

HE-AP17 COURSE DESIGN, DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Abbreviations:

AB	Academic Board
AHE	Apex Australia Higher Education
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
BoD	Board of Directors
CARC	Course Advisory and Review Committee
CC	Course Coordinator
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CLO	Course Learning Outcome
CP	Credit Points
HEP	Higher Education Provider
TEQSA	Tertiary Education Quality Standards Authority
ULO	Unit Learning Outcome

1. Purpose

- 1.1 Apex Australia Higher Education (AHE) has a Policy and Procedure to inform the process of course design, development, and approval of courses.

2. Scope

- 2.1 Applies to all governance and management aspects of AHE for course development.

3. Principles of Course Design

- 3.1 In designing courses, AHE adheres to the professional development standards indicated by academic research in its fields of expertise as well as the standards and guidelines established by peer higher education providers, professional bodies, and peak industry associations (where applicable).
- 3.2 AHE's courses are developed to meet the [Higher Education Standards Framework](#).
- 3.3 This Policy and Procedure also incorporates the best practice principles outlined in the [Australian Qualifications Framework](#) (2013).
- 3.4 AHE's course development is grounded in an educational philosophy that emphasises the centrality of the learner within the learning process and which supports the personal and professional development of each student to foster innovation, critical thinking, and ethical and professional practice.

- 3.5 AHE's courses are structured to enable students to expand their professional interests across a range of related disciplines and enhance their future employment prospects.
- 3.6 In line with these principles, AHE's courses are designed to:
- 3.6.1 Provide students with accredited qualifications (i.e. by TEQSA) in their chosen field of study.
 - 3.6.2 Provide a critically reflective theoretical and experiential learning context.
 - 3.6.3 Extend students' abilities to apply for and engage in a range of career options.
 - 3.6.4 Integrate theory and practice in a dynamic learning environment.
 - 3.6.5 Provide support to promote and foster personal and professional development.
- 3.7 The Dean, in consultation with the Course Advisory and Review Committee (CARC), are responsible for facilitating the course design and development process. The Dean and CEO, together with the Board of Directors are responsible for the business and financial aspects of course development.
- 3.7.1 To ensure quality in course design and content, courses are developed in consultation with the CARC which is commissioned and supervised by the Academic Board (AB) to contribute advice and expertise to the initial development of a course and to support the ongoing review and monitoring of that course.
 - 3.7.2 The CARC also assists in identifying the need and demand for a course and to assist academic staff with industry and content specific advice and guidance in the development of AHE's courses.
- 3.8 Course Rules:
- 3.8.1 Course Specifications must include:
 - 3.8.1.1 Full Course Title and Abbreviated Title.
 - 3.8.1.2 Credit points (CP) required to earn the award.
 - 3.8.1.3 Course Structure and Sequence.
 - 3.8.1.4 Whether units are core units, specialisation units, or electives.
 - 3.8.1.5 Whether the course contains any recommended sequences of electives known as Streams.
 - 3.8.1.6 Admission requirements (General and Specific), including English Language Requirements, numeracy and academic as relevant.
 - 3.8.1.7 Number of units from each level and/or area required to be completed to earn the award.

3.8.2 For undergraduate units:

3.8.2.1 Each unit has a code which comprises a capitalised three-letter prefix and a three digital number according to the area and level. Normally the three digital numbers are allocated in sequential order as new units are developed.

3.8.2.2 This is followed by a space and the full title of the unit.

- For example:
 - A second level, Business unit is BUS201.
 - The next second level Business unit is BUS202; and
 - The first third level Business unit is BUS301.
- For postgraduate units:
 - Each unit has a code which comprises a capitalised three-letter prefix according to the area of study (e.g. MIS for a Master of Information Systems or ICT for Information and Communications Technology), and a four-digit number.
 - The number is of the form 5XNN, where the five represents a postgraduate unit, X represents the level within the course with 1 being a Foundational level, 2- intermediate, and 3 advanced.
 - The final two numbers (NN) provide uniqueness and will normally be assigned in sequential order. For example, MIS5101 is the first unit in the MIS and is a postgraduate foundational level unit.
 - MIS5201 is the first intermediate level postgraduate unit within the MIS, whilst MIS5301 is the first advanced unit with the MIS.

3.8.3 Each unit must state the credit points associated with the unit. Each unit is normally worth 10 credit points (CP).

