

Assessor Handbook

UNDER REVIEW

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Responsible Officer: Executive Director, Accreditation Services

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Purpose of the assessor handbook

The Assessor Handbook is primarily designed for assessment team members. It may serve as a useful resource for education providers, Associate Directors for Professional Programs (ADPP), and others interested and involved in the assessment and accreditation of nursing and midwifery programs in Australia.

The Assessor Handbook is informed by and forms part of, a broader policy framework developed for the accreditation of nursing and midwifery programs leading to registration or endorsement in Australia.

The content of the Assessor Handbook is limited to information for assessment team members and should be read in conjunction with the relevant accreditation standards and the ANMAC *National Guidelines for the Accreditation of Nursing and Midwifery Programs Leading to Registration and Endorsement in Australia* (the National Guidelines).

Part one – Background and governance

This part of the handbook contains an:

- outline of the principles of the National Accreditation Scheme; and
- overview of the assessment teams within ANMAC's governance and organisational structure.

Principles Guiding the National Accreditation Scheme

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council (ANMAC) is the independent accrediting authority for nursing and midwifery under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme. It develops standards for accreditation and accredits nursing and midwifery programs of study leading to registration and endorsement.

The role and functions of ANMAC are intended to give the community confidence that nurses and midwives who successfully complete programs accredited by ANMAC are able to practise in a safe and competent manner to achieve quality outcomes for people in their care. A primary function of ANMAC as the accreditation authority for the nursing and midwifery professions is to ensure that programs leading to registration and endorsement of nurses and midwives in Australia, meet the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) approved standards for accreditation.

Assessors must have sound working knowledge and understanding of the principles that guide the National Accreditation Scheme. These principles are outlined in the National Accreditation Guidelines.¹

An Overview of ANMAC's Governance Structures and Operations for Assessors

This section briefly describes ANMAC's governance structures and operations from the perspective of the assessment teams. Please refer to the National Accreditation Guidelines for further information.

ANMAC's Register of Accreditation Assessors

ANMAC maintains a directory of individuals approved by ANMAC as assessors - **the ANMAC Register of Accreditation Assessors**.

ANMAC selects and approves individuals as assessors on the basis of current: knowledge, skills, expertise and experience, and the standing they have within the nursing and midwifery professions.

Nurses and midwives, with current registration in Australia, can apply to ANMAC for consideration as an assessor by submitting an Expression of Interest to ANMAC together with a current resume.

¹ ANMAC National Guidelines for the Accreditation of Nursing and Midwifery Courses Leading to Registration and Endorsement in Australia Version #15, pp 2-4[DM1].

ANMAC reviews and updates the Register of Assessors regularly and all approved assessors must provide the ANMAC Accreditation Support Coordinator with updated contact and professionally relevant information when any information changes.

Composition of an Assessment Team

ANMAC establishes an assessment team for each program it is required to assess for accreditation under the National Law, including the assessment of a major modification to a currently accredited program.

An assessment team established by ANMAC for a full assessment of a single education program will generally comprise at least four members, being:

- two assessors who have relevant academic/educational expertise, including one who has particular expertise in the development and review of education curricula – these assessors will, where possible work in a different state or territory to that where the education provider is based
- one or more assessors who have clinical expertise or clinical management experience relevant to the program being assessed – where possible, these assessors will work in the state or territory where the education provider is based
- an Associate Director for Professional Programs who has been allocated to lead the respective assessment team.

The composition of an assessment team established by ANMAC to assess a major modification to a currently accredited program will be influenced by the complexity and type of assessment required. The team will be determined by the Associate Director for Professional Programs in collaboration with the Executive Director, Accreditation and Assessment Services. An example of an assessment team for a major modification is:

- an Associate Director for Professional Programs who is allocated to the respective assessment team
- one assessor who has appropriate knowledge, skills and experience and/or relevant expertise to assess the major modification to the currently accredited program.

Allocating an Associate Director for Professional Programs

The Executive Director, Accreditation and Assessment will allocate an Associate Director for Professional Programs for each submission.

