

Accreditation in the National  
Registration and Accreditation  
Scheme (NRAS):  
**A snapshot 2019/20**



**Ahpra  
& National  
Boards**

# Introduction

**The National Registration and Accreditation Scheme** (the Scheme) was established by the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (the National Law) in July 2010.

The Scheme is multi-professional, regulating over 800,000 health practitioners in 16 professions. The accreditation functions in the National Law include developing accreditation standards, accrediting programs of study against approved accreditation standards and assessing overseas-qualified practitioners.

**Accreditation** is integral to the Scheme as it is the key way to ensure that individuals seeking registration have the knowledge, skills and professional attributes to safely and competently practise their profession in Australia.

**Snapshot of Accreditation** is a yearly summary of whole of scheme information about accreditation activities. This version is current at 30 June 2020.

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## Contact us

Please contact Ahpra on **1300 419 495** or visit our website **[www.ahpra.gov.au](http://www.ahpra.gov.au)**.

This document was prepared by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency in collaboration with National Boards and the Health Professions Accreditation Collaborative Forum



HEALTH  
PROFESSIONS  
ACCREDITATION  
COLLABORATIVE  
FORUM

Australia's accreditation authorities  
for regulated health professionals



**Ahpra**  
& National  
Boards

# Accreditation

## What is it?

### Program Accreditation

Program accreditation is the process of assessing whether an educational program of study and the education provider that provides the program produce graduates who have the knowledge, skills and professional attributes to safely and competently practise the profession in Australia.

### Practitioner Assessment

Practitioner assessment is the process of assessing whether an overseas-qualified practitioner has demonstrated the knowledge, clinical skills, and professional attributes to safely and competently practice the profession in Australia.

There are five accreditation committees and ten accreditation councils exercising accreditation functions in the National Scheme (see: [www.ahpra.gov.au/Accreditation/Accreditation-Authorities](http://www.ahpra.gov.au/Accreditation/Accreditation-Authorities))

### Accreditation Committees:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Accreditation Committee
- Chinese Medicine Accreditation Committee
- Medical Radiation Practice Accreditation Committee
- Paramedicine Accreditation Committee
- Podiatry Accreditation Committee

### Accreditation Councils:

- Council on Chiropractic Education Australasia
- Australian Dental Council
- Australian Medical Council
- Australian Nursing & Midwifery Accreditation Council
- Occupational Therapy Council of Australia
- Optometry Council of Australia and New Zealand
- Australian Osteopathic Accreditation Council
- Australian Pharmacy Council
- Australian Physiotherapy Council
- Australian Psychology Accreditation Council

## Accreditation in the National Scheme: Who does what?

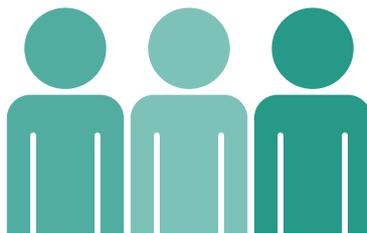


## Other bodies involved in accreditation



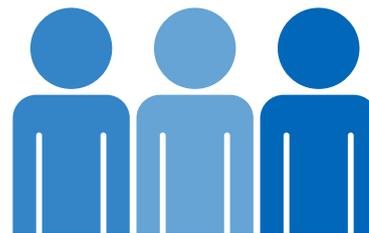
### Accreditation Liaison Group

The National Boards, Accreditation Authorities and Ahpra have established an Accreditation Liaison Group (ALG) to facilitate effective delivery of accreditation within the National Scheme. The ALG is a committee of the Forum of NRAS Chairs and, as an advisory group, it provides an important mechanism to consider shared issues in accreditation across National Boards, Accreditation Authorities and Ahpra. The ALG has developed a number of [reference documents](#) to promote consistency and good practice in accreditation while taking into account the variation across entities. These documents have been approved by National Boards and Accreditation Authorities.



