the core evidence used by the Academic Board in recommending to the Board of Directors the conferral of an award.

## **2.3. Conferral and Documentation**

2.3.1 Students who meet the academic requirements for completion of an award course are entitled to have that award conferred upon them provided that:

- They have not failed to comply with an APAC policy and procedure where non-compliance abrogates their entitlement to have the award conferred, and;
- They have paid in full all fees due to APAC.

2.3.2 Awards are conferred by the Board of Directors on the advice of the Academic Board. Conferral of an award involves the issuance of a testamur which specifies:

- the name of the registered higher education provider;

- the full name of the person to whom the documentation applies;
- the date of issue;
- the name and office of the person authorised by APAC to issue the documentation;
- recognition that the qualification is recognised by the AQF;
- the full title of the qualification award, including the field or discipline of study;
- Any subsidiary component of the study (such as integrated Honours, an area of specialisation or a major study).

2.3.3 APAC has in place arrangements to ensure the integrity and authenticity of testamurs, as well as of academic transcripts, which summarise course progress and levels of academic achievement in units. Students may choose to receive their testamur either at a formal graduation ceremony or by mail.

### **3. Procedure**

#### **3.1. Course Completion**

- 3.1.1. Authorised administrative staff identify, using the student system, those students who have successfully completed the requirements for their course, also indicating which of these students have paid in full all fees owing to APAC.
- 3.1.2. The Director of Higher Education (DoHE) reviews the academic records of the students thus identified and confirms that they have met the requirements for completion of their course. The DoHE completes a Graduation Report attesting to the fact that each student identified in it has met the requirements for the completion of their course. The Graduation report is provided to the Academic Board for its consideration.
- 3.1.3. Once the Academic Board is satisfied that each student identified in the Graduation Report has met the requirements for the completion of their course, the Graduation Report is endorsed and advises the Board of Directors that each student identified has met the requirements for the completion of their degree and is entitled to have the relevant award conferred on them, provided that they have paid in full all fees due to APAC.
- 3.1.4. The Board of Directors confers on the advice of the Academic Board, the relevant awards. The conferral by the Board of Directors is recorded in the minutes of the relevant Board of Directors meeting, along with the names of the graduates with the name of the award conferred. The Minutes constitute the source of truth regarding the names of graduates and the awards conferred upon each.
- 3.1.5. Authorised administrative staff initiate the process of creating an appropriate testamur for each graduate, along with an Official Academic Transcript to which they are also entitled. Using the Testamur and Academic Transcript Request Form, graduates opt to receive their testamur at either a Graduation Ceremony, by mail or collection in person from Reception. Graduates opting to receive their testamur at the

Graduation Ceremony must submit the form and pay in full any fees due to APAC by the requisite due date.

- 3.1.6. In the absence of original signatures, digital signatures may be used for official testamurs and transcripts upon request by Authorised Administrative staff. The use of digital signatures will be recorded in the Digital Signature Register and managed by the Admissions and Compliance Manager.
- 3.1.7. Authorised administrative staff will update the Qualifications Register with details on all Testamurs issued. The register will be managed and monitored by the Admissions and Compliance Manager.

### **3.2. Varying Course Completion Requirements**

In exceptional circumstances the requirements for course completion may be varied, for example where a student may be transitioning from an award which is being discontinued to a new award.

In such cases the Academic Board may approve a variation provided that the variation does not undermine the academic integrity of the award, erode academic standards, or prevent the achievement of course learning outcomes or graduate attributes.

### **3.3. Rescinding and Correcting Awards**

On the recommendation of the Academic Board, and in exceptional circumstances, the Board of Directors may rescind or correct an award that has been conferred. Exceptional circumstance includes, but is not limited to, cases where:

- an administrative error has resulted in the conferral of an award for which the student was not eligible; or
- a student is found to be in breach of a policy of APAC where rescission of an award is a valid penalty for such a breach.

### **3.4. Official Academic Transcripts**

3.4.1. Official Academic Transcripts:

- are produced in accordance with the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 Standards, and the AQF Qualification Issuance Policy;
- are printed on high security, water-marked paper that includes a copy text that is visible in an original transcript to prevent fraudulent reproduction, and are traceable and authenticable;
- are replaceable by APAC through an authorised and verifiable process;
- display the APAC company seal and logo;
- are digitally signed (where an original signature is not available) by the Director of Higher Education and the Chair of the Board of Directors; and

- are clearly differentiated from testamurs.

#### 3.4.2. Official Academic Transcripts contain the following:

- student name and identification number;
- the testamur identification number;
- approved name of the course in which the student was enrolled;
- approved names of all completed units; the study period when these units were undertaken; grades and/or marks awarded for those units; and their credit weighting;
- grade point average;
- details of advanced standing granted;
- an explanation of the grading system used
- date at which the award for the course in which the student was enrolled was conferred;
- the signature of the DoHE and the Chair of the Board of Directors;
- date of issue.

### 3.5. Testamurs

#### 3.5.1. Testamurs:

- are produced in accordance with the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 Standards, and the AQF Qualification Issuance Policy;
- are printed on high security, water-marked paper (parchment) that includes a copy text that is visible in an original transcript to prevent fraudulent reproduction, and are traceable and authenticable;
- display the APAC company seal and logo;
- are digitally signed (where an original signature is not available) by the Director of Higher Education and the Chair of the Board of Directors;
- are replaceable by APAC through an authorised and verifiable process; and
- are clearly differentiated from testamurs awarded by other institutions.

