



# Course Accreditation Guide

## For Education Providers

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**ESSA:**  
EXERCISE & SPORTS SCIENCE AUSTRALIA

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# INTRODUCTION

The Course Accreditation Guide (“The Guide”) provides education providers with information to support applying for courses to be accredited with Exercise & Sports Science Australia (ESSA).

It provides supporting information to explain the course accreditation requirements outlined in the following documents:

- [Course Accreditation Requirements](#)
- [Course Accreditation Standards](#)
- [Practicum Standards](#)

The Guide also explains the processes for:

- Applying for course accreditation
- Applying for reaccreditation
- Making course changes during an accreditation cycle

The Guide should be read in full before an education provider completes an application form for either qualifying or full accreditation.

# 1. COURSE ACCREDITATION OVERVIEW

## Levels of Course Accreditation

There are two levels of course accreditation available:

- Exercise Science
- Exercise Physiology

A course submitted for accreditation at the level of both exercise science and exercise physiology must meet both the AES Professional Standards and the AEP professional standards. **Students graduating from a postgraduate course accredited at the level of exercise physiology must also have met the prerequisite AES Professional Standards and associated practicum requirements to be eligible for AEP credentialing with ESSA.**

Education providers must demonstrate meeting all the Course Accreditation Requirements, Course Accreditation Standards and Practicum Standards for the relevant accreditation level to be awarded accreditation.

## Domains of Accreditation Requirements

The accreditation requirements are structured in four domains:

1. General Requirements
2. Course of Study
3. Resources
4. Practicum Program

Education providers must demonstrate and provide evidence of student attainment of the *guiding principle* and *elements of professional practice* for each of the standards within the relevant Professional Standards for Accreditation documents.

## Roles and Responsibilities

### ESSA will:

- Appoint an appropriately qualified team of course reviewers
- Assess in a timely fashion
- Provide clear explanation of assessment findings at each stage of the process
- Provide guidance and recommendations for the purposes of improving the course and the quality of graduates
- Provide fair and equitable assessments and outcomes
- Engage in a respectful, professional, and collaborative manner with course providers
- Be available to work collaboratively with each course provider including answering questions, providing clarification, or establishing optimal approaches for unique circumstances

### Education Providers will:

- Provide all information requested

Provide responses and requested information in a timely manner. Delays in responses at any stage of the process may impact the outcome date for the course.

Ensure information provided is accurate, current and is not misleading. Education providers will notify ESSA in a timely manner where information relevant to accreditation changes.

### **Course reviewers**

ESSA maintains a pool of academic and practitioner professionals with current experience in the exercise and sports science field. Reviewers are allocated to applications based on availability, expertise, and conflicts of interest.

Course reviewers are valued volunteers of the organisation bound by confidentiality and Codes of Conduct.

## **Public Statements Regarding the Accreditation Status of Courses**

The accreditation status of all courses must be accurately reflected on all website, print, electronic or other material, both internal and external to the provider. The accreditation status will be one of the following:

- (i) **Qualifying accreditation:** Courses that ESSA has agreed are eligible to apply for full accreditation.
- (ii) **Provisional accreditation:** Courses that have been formally assessed and have conditions imposed upon them that must be met to achieve full accreditation.
- (iii) **Full accreditation:** Courses that have met all requirements.

## 2. COURSE ACCREDITATION DOMAINS

### Domain 1: General Requirements

Accreditation is only applicable to the education provider and the specified courses, facilities and campuses that are listed within the application.

For education providers with courses delivered across multiple campuses, or where there is intent to deliver a course across multiple campuses in the future, please refer to the ESSA Multiple Campus Policy. This Policy must be read in conjunction with the course accreditation requirements.

#### Course Titling

Courses must have a discrete name and identifying code (or supplementary statement) that is listed on the student academic transcript, and testamurs which relate exclusively to those students who have met the requirements of the course being considered for accreditation. Where the course of study is offered at multiple campuses, it must be identified at which campus the student completed the course of study.

#### Admission Requirements

##### English Language Requirement

Students must have sufficient proficiency in English to meet the demands of the course- see ESSA English Language Policy. Education providers are responsible for ensuring the proficiency and having sufficient safeguards in place to enable students to progress to course completion.

##### Postgraduate Courses in Exercise Physiology

Education providers submitting a postgraduate course for accreditation at the level of exercise physiology must ensure that students graduating from the course have also met the AES Professional Standards and associated practicum requirements.

##### **Failure to comply with this requirement may jeopardise the accreditation status of a course.**

Education providers may set their own verification process; however ESSA encourages providers to require individuals to obtain confirmation from ESSA prior to enrolling in the course. This could include:

- Obtaining a graduate entry (GE) assessment letter\*; or
- Obtaining AES status with ESSA

NB. Individuals who graduated from an ESSA accredited course are considered to have met the relevant Professional Standards for Accreditation and practicum requirements, regardless of when they graduated.

ESSA accepts no responsibility for a graduate being unable to obtain AEP credentialing if the student fails to meet the AES requirements before graduating from the accredited exercise physiology course.

\*Individuals with a not yet met GE assessment outcome will have deficiencies that must be addressed before they complete the post-graduate exercise physiology course.

### Domain 2: Course of Study

## **Pedagogical Design**

When viewing the structure of the course, it should be evident that foundational information is delivered early in the course with clear progression to more advanced concepts directly built upon by earlier information. Additionally, education providers should consider the appropriate time between the foundational and advanced concepts to ensure student knowledge isn't lost to a substantial gap between units.