### The Health Professions' Accreditation Collaborative Forum

The [Health Professions' Accreditation Collaborative Forum](#) (HPACF), formerly known as the Health Professions' Accreditation Councils' Forum, is the coalition of the entities appointed by the National Boards as Accreditation Authorities for the professions regulated under the National Law. The HPACF has been meeting regularly since 2007, before the commencement of the Scheme, to consider matters of common interest, principally matters concerning the accreditation of education and training programs in the regulated health professions and advocating for good accreditation practices. The HPACF engages with Ahpra and the National Boards. The HPACF publishes a [communiqué](#) after each meeting.

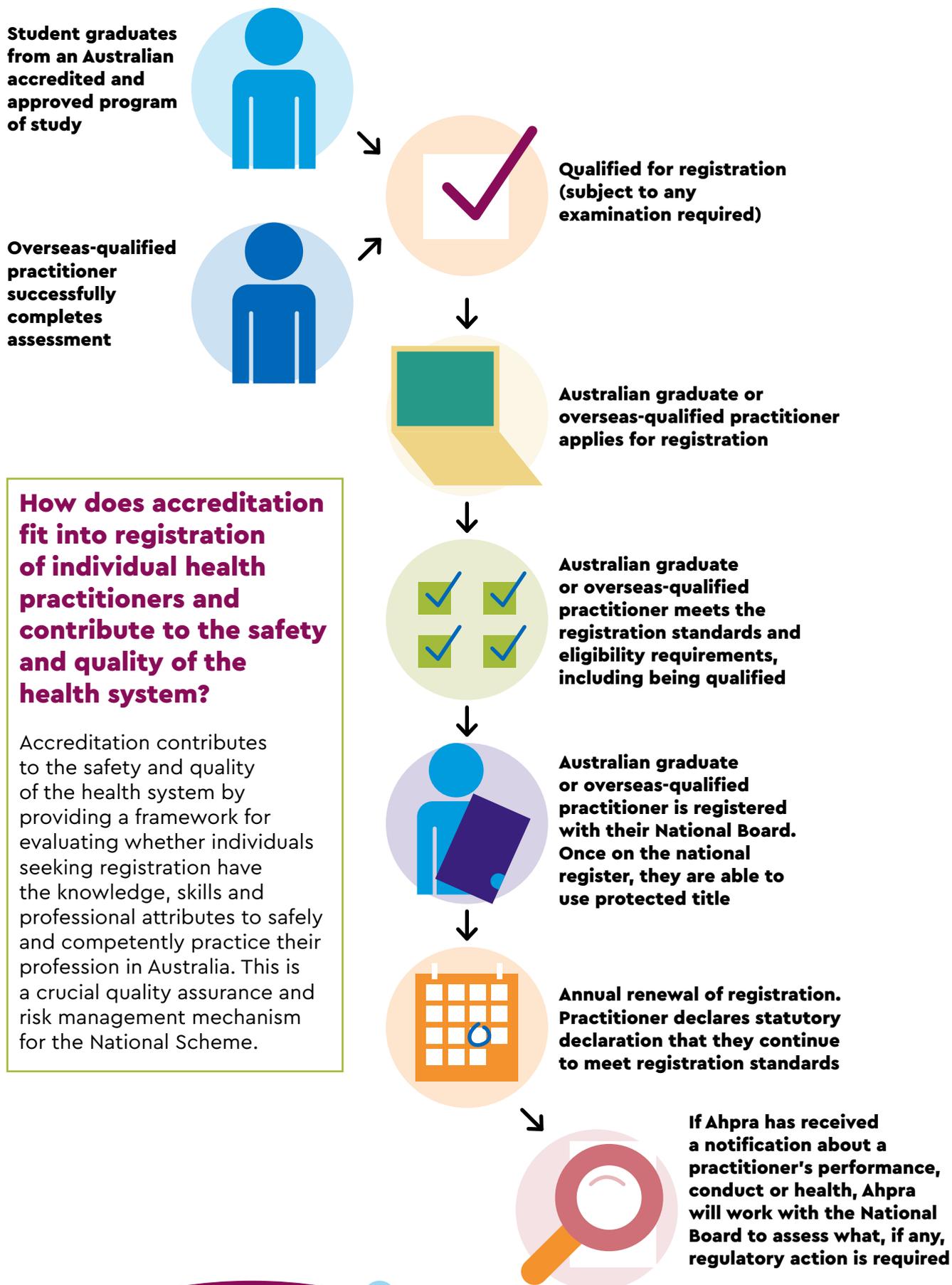


### Ahpra's Accreditation Advisory Committee

Ahpra's [Accreditation Advisory Committee](#) (AAC) is a standing committee of the Agency Management Committee. The AAC has been meeting regularly since April 2018 to provide oversight and leadership on accreditation governance, accountability and transparency issues and a scheme-wide perspective on Ahpra's management of contracts for the performance of the accreditation functions. The AAC publishes a [communiqué](#) after each meeting.

# Accreditation functions and registration of health practitioners

## Lifecycle of a health practitioner



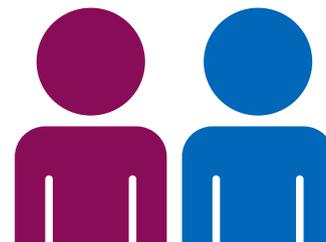
### How does accreditation fit into registration of individual health practitioners and contribute to the safety and quality of the health system?

Accreditation contributes to the safety and quality of the health system by providing a framework for evaluating whether individuals seeking registration have the knowledge, skills and professional attributes to safely and competently practice their profession in Australia. This is a crucial quality assurance and risk management mechanism for the National Scheme.

# Accreditation activities 2019/20

## Program accreditation activities

**47 new programs accredited**  
**88 programs re-accredited**  
**624 programs monitored**  
**94 site visits undertaken**



## Practitioner assessment activities

**8,690 overseas-qualified health practitioners assessed**



## Overall program accreditation at 30 June 2020

**850+ accredited programs**  
**130+ providers offering accredited programs**



## Accreditation standards

**1 new standards published in 2019/20**  
**8 standards currently under review**



## Links to new standards

[Accreditation Standards for Paramedicine \(2020\)](#)

