National Guidelines for Higher Education Approval Processes

Guidelines for establishing Australian universities

(relating to National Protocols A and D)

As approved by MCEETYA
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Introductory Information

1. Purpose

These guidelines are a sub-set of the *National Guidelines for Higher Education Approval Processes* which give effect to the *National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes* (the National Protocols), a revised version of which was approved by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) on 7th July 2006.[1] The National Protocols promote common principles, criteria, processes and standards for higher education approvals throughout Australia and also apply to Australian institutions delivering Australian higher education qualifications offshore. The National Protocols and the National Guidelines protect the standing of Australian higher education nationally and internationally by assuring students and the community that higher education institutions in Australia have met identified requirements and are subject to appropriate government regulation.

The National Protocols and the National Guidelines apply to:

- all higher education institutions operating, seeking to operate or purporting to operate in Australia. No institution may operate or purport to operate as a higher education institution in Australia or offer a higher education course in Australia without approval;
- Australian approved institutions delivering Australian higher education qualifications offshore; and
- arrangements in which some aspects of an institution's higher education operations are carried out by other entities, such as through partnerships with other institutions, providers or business entities, the formation of companies, sub-contracting of services, or franchising.

These guidelines relate to Protocols A and D of the National Protocols and describe the requirements and processes for approval to operate as an Australian university. The guidelines also include specific provisions for institutions with a university college title and institutions with a specialised university title.

An institution approved as an Australian university under these guidelines may use the term 'university' in its title according to the conditions under which the approval is granted (see Section 10.11).

Australian universities are self-accrediting and deliver higher education qualifications that comply with the Australian Qualifications Framework (see Section 3.2).

An institution approved to operate as an Australian university in one jurisdiction in Australia will be permitted to operate in any other Australian jurisdiction.

2. Definitions

Appendix 1 contains a glossary which explains the terms used in these guidelines. Unless stated to the contrary, terms have the same meaning as in the National Protocols. Appendix 2 lists the acronyms used in the guidelines.

3. Relationships with other guidelines and legislative processes

Approved higher education institutions must comply with a range of requirements and legislative processes with respect to their operations and reporting. These guidelines focus specifically on the requirements and processes set out for Australian universities in the National Protocols.

3.1 National Guidelines for Higher Education Approval Processes

Other guidelines describe the requirements and processes for the approval of other types of higher education institutions, including those from overseas, as defined by the National Protocols. They are:

[1] See: www.mceetya.edu.au

- Guidelines for the registration of non self-accrediting higher education institutions and the accreditation of their higher education course/s (relating to Protocols A and B);
- Guidelines for awarding self-accrediting authority to higher education institutions other than universities (relating to Protocols A and C); and
- Guidelines for overseas higher education institutions seeking to operate in Australia (relating to Protocols A and E).

All Australian higher education delivery must comply with Protocol A.

The National Protocols have been developed to provide pathways between types of approval for those institutions which aspire to change the nature of their approval. For example, an institution new to higher education is able to apply first to become a non self-accrediting higher education institution and then consider applying for self-accrediting authority after demonstrating a track record of re-registration and re-accreditation. A self-accrediting institution has an opportunity of applying to become a university if it builds a record of research and scholarship to the required breadth and depth. These pathways do not prevent an institution applying directly to become a university if it is able to meet the necessary requirements.

3.2 The Australian Qualifications Framework

The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) is a unified system of national qualifications in post-compulsory education and training.[2] It provides qualification titles and descriptors, including nationally agreed characteristics of learning outcomes, against which accreditation takes place and which are set out in detailed guidelines in the AQF Implementation Handbook.

The AQF defines Australian qualifications to which Australian approval processes apply. The Australian qualifications to which higher education approval processes apply are:

- Diploma and Advanced Diploma (may also be approved under VET processes – see below);
- Associate Degree;
- Bachelor Degree;
- Graduate Certificate;
- Graduate Diploma;
- Masters Degree; and
- Doctoral Degree.

Separate approval processes are required for registration as a provider of Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses. Courses approved through VET processes lead to the following qualifications:

- Certificate I, II, III and IV;
- Diploma;
- Advanced Diploma;
- Vocational Graduate Certificate; and
- Vocational Graduate Diploma.

3.3 CRICOS approval

Institutions seeking to offer courses for overseas students in Australia must also become registered on the *Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students* (CRICOS) through a separate application process. Institutions intending to deliver courses to international students should allow time for CRICOS approval.

[2] See: www.aqf.edu.au

4. Government Accreditation Authorities

Government Accreditation Authorities are listed on the AQF *Register of Recognised Education Institutions and Authorised Accreditation Authorities* and are responsible for higher education approvals. Part 3 of the National Protocols outlines the obligations on Government Accreditation Authorities.

Each jurisdiction within Australia has enacted legislation to give effect to the National Protocols. The administration of this legislation is undertaken by the Government Accreditation Authority in each jurisdiction. The legislation specifies the responsible decision-maker who will consider advice from the relevant Government Accreditation Authority in arriving at a decision about an application for approval as an Australian university. The Government Accreditation Authority provides information for applicants, administers the approval process and provides an officer for each assessment panel.

5. Fees

Fees associated with higher education approval processes will be specified by the Government Accreditation Authority.

6. Enacting the approval

After approval, the institution will be registered by the Government Accreditation Authority on the AQF *Register of Recognised Education Institutions and Authorised Accreditation Authorities*. Most Australian universities operate under a legislative instrument established in the jurisdiction in which approval is granted.

7. Duration of approvals

Approvals are normally subject to review within a period of no more than five years. After granting a university initial approval for up to five years, the responsible decision-maker may grant approval for a longer period, including in perpetuity. All approvals are subject to the processes for revoking or amending approval as described in Section 13. The processes for renewal of approval, when and as required, are described in Section 14.

8. Marketing and public statements during the approval process

An applicant in the process of seeking approval must refrain from making any public statement or advertisement which falsely implies that the applicant is approved to operate as an Australian university before approval is formally granted by the responsible decision-maker. There are penalties for advertising as a higher education institution, offering or advertising a higher education award or conferring a higher education award before approval is formally granted through one of the sets of processes in the *National Guidelines for Higher Education Approval Processes*.

Approval Processes

9. Timeframe for approval

As a general rule, initial applicants should allow at least twelve months between the time of making a complete and satisfactory application to the Government Accreditation Authority and a recommendation being made to the responsible decision-maker. This timeline is indicative only and may be extended by a number of factors, including the complexity of the application, as well as incomplete applications and consequent panel requests for additional information. The time taken for the applicant to provide any required additional or revised information will be added on to the indicative timeline.

10. Steps in the process

The process of granting approval for an Australian university is presented as an overview in Figure 1 below. Further detail on each of the steps in the process follows.

Depending on the type of institution making the application, possible outcomes of the approval process include approval to operate as an:

- institution with an unmodified university title;
- institution with a specialised university title; or
- institution with a university college title.

10.1 Initial contact with Government Accreditation Authority

The applicant should become familiar with the guidelines and all documentation associated with the application process. The applicant should then contact the Government Accreditation Authority in the relevant jurisdiction if clarification on the approval process is needed and to apprise the Authority of the intention to seek approval.

An application must be made to the Government Accreditation Authority in the jurisdiction in which the institution's legal entity is registered.

10.2 Application prepared and submitted

An application for initial approval to operate as a university involves the preparation of a detailed and documented application which addresses in full the requirements for the relevant approval sought as explained in detail in the Requirements sections (Sections 16 to 19) of these guidelines. The Requirements sections (Sections 16 to 19) also provide initial applicants with information about the types of evidence to be presented in order to demonstrate compliance with the requirements. Note that the assessment panel will need evidence that requirements are met through the documentation provided by the applicant and through direct verification during the site visit and/or interviews if these take place as part of the assessment. The application should provide sufficient detail to enable an informed judgement to be made by a panel.

