



PhillipsKPA

---

## MAPPING OF PROFESSIONAL ACCREDITATION IN THE CONTEXT OF HIGHER EDUCATION REGULATORY AND STANDARDS FRAMEWORKS

---

The Department of Education and Training has commissioned PhillipsKPA to survey and characterise the extent and scope of professional course accreditation practices in Australian higher education. The project aims to examine a range of dimensions, including the scope of professional accreditation arrangements, the practical impact on institutional operations, the perceived advantages and disadvantages and the effect of professional accreditation on innovation in course design. Input is being sought from universities, other registered higher education providers, professional bodies and student groups.

The work will be undertaken between July and December 2016 and the project report will inform work being undertaken by the Higher Education Standards Panel to provide advice to the Minister for Education and Training on the impact of professional accreditation on Australian higher education and opportunities that may exist to reduce regulatory burden for higher education providers.

We are seeking input on the following issues specifically but would welcome any information that respondents deem relevant to the topic. Please feel free to provide examples to illustrate your responses. There are two sets of questions which are intended not as a survey but as a prompt for your thinking. The first set is for higher education providers. The second set is for accrediting bodies.

All responses will be confidential to PKPA consultants and the report analysis will not include identifiable examples or respondents.

Responses would be appreciated by Friday 9<sup>th</sup> September.

Please address all enquiries and responses to the Project Lead:

Emeritus Professor Christine Ewan

Key Associate PhillipsKPA

[cewan@phillipskpa.com.au](mailto:cewan@phillipskpa.com.au)

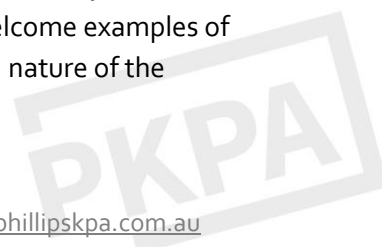
Mob: 0419970578

Landline: 02 42 684918

### Issues for Higher Education Providers to address

#### 1. What is the practical impact of professional accreditation on institutions?

We have identified at least 60 bodies that offer formal accreditation services to universities, most of which are essential if graduates are to find professional employment. We would welcome examples of both good and poor practice in accreditation as well as descriptions of the scale and nature of the



financial and opportunity cost burden to the institution and the extent to which infrastructure for managing accreditation is aligned with other regulatory systems such as ESOS and TEQSA.

2. Are there advantages and/or disadvantages to professional accreditation processes as they are currently managed? What are they?

We are interested in receiving perceptions on this question from the point of view of institutions, professions, employers and students/graduates.

3. Are there trends emerging in professional accreditation that you are aware of and are the bodies you are associated with adopting them? What new approaches are emerging?

For example, are accreditation standards becoming more outcomes rather than inputs based, are standards beginning to reflect or foreshadow future modes of professional practice? Are the standards established by the Higher Education Standards Framework (HESF) and by professional bodies congruent?

4. Does accreditation make innovation in course design more difficult, or does it encourage innovation?

For example, are accreditation criteria too prescriptive to allow for significant departures from traditional teaching methods? Are prescriptions of course content or contact hours inhibiting innovation in curriculum? Are there innovations you would like to introduce that are being hampered by regulatory criteria?

5. How do international professional recognition requirements impact on course design in your discipline(s)? Do these requirements mesh easily with internal academic quality assurance, the HESF and the TEQSA process? What, if any, are the problems?

6. What could be done to streamline the various regulatory, quality assurance and professional accreditation processes to reduce the burden on institutions?

### Issues for accrediting agencies to address

1. Are your accreditation practices examples of good practice?

**For example:**

- Are the accreditation criteria in your profession open to evolution of professional practice in the future?
- Are you confident that the criteria do not reinforce stagnation or stifle innovation?
- Do your accreditation processes and criteria take the Higher Education Standards Framework and TEQSA accreditation into account?

- Do you look for evidence of benchmarking of learning outcomes and course design?
- How often do you review professional accreditation standards and processes and what do you address in reviews?
- How does international accreditation impact on your accreditation practices?

## 2. Do the relationships between stakeholders work for your profession?

### For example:

- What issues (positive and negative) emerge in your relationships with education providers?
- What is the relationship with the profession in general, with industry and employers – how do their needs guide criteria or processes? For example, is there an intersection between industrial relations and accreditation?
- How do you fund the accreditation process and determine your fees?
- How do you choose and train reviewers?
- If your organisation offers its own training programs is there the potential for any perceived or actual conflict of interest?

## 3. What advice do you have that could improve the process for all stakeholders?

### For example:

- Have efforts been made to analyse costs and benefits or to benchmark accreditation practices within Australia or overseas?
- Is there duplication of effort that could be rationalised by better inter - professional cooperation?
- Are there opportunities for better alignment with TEQSA processes eg aligning 7 year cycles, sharing expert reviewers, adopting a more risk based approach, accepting TEQSA registration as satisfying institutional criteria such as governance and QA processes