Accreditation standards are used to assess whether a program of study, and the education provider that provides the program of study, provides graduates of the program with the knowledge, skills and professional attributes to practise the profession

# What's new in accreditation

## Accreditation Systems Review

In February 2020, the then COAG Health Council announced its response to the final report of *Australia's health workforce: strengthening the education foundation, independent review of accreditation systems within the National Scheme*, informed by further consultation undertaken by the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council (AHMAC). Ministers accepted (either in full, in part or in principle) many of the recommendations in the final review report but did not accept the governance model recommendations. Ministers decided to direct Ahpra to establish an independent accreditation committee with broad stakeholder membership to provide advice to National Scheme bodies on relevant accreditation reforms, working within the existing governance of the National Scheme. For more information see [www.coaghealthcouncil.gov.au/Projects/Accreditation-Systems-Review](http://www.coaghealthcouncil.gov.au/Projects/Accreditation-Systems-Review).



## New agreements and terms of reference

The new agreements and terms of reference took effect on 1 July 2019. Ten external accreditation councils signed new agreements until 30 June 2024.

Early in 2019/20, National Boards established new terms of reference for accreditation committees, which mirror the key aspects of the agreements. See [www.ahpra.gov.au/accreditation/accreditation-authorities/accreditation-agreements](http://www.ahpra.gov.au/accreditation/accreditation-authorities/accreditation-agreements).

## COVID-19 and accreditation

Since March 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged the health and education sectors and required Accreditation Authorities, National Boards, and Ahpra to work collaboratively to respond to the challenge of disruptions to clinical education and significant changes to program delivery while holding public safety at the core of all activities.

Accreditation Authorities, National Boards, and Ahpra have supported education providers to explore alternative approaches to learning and assessment of clinical skills where clinical placements had been cancelled or modified. Accreditation Authorities have recognised the changes to education delivery including innovative approaches to online delivery.