Establishing an Assessment Team

Step 1: Selection

To be eligible for selection for an assessment team, an assessor must:

- hold current registration without conditions relating to conduct as a nurse and/or midwife with the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA)
- have the requisite knowledge, skills and experience for the type of program being assessed
- be available to participate in all stages of the assessment of the program, including any site visit(s) and drafting and/or review of reports by the assessment team

- have no personal or professional interest or duty that may, or may not be perceived to, interfere or conflict with the individual's ability to fulfil their responsibilities as a member of the assessment team.

The selection of eligible assessors from the ANMAC Register of Assessors is undertaken by the Accreditation Support Coordinator in consultation with the allocated Associate Director for Professional Programs and if required the Executive Director, Accreditation.

Step 2: Notice to education provider

ANMAC will notify the education provider of the names and relevant professional background of the individual assessors selected by ANMAC for appointment to the relevant assessment team.

Step 3: Education provider must notify ANMAC

The education provider must, within five (5) working days after receiving the names and relevant professional background of the individual assessors either:

- notify ANMAC that the education provider has not identified any individual assessor has a real or perceived conflict of interest and agree to the appointment of the individual assessors to the assessment team; or
- notify ANMAC that the education provider has identified one or more of the individual assessors has a real or perceived conflict of interest and object to the appointment of the individual assessors to the assessment team.

Step 4: If necessary, ANMAC may select alternative assessor(s) or request more information

If ANMAC receives notice that the education provider has:

- identified one or more assessors have a real or perceived conflict of interest; and
- objected to the appointment of the assessor(s) to the assessment team,

ANMAC, in consultation with the Executive Director, Accreditation and Assessment and the allocated Associate Director for Professional Programs, will consider the reasons for the education provider's objection, and:

- if ANMAC considers the objection to be reasonable in the circumstances, it will select alternative assessors for the assessment team; ANMAC will provide the names and relevant professional background of the alternative assessor(s) to the education provider
- if ANMAC considers the objection to be unreasonable in the circumstances, ANMAC will:
 - notify the education provider that it considers the objection is unreasonable in the circumstances
 - give the education provider up to 7 days from the date of the notice to submit further information to support the objection
- if, on the basis of any further information submitted by the education provider to support the objection, ANMAC considers the objection to be reasonable in the circumstances, and selects alternative assessor(s) for the assessment team, ANMAC will re-notify the education provider of the newly selected individual assessor(s).

Step 5: ANMAC may appoint the assessment team

If ANMAC:

- receives notice that the education provider has:
 - not identified any individual assessor has a real or perceived conflict of interest
 - agreed to the appointment of the individual assessors to the assessment team
- does not receive further information from the education provider to support the objection; or
- continues to consider the objection to be unreasonable,

ANMAC may confirm the appointment of the assessors as members of the assessment team.

Chair of the Assessment Team

The chair of the assessment team is generally an assessor who is a senior academic with the requisite knowledge, skills and experience for the type of program being assessed.

Providing Administrative Support for the Assessment Team

ANMAC administrative staff will provide administrative support for assessment teams as required.

Part two – Assessor responsibilities

Overview of General Responsibilities of Assessors

General responsibilities of the ANMAC Associate Director for Professional Programs

The Associate Director for Professional Programs allocated to each team is responsible for:

- leading the assessment team throughout the accreditation process
- development of accurate documentation throughout the process
- providing a key coordination role for the accreditation process and facilitating the efficient and ethical operation of the assessment team
- liaising with stakeholders during assessment and monitoring
- coordinating the accreditation site visits
- providing information and assistance to education providers in relation to accreditation assessment or review
- planning and coordinating the conduct of accreditation assessments and monitoring of nursing and midwifery education providers and their programs of study as delegated.

General responsibilities of the Chair of the Assessment Team

The chair of an assessment team is responsible for:

- in collaboration with the Associate Director for Professional Programs, leading the team during the assessment process - in collaboration with the Associate Director for Professional Programs guiding the discussions of the assessment team on assessment outcomes based on the accreditation standards
- chairing the site visit meeting
- reviewing all documentation to be sent to the education provider and relevant Accreditation Committee for accuracy
- meeting with the relevant ANMAC Accreditation Committee when the program is under consideration
- where possible, reviewing any special reports required by ANMAC (these may be the result of conditional accreditation being granted or where opportunities for improvement or other matters are identified requiring additional monitoring to that afforded by the annual declaration).