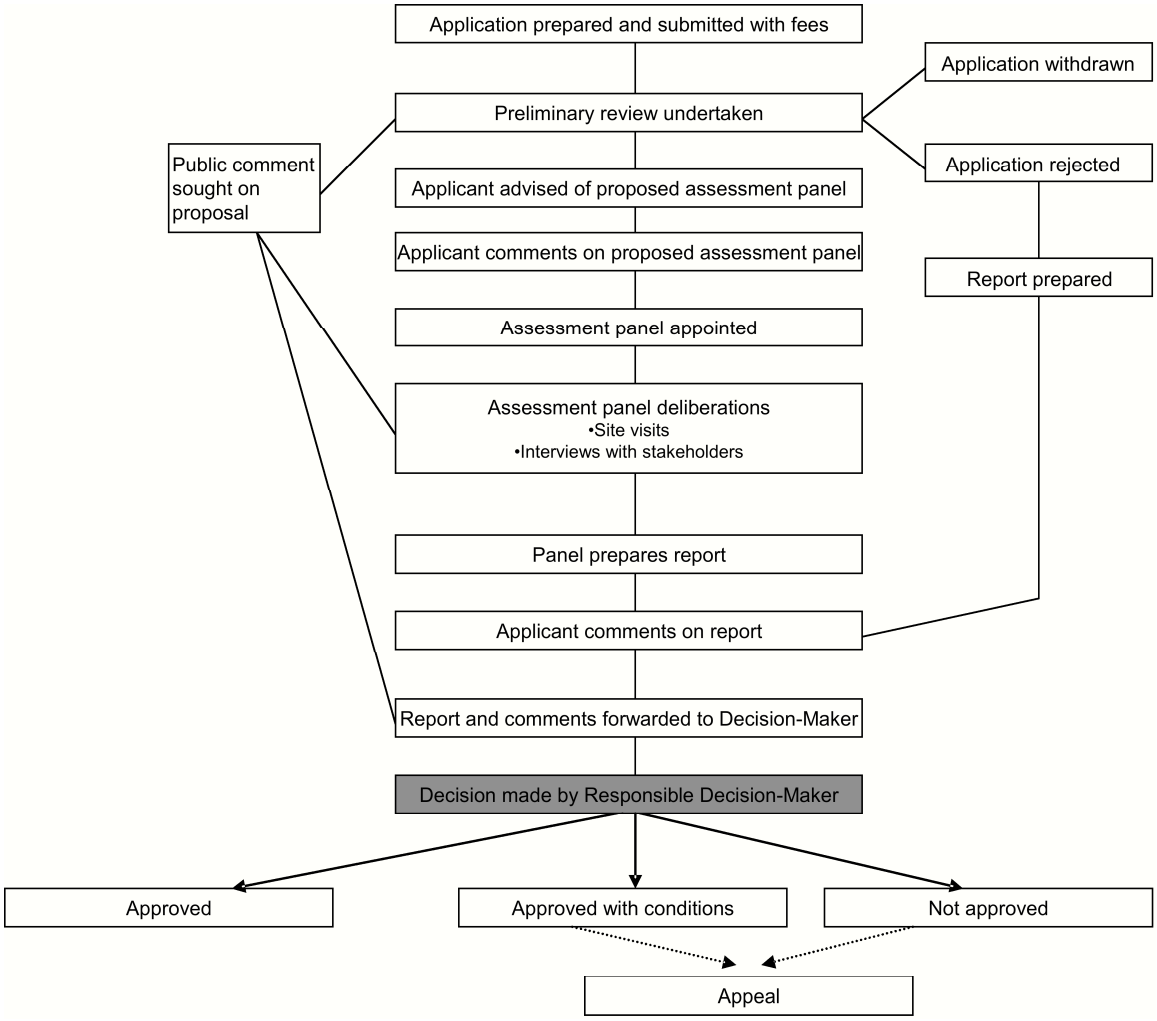
The assessment process will include consideration of all offshore activities of the institution which involve the delivery of Australian higher education qualifications. The application must, therefore, include information and documentation relating to all activities of the institution which are associated with the delivery of Australian qualifications offshore.

The assessment process will also include consideration of the delivery of Australian higher education qualifications by agents and/or partners on behalf of the institution, including those within Australia and offshore. The application must, therefore, include information and documentation relating to all relevant arrangements with agents and/or partners.

The applicant should present two copies of the application to the Government Accreditation Authority, together with the required fees. Receipt of the application will be acknowledged in writing.

Notwithstanding the requirement for seeking public comment on the proposal, the Government Accreditation Authority will maintain strict confidentiality with all applications and will not release information to inquirers without agreement from the applicant or unless in response to misleading public statements by the applicant or required to do so by law. Information on applications will be shared between Government Accreditation Authorities on a confidential basis.

Figure 1: Overview of approval process



10.3 Preliminary review

The Government Accreditation Authority will undertake a preliminary review of the application to determine if it provides an adequate basis for assessment by a panel through addressing fully the requirements in these guidelines. The financial viability of the institution may also be assessed at this stage.

As part of the preliminary review and/or at any stage during the assessment process, the applicant may be asked to clarify aspects of the application and/or provide additional information.

If additional information is requested, no further action will be taken by the Government Accreditation Authority until the applicant responds by providing the information. The application will be considered withdrawn if the applicant does not provide the information within three months of the request.

An application may be withdrawn by the applicant at any stage in the process.

Unless the application is withdrawn by the applicant, following the preliminary review the Government Accreditation Authority will:

- arrange for formal commencement of the assessment process; or
- recommend that the application not be approved on the grounds that it does not provide an adequate basis for assessment by a panel or that it appears to be financially unviable. In such a case, a report to this effect will be prepared for the responsible decision-maker and the applicant will be provided with a copy of the report as in Section 10.9 below.

The applicant will be notified of the number of copies of the application and additional information (if any) required for panel members.

10.4 Public comment invited

At an appropriate stage in the process, the Government Accreditation Authority will invite public comment on the proposal to establish an Australian university. At a minimum, this will involve letters to key stakeholders and the provision of information on a public website. This provision does not require commercial-in-confidence information to be made public. Submissions from the public consultation process will be considered by the assessment panel as relevant and a summary of the submissions will be provided to the responsible decision-maker as in Section 10.10.

10.5 Applicant advised of proposed assessment panel

An independent, expert panel will assess the application. Prior to the appointment of the panel, the applicant will be advised of the proposed membership and will have the opportunity to express in writing any reasons for concerns or reservations held about any of the proposed members of the panel on the grounds of conflict of interest, bias or competence. These reasons will be considered when appointing the panel. The responsible decision-maker or delegate reserves the right to make the final choice on composition of all assessment panels.

10.6 Assessment panel appointed

The assessment panel will be appointed and the membership confirmed to the applicant.

The role of the assessment panel is to:

- evaluate the application against the relevant requirements in Sections 16 to 19 and report to the responsible decision-maker on whether the application complies with the relevant requirements; and
- provide advice on whether or not approval should be granted along with any suggested conditions which should be imposed on the approval.

The panel's composition will be relevant and appropriate to the application under consideration. The majority of the members of the assessment panel will be senior academic leaders with high-level experience in an Australian university. The panel will include significant representation from outside the jurisdiction in which the application is made. A panel established to assess an application for a specialised institution seeking access to a modified university title will also include significant senior academic leaders from the area/s of specialisation.

