

ARONAH Procedure for Accreditations for Naturopathy and Western Herbal Medicine Courses

Program accreditation is a multi-level process that aims to evaluate and continuously improve educational effectiveness based on firstly self-evaluation by the relevant program followed by verification and validation by the ARONAH Board.

ARONAH undertakes the accreditation function by:

- Developing Naturopathic Education Accreditation Standards, which set out the criteria for accreditation and establish the minimum education expected to be received by students who are studying to be primary health care clinicians.
- Maintaining an ARONAH Board. The ARONAH Board is responsible for interpreting the Standards, implementing the process of accreditation, and certifying the quality and integrity of Australian Naturopathic and Western Herbal Medicine programs through the evaluation of their compliance with the Education and Accreditation Standards.
- The ARONAH Board also provides recommendations to the ARONAH board on issues of effectiveness and program quality.

The purpose of the accreditation process is to determine that the Naturopathic and Western Herbal Medicine programs:

- Meet the criteria for Accreditation.
- Maintain conditions under which the achievement of these criteria can reasonably be expected.
- Are in fact achieving these criteria substantially.
- And can be expected to continue to achieve these objectives in the future.

The role of the ARONAH Board is to assess educational programs and the capacity of the educational institution offering the award to do so according to specified standards. The ARONAH Board considers not only the curriculum and the delivery of education but also the ability of the program to ensure quality outcomes, the resources available and the performance of graduates.

A program seeking accreditation is required to provide the ARONAH Board with a completed Accreditation Checklist and Application Form. This Accreditation Checklist and Application Form is made available on expression of interest in the accreditation process. The ARONAH Board will appoint an Assessment Team, that may include, but it not limited to: academics; practitioners; and lay persons. The Assessment Team is responsible for undertaking a comprehensive review of the program documents electronically and will also include a site visit to the educational institution. The Assessment Team will then prepare a report for consideration by the ARONAH Board with a recommendation for accreditation or otherwise.

How to apply

If you are an education provider and wish to apply for an accreditation assessment of your program of study, you need to contact the ARONAH Board and arrange submission of your application.

The Accreditation Standards are available on the ARONAH website and the accreditation process is available on this page.

Purpose of the document

The purpose of this information is to describe the process that the ARONAH Board will use to assess, accredit, and monitor Naturopathic and Western Herbal Medicine courses.

Establishing Assessment Teams

The ARONAH Board appoints and trains assessors and establishes Naturopathic and Western Herbal Medicine Assessment Teams.

Assessment Teams are responsible for assessing education providers and their Naturopathic and Western Herbal Medicine programs against the relevant Accreditation Standards.

The ARONAH Board will generally establish an Assessment Team for each program. Each Assessment Team will generally:

- (a) comprise two or three assessors, including one assessor who is a member of the ARONAH Board
- (b) be composed so that the combination of assessors provides coverage of the following areas:
 - sound knowledge of Naturopathic or Western Herbal Medicine clinical practice and experience in clinical education
 - current membership with ARONAH in each profession relevant to the program being assessed
 - sound knowledge of the Australian higher education system and experience in development and delivery of higher education in Australia
 - knowledge of education theory and experience in education design and assessment, and/or
 - sound knowledge of biomedical and clinical sciences.

When an education provider offers programs in more than one profession (Naturopathy or Western Herbal Medicine), the ARONAH Board may establish a single Assessment Team that includes one or more assessors who are Naturopaths or Western Herbal Medicine practitioners, and who are registered with ARONAH in each of the divisions of the register relevant to programs being assessed.

The ARONAH Board considers the establishment of a single Assessment Team is more cost effective and efficient than establishing an Assessment Team for each program offered by the same education provider.

Before confirming the establishment of any Assessment Team, the ARONAH Board will give the relevant education provider written notice about the proposed Team, including the names and relevant background of each assessor.

The education provider may submit details of any matters that it considers may influence or be perceived to influence the ability of any assessor on the proposed Assessment Team to fulfil his or her responsibilities objectively.

If the education provider provides details of any such matters, the ARONAH Board will take all reasonable steps to manage any actual, perceived or potential influence on the ability of any assessor to fulfil his or her responsibilities objectively before confirming establishment of the Assessment Team.

