



ESSA:
EXERCISE & SPORTS SCIENCE AUSTRALIA

COURSE ACCREDITATION REQUIREMENTS

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PREFACE

Exercise & Sports Science Australia (ESSA)

ESSA is a professional organisation committed to industry leadership to develop, promote, and support exercise and sports science professionals through accreditation, advocacy, education, and member engagement. ESSA's vision is to enhance performance and health through the application of exercise and sports science.

Purpose of Regulation

The primary focus of regulation is providing for the protection of the health and safety of the public by ensuring that practitioners are suitably trained and qualified to provide competent and ethical services.

In Australia the National Regulation and Accreditation Scheme for registered health professions is administered by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA). Exercise and Sports Science Professions are not registered professions under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law and are considered self-regulated professions.

ESSA is a recognised self-regulating body for the Exercise and Sports Science Professionals and performs a similar function to AHPRA by accrediting and regulating professionals. ESSA is also a full member of the [National Alliance of Self-Regulating Health Professions](#) (NASRHP), which is independent body providing a quality framework for self-regulating health professions. NASRHP has a set of standards for membership that have been closely modelled on the standards that health professions regulated by must meet.

Purpose of Course Accreditation

ESSA's course accreditation program accredits suitable undergraduate and postgraduate degree courses in the field of exercise and sports science.

Course accreditation provides assurance that all graduates of an accredited course have the knowledge and skills to practise competently as an exercise professional. Graduates from an ESSA-accredited course are eligible to apply for practitioner accreditation via the relevant accreditation pathway. Course accreditation:

- Sets a high standard for education and training in the field of exercise and sports science
- Provides direction and guidance for the establishment and continuous improvement of exercise and sports science courses
- Provides potential students with assurance that the course offers a high-quality study experience that aligns with competency standards for entry into the profession.

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

About the Course Accreditation Requirements

ESSA's Course Accreditation Requirements reflect the minimum requirement for the self-regulation of health professional in Australia.

The Course Accreditation Requirements set the minimum criteria and thresholds that a course of study must meet to demonstrate that graduates will meet ESSA's Professional Standards for Accreditation for the relevant ESSA practitioner accreditation. The requirements apply to all higher education providers seeking accreditation for a new or established course of study leading to a qualification in the field of exercise and sports science.

The Course Accreditation Requirements have been developed to support an outcomes-focused approach to accreditation and are designed to allow flexibility for education providers in demonstrating how the requirements are met, recognising the diversity of educational approaches, training contexts and expertise that exists in health professional education.

This document should be read in conjunction with the Course Accreditation Standards and the Practicum Standards. Further information on the stages and processes of course accreditation is provided in the Course Accreditation Application Guide.

COURSE ACCREDITATION PROGRAM

Program Governance

Accreditation Council

The Accreditation Council (AC) is a council of Exercise & Sports Science Australia, and provides leadership, governance and oversight for the accreditation and regulation of exercise and sports science professions and professionals. It also provides strategic advice to the Board on issues pertaining to the accreditation and regulation of exercise and sports science professions and professionals. The AC is responsible for:

- Approving course accreditation outcomes
- Approving course accreditation requirements, standards and policies
- Governing and overseeing appeals of course accreditation outcomes

Course Accreditation Committee

The Course Accreditation Committee (CAC) is a subcommittee of the Accreditation Council. It provides oversight and leadership of course accreditation activities and implementation of the course accreditation program. It also provides advice to management and course reviewers regarding the implementation, monitoring and reviewing of course accreditation. The CAC is responsible for:

- Recommending final outcomes of course accreditation applications to the AC
- Recommending new and revised course accreditation policies to the AC
- Approving submissions against accreditation conditions
- Overseeing the appointment of course accreditation reviewers
- Overseeing course change approval processes
- Setting and reviewing reporting requirements

Course Reviewers

The course accreditation reviewers are experienced academics and practitioners recruited and appointed by the CAC. Course reviewers undertake initial and ongoing training. A team of approved reviewers is appointed to assess a course accreditation application, conduct a site and/or virtual visit, and recommend an application outcome to the CAC. Where relevant, the team will also review submissions against accreditation conditions.