The course design should also ensure student placement can be a meaningful experience by undertaking essential units of study to translate knowledge and skills, particularly those practical in nature.

Units of study that are included in a course as elective units, cannot be used towards meeting **any** of the accreditation standards.

## **Course Content**

Graduates are expected to be equipped to practise across a variety of client populations, practice settings and areas of practice.

Please refer to the following documents for information on relevant areas of practice:

- [ESSA Scopes of Practice](#)
- [Professional Standards for Accreditation Support Guides](#)

In terms of Exercise Physiology Professional Standards, it is expected that a variety of common pathologies are delivered across the course to appropriately prepare students with the knowledge and skills required to undertake placement in a safe environment.

## **Assessment**

ESSA's review of group assessments will consider how the academic unit has successfully determined that each student has adequately contributed towards the assessment activity and demonstrated achievement of the learning outcomes required.

## **Governance and Quality Assurance**

An action plan with outcomes should be provided that explains the structured and systematic external benchmarking of the assessment modalities.

## **Domain 3: Resources**

### **Multiple Campuses**

Courses delivered at multiple campuses must be provide campus specific information for each location. This should include:

- Reference to all components of Domain 3: Resources (Course Accreditation Requirements) for each campus
- Information demonstrating equivalency in the provision of sufficient resources

Courses delivered by distance (off-campus) are considered as a separate campus.

Please review the [Multi Campus Policy](#) for more information.

### **Academic Staffing**

The core academic staff are expected be responsible for the majority of teaching and associated academic and professional activities within the academic unit.



Academic units may draw on expertise from related schools, departments, or external experts to assist and support the delivery of a course. These staff must have an academic or practice background with evidence of ongoing scholarly activity that is authentic and relevant

- The application should address plans for ensuring continuing expertise where staff are a contracted appointment. ESSA will consider contract expiry dates
- All courses submitted for accreditation must have staff with experience and capacity to provide effective laboratory, tutorial, and practical learning activities

Applications should demonstrate the training, support, supervision, and professional development activities provided to support the development of staff teaching into the course.

Where fixed-term or casual appointments are engaged it is expected that:

- Qualifications and experience will be appropriate for the teaching activities undertaken
- The education provider supplies sufficient training, support, and supervision to ensure that teaching is delivered at a standard commensurate with the expected learning outcomes

### **Exercise Science Course Staff Profile**

The application must address:

- a) Staff who produce research outcomes that allow the effective translation of research into teaching, with at least one research active staff member appointed at Level D or above.  
Academic staff responsible for the management of the exercise science practicum program. The time allocated to this role must be proportionate to the number of students enrolled in the course and be sufficient to ensure that the practicum program is managed effectively
- c) Staff who teach the fundamental domains of exercise science, i.e. motor control and learning, biomechanics, exercise physiology, and sport and/or exercise psychology must have a relevant background in those areas
- d) Staff members from another academic unit can provide expertise for one or more of the exercise science sub discipline areas. However, staff coordinating units that cover the four sub discipline areas must be continuing or fixed term staff, i.e. they cannot be casual or sessional staff

### **Exercise Physiology Course Staff Profile**

The intent of this requirement is to ensure that students are taught by staff who can articulate their clinical experience into their teaching. It will be expected that these staff contribute to the pedagogical development of the AEP-specific curriculum.

The active clinical practice requirement can be met by one, or a combination of multiple clinically active AEPs noting:

- Of the minimum 200 hours of active clinical practice required, up to 100 hours can be undertaken in clinical research with clients, or similar activities
- The time of academic staff responsible for the management of the exercise physiology practicum program allocated to this role must be proportionate to the number of students enrolled in the course and be sufficient to ensure that the practicum program is managed effectively



For a course submitted for exercise science and exercise physiology accreditation, the application must include the requirements outlined both the Exercise Science Course Staff Profile and Exercise Physiology Course Staff Profile outlined above.

### **Support Staff**

The academic unit must be supported by additional staff including enough technical, IT and administrative support staff to adequately meet the needs of students and academic staff within the academic unit.

### **Facilities**

The academic unit may nominate the use of facilities that are not exclusive for use by the academic unit. However, if facilities are not owned by the education provider, there must be sufficient evidence of contractual arrangements for the use of the facility, and adequate, uninterrupted timetabling for its use.

## **Domain 4: Practicum Program**

A well-resourced practicum program is a crucial part of applications. Course providers must provide detailed information about how students and supervisors are supported. This should include:

- How risks to workplace, supervisor, student, and client well-being are mitigated
- How students are adequately prepared for each practicum experience giving due consideration to their stage of learning and expected learning outcomes
- How the program ensures a sustainable and broad range of placement sites
- Resources and support available to supervisors and students

N.B. Passive observational practicum hours **cannot** be counted towards the required minimum number of practicum hours. Practicum hours completed as part of the degree and submitted toward practicum requirements should be unpaid experiences. The intent is that practicum is a learning opportunity for students, free from the restrictions of performance and financial expectations. Please note this does not apply to hours submitted for RPL or for experiences outside of those submitted for accreditation.

### ***Exercise Science***

- Exercise assessment, prescription and delivery activities must be clearly outlined
- Evidence must be verified by the practicum supervisor and practicum coordinator
- All evidence should not include client identification
- Where the placement activity is categorised under the 80 hours of assessment, prescription, and delivery but the supervisor qualification only meets the 60 hours of exercise science, the hours should be allocated based on the supervisor. Please note an oversight supervision arrangement would be required for the hours to be included in the 80 EAPD hours category.

