

Course Design Policy and Procedure

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HESF (Threshold Standards) 2021	3.1.1; 3.1.2; 3.1.3; 3.1.4; 3.1.5
Policy Visibility	Public

1. Purpose

This Policy and its associated Procedure seek to provide a framework for the design and development of courses delivered by the Australian Institute of Higher Education Pty Ltd ('the Institute') to ensure the quality and relevance of the courses.

2. Principles

Key principles informing this Policy and the associated Procedure are:

- courses are designed to enable students to achieve course learning outcomes and graduate attributes of the Institute;
- courses include a range of content that engages students from diverse backgrounds;
- courses align with the strategic and educational priorities of the Institute;
- courses are designed and developed in consultation with the relevant industry, profession and professional bodies;

- courses comply with the qualification specifications of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), the Higher Education Threshold Standards 2021 and the requirements of the regulatory bodies;
- courses are designed to reflect best teaching and learning practices;
- course design takes stakeholder feedback and data from quality assurance systems into account; and
- courses are designed to enable positive employment prospects for students.
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3. Context

This Policy has been developed in order to:

- ensure desired outcomes are met when designing and developing a course to provide an enriching, effective learning experience for students and a rewarding teaching experience for staff; and
- to ensure that courses are designed and developed to be effective in promoting high quality, meaningful, and long-lasting learning, particularly in relation to the Institute's graduate attributes.

4. Scope

This Policy applies to all staff members and external contributors involved in the design and development of existing or new courses for the Institute.

5. Definitions

See the AIH Glossary of Terms for definitions.

6. Policy details

6.1 Overall Guidelines in Developing a New or Existing Course

In designing and developing new or existing courses, the Institute adheres to educational and professional development standards indicated in academic research within the broad disciplines within which it operates. These standards are established by higher education regulators, peer institutions of higher education, professional bodies and peak industry associations.

Course development is grounded in an educational philosophy that emphasises the centrality of the learner within the learning process. It supports the personal and professional development of each student to foster innovation, critical thinking, independent learning, and ethical and professional practice. The Institute's courses are structured to enable students to expand their professional interests across a range of related disciplines and enhance their future employment prospects.

Course design and development will take into account the areas of differentiation of the Institute comprising cultural intelligence, close industry networking and relationship, as well as embedded international aspects. Adherence to the

Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), professional bodies, and industry and academic benchmarks will also serve to guide and continuously improve the course.

6.2 Benchmarking

During the process of designing and developing an existing or new course, benchmarking activities will be carried out and documented in accordance with the External Moderation and Benchmarking Policy and associated Procedure.

6.3 Course Approval

There are six required steps to obtain approval before a submission is made to the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA) for accreditation or renewal of accreditation for a course:

- New course or change approval - a feasibility study is prepared and approval is gained by the Executive Management team and Board of Directors before course design and development can commence.
- 1st stage Course Advisory and Review Committee (CARC) - the CARC reviews the proposed course design and makes recommendations. There will be a second stage CARC after the external academic review.
- External academic review - Once the course has been reviewed by the CARC and required amendments are made, the course documentation will be sent to an independent external academic reviewer for feedback.
- 2nd stage Course Advisory and Review Committee (CARC) - once the suggested changes are made based on the external academic reviews feedback, a final CARC meeting will be held to provide final endorsement.
- Academic Board - Upon receiving final endorsement, the proposed course will be presented to the Academic Board for final approval.
- Board of Directors - The Board of Directors will endorse the proposed course being submitted to the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA).

For further information on the CARC, Academic Board and Board of Director responsibilities and membership, refer to the Academic Quality and Governance Framework.

6.4 Course Evaluation and Feedback

All courses offered by the Institute are subject to ongoing monitoring and evaluation of course content and delivery mechanisms. For further information, refer to the Quality Assurance Framework and Academic Continuous Improvement Policy and associated Procedure.

6.5 Specific Design and Development Requirements

6.5.1 Course Duration

All award courses must have a course duration that meets Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) requirements.

