Higher Education Course and Unit Accreditation Procedure

Section 1 - Preamble

(1) This procedure outlines the requirements for the accreditation, re-accreditation, amendments and discontinuation of Higher Education (HE) coursework award courses, enabling programs, HE units, and credit-bearing microcredentials.

(2) As a self-accrediting higher education provider CDU must ensure that the development, approval, delivery and discontinuance of all new and amended HE courses and units comply with professional accrediting and disciplinary bodies and the following regulations as set out in the Educational Quality and Excellence Framework Policy:

a. Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021;
b. Higher Education Support Act 2003;
c. Australian Qualifications Framework;
d. Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000;
e. ELICOS Standards 2018; and
f. National Standards for Foundation Programs 2021.

(3) All HE courses, units, and credit-bearing microcredentials must align to the Units and Courses Policy.

(4) All Foundation courses must align to the National Standards for Foundation Programs 2021.

(5) The HE course accreditation and re-accreditation process runs on a 7-year cycle, whereby each course is allocated a review date for re-accreditation. In some instances, a HE course may be subjected to an earlier review to meet professional registration or other requirements.

Section 2 - Purpose

(6) This procedure outlines the process to approve, accredit, reaccredit and amend HE courses, units, and micro-credentials to support requirements as set out in the Units and Courses Policy.

(7) This procedure outlines the procedures, approval workflows and delegations across a common curriculum lifecycle of product prioritisation, planning, design and review that are aligned to academic governance.

(8) This procedure must be read in conjunction with the University's HE Annual Course Review Procedure, Course Professional Accreditation Procedure, Benchmarking and External Referencing Policy and Procedure, Higher Education Coursework Assessment Policy and Procedure, and Third-Party Provider for Educational Delivery Procedure.

Section 3 - Scope

(9) The procedure applies to the accreditation of all higher education coursework courses and unit accreditation, re-accreditation, amendments and discontinuation, including for credit-bearing microcredentials.

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(10) The procedure does not apply to the approval of Higher Degrees by Research, VET courses, or CDU Express offerings.

Section 4 - Procedure

Product prioritisation and planning – HE courses

HE product prioritisation

(11) The first phase of the curriculum lifecycle is Product Prioritisation where the Vice-Chancellor decides as to the strategic fit and financial viability of a proposed course. Individual units do not require product prioritisation or course planning. Unit accreditation begins in the third stage, course or unit design.

(12) Prior to HE course accreditation for new, adapted and re-accredited products, a Business Case must be prepared by the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor in the Curriculum Management System (CMS).

(13) Business cases for HE product prioritisation are categorised as:

a. New product proposals outside current core business or markets (i.e., fields of education) requiring significant development that are subject to robust analysis.
b. Adapted product proposals within current core business or markets subject to a fast-track business case approval process.
c. Re-accredited (7 year) HE course proposals also subject to a fast-track business case approval process. The business case for re-accredited courses must include a Major Course Review based on Annual Course Review (ACR) data and details of quality improvements for the previous 6 years.

(14) The business case must provide adequate information to decide whether the product should be added or retained in the University's product portfolio, including:

a. market and student demand;
b. previous performance over 6 years for re-accredited courses;
c. results of interim monitoring including institutional and external benchmarks;
d. resource and staffing requirements; and
e. additional associated costs beyond the Faculty budget.

(15) The next stage of the procedure, curriculum planning, cannot commence until the Business Case is submitted by the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor to the Vice-Chancellor and approved in the CMS.

HE course planning

(16) The second phase of the curriculum lifecycle is Course Planning where the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor approves the overarching course details.

(17) Once a new, adapted or re-accredited product has been prioritised and approved for curriculum development by the Vice-Chancellor, the Faculty must prepare a HE course plan in the Curriculum Management System (CMS).

(18) All HE course plans must include detailed information regarding:

a. course detail:
    i. course award type;
    ii. course title and award title;

iii. AQF level;
iv. course rationale;
v. standard part time and full-time completion times;
vi. volume of learning in credit points;
vii. delivery locations other than Australia;
viii. third party arrangements;
ix. work integrated learning; and
x. professional accreditation.

b. course Offering Information:
i. student cohorts including international onshore and offshore;
ii. availability including teaching period, location, offering mode, and offering options; and
iii. proposed fee categories.

c. award Information:
i. course award and post nominal;
ii. majors and specialisations including post nominal if applicable;
iii. nested awards, including exit awards; and
iv. Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement detail.

d. admission Criteria and Associated Information:
i. selection methodology for undergraduate, postgraduate, standalone bachelor honours and graduate entry bachelor;
ii. English language proficiency;
iii. international pathways if applicable; and
iv. essential requirements for admission.

e. marketing Information:
i. course description;
ii. course structure description;
iii. career opportunities statement;
iv. professional recognition statement if applicable; and
v. practical experience if applicable.

f. inherent requirement indicators;
g. incidental fees and costs; and
h. educational facilities.