### ***Exercise Physiology***

Practicum Evidence should address the following components:

- Primary reason for the service/primary condition being treated should be clearly identified\* This should link to the areas of practice (see table below)
- Key comorbidities should be outlined
- Exercise assessment, prescription and delivery activities must be clearly outlined
- Supervisor qualification information

\*This supports real-world skills which requires AEPs to clearly identify the reason for referral and primary purpose of treatment sessions in case notes, treatment plans and reports. Feedback ESSA receives from employers and regulators is that this is an area AEPs need to improve on.

CORE	NICHE	EMERGING
Acute and sub-acute conditions such as non-specific musculoskeletal pain and injuries	Chronic kidney conditions	COVID-19 rehabilitation
Chronic conditions such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» cardiovascular diseases</li> <li>» metabolic diseases</li> <li>» chronic musculoskeletal conditions</li> <li>» chronic respiratory conditions</li> <li>» neurological conditions</li> </ul>	Women's health	
Mental illnesses	Autoimmune conditions	
Cancers		
Chronic pain conditions		
Healthy ageing and aged related conditions and illnesses		

*\*This table provides examples of current areas of practice and is not an exhaustive list. The areas of practice are fluid and dynamic and will be reviewed after 12 months based on industry changes.*

## Oversight Supervision

An oversight supervisor is intended to provide the exercise and sport science or exercise physiology context to a placement experience where no suitable supervisor can be available. An oversight supervisor may be the practicum coordinator, another member of the academic staff at the university, or another practitioner/accredited professional.

In all cases, the oversight arrangement should be established prior to the commencement of the placement and the direct supervisor should be aware of the purpose of the oversight arrangement. An agreed timeframe, method of communication and expectations should be agreed upon by all parties involved.

The education provider should ensure there is record of the arrangement and communication that has occurred as evidence of appropriate oversight supervision.

## Practicum Evidence

- Education providers may use ESSA's Record of Supervised Experience form as the sole form of practicum evidence. One per placement site should be completed
- Education providers may use their own practicum recording system so if it the address the key practicum components outlined in the Practicum Standards and Record of Supervised Experience
- Records must be accurate and verified
- Records must be retained for a period of 3 years and supplied to ESSA upon request

## 3. COURSE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

### 1. Overview

Course accreditation consists of 5 stages for a new course, i.e. including qualifying accreditation, and 4 stages for re-accreditation, i.e. re-accreditation commences at stage 2:

**Stage 1:** Application for qualifying accreditation (for new courses)

**Stage 2:** Application for full accreditation / Application for re-accreditation

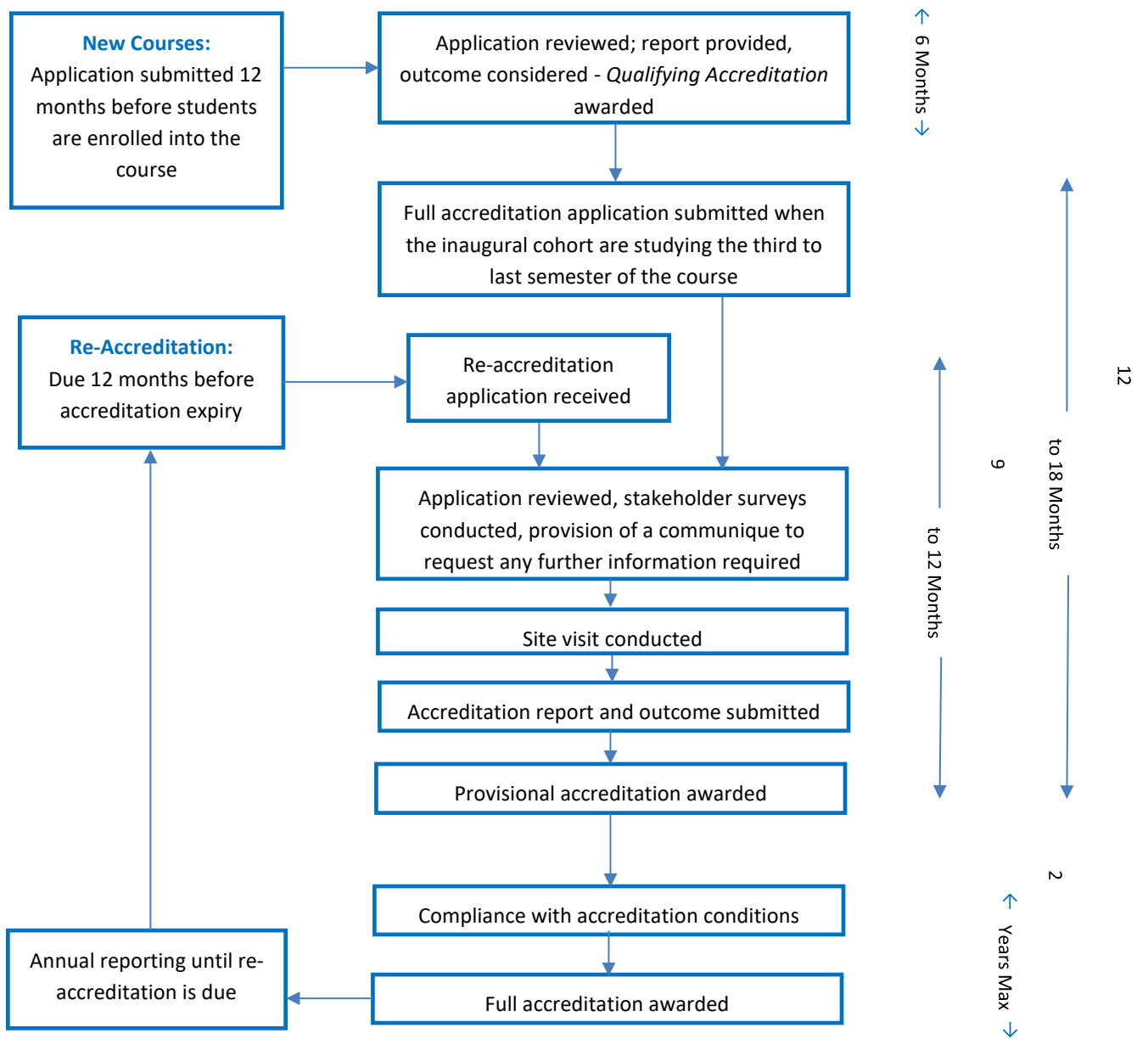
**Stage 3:** Application outcome – award of provisional, full accreditation, or declined accreditation