Appointment and training of assessors

The ARONAH Board will call for expressions of interest from suitably qualified and experienced individuals to be appointed by the committee as assessors.

Assessors may be members of the ARONAH Board, or individuals identified by the ARONAH Board as having the qualifications, skills and experience required for appointment as an assessor, such as:

- (a) sound knowledge of Naturopathic or Western Herbal Medicine clinical practice and experience in clinical education
- (b) current membership with ARONAH in the profession relevant to the program being assessed
- (c) sound knowledge of the Australian higher education system and experience in development and delivery of higher education in Australia
- (d) knowledge of education theory and experience in education design and assessment, and/or
- (e) sound knowledge of biomedical and clinical sciences.

Initial appointment as an assessor is subject to:

- (a) probity checks, such as criminal history check and declaration of private interests
- (b) satisfactory completion of assessor training, and
- (c) signing of a confidentiality agreement.

The term of appointment of each assessor is three years and each assessor must satisfactorily complete re-training before being eligible for re-appointment at the end of each three-year term. The confidentiality agreement is a legally binding agreement that covers confidentiality, privacy and intellectual property matters and remains effective even after the assessment is completed.

Management of assessor conflicts of interest and potential bias

Before and during their appointment, each assessor must disclose:

- (a) any personal or professional interest or duty relevant to the performance of their responsibilities as an assessor, and
- (b) any other matters that may influence or be perceived to influence their ability to perform their responsibilities objectively.

The ARONAH Board will take all reasonable steps to manage any actual, perceived, or potential influence on the

ability of any assessor to fulfil their responsibilities objectively.

Assessment Team Leader

After establishing each Assessment Team, the ARONAH Board will appoint a member of the team to lead that team (Assessment Team Leader). The Assessment Team Leader will generally be an assessor who has a sound knowledge of Naturopathic or Western Herbal Medicine education and an understanding of accreditation processes. The Assessment Team Leader will be the main point of contact for the ARONAH Board and will lead all meetings including meetings during site visits. The Assessment Team Leader may appoint an additional fully trained ARONAH board member to conduct site visits along with the assessor (if applicable) depending on the relevant location of the education provider.

Assessment Team responsibilities

The Assessment Team is responsible for assessing the education provider and the program offered by the education provider against the Accreditation Standards by:

- (a) evaluating the education provider's application (self-audit and supporting materials) against the Accreditation Standards
- (b) evaluating information gathered during any site visits to the education provider's facilities
- (c) reviewing, commenting on, and signing off on accreditation reports
- (d) confirming that accreditation reports are ready to be submitted to the ARONAH Board.

ARONAH Board responsibilities

The ARONAH Board is responsible for:

- (a) coordinating assessor training
- (b) maintaining a database of individuals who have satisfactorily completed assessor training
- (c) communication with education providers about assessment and accreditation of programs
- (d) arranging Assessment Team meetings and site visits
- (e) providing support for the Assessment Teams
- (f) recording details of information gathered by Assessment Teams during any site visits
- (g) providing templates for draft accreditation reports based on the Assessment Team's evaluation of the education provider and the program against the Accreditation Standards, and

The Team Leader is responsible for

- (a) taking minutes of any Assessment Team meetings during site visits and
- (b) submitting confirmed accreditation reports from the Assessment Team to the ARONAH Board.

Secure storage and destruction of accreditation materials

All documents received by the ARONAH Board for accreditation applications will be held as 'commercial in confidence'. The ARONAH Board will store all accreditation materials and reports in a secure electronic format. Assessors will be unable to access electronic versions of accreditation materials and reports when an assessment has been completed.

Assessors must ensure any electronic materials are deleted and removed from devices and any hardcopy accreditation materials are disposed through secure destruction when an assessment has been completed. The ARONAH Board will assist assessors with these arrangements if required.

Processes for assessment prior to initial accreditation with the ARONAH Board

Before initial accreditation with ARONAH, all Naturopathy and Western Herbal Medicine programs, and the education providers that provide those programs, must be assessed against the Accreditation Standards.