(19) The next stage of this procedure, curriculum design, cannot commence until the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor approves the HE course plan in the CMS workflows.

Design and review – HE courses and units

HE course and unit design

(20) The third phase of the curriculum lifecycle is Course and Unit Design where Academic Programs Committee conducts a quality review and ensures compliance with the academic requirements of the University and the legislation as prescribed in clause 2.

(21) Once a HE course plan is approved by the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor, the Faculty must prepare and submit a course and unit design in the CMS.

(22) All HE course designs must include detailed information regarding:

a. course learning outcomes that address knowledge and skills and are consistent with AQF level and field of education;
b. course mapping:
    i. course learning outcome relationship to graduate attributes; and
    ii. course learning outcome relationship AQF.
c. learning design:
    i. course benchmarking;
    ii. learning and teaching overview;
    iii. use of educational technology;
    iv. student course engagement and progression evaluation;
    v. academic staff;
    vi. proportion of research; and
    vii. learning and teaching resources.
d. pathways, articulation and precedents;
e. course structure, including major, minor and specialisations and course rules (award requirements);
f. study plan; and
g. configuration of major, minor and specialisations if applicable:
    i. code;
    ii. title;
    iii. credit points;
    iv. description; and
    v. entry requirements if applicable.

(23) All HE unit designs must include detailed information regarding:

a. unit details;
b. unit description;
c. credit points;
d. pre-requisite/assumed knowledge, co-requisite if applicable;
e. unit learning outcomes including relationship to course learning outcomes and graduate attributes;
f. assessment tasks including relationship to unit learning outcomes;
g. learning activities including relationship to unit learning outcomes
h. learning design;
i. student engagement and progression evaluation;
j. unit offering including teaching period, location, attendance mode, and learning method;
k. cross institutional credit transfer, if applicable; and
l. incidental fees and costs.

(24) Where new units are proposed as core or specialist electives in a HE course they must be submitted by the Faculty in the CMS, approved by the Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee (FLTC), and resolved by the Academic Programs Committee.

(25) Where a HE course is shared by two Faculties (i.e. double degree) there must be evidence of consultation and approval by both Faculty Learning and Teaching Committees.

(26) Once the FLTC approves the HE course and new unit/s design in the CMS, it must be reviewed and approved by the Academic Programs Committee and reported to Academic Board.

(27) Once Academic Programs Committee approves a HE course and/or unit it is accredited.

(28) Once Academic Programs Committee approves a new HE course it declares the Award.

HE course review

(29) The fourth phase of the curriculum lifecycle is Course Review where every HE course must be subjected to 2 levels of course review:

a. Annual Course Review where quality improvements are identified and reported on through the Annual Course Review (ACR) process. Course improvement plans must be approved by FLTC and submitted to Academic Board for noting.
b. Major Course Review that occurs at least once every 7 years (usually in year 6 of the accreditation cycle) for the purposes of re-accreditation. These reviews are informed by but not limited to previous Annual Course Reviews and must cover student feedback at the unit level, external referencing of student cohort success and satisfaction, modes of delivery, emerging developments in the field of education, changing needs of students, quality risks, assessment methods and grading against comparable courses. The outcomes of the Major Course Review must inform the Business Case for re-accreditation or discontinuation as set out in this procedure.

(30) Faculties must establish Course Advisory Groups to conduct Annual and Major Course Reviews, report on outcomes and ensure improvement plans are implemented.

(31) Annual or Major Course Reviews may result in amendments, revision, suspension and/or discontinuation of HE courses.

(32) Minor and major amendments must consider and minimise the potential impact on students and across courses.

(33) A minor amendment to a unit involves amendments that do not involve substantial change such as:

a. adding a new learning method;
b. adding an offering;
c. changes to teaching responsibility;
d. changes to assumed knowledge;
e. clarifying current learning outcomes, unit description, assessment tasks; and
f. additional student information.

(34) A minor amendment to a course involves amendments within a course that do not involve substantial change such as:

a. clarifying current learning outcomes; and
b. additional student information.

(35) Minor amendments to a course or unit are submitted through the CMS and approved by the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor.

(36) A major amendment to any unit includes:

a. changes to learning outcomes;
b. changes to assessment tasks;

c. removing published offerings;
d. changes to work integrated learning; and
e. change to learning mode.

(37) Major amendments to units are submitted through the CMS and approved by the FLTC, and approved by the Chair Academic Programs Committee.

