Continuing Professional Education

Accreditation Pap Smear Handbook

Accreditation Process
Guidelines for Education Providers

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Course Accreditation
Gardiner (1994) defines accreditation as:

... a process whereby elements of a Course are assessed within certain specified categories (for example, objectives, content, resourcing, staff profile), with the aim of reaching a conclusion about whether the Course meets minimum standards set by either the relevant professional associations and registration boards or the university.

A ‘Course’ or ‘Program’ of study
An educational ‘Course’ or ‘Program’ is a planned and organised series of learning experiences which enables participants to achieve demonstrable educational outcomes. To allow flexibility of learning, a great variety of media or organisational methods may be used, but there must be a way of evaluating learning built into the ‘Course’ or ‘Program’. In order to demonstrate the achievement of outcome, students must be formally enrolled and assessed.

The Benefits of Accreditation
Accreditation is a process designed to enable the nursing profession to assess, and give recognition to, postgraduate nursing courses which demonstrate a standard considered necessary to facilitate the further education of nurses into advanced areas of practice. As it is a national process, it will allow for greater interstate mobility for nurses with postgraduate qualifications and also promote national standards of advanced practice. Accreditation allows consumers, nurses and their employers, access to an objective evaluation when choosing the course most likely to meet their needs. Accreditation also gives education providers guidelines of the profession’s expectations and minimises the risk of courses or programs being developed in isolation from the wider nursing profession. This does not mean that all courses or programs must be the same or that local needs cannot be met.

Accreditation is about setting minimum standards, and each course or program will be assessed on its merits, cognisant of specific aims and objectives.
The Accreditation Process

Accreditation Team
The process of accreditation of any given course involves the establishment of a team of accreditors led by an accreditation officer of the RCNA. This team consists of a representative of the relevant group of clinical specialists (preferably a formal organisation, if none exists then an expression of interest is called for from individual practitioners), the education providers, the relevant employers (DONs) and the State Registration Authority. RCNA may invite persons with specific expertise when required.

The process undertaken by the team involves evaluating all documentation submitted by the course providers, determining any areas of further information required and requesting such information, where deemed necessary by the accrediting team. Compiling a recommendation to the RCNA this may be to give accreditation for a given period, to give accreditation conditional on changes to the Course, or to withhold accreditation. Fully documented reasons for the recommendations will be included. Once a team has been established the process would normally take no more than two calendar months for the recommendations to be submitted.

In considering course documentation for accreditation, the Course Review Team assesses the documentation against the following standards. The indicative criteria will be related by the Review Team to the Course being submitted and allow flexible learning options to be reviewed (for example, if a course offered by CD ROM is submitted, only relevant criteria will apply).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Indicative Criteria</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pap Smear Accreditation Handbook</td>
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</table>
1. The Course is conducted by a reputable provider;

1.1 the provider conducts its business affairs according to current state and Commonwealth legislation, and has public liability insurance and/or professional indemnity insurance

1.2 the organisation states affiliations with other organisation(s)

1.3 there are adequate provisions for administering student fees

1.4 the provider has adopted a code of practice or guidelines for the delivery of educational services

**OR if an individual is providing a Course and presenting it for accreditation :**

1.5 there are adequate provisions for administering student fees

1.6 the provider has adopted a code of practice or guidelines for the delivery of educational services
2. The Course reflects appropriate principles of curriculum design

2.1 the process of course development includes collaboration with relevant stakeholders

2.2 the title, purpose & expected outcomes of the Course/program are congruent & relevant to the specific area of nursing

2.3 the aims, content & expected outcomes of the Course/Program reflect accepted or agreed nursing standards

2.4 clinical and theoretical assessment of student performance is related to course/program outcomes

2.5 entry criteria/admission requirements are explicit and relevant to the Course/Program being provided

2.6 Policies related to student progress are clearly articulated

3. The Course/Program is adequately resourced and managed

3.1 the co-ordinator of the Course is clearly specified, and holds relevant qualifications

3.2 teaching staff are sufficient in number and appropriately qualified to effectively conduct the Course

3.3 support staff are in adequate numbers to enable the Course/Program to function effectively

3.4 there are established mechanisms for student/staff consultation

3.5 physical resources and facilities are sufficient for Course/Program implementation

3.6 teaching & learning resources are sufficient in number and readily available

3.7 clinical and/or field experience follows a planned pattern of allocation and is sufficient to enable students to meet Course/Program outcomes

3.8 there are written agreements regarding access to the facilities of another agency or institution;

3.9 there is an established mentoring or preceptorship arrangement for clinical and/or field experience
3.10 a certificate, diploma, higher degree, or other statement of proficiency is awarded to graduates of the Course.

3.11 a transcript of the theoretical and clinical components of the Course is provided to the student on Course completion;

3.12 Mechanisms are established for ongoing Course/Program management

3.13 Provision is made for adequate records and documentation

4. Formal arrangements are established for the formative and summative evaluation of the Course/Program

4.1 A framework is established for subject/Course evaluation

4.2 Key stakeholders are identified and involved in Course/Program evaluation

4.2 There is evidence of implementation of a planned approach to subject/Course evaluation

4.3 where appropriate there is evidence of response to Course/Program evaluation

Explanatory Notes:

•The use of terminology of some higher education awards is protected by law in certain states, and not others; for example: “Graduate Certificate or Diploma.”

The use of higher education awards of Bachelor level and above is protected - but not necessarily confined to University use, in all states. Providers need to be registered with the relevant authority to use these terms.

Some terms relating to Diploma and Certificate are also protected. If in doubt, contact the Higher Education section of the relevant Vocational Education Training Authority in your state (names of these agencies also differ from state to state).

