



AUSTRALIAN
SOCIETY of
ARCHIVISTS Inc.

Course Accreditation – Policy, Principles and Procedures

Policy

Policy context

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the following document:
Guidelines for ASA participation in university courses

Objectives

The Australian Society of Archivists (ASA) is committed to supporting the education of archivists and to implementing that support through its Strategic Plan and its Education Strategic Plan. The objectives, strategies and performance measures for its course accreditation activities are set out under Strategy 12 of the Education Strategic Plan 2005-2008.

The ASA undertakes the accreditation of university courses in archives and records in accordance with its objects:

- 3(iii) to establish and maintain standards of archival practice and administration and of professional conduct among archivists
- 3(iv) to establish standards of archival qualifications and professional training
- 3(x) to promote a professional identity amongst archivists and to advance their professional standing and welfare

The ASA accepts graduates who have completed an accredited university course and who also have one year's experience as an archivist as professional members (Rule 4.2.iii).

The ASA acknowledges that the purposes of course accreditation are to establish, maintain and improve the quality of education of records professionals.

The ASA endeavours to carry out its evaluation of courses in a constructive and accountable manner and with integrity.

Standards

The ASA is guided by the following standards in carrying out its course accreditation objectives:

Standards Australia AS ISO 15489 – 2002 Records Management

ASA and RMAA, Statement of Knowledge for Recordkeeping Professionals (2006)

In particular, the Statement of Knowledge for Recordkeeping Professionals (the Statement) will be used as a guide for assessing course objectives and course content. The ASA considers the three recordkeeping knowledge domains described in the Statement (record characteristics, context and practice), together with the underpinning knowledge domain relating to recordkeeping theories and principles as critical.

The ASA is committed to the teaching and practice of recordkeeping that is informed and illuminated by the continuum model of recordkeeping and incorporates this into the assessment criteria applied in its course accreditation activities.

Review of Policy

The policy and procedures for course accreditation and the new course accreditation program will be reviewed in 2008-2009.

Principles of course accreditation

Scope

In undertaking course accreditation, the ASA is assessing first level professional qualifications, ie bachelor's degree, graduate diploma and coursework masters degree.

The ASA does not accredit research programs at masters or doctoral level. It is assumed that candidates in such programs would meet the minimum conditions for professional membership of the ASA.

The ASA does not accredit graduate certificate programs, as these programs do not have sufficient academic content to enable students to meet the ASA's educational requirements for professional membership. Likewise, the ASA does not accredit single units in archives or recordkeeping.

The ASA does not accredit TAFE or other courses in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector because its rules require that professional members are university graduates.

Criteria

The criteria used to assess courses for accreditation are based on:

- the ASA/RMAA Statement of Knowledge for Recordkeeping Professionals
- the continuum model
- AS ISO 15489 - 2002 Records Management

The ASA uses the document ASA Course Assessment Guidelines (2007) to guide its processes of assessing qualifications and the individual courses which they comprise.

The ASA assessment criteria cover core recordkeeping content only and the ASA does not seek to assess elective courses from other disciplines.

The ASA acknowledges that it is difficult to prescribe a specific profile for a graduate, and that different courses will have different emphases in preparing their students as professionals.

Applicability of criteria

The same criteria will be used to accredit undergraduate, graduate diploma and coursework master's degree programs.

Period of accreditation

Courses will be accredited for a period of five years.

Review

Accreditation may be reviewed earlier if a course is no longer offered or if it undergoes substantial revision. A review may be initiated by the ASA or by a university whose courses have been accredited.

Appeal

A university may appeal against a decision by the ASA not to accredit a course or to discontinue its accreditation of a course.

New courses

The ASA does not accredit courses before they have commenced, ie before they have enrolled and begun teaching students. A course may be accredited before it has any graduates, provided the ASA is satisfied that in conjunction with its one year employment requirement, future graduates would become eligible for professional membership of the ASA.

Focus

The focus of ASA course accreditation is the academic content and context of its courses in archives and recordkeeping, not the facilities of the university or its offerings in other disciplines.

Mode of delivery

The ASA does not specify requirements for the mode of delivery of courses, and notes that some courses may be delivered in multiple modes. The course content and learning outcomes for students are critical, not how the course is delivered.

Internal university processes

The ASA acknowledges and respects the internal processes by which universities develop, approve and review courses. It understands that these processes are implemented for educational and quality purposes. In undertaking course accreditation, the ASA is not attempting to replicate or assess internal university processes.

Staff

The ASA expects that staff delivering courses in archives and recordkeeping would possess appropriate qualifications and that universities would ensure there are sufficient qualified staff available to teach and assess students enrolled in undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

Stakeholders

The ASA acknowledges the interests of various stakeholders in the course accreditation process – universities and their staff, existing professional members of the ASA, graduates seeking employment as professional archivists, other professional associations in related fields, employers of archives and recordkeeping graduates and students currently enrolled in the courses. The ASA will endeavour to keep these stakeholders informed about its course accreditation activities. It will also consult with employers, other professional associations, graduates and students during individual course accreditation exercises, as appropriate.