General responsibilities of each assessor on the assessment team

Each assessor on the assessment team is responsible for:

- reviewing accreditation submission documents to assess whether the education provider and program meet the approved accreditation standards

- using the Standards Assessment Tool (in electronic format) to provide comments about the assessment of the submission to the allocated Associate Director for Professional Programs
- attending all meetings of the assessment team – these may be face-to-face or by teleconference or video conference
- visiting the site(s) of the education provider with the assessment team to meet key personnel, clarify aspects of the submission and to view the facilities relevant to the program
- contributing to the drafting of the Collated Assessment Team Review and verifying the final assessment team report, prior to referral to the relevant ANMAC Accreditation Committee.
- Ensuring all timelines are met

Overview of Steps in Assessment

Step 1: Evaluating the submission

Prior to evaluating the submission against the ANMAC accreditation standards, each member of the assessment team should familiarise themselves with the specific requirements by reading the:

- National Guidelines
- Relevant accreditation standards
- submission from the education provider

After familiarising themselves with the relevant accreditation standards and documents submitted by the education provider, each member of the assessment team will:

- evaluate the education provider and program against the criteria for each standard by analysing the information provided in the submission
- identify in the Collated Assessment Team Review document whether, on the basis of the information provided:
 - the criteria have been met
 - the criteria have not been met
 - the criteria may have been met but the assessment team requires further clarification and /or documents

After completing the evaluation and analysis of the submission, each member of the assessment team will forward the completed Collated Assessment Team Review document (in electronic format) to the allocated Associate Director for Professional Programs.

Step 2: Preparation for the site visit

Prior to the site visit, each member of the assessment team will:

- read the site visit agenda provided by the Associate Director for Professional Programs
- review the Collated Assessment Team Review document.

Step 3: Conducting the site visit

The allocated Associate Director for Professional Programs and Accreditation Support Coordinator will contact each member of the respective assessment team regarding dates of availability to undertake the site visit to the education provider's establishment(s).

ANMAC will arrange travel and accommodation for assessment team members.

Site visit responsibilities of the ANMAC Associate Director for Professional Programs

Prior to the site visit, the Associate Director for Professional Programs must:

- inform the education provider of the purpose of the meeting, the site visit and the assessment team requirements for site visit(s) outlined in the site visit agenda
- ensure the assessment team have all required documents for the meeting and site visit;
- collate the assessment team responses and provide collated responses to the assessment team and the education provider
- organise the date and time of further assessment team teleconference (if required) with team agreement.

During the site visit, the Associate Director for Professional Programs must:

- discuss the assessment teams' findings with the education provider and request the additional information identified by the assessment team.

After the site visit, the Associate Director for Professional Programs must:

- following submissions by the education provider of additional clarification and responses to assessment team queries, prepare a draft assessment team report
- provide a draft assessment team report to members of the assessment team for review
- provide a draft assessment team report to the education provider
- give the education provider an opportunity to clarify and discuss any outstanding issues raised in the draft assessment team report, and to provide supporting evidence in response to the draft assessment team report
- on receipt of additional supporting evidence from the education provider complete a further draft assessment team report and provide a further draft assessment team report to the assessment team
- submit the final report to the relevant Accreditation Committee.

Site visit responsibilities of the chair of the assessment team

Prior to the site visit, the chair will:

- chair an assessment team meeting by teleconference.

During the site visit, the chair in collaboration with the Associate Director for Professional Programs will:

- assign duties related to the meetings and other aspects of the site visit to individual members of the assessment team as required
- introduce members of the assessment team to education provider representatives
- lead the site visit meetings with the education provider and review of campus facilities.

Site visit responsibilities of the assessment team members

Prior to the site visit, the assessment team members will:

- send the completed Collated Assessment Team Review document (in electronic format) to the allocated Associate Director for Professional Programs for collation
- attend a teleconference to discuss the content of the Collated Assessment Team Review document and determine the outstanding evidence required
- inform the Associate Director for Professional Programs if they are unable to attend the site visit due to unforeseen circumstances.