**Stage 4:** Maintaining accreditation (compliance with accreditation conditions, annual reporting, and notification of course changes)

**Stage 5:** Re-accreditation

Applications can take 12-18 months to finalise.

**Figure 1. Possible pathways to full accreditation**



**2.**

N.B. Further steps including but not limited to additional stakeholder engagement and communiques may be required



## General Information

<b>Application Form</b>	<p>Please complete all sections of the relevant application form and attach supporting documents prior to submitting.</p> <p>Please view the application checklist at the end of the form to ensure all items have been included.</p>
<b>Correspondence</b>	<p>One person should be nominated by the education providers to be the primary contact for the application. ESSA may engage with other persons across the course of the application assessment as needed.</p> <p>All correspondence with ESSA will be through the course accreditation staff only.</p>
<b>Application Submissions</b>	<p>Please submit applications by the agreed date via courier in the following form:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One electronic (provided on a USB) copy of the application and supporting documents</li> </ul> <p>Please ensure the application includes a table of contents, sequential page numbers and tabbed and labelled dividers are inserted in between each section of each document</p> <p>Applications should be addressed as follows:  <i>For the attention of the Course Accreditation Program Manager</i>  <i>Exercise &amp; Sports Science Australia</i>  <i>9 Hercules Street</i>  <i>Hamilton</i>  <i>QLD 4007</i></p> <p>Documents provided as evidence must be clearly labelled and referenced within the application submission. Units of study must appear in the appendices in the sequence they are delivered within the course, and each unit outline must be clearly identified within the table of contents. Unit outline titles must be consistent throughout the documentation. A list of evidence attachments must also be provided</p> <p>Incomplete applications, applications including large quantities of irrelevant information and/or documentation, and applications that are not presented as requested above will be returned and an administration fee incurred.</p>
<b>Accredited Courses Listed on ESSA's Website</b>	<p>All courses awarded qualifying, provisional, or full accreditation will be listed on ESSA's website.</p>

<b>Application Fees</b>	<p>A Schedule of Fees is available on ESSA’s website. Fees received for course accreditation do not support any other business activities of ESSA; they are only used to subsidise activities for course accreditation.</p> <p>ESSA will raise an invoice for the application fee once the application has been received, unless agreed in writing with the education provider beforehand.</p> <p>Full payment of the application fee is required before processing of the application can commence. ESSA takes no responsibility for delays in commencing the application review where the education provider has failed to provide timely full payment of the application fee.</p>
<b>Application Submission Review</b>	<p>ESSA’s course accreditation team will undertake an initial review of the application within two weeks of receipt to ensure that the Application Form has been completed in full, and that all supporting evidence has been provided. Incomplete applications or applications containing documentation irrelevant to accreditation or that are not presented as requested, will be returned and an administration fee will be incurred.</p> <p>The application will then be forwarded on to the review team for their evaluation.</p>

## Course Reviewers

### Team Selection

ESSA’s course accreditation staff selects review teams from a pre-approved pool of reviewers based on availability, expertise, and conflicts of interest. A mix of academic and practitioner reviewers, and ESSA course accreditation staff will be included in each team.

A senior and experienced academic reviewer will be nominated as the Review Team Chair. Where possible, the Chair for full accreditation applications will have been involved in the qualifying accreditation application review. The Review Team Chair will have overall responsibility for the conduct of the application review and the site visit.

ESSA reserves the right to invite additional expertise to participate in a review of an application (from either within or external to the pool of course accreditation reviewers); and observers who are not members of the review team to attend for quality assurance purposes (e.g. Course Accreditation Committee members, Accreditation Council members, ESSA Board Directors, ESSA CEO), or other new reviewers for training purposes. ESSA will consult with the education provider on this in advance of the site visit.

### Conflicts of Interest

Reviewers are:

- Required to inform the Course Accreditation Program Manager of any potential conflicts of interest they may have with an education provider (and its staff) that are being considered for accreditation, before accepting an invitation to participate in an application.

- Not eligible to participate on a review team for an education provider being considered for accreditation if they have previously been employed by the education provider, either as a contracted or sessional staff member.
- Must not have been involved in benchmarking or course advisory with the course submitted for accreditation

□

Education providers should review the Course Accreditation Reviewer list on the [ESSA website](#) and advise of any conflicts of interest they want considered in team selection.