3.8.4 Each unit must state its relevant prerequisite(s) or co-requisite(s) as relevant. In some cases, prerequisites can be listed by a given number of completed credit points. Where specific units would be useful to take prior to a given unit but is not a mandatory pre-requisite this may be listed in the course structure as being 'Ideally after ...', indicating the unit that should ideally be taken prior to a student undertaking a specific unit.

3.8.5 This latter credit point based prerequisite requirements will be used sparingly and only in cases where students can't undertake units until later in the course.

3.8.5.1 For example, an undergraduate capstone project unit that is taken in the final semester of students could have a prerequisite of 'completion of 180 credit points.

3.8.5.2 In a full-time study load, a student will normally undertake 40 CP¹ in each semester. Refer to the [Student Academic Progression Policy and Procedure](#) for more information.

4. Actions and responsibilities for the AHE course development process

4.1 Each step outlined below is iterative between the BoD, AB and the CARC. Please refer to [Appendix 1: Iterative Process for Course Design, Development and Approval](#) and [Appendix 2: Flowchart of Course Development and Approval at AHE](#) at the end of this Policy and Procedure.

[Appendix 1: Iterative Process for Course Design, Development and Approval](#), provides a brief outline of the following steps and [Appendix 2: Flowchart of Course Development and Approval at AHE](#) provides a summary of the following steps:

- **Step 1: Development of a Business Case for a New Course Proposal**

The first step involves the development and consideration of the strategic, business, and academic case for the course in the form of a New Course Proposal prepared by the CEO in conjunction with the Dean.

The **Case for a New Course Proposal** will include an analysis of:

- How the development of the proposed course helps achieve the strategic objectives of AHE.
- The demand and need for the course in industry and the broader community (underpinned by market research).
- How the proposed course complements the present range of courses offered by AHE (having regard to the range of existing courses, the evidence of demand for the course and identified areas of industry and community need).
- Forecast enrolments in the proposed course over the period of accreditation.
- The capacity of AHE to deliver the proposed course.
- The cost to develop the course and, where necessary, the cost to develop the capability of AHE to deliver the course and any additional associated resources to develop/run the course.

¹ 75% of the normal full-time semester load is regarded as full-time study as long as the students is able to complete their course within the normal full-time duration.

- **Step 2: Approval by the BOD for a New Course Proposal**

The CEO will consult with the Dean and other relevant proposer(s) to compile a Case for a New Course Proposal and present the Proposal to AHE's Board of Directors (BoD) for approval.

The BoD will consider the proposal against the strategic objectives it has set and will review the financial implications of proceeding with development.

The proposal may require that the BoD revise AHE's strategic objectives for the course to align with AHE's overall strategic planning.

Prior to approving the proposal, the BoD must ensure that adequate funds are available to support developing and delivery the new course. The BoD may:

- Support the new course proposal and recommend it be referred to the AB for implementation.
- Request further information regarding the new course proposal before making a final decision.
- Reject the new course proposal as it is not compatible with the strategic plan or physical or financial resources of AHE.

- **Step 3: Academic Board actions course development**

If the BoD approves the Case for a New Course Proposal, the Proposal is sent to the AB for its consideration and development.

The AB will undertake an oversight role for the course development process, with the Dean undertaking the academic leadership role throughout the development process.

The AB will delegate course development to the CARC which the AB convenes.

- The AB may utilise an existing CARC, modify the membership of an existing CARC, or recommend that the membership of the CARC be augmented with temporary expertise through appointment of additional members for the purpose of the development of specific courses.

The AB, through the CARC and Dean, develops an Academic Course Proposal based on the Case for a New Course Proposal endorsed by the BoD. The Academic Course Proposal contains:

- A Course Rationale.
- Proposed qualification to be awarded by AHE.
- Admissions Criteria.
- Course Learning Outcomes.

- Alignment of the course with the AHE Graduate Attributes.
- Alignment of the course with the AQF level.
- Proposed Methods of Assessment.
- Indicative Student Workload.
- Comparative Information on similar Bachelor courses offered in Australia.
- A Proposed Academic Calendar.
- The proposed structure of the course, duration, and delivery mode(s).
- Proposed units.
- Requirements to graduate.
- Exit pathways.
- Accreditation (other than by TEQSA) for the course when it is developed and delivered.

The AB will normally delegate the Academic Course Proposal to the Dean and CARC to complete the development of the proposed course and its learning and teaching materials.

The CEO will have delegated authority to approve financial and other resources required by course developers and/or request amendments to budgetary allocation from the BoD if there are changes from the initial Case for a New Course Proposal after further development of the Academic Course Proposal.