Submitting information about a new Naturopathic or Western Herbal Medicine program

The ARONAH Board requires any education provider planning to develop a new Naturopathic or Western Herbal Medicine program, or to enroll students in a new program, to contact the ARONAH Board as soon as possible (and preferably not less than 18 months before commencement of the new program).

The education provider should provide the following information to the ARONAH Board:

- (a) contact details for the person responsible for the program
- (b) the month and year the education provider plans to commence the program
- (c) the planned AQF level and duration of the program, and
- (d) any other details the education provider considers relevant to its plans such as staff recruitment or third-party arrangements for its program.

Initial consideration of information about a new Naturopathy or Western Herbal Medicine program

On receipt of information about a new Naturopathy or Western Herbal Medicine program, the ARONAH Board will:

- (a) send the education provider an application pack, (which includes the Accreditation Checklist and Application Form) and
- (b) confirm the due date for submission by the education provider of its application for assessment and initial accreditation.

Applying for assessment and initial accreditation

An education provider is required to submit its application for assessment and initial accreditation by the date confirmed by the ARONAH Board.

The due date for submission of the application will generally be not less than 12 months before the commencement date of the first cohort of students, to allow sufficient time for completion of the assessment before students commence the new program.

Applying for assessment and initial accreditation of an existing program that transitioned as an approved program on 1 July 2020

All education providers that offer programs that transitioned as approved programs on 1 July 2020 must apply for assessment and initial accreditation in order to become accredited. The ARONAH Board will contact each education provider offering a program that transitioned as an approved program on 1 July 2020 to negotiate a date by which that education provider is required to submit its application for assessment and initial accreditation.

Format of application for assessment and initial accreditation

The ARONAH Board will provide each education provider with the Accreditation Standards, accreditation process and the Accreditation Checklist and Application Form that the education provider is required to complete and submit with its application for assessment and initial accreditation.

The accreditation application will consist of a self-audit by the education provider and supporting materials that the education provider considers are the best available evidence of the claims made in its self-audit.

The self-audit will require the education provider to identify the overall strengths and weaknesses of its program and to suggest strategies it could implement (or is implementing) to address identified weaknesses as well as any other actions that are in place to improve the program. The self-audit will also require the education provider to explain the extent to which it has met (or in the case of a planned program, will meet) each of the Accreditation Standards, and to provide a specific referenceto the evidence supporting each explanation.

Checking accreditation application and forwarding to the Assessment Team

The ARONAH Board will check that each accreditation application has addressed each accreditation standard and has been submitted in accordance with the instructions.

The ARONAH Board will notify the education provider if their application does not comply with the instructions and provide details about the non-complying aspects. The education provider will be required to re-submit any application that does not comply with the instructions and the committee reserves the right to charge a resubmission fee.

The ARONAH Board will only forward an accreditation application to the respective Assessment Team if it complies with the instructions.

Review and evaluation of accreditation application

The Assessment Team will review the application and evaluate the information submitted by the education provider against the Accreditation Standards and may meet to discuss their evaluation. The Assessment Team will, as part of the evaluation, consider and advise the ARONAH Board about any information it requires the education provider to submit before, or provide at, the site visit.

The Assessment Team will advise the ARONAH Board of any information required from the education provider prior to or during any site visits. The ARONAH Board will notify the education provider accordingly.

Further evaluation of education provider and program

The Assessment Team may decide to conduct one or more site visits as part of its further evaluation of an education provider and program. A site visit is generally held over a period of one to two days and within three months after the Assessment Team receives the accreditation application.

The ARONAH Board will, in consultation with the Assessment Team and the education provider, coordinate plans for any site visit, including the schedule.

The purpose of the site visit is for the education provider to provide the Assessment Team with:

- (a) access to information, individuals and facilities that can be evaluated only during a site visit
- (b) further supporting information about how the education provider and its program have met, or plan to meet, the Accreditation Standards (particularly any standards that have not been adequately evidenced in the accreditation application), and
- (c) any information that the Assessment Team has specifically requested that the education provider make available at the site visit.