If an assessment panel identifies that additional expertise is needed, it may seek advice of persons outside its membership wherever necessary, especially when establishing the financial viability of the institution. Details of the source/s of this external advice will be included in the panel's report.

It is a requirement for each panel member to sign a declaration to maintain confidentiality, to protect ownership of intellectual property and to declare any conflicts of interest. Panel members must declare any past, present or proposed involvement with the business of the applicant and/or any past, present or proposed financial, professional or personal relationships with the applicant which might constitute a conflict of interest. Panel members should seek disqualification from membership of an assessment panel at any stage in the process if they have serious difficulty making objective decisions about the application.

Applicants must not contact members of an assessment panel directly unless advised to do so by the Government Accreditation Authority. Normally, all matters will be directed through the officer nominated by the Government Accreditation Authority.

10.7 Assessment panel deliberations

The assessment panel will be brought together to discuss the application in detail and assess whether sufficient written evidence is provided to demonstrate that the requirements are met. The panel will identify any issues or further information it wishes to follow up with the applicant.

Meetings of the assessment panel may be conducted face-to-face and/or via email, teleconference and videoconference.

If, at any stage in the assessment process, the panel considers that the application clearly does not meet the requirements for approval, the panel has the discretion to finalise its deliberations and prepare its report to the responsible decision-maker advising that approval not be granted. In such a case, the applicant will be provided with a copy of the report as in Section 10.9 below.

If facilities exist, the assessment panel will arrange a site visit to inspect facilities and interview staff and students if possible. The timing and format of the visit will be negotiated with the applicant. Typically the visit will include:

- time for the panel to question the key proponents about features of the application;
- an inspection of physical facilities (such as library and the provision of electronic resources, classrooms, specialised teaching spaces, student areas and administrative areas); and
- meetings with key academic staff and other staff involved in areas relevant to the application.

The assessment panel may also meet with students and recent graduates (if relevant).

The panel chair may provide the applicant with feedback about the panel's findings, but comments made by the panel chair and panel members during a site visit or during other interactions with the applicant do not constitute the panel's final assessment.

10.8 Panel report

At its final meeting, the panel will formulate its advice to the responsible decision-maker regarding the application. A written report will be prepared which includes the panel's findings against the requirements. Panel advice will take one of the forms outlined in Section 10.11 below.

10.9 Applicant comments on report

Prior to the report's consideration by the responsible decision-maker, the Government Accreditation Authority will provide the applicant with a copy of the report and invite a response. The response must be received within four weeks of the date of dispatch of the report, although additional time for making a response may be requested. The response should focus on matters of accuracy and emphasis. The response may not include the submission of new material for assessment, other than pre-existing material which supports claims of errors of fact.

10.10 Report and comments forwarded to Responsible Decision-Maker

The applicant's response, a summary of the public submissions and the assessment panel's report will be forwarded to the responsible decision-maker for consideration. The responsible decision-maker may seek additional advice, including from the assessment panel, when deliberating on the material under consideration.

10.11 Decision made by Responsible Decision-Maker

After considering the material presented, the responsible decision-maker will make one of the following decisions:

1. Approve the application – normally approval to operate will be subject to review within a period of no more than five years.
2. Approve the application with conditions which are relevant and reasonable to the application, taking into consideration the assessment panel's advice. Approval with conditions may be granted in cases where an applicant meets some requirements only to a marginal level or when other issues are identified which need to be monitored. Typically, institutions will be required to report on conditions as part of the annual reporting process (see Section 11 below). When conditions are set, there should be clear timelines, and subsequent action in the event of non-compliance should be specified. Conditions may include approval for a provisional period which is associated with use of a 'university college' title as described below.
3. Refuse approval of the application in which case the grounds for such a decision will be presented in the notification of the decision sent to the applicant.

The applicant will be notified in writing of the outcomes of the approval process.

The authority to operate will specify the title the institution may use and the conditions for the use of that title.

Conditions may include a period of sponsorship or mentoring by an established Australian university (or universities) or an equivalent process. In the case of a green-field institution a period of sponsorship or mentoring would normally be required.

The institution may be approved to use an unmodified university title, a modified university title for a specialised university or a 'university college' title, according to the guidelines below.

Unmodified university title:

- may only be used for universities where approval is based on meeting all requirements in Section 16 and the institution delivering AQF higher education qualifications across a range of broad fields of study (including Research Masters and PhDs or equivalent Research Doctorates in at least three broad fields of study) and setting standards for those qualifications which are equivalent to Australian and international standards (see Section 17).

Modified university title for a specialised university:

- must be used for specialised universities where approval is based on meeting all requirements in Section 16 and the institution delivering AQF higher education qualifications (including Research Masters and PhDs or equivalent Research Doctorates) in *one or two* broad fields of study *only* and setting standards for those qualifications which are equivalent to Australian and international standards (see Section 18);

- involves use of the term '[Name] University of [specialisation]' as part of the institution's title, for example Perth University of Agricultural Sciences;

- must be associated with conditions that include a specific period after which the use of the modified university title will be renewed or revoked, based on the processes described in Sections 13 and 14; and

- must not be shortened to 'University' in advertising, formal documentation or other formal situations.

'**University college' title:**

- must be used for all institutions where approval is based on meeting all requirements in Section 16 and the institution delivering AQF higher education qualifications across a range of broad fields of study (including up to Masters coursework degrees in *at least three* broad fields

of study and Research Masters and PhDs or equivalent Research Doctorates in *at least one* broad field of study) and setting standards for those qualifications which are equivalent to Australian and international standards (see Section 19). The institution has no more than five years to demonstrate that it meets the requirements for access to an unmodified university title (see Sections 14, 16 and 17);

- is normally used for all green-field institutions applying for an unmodified university title. The institution has no more than five years to demonstrate that it meets the requirements for an unmodified university title (see Sections 14,16 and 17);

- is normally used for all green-field institutions with a specialised university title, in which case the institution must use the title '[Name] University College of [specialisation]' (for example, Perth University College of Agricultural Sciences) which must not be shorted to University College or University in advertising, formal documentation or other formal situations (see section 16 and 18). The institution has no more than five years to demonstrate that it meets the requirements for access to a specialised university title (see Section 14).

- is normally associated with sponsorship or mentoring by an established Australian university (or universities) or equivalent process which provides similar quality oversight and mentoring;

- must not be shortened to 'University' in advertising, formal documentation or any other formal situation; and

- is associated with a requirement to guarantee the welfare of students in case the institution is not approved to continue as a university after the completion of the provisional period.

10.12 Appeals process

The Government Accreditation Authority will outline to the applicant the process through which an appeal of the decision may be made. An appeal may be lodged after the outcomes of the approval process have been conveyed in writing to the applicant.

Post-Approval Processes

11. Annual reporting

As a condition of approval, universities will be required to report annually to the responsible authorities in the jurisdiction where approval has been granted. The Government Accreditation Authority will provide details of the reporting requirements and process.

12. External quality audit

Universities will undergo a regular external quality audit by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA). One of the purposes of these audits will be to determine if the approved institution continues to meet the requirements of the National Protocols. Details of university audits will be provided in the AUQA audit manual.

Existing universities would be expected to demonstrate that they continue to meet the criteria in Protocols A and D as part of their AUQA performance portfolio referring to (without duplicating) information provided for a range of purposes as part of ongoing accountability requirements to Commonwealth and State Governments.

Initial approval for a university, under these guidelines, will be for five years. An external quality audit by AUQA will be undertaken before the end of this period to determine if the institution's teaching and research outcomes meet the requirements for an established university of its type, as set out in the National Protocols and these guidelines.

