

# Course Development and Review Policy and Procedure

## 1. Introduction

The Australian Performing Arts Conservatory (APAC) Course Development and Review Policy and Procedure sets out the purpose, scope, principles, policy statements, procedures, and responsibilities relating to the development and review of courses. The document is designed to underpin and structure APAC's approach to the development and review of its courses, as required by mandated higher education standards, to embed academic quality assurance, to foster good practice, and to appropriately assign responsibility and accountability.

### 1.1. Purpose

The intent of this document is to provide a framework, reflecting underpinning principles, which ensures that APAC develops high-quality courses for offer and regularly reviews, and improves existing courses.

This Policy and Procedure should be read in conjunction with the following APAC documents: Course Review Criteria, Course Review Implementation Plan, Internal Course Review Process and External Course Review Process.

### 1.2. Scope

This Policy and Procedure applies to all staff and to members of decision-making and advisory groups.

### 1.3. Principles

- Courses offered align with, and advance, APAC's mission and strategic goals;
- Course development is underpinned by an evidence-based business case demonstrating the sustainability and viability of the course;
- Course development and accreditation aligns with the requirements of the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021, National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students (2018) and with the Australian Qualifications Framework 2013.
- Course content and methods of course delivery reflect contemporary knowledge and professional practice;
- Courses provide students with the initial skills and knowledge for entry to professions and careers, and also provide a basis for career progression, life-long learning and professional innovation.
- Course development and course review are guided by external reference points, including benchmarking and expert advice from academic and professional leaders;

- Course development and course review utilise a range of data, including feedback from students, industry and employers, and data on student satisfaction and graduate outcomes, to improve courses and student outcomes;
- Course development and course review take account of contemporary and emerging professional and industry needs, and embed work-integrated learning, to facilitate graduate success;
- Course development and course review ensure the constructive alignment of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment with course learning outcomes;
- Course development and course review reflect a commitment to academic quality assurance, continuous academic quality improvement, embedding academic standards, and to meeting the requirements of the course accreditation authority.

## 2. Policy Statements

### 2.1. Strategy and Sustainability

- Decisions to develop courses, with a view to securing their accreditation and then delivering them, are guided by APAC's mission and strategic goals, with careful consideration of the probable impact of developing and offering the course on APAC's long-term sustainability, and consequently consideration of the viability of the course itself. Before a decision is made to develop a course a comprehensive, evidence-based business case is developed for consideration by the Board of Directors.
- The business case will quantify the likely initial and on-going costs, including opportunity costs, of developing and delivering the course, including, but not limited to, those related to staffing, required facilities and infrastructure, necessary supporting services such as student support services, relevant professional accreditation requirements, and marketing and promotion. In projecting revenue account is taken of, but not limited to, evidence regarding trends in domestic and international student demand, benchmarking with competitor offerings, course differentiation, market position and price points, and employment trends in relevant industry areas and professions.
- The business case is developed with significant input from external academic, professional and industry experts, and, if required, external financial advice.
- The regular review of courses is also conducted with reference to alignment with APAC's mission and strategic goals. Review findings may reveal that a course is drifting from an earlier alignment, or that without improvement it will cease to be viable. Decisions to address these issues are informed by a business case for making required investments as against discontinuing the course. The business case here mirrors the characteristics described in points ii. and iii. under Section 2.1 of this Policy and Procedure. See also the Course Discontinuation Policy and Procedure.

## 2.2. Academic Quality Assurance and Academic Quality Improvement

- Once the decision is made to develop a course for accreditation and subsequent delivery, the assurance of its academic quality structures its development. The academic quality assurance process focuses on the following key matters:
  - embedding appropriate academic standards in all aspects of the course;
  - ensuring compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements, accreditation requirements, including for professional accreditations;
  - specifying relevant graduate attributes and course learning outcomes;
  - ensuring that course content reflects contemporary knowledge and contemporary and emerging professional practice, and industry trends;
  - ensuring that course delivery is by means of contemporary and effective methods;
  - embedding work-integrated learning and connections with industry and professions;
  - ensuring the constructive alignment of course curriculum, pedagogy and assessment with course learning outcomes; and
  - identifying the ancillary support, including facilities, infrastructure and student support services, required for the effective delivery of, and equitable access to, the proposed course.
- Academic quality assurance of courses being developed requires the significant input of external academic, professional and industry experts, and the utilisation of other external reference points, including benchmarking with similar courses offered elsewhere, including internationally. Internal decision-making and advisory groups, which have some external membership, are key contributors to academic quality assurance and have layered endorsement and approval roles as a course evolves to the point where accreditation is sought, moving from endorsement by the relevant Course Advisory Committee, to endorsement by the Teaching and Learning Committee, to approval by the Academic Board.
- Regular review of courses is a driver of academic quality improvement. Reviews include external reviews, where a comprehensive, evidence-based review is conducted by a panel of external academic, professional and industry experts, and various internal reviews which may focus on the course overall or on certain of its components or aspects.
- All course reviews are characterised by varying degrees of external expert input and the use of external reference points, including benchmarking, the use of data and feedback relating to student satisfaction with courses and graduate outcomes, academic success, progression, retention and completion, and the use of data and feedback from industry and the professions.