The Assessment Team may require the education provider to:

- (a) provide access to other information, individuals, or facilities at the site visit, and
- (b) submit further information after the site visit.

The Assessment Team will generally require additional information if the education provider makes unverified claims at the site visit.

Preparing the draft accreditation report

Following the assessment of the electronic documentation provided by the education provider during the application process, as well as the site visit, the Assessment Team will provide the ARONAH Board with an evaluation report using a standard report template. The ARONAH Board will use the Assessment Team's evaluation report to prepare a draft accreditation report and send it to the Assessment Team for confirmation and approval before

the draft report is sent to the education provider for review.

Education provider review of the draft accreditation report

The ARONAH Board will send the draft accreditation report to the education provider for review. The education provider will be required to advise the ARONAH Board, in writing and within a defined period, of any factual errors in the draft accreditation report.

Reviewing any written advice from the education provider

The ARONAH Board, in consultation with the Assessment Team, will review any written advice received from the education provider and may:

- (a) proceed to prepare the final accreditation report, or
- (b) amend the draft accreditation report and send it to the Assessment Team for confirmation and approval before proceeding to prepare the final accreditation report.

Preparing the final accreditation report

The ARONAH Board, in consultation with the Assessment Team, will prepare the final accreditation report using a standard report template.

The final accreditation report:

- (a) will indicate whether, on the basis of the evidence provided to the Assessment Team, the education provider and program have met each accreditation standard
- (b) may include recommended actions for the education provider, particularly if a standard has not been met, and
- (c) will be sent to the Assessment Team for confirmation and approval before final consideration by the ARONAH Board.

Processes for decisions about initial accreditation of Naturopathy or Western Herbal Medicine programs

ARONAH Board preliminary accreditation decision

The ARONAH Board will consider the content of the final accreditation report and make a preliminary decision about accreditation of the program.

The education provider will receive written notice of the ARONAH Board's preliminary accreditation decision and provide the reasons for its preliminary decision as well as a copy of the final accreditation report.

Education provider may respond to preliminary accreditation decision

The ARONAH Board will send the education provider written notice of the preliminary accreditation decision and provide the reasons for its preliminary decision as well as a copy of the final accreditation report.

The education provider may, if it wishes, submit to the ARONAH Board in writing and within a defined period, a written response to the preliminary accreditation decision.

Reviewing any written response from the education provider

The ARONAH Board, in consultation with the Assessment Team, will review any submission by the education provider in response to the preliminary accreditation decision and may:

- (a) confirm its final accreditation decision, or
- (b) defer its final accreditation decision and request the Assessment Team to continue to assess the program and provider against the Accreditation Standards and to prepare an amended final accreditation report to the ARONAH Board.

Confirming the ARONAH Board's final accreditation decision

The ARONAH Board may decide to accredit the program, with or without conditions. The ARONAH Board may also decide not to accredit the program.

The ARONAH Board may decide to accredit a program if the final accreditation report indicates the education provider and program meet all Accreditation Standards.

The ARONAH Board may decide to impose conditions on the initial accreditation of a program if the final accreditation report indicates:

- (a) the education provider and program substantially meet the Accreditation Standards, and
- (b) the imposition of conditions will ensure all Accreditation Standards are met within a reasonable time.

The ARONAH Board may decide not to accredit a program if the final accreditation report indicates:

- (a) the education provider and program have not substantially met the Accreditation Standards, or
- (b) despite the imposition of conditions, the education provider and program will be unable to meet the Accreditation Standards within a reasonable time.

Reporting of ARONAH Board initial accreditation decisions

The ARONAH Board will advise the education provider of any initial accreditation decision.

If the ARONAH Board decides to impose conditions on the initial accreditation of a program, it will issue a

schedule outlining how conditions will be monitored and the timeframe in which conditions must be addressed. If the ARONAH Board decides not to accredit a program it must give written notice of the decision to the education provider and include the reasons for the decision and outline how the education provider may apply for an internal review of the decision.

The education provider may appeal the decision within 30 days of receiving the notice of the initial accreditation decision. The processes for appeal are available on request.