During the site visit, the assessment team members must:

- hold a pre-visit meeting to discuss the draft report and review the site visit meeting agenda, format and protocols
- attend meeting(s) with the education provider and representatives at the predetermined site
- meet together to finalise findings of the site visit to present to the education provider at a final meeting; attend a final meeting with the education provider and representatives to report findings
- at the final meeting, provide the opportunity for the education provider to respond to findings of the assessment team and to any issues or points of clarification.

After the site visit, the assessment team members will:

- provide an electronic copy of proposed amendments to the draft assessment team report to the Associate Director for Professional Programs
- indicate endorsement for the final assessment team report to the Associate Director for Professional Programs.

Part three – General principles of the accreditation process

Assessment against the ANMAC Accreditation Standards

It is important that all members of an assessment team focus their review on the analysis and evaluation of the evidence submitted by the education provider against the specific ANMAC accreditation standards. It is crucial to the integrity of the process that only information relevant to the accreditation standards is requested and considered by members of the assessment team.

Privacy

ANMAC is committed to responsible privacy practices and complying with its obligations under the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) (including the National Privacy Principles) and all other relevant legislation governing privacy and handling of personal information.

Personal information is, generally, information or an opinion relating to an individual which can be used to identify that individual. This includes a person's name, address, telephone number, email, date of birth, image, employment details, and other information of a personal nature.

ANMAC may collect personal information in submissions from the education provider, and during the site visit(s). Such personal information will only be used for the purpose for which it was obtained by ANMAC.

Accreditation assessors must ensure any personal information is only used for the purpose for which it was obtained by ANMAC and is kept secure and confidential. The ANMAC Privacy Policy is annexed at <http://www.anmac.org.au/privacy-statement>.

Confidentiality & Confidential Information

During any accreditation process, members of the relevant assessment team will have access to a significant amount of information about the respective education provider and program. Information will be accessed in submissions from the education provider to ANMAC, and during the site visit(s). This information may include information of a sensitive nature such as staff details, financial information, planned changes and innovation by the education provider, and commercial-in-confidence material.

ANMAC requires all individuals involved in its accreditation processes to maintain the confidentiality of any information accessed during any assessment. All information obtained during any assessment is confidential and must not be released in any way, even after an individual's active involvement with ANMAC ceases, to third parties without prior approval from the ANMAC Board, or as required by law.

Assessors must sign a Deed of Confidentiality as a condition of appointment. This is a legally binding agreement by the individual to keep confidential information that is accessed during any accreditation assessment [ANMAC accreditation assessors' conflict of interest confidentiality statement form](#).

It is particularly important that assessors maintain confidentiality of discussions with staff, students, and others by ensuring the details of such discussions are de-identified, unless the person who provides the information agrees to be identified.

Secure Destruction of Accreditation Materials

It is particularly important that assessors arrange for the secure destruction of any materials once an assessment has been completed. The ANMAC office can make these arrangements for any assessor who does not have access to secure destruction facilities. The ANMAC office will store a complete set of materials and reports securely so there is no reason for any member of an assessment team to retain a copy in any format.

Intellectual Property

Intellectual property is a juridical concept used to describe rights arising from intellectual effort and innovation that are recognised and governed by law. Under intellectual property law, owners are granted certain exclusive rights to a variety of intangible assets, such as literary and artistic works, inventions and designs. Common types of intellectual property rights include copyright, trademarks, patents, industrial design rights and in some jurisdictions trade secrets. ANMAC Assessors are required to comply with the legislated requirements of intellectual property.

Identifying and Managing Conflict of Interest

ANMAC requires all individuals involved in its accreditation processes to declare any personal or professional interest or duty that may, or may be perceived to, interfere or conflict with the individual's ability to fulfil their responsibilities to ANMAC's accreditation assessments. A perceived or apparent conflict of interest or duty exists when a person's interests could improperly influence the performance of his/her duties, even though in reality this may not be the case.

The existence of a perceived or apparent conflict of interest or duty does not reflect negatively on the person who has the conflict but ANMAC must manage any conflicts of interest or duty.

ANMAC can only manage conflicts of interest effectively if individuals declare all such interests and duties prior to the start of any assessment.