- **Step 4: Course Development by the CARC**

The CARC will consider the Academic Course Proposal and during its deliberations will ensure that the course is:

- Equivalent to similar courses delivered by other higher education providers (supported by benchmarking).
- Of a suitable quality and meets appropriate academic standards (supported by mapping against the attributes of a course at the same level as outlined in the [Australian Qualifications Framework 2013](#)), and
- Aligned with current practices and bodies of knowledge relevant to the course.

The CARC will oversee the development of the required course accreditation documentation below:

- a. The course's rationale (including graduate employment opportunities).
- b. Graduate Attributes of AHE, mapped with each of the units' learning outcomes and assessments.
- c. Qualification to be awarded upon course completion.

- d. Admissions criteria (e.g. prior qualifications, English and numeracy) in the TEQSA Template for Course Admission Information or equivalent format.
- e. Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) and Unit Learning Outcomes (ULOs) mapped with AQF level specifications, mapping between CLOs and ULOs, assessment rationale and assessments in a summary table in TEQSA's Template for Constructive Alignment or equivalent format.
- f. The body of knowledge (national and international benchmarks) for course development.
- g. Course structure, duration, and delivery mode.
- h. The units (core/elective/specialisation, and prerequisites/co-requisites) that make up the course:
 - Course specification and course sequence and unit availability.
 - Learning materials for the course as required by TEQSA.
 - Overall assessment methodology for the course.
 - Rules for course completion, and
 - Any other requirements by TEQSA for initial course accreditation as delineated under the [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#) (e.g. Unit Outlines, Learning and Teaching materials including assessment and rubrics, etc.) and other TEQSA requirements.

The CARC will report to the AB on course development progress in an iterative manner as follows:

- Refer the Academic Course Proposal back to the AB with amendments for consideration.
- Request the CEO consider and approve financial and other resources required by course developers.
- Make changes as requested by the AB.
- Complete all course documentation as required having made any amendments required by the AB.
- And/or continue to Step 5 for course validation.

- **Step 5: Validation of course documentation prior to submission to TEQSA for application of a new course**
 - a. The CARC will refer the final draft of the course to the AB with a request that the course be sent for expert external review. The AB appoints the external reviewer(s) and sends the course documentation to be critically reviewed, asking for feedback in a template that is provided by AHE. The independent experts should be familiar with the discipline area of the course and understand the requirements for accreditation of higher education courses in the non-self-accrediting sector.
 - b. Any recommendations by the independent experts are referred to the CARC for review before incorporation into the final course documentation.
 - c. The Dean, with input from the CARC as required, will develop a response to external reviewer's recommendations. In this response the Dean will detail any amendments made to the course and/or course documentation, including a rationale for any recommendations that have not been implemented.
 - d. The final required course development documentation is referred to the AB for scrutiny and to be endorsed.
 - e. The course accreditation documentation, incorporating any amendments recommended by the AB, is presented to the BoD for approval.
 - f. Upon approval the BoD delegates the responsibility to the CEO to submit the accreditation application to TEQSA.

5. Dissemination and Publication:

- 5.1 This Policy and Procedure will be part of the internal documents of AHE for governance and executive management purposes.

6. Benchmarking Documents

- [TEQSA Application Forms and Support](#)
- [TEQSA Application Guide for Course Accreditation](#)

7. Legislation

- [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#) – standards 3, 5 (Specifically – 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.1.3, 3.1.4, 3.1.5, 5.1.1, 5.1.2, 5.1.3, 5.3.1, 5.3.2, 5.3.3, 5.3.4, 5.3.7).
- [Australian Qualifications Framework](#)

8. Related Documents

- AHE Strategic Plan
- AHE Business Plan
- AHE Workforce and Staffing Plan
- AHE Learning and Teaching Plan
- [Student Academic Progression Policy and Procedure](#)
- [Student Assessment Policy and Procedure](#)
- Terms of Reference for each governance board and committee in association with the AHE Governance Framework

9. Definitions

Refer to:

