



**Paramedicine  
Accreditation  
Committee**

# Approach to establishment of accreditation assessment teams for paramedicine

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# 1. Purpose

Under section 42 of Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (the National Law), as in force in each state and territory, the "accreditation function" includes "assessing programs of study (programs), and the education providers that provide the programs, to determine whether the programs meet approved accreditation standards"

The Paramedicine Accreditation Committee (the Committee) exercises the paramedicine accreditation function under the National Law. In order to support the exercise of its accreditation functions, the Committee will appoint and train assessors and establish accreditation assessment teams (assessment teams).

Assessment teams assess education providers and their programs against the *accreditation standards for paramedicine* and report their findings to the Committee.

This procedure outlines the key considerations for the Committee when it is establishing an assessment team.

## 2. Factors that the Committee must consider when establishing an assessment team

The Committee will generally establish an assessment team for each program undergoing an accreditation assessment. The Program Accreditation Team maintains a database of accreditation assessors that have been trained and may be selected to an assessment team.

### 2.1 Individual assessor attributes considered in establishing an assessment team

The Committee has agreed that each assessment team:

- a. will generally comprise three assessors, including one assessor who is a member of the Committee and will typically be the assessment team leader
- b. is composed so that the combination of assessors provides coverage of the following areas:
  - current registration with the Paramedicine Board of Australia
  - sound knowledge of education system and experience in teaching and learning, and
  - sound knowledge of paramedicine.

### 2.2 Actual and perceived conflict of interest and bias

Section 3 (3) of the National Law shows the guiding principles, and notes that the scheme is to operate in a transparent, accountable, efficient, effective and fair way.

In exercising functions delegated to them under the National Law, assessors must act honestly, in good faith, with integrity, and with a reasonable degree of care, diligence and skill (section 234(2)).

Assessors should therefore avoid situations in which their private interests may conflict, or might reasonably be perceived to conflict, with the impartial fulfilment of their official duties and the public interest.

The *Guidelines for accreditation of education and training programs* (the guidelines), as adopted by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice, Chinese Medicine, Medical Radiation, Paramedicine and Podiatry Accreditation Committees, outline that:

*Before and during their appointment, each assessor must disclose:*

- a. *any personal or professional interest or duty relevant to the performance of their responsibilities as an assessor, and*
- b. *any other matters that may influence or be perceived to influence their ability to perform their responsibilities objectively.*

*The Committee will, in consultation with the Program Accreditation Team, take all reasonable steps to manage any actual, perceived or potential influence on the ability of any assessor to fulfil their responsibilities objectively.*

The Program Accreditation Team keeps a record of the self-identified conflicts of interest or bias for each assessor.

## 3. Adopting a consistent approach to consideration of factors when establishing an assessment team

The Committee considers each of the following questions in order:

1. What assessors have declared a relevant conflict of interest or bias in relation to the program?
2. From the remaining "short list", what assessors work in the same state or territory as the location where the program is delivered?
3. Which assessors cover the necessary individual assessor attributes for establishment of an assessment team?
4. Are any assessors on the "shortlist" already assigned to established assessment teams? If yes, which teams?
5. Are any assessors on the shortlist associated with each other in employment, business arrangements or a personal relationship?
6. Are any assessors on the shortlist a member of the Committee?

### 3.1 Consideration of individual attributes

#### What assessors have declared a relevant conflict of interest or bias in relation to the program?

The Committee **will not** consider any assessor who has declared a relevant conflict of interest or bias when it is establishing an assessment team. These people are removed from the "short list" of potential assessors for the team that is being established for that program.

#### From the remaining "short list", what assessors work in the same state or territory as the location where the program is delivered?

Whenever practicable, the Committee **will not** consider any assessor who works in the same state or territory as the location where the program is delivered. These people are removed from the "short list" of potential assessors for the team that is being established for that program.

#### Which assessors cover the necessary individual assessor attributes for establishment of an assessment team?

To ensure the right balance of membership on an assessment team, the Committee must consider the relevant competencies, expertise and attributes of each assessor, and ensure assessors cover the areas identified at section 2.1.