Program Structure

Levels of Accreditation

Three levels of course accreditation is available:

- Exercise science
- Exercise physiology
- Sports science

Undergraduate degree courses may be accredited at the level of:

- Exercise science only
- Exercise science and exercise physiology

- Exercise science and sports science

Postgraduate courses are accredited at the level of exercise physiology or sports science only.

Domains

The Course Accreditation Requirements are structured in four domains:

- **Domain 1:** Governance and Quality Assurance
- **Domain 2:** Course of Study
- **Domain 3:** Resources
- **Domain 4:** Practicum Program

Each domain consists of an overarching statement, which summarises the purpose of the domain, and the individual elements that must be addressed to demonstrate meeting the requirements. The domains and elements apply to all the exercise science, exercise physiology and sports science levels of accreditation unless otherwise specified.

An accredited course must meet all requirements in each domain and in relation to the Professional Standards for Accreditation for the accreditation level being sought.

Accreditation Categories

Approved courses will be awarded accreditation in one of the following categories:

- **Qualifying accreditation (pre-accreditation):** Courses seeking accreditation for the first time that have been assessed as suitable to submit an application for initial accreditation.
- **Provisional accreditation:** Courses that have been assessed for initial or reaccreditation and have conditions applied that must be met to achieve full accreditation.
- **Full accreditation:** Courses that have been assessed as meeting all accreditation requirements.

Gaining Course Accreditation

An education provider submitting a course for initial accreditation must progress the course through the Qualifying and Provisional accreditation categories before being eligible for the award of Full accreditation.

Provisional accreditation is awarded for a period of up to two years. To progress from Provisional accreditation to Full accreditation, the education provider must demonstrate that all conditions applied to the course accreditation have been satisfied, and pay any fees associated with the processing of the conditions.

Graduates of a course holding Provisional or Full accreditation are eligible to apply for the relevant ESSA practitioner accreditation via the accredited-course pathway. Applicants must satisfy all accreditation entry requirements to gain practitioner accreditation listed in the Regulations of Accredited Individuals Policy.

Maintaining Course Accreditation

A course seeking to maintain accreditation must:

- Apply for reaccreditation every five years
- Notify ESSA of any changes to the accredited course, for review and approval
- Fulfil reporting requirements as requested by ESSA, including provision of an annual report

- Comply with all applicable ESSA policies
- Pay an annual accreditation fee.

COURSE ACCREDITATION REQUIREMENTS

Domain 1: Governance & Quality Assurance

The education provider has effective procedures and structures for academic governance and quality assurance.

Governance

- 1.1 The education provider is an authorised issuing organisation for AQF qualifications as per the applicable AQF qualification type.
- 1.2 The course and all its elements, as listed within the application, have been formally approved by the education provider and meet TEQSA requirements for the level of a Bachelor's degree or higher.
- 1.3 The education provider has in place a transparent approach for informing students and potential students of their eligibility to obtain practitioner accreditation with ESSA following graduation, as per ESSA's Practitioner Accreditation Policy. The approach is compatible with all contemporary and any forthcoming requirements that would be in place at the time of graduation.
- 1.4 The education provider adheres to a clear, published policy and procedure for assessing and recording when advanced standing (credit) is granted, which align with ESSA's Course Accreditation Standards.

Quality Assurance

- 1.5 The course has processes to ensure effective quality assurance including:
 - a) Evaluation of course outcomes and the quality of the educational processes used
 - b) Evaluation and retention and attrition rates
 - c) Mechanisms to implement changes arising from evaluation of course outcomes and the educational processes used within the course
 - d) Engagement in comparative analysis with other education providers (national or international) to determine relative student outcomes from the course against the standards relevant to the accreditation level being sought.
- 1.6 The course has implemented a formally appointed and functioning external course advisory group that:
 - a) Includes individuals who are external to the course, and to the university, i.e. industry professionals, who are adequately qualified to provide meaningful and effective feedback regarding the course.
 - b) Meets periodically, but at least once per year.
 - c) Provides recommendations for quality improvements.
- 1.7 The course undertakes structured and systematic external benchmarking of a range of assessment modalities across a five-year accreditation cycle, to ensure parity of standards and outcomes across the profession.