If the education provider has conflict of interest concerns with the selected review team, they must notify the Course Accreditation Program Manager within two weeks of receiving notification. The conflict of interest will be discussed with the education provider, the Review Team Chair, and if necessary, the Course Accreditation Committee. If all parties agree that the conflict (perceived or otherwise) will not impact the application proceedings, the reviewer selected will remain. If any party deems that the conflict (perceived or otherwise) has the potential to impact on the application proceedings, another reviewer will be selected for the review team.

## **Confidentiality**

All reviewers are required to sign a Code of Conduct that incorporates a confidentiality clause.

All information provided by the education provider will be used solely for the purpose of reviewing the application. All information provided by the education provider will be kept confidential and will not be shared with any third party (other than the review team), without ESSA first seeking written consent from the applicant.

The only exception to seeking consent and sharing information with a third party is where a review team may need to seek expert advice from ESSA's other course accreditation reviewers from time-to-time, on an as needs basis.

Review team members will not disclose to any person or education provider any confidential information that they have acquired by virtue of their position as a course accreditation reviewer. Nor will any review team member use any information acquired for their personal, financial, or other benefit, or for the advantage of other persons or education providers. The only exception to this is where a review team member has sought permission directly from the author/s. In this instance, the authorship of the documentation must be acknowledged in line with common professional practice.

The Code of Conduct specifies that review team members must store application documents and supporting material in a secure manner. Paper and electronic documents are required to be destroyed via secure waste management or returned to the Course Accreditation Program Manager, within six months of an application being finalised.

## **Compensation/Gifts**

ESSA representatives cannot request or accept compensation or gifts for any activities undertaken that are related to accreditation.

## **Stage 1: Application for Qualifying Accreditation**



## Overview

All new courses must commence with a qualifying accreditation application.

Qualifying accreditation enables a course structure and plans for meeting accreditation requirements to be reviewed before students are enrolled into a course. The award of qualifying accreditation following provision of satisfactory plans and timelines for compliance provides both the education provider and students with some assurance that a course is progressing towards meeting accreditation requirements.

Before applying for qualifying accreditation, the education provider is expected to have read and understood the requirements for full accreditation. The application for qualifying accreditation must include plans that demonstrate how the course will progress to meeting all accreditation requirements by the time an application for full accreditation is submitted. Information required for an application for qualifying accreditation will include:

- Details of the course to be considered, e.g., course name and code, duration, mode of delivery, accreditation level sought, date of commencement
- Proposed student enrolment numbers for the first four years including commencing and continuing student load (student numbers and EFTSL's)
- External consultation, and curriculum development expertise that has been engaged to develop the course
- An outline of the course structure
- An outline of each unit
- Planned benchmarking activities
- The current academic staffing profile, and plans for future appointments
- The availability of existing and planned facilities and equipment
- Strategies and staffing to develop the practicum program

## Application Submission

The education provider must apply for qualifying accreditation at least 12 months before students are first enrolled into the course. It is in the education provider's best interests to obtain qualifying accreditation before the education provider submits the course for formal institutional approval. The education provider must provide the Course Accreditation Program Manager with **at least three months' notice** before a qualifying accreditation application is submitted.

The qualifying accreditation application process is anticipated to take approximately four to six months to complete.

A review team will be selected from ESSA's pool of course accreditation reviewers to review the application (please refer to *Selection of Review Teams* on page 23). A desk-top review of the application will be undertaken by the review team and the Course Accreditation Program Manager. Wherever possible, at least one member of the review team will also participate as a reviewer when the course is being considered for full accreditation.

Further information may be sought from the education provider, if necessary. Any additional information required must be provided within 10 working days of being requested. Site visits are not undertaken for qualifying accreditation.

A report and recommended outcome will be prepared and reviewed by the Course Accreditation Committee. The Course Accreditation Committee will then deliberate to decide an outcome for the application. The report, including the outcome for the qualifying accreditation application is subsequently forwarded to the education provider (see Stage 3).

## Stage 2: Application for Full Accreditation / Re-Accreditation

### Timing of an Accreditation Submission for a New Course

New courses must be submitted as soon as the inaugural cohort of students commence studying the third to last semester of the course.

### Timing of a Re-Accreditation Submission

Reaccreditation applications must be submitted no later than 28 February of final year of the accreditation period.

### Notice of Intent to Submit an Application

Education providers must liaise with the Course Accreditation Program Manager **four months before the application is to be submitted**, to schedule a mutually agreeable submission.

### Initial Application Review

Review team members undertake an independent evaluation of the application. These evaluations are collated to form the initial communique.

### Initial Communique

ESSA will send an initial communique to education provider within approximately three months of the application being received.

The communique requests additional information with a typical response time of 20 working days

The site visit will only be confirmed once the review team are satisfied with the further information provided.

### Site Visit

The purpose of the site visit is to:

- Provide further information for the review team
- Confirm that content within the application accurately reflects the course and the academic unit
- Verify that the course complies with accreditation requirements
- Ensure the education provider's policies and processes associated with accreditation are implemented consistently
- Consult further with the course leader and coordinators on points for clarification and areas of concern
- Interview key stakeholders, including academic staff, students, and practicum supervisors to validate the outcomes of the course (in as far as is practically possible for a new course)

Site visits for new courses will not be undertaken until there are students undertaking the second to last semester of the course.