Processes for monitoring of accredited programs

Overview

The intent of monitoring accredited programs is to provide an opportunity for early intervention by the ARONAH Board if concerns are raised about a program, and to maximise the likelihood that students who are undertaking study in that program can complete their studies and graduate with a qualification that will be recognised by the ARONAH Board for the purposes of membership in the profession.

Although the ARONAH Board does not accredit programs for a set period, a program remains accredited only if the committee continues to be satisfied the program and provider meet the Accreditation Standards. The ARONAH Board will monitor the program and may impose conditions or revoke accreditation of a program if it finds the standards are no longer being met.

The ARONAH Board monitors whether the program and education provider continue to meet the Accreditation Standards, by:

- (a) evaluating reports about accredited programs submitted by education providers to the Board, and
- (b) evaluating other information about accredited programs that comes to the Board's attention such as complaints about an education provider, details published by the education provider, the government, the respective professional association, reports in the media or staff advertisements.

Monitoring evaluating reports from education providers

When the ARONAH Board advises an education provider of its decision to accredit the program, with or without conditions, the Board will provide details of the reporting requirements that the Board has established for that education provider. The ARONAH Board may re-establish the reporting requirements for any education provider in response to the outcomes of the committee's monitoring of relevant program(s).

The reporting requirements established by the ARONAH Board will generally include:

- (a) a requirement for the education provider to report by specific dates on its compliance with any conditions imposed by the ARONAH Board
- (b) a requirement for the education providers to submit key statistical data and other details in the form of an annual declaration to the ARONAH Board

- (c) a requirement for education providers to notify the ARONAH Board in writing of any planned and/or implemented changes to an accredited program, and
- (d) a requirement for the education provider to respond to any request by the ARONAH Board for information as required, to ensure the Board continues to be satisfied that the Accreditation Standards are being met by the program and provider.

The ARONAH Board requires each education provider to comply with its reporting requirements by submitting information in the required format and by the due dates.

Requirement to report to the ARONAH Board about conditions

If a program is accredited with conditions, the ARONAH Board will advise the education provider about what types of reports are required to demonstrate compliance with those conditions and when any reports are due.

The conditions imposed by the Board may be addressed through reports including those provided by:

- (a) written submissions
- (b) site visits
- (c) meetings with groups or individuals, including with representatives of the education provider, or
- (d) any other type of report the ARONAH Board considers appropriate in the circumstances.

Requirement to submit an annual declaration to the ARONAH Board

All education providers must submit key statistical data and other details to the ARONAH Board in the form of an *Annual declaration about an accredited program*.

Requirement to notify the ARONAH Board of any change

The education provider is required to submit a *Notice of change form* if the provider plans or implements material changes to an approved program, where the change means students will complete a program that is different to the program that was accredited. The education provider must also submit a *Notice of change form* if the provider plans or implements changes to any aspect of its governance or operations that may impact on its ability to continue to meet the Accreditation Standards.

Monitoring by evaluation of other information or sources

The ARONAH Board may become aware of problems through receipt of a complaint about an education provider or program.

The ARONAH Board may become aware of changes or other matters relevant to accreditation of a program through means such as advertisements or details published by the education provider, the government, the respective professional association, or reports in the media.

If the ARONAH Board becomes aware of such matters, it will decide whether it requires the education provider to submit any type of report to ensure the Board continues to be satisfied that the program and provider are meeting the Accreditation Standards.

If the ARONAH Board decides to require the education provider to report, it will advise the education provider about what type of report is required to enable the Board to decide whether the Accreditation Standards continue to be met and when any report is due.

Option to require a full assessment against the Accreditation Standards

The ARONAH Board may determine at any time that a full assessment against the Accreditation Standards is required to enable the Board to decide whether the standards continue to be met.

Processes for evaluation of submissions required by the reporting requirements

Appointment of reviewers

The ARONAH Board will appoint two or three members of the Board to:

- (a) review and evaluate any report or notification submitted by an education provider, and
- (b) draft a monitoring report for consideration by the committee using a standard report template.

Review and evaluation of report or notification

The appointed members of the Board will review the report or notification submitted by an education provider and evaluate the information against the Accreditation Standards and may meet to discuss their evaluation.