Domain 2: Course of Study

The course design and delivery facilitate student attainment of the required professional attributes and outcomes.

Pedagogical Design

The curriculum:

- 2.1 Is based on an educational philosophy that facilitates the development and attainment of the relevant ESSA professional attributes.
- 2.2 Has a clear and coherent structure, with sequential learning that is integrated to ensure effective learning.
- 2.3 Demonstrates alignment of course learning outcomes with assessment practices.
- 2.4 Facilitates the progressive development and integration of students' knowledge, skills, and professional attributes.

Course Content

The course:

- 2.5 Has a demonstrated nexus between research, teaching, and related learning activities with the delivery of course materials informed by emerging concepts, research, and best practice in the profession.
- 2.6 Is delivered within an academic unit that fosters and explicitly supports research and scholarship relevant to the accreditation level being sought.
- 2.7 Addresses all guiding principles and elements of the relevant Professional Standards for Accreditation.
- 2.8 Delivers an appropriate depth and breadth of education to equip a graduate to practise across a variety of client populations, practice settings, and areas of practice.

Assessment

- 2.9 There is a robust, clearly defined assessment methodology to ensure that assessments are aligned with learning outcomes and mapped to all elements of the relevant Professional Standards for Accreditation.
- 2.10 A contemporary, validated range of assessment tools and modalities are utilised.
- 2.11 Regular reviews and evaluations of assessment practices are undertaken.
- 2.12 Moderation processes are in place to ensure consistent assessment practices, processes, and standards across all modes of delivery and campuses.
- 2.13 All forms of assessment for individual and group learning activities include sufficient opportunities to provide students with feedback.

Domain 3: Resources

The course has sufficient resources available for the period of accreditation to support the delivery of a quality learning experience for the current and projected number of enrolled students.

Staffing

3.1 The education provider has a sustainable core (continuing or fixed term) of academic staff with a background in the field of exercise and sports science including:

- a) Course leadership that is responsible for the day-to-day management of the course, administrative oversight, and strategic planning of the course(s), including input into staffing workloads.
- b) Staff who produce research outcomes that allow the effective translation of research into teaching.
- c) Staff responsible for management of the practicum program.

3.2 The core academic staff profile includes a minimum number of suitably qualified and experienced staff, as defined by the Course Accreditation Standards.

3.3 Students have sufficient access to course teaching staff to support their learning needs, including staff with relevant experience and capacity to provide effective laboratory, tutorial, and practical learning activities.

3.4 The education provider supplies sufficient training, support, and supervision to ensure that teaching is delivered at a standard commensurate with the expected learning outcomes.

3.5 There are sufficient technical, IT and administrative support staff to meet the needs of students and academic staff within the academic unit.

Facilities and Equipment

The academic unit has access to adequate, contemporary facilities and equipment including:

3.6 Teaching laboratory spaces that are equipped to accommodate the delivery of:

- a) Exercise physiology, and exercise testing and prescription.
- b) Biomechanics, and motor control and motor learning.
- c) Strength and conditioning.
- d) *For an exercise physiology course*, access to a minimum of one additional teaching/clinic/laboratory space that is suitable to equip students to achieve exercise physiology learning outcomes.
- e) *For a standalone sports science course*, access to a minimum of one additional teaching/clinic/laboratory space that is suitable to equip students to achieve sports science learning outcomes. This area should not be considered an additional space to existing facilities and equipment utilised for AES or AEP courses.

3.7 Facilities to foster high quality research in exercise science and exercise physiology.

3.8 Equipment (hardware and software) to meet the specific teaching and research needs of academic staff, and to facilitate the attainment of learning outcomes for students.