13. Revoking or amending approval

In response to concerns about the quality of a university operating in its jurisdiction, the responsible decision-maker may investigate the activities of the institution and may place conditions on its continuation or its use of a university title within the jurisdiction. The responsible decision-maker may also revoke approval to operate or approval to operate with a university title at any time, based on evidence that the institution no longer meets one or more of the requirements specified in these guidelines. Such actions may follow concerns identified through the annual reporting process or an external quality audit or result from investigations of a complaint or grievance against the institution. If the Government Accreditation Authority is considering revoking approval for operate as a university, advice may be sought from AUQA on the performance of the institution. Details of concerns will be provided to the institution and the institution's comment will be sought, with a specified time limit, prior to a decision being made.

The decision may be appealed in accordance with provisions in Section 10.12.

14. The process of renewing approval or moving from a university college to a university

In cases where approval has been granted for a period after which renewal of approval must be sought, the application for renewal will be assessed against the relevant requirements as outlined in the Requirements sections (Sections 16 to 18) of these guidelines with a major focus on quality improvement and outcomes achieved during the period since the previous approval. The process for renewal of approval covers renewal of approval to operate as a university with an unmodified title, renewal of approval to operate with a modified university title or approval to move from a university college to a university with a modified or unmodified title.

Applications for the renewal of approval must be submitted to the Government Accreditation Authority in time for the process for renewal of approval to be completed before approval expires.

The Government Accreditation Authority will provide details of the evidence to be submitted to demonstrate that the relevant requirements are met. The evidence should focus on quality improvements and outcomes since the previous approval. External quality audit reports from AUQA

and the institution's annual reports will provide much of the evidence required for renewal of approval. The Government Accreditation Authority will specify the additional information required.

The Government Accreditation Authority may seek external advice to assist in assessing the application for renewal of approval, including advice from AUQA on the performance of the institution. This may also include establishing an assessment panel or seeking advice from the chair or member/s of the previous assessment panel, a content expert or a financial expert.

There may be conditions associated with a decision to renew approval. If approval is not being recommended or if conditions are recommended, the institution's comment will be sought, with a specified time limit, prior to a decision being made.

Normally use of the title 'university college' is approved for a provisional period of no more than five years. If, after the provisional period, the institution is not granted an unmodified university title or a modified university title for a specialised university, the institution may seek approval to operate as another type of higher education institution under relevant guidelines.

The decision may be appealed in accordance with provisions in Section 10.12.

15. Marketing and public statements

All higher education institutions must ensure that marketing of their services is carried out with integrity and accuracy. No false or misleading comparisons will be drawn with any other institution or its courses, nor should institutions make any inaccurate claims about their approval status, their title or their association with any other institution or organisation.

An institution's publications, statements and advertising should describe accurately the institution, its operations and its accredited courses.

In cases where a course is delivered in association with another entity, the responsibility for advertising the recruitment materials for the course rests with the approved institution.

Requirements

These sections provide details of the requirements which must be met for approval to operate as a:

- institution with an unmodified university title: must meet requirements in Sections 16 and 17;
- institution with a specialised university title: must meet requirements in Sections 16 and 18; and
- institution with a university college title: must meet requirements in Sections 16 and 19. To gain access to an unmodified university title the institution must build towards meeting the requirements in Sections 16 and 17 within five years of its establishment.

The requirements elaborate on the criteria presented in the *National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes*. The number of the relevant criterion or criteria in the National Protocols from which the requirements are derived is listed in brackets after the heading for each section or sub-section.

These sections also provide details about evidence to be presented by initial applicants in order to demonstrate that the requirements are met.

The requirements have been written with a focus on outcomes and therefore some forms of evidence may not apply directly to 'green-field' institutions, organisations moving into education provision for the first time or institutions moving from vocational education and training delivery into higher education delivery for the first time. In these cases, it is essential for detailed plans to be submitted to provide evidence that planning has taken account of the requirements which must be met and that appropriate policies, procedures and financial and human resources are in place to support the achievement of those requirements. Assessment panels will need to be confident that there is sufficient evidence to indicate all requirements will be met in a reasonable period of time after establishment.

16. Requirements for approval to operate as an Australian university

16.1 Fitness and legality (A1)[3]

Expected outcome: There is a legally accountable and reputable entity responsible for all higher education courses and delivery.

16.1.1 The institution is a legally constituted entity established and/or recognised by or under an Australian legislative instrument.

16.1.2 The applicant and the senior officers of the institution demonstrate that they are 'fit and proper' persons. (see Appendix 3)

16.1.3 The applicant discloses all details of the history of the entity, its predecessors and related entities, and its history of prior applications for approval to deliver education, and any prior involvement in education delivery indicates a track record of compliance and quality education provision.

16.1.4 The applicant undertakes to comply with relevant State/Territory and Commonwealth laws and regulatory requirements.

Evidence to be provided by initial applicants includes:

- Australian Business Number (ABN) of the institution
- Australian Company Number (ACN), where relevant

[3] Refers to the criteria or criterion in the *National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes* which relate to the requirements that follow.

- Copy of the certificate of registration of the company and business/trade name, where relevant
- If an association, copy of certificate of incorporation
- If a statutory body, details of establishing legislation
- Copy of constitution or equivalent
- Details of the owner/s, shareholders (and their proportional shareholdings), members or directors (as relevant)
- Copies of contracts with agents, partners and/or other organisations involved in the delivery of the applicant's services (as relevant)
- A signed declaration against the fit and proper person requirements in Appendix 3
- A statement of previous history of the entity, its predecessors and related entities, and its history as any type of education institution, including all successful and unsuccessful applications for approval, both within Australia and overseas
- Declaration of compliance with key State/Territory and Commonwealth laws and regulatory requirements.

16.2 Goals and culture of the institution (D3, A2, A3)

Expected outcome: The institution contributes to higher education outcomes within Australia and has a commitment to free intellectual inquiry.

16.2.1 Legal and public documentation of the institution clearly articulates a primary purpose focused towards higher education and research.

16.2.2 The mission and goals of the institution and its programs can be mapped against the goals of Australian higher education as stated in Part 1 (Introduction) of the *National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes* and no goal of the institution is incompatible with the goals of Australian higher education.

16.2.3 The mission and goals of the institution include specific reference to free inquiry and the systematic advancement of knowledge.

16.2.4 The institution has policies, procedures and practices in place which encourage academic integrity and honesty as well as free intellectual inquiry in the teaching, research and scholarship activities of the institution.

Evidence to be provided by initial applicants includes:

- Statement of mission and goals for institution, together with a record of their approval by the relevant body
- Public documentation such as website, prospectus and advertising material of the institution showing mission, goals, purpose and programs
- Explanation of how the mission and goals of the institution and its programs map against the goals of Australian higher education
- Evidence that academic freedom and a commitment to free inquiry are built into employment conditions
- Academic policies and procedures which relate to academic integrity and honesty, and free intellectual inquiry with examples of how these policies are implemented and understood by staff.

16.3 University governance (D4, A5)

Expected outcome: The institution is well-governed.

16.3.1 The institution's structures and instruments of governance are appropriate to a university and demonstrate the capacity of the institution to ensure academic autonomy, independent inquiry, integrity of academic programs and self-management.

16.3.2 The institution has a legally constituted governing body which has responsibility for oversight of all of the institution's activities including conferral of its higher education awards and the delegation of academic governance to an appropriate body (see requirements under 16.6 below).

16.3.3 Membership of the governing body includes the range of expertise required for effective governance of a university, including financial, commercial and higher education expertise.