Payment of Assessors

The role of an assessor is voluntary; however, ANMAC will provide remuneration for participation in an assessment team. The payment to assessors is intended to offset some of the personal costs of attending the site visit and participating in teleconferences related to the accreditation process. The fee is not payable in respect to travelling time. Assessors are also reimbursed for costs associated with the site visit, including meals, incidentals, motor vehicle allowance, taxi fares, parking etc. The Expense Claim Form is provided to the assessment team before the site visit takes place. The Assessor Payment Claim Form is provided to the assessment team once the program has gone to the relevant accreditation committee.

ANMAC is aware that some assessors will receive payment from their employer for any time spent undertaking their responsibilities as an ANMAC assessor. ANMAC considers it unethical for an individual to be paid personally by both ANMAC and their employer. An individual in this situation can direct ANMAC to make the payment to their employer by arranging for the employer to submit an appropriate tax invoice for the amount.

Work Health and Safety for Assessors

ANMAC has a statutory duty to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of assessors while they are undertaking their responsibilities as an ANMAC assessor. This includes, as far as reasonably practicable, the provision and maintenance of a work environment without risks to health and safety. Assessors also have a statutory duty to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and to comply with instructions, policies and procedures of ANMAC relating to health and safety in the workplace.

ANMAC assessors undertake their responsibilities in work environments that are outside the direct control of ANMAC. Therefore, ANMAC requires all assessors, while they are undertaking their responsibilities as an ANMAC assessor, to:

- report immediately to the allocated Associate Director for Professional Programs, any risk to health and safety in the workplace, including during site visit(s)
- take reasonable care for their own health and safety
- take reasonable care that they do not adversely affect the health and safety of other people
- follow any instructions, policies and procedures of ANMAC relating to health and safety in the workplace.

ANMAC Code of Conduct

- Board, Committee members, Assessors and ANMAC staff are expected to behave ethically and with honesty and integrity at all times
- act with care and diligence, and in accordance with ANMAC's purpose, objectives, values and principles
- treat fellow members, staff and stakeholders of ANMAC with respect and courtesy, and without harassment
- comply with all applicable Australian laws, in particular the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009 (the National Law)
- maintain appropriate confidentiality about all matters raised in the course of ANMAC meetings/business and not seek to take unfair advantage of knowledge so gained
- disclose, and take reasonable steps to avoid, any conflict of interest (real or apparent) in connection with ANMAC business
- use ANMAC resources in a proper manner
- recognise and respect the intellectual property of ANMAC, its members, education providers, contractors and other stakeholders of ANMAC
- behave in a way that upholds and promotes the good reputation of ANMAC.

Glossary

Term or abbreviation	Explanation
National Guidelines	The <i>National Guidelines for the Accreditation of Nursing and Midwifery Courses Leading to Registration, Enrolment, Endorsement and Authorisation in Australia</i>
ANMAC	Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council
Annual declaration	A Declaration made by the education provider each year for the life of the accredited program. ANMAC uses this Annual Declaration to monitor whether education programs and the education providers offering them are continuing to meet approved Accreditation Standards
Education provider	A university or higher education provider, or a registered training organisation, responsible for a program, the graduates of which are eligible to apply for registration or endorsement as a nurse or midwife
Modification of a program	A change to an accredited program
National Law	The National Law is contained in the Schedule to the <i>Health Practitioners Regulation National Law Act 2009</i> (Qld)
NMBA	Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia
NRAS	National Registration and Accreditation Scheme
Procedural fairness	Is underpinned by the following principles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the decision-maker must be impartial and unbiased regarding the matter to be decided, and must have no pecuniary or propriety interest in the outcome those who may be adversely affected by a decision must be given prior notice of the case and a fair opportunity to answer the case and present their own case the decision must be based on sound argument and evidence those affected must be given the reasons for the decision
Program	A full program of study and experiences that are required to be undertaken before a qualification recognised under the Australian Qualifications Framework, such as a Bachelor of Nursing, can be awarded.

Random audit	An audit by ANMAC performed randomly on an education provider of an accredited nursing or midwifery program
Submission	Documents provided to ANMAC for either accreditation of a new program or modifications of a currently accredited program

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