3.9 Sufficient information technology facilities and library resources for staff and students to effectively engage in scholarly activity.

Domain 4: Practicum Program

The education provider offers a sustainable practicum program that is integrated into the course curriculum and provides all students with authentic high-quality experiences of sufficient scope and depth to ensure the course outcomes are met, as defined by the Practicum Standards.

Program Design

The practicum program:

- 4.1 Promotes the safety and well-being of the client receiving services.
- 4.2 Is well organised and appropriately resourced.
- 4.3 Has sufficient capacity to accommodate current and projected student numbers.
- 4.4 Provides meaningful learning activities that support students to consolidate and apply their knowledge and skills.
- 4.5 Has clear learning outcomes associated with placements, designed to facilitate student learning to ensure that the Professional Standards are met.
- 4.6 Offers sufficient formalised practicum opportunities to ensure that students:
 - a) Undertake a range of appropriate activities within the relevant Scope of Practice.
 - b) Experience practicum across a variety of relevant client populations.
 - c) Experience practicum across a variety of relevant practice settings.
 - d) Meet the specifications of the Practicum Standards.

Program Management

- 4.7 The time allocated to the role of managing the program is proportionate to the number of students enrolled in the course and sufficient to ensure that the practicum program is managed effectively.
- 4.8 There are a range of formal processes in place to effectively manage the practicum program and to mitigate risk to workplace, supervisor, student, and client well-being.
- 4.9 Students are adequately prepared for each placement. Prior to commencing placements:
 - a) Learning outcomes have been clearly communicated to students.
 - b) Students have completed units of study essential to providing a meaningful practicum experience.
- 4.10 Students are well supported throughout the practicum process.
- 4.11 The education provider has a system of accurately recording and verifying each student's practicum hours, sites, activities, client populations worked with, skills undertaken and supervisor evaluations.

Placement Supervisors

- 4.12 Supervisors receive an induction to the practicum program by the education provider.
- 4.13 Supervisors are appropriately credentialed, experienced, and trained to facilitate and assess the specific outcomes for a student's stage of learning.
- 4.14 Training opportunities are offered as required, to assist supervisors in providing effective supervision, in line with the Practicum Standards.

GLOSSARY

Academic unit	The core operational unit of course development and delivery, 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.
Accreditation requirement	Criteria that must be met or fulfilled to gain or maintain ESSA accreditation.
Advanced standing	A form of credit for any previous learning. Also see <i>recognition of prior learning</i> .
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
Area of practice	A specific health condition, or group of conditions, to which an exercise professional applies their knowledge and skills.
Course	Units of study or subjects that combined form the requirements for the award of the qualification.
Education provider	The academic institution governing the operation of the academic unit.
Formal learning	Learning that takes place through a structured program of teaching and assessment with defined learning objectives and program outcomes.
Informal learning	Learning gained through unstructured activities and experiences. Informal learning is not organised or externally structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support.
Knowledge	Refers to what an individual knows and understands. Can be described in terms of depth, breadth, kinds of knowledge and complexity.
Learning outcomes	The set of knowledge, skills, and their application that a person has acquired and is able to demonstrate after undertaking a learning process.
Practice setting	The context, industry sector or type of workplace in which an exercise professional is practising.
Practicum	Supervised work experience completed at a placement site as part of the course of study. May also be known as Work Integrated Learning.
Practicum supervisor	An appropriately qualified professional overseeing a student undertaking practicum.
Recognition of prior learning (RPL)	Assessment of an individual's relevant prior learning and experience against the requirements or competencies of a course of study to determine eligibility for advanced standing or credit.
Research	Systematic experimental and theoretical work, application, and/or development that results in an increase in the dimensions of knowledge.
Skills	Refers to what an individual can do. Can be described in terms of kinds and complexity and includes cognitive, technical, communication, creative, interpersonal, and generic skills.
TEQSA	Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency
Unit of Study	An individual subject within a course of study.

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