16.3.4 The institution has an organisational structure whose reporting arrangements, delegations and inter-relationships are clearly described and which has the necessary positions, structures and arrangements in place to manage all key aspects of a quality university.

16.3.5 The governing body ensures that all the institution's operations, including its governance, are systematically reviewed and that strategies are implemented to improve institutional performance.

Evidence to be provided by initial applicants includes:

- Terms of reference and membership of governing body, indicating frequency of meetings, allocation of functions, duties of members, lines of responsibility and delegations
- Details of background and expertise of members of governing body
- The name of the body which will confer higher education awards
- Organisational chart and an explanation of the relationships and reporting lines among key positions and structures which relate to the major institutional governance, management and academic responsibilities
- Explanation of the relationship between the governing body and the academic board
- Reports of external reviews of governance and/or other benchmarking against university governance arrangements
- Copies of policies, plans and outcomes for reviews of institutional performance, including an indication of the role of the governing body in these processes.

16.4 Finances and management (D4, A6)

Expected outcome: Quality student learning outcomes are achieved by a well-managed institution with sufficient resources.

16.4.1 The institution has a current strategic plan which is approved by the governing body, is well-understood by stakeholders and indicates that the institution has clarity about its future directions.

16.4.2 There are management and administrative systems, policies, procedures and practices in place to ensure that adequate records are maintained and kept secure, and that reporting requirements are met.

16.4.3 The institution has systems and processes which ensure potential risks are identified and prevented or minimised and that strategies are in place to deal with risks which eventuate.

16.4.4 The financial records for the institution are accurate and independently audited by a qualified auditor.

16.4.5 The institution demonstrates its financial viability and its capacity to sustain quality university-level operations into the future through a range of financial indicators, such as credit rating, cash flow, current ratio (equal to or greater than 1) and debt ratio (equal to or less than 1) or, if necessary, the institution has a financial guarantor with capacity to service the guarantee.

Evidence to be provided by initial applicants includes:

- The institution's strategic plan, covering at least the next three years, and details of the planning, dissemination, monitoring and reporting processes associated with the strategic plan
- Information about the institution's financial management system/s and student records management system
- A detailed business plan, incorporating a three year profit and loss projection, sources of funding, capital and asset plan, student enrolments, and risk management plan
- Details of financial guarantor (if relevant)
- Financial statements for the last three years presented and independently audited by a qualified auditor in compliance with Australian Accounting Standards.

16.5 Protection of students (A10)

Expected outcome: The rights and interests of students are safeguarded.

16.5.1 The institution has financial and tuition safeguards in place for students, such as membership of an approved Tuition Assurance Scheme, financial underwriting and written course assurance agreements with another institution, should the institution cease to be able to provide a course or cease to operate as a university.

16.5.2 Students are informed about their contractual arrangements with the institution and have access to information about all charges, conditions, refunds and tuition assurance arrangements.

16.5.3 Students have access to effective grievance procedures which enable them to make complaints about any aspect of the institution's operations without fear of reprisal and which provide access to an independent third party if internal processes fail to resolve the grievance.

Evidence to be provided by initial applicants includes:

- Documents that show the arrangements in place for students in the event of closure of course/s or the entity, such as membership of an approved Tuition Assurance Scheme (TAS), written course assurance agreements from other higher education institutions, bank guarantee or other form of underwriting
- Policy and procedures relating to student grievances, including details of any costs to students
- Information for students published on website and in student handbook regarding grievances, complaints, fees and charges, refunds of fees and tuition assurance arrangements
- Details of any student grievances over the previous three years which have resulted in legal action (for existing institutions).

16.6 Academic governance and quality assurance (D4, A5)

Expected outcome: The institution has a focus on continuous improvement of teaching and learning to provide quality outcomes for students and academic standards comparable with Australian universities.

16.6.1 The institution has a properly constituted academic board or equivalent whose membership provides the institution with the expertise to ensure that standards are maintained at the level of Australian universities.

16.6.2 The academic board plays an active role in the approval and review of the institution's courses.

16.6.3 The academic board plays a key role in the development, dissemination and monitoring of academic policies related to academic standards.

16.6.4 The institution has student admission policies and procedures which ensure that students are selected through open and fair processes and which are based on maintaining academic standards and maximising the likelihood of students succeeding in their studies (notwithstanding specific equity provisions).

16.6.5 The institution has an effective and comprehensive quality system which ensures all its academic operations are systematically monitored and that improvements are made when necessary.

16.6.6 The institution has effective mechanisms to collect regular, valid and reliable feedback from stakeholders, such as students, graduates, staff, and employers of graduates, and effective mechanisms to ensure that the feedback is acted upon to bring about improvements.

16.6.7 The institution has mechanisms for benchmarking its academic performance against other universities to identify and act upon areas requiring improvement.

16.6.8 The institution takes full responsibility for and ensures consistent standards for all courses which lead to a qualification it awards including through specific strategies to monitor courses delivered offshore and those delivered through partners or agents if relevant.

Evidence to be provided by initial applicants includes:

- Terms of reference of academic board highlighting meeting frequency, sub-committee structure/s, procedures for appointing members, reporting lines, and responsibilities
- Membership of academic board with details of qualifications, current employment, experience and expertise of members
- Copies of key academic policies endorsed by academic board, including academic promotions, student admissions, recognition of prior learning (RPL) and credit transfer, student progress and exclusion, assessment, academic appeals, student conduct, graduation, course approvals and course reviews
- Details of survey tools and examples of data collected and analysed to enhance quality
- Policies and procedures to assure quality of all courses including those delivered by partner institutions or agents and those delivered offshore (if relevant), such as policies and procedures relating to course consistency or equivalence and moderation of assessment.
- Examples of benchmarking data and improvements made as a result of quality assurance processes (for existing institutions).

16.7 Staffing (A8)

Expected outcome: Students are taught and supported by staff with academic and professional expertise to facilitate quality learning outcomes and who contribute to the advancement of knowledge and understanding.

16.7.1 The numbers, qualifications, experience, expertise and sessional/full-time mix of academic staff are appropriate for a university of the size and complexity of the institution and the nature, range and levels of the courses offered.

16.7.2 The numbers and expertise of administrative and support staff are appropriate to ensure all administrative and support functions are carried out effectively and students have adequate access to assistance when they require it.

16.7.3 The proportion of academic staff with doctoral qualifications in each field of study offered by the institution is comparable with other similar Australian universities.

16.7.4 The institution verifies the bona fides of the qualifications of its staff.

16.7.5 There are appropriately experienced academic staff available and clearly identified to provide leadership for key academic tasks such as course development, course co-ordination and course review.

16.7.6 The institution ensures that academic staff are available for students seeking academic assistance.

16.7.7 The institution ensures that teaching is normally carried out by academics with relevant qualifications at least one AQF qualification level higher than the level of the course being taught.

16.7.8 The institution has strategies for enhancing teaching quality and other aspects of staff performance, including for sessional staff, such as through staff development and other professional development opportunities.

Evidence to be provided by initial applicants includes:

- Details of staff profile, including employment arrangements, length of service, qualifications and background
- Staffing profile benchmarked against Australian universities in terms of student staff ratios and qualifications
- Details of procedures used by the institution to verify the bona fides of all qualifications of staff
- Copies of staff recruitment policies and procedures
- Copies of academic appointment and promotion policies showing criteria used
- Copy of policy and procedures for staff performance review
- Details of background and qualifications of staff involved in the development, co-ordination, quality assurance and delivery of the institution's higher education courses
- Copies of policies and procedures relating to availability of academic staff for consultation with students
- Staff development policy, plans, budget and expenditure, including for sessional staff.