- Table of Acronyms and Definitions

Version Control

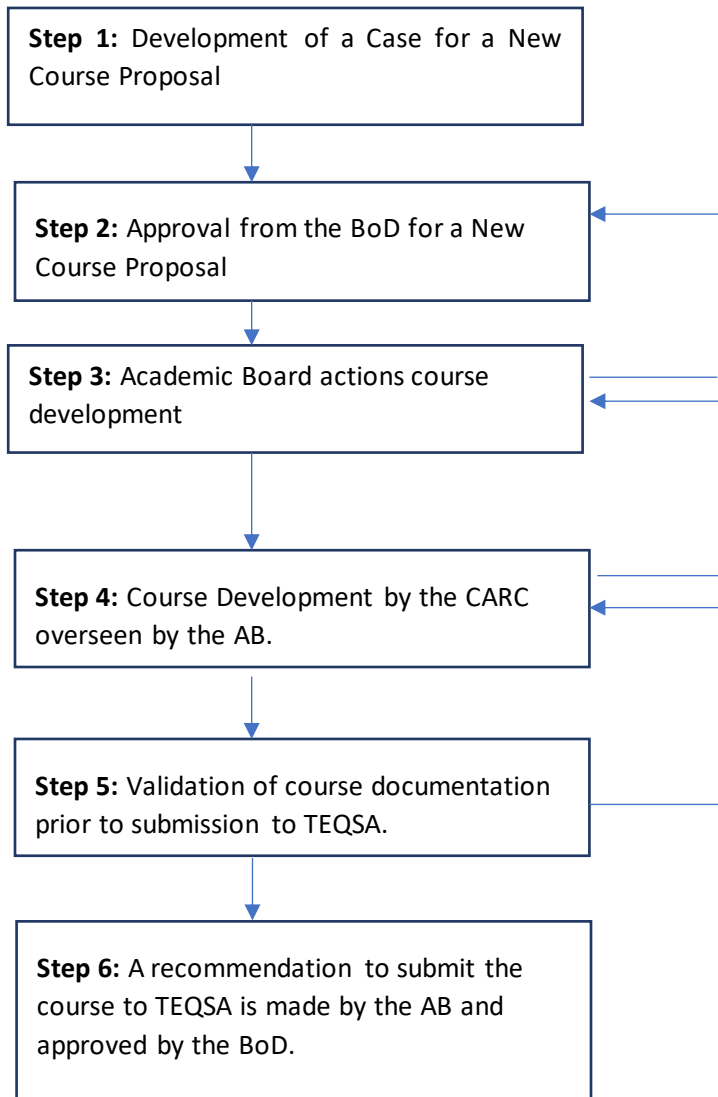
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Revision History				
Version	Date of Changes	Change Summary	Author	Review Due
V1.0	8 November 2017	Created Document and included aspects of course review	CEO / Executive Dean	November 2020
V2.0	7 February 2018	Template for Procedures followed. Process and documents follow the TEQSA accreditation application (Higher Edu Std's 2015 Framework) and Flow Chart created to match the process; Course Rules at the beginning. Approved by: Academic Board	CEO / Executive Dean	February 2021
V2.1	26 February 2018	Amended Step 3 to incorporate leadership role of the AB. TEQSA requirements for constructive alignment added to Step 4 and Appendix. Learning and Teaching materials required by TEQSA amended. Approved by: Academic Board	CEO / Executive Dean	February 2021
V2.2	26 March 2018	Amended Step 4 to incorporate all TEQSA's requirements. Step 5 amended to only refer to external review of course documents.	CEO / Executive Dean	March 2021
V2.3	30 April 2018	Amended all steps to show it is an iterative process between AB and CARC. Flowchart included. Also amended Step 6 to include material changes to a course. Approved by: Academic Board	CEO / Executive Dean	April 2021
V2.4	30 July 2018 as requested by the CARC	Amended Section 1.4 Course Rules to include: admission requirements, course title, unit pre-req and co-requisites, unit codes and titles, and refer to Student Academic Progression Policy and Procedure Approved by: Academic Board	CEO / Executive Dean	July 2021
V2.5	3 September 2018	Deleted section on Specialisations. Approved by: Academic Board	CEO / Executive Dean	September 2021

Version	Date of Changes	Change Summary	Author	Review Due
V2.6	5 October 2018	Amended typos, roles and clarified certain aspects, CEO/ Exec Dean role; Case by BOD not a Business Case; all to be consistent with other documents of AHE. Approved by: CEO	CEO / Executive Dean	October 2021
V2.7	16 November 2018	Reformatted document. Approved by: CEO	CEO / Executive Dean	November 2021
V3.0	20 January 2022	PRV and CRICOS Code inserted. Approved by: CEO	CEO / Executive Dean	January 2025
V4.0	12 May 2023	Various aspects of the policy after a comprehensive review and based on an external expert's review. Updated unit code specifications to cover PG units. Added minimum unit load for studies to be considered full-time. Approved by: Academic Board	CEO / Dean	May 2025
V5.0	3 April 2024	Updated header and footer, formatted the document, updated colours, added relevant links to the document and updated version control table.	Senior Compliance and Risk Manager	April 2027
		Additional content added. Academic Board Approval:16.05.2024	Dean and CEO	
Organisation		Apex Australia Higher Education		
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1:

Iterative Process for Course Design, Development and Approval



Appendix 2

Flowchart of Course Development and Approval at AHE.

