



**ESSA:**  
EXERCISE & SPORTS SCIENCE AUSTRALIA

**COURSE  
ACCREDITATION  
STANDARDS**



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## 1.0 Purpose and scope

### Purpose

1. The Course Accreditation Standards sets out minimum specifications and structures for courses seeking to meet ESSA's Course Accreditation Requirements.
2. All aspects of the standards are mandatory and failure to adhere to the standards may result in a review of accreditation.
3. These standards should be read in conjunction with the Course Accreditation Requirements and the Practicum Standards.

### Scope

4. These standards apply to all education providers seeking to gain or maintain ESSA course accreditation.
5. The standards apply to all accreditation categories and remains in effect throughout the accreditation cycle of a course.

## 2.0 Principles and key requirements

### 2.1. Course structure

1. A course submitted for accreditation at the level of exercise science must contain a minimum of 1.5 years of equivalent full-time study dedicated to equipping graduates to meet the AES Professional Standards.
2. A course submitted for accreditation at the level of exercise physiology must contain a minimum of 1.5 years of equivalent full-time study dedicated to equipping graduates to meet the AEP Professional Standards.
3. A course submitted for accreditation at the level of both exercise science and exercise physiology must equip graduates to meet both the AES and AEP Professional Standards.
4. A course submitted for accreditation at the level of exercise science and exercise physiology must meet the accreditation requirements for both levels. A course that incorporates both exercise science and exercise physiology will not be accredited where:
  - An application is submitted only for one level.
  - An application meets the requirements for only one level.
5. Course content attributed to meeting the AES Standards cannot also be attributed to meeting the AEP Professional Standards, and vice versa.
6. Units of study that are included in a course as elective units cannot be attributed towards meeting either the AES or AEP Professional Standards.
7. An education provider submitting a postgraduate course for accreditation at the level of exercise physiology must ensure that students graduating from the course have also met all the AES Professional Standards and the exercise science practicum requirements. The verification process must ensure that:
  - Non-award units undertaken prior to or during the postgraduate degree meet the AES Professional Standards.
  - Documentation of exercise science practicum has been provided.
  - Universities can undertake the verification themselves or can require students from non- accredited exercise science courses to have undertaken a graduate entry verification assessment.

## 2.2. Course delivery

1. Course accreditation is awarded specifically to the course and campus/es (including delivery modes) listed in the accreditation application. Additional campuses or modes of delivery seeking accreditation during a course's accreditation cycle must be submitted for accreditation separately in the first instance.
2. The accreditation status of all courses must be accurately reflected on all website, print, electronic or other material, both internal and external to the education provider.
3. Education providers delivering a course across multiple campuses and/or different modes of delivery must ensure that the course accreditation status at each campus and/or mode of delivery is clearly communicated to current and enrolling students.
4. An education provider submitting an accreditation application for multiple or additional campuses must demonstrate that:
  - All course accreditation requirements are met for each campus.
  - All students have equivalent and appropriate access to staff, support, supervision, facilities, equipment, and practicum placements.
  - Students across all campuses have achieved equivalent learning outcomes and assessment expectations, both theoretical and practical.
  - Accreditation for an additional campus/es will be awarded for a period that will bring its accreditation cycle in sync with the existing campus accreditation.
5. Accreditation may be awarded in different categories for different campuses.

## 2.3. Staff qualifications and experience

1. For a course submitted for accreditation at the level of exercise science:
  - The equivalent of at least one full-time continuing or fixed-term AES academic staff whose responsibility is the curriculum attributed to meeting the AES Professional Standards for 2025
  - The equivalent of at least two full-time continuing or fixed-term AES academic staff whose responsibility is the curriculum attributed to meeting the AES Professional Standards for 2026
  - The core academic staffing profile associated with the course must include at least three additional full-time equivalent continuing or fixed term academic staff with qualifications, research publications and experience in the field of exercise and sports science, with one of these appointed at Level D or above.
2. For a course submitted for accreditation at the level of exercise physiology:
  - i. The core academic staffing profile associated with the course must include:
    - The equivalent of at least two full-time continuing or fixed-term AEP academic staff whose primary responsibility is the curriculum attributed to meeting the AEP Professional Standards; and
    - The equivalent of at least one full-time AEP must be engaged in active clinical practice (minimum of 200 hours in the last 12 months).
    - Most units of study attributed to meeting the AEP Professional Standards for Accreditation must be taught and assessed by staff who hold or have held accreditation as an AEP and have undertaken clinical practice in exercise physiology.
3. A course submitted for accreditation at the level of exercise science and exercise physiology must meet the specifications of both clause 1 and 2 above.

- A course that is being discontinued is expected to continue to be adequately staffed with appropriately qualified academics, for as long as expertise is needed for students still enrolled in the course who have yet to complete units of study associated with specific areas of expertise. It is anticipated that staffing levels will reduce in line with students progressing through the course and there ceasing to be students enrolled in the earlier years of the course.

