

Australian Society of Archivists (ASA)

GUIDELINES FOR ASA PARTICIPATION IN UNIVERSITY COURSES

The purpose of these guidelines is to set out the ASA's role in the accreditation, review and development of university courses in archives, records and recordkeeping, for the benefit of university educators, ASA representatives and ASA members.

1. Accreditation ¹

This is a formal process through which the Society assesses university courses to determine whether graduates will be eligible for professional membership with one, as opposed to two year's relevant work experience, as provided by ASA Rules 4.2 (ii) and (iii). Criteria for accreditation are endorsed by Council. The process of accreditation is managed by a Course Accreditation Committee.

The Committee would only commence the accreditation process if there were a reasonable possibility that the course or courses to be assessed would in fact be accredited.² This means that single units in archives, records or recordkeeping or courses which have a different primary focus, even though some work in archives, records or recordkeeping is included, would not be assessed. Courses presented for accreditation need to be of a quality and depth such that graduates with one year's work experience could be considered to have the conceptual, theoretical and practical skills and knowledge to be professional members.

Universities are given full details of the process before they agree to participate. The formality of this process ensures that both the Society and the university are clear about the process and the outcome, which is:

- that graduates of the accredited courses may be admitted to the Society as professional members if they also have one year of satisfactory professional experience, and
- that universities may advertise that the accredited courses have been accredited by the Society for this purpose. (See Rule 4.2)

Course accreditation provides an opportunity to express interest in courses and is a form of dialogue between the ASA and educators. It is therefore beneficial in promoting two Objects of the Society in Rule 3:

- (iii) to establish and maintain standards of archival practice and administration and of professional conduct amongst archivists;
- (iv) to establish standards of archival qualifications and professional training.

¹ The term 'accreditation' is used in the ASA Constitution and has been used here in preference to Course Recognition. In these guidelines 'accreditation' is not intended to imply a license to practice.

² The Society may invite universities to participate in accreditation and also welcomes enquiries from universities wishing to be accredited.

Course accreditation is not further considered in these guidelines, except in relation to the other contributions which the Society may make to the quality of university professional education programs.

2. Course Review

This term covers participation in specially convened panels and representation on ongoing committees designed and established by a university to access the views of practitioners. It covers situations where educators are seeking input from the profession or industry.

The Society, as approved by Council, is prepared to participate in course review of any courses in archives, records and recordkeeping, whether they are of sufficient length and depth to meet accreditation criteria or not. This includes review of individual subjects in a course.

Society representatives should always make it clear to universities that the purpose of ASA participation is to assist with improving the archives and records content of the course.

It should be made clear that accreditation of the course by the Society is a separate issue. The Society will respond formally to invitations to participate in course reviews. The Society, in its response to the university, will make it clear that its participation in a course review does not mean that any changes to the course are automatically accredited.

The Society seeks to contribute to quality education in the field. If the Society is approached to provide a representative to participate in course review processes it will make every effort to nominate a suitable member. Universities are asked to specify any requirements for representation at the time of requesting it. For example, the university may prefer that the member have a minimum number of years of professional experience, resides in a particular location or requires particular expertise.

Professional members who take part in such processes on behalf of the Society must be authorised by Council. The ASA may choose to have a committee for this purpose. The Society will not generally authorise associate members to take part in such processes on its behalf.

The Society recognises that its professional members may be asked to participate in such processes without being asked to speak on behalf of the Society. Indeed, members may be invited to participate in review processes as representatives of their employer, as representatives of another professional society or simply because of their professional reputation.

Where members are invited to participate in review processes they should seek clarification as to the role which the university is expecting them to perform. The Society encourages members to consult Council when they receive such invitations to see whether the Society would wish to be represented in the review.

If Council agrees, it would then be necessary to determine whether the university would accept representation from the Society.

It should also be clear whether the member has any role in representing any other institution at the same time. The Society will ensure that the member is not placed in a position of conflict of interest when representing the Society. The agreement of any other institution which the member wishes to represent at the same time as the Society must be documented and made known to the university.

Members who represent the Society in this way will be expected to report to Council on their participation. This must be made clear to the university before commencing participation in course review processes. There may be circumstances in which parts of discussion in review committees or panels are required by the university not to be disclosed. Members representing the Society will need to conform to university expectations in this but should seek permission to discuss any relevant matters with Council.

In course review, the ASA would always expect that there was some proposal on which they were being invited to comment. This could be an existing course, a framework for a new course or more general issues in relation to existing or new courses.

3. Course Development

This term covers requests by a university for the Society to take part in the academic work of developing a new or revised course. It includes requests to write a syllabus or course description and requests to develop course material including reading lists. It covers situations where the Society is being asked to perform any of the work for which an educator would normally have responsibility.

The Society believes that satisfactory courses can only be developed where the university is committed to employing professional staff, allocates appropriate funding and has in place an appropriate governance structure to sustain the course.

The Society is mindful of conflicts of interest if the Society participates in developing courses which are subsequently put forward for accreditation. If the Society participates in the development of a course, it potentially could be difficult for the Society (even through a different committee) to subsequently refuse it accreditation.

The Society encourages universities to employ the Society's professional members in course development but expects that professional members make clear that they are not representatives of the Society or its views. In this instance, the Society needs to maintain its separate existence from its individual members.

Participation by the Society in course development must be specifically authorised by Council.

Informal arrangements

These guidelines are not intended to prevent members discussing their views of courses or professional education with university educators, but members should be careful not to give the impression that they are representing the Society as a whole unless they have the authorisation of Council to do so.

The Guidelines do not preclude members from sessional teaching or tutoring at a university.

The Society's Education Portfolio Holder, the Convenor and members of the Education and Professional Development Committee and other education related committees such as the Course Accreditation Sub-committee, the Professional Development Sub-committee, any joint committees and delegates formally appointed by Council have a responsibility to represent the Society on education matters. Such members should take care to do so within the framework of the Society's policies.