Each Step outlined below is iterative between the BoD, AB and the CARC.

Step #	Document required	Person Responsible	Description of Document Required/ Action	Approval From
Step 1	Case for a New Course Proposal.	CEO + Dean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of a business case for a course proposal. 	Board of Directors (BoD)
Step 2	Approval from the BoD for a New Course Proposal.	BoD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approval from the BoD is required. 	BoD
Step 3	Academic Course Proposal based on Case for a New Course Proposal.	CEO + Dean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic Board convenes a Course Advisory Committee (CARC) to oversee the development of the course based on the Academic Course Proposal. If nested courses are to be included these are specified at this stage. 	Academic Board (AB)
Step 4	Course Rationale.	CEO + Dean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The course's rationale (including graduate employment opportunities, particularly in the country of the graduates). 	Course Advisory and Review Committee (CARC)
	Benchmarking.	Dean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A comprehensive benchmarking review is undertaken focused on recognised and authoritative bodies of knowledge plus the course aims/objectives, Course Learning Outcomes, admission criteria, and courses structures a range of Australian and international university, and HE related courses. 	CARC
	Mode of delivery.	CEO + Dean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The mode of delivery is determined. 	CARC
	TESQA Template for Course Admission Information.	CEO + Dean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Admissions criteria (prior qualifications, English and numeracy). 	CARC
	Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs).	Dean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CLO's are developed including mapping to the AQF and other external reference points, body of knowledge, and/or frameworks. 	CARC
	Course Specification.	CEO / Dean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The units (core, specialisation, electives) and sequencing (prerequisites) and standard study patterns are developed, along with course duration. Course completion requirements are defined. Comparison to benchmark courses is made highlighting similarities and differences. 	CARC

Step #	Document required	Person Responsible	Description of Document Required/ Action	Approval From
	Unit Learning Outcomes and Topics Developed.	Dean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ULO's and Topics are developed and refined. Mapping of the ULO's to the AQF, key bodies of knowledge, Level of Thinking (e.g. Bloom's taxonomy) are developed to ensure appropriate depth and breadth of the course. 	CARC
	Assessment.	Dean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual unit assessments are developed including mapping to ULO's and CLO's. 	CARC
	Unit Outlines Developed.	Dean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The complete set of unit outlines (using the TEQSA template) are developed 	CARC
	TEQSA Template for Constructive Alignment.	Dean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A complete set of comprehensive constructive alignment analyses are developed relating the assessments to ULO's and CLO's, the ULO's/CLO's to AHE Graduate Attributes and AQF level requirements, plus mappings of the units against appropriate bodies of knowledge. Also, the overall and development in the level of Thinking across the course and the variety in types of assessments are developed. 	CARC / AB
	And any other requirements by TEQSA for initial course accreditation.	CEO + Dean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The complete set of course related documentation required by TEQSA are developed including advertising materials, handbooks, Unit Outlines, Course Proposal, and the detailed L&T materials with assessment and rubrics for the units specified as part of TEQSA's Confirmed Evidence Tables (CET). Teach-out agreements for the courses is established where possible with other HE institutions. 	CARC / AB
Step 5	Validation of course documentation prior to submission to TEQSA, including External review of the course.	CEO + Dean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of the course has been externally reviewed and the feedback incorporated into the course. The course was then sent to AB for endorsement. NB: This may require changes to the course and units, and this will normally include the CARC's involvement during the refinement process. A detailed response to the External Reviewers' feedback is developed and considered. 	AB
Step 6	Finalisation of accreditation documentation by AB.	CEO + Dean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalisation of all the course related documentation required in the accreditation are developed and approved by the AB for recommendation to the BoD. 	AB
	Approval of submission of the course to TEQSA for Accreditation.	CEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consideration of all the accreditation documentation is ready for submission to TEQSA and authorisation to the CEO to launch the application. 	BoD