Additional criteria for accreditation of courses to credential Pap Smear providers:

As detailed in the reports:

Department of Health, Housing, Local Government and Community Services. 1993 Making the pap smear better: Report of the steering group on Quality Assurance in Screening for the prevention of cancer of the cervix. p 5 and

- 18-20 hours of clinical supervision for students to include a minimum of 15 Smears
- 35 hours theory and a session with a tutor-client
- be equivalent to elective subjects at graduate diploma level
- be equivalent to one semester subject
- assessments will reflect the nurse Pap smear provider competencies
- agency based programs should articulate with the tertiary sector through pathways such as credit transfer.

**Content framework:**

**Knowledge base:**
- principles of screening programs
- national cervical screening policy
- basic anatomy of the female pelvis
- Pap smear taking protocols
- preparation of high quality Pap smears
- natural history of Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), cervical intra-epithelial neoplasia and invasive cancer of the cervix
- cytological terminology and its significance, interpretation of results,
- medico legal issues in screening
- history taking
- the development of protocols and guidelines for practice

**Skills**
- basic counselling/ education
- gynaecological examination with minimal discomfort for the woman including:
- use of the speculum to visualise the cervix
- pelvic examination (bi-manual)
- Pap smear taking to ensure an optimum sample of cells
- record keeping and confidentiality, follow up of results, and of women with abnormal results
- care of instruments and infection control

**Attitudes and values**
- awareness raising of personal attitudes and values, including cultural diversity
- ability to deal with sexuality issues sensitively
- ability to respect women’s individual needs, their privacy and comfort.
Use this check list before submitting your document!

**Check list: Accreditation Submission Document**

The document submitted for accreditation contains the information specified below:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>• name, address and contact details of organisations/person submitting the document;</td>
<td>Evidence of public liability or professional indemnity insurance and evidence of a code of practice or guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>• name of the Course;</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>• statement of the ownership of Copyright of the Course; details of any Copyright requirements;</td>
<td>The ownership of the Course is clearly stated. Any contractual details are outlined (for example, funding may have been received from another agency/government dept. which then owns Copyright). Any material within the Course which is not originally produced by the developers needs Copyright clearance from the owners. If the Course is being presented by Distance (print) or CD ROM and there are inclusions such as readings, music, graphics, illustrations - copyright arrangements need to be described.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>• length;</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>• delivery mode(s) of offering</td>
<td>For example, on site/ classroom; Distance - print, CD ROM, Internet - or mixed mode/ flexible.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>• overview;</td>
<td>A paragraph or so of description of the Course such as may be used to advertise it to students.</td>
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Tick √
7. admission requirements including special entry; For example; Registered nurse, x years clinical experience.
   If the student is expected to own certain equipment in order to complete the Course this is stated. (eg. access to Internet)

8. Course structure showing subjects identifying any core and/or elective subjects, and the relationships between subjects; Best presented in graphic form - a model, or a flow chart.

9. rationale; (including reason for conducting the Course; evidence of consultation with a range of people/organisations with an interest in the subject area of the Course); Evidence of wide consultation is needed.

10. aims; the overall aims or outcomes of what the Course is hoping to achieve (the big picture)

11. Subject detail requirements

- subject name;
- number of credit points;
- modes of presentation (including contact hours where appropriate);
- pre-requisites and co-requisites;
- objectives;
- the manner in which subject objectives will contribute to the overall course aims;
- the material to be taught;
- the specific teaching/learning strategies;
- the methods of student assessment including the weighting of components, and the manner in which the methods of assessment integrate with subject objectives;
- prescribed texts and suggested references;
- name of present subject co-ordinator.

4. Procedure for Course Accreditation:
1. Royal College of Nursing, Australia, Accreditation Service receives an enquiry for Course accreditation.

2. A copy of the Accreditation Handbook is sent to the Course provider to assist in the preparation of a submission.

3. The applicant forwards **FOUR (4)** copies of the course documentation to Royal College of Nursing, Australia.

4. A Course Review Team is established, with the provider invited to suggest **TWO (2)** suitable reviewers.

6. The Course Review Team receives relevant documentation and the appropriate meetings and site visits, are held.

7. The Course Review Team makes a recommendation to the Education Services Co-ordinator regarding the awarding of accreditation status to the Course.

8. The applicant is notified of the outcome of the accreditation process and provided with a report of the outcomes of the accreditation process. If accreditation is granted, a certificate is issued. If changes are required, then a quotation is given for further costs.

**Certification**
On successful completion of the review process, a Certificate of Accreditation is awarded to the Education Provider.

**Re-accreditation**
Re-accreditation would normally occur when the previous accreditation period is nearing completion. Re-accreditation requires the education provider to satisfy the Course Review Team that the Course has undergone an evaluation process and been reviewed accordingly. Royal College of Nursing, Australia may, in the light of changes in nursing knowledge or practice, deem previously accepted Courses no longer worthy of accreditation. In such circumstances the provider would be informed of the changes necessary for re-accreditation.

**Suspension of accreditation**
If Royal College of Nursing, Australia (at any time) considers that necessary requirements for accreditation have not been met, accreditation may be suspended until such time as Royal College of Nursing, Australia is satisfied that the Course meets all requirements.

**Appeals**
If applicants are dissatisfied with the accreditation decision they may appeal to Royal College of Nursing, Australia. The College may call an Appeals Committee consisting of an independent chair and two others.

**Fees**
$2750 per course including GST. Additional costs may be required if the course requires major re-writing and re-submitting. These will be advised prior to undertaking the work.
Further Information

For further information regarding the accreditation process please contact:

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