The members will, as part of the evaluation, consider and advise the ARONAH Board about any information they require the education provider to submit to enable them to draft their monitoring report where that information relates directly to the scope of the monitoring report.

The ARONAH Board will notify the education provider about the information that the members require the education provider to submit.

In the case of a notification of change, Board members that are selected to assess the information will consider whether there is any potential that a standard will not be met as a result of the implementation of the proposed change and will assess each notification individually. The outcome will be based on the potential impact of the change on relevant Accreditation Standards.

Drafting the monitoring report

Each member will draft a monitoring report for consideration by the Board using a *standard report template*. The monitoring report will summarise the members' evaluation of information submitted by the education provider and, when applicable, identify any evidence that the education provider or its program of study may not continue to meet the Accreditation Standards.

ARONAH Board consideration of draft monitoring report

The ARONAH Board will consider the draft monitoring report and make a decision about whether it has sufficient information to ensure it continues to be satisfied that the program and provider continue to meet the Accreditation Standards.

If the ARONAH Board decides it has insufficient information to ensure it continues to be satisfied that the program and provider continue to meet the Accreditation Standards, the committee may require the education provider to submit a further report.

If the ARONAH Board decides it has sufficient information, it must proceed to prepare the final monitoring report.

Preparing the final monitoring report

The ARONAH Board will prepare the final monitoring report using a standard report template. The final monitoring report:

- (a) will indicate whether, on the basis of the information in that report, the education provider and program continue to meet the Accreditation Standards, and
- (b) may include recommended actions for the education provider (including site visit, full assessment, or other actions), particularly if the information indicates that any Accreditation Standard has not been met.

Processes for decisions during monitoring of approved programs

ARONAH Board preliminary monitoring decision

The ARONAH Board will consider the content of the final monitoring report and make a preliminary decision about continued accreditation of the program. The Board will send the education provider written notice of the preliminary monitoring decision and provide the reasons for its preliminary decision as well as a copy of the final monitoring report.

Education provider may respond to preliminary monitoring decision

The education provider may, if it wishes, submit to the ARONAH Board in writing and within a defined period, a response to the ARONAH Board's preliminary monitoring decision.

Reviewing any written response from the education provider

The ARONAH Board will review any submission by the education provider in response to the Board's preliminary monitoring decision and may:

- (a) confirm its monitoring decision, or

- (b) defer its decision and request the education provider to respond to a request

Confirming the ARONAH Board's monitoring decision

The ARONAH Board may decide to continue to accredit the program, with or without conditions. The ARONAH Board may also decide to revoke accreditation of the program.

The ARONAH Board may decide to continue to accredit a program if the final monitoring report indicates the education provider and program meet all the Accreditation Standards.

The ARONAH Board may decide to impose conditions on the continued accreditation of a program if the final monitoring report indicates:

- (a) the education provider and program substantially meet the Accreditation Standards, and
- (b) the imposition of conditions will ensure all the Accreditation Standards are met within a reasonable time.

The ARONAH Board may decide to revoke accreditation of a program if the final monitoring report indicates that the education provider and program no longer meet the Accreditation Standards.

Reporting of ARONAH Board monitoring decisions

The ARONAH Board will advise the education provider of any final monitoring decision.

If the ARONAH Board decides to impose conditions on the continued accreditation of a program, it will issue a schedule outlining how conditions will be monitored and the timeframe in which conditions must be addressed.

If the ARONAH Board decides to revoke accreditation of a program it must give written notice of the decision to the education provider, including the reasons for the decision and outlining how the education provider may apply for an internal review of the decision. The processes for internal review are described in a separate document.

Process for complaints about programs and education providers

The ARONAH Board may receive complaints about programs and education providers. After considering any complaint, the ARONAH Board may determine that the complaint is:

- (a) not relevant to accreditation of the program, or
- (b) relevant to accreditation of the program and take such action as the Board considers reasonable in the circumstances to ensure it continues to be satisfied that the program and provider are meeting the Accreditation Standards.

The ARONAH Board must ensure the complainant is advised when the complaint is received by the Board and notified of the outcome of the Board's consideration of the complaint.