6.5.2 Credit Points and Workload

All units at the Institute must be worth 10 credit points or a multiple of 10 credit points. The student workload for a unit worth 10 credit points is 150 hours equating to 1200 hours a year for a fulltime load (8 units worth 10 credit points).

All award courses at the Institute must adhere to the specified minimum credit point requirements for an award course at the relevant AQF level as set out in the table below:

Award	Minimum Total Credit Points for Course
Diploma	80
Associate Degree	160
Bachelor	240
Graduate Certificate	40
Graduate Diploma	80
Masters	160

Students are expected to undertake at least -30hr of combined study per week, comprising of face-to-face and/or online study, as well as private study.

6.5.3 Course Pre-requisites

Unit pre-requisites may be approved where a student's success in a unit is dependent on prior knowledge that must be demonstrated by successful prior completion of a specified unit within the course. As a matter of principle, pre-requisite units should be minimised and only introduced when absolutely necessary. Pre-requisites can be waived at the discretion of the Program Director or Dean where it is determined a student will not be significantly disadvantaged and the student is aware and agrees to the provision being made.

6.5.4 Assessments

When developing assessments, there is a requirement for early assessment tasks with prompt feedback for introductory units to enable the early detection of students at risk. Refer to the Student Assessment Policy and associated Procedure for further information on assessment requirements.

7. Legislation

This Policy and the associated Procedure comply with Higher Education Standards Framework standard 3.1 (Course Design), which specifies (in summary) that:

3.1.1 The design for each course of study is specified and the specification includes:

- a. the qualification(s) to be awarded on completion
- b. structure, duration and modes of delivery

- c. the units of study (or equivalent) that comprise the course of study
- d. entry requirements and pathways
- e. expected learning outcomes, methods of assessment and indicative student workload
- f. compulsory requirements for completion
- g. exit pathways, articulation arrangements, pathways to further learning, and
- h. for a course of study leading to a Bachelor Honours, Masters or Doctoral qualification, includes the proportion and nature of research or research-related study in the course.

3.1.2 The content and learning activities of each course of study engage with advanced knowledge and inquiry consistent with the level of study and the expected learning outcomes, including:

- a. current knowledge and scholarship in relevant academic disciplines
- b. study of the underlying theoretical and conceptual frameworks of the academic disciplines or fields of education or research represented in the course, and
- c. emerging concepts that are informed by recent scholarship, current research findings and, where applicable, advances in practice.

3.1.3 Teaching and learning activities are arranged to foster progressive and coherent achievement of expected learning outcomes throughout each course of study.

3.1.4 Each course of study is designed to enable achievement of expected learning outcomes regardless of a student's place of study or the mode of delivery.

3.1.5 Where professional accreditation of a course of study is required for graduates to be eligible to practise, the course of study is accredited and continues to be accredited by the relevant professional body.

In addition, this Policy and the associated Procedure comply with the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF).

8. [Course Design Procedure](#)

8.1 Purpose

The purpose of this Procedure is to outline the protocols associated with the Course Design Policy, the intent of which is to provide a framework for the design and development of courses delivered by the Australian Institute of Higher Education Pty Ltd ('the Institute') to ensure the quality and relevance of the courses.

8.2 Scope

This Procedure applies to all staff members and external contributors involved in the design and development of existing or new courses for the Institute.

8.3 Definitions

See the AIH Glossary of Terms for definitions.

8.4 Course Design and Development Process

Step 1: Initial review of feasibility and approval to proceed

Before changes are made to an existing course or a new course is designed and developed, a feasibility study should be performed by the Marketing department. The feasibility study should then be presented to the Executive Management team for endorsement before being submitted to the Board of Directors for final approval. Once final approval is received, development work can commence.

The feasibility study should include:

- A product overview;
- Market research including a competitor analysis, target market, typical target market demographic and level of education and expected marketing approach;
- General information about careers, job growth and expected salary for graduates;
- Projected student numbers;
- A financial model including the costs for development of the course and projects revenue and ongoing costs.