ESSA undertakes in-person site visits over two consecutive days. Courses delivered across multiple campuses may require longer site visits. These will be organised in succession where possible.

Courses that are assessed as low risk will be offered virtual site visits, with sessions to take place within a specified two-week period. In these circumstances an ESSA representative will visit the facility in person to take photos/videos of the facilities for course team review.

The following parameters are utilised to determine the site visit modality:

- I. First time university has applied for accreditation at that level
- II. Major change in infrastructure potentially affecting space and personnel to deliver course (i.e. if a campus moves, or includes new buildings)
- III. Issues with current accreditation that have been noted and required remediation – e.g. Failed audits, failure to meet reporting requirements
- IV. A new campus that a program is being delivered (even if other courses at a “home” campus have been accredited)
- V. Increases in student numbers (>50%)

### Site Visit Dates

Tentative dates for the site visit will be scheduled within approximately 6 weeks of application submission. Final site visit dates will be confirmed with at least 4 weeks' notice.

### Site Visit Schedule

ESSA will provide a Site Visit Schedule once the site visit date has been confirmed. This includes:

- Detailed instructions regarding preparations the education provider is to make
- Resources that will need to be made available at the site visit
- Overview of who needs to participate

ESSA reserves the right to vary the Site Visit Schedule at its discretion.

The education provider must provide:

- The names of all participants for each session
- A dedicated meeting room for the whole site visit (with power outlets and internet connect) that is sufficient to hold all session attendees
- Morning tea, lunch, and afternoon tea for the review team

The Course Provider will need to review the site visit schedule and add the names of all participants that are attending each session. **This must be returned to ESSA no later than one week prior to the site visit.** Failure to do so may result in the cancellation of site visit, additional fees, and delay to application progression.

ESSA organises and pays for all accommodation and travel of the review team.

### Site Visit Sessions

The review team will hold a series of sessions with different stakeholders. This includes:

- Currently enrolled students (representatives from each year of the course)
- Practicum supervisors (currently supervising students)
- Practicum program staff (e.g. coordinators, WIL staff)
- Academic staff
- Course leadership staff

The review team will take notes of all meeting sessions. All meeting session notes are confidential and are not disclosed to the education provider.

A concluding session will be held with the course leadership where a summary of the feedback obtained, and evidence reviewed will be provided. All feedback is deidentified and does not constitute a formal outcome.

A formal response (Accreditation Report) will be sent following the site visit.

### **Accreditation Report**

Accreditation reports are generally finalised within six weeks of the site visit. Reports are submitted on behalf of the course review team to a Course Accreditation Committee representative for review before being sent to the education provider for response.

The accreditation report contains two appendices:

- Appendix 1 - general observations and feedback, and suggested quality improvement recommendations. No response to items listed within Appendix 1 is required.
- Appendix 2- items that the education provider will be required to respond to. These items will relate to accreditation requirements that the review team are not convinced have yet been met.

Education providers should provide their response in a timely manner to prevent delays. This response is considered by the review team as part of the final recommendation to the Course Accreditation Committee.

ESSA may send a follow-up communique to the education provider if the original response is deemed insufficient, or if further clarification is required to make a final recommendation.

### **Stage 3: Application Outcomes**

ESSA's Accreditation Council are the designated approval authority for course accreditation outcomes. The Course Accreditation Committee will finalise all application outcomes and submit to the Accreditation council for final decision.

#### **Qualifying Accreditation Application Outcomes**

Qualifying accreditation is awarded where there is a reasonable expectation that the education provider can provide a sustainable course of sufficient quality that meets all accreditation requirements in by the time the inaugural cohort complete a course.

NB. Holding qualifying accreditation is not assurance that the course will be approved for full accreditation.

Possible outcomes for the application review include:

#### ***Qualifying accreditation***

Successful courses will be listed on the ESSA website as being awarded qualifying accreditation.

The education provider is required to continue progressing towards meeting accreditation requirements and the milestones that were submitted in the qualifying accreditation application.

Student cohorts graduating from a course that has qualifying accreditation status are not eligible for accreditation credentialing with ESSA under the recognition of having completed an accredited course.

### **Declined Accreditation Outcome**

Providers will be notified in writing that a declined outcome has been approved. ESSA will provide an objective rationale for declined applications in the outcome letter.

### **Full Accreditation Outcomes**

Possible outcomes for the application review include:

#### **Provisional Accreditation**

A provisional accreditation outcome indicates that a course has conditions applied based on changes proposed as part of the accreditation report or subsequent communication. The purpose of the conditions is to ensure implementation of these changes and that all accreditation requirements have been sufficiently addressed. The education provider is required to comply with all conditions listed in the outcome letter within the specified timelines, to be eligible for full accreditation.

Provisional accreditation will be effective\* from the date listed on the outcome letter. The letter will also include the names and codes of all courses the accreditation applies to, the respective course structures, the campuses at which the courses are offered, the conditions and the timeframes in which to meet them.

Provisional accreditation status can be held for a maximum of two years. In all instances that provisional accreditation is awarded, ESSA reserves the right to undertake further stakeholder surveys, teleconferences and/or a second site visit, if necessary, prior to the provisional accreditation expiry and before full accreditation is awarded.

The requirement for a second site visit will be determined on a case-by-case basis dependent on the conditions imposed. If a second site visit is required, the education provider will incur an additional fee to cover the cost.