(38) Major amendments to units should not be made after the annual publication of the next academic year's units in October. Any amendments after 1 October may only be made with the full, documented consent of any enrolled students and in accordance with the approval process outlined above.

(39) A major amendment to a course involves amendments that involve a significant change within a course such as:

a. changing course title;
b. changing AQF level;
c. changing type of qualification;
d. change to course outcomes;
e. change to entry requirements;
f. changing course duration and volume of learning;
g. change to offering mode;
h. removing offerings or adding additional course offering locations;
i. changes to course structure including, major, minor and specialisation and course completion rules;
j. adding international cohort;
k. adding new pathways and precedents;
l. changes in response to professional accreditation; and
m. changing third party arrangements.

(40) Major amendments to courses are submitted through the CMS and approved by the FLTC, followed by Academic Programs Committee approval.

(41) Major amendments to courses should not be made after the annual publication of courses in August. The Academic Programs Committee may approve course structure amendments made after August and before enrolments opening on a case-by-case basis.

(42) Where numerous amendments to a HE course are proposed the Chair Academic Programs Committee will determine if the changes are so significant that the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor will submit of a business case for re-accreditation as detailed in Product Prioritisation of this procedure.

(43) Proposals for course discontinuation are submitted through the CMS and approved by the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor, followed by an Academic Programs Committee and Vice-Chancellor approval. However, the Vice-Chancellor may initiate and approve course discontinuation without the approval of the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor. Vice-Chancellor approval is not required for course discontinuation as an outcome of the re-accreditation cycle.

Design and review – credit-bearing microcredentials

Credit-bearing microcredential design

(44) A credit-bearing microcredential is not structured as a unit within a HE course. However, when appropriately combined or stacked, it can contribute credit toward an HE unit or course.

(45) Once approved, the credit-bearing microcredential will be established in the student management system,

allowing for a corresponding Learnline unit to be established.

(46) To establish a credit-bearing microcredential that is eligible for academic credit in a HE unit, the Faculty must complete the template available in the CMS including but not limited to the following information:

a. Summary information including code, title, credit points and field of education;
b. Admission information and requirements;
c. learning outcomes including relationship to learning outcomes and graduate attributes;
d. assessment tasks including relationship to learning outcomes;
e. learning activities including relationship to learning outcomes;
f. learning design; and
g. recognition including the relationship to other credit-bearing microcredentials.

(47) Credit-bearing microcredentials must be submitted by the Faculty in the CMS, approved by the Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee (FLTC), and resolved by the Academic Programs Committee.

Credit-bearing microcredential review

(48) Minor and major amendments to a credit-bearing microcredential must consider and minimise the potential impact on students.

(49) A minor amendment to a credit-bearing microcredential involves amendments that do not involve substantial change such as:

a. adding an offering;
b. changes to teaching responsibility;
c. clarifying current learning outcomes; and
d. additional student information.

(50) Minor amendments to a credit-bearing microcredential are submitted through the CMS and approved by the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor.

(51) A major amendment to any credit-bearing microcredentials includes:

a. changes to learning outcomes;
b. changes to assessment tasks;
c. removing published offerings;
d. admission information; and
e. requirements.

(52) Major amendments to a credit-bearing microcredentials are submitted through the CMS and approved by the FLTC, followed by Academic Programs Committee approval.

(53) A credit-bearing microcredential discontinuation is submitted through the CMS and approved by the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor, followed by Academic Programs Committee approval. However, the Academic Programs Committee may initiate and approve discontinuation without the approval of the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor.

Section 5 - Non-Compliance

(54) Non-compliance with Governance Documents is considered a breach of the Code of Conduct - Employees or the Code of Conduct - Students, as applicable, and is treated seriously by the University. Reports of concerns about non-compliance will be managed in accordance with the applicable disciplinary procedures outlined in the Charles Darwin University and Union Enterprise Agreement 2025 and the Code of Conduct - Students.

(55) Complaints may be raised in accordance with the Complaints and Grievance Policy and Procedure - Employees and Complaints Policy - Students.

(56) All staff members have an individual responsibility to raise any suspicion, allegation or report of fraud or corruption in accordance with the Fraud and Corruption Control Policy and Whistleblower Reporting (Improper Conduct) Procedure.

Status and Details

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Responsible Executive	Lisa Papatraianou Deputy Provost
Implementation Officer	Natasha McCrae Associate Director Course Accreditation and Registration
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Glossary Terms and Definitions

"Faculty" - An organisational and academic unit in the University that delivers courses and conducts research.

"Higher education coursework course" - Higher education coursework courses include award courses, which lead to a qualification recognised by the AQF, and accredited non-award courses, including enabling, foundation, preparatory, bridging, study abroad, international exchange, and other types of accredited non-award courses.