Step 2: Development of Course Rationale, Learning Outcomes, Units and Sequencing

Once the design and development of a new or existing course is approved, the Academic Team can commence work on deciding on the units, learning outcomes and the unit sequencing. A course rationale will need to be prepared explaining the reasons for the design and development of the curriculum for a new course or the justification for any changes to an existing course. The course rationale will be presented at the first Course and Advisory Review Committee (CARC) meeting.

Course Rationale

The development of existing courses or creation of new courses must be made based on curriculum reasons, not administrative reasons. The development of an existing course is a serious decision as it creates a considerable amount of work, will have an impact on existing students required to transition and can trigger provider default under Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) regulations.

The course rationale must include the reasons as to why the course units and learning outcomes are important.

Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes describe significant and essential learning that a student is expected to achieve by the end of the course or unit. The preparation of learning outcomes can assist academics in designing and developing course and unit content, teaching and learning resources, and assessment methods. There needs to be constructive alignment of the graduate attributes, course learning outcomes, unit learning outcomes, assessments, industry standards, and the Higher Education Threshold Standards and Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) requirements.

Constructive alignment is a design for teaching in which what it is intended students should learn [learning outcomes], and how they should express their learning [summative assessment], is clearly stated before teaching takes place. Teaching is then designed to engage students in learning activities that optimise their chances of achieving those outcomes, and assessment tasks are designed to enable clear judgments as to how well those outcomes have been attained.’ (Biggs 2014)

Constructive Alignment Process

Before commencing the development of learning outcomes there needs to be an understanding of the desired qualities of the graduate as defined by the Institute. Once there is an understanding of the graduate attributes, the course learning outcomes can be developed that align with the graduate attributes. Planning backwards from the course learning outcomes, aligning learning outcomes for the units can be developed.

When developing unit and course learning outcomes, Bloom’s categories of learning is to be considered. The learning outcomes are to represent the process of learning which typically starts with knowledge and moves through to evaluation. Learning outcomes need to be measurable, realistic and achievable.

During the development of course and unit learning outcomes, the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) course level descriptors are to be considered. The course level descriptors are available on the AQF website (<http://www.aqf.edu.au>). Figure 1 provides a diagrammatical representation of the course levels.

Majors, Minors and Specialisations

If designing a course with Majors or Minors

Definitions

- Major: A structured sequence of specialist units within a discipline that provides students with depth of knowledge and skills, normally preparing them for employment or further study in that field.
- Minor: A shorter sequence of specialist units within a discipline that provides students with additional breadth and complementary knowledge.
- Specialist Unit: A unit of study that delivers advanced, discipline-specific content contributing directly to the attainment of course learning outcomes.

Requirements

1. Majors

- a. A major must comprise a minimum of 8 specialist units within the designated discipline area.
- b. At least half of these units must be at advanced levels (normally AQF level 7, years 2 and 3 of study in a bachelor’s program).