The Health Professions Accreditation Collaborative Forum (HPACF) released a consensus statement in March on the collective position with respect to accredited programs and the impact of COVID-19. Accreditation Authorities also provided individual profession specific advice to education providers which was published by the HPACF as an analysis of the authorities' initial response to COVID-19.

National Boards, Accreditation Authorities and Ahpra worked with the Australian Government through the Health and Education portfolios to finalise and approve the national principles for clinical education during the COVID-19 pandemic. The statement of principles acknowledges and complements statements developed for specific professions by professional bodies and Accreditation Authorities.

Accreditation Authorities continue to build upon their existing good processes and relationships to implement COVID-19 specific monitoring that is critical in assuring graduate competence. Accreditation Authorities and their National Boards work together and maintain close communication to ensure the risks of students not achieving the required clinical capabilities are monitored and managed accordingly.

## National principles for clinical education during COVID-19

Students build the capabilities they need to practise safely and competently as a registered health practitioner through clinical education experiences, including student placements in a range of health services and settings. Australia's future health workforce is dependent on current students maintaining access to a range of opportunities to build these capabilities. Their timely graduation and registration is critical to workforce sustainability.

To comply with social distancing requirements, in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic many universities and education providers moved quickly to close campuses and move to online course delivery. Simultaneously, some health services cancelled clinical placements while public health restrictions prevented others taking place.

The Australian Government, through the health and education portfolios, Ahpra, National Boards and Accreditation Authorities, issued national principles for clinical education to encourage and support student placements to continue where this is safe and possible. For more information see [www.ahpra.gov.au/news/covid-19/national-principles-for-clinical-education-during-covid-19](http://www.ahpra.gov.au/news/covid-19/national-principles-for-clinical-education-during-covid-19).

## Overseas qualified practitioner assessments



**8 Accreditation Authorities assess overseas-qualified practitioners seeking registration in a registered health profession in Australia**

**Council on Chiropractic Education Australasia**

**Australian Dental Council**

**Australian Medical Council**

**Occupational Therapy Council of Australia Ltd**

**Optometry Council of Australia and New Zealand**

**Australian Osteopathic Accreditation Council**

**Australian Pharmacy Council**

**Australian Physiotherapy Council**

Overseas-qualified practitioners seeking registration in other registered health professions in Australia are assessed when they apply for registration

# Further details about work in accreditation

Each Accreditation Authority, the HPACF and Ahpra publishes information on their websites:

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Accreditation Committee

<https://www.atsihealthpracticeboard.gov.au/Accreditation/ATSIHP-Accreditation-Committee.aspx>

## Chinese Medicine Accreditation Committee

<https://www.chinesemedicineboard.gov.au/Accreditation/Committee.aspx>

## Council on Chiropractic Education Australasia

<http://www.ccea.com.au/>

## Australian Dental Council

<http://www.adc.org.au/>

## Australian Medical Council

<http://www.amc.org.au/>

## Medical Radiation Practice Accreditation Committee

<https://www.medicalradiationpracticeboard.gov.au/Accreditation/Accreditation-Committee.aspx>

## Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council

<http://www.anmac.org.au/>

## Occupational Therapy Council of Australia Ltd

<http://otcouncil.com.au/>

## Optometry Council of Australia and New Zealand

<http://www.ocanz.org/>

## Australian Osteopathic Accreditation Council

<http://www.anzoc.org.au/>

## Paramedicine Accreditation Committee

<https://www.paramedicineboard.gov.au/Accreditation/Accreditation-Committee.aspx>

## Australian Pharmacy Council

<http://pharmacycouncil.org.au/>

## Australian Physiotherapy Council

<http://www.physiocouncil.com.au/>

## Podiatry Accreditation Committee

<https://www.podiatryboard.gov.au/Accreditation/Accreditation-Committee.aspx>

## Australian Psychology Accreditation Council

<http://www.psychologycouncil.org.au/>

## Health Professions Accreditation Collaborative Forum

<http://www.hpacf.org.au/>

## Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency

<https://www.ahpra.gov.au/Accreditation.aspx>