#### **Full Accreditation**

Full accreditation is awarded where all requirements have been met. Full accreditation is effective\* from the date listed on the outcome letter. The letter will also include the names and codes of all courses the accreditation applies to, the respective course structures, and the campuses at which the courses are offered.

\*For an approved outcome to be effective education providers are required to accept the terms of the outcome.

### **Declined Accreditation Outcome**

Providers will be notified in writing that a declined outcome may be recommended to the Course Accreditation Committee and allowed opportunity to respond within a specified timeframe.

This response will be considered in the outcome. ESSA will provide an objective rationale for declined applications in the outcome letter.

Education providers have the right to appeal decision in line with ESSA's Course Accreditation Appeals Policy (see Appeals Section).

### **Eligibility of Graduates for ESSA Individual Credentialing**

Students graduating from a course with either provisional or full accreditation status will be eligible to apply\* for individual accreditation credentialing with ESSA via the accredited course pathway.

N.B. For new courses that have achieved accreditation for the first time, provisional accreditation must be awarded before the inaugural cohort graduating from the course is eligible to apply for accreditation.

\*Additional practitioner eligibility requirements apply, such as recency of practice and fit and proper person status.

### **Period of Full Accreditation**

Course accreditation is valid for a maximum period of five years (inclusive). The accreditation is valid for all students who are enrolled in the course during the accreditation period. However, where a course has been awarded provisional accreditation, the accreditation expiry for full accreditation will be up to a maximum of five years including the provisional accreditation period.

## **Stage 4: Maintaining Accreditation**

Education providers are responsible for complying with the following requirements to maintain their accreditation status. Please contact the Course Accreditation Program Manager as soon as possible if there are any concerns about meeting these requirements

### **Students Graduating from the Course**

All students graduating from an accredited course must have completed the course structure that has been approved for accreditation.

### **Accreditation Conditions Imposed**

Where accreditation conditions are applied the education provider must comply fully with all conditions and within the required timeframes.

### **Annual Fees**

Annual fees are required to be paid in full by 1 June each year. An invoice for the annual fee will be provided four weeks prior to the annual fee due date.

### **Annual Reporting**

Education providers are required to submit an annual report by close of business on 1 June each year. ESSA will forward the annual report template at least two months before the due date.

One annual report form must be provided for each course that is accredited with ESSA. Providers must also report on campus specific information where a course is offered at multiple campuses.

ESSA reviews annual reports to confirm all information has been included and identify if any content requires clarification. Additional information or evidence may be requested, to be provided within 20 working days. Recommended outcomes will then be considered by the Course Accreditation Committee.

If there are concerns with the information provided, ESSA may review the accreditation status of the course.

## Course Change Notifications

Education providers wishing to change key course components must notify ESSA via a Course Change Notification at least **twelve months before the planned implementation date**. This includes but is not limited to:

- Academic staffing
- Enrolments
- Course structure
- Curriculum
- Assessment
- Practicum placements (where there is a significant loss)
- Course and/or unit codes/names

The Course Accreditation Committee must provide approval for the changes to be implemented.

Fee may apply for course change reviews. The fee will be dependent on the type and extent of the proposed changes.

## Major Course Changes

Major changes (i.e., capacity to impact on the ability of the education provider to meet course objectives) may require a full accreditation application process.

Major changes may include but is not limited to:

- Change in course duration, format, structure, mode, or place of delivery
- Significant modification in course objectives or educational philosophy
- Significant increase in student enrolment numbers
- Changes affecting academic staffing, practicum placements and supervisors, facilities, or resources

## Future Changes to Accreditation Requirements

ESSA undertakes periodic reviews of the Course accreditation Requirements and Professional Standards for Accreditation, outlined in the Standards & Accreditation Lifecycle Model.

Education providers are provided a standardised timeframe to transition (typically 18 months) and implement (typically 12 months) updated requirements. All courses must be compliant within the timeframes to retain accreditation status.

Education providers will be required to submit transition and implementation plans as part of the annual report process. This should detail the type and extent of the changes to the course.

## Stage 5: Re-Accreditation

It is the education provider's responsibility to ensure the ongoing accreditation of a course to enable the course to continue to be marketed as an accredited course.

## Extension of an Accreditation Period

ESSA may grant extensions in exceptional circumstances only.



## Applying for Re-Accreditation

Reaccreditation applications are considered full accreditation applications and will follow the same process and attract full course accreditation fees.

Reaccreditation applications **must be submitted at the beginning of the final 12 months of the accreditation period**. Education providers must contact the Course Accreditation Program Manager at least 4 months before this to agree on a submission date. This date **must be no later than 28 February in the final year of accreditation**.

Failure to submit a re-accreditation application within the required timeframe may mean applications cannot be finalised before course expiry. In circumstances where an application is not finalised at the expiry education providers are responsible for communicating this to students and on all website, print, electronic or other material, both internal and external to the provider. ESSA accepts no responsibility for an application not being finalised before the accreditation expiry if education providers do not meet reasonable timeframes.

## Non-Compliance with Requirements

Failure to meet or maintain requirements within the required timeframes (including but not limited to course conditions, annual reports, payment of annual fees, course changes, course accreditation requirements, Professional Standards for Accreditation) may result in accreditation status being removed.

It is the education provider's responsibility to inform all students enrolled in the course regarding the removed accreditation status. The education provider indemnifies ESSA against any claims made by any party (financial or otherwise) if the accreditation status is removed due to non-compliance.