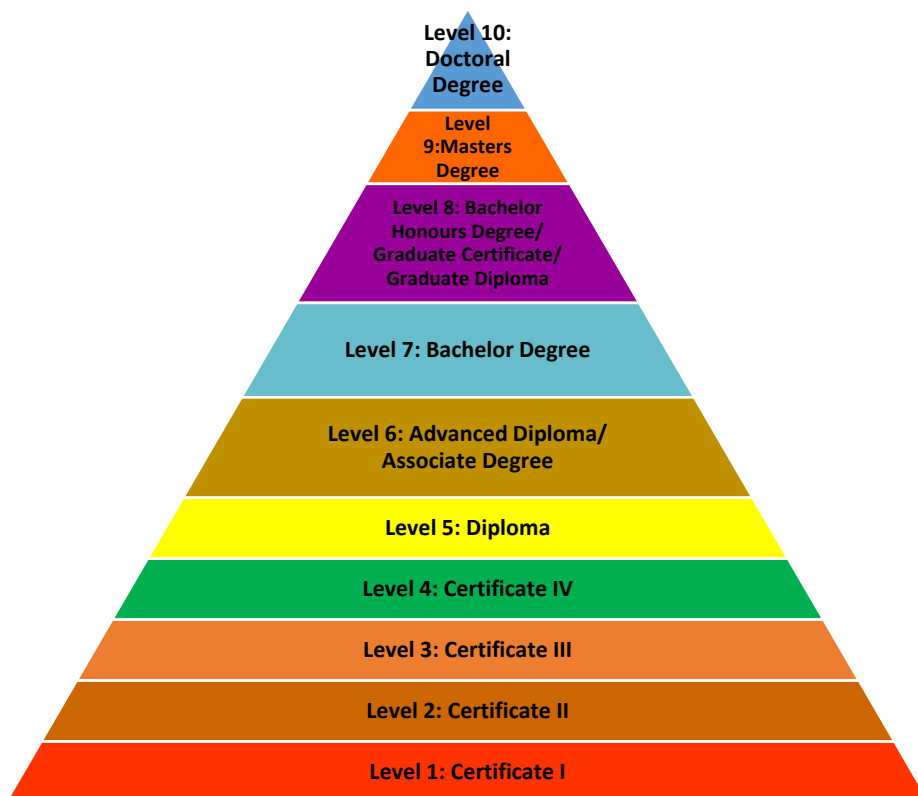
2. Minors

- a. A minor must comprise a minimum of 4 specialist units within the designated discipline area.
- b. At least two of these units should be at an intermediate or advanced Level.

Specialisations

A specialisation is a prescribed sequence of study within a course that provides focused disciplinary or professional depth. At undergraduate level, a specialisation normally comprises 8 units. At postgraduate level, a specialisation normally comprises 4–6 units, reflecting the shorter course structure. Where approved, the specialisation may appear in the award title and on the testamur, and must be endorsed through Academic Board in accordance with course approval processes.

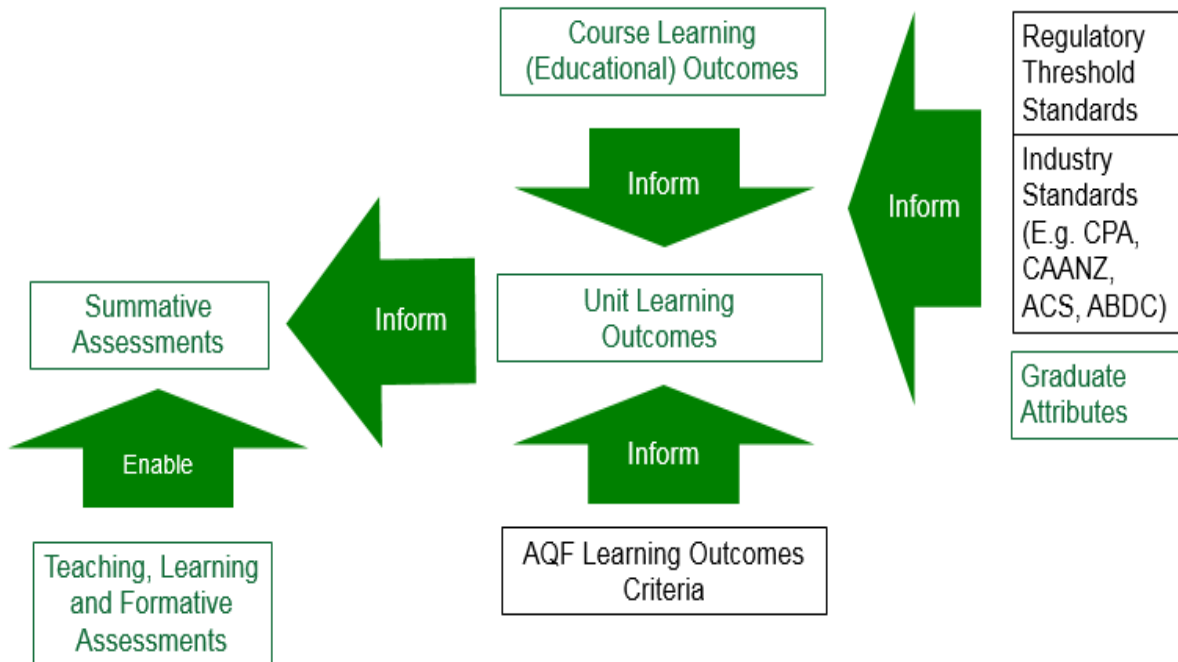
Figure 1: AQF Course Levels



The Higher Education Threshold Standards and any professional body/industry standards requirements are also to be kept in mind when developing course and unit learning outcomes.

