

GOOD PRACTICE PRINCIPLES FOR COURSE ACCREDITATION AND REVIEW OF INDIGENOUS CURRICULUM

November 2019

1 INTRODUCTION

In March 2017 Universities Australia (UA), in partnership with the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Consortium (NATSHEC), released its Indigenous Strategy 2017-2020. The strategy brings all member universities together to achieve common goals to advance Indigenous participation and success in higher education, including to make Australian universities much more reflective of Indigenous Australia.

On graduate outcomes and curriculum, the strategy states that all member universities commit to having:

processes that ensure all students will encounter and engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural content as integral parts of their course of study, by 2020 (p.14).

In addition to this, the UA Deputy Vice-Chancellors (Academic) Committee (DVCA) have been tasked under the strategy to develop initiatives that:

ensure that internal course accreditation processes within our member universities formally involve Indigenous consultation and input to curriculum development and subsequent review processes (p.34).

It is expected that these principles will assist universities to meet their commitments under the strategy and obligations under the Higher Education Standards Framework. The standards state that:

educational policies and practices support participation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and are sensitive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and cultures. (Standard 6.2.1(g)).

This document sets out principles and guidance for each UA Member to incorporate into their internal course accreditation processes, and, therefore, course design delivery and review/reaccreditation processes. In so doing, it is recognised that Australian universities are autonomous, self-accrediting institutions and can adopt or adapt this guidance in ways that are best suited to their own situation.

2 BACKGROUND

The DVCA Standing Group on Indigenous Higher Education (standing group) have led the development of these principles. The drafting process involved extensive discussions on the purpose, usability and content of the principles over several DVC A Committee meetings from late 2017 to mid-2019.

Following in-principle support from the DVC A Committee to the principles in this document at the June 2019 meeting, members agreed to discuss the principles and implementation with their respective institutional senior Indigenous officer. The standing group considered all feedback provided following this

consultation process, and adjustments to the principles that were consistent with the broad intention agreed by the DVC A Committee

3 PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to help Australian universities ensure their course accreditation processes:

- encourage courses to be accessible to and relevant for Indigenous Australians;
- help graduates develop an appreciation and sensitivity of Indigenous knowledges that can be applied in professional practice; and
- promote a more culturally inclusive and engaging society that values the histories, traditions, knowledges and experiences of Indigenous Australians.

4 SCOPE

These principles are intended to be used to inform the policies and procedures for the accreditation and review/reaccreditation of all higher education (including enabling) courses at all Australian universities.

Each institution may interpret and adapt these principles in a way that best aligns with their institutional approaches to advancing the participation and success of Indigenous Australians in higher education, and reconciliation.

Institutions acknowledge these principles should not be considered in isolation, but rather resources¹ on pedagogy and decolonisation, as well as educator preparation, should also be considered to lead to successful delivery of classroom curriculum.

5 OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

5.1 Australia is home to the world's oldest continuous societies and cultures. This carries a wealth of knowledges and practices that have immense value today and for the future, as well as historically.

5.2 All courses provided by an Australian university should be designed, accredited, delivered and reviewed in ways that considers whether the curriculum is inclusive of, sensitive to and conducive to the aspirations of Indigenous Australians.

5.3 Design, accreditation and delivery of courses or programs should also consider any unreasonable barriers to access, participation and success by Indigenous Australians.

5.4 An appreciation of Indigenous knowledges contributes to a breadth and depth of learning that helps prepare all graduates to operate effectively in global society. Courses that are conducive to the aspirations of Indigenous Australians benefit all students.

5.5 Whilst universities will ensure formal Indigenous involvement in accreditation processes, the responsibility to ensure courses are accredited in a manner that incorporates Indigenous considerations rests with the academic governance of the university and not solely with the Indigenous staff of the university.

¹ An extensive list of resources is available on the online Learning and Teaching Repository - <https://ltr.edu.au/>.

6 COURSE DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY

6.1 The university should have an Indigenous graduate attribute (or similar graduate outcome or course learning outcome) to develop an appreciation or sensitivity to Indigenous Australian cultures, and the course accreditation process should ensure that all courses are aligned to the achievement of this attribute.

6.2 Indigenous curriculum should be coherently integrated into degree curricula, allowing student opportunities to build from introductory to advanced learning.

6.3 The appreciation or sensitivity to Indigenous knowledges and understanding as set out in the learning outcomes should be formally assessed.

6.4 Teaching staff should be sensitive to, appropriately prepared and experienced in the Indigenous content that they teach. Professional development should be offered to staff to develop and enhance the capacity to teach Indigenous content.

6.5 Courses should include formal recognition of the Indigenous knowledges and sources drawn upon and explicitly acknowledge relevant endorsements by Indigenous bodies where relevant.²

6.6 Courses should use language which reflects the diversity and multi-lingual practices of Indigenous Australians where possible³.

6.7 Indigenous graduate attributes, or other course learning outcomes, may be supported and enhanced by extracurricular or co-curricular activities. If appropriate, the accreditation process should take such activities into consideration, but such activities are not by themselves a substitute for formal Indigenous curriculum development.

7 COURSE APPROVAL AND ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE

7.1 The course accreditation process should demonstrate that Indigenous Australian stakeholders have been authentically consulted as part of the course development process.

7.2 Indigenous and non-Indigenous academic staff engagement in academic governance bodies and decision-making processes in universities is critical to successful Indigenous curriculum development.⁴

² There are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander professional groups who have influenced the professional practice standards e.g. Council for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives (CATSINAM), Australian Indigenous Doctors Association (AIDA), Aboriginal Psychologists Association, Indigenous Allied Health Association. There are also state based Aboriginal Education Consultative Committees.

³ For example, when referring to Indigenous considerations, it will often be appropriate to use the relevant Indigenous nomenclature alongside English translations, rather than only relying upon English nomenclature.

⁴ Institutions are responsible for managing workloads of, and professional development opportunities for all staff. Careful consideration must be given to existing workloads when making any appointments to new bodies, including academic governance bodies.

NON-EXHAUSTIVE LIST OF INDIGENOUS CURRICULUM PROJECTS TO CONSIDER IN CURRICULUM DESIGN

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