Education providers whose course accreditation has been removed must go through the full accreditation application process to be reconsidered for accreditation.

## Quality Assurance of the Course Accreditation Process

ESSA is committed to delivering a high-quality course accreditation process that is transparent, consistent, fair, and equitable.

ESSA welcomes feedback on the accreditation process to continually improve the course accreditation process. Please complete the feedback evaluation at the end of the accreditation process.

Feedback can also be provided to the Course Accreditation Program Manager at any time.

## Complaints & Appeals

Complaints about the course accreditation process should be submitted in writing to the Accreditation Council c/o the Regulations Manager, Carly Ryan - [Carly.ryan@essa.org.au](mailto:Carly.ryan@essa.org.au)

Education providers have the right to appeal a course accreditation outcome. Details can be found on the [Appeals \(essa.org.au\)](https://www.essa.org.au) webpage.

## Summary of Updates

Date	Version Number	Details
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December 2019	V5	Amendments to sections under Item 5.1 Recognition of Prior Learning (page 13)
November 2022	V6	Updated to reflect new Course Accreditation Requirements, Course Accreditation Standards and Practicum Standards documents

## GLOSSARY

Academic unit	The core operational unit of Exercise Science, which may sit within a department, school, or other individual academic entity within the education institution.
Accreditation condition	Action that the education provider must take within a specified timeframe to meet accreditation requirements.
Accredited Exercise Scientist (AES)	An individual who has current ESSA AES credentialing
Accredited Exercise Physiologist (AEP)	An individual who has current ESSA AEP credentialing.
Accreditation reviewers	Pool of course accreditation reviewers from which review teams are selected.
Accreditation Review Team	Course accreditation reviewers who have been selected to review an application.
Accreditation requirement	Mandatory requirements to obtain course accreditation.
Accreditation status	Qualifying, provisional or full accreditation as relevant.
Active clinical practice	This active clinical practice time relates to the requirement for the equivalent one full-time AEP being able to demonstrate the completion of at least 200 hours of active clinical practice in the last 12 months. This requirement may be met by one, or multiple clinically active AEP staff.
Advanced standing	A form of credit for any previous learning. Also see recognition of prior learning.
AHPRA	The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency
Assessment	A process to determine a student's achievement of expected learning outcomes and may include a range of written and oral methods and practice or demonstration.
Australian Qualification Framework (AQF)	Australia's national framework for regulated qualifications providing a nationally consistent definition for each qualification type and level.
CHESMS	The Council of Heads of Exercise, Sport, and Movement Science.
Course	Units of study or subjects that combined form the requirements for the award of the qualification.
Discipline	Refers to a defined branch of study or learning.
Education Provider	The academic institution governing the operation of the academic unit.
EFTSL	Equivalent full-time student load.
Elective	A unit of study or subject that is not a mandatory requirement of the course, but that contributes to the award requirements.
Formal learning	Formal learning is the learning that takes place through a structured program of learning that leads to the full or partial achievement of an officially accredited qualification.
Graduate outcomes	Knowledge and skills graduates have acquired and are able to apply and demonstrate upon completion of a course of study.

Professional attributes	Qualities and skills individuals should demonstrate to gain an ESSA accreditation.
Informal learning	Gained through work, social, family, hobby or leisure activities and experiences. Unlike formal or non-formal learning, informal learning is not organised or externally structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support.
Integrated knowledge	Combines two or more kinds of knowledge and concepts (e.g. technical and theoretical).
Knowledge	Refers to what a graduate knows and understands and can be described in terms of depth, breadth, kinds of knowledge and complexity.
Learning Outcomes	The expression of the set of knowledge, skills and the application of the knowledge and skills a person has acquired and is able to demonstrate because of learning.
NASRHP	The National Alliance of Self-Regulating Health Professions.
New course	Any course that has been offered for a period of six months or less or has substantially different course content or objectives from any course previously offered.
Non formal learning	Learning that takes place through a structured program of learning but does not lead to an officially accredited qualification.
Practical knowledge and skills	Are concrete or hands-on knowledge and skills.
Practicum	Supervised work experience completed at a placement site as part of the course of study. May also be known as Work Integrated Learning (WIL).
Practicum Supervisor	An appropriately qualified professional overseeing a student undertaking practicum.
Qualifying Accreditation	The process for courses seeking accreditation for the first time.
Recognition of prior learning (RPL)	An assessment process that involves assessment of an individual's relevant prior learning (including formal, informal, and non-formal learning) to determine the credit outcomes of an individual application for credit (National Quality Council Training Packages glossary).
Research	Comprises systematic experimental and theoretical work, application and/or development that results in an increase in the dimensions of knowledge.
Skills	Refer to what a graduate can do. They can be described in terms of kinds and complexity and include cognitive skills, technical skills, communication skills, creative skills, interpersonal skills, and generic skills.
Simulated Learning Environments (SLE)	A technique for practice and learning that replaces and amplifies real experiences with guided ones, often "immersion" in nature,

that evoke or replicate substantial aspects of the real world in full interactive fashion.<sup>1</sup>

TEQSA

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency

Testamur

An official certification document that confirms that a qualification has been awarded to an individual.

Unit of Study

An individual subject (sometimes referred to as a course) within a course of study.

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<sup>1</sup> Lateef, F. (2010). Simulation-based learning: Just like the real thing. *Journal of Emergencies, Trauma and Shock*, 3(4), 348–352. <http://doi.org/10.4103/0974-2700.70743>