

## November 2020 Podiatry Accreditation Committee meeting

The Podiatry Accreditation Committee (the Committee) commenced undertaking accreditation functions for podiatry in the national scheme regulating health practitioners in July 2019.

The Committee publishes this communiqué on its [accreditation webpages](#). Please forward it to your colleagues and employees who may be interested.

### Committee's response to COVID-19

The Committee and Ahpra continue to monitor the COVID-19 pandemic and its potential impacts on accredited and approved programs. The Committee has released statements outlining its plans for its accreditation activities for the remainder of 2020, on the 'News and updates' accreditation webpage. The Committee recently concluded its special COVID-19 monitoring of all its accredited and approved programs.

### Accreditation Committee meeting

The eighth meeting of the Committee was held on 19 November 2020 via Zoom, the last meeting of the year. The Committee anticipates holding at least three meetings in 2021.

Some activities that were discussed at the Committee's November 2020 meeting, as well as some other key activities for the Committee, are outlined more thoroughly below.

### Risk-based approach to accreditation

The Committee has explored cyclic and risk-based approaches to specified periods of accreditation, and recently agreed to adopt a risk-based approach to accreditation – that is that all accredited and approved podiatry programs of study will be accredited without a specified time period. The Committee would then monitor the programs under section 50 through monitoring against conditions and/or specific monitoring, and routine annual monitoring. All accredited and approved podiatry programs would undergo a full accreditation assessment against any new or revised accreditation standards each time they are approved by the Board.

Two sections of the National Law are relevant to the Committee's policy position on specifying a period of accreditation – section 48 and section 50.

Section 48 sets out the parameters for the Committee's decision to accredit a program with or without conditions, or to refuse to accredit a program after assessing that program and the relevant education provider against the accreditation standards.

Section 50 sets out the parameters for the Committee's decision to impose conditions and/or specific monitoring on, or revoke its accreditation of, a Board-approved program after monitoring whether the program and the relevant education provider continue to meet the accreditation standards.

These sections of the National Law do not specify or mandate that accreditation be for a specified period, rather they establish a regulatory framework for accreditation that enables the Committee to continue to accredit programs that the Committee is, through its monitoring, satisfied are meeting the accreditation standards.

These sections also enable the Committee to use conditions to take proportionate regulatory action when the Committee considers it necessary to ensure a program will meet standards that are not met at the time of assessment, or are no longer met after the program is accredited. This proportionate regulatory action may include imposing an end date on accreditation if a program continues not to meet standards, despite conditions.

### **Assessment activities for approved programs of study**

The Committee recently considered and finalised its schedule of podiatry accreditation assessments for education providers to undergo assessments against the new and revised accreditation standards for podiatry, anticipated to be approved by the Board in mid-2021. The Committee is currently in the process of considering accreditation applications for two programs of study against the current accreditation standards. The Program Accreditation Team has recently contacted education providers to advise them of their tentative accreditation assessment application dates against the new and revised accreditation standards, once they are approved by the Board and take effect.

### **Monitoring approved programs of study**

At its November 2020 meeting, the Committee considered the final 2019 Routine annual monitoring responses from education providers, as part of its responsibility to monitor education providers and their programs of study in 2019 and 2020.

#### **COVID-19 special reporting**

As forecast in its [11 May 2020 statement](#), the Committee is carrying out special COVID-19 monitoring of all approved podiatry programs of study.

In July 2020, the Committee agreed on its framework to collect information from education providers about changes impacting final year students in 2020, resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Committee has considered education provider reports that were submitted in September 2020 and will provide advice to the National Board on changes made to education providers and their programs since March 2020 that may or may not impact on final year students achieving threshold capability prior to graduation. Outcomes of the Committee's COVID-19 monitoring will be communicated to education providers in due course.

The Committee thanks all education providers for the information they submitted regarding the impact of COVID-19 on the 2020 cohort of graduating students. The Committee will continue to provide advice to the Board on its monitoring of accredited and approved programs including the downstream impacts of COVID-19 on all students. Information on the downstream impacts of COVID-19 on future cohorts will be requested with education provider's 2021 Routine annual monitoring submissions, which are anticipated to be due in mid-2021. The Committee will disseminate the Routine annual monitoring report forms to education providers in early-2021.

### **Call for accreditation assessor applications**

The Committee recently agreed to commence a campaign to recruit accreditation assessors in mid-January 2021. The campaign will be advertised on the Committee's [accreditation webpages](#), and an initial intake period shall be established to ensure appointment of enough accreditation assessors to the Committee's pool to support its first accreditation assessments against the new and revised accreditation standards. The Committee has appointed its Selection Advisory Panel to review the applications and interview the shortlisted candidates, and anticipates considering the Selection Advisory Panel's recommendations of accreditation assessor appointments at a meeting in mid-2021. All successfully appointed accreditation assessors will be required to undergo assessor training in late-2021.

### **Accreditation fees for podiatry**

The Committee continued its important discussion regarding its approach to accreditation fees for podiatry programs of study in 2021 and beyond. The Committee considered the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education providers, and the transition to accreditation functions being undertaken by the Committee from July 2019.

The Committee has recently contacted education providers and the Australasian Council of Podiatry Deans seeking feedback on its proposed approach to podiatry accreditation fees for 2021-2024.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

The Program Accreditation Team, on behalf of the Committee, continues to engage with education providers via the Committee's [accreditation webpages](#), and through videoconference, phone and email correspondence, and its communiques.

#### [Review and development of podiatry accreditation standards and professional capabilities – public consultation](#)

As education providers would be aware, the draft revised accreditation standards and professional capabilities have been released for [public consultation](#). The consultation will run until 12 March 2021. As part of this consultation, a series of webinar information sessions are currently scheduled to be held in February 2021. The Committee is looking forward to participation and comments from its key stakeholders, and more details on the dates of the webinars will be published on the [Committee's webpages](#) in early 2021.

#### [Ongoing engagement with key stakeholders](#)

As part of its continued commitment to a collaborative and collegial approach to liaising with its key stakeholders on its core accreditation activities, the Chair of the Committee and other Committee representatives hope to soon meet, via videoconference, with representatives from each education provider delivering a podiatry program of study to discuss any of the Committee's key activities that may be of interest.

The Committee would also like to recognise and acknowledge the significant efforts made by education providers this year to ensure their programs continued to provide the necessary support to its students, and those 2020 cohorts who would graduate with the knowledge, skills and professional attributes necessary to be eligible for registration in the profession. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic cannot be understated, and the Committee appreciates the hard-work by all involved.

The Committee wishes all its key stakeholders a very merry Christmas, and a much-deserved break this holiday season, and looks forward to engaging more on important topics about podiatry accreditation, in 2021 and beyond.

### **Contact information**

For any queries related to podiatry program accreditation, please contact the Committee via the Program Accreditation Team at [program.accreditation@ahpra.gov.au](mailto:program.accreditation@ahpra.gov.au).

For more information on podiatry accreditation please visit the Committee's [accreditation](#) webpage.

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