Course accreditation procedures

Preliminaries

The accreditation process may be initiated by the ASA or by an approach from a university offering courses in archives and recordkeeping. Where the university initiates the process, the ASA should respond promptly to the approach.

The ASA will liaise with the university concerned as to the preferred timing of its course accreditation activities. When agreement on the proposed timing has been reached, the ASA will write formally to the university notifying its intention to assess courses in archives and recordkeeping with a view to accreditation.

ASA personnel

The Education Officer will be the main point of liaison with universities. The Education Officer will participate in course accreditation activities such as gathering and analysing course documentation and annual returns from the universities, but will not be involved in the decision to grant or withhold accreditation from a particular course or program.

ASA Council will appoint a team of three professional members to participate in each accreditation exercise, on the recommendation of the Education Portfolio holder. At least one team member will usually be a member of the Accreditation Sub-Committee of the Education and Professional Development Committee. At least one team member will be a graduate of an Australian university archives or recordkeeping course. It is desirable that one member of the team would have experience as an archives or recordkeeping educator in the higher education sector.

ASA members who have had a close association with the university concerned, for example in course development or review or as members of course advisory committees, will not be eligible to participate in accreditation of courses at that university (see Guidelines for ASA participation in university courses).

Initial research phase

The process begins with an information-gathering phase in which the ASA assembles publicly available information about the university, its structures, the programs and courses offered. If further information such as detailed course descriptions is required, the ASA will request the university to provide access to that information. The ASA should expect to be given access to information

similar to that provided to students enrolled in the subjects/units/courses concerned.

Mapping courses to ASA criteria

The key activity to be undertaken by the ASA accreditation team will be to map the course documentation provided by the university to the Statement of Knowledge for Recordkeeping Professionals and to any extended version of the Statement developed for course accreditation purposes. The team will also assess whether in its opinion each course meets the university's stated objectives.

Consultation with stakeholders

Consulting stakeholders including employers, recent graduates and current students is an expected element of the course accreditation process. The ASA will seek the cooperation of educators in facilitating contact with relevant stakeholders.

Visits to universities

The ASA considers that visits by its course accreditation teams represent important opportunities to foster contact and dialogue between the ASA and the university. In particular, when assessing a course or courses offered by a university whose courses have not previously been accredited, the ASA would usually expect to visit the university. Subsequent accreditation exercises for continuing courses may not require a visit (Note: this provision does not affect other interactions with universities, as set out in the Guidelines for ASA participation in university courses).

Arrangements for accreditation visits will be made well in advance, generally at least one semester before the date of the proposed visit. The timing of any such visits will be at the mutual convenience of the university and the ASA. The ASA may choose to visit at the same time and in cooperation with other professional associations.

Decision

When the course accreditation team has completed the accreditation process, it will recommend to Council, through the Course Accreditation Sub-Committee of the Education and Professional Development Committee, that the ASA should accredit the course or that it should not accredit the course. It will set out the reasons for declining to accredit a course and will inform the university of the reasons.

Appeal process

When a university appeals against the ASA's decision not to accredit a course, the Education and Professional Development Committee will handle the appeal on behalf of the ASA and will have the power to call for evidence and witnesses. The Committee will inform Council of the progress of the appeal and will recommend whether it should be upheld or not. No member of the course accreditation team involved in the accreditation in question will be involved in assessing the appeal.

Annual course return

After accreditation, the ASA will use an annual course return to request information from universities about courses which have been accredited. This would be expected to include course outlines and course structures, including details such as combinations of core units and electives that would fulfil requirements for the particular qualification. It could also include information on enrolment trends, plans for course revision, restructuring of academic units and other factors relevant to the delivery of accredited courses. It is expected that the required information would usually be compiled by the university for other purposes and hence completing the annual course return would not be an onerous task for the educators concerned. The annual course return would serve as a trigger for the ASA to raise issues that may have arisen in relation to the course with the university and that may affect its continued accreditation.

Review process

The ASA may decide to review its decision to accredit a course and may subsequently discontinue accreditation of a course during the five-year accreditation period. This action would only be taken in exceptional circumstances, such as the foreshadowed closure of the course or a major course revision that removed archives, records or recordkeeping content from the course as originally accredited. This would include instances where the ASA was no longer confident that students would have had the opportunity to cover adequately content identified in the Statement of Knowledge for Recordkeeping Professionals. The process for reviewing accreditation would be similar to that for handling appeals by universities, although members of the last accreditation team would not necessarily be excluded from this process.

A university may request the ASA to review the accreditation of its courses, if, for example, there have been substantial alterations to course structures, course content or qualification titles.

Any review of accreditation by the ASA will take into account the potential impact on recent graduates and students currently enrolled in the course being reviewed.

Course accreditation handbook

The Education Officer will compile a course accreditation handbook for the guidance of course accreditation team members. The handbook will include both policy information and procedures. It will provide a step-by-step guide to the course accreditation process and templates for reports. It will also cover recordkeeping requirements for course accreditation teams.

Register

The ASA will maintain a register of accredited courses and will publish the register on its website.

Publicity

When a course is accredited, the ASA will publicise the details of the institution and course through its publications, including its website.