- Course review findings, and consequent responses and action plans, are considered by internal decision-making and advisory groups, which provide advice, and which play an endorsement and approval role.
- Action plans for academic quality improvement are developed in the context of budget considerations and in the context of the changes to courses parameters specified by the accrediting authority. Plans are endorsed by the relevant Course Advisory Committee and approved by the Academic Board.

### **3. Procedure**

#### **3.1. Course Development**

- All staff are encouraged to provide ideas for new courses. Ideas are considered in the first instance by the Director of Higher Education in partnership with the relevant Head of Discipline, who together make an initial assessment of the feasibility and viability of what is proposed. Where the initial assessment is positive the Director of Higher Education and the Head of Discipline develop a course development brief providing an overview of the strategic, market and financial case for the course. Commentary on the brief is provided by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), any relevant Course Advisory Committee, the Teaching and Learning Committee and the Academic Board.
- The course development brief and commentary are considered by the Board of Directors, which may request additional external expert advice on what is proposed as well as additional information from internal sources. If the Board of Directors makes a positive assessment, then it may authorise the development of a business case, as described in Section 1.4 ii. and iii of this Policy and Procedure.
- Where the development of a business case is authorised, it is co-ordinated by the CEO and the Director of Higher Education, with support from the relevant Head of Discipline.
- A completed business case is considered by the Board of Directors, which may request additional external expert advice on what is proposed as well as additional information from internal sources. If the Board of Directors makes a positive assessment of the business case, it may authorise the commencement of the course development process.
- The course development process is managed by a Course Development Group (CDG) consisting of the Director of Higher Education, as Chair, the CEO, and the relevant Head of Discipline. The CDG may co-opt additional internal support, and seek external input, as required.
- The CDG develops a detailed course proposal, including demonstrating its consistency with the Higher Education Standards (Threshold Standards) 2021 and the Australian Qualifications Framework 2013, and specifying ancillary support required.
- Once the decision is made to develop a detailed course proposal, a Course Advisory Committee is expeditiously constituted, and once constituted, liaises regularly with the CDG providing feedback and advice.
- Once the CDG endorses the completed detailed course proposal, the proposal is considered by the Teaching and Learning Committee, which may request additional

external expert advice on what is proposed as well as additional information from internal sources.

- Once the Teaching and Learning Committee endorses the detailed course proposal, the proposal is considered by the Academic Board, which may request additional external expert advice on what is proposed as well as additional information from internal sources.
- Once the Academic Board has approved the detailed course proposal, the Board of Directors will decide whether to initiate the process of securing accreditation/CRICOS approval.

### **3.2. Course Review**

- APAC follows a schedule of external and internal course reviews to drive academic quality improvement and the comply with regulatory requirements. The review schedule has a seven-year horizon and requires:
  - new courses to undergo an external review as required by the Board of Directors based on factors identified in the business case, but at least every five years;
  - continuing courses to undergo an external review every five years; and
  - all courses to undergo an internal review annually, except in a year where they are being externally reviewed.
- External reviews are conducted by an external academic who holds a professorial position in a relevant discipline in another higher education provider. The external expert is proposed by the Director of Higher Education, in consultation with the relevant Head of Discipline, and approved by the Academic Board.
- External reviews are evidence-based and commence with the consideration of a review portfolio. The review portfolio is compiled by the Director of Higher Education, in partnership with the relevant Heads of Discipline, who may draw on the support of staff as required. The portfolio includes information regarding but not limited to:
  - student achievement, progression, retention, completion and graduate outcomes;
  - analysis of the relationship between the above performance indicators and admission requirements, including English language proficiency, and the source or channel through which students were recruited, such as through particular student recruitment agents or particular pathways;
  - student satisfaction and student feedback at the course and unit level, including on assessment, facilities, infrastructure and student support services;
  - staff feedback at the course and unit level, including on student capability, facilities, infrastructure, student support services, and demands on, and expectations of, staff;
  - enrolment data and articulation pathway data, benchmarked with data from similar courses at other higher education providers;

- student/staff ratios benchmarked with data from similar courses at other higher education providers;
- grade distributions and moderation outcomes;
- breaches of academic integrity;
- feedback from students, graduates, external academic experts and external stakeholders in industry and the professions;
- benchmarking at the course and unit level, including benchmarking focused on academic standards; and
- profiles of staff teaching in the course.

External reviewers may request additional information as required.