16.8 Facilities and student services (A9)

Expected outcome: Student learning outcomes are enhanced through access to quality facilities, learning and information resources and support services.

16.8.1 The physical presence of the institution is appropriate to a university of the size and nature of the institution.

16.8.2 The institution has arrangements to maintain contact with and support students who are remote from the campus, such as through a website, telephone, print and on-line resources, and email.

16.8.3 The institution has facilities, including classrooms, library, laboratories, administrative areas and staff office accommodation, appropriate in scope and quality for the size and nature of the institution, the delivery methods and the types of courses it offers.

16.8.4 The institution provides an appropriate range and quality of student services such as counselling, academic and career advice, IT support, and student learning assistance.

16.8.5 The institution has measures in place to prevent and detect cheating and plagiarism amongst its students and to deal appropriately with any instances of these practices.

16.8.6 The institution has effective mechanisms to identify students 'at risk' in terms of their academic progress and provides support for such students.

16.8.7 The range and quality of the learning and information resources provided to students by the institution support effective student learning and are appropriate for the nature of the institution, its courses and their mode of delivery.

Evidence to be provided by initial applicants includes:

- Details of physical and IT facilities, including accessibility for students
- Details of all student services including information about accessibility for students
- Details of processes for review and improvement of facilities and student services
- Copies of contracts/agreements if services are out-sourced
- Copies of policies on academic misconduct and plagiarism
- Details about strategies for detecting and dealing with plagiarism
- Details of how 'at risk' students are identified and the academic counselling or other learning assistance and support available to students
- Details of library holdings, including electronic databases, and access to learning resources for students and staff
- Details of the assistance available to students in developing information literacy and in accessing resources
- Policies on the development and review of learning and information resources, including details of budget available for maintaining and upgrading such resources.

16.9 Course requirements (D1, A4, A7)

Expected outcome: Student learning outcomes are consistent with Australian university standards.

16.9.1 The Australian higher education qualifications offered by the institution comply with AQF requirements.

16.9.2 The courses have been developed with input from academics and professional bodies (where relevant) familiar with the standards in Australian universities for these types of courses.

16.9.3 There are mechanisms to ensure that course developers and academics delivering courses remain aware of the standards in other Australian universities as well as internationally.

16.9.4 Benchmarking, external review and industry/professional accreditation provide assurance that standards of courses and student learning outcomes are comparable with Australian universities.

16.9.5 The subject or discipline area of all courses is underpinned by a substantial level of scholarship demonstrated by a coherent body of knowledge, theoretical framework, published research and current literature, and this scholarship is reflected in the courses.

16.9.6 Course objectives and content include engagement with advanced knowledge and inquiry.

Evidence to be provided by initial applicants includes:

- Details of how course development, approval and review processes take into account AQF requirements and standards within Australian and international universities
- Evidence of benchmarking of course standards and outcomes, professional/industry accreditation, and external reviews
- Evidence that the design of courses and course materials is informed by scholarship and research
- Identification of course objectives and content which require students to engage with advanced knowledge and inquiry.

16.10 Culture of scholarship (D1, A8)

Expected outcome: The institution has a culture of sustained scholarship which informs teaching and learning in all fields in which courses are offered.

16.10.1 The institution demonstrates a culture of sustained scholarship through policies, procedures and outcomes which highlight the importance of scholarship and its consideration in teaching and learning across all fields of study offered.

16.10.2 The institution uses academic promotion and appointment criteria which reflect a culture of sustained scholarship and a commitment to scholarly teaching and learning in all fields.

16.10.3 The institution supports all academic staff, including sessional staff, to be active in scholarship which informs their teaching.

16.10.4 Academic staff of the institution, including sessional staff, are actively engaged in scholarship and/or professional practice relevant to the fields in which they teach and at an appropriate level reflecting their seniority and responsibilities.

Evidence to be provided by initial applicants includes:

- Explanation of how policies and practices show a commitment to the scholarship of teaching and learning, such as through appointments and promotions, the design of courses, student assessment and the promotion of academic honesty, regular course review, monitoring student progress and graduate outcomes, staff development and the recognition of excellence in teaching
- Copies of academic promotion and appointment policies and procedures showing criteria related to scholarship
- Details of budget allocation, expenditure and other institutional strategies to support staff in scholarship

- Details of involvement by academic staff in various types of scholarly activity, such as membership of a discipline journal editorial board, acting as an anonymous peer reviewer, membership of academic societies, peer recognition (e.g. fellowship of an academy or other awards), and presentation of conference papers
- Details of involvement by academic staff in various types of relevant professional activity integral to the academic's discipline, such as membership of professional societies, consultancy work and creative endeavour.

16.11 Research culture (D2, A8)

Expected outcome: The institution undertakes research that leads to the creation of new knowledge and original creative endeavour at least in those fields in which Research Masters and PhDs or equivalent Research Doctorates are offered.

16.11.1 In all fields in which research higher degrees are offered, the institution demonstrates a research culture and research output which are at least comparable with similar Australian universities.

16.11.2 The institution has a strategic approach to building its research capability over time.

16.11.3 The institution has sufficient infrastructure to support its research endeavours.

16.11.4 The institution demonstrates evidence that academic staff engaged in research student supervision as principal supervisors are active in research.

16.11.5 The institution assesses theses by candidates undertaking higher degrees by research using procedures and standards equivalent to Australian universities, including the appointment of external examiners.

16.11.6 The institution has policies and procedures to ensure the ethical conduct of its research, its researchers and supervision of research students.

Evidence to be provided by initial applicants includes:

- Copy of the institution's strategic research plan which shows performance targets, development and maintenance of research capacity and research infrastructure, and strategies for staff and student recruitment and support. The plan should also identify areas of research focus and how it is proposed these will be built up over time, the relationship between building research capacity and teaching capacity, and the processes for monitoring implementation and achievement of plans and targets
- Details of institutional research output of staff and research students, including research publications (weighted) per full-time equivalent (FTE) academic staff member assessed against the reference points set out in Appendix 4
- The ratio of total research income to total revenue for the institution, assessed against reference points set out in Appendix 4
- Details of budget allocation, expenditure and sources of funding to support development of research capability and research infrastructure in selected fields of research
- Details of budget allocation and other institutional strategies to support staff and students in their research endeavours, including through support for staff to complete PhDs, study leave, reduced teaching loads, staff development, scholarships and research grant schemes
- Evidence that teaching loads for academic staff provide time for research endeavours
- Copies of policies and procedures for higher degrees by research

- Copies of documented policies and procedures for assessment of candidates for higher degrees by research, including appointment of examiners
- Copies of documented policies and procedures for appointing supervisors of research students, demonstrating the requirement for principal supervisors to be research active (noting that the definition of research active for this purpose must exclude research student supervision)
- For staff involved in research student supervision, details of a record of successful research student supervision and details of research output, such as research publications and research income
- Copies of policies on intellectual property, research ethics, commercialisation, and research student supervision
- Documented procedures to ensure all staff and student research activity meets ethical standards.

17. Additional requirement for institutions with an unmodified university title *(D5)*

The institution delivers AQF higher education qualifications across a range of broad fields of study (including Research Masters and PhDs or equivalent Research Doctorates in at least three broad fields of study) and sets standards for those qualifications which are equivalent to Australian and international standards.

Evidence to be provided by initial applicants includes:

- List of courses and student load in each course, by field of study, assessed against the reference points set out in Appendix 4
- Copies of policies and procedures for setting course standards, including how equivalence to Australian and international standards is assured.