#### 3.5.2. Testamurs contain the following:

- name, as indicated in the student management system, of the graduate upon whom the relevant award has been conferred;
- the words: "having fulfilled the requirements prescribed by the Australian Performing Arts Conservatory is granted the ...";

- approved award title in full;
  - the date that the Board of Directors approved the award;
  - the signatures of the DoHE and the Chair of the Board of Directors
  - the graduate’s student identification number;
  - the testamur identification number; and
  - the AQF logo or the words: “This award is recognised within the Australian Qualifications Framework.”
- 3.5.3. Further, each graduate is issued with a unique identifier in the form of a Testamur Identification Number that is securely recorded and kept recorded by APAC’s Student Administration and which appears on both the Testamur and Official Academic Transcript.

### **3.6. Testamur Replacement**

The Director of Higher Education may approve the issue of a replacement Testamur if:

- 3.6.1. The original is lost, stolen, or destroyed.

In this case the application must be accompanied by a Statutory Declaration detailing the circumstances. In addition, the graduate must sign an agreement that if subsequently the original testamur is located, the replacement testamur must be returned.

- 3.6.2. The original is damaged.

In this case the original, damaged testamur must be returned prior to issue of the replacement. A Statutory Declaration is not required.

- 3.6.3. A replacement is required because of a change of name.

- In this case certified copies of proof of name change documents and the original Testamur must be attached.

- 3.6.4. To apply for a replacement testamur graduates must:

- Request the Replacement Testamur in person or by e-mail;
- provide proof of identification including:
  - Photo ID;
  - Student ID number;
  - Date of Birth;
  - Place of Birth; and
  - Residential Address; and
- Pay the replacement fee for the reproduction of documentation as specified in the relevant Fees Policy and Procedure.

3.6.5. The replacement Testamur must include:

- A new Testamur identification number, which is recorded in the same fashion as the original; and
- The date on which the replacement documentation is issued as well as the date the original was issued.

3.6.6. Replacement Testamurs may be provided to graduates via one of the following options:

- collection by the graduate from APAC's Student Administration, in which case the graduate is required to provide photographic identification such as a driver's license or passport, and must complete a collection form; or
- collection by another person (agent) on behalf of the graduate, in which case written authorisation is required from the graduate and the agent must provide photographic identification, and must complete a collection form; or
- posting to the graduate by Registered Mail.

3.6.7. Appeals against a decision not to issue, re-issue or replace a testamur may be lodged with the DoHE, who will forward the appeal to the Academic Board for its consideration.

## **4. Responsibilities**

### **4.1. The Board of Directors**

The Board of Directors is responsible for:

- Oversee the legitimate conferral of qualifications, as recommended by the Academic Board;
- Assuring itself of the integrity and effectiveness of APAC's approach to conferral of awards and related certification; and
- Rescinding or correcting awards on the advice of the Academic Board.

### **4.2. Academic Board**

The Academic Board is responsible for:

- Monitoring the implementation of this Policy and Procedure;
- Recommending to the APAC Board of Directors the conferral of awards for students who have completed course requirements;
- Providing advice to the Board of Directors on the rescission or correction of awards; and
- Considering appeals by students or graduates regarding decisions not to issue, re-issue or replace a testamur.

### 4.3. The Director of Higher Education

The Director of Higher Education is responsible for:

- The implementation of this Policy and Procedure; and
- Producing the Graduation Report.

### 4.4. Admissions and Compliance Manager

The Admissions and Compliance Manager is responsible for:

- managing the Digital Signature Register and processing requests for use of digital signatures from authorised administrative staff; and
- managing and maintaining a Qualification Register of all testamurs issued.

### 4.5. Students and Graduates

Students and graduates are responsible for:

- Complying with the requirements of this Policy and Procedure.

## 5. Relevant Documents

- APAC Digital Signature Register
- APAC Domestic Student Fees Policy and Procedure
- APAC International Student Fees Policy and Procedure
- APAC Testamur and Academic Transcript Request Form
- APAC Qualifications Register
- Australian Performing Arts Conservatory Fee Schedule
- Australian Qualifications Framework, 2013
- Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021

## 6. Definitions

- **Award** is a degree, diploma or certificate conferred following completion of an award program, providing official recognition of successful completion of that program.
- **Graduand** is a person upon whom an award is conferred in virtue of meeting the requirements for completion of an award course.
- **Official Academic Transcript** is an official record of a graduand's course, including the full name and unit code of units attempted and completed; the study period when units were undertaken and completed; the credit weighting of units attempted and completed; the grades and/or marks awarded for each unit and any advanced standing granted.

- **Testamur** is the legal document which is the authorised certification of a student's completion of an award.

## Version Control and Document Owner

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1.1	APAC	Formatting updated.	9 June 2017	9 June 2017
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3.0	DVE Business Solutions Pty Ltd	Updated the policy and procedure and changed the name from the Graduation and Certification Policy to Graduation and Awards Policy and Procedure.	9 December 2022	
4.0	DVE Business Solutions Pty Ltd	Updated s3.4.1 and 3.5.1 to include the use of digital signatures. Added Compliance Manager to responsibilities and the use of a Digital Signature Register	20 March 2023	20 March 2023
5.0	DVE Business Solutions Pty Ltd	Addition of section 3.1.7 to capture use of qualifications register and addition responsibility of Admissions and Compliance Manager.	23 August 2023	23 August 2023