- External reviewers may conduct a site visit to the campus and interview selected decision-making and advisory groups, staff, students, graduates, and stakeholders, including from industry and the professions.
- The external reviewer will compile a review report, including recommendations for actions to be taken to ensure compliance and to achieve academic quality improvement.
- The review report is considered by the Director of Higher Education, and the relevant Heads of Discipline, who, in consultation with the relevant Course Advisory Committee, develop a response and action plan with targets, key performance indicators, and timelines.
- The response and action plan, along with the review report and input from the Teaching and Learning Committee, is considered by the Academic Board for approval in whole or in part. The Academic Board may request modifications to the action plan.
- Action plans must identify whether any proposed improvements require approval by the accreditation authority. In instances where such approval is required, then, if the Academic Board has approved the improvement in question, the Board of Directors will decide whether the improvement should be pursued.
- Where actions require resourcing outside allocated budget, the CEO, in consultation with the Board of Directors, will make the required decisions, noting that recommendations relating to ensuring compliance must be acted upon.
- Progress on action plans is regularly reported to the Academic Board and made available to the APAC community.
- re evidence-based, are conducted by the Director of Higher Education and the relevant Head of Discipline, in liaison with the relevant Course Advisory Committee, and make use of information including, where available, but not limited to:
  - student achievement, progression, and retention;
  - analysis of the relationship between the above performance indicators and admission requirements, including English language proficiency, and the source or

channel through which students were recruited, such as through particular student recruitment agents or particular pathways;

- student satisfaction and student feedback at the course and unit level, including on assessment, facilities, infrastructure and student support services;
  - feedback from students, graduates, external academic experts and external stakeholders in industry and the professions;
  - staff feedback at the course and unit level, including on student capability, facilities, infrastructure, student support services, and demands on, and expectations of, staff;
  - grade distributions and moderation outcomes;
  - breaches of academic integrity;
  - benchmarking at the course and unit level, including benchmarking focused on academic standards; and
  - profiles of staff teaching in the course.
- The Director of Higher Education and the relevant Head of Discipline, in liaison with the relevant Course Advisory Committee, produce an internal review report identifying problems revealed and recommending actions to be taken to ensure compliance and to achieve academic quality improvement and including an action plan with targets, key performance indicators, and timelines. One recommendation may be to bring forward an external review.
  - The internal review report and action plan is considered by the Academic Board for approval in whole or in part, and the Academic Board may request modifications to the action plan.
  - Action plans must identify whether any proposed improvements require approval by the accreditation authority. Such instances trigger an external review.
  - Where actions require resourcing outside allocated budget the CEO, in consultation with the Board of Directors, will make the required decisions, noting the recommendations relating to ensuring compliance must be acted upon.
  - Progress on action plans is regularly reported to the Academic Board and made available to the APAC community.

## **4. Responsibilities**

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

The Board of Directors is responsible for:

- assuring itself that there is an effective system in place for course development and external and internal course review, which system ensures compliance with mandated higher education standards;
- authorising the business case for the development of a course;

- authorising the commencement of the course development process; and
- deciding whether to seek accreditation of newly developed course and deciding whether to pursue improvements requiring approval of the accreditation authority.

## **4.2. The Academic Board**

The Academic Board is responsible for:

- overseeing and monitoring the course development process;
- overseeing and monitoring the course review process;
- approving detailed course proposals prior to securing accreditation;
- approving the membership of external review panels;
- approving action plans resulting from external and internal reviews;
- monitoring progress of action plans.

## **4.3. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO)**

The CEO is responsible for:

- Coordinating, in partnership with the Director of Higher Education, the development of the business case for proposed courses; and
- adjusting budgets to enable academic quality compliance and academic quality improvement.

## **4.4. The Director of Higher Education**

The Director of Higher Education, is responsible for:

- Developing, in partnership with the relevant Head of Discipline, course development briefs for the Board of Directors;
- chairing the CDG;
- compiling, in partnership with the relevant Head of Discipline, the review portfolio for external course reviews;
- developing, in partnership with the relevant Head of Discipline, a response and action plan in the light of external review findings and recommendations;
- conducting, in partnership with the relevant Head of Discipline, internal course reviews; and
- producing, in partnership with the relevant Head of Discipline, an internal review report and resultant action plan.

## **4.5. Staff**

Staff are responsible for:

- providing open and honest feedback on courses and units, and on ancillary support.



## 4.6. Students

Students are responsible for:

- providing open and honest feedback on courses and units, and on ancillary support.

## 5. Relevant Documents

- Australian Qualifications Framework 2013
- Course Discontinuation Policy and Procedure
- Course Review Criteria
- Course Review Implementation Plan
- Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000
- External Course Review Process
- Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021
- Internal Course Review Process
- National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018
- TEQSA Guidance Note: Course Design (including Learning outcomes and Assessment) 2017
- TEQSA Guidance Note: Changes in a Course of Study that may lead to Accreditation as a New Course 2017
- TEQSA Guidance Note: Academic Quality Assurance 2017

## 6. Definitions

- **Course** is an approved sequence of study leading to the conferral of a higher education award.
- **Unit** is a component of a course for which a grade is awarded.

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