18. Additional requirement for institutions with a specialised university title *(D7)*

The institution delivers AQF higher education qualifications (including Research Masters and PhDs or equivalent Research Doctorates) in *one or two* broad fields of study *only* and sets standards for those qualifications which are equivalent to Australian and international standards.

Evidence to be provided by initial applicants includes:

- List of courses and student load in each course, by field of study, assessed against the reference points set out in Appendix 4
- Copies of policies and procedures for setting course standards, including how equivalence to Australian and international standards is assured.

19. Additional requirement for institutions with a 'university college' title *(D6)*

The institution delivers AQF higher education qualifications across a range of broad fields of study (including up to Masters coursework degrees in *at least three* broad fields of study and Research Masters and PhDs or equivalent Research Doctorates in *at least one* broad field of study) and sets standards for those qualifications which are equivalent to Australian and international standards.

The institution demonstrates it has the capacity to build towards meeting the requirement for an unmodified university title no more than five years after its establishment.

Evidence to be provided by initial applicants includes:

- List of courses and student load in each course, by field of study, assessed against the reference points set out in Appendix 4
- Copies of policies and procedures for setting course standards including how equivalence to Australian and international standards is assured
- Plans for extending the fields of study to the requirements for an established university (see 17 above) within five years, assessed against the reference points set out in Appendix 4.

Appendix 1: Glossary

Approval:

A process of assessment and review which enables a higher education course or institution to be recognised or certified as meeting appropriate standards.

Course:

A sequence of study leading to the award of a qualification.

Course accreditation:

The term 'course accreditation' includes the assessment and approval of courses of study which lead to higher education qualifications.

Delivering Australian higher education qualifications offshore:

A higher education institution approved in Australia which operates offshore and is involved in the delivery of courses or parts of courses leading to AQF qualifications, the related components of that activity (such as educational delivery and assessment), and/or awarding AQF qualifications offshore (whether or not a course is provided).

Field of study:

The term 'field of study' as used in the National Guidelines is a modified version of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Australian Standard Classification of Education (ASCED) categories for a broad field of education (excluding the 'mixed field' classification). For the purposes of these guidelines, there are twelve broad fields of study:

- Mathematical and physical sciences (comprising ASCED narrow fields 0101 Mathematical Sciences, 0103 Physics and Astronomy, 0105 Chemical Sciences, 0107 Earth Sciences and detailed fields 019907 Pharmacology, 019909 Laboratory Technology and 019999 Natural and Physical Sciences n.e.c.)
- Biological sciences (comprising ASCED narrow field 0109 Biological Sciences and detailed fields 019901 Medical Science, 019903 Forensic Sciences and 019909 Food Science and Biotechnology)
- Information technology (comprising ASCED broad field 02)
- Engineering and related technologies (comprising ASCED broad field 03)
- Architecture and building (comprising ASCED broad field 04)
- Agriculture, environmental and related studies (comprising ASCED broad field 05 and narrow field 0611 Veterinary Studies)
- Clinical sciences and clinical physiology (comprising ASCED narrow fields 0601 Medical Studies, 0605 Pharmacy, 0607 Dental Studies, 0609 Optical Science and 0615 Radiography)
- Public health and health services (comprising ASCED narrow fields 0603 Nursing, 0613 Public Health, 0617 Rehabilitation Therapies, 0619 Complementary Therapies and 0699 Other Health
- Education (comprising ASCED broad field 07)
- Management and commerce (comprising ASCED broad field 08 plus broad field 11 Food, Hospitality and Personal Services)
- Society and culture (comprising ASCED broad field 09)
- Creative arts (comprising ASCED broad field 10).

Government Accreditation Authorities:

Those Commonwealth and State/Territory agencies listed on the Australian Qualifications Framework *Register of Recognised Education Institutions and Authorised Accreditation Authorities*.

Green-field institution:

An applicant for which there is no existing education institution and/or facilities and premises on which the application is based. Assessment of the application is therefore made on the basis of detailed plans.

Higher education qualification:

The qualifications covered by higher education legislation and processes are Australian Higher Education Qualifications defined as higher education qualifications in the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF).

Institution:

The term 'institution' includes the full range of organisations, providers and divisions offering higher education qualifications.

Jurisdictions:

Those governments in Australia which have agreed to enact the National Protocols.

Mutual recognition:

Refers to approval by one jurisdiction (the 'secondary' jurisdiction) based on registration of an institution and accreditation of its course/s by another jurisdiction (the 'primary' jurisdiction).

National Protocols:

The *National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes* approved by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) on 7th July 2006.

Non self-accrediting institution:

An institution which is registered as a higher education institution and whose courses are accredited by the Government Accreditation Authority.

Operating in Australia and purporting to operate in Australia:

'To operate' and 'purporting to operate' as a higher education institution in Australia includes both to provide courses or parts of courses in Australia leading to higher education qualifications, and the related components of that activity (educational delivery and assessment), or to award higher education qualifications (whether or not a course is provided). Electronic or distance education delivery of a higher education course/s in or from a jurisdiction is included in the definition of operating in Australia, although electronic or distance education delivery into a jurisdiction from outside Australia is not included. Conducting a business, using premises, mail and/or telecommunication devices 'to operate' or 'purport to operate' a higher education institution in Australia without approval is unlawful under legislation which enacts the National Protocols.

'Purporting to operate' in Australia means representing that the institution operates in Australia (as in the definition above), or has accreditation association with an Australian jurisdiction.

The requirements related to operating in or purporting to operate in Australia apply to an institution or an agent acting on behalf of the institution.

Overseas higher education institution:

An overseas higher education institution refers to a university or other recognised higher education institution whose legal origin is in a country or countries other than Australia.

Quality assurance:

Quality assurance refers to the policies, attitudes, actions and procedures necessary to ensure that quality is being maintained and enhanced. It requires actions internal to the institution, but may also involve actions of external bodies. It includes course design, staff development and the collection and use of feedback from students and employers. Quality assurance is also used as a general term to refer to the range of possible approaches to addressing concern for quality in higher education.[4]

Quality audit:

[4] Based on the definition provided by the Australian Universities Quality Agency. See: www.auqa.edu.au

In the context of quality in higher education, quality audit is a process for checking that procedures are in place to assure quality, integrity or standards of provisions and outcomes.[5]

Registration:

The term 'registration' includes the approval of an institution to deliver one or more courses of study leading to a higher education qualification.

Research:

Research[6] comprises creative work and artistic endeavours undertaken systematically in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of humans, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications. Research is characterised by originality and includes creative activity and performance. It has investigation as a primary objective, the outcome of which is new knowledge, with or without a specific practical application, or new or improved materials, products, devices, processes or services. Research ends when work is no longer primarily investigative.

There are three broad types of research activity:

- Basic research is experimental and theoretical work undertaken primarily to acquire new knowledge without a specific application in view. It consists of pure basic research which is work undertaken to acquire new knowledge without looking for long term benefits other than advancement of knowledge and strategic basic research which is work directed into specific broad areas in the expectation of useful discoveries thus providing the broad base of knowledge necessary for the solution of recognised practical problems.
- Applied research is original work undertaken primarily to acquire new knowledge with a specific application in view. It is undertaken either to determine possible uses for the findings of basic research or to determine new ways of achieving some specific and predetermined objectives.
- Experimental development is systematic work, using existing knowledge gained from research or practical experience which is directed to producing new materials, products or devices, to installing new processes, systems and services, or to improving substantially those already produced or installed.

Responsible decision-maker:

Any Commonwealth, State or Territory Minister or other person with responsibility for higher education in Australian jurisdictions which have agreed to the National Protocols.