*The Committee identifies the areas listed for each assessor on the "short list" of potential assessors for the team that is being established for that program.*

**Note:** The Program Accreditation Team carries out the steps outlined in 3.1 above prior to presenting an annotated "shortlist" of suitable assessors to the Committee for consideration.

### 3.2 Consideration of assessment team attributes

When identifying possible combinations of assessors that could be drawn from the "shortlist" of assessors who are suitable for the assessment team, the Committee may wish to consider other factors that may impact on the performance and bias of the assessment team as a whole:

#### Are any assessors on the "shortlist" already assigned to established assessment teams? If yes, which teams?

The Committee identifies any established assessment teams to which each assessor is already appointed. The Committee may wish to consider spreading the assessment team workload between assessors to avoid unnecessary delays in completion of assessments. If there are sufficient assessors on the shortlist, people who are on an established team and the workload overlaps with the team being established may be removed from the "short list" of potential assessors for the team that is being established for that program.

#### Are any assessors on the shortlist associated with each other in employment, business arrangements or a personal relationship?

The Committee should avoid appointing assessors who are associated with each other outside their role as an assessor as such associations are likely to lead to perceptions of bias. If there are sufficient assessors on the shortlist, people who are associated with each other outside their role as an assessor may be removed from the "short list" of potential assessors for the team that is being established for that program so only one person remains on the list.

## Are any assessors on the shortlist a member of the Committee?

Each team will generally include a member of the Committee.

For assessment of applications for accreditation, the Committee should consider whether appointing one or more assessors who are a member of the Committee could cause the Committee to become inquorate if members are required to be absent to manage the risk of claims of apprehended bias when the Committee makes its decision. This may not always be avoidable, and the risk is then managed through the usual meeting processes.

### 3.3 Other considerations

At the Committee's discretion, it may request the Program Accreditation Team source potential assessors through external regulators (such as TEQSA) or the assessor lists for other health professions supported by the Program Accreditation Team.

All assessors, regardless of where they are sourced, are required to undertake relevant training conducted by Ahpra's Program Accreditation Team.

### 3.4 Establishing a proposed assessment team

After considering the factors above, the Committee will have potential combinations of assessors who are suitable for the assessment team. If there are enough assessors on the shortlist, only one Committee member could remain on each potential combination of assessors. Whilst the Committee will need to establish the proposed assessment team based on those potential combinations, it needs to identify one or more "reserve" assessors who the Program Accreditation Team can substitute if any assessor is unavailable or if issues are raised during the final check described below. This will minimise delays in finding alternative assessors.

After establishing each assessment team, the Committee will select one assessor from the established team as assessment team leader, typically the Committee member if they are on the assessment team.

The assessment team leader will generally be an assessor who has a sound knowledge of education and an understanding of accreditation processes.

## 4. Final check with assessors selected for proposed assessment team

After considering the factors above, the Committee will decide on the assessors for the proposed assessment team.

Prior to giving the relevant education provider written notice about the proposed team, including the names and relevant background of each assessor, the Committee should request that the Program Accreditation Team advises each assessor of their selection for the proposed team and invites each assessor to submit details of any matters that they consider may influence or be perceived to influence their ability to fulfil their responsibilities objectively on that team.

If any assessor provides details of any such matters, the Committee will, in consultation with the Program Accreditation Team, take all reasonable steps to manage any actual, perceived or potential influence on the ability of any assessor to fulfil their responsibilities objectively before giving the relevant education provider written notice about the proposed team.

## 5. Check with the education provider regarding proposed assessment team

The education provider may, after being notified about the proposed team, submit details of any matters that they consider may influence or be perceived to influence their ability to fulfil their responsibilities objectively on that team.

If an assessor is not available or there are matters that they or the education provider consider may influence or be perceived to influence their ability to fulfil their responsibilities objectively on that team, the Program Accreditation Team will substitute that assessor with one of the reserves without seeking approval from the Committee. If a Committee Member is selected and is not available, or the education provider considers the Committee Member will not be able to fulfil their responsibilities objectively on that team, the Program Accreditation Team will liaise with the Chair (or Deputy Chairs) as appropriate to replace the Committee Member on the team. The Program Accreditation Team will advise the Committee of any changes to proposed teams at its next meeting.