## 2.4. Practicum

- Students must not be required to source or identify their own practicum.
- A supervisor may supervise a group of up to four students at a time on external placement and up to five students on internal placements, which may be a mixed group of exercise science and exercise physiology students, provided there is capacity for one-on-one contact with each student.
- Oversight supervision may be utilised for both exercise science and exercise physiology practicum, in accordance with the Practicum Standards.
- Oversight supervision arrangements must:
  - Be approved by the practicum coordinator prior to commencement.
  - Be documented in a supervision plan that clearly sets out the expectations for all parties and agreed methods for communication and information-sharing between the oversight supervisor, direct supervisor, and student.
  - Comply with any external regulatory requirements for practice.
  - Ensure that client safety is maintained.
- The table below outlines the roles and responsibilities of individuals in an oversight supervision arrangement.

Role	Responsibilities
Oversight Supervisor	Regular communication with direct supervisor and student. Confirms arrangement with education provider. Comprehensive understanding of activities the student is undertaking. Collates documented evidence of communication and information sharing. Counter-signs evidence of practicum (logbook, record of student engagement or equivalent).
Direct Supervisor	Provides day-to-day supervision for student. Reports student's activities, performance and any feedback to student and informs oversight supervisor. Signs evidence of practicum (logbook, record of student engagement or equivalent). Can sign off on evidence of professionalism and communication
Student	Communicates activities with direct and oversight supervisor. Reports challenges or issues with supervisors where appropriate. Compiles evidence of practicum (logbook, record of student engagement or equivalent) to be signed by supervisors.

- The education provider must retain evidence of a student's practicum completion for a period of three years. Evidence may be in the form of:
  - A student logbook and supervisor form per placement; **or**
  - A Record of Student Engagement (RSE) per placement; **or**

- Other documentation tools developed by the education provider that capture the required student information.
7. Evidence of completion must be documented within one month of students completing a practicum placement.
  8. Practicum hours undertaken in a simulated learning environment (SLE) may be substituted for a portion of the required hours, as specified in the Practicum Standards. To be counted towards practicum requirements, an SLE placement must be high fidelity and include:
    - Clear learning objectives
    - Problem solving components built into the scenarios
    - Confirmation that the required outcomes have been met
    - Structured debriefing

## 2.5. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

1. RPL may only be awarded for formal learning, which includes at a minimum documented learning outcomes and assessments.
2. RPL towards practicum requirements may be awarded for experience hours completed where:
  - The activities undertaken were within the scope of practice for exercise science or exercise physiology as applicable,
  - Supervision was by an appropriately qualified and experienced supervisor in line with the requirements of the Practicum Standards,
  - The activities and level of supervision were commensurate with the individual's level of knowledge, skills, and experience; and
  - Sufficiently detailed evidence has been submitted to demonstrate meeting learning outcomes and/or competencies set by the education provider for equivalent practicum placements.
3. RPL towards the exercise science practicum requirements may be awarded for activities undertaken as part of a higher degree by research provided the activities and supervision are in line with the Practicum Standards.
4. RPL towards the exercise physiology practicum requirements may only be awarded where:
  - The placement meets the specifications of clause 2 above,
  - The practicum requirements for exercise science had been completed prior to undertaking the placement; and
  - The placement has not been, or will not be, awarded RPL towards the exercise science practicum requirements.
5. All RPL processes must be undertaken in line with the university's approved RPL policy.

## 3.0 Definitions

*All terms are defined as per the ESSA glossary*

**Accredited Exercise Scientist (AES)** – An individual holding current AES practitioner accreditation with ESSA

**Accredited Exercise Physiologist (AEP)** – An individual holding current AEP practitioner accreditation with ESSA

**Active Clinical practice** – Practice in which the individual uses their professional knowledge and skills in the direct provision of exercise physiology services to clients at a minimum of 200 hours within the last 12 months.

**AES Standards** – The Accredited Exercise Scientist Professional Standards for Accreditation

**AEP Standards** – The Accredited Exercise Physiologist Professional Standards for Accreditation

**Clinical practice** – Practice in which the individual uses their professional knowledge and skills in the direct provision of exercise physiology services to clients.

**Delivery mode** – The way a course of study is delivered to students. Modes include face-to-face, online, blended, and intensive.

**Evidence of completion** – Paper to be signed off by the supervisor

**Practicum** – Supervised work experience completed at a placement site as part of the course of study. May also be known as work integrated learning.

**Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)** – Assessment of an individual’s relevant prior learning and experience against the requirements or competencies of a course of study to determine eligibility for advanced standing or credit.

**Simulated Learning Environment (SLE)** – A fully interactive practice and learning environment that replicates substantial aspects of a real-world experience, e.g. mannequins, part-task trainers, simulated patients, or computer-generated simulations. It does not include peers practicing skills during a laboratory class.

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