Scholarship:

Scholarship in relation to learning and teaching involves:

- demonstrating current subject knowledge and an ongoing intellectual engagement in primary and allied disciplines, and their theoretical underpinnings;
- keeping abreast of the literature and new research, including by interaction with peers, and using that knowledge to inform learning and teaching;
- encouraging students to be critical, creative thinkers and enhancing teaching understanding through interaction with students;
- engaging in relevant professional practice where appropriate to the discipline;
- being informed about the literature of learning and teaching in relevant disciplines and being committed to ongoing development of teaching practice; and
- focusing on the learning outcomes of students.

Self-accrediting institution:

[5] Based on definition provided by Standards Australia.

[6] Based on the ABS definition of Research and Development, with minor amendment to provide for more explicit recognition of performance and creative arts.

A self-accrediting institution is one which has authority to accredit its higher education courses. Self-accrediting authority may be limited to certain fields of study and/or qualification levels. Self-accrediting institutions include Australian universities established or recognised under Protocol D, institutions with authority to self-accredit their higher education courses under Protocol C and a number of institutions established prior to the National Protocols[7].

Subject:

A distinct module or component of study within a course. Each subject is identified by its title and contributes a fixed percentage towards the requirements for an award. Subjects are often allocated credit points which measure their workload. Subjects are typically completed in one semester.

[7] Australian Maritime College, Australian Film, Television and Radio School, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education and Melbourne College of Divinity.

Appendix 2: Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
ASCED	Australian Standard Classification of Education
AUQA	Australian Universities Quality Agency
CRICOS	Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students
DEST	Department of Education, Science and Training (Commonwealth)
FTE	Full-Time Equivalent
HDR	Higher Degree by Research
HERDC	Higher Education Research Data Collection
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
TAS	Tuition Assurance Scheme
VET	Vocational Education and Training

Appendix 3: Fit and Proper Person Guideline

For the purposes of offering higher education courses and operating a higher education institution, an applicant and the institution's senior officers must fulfil the fit and proper person requirements. In determining whether a person meets the fit and proper person requirements, consideration will be given to whether the applicant or any senior officer:

- has had any criminal charges or convictions or has committed any drug offences;
- was or is an undischarged bankrupt or has certain arrangements outstanding under bankruptcy legislation;
- has ever been disqualified from managing corporations;
- was or is a prohibited person under Child Protection provisions; or
- has been suspended or removed from any register of higher education or vocational education and training institutions or courses for breaches of accreditation legislation or conditions.

These provisions must be maintained at all times during the period of the approval.

The requirement applies to an officer, director or substantial shareholder who is in a position to influence the management of the institution. A substantial shareholder is defined as a shareholder who owns 15% or more of the applicant entity or is entitled to receive 15% or more of any dividend paid by the entity.

By signing the declaration, the signatory is giving consent to the Government Accreditation Authority to investigate the status of the applicant and other relevant officers if necessary. This may entail searches by the Police or the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, as well as the exchange of information with other jurisdictions. The primary onus is on the applicant to disclose any relevant matters.

While the fit and proper person requirement does not extend to all staff of the institution other than those defined above, it is the responsibility of the institution to ensure the appropriateness of staff. Institutions should have in place mechanisms for screening staff prior to employment and procedures to ensure staff remain fit for their duties.

Appendix 4: Reference Points

The Requirements sections of these guidelines indicate that certain quantitative measures which form part of an application to operate as a university will be assessed against reference points. In particular this relates to:

- institutional research output and research income; and
- the distribution of student load by field of study.

The purpose of the reference points is to assist assessment panels in deciding whether a particular institution meets the requirements of the National Protocols. Panels will have considerable discretion in reaching conclusions and providing advice to the responsible decision-maker. Assessment against reference points will help inform broader panel assessments based on the full range of evidence for each requirement.

Since the National Protocols apply to both new and existing higher education institutions, assessment against these reference points will form a part of the approval, renewal of approval and external quality audit processes for all institutions. Institutions which are already universities will be expected to maintain and improve on their existing performance. Institutions seeking to become universities or university colleges, whether they are entirely new ('green-field') or they are based on existing institutions, will be assessed on their capacity to perform against the reference points within an initial approval period.

Institutions seeking to become universities will be expected to present annual data based on plans for the period for which approval is sought. Existing institutions seeking to become universities may also present historical data to support their case as background information for a panel, but as with green-field institutions, the assessment will focus on their capacity to perform against the reference points within an initial approval period.

Measure	Reference points
Title – Research output Description: Total weighted research publications divided by total full-time equivalent academic staff for the whole institution. Institutions may also include evidence about broader research outputs such as creative art works or performances.	• Current ratio for all universities: 1.3 (a)[8] • Current range from lowest to highest: 0.7 to 2.0 (a) • Average for universities established since 1987 at six years after establishment : 0.43 (b)
Title – Research income Description: Ratio of total research income from all sources as defined in the DEST Higher Education Research Data Collection (HERDC) (expressed in $'000) to total revenue from continuing operations (expressed in $m). Institutions may also include evidence about other forms of research income not included in the HERDC.	• Current ratio for all universities : 128 (c) • Current range from lowest to highest: 2.4 to 235 (c) • Average for universities established since 1987 at six years after establishment : 33.1 (b)
Title – Total student load by field of study Description: Student load in each modified broad field of study as a proportion of the institution's total student load.	• A university with unmodified title or a university college should have at least 20% of total student load in each of its three largest fields

[8] See notes below table.

Measure	Reference points
Only AQF higher education qualifications should be included, i.e. non-award courses should be excluded. Load should be assigned to fields of study based on the classification of the whole qualification rather than individual units within it.	where there are 5 or fewer fields. • A specialised university should have no more than 20% of student load outside the 1 or 2 fields in which it specialises. If student load is spread more widely, a panel may still regard it as a specialist university where the courses offered are linked by a common thematic specialisation across fields.
Title – Higher degree research student load by field of study Description: Higher degree by research (HDR) student load as a proportion of the institution's total student load. Only AQF higher education qualifications should be included, i.e. non-award courses should be excluded. Load should be assigned to fields of study based on the classification of the whole qualification rather than individual units within it. Coursework masters and professional doctorates are excluded from HDR load.	Universities: • Current average proportion for all universities : 5.1% (d) • Current range from lowest to highest : 0.9% up to15.6% (d) University colleges: • Average for universities established since 1987 at six years after establishment : 2.7% (b) Specialised universities – Current average proportion for each field of study as follows: (d) • Mathematical & Physical Sciences – 10.8% • Biological Sciences – 20.2% • Information Technologies – 3.1% • Engineering & Related Technologies – 9.1% • Architecture & Building – 3.2% • Agriculture, Environmental & Related Studies – 13.6% • Clinical Sciences and Clinical Physiology – 10.1% • Public Health & Health Services – 3.2% • Education – 3.7% • Management & Commerce – 1.4% • Society & Culture – 5.9% • Creative Arts – 4.2%.

Notes:
(a) Based on 2005 data from the DEST Higher Education Research Data Collection and the Staffing statistics. Excludes Bond University for which staffing data is not available. Reference points will be updated annually as new data becomes available.
(b) Based on data for various years between 1993 and 2002 for 18 institutions. Excludes Bond University and Notre Dame University for which data was not available in the relevant year. Reference points will be updated in the future as new institutions are approved and data becomes available on performance at 6 years after establishment.
(c) Based on 2005 data from the DEST Higher Education Research Data Collection and the Finance statistics. Excludes Bond University for which finance data is not available. Reference points will be updated annually as new data becomes available.
(d) Based on 2005 data from the DEST Higher Education Student Collection. Reference points will be updated annually as new data becomes available.