The assessments and teaching and learning activities will then be informed by the course and unit outlines. The development of teaching and learning activities is covered in Step 5 and the development of assessments is covered in Step 6. For existing courses, the alignment of summative assessments will take place in Step 2.

Figure 2: Constructive Alignment Process Diagram



Types of Units

There are four types of units:

Core Units: These are compulsory units that have to be completed by all students in a particular course, unless the student has been granted credit transfer or advanced standing for the unit. A definitive characteristic of core units is that the achievement of the objectives of the course depends upon these units.

Specialisation Units: Specialisation units are units that provide specialised knowledge and skills for the degree specialisation. If a course offers specialisation, each specialisation will have a selection of specialisation units which are particular to that course of study. These are compulsory units that have to be completed by all students in a specialised course in order to obtain the degree specialisation, unless the student has been granted credit transfer or advanced standing for the unit. The rationale for determining if a unit is a core unit or a specialised unit includes, but is not limited to, consideration of whether the unit is critical to the degree or the specialisation of the degree.

Elective Units: Elective units are units that are not core units but which are undertaken to complete the required number of units for the degree. Elective units may be selected from an approved list for each course. The rationale for determining whether one unit or more within a course can be an elective includes,

but is not limited to, consideration of whether a unit supports but is not critical to the objectives and rationale of the course.

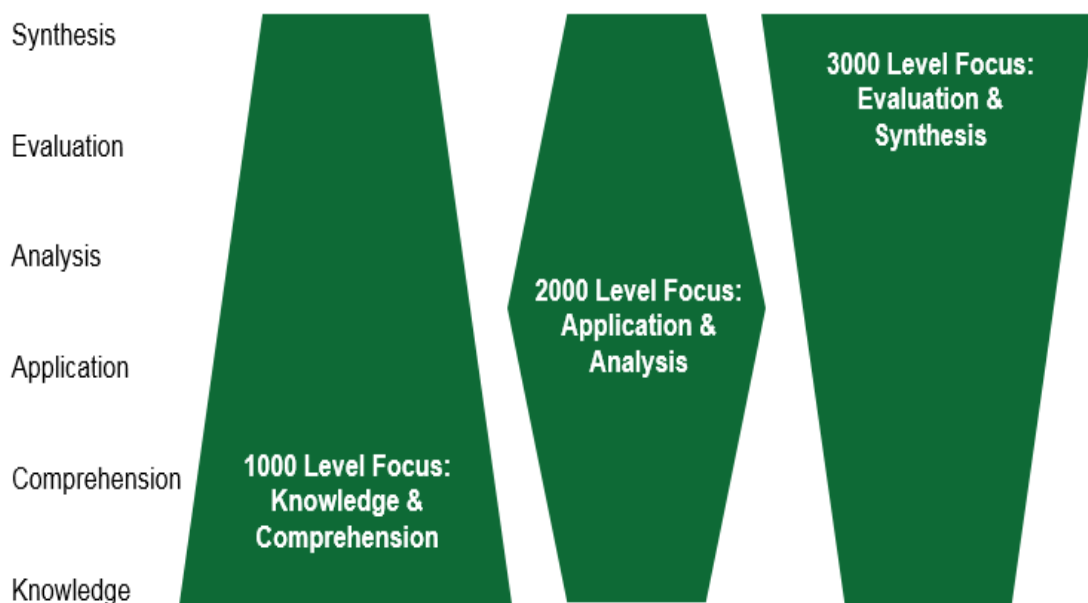
Integrative Units: A unit that integrates a wide variety of prior learning outcomes and objectives, and is based on knowledge and skills drawn from units undertaken before the integrative unit. Not all courses require an integrative unit. Integrative units could include a problem-based unit, capstone unit or internship unit. Integrative units can be either core or elective units.

Levels of Units

The institute adopts Bloom's categories of learning in its curriculum development. In practice, the entire hierarchy of Bloom's taxonomy needs to be applied in every unit irrespective of its level.

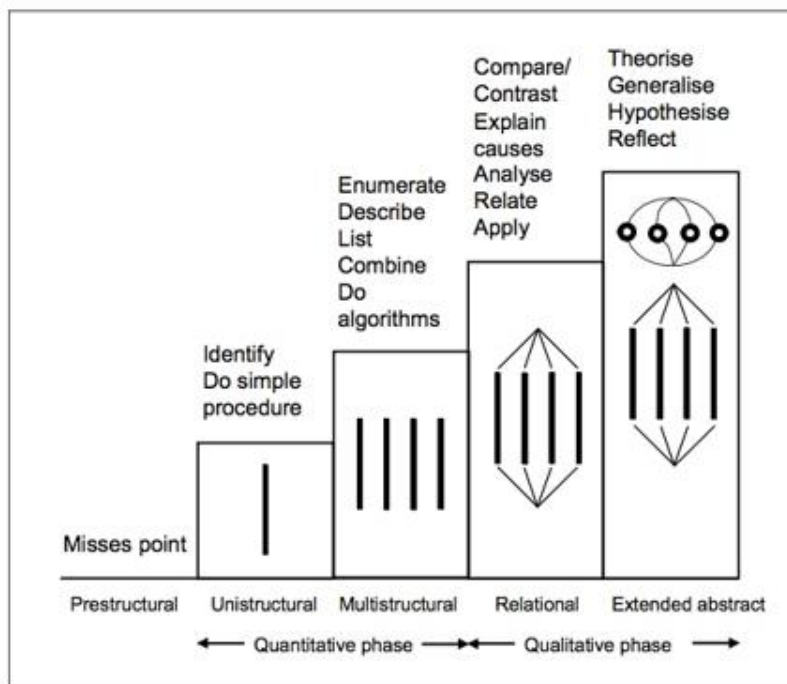
The critical thinking skills of application and analysis cannot take place without having acquired comprehension of knowledge on a topic. Therefore, unit learning outcomes should cover all levels of Bloom's between them albeit with a focus as prescribed in Figure 3 for Level 100/1000, 200/2000 and 300/3000 level units. Summative assessment marks may be weighted to achieve the required focus at each level. For example, 100/1000 Level summative assessments might award more marks at the knowledge and comprehension level.

Figure 3: Guide to Application of Learning Taxonomy



For Level 4000 and 5000, curriculum development should be based around the works of Biggs and Tang (refer to Figure 4: Biggs and Tang Taxonomy).

Figure 4: Biggs and Tang Taxonomy



Source: Biggs, J. Tang, C. (2007) *Teaching for Quality learning at university*. 3e. Maidenhead. Open University Press.

One of the most effective ways of stimulating students to work at the different learning levels is the use of what is often termed Bloomian Action Verbs. For example, the use of the verb 'list' in an assessment question will trigger a knowledge response. Similarly, an instruction to 'describe' will bring a response at the comprehension level. Bloomian Action Verbs are also used in learning outcomes, and these verbs inform and help form the alignment between unit learning outcomes and summative assessments. Bloomian Action Verbs are available from a variety of academic and popular sources.

Levels of Units in More Detail

Unit codes in the thousands represent current units.

Award courses will usually consist of units from the levels indicated in *Figure 5: levels within a course*.

Figure 5: Levels within a course

Award	Level(s)
Diploma	1000
Associate Degree	1000 & 2000
Bachelor	1000, 2000 & 3000

Graduate Certificate	4000
Graduate Diploma	4000
Masters	4000 & 5000

1000 level units: 1000 level units, designated by the leading numeral 1, are defined by assessment items and learning outcomes that refer to the development of knowledge and comprehension of subject matter taught. Learning outcomes of these units include being able to define the knowledge area, being able to relate and review different areas of the unit's content area, the ability to discuss and recognise principles and topic areas taught, and the ability to explain and identify specific content knowledge.

2000 level units: 2000 level units, designated by the leading numeral 2, are defined by assessments items and learning outcomes that refer to the application of knowledge and the ability to analyse and distinguish between different bodies of knowledge. The learning outcomes include being able to criticise and debate between opposing and contrasting areas and therefore prepare reports purporting to support these arguments.

3000 level units: 3000 level units, designated by the leading numeral 3, are defined by assessments items and learning outcomes that synthesize and evaluate the unit's content areas. The learning outcomes include being able to construct new implications and understanding stemming from the learnt body of knowledge and being able to apprise and compare different areas of knowledge.

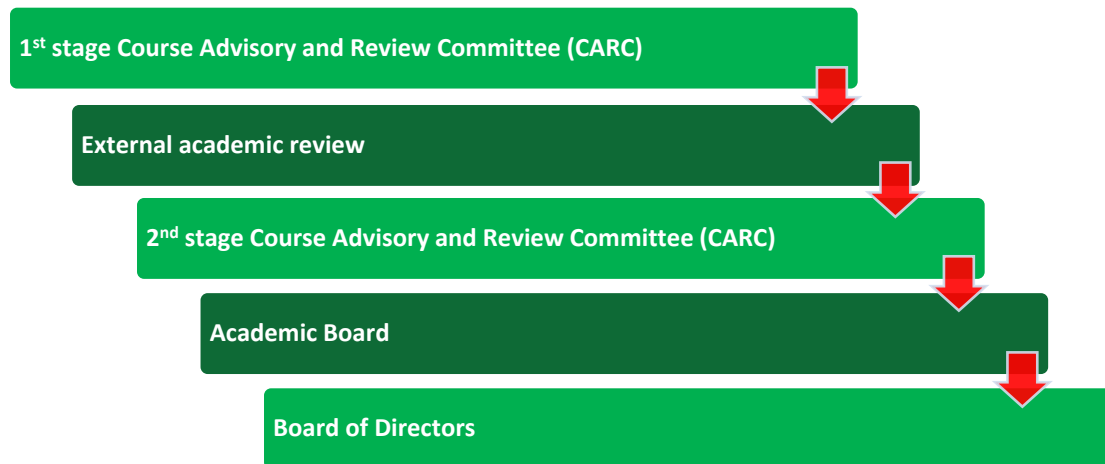
4000 level units: 4000 level units, designated by the leading number 4, are defined by assessments and learning outcomes that allow a student to extend their knowledge in a discipline and apply this knowledge. At this level the lecturer fulfils more of a facilitator and mentor role. Learning outcomes are aimed at high level thinking, often student driven and related to an area of specialisation or new knowledge.

5000 level units: 5000 level units, designated by the leading number 5, are defined by assessments and learning outcomes that are student directed and reflect a sophisticated understanding of the discipline area. At this level the unit is about advanced knowledge in a specialist area, and a student working at the forefront of an academic discipline.

Step 3: Internal Course Approval and External Review

There are five stages in the course approval and external review process as outlined in Figure 6. Each stage allows for feedback on the course proposal and an opportunity for refinement before final submission to the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA).

Figure 6: Course approval and external review stages



The following documents are required for each stage of the review and approval process before work can commence on finalising submission documentation for TEQSA:

- Course Rationale;
- Constructive alignment mapping;
- Unit Guides;
- Course admission information;
- Delivery mode details;
- Study patterns;
- Projected student numbers for 5 years;
- Projected staff numbers, their highest-level qualification and the units being taught.

Step 4: Submission to the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA)

Once the course has been reviewed and approved internally and by an independent external reviewer, the templates provided by TEQSA will need to be populated for course accreditation or re-accreditation of existing courses. The institutes TEQSA Case Manager will provide specific details on what is required for submission. The information required may include:

- Information on the intellectual property ownership of the courses;
- Delivery mode details;
- Proposed commencement date;
- Study patterns;
- Evidence relating to Student Participation and Attainment Standards (Domain 1 of the HES Framework 2021, 1.1, 1.3.3, 1.4 and 1.5.3);
- Evidence relating to Learning Environment Standards (Domain 2 of the HES Framework 2021, 2.1);
- Evidence relating to Teaching Standards (Domain 3 of the HES Framework 2021, 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3.1) which may include:
 - Projected Staff Numbers
 - Projected Student Numbers

- Constructive Alignment Mapping
- Course Admission Information
- Abbreviated CV's of Academic's
- Unit Guides
- Evidence relating to Institutional Quality Assurance Standards (Domain 5 of the HES Framework 2021, 5.1.2, 5.1.3, and 5.4 (if applicable));
- Evidence relating to Governance and Accountability Standards (Domain 6 of the HES Framework 2021, 6.2.1(i));
- Evidence relating to Representation, Information and Information Management Standards (Domain 7 of the HES Framework 2021, 7.1, 7.2.1-2);
- External Expert Reports;
- Course Advisory and Review Committee membership and minutes relating to course approval;
- Academic Board membership and minutes relating to course approval.
- The Principal will be responsible for submitting the required documentation to TEQSA through the TEQSA provider portal.

Step 5: Development of Engaging Teaching and Learning Activities

Once TEQSA have approved the course accreditation or re-accreditation, work can commence on the teaching and learning activities. Please note, TEQSA may require a sample of teaching and learning activities as part of the course accreditation or re-accreditation process (Step 4). The institutes TEQSA Case Manager will provide details of the specific evidence required.

Teaching and learning activities need to be developed to enable students to be able to master the concepts and skills defined in the course and unit learning outcomes. The teaching and learning activities should be interactive and provide students with opportunities to deepen their understanding.

Step 6: Development of Informative Assessments

Please note, TEQSA may require a sample of assessments as part of the course accreditation or re-accreditation process (Step 4). The institutes TEQSA Case Manager will provide details of the specific evidence required.

Assessments need to be developed to allow for students to be able to demonstrate their understanding of the course and unit learning outcomes and allow for the provision of meaningful feedback to students. For further information on assessment requirements, refer to the Student Assessment Policy and associated Procedure.

For existing courses where assessment tasks have already been created, summative assessments should be mapped against learning outcomes to ensure constructive alignment as part of Step 2. This will allow for the identification of gaps or areas for improvement.

Step 7: Continuous Improvement

Course and unit learning outcomes, learning activities, and assessments will continuously be evaluated and benchmarked to allow for continuous improvement. For further information on the continuous improvement process,

refer to the Quality Assurance Framework, Academic Continuous Improvement Policy and associated Procedure, and the External Moderation and Benchmarking Policy and associated Procedure.

9. Version Control

This Policy has been endorsed by the Australia Institute of Higher Education Academic Board as at October 2025 and is reviewed every 3 years. The Policy is published and available on the Australian Institute of Higher Education website <http://www.aih.edu.au/> under 'Policies and Procedures'.

Change and Version Control				
Version	Authored by	Brief Description of the changes	Date Approved:	Effective Date:
2017-1	Registrar	New Policy and Procedure	19 April 2017	20 April 2017
2019-1	Principal	Updated Titles from Policy and Procedure owner and Responsible Officer from Executive Dean to Principal, and Contact Officer from Registrar to Academic Dean.	20 November 2019	21 November 2019
2021.1	Dean	Policy review. Amendments to 6.5.2 to include Grad Cert, Grad Dip and Masters. Procedure review - updated 4.1.2 Levels of Units	17 February 2021	18 February 2021
2022.1	Registrar	Updated Higher Education Standards Framework [Threshold Standard] 2021	25 May 2022	25 May 2022
2022.2	Compliance and Executive Officer	Added Specialisation Units to types of Units section. Formatting improvements.	30 November 2022	16 December 2022
2025.1	Acting Head of Quality Assurance	Responsible Officer updated from PEO to Dean, Policy Visibility information added to the table on page 1 and merged Course Design Policy with its associated Procedure.	9 April 2025	23 April 2025
2025.2	Dean	Added information on Majors, Minors, and Specialisations to section 8.4; formatting improvements made.	8 October 2025	13 October 2025