



ALIA, ASA, RIMPA ACCREDITATION AND REACCREDITATION GUIDELINES FOR TERTIARY EDUCATION PROVIDERS AND OTHER REGISTERED TRAINING ORGANISATIONS

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1. The associations

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA), Australian Society of Archivists (ASA) and Records and Information Management Professionals of Australasia (RIMPA) all accredit education courses for students who aim to become information professionals.

ALIA is the professional organisation for the Australian library and information services sector. With 5,000 members across Australia, the association provides the national voice of the profession in the development, promotion and delivery of quality library and information services, through leadership, advocacy and mutual support.

ASA is the professional body for archivists and record keeping professionals in Australia. With over 1000 members across Australia, the ASA advocates on behalf of archivists, and the archival and recordkeeping profession, and seeks to promote the value of archives and records as well as support best practice standards and services.

RIMPA with over 2000 members is the peak body representing and delivering benefits and services for professionals and businesses affiliated to with records and information management. RIMPA's vision is to advance and connect the records and information management profession.

2. Purposes of course accreditation

Course accreditation fosters excellence in the provision of education for the Australian library, archives, records and information services sector and aims to ensure that all students undertaking an accredited course experience a quality program, with an appropriate curriculum delivered effectively and supported by the required resources.

Successful completion of an ALIA, ASA and/or RIMPA accredited course provides graduates with the opportunity to become a professional member of one or more of these associations. Eligibility for professional membership of the associations is regularly used as a benchmark for the qualifications needed for employment in the information sector.

3. Joint foundation skills and knowledge and course accreditation

While each sector – archives, libraries and records – has its own requirements, the associations recognise that there are foundation skills and knowledge which apply to all, under the broader 'information' heading.

The associations agree to a joint approach to course accreditation, with the aim of:

- Ensuring a high standard of practice among information professionals
- Providing guidance about current education requirements in a rapidly changing environment
- Encouraging consistency across professional qualifications
- Streamlining the course accreditation process for educators.

4. Eligible courses

ALIA, ASA and RIMPA undertake accreditation of courses at the invitation of an institution offering the course. To seek accreditation of a course, an institution must be a currently listed higher education provider or Registered Training Organisation (RTO) and the course must be within its scope of registration.

RTOs are those training providers registered by the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) (or, in some cases, a state regulator) to deliver VET services. Higher education providers are registered by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA).

While there are significant areas of overlap between ALIA, ASA and RIMPA, there are also significant differences:

- ALIA focuses on library and information science, ASA on archival, records and information management, and RIMPA on records management, archives and/or information management/science courses.
- ALIA, ASA and RIMPA accredit undergraduate and post-graduate courses. ALIA also accredits VET diploma courses and RIMPA accredits VET certificate and diploma courses.
- ALIA accreditation is provided to Australian institutions, and to Fiji (VET qualification). ASA accreditation is provided to Australian institutions. RIMPA provides accreditation for Australian and New Zealand institutions.

Courses may be offered in a variety of delivery modes but it is expected that all students will have the opportunity to attain the same learning and development outcomes from the course, regardless of whether delivery is online, distance learning, face-to-face or a combination of all of these.

5. Course accreditation procedures

In 2015, to streamline the accreditation process for educators and the associations, ALIA, ASA and RIMPA agreed to align their course accreditation procedures and documentation where possible, while allowing for each association to have its own specific areas of specialisation.

5.1 New courses

A preliminary process is invited for new courses – this does not result in accreditation but enables the institution to state that it has met the initial course accreditation requirements of the associations.

The full accreditation process is not normally undertaken until the course has commenced and students are enrolled.

It is advised that institutions planning to introduce or revise a course should include representation from ALIA, ASA and/or RIMPA in the course development process.

5.2 First course accreditation

The first course accreditation process for an institution is through documentation and a panel site visit – a fee is applicable). Ongoing compliance may require completion of an Annual Course Return (ACR).

5.3 Reaccreditation of a course

Reaccreditation of an accredited course is at the end of the period of accreditation. In the year that reaccreditation is required, the association will advise institutions at the start of the year.

5.4 Interim accreditation for a revised course

Interim accreditation for course changes within an accreditation period requires completion of an 'Application to amend an Accredited Course' request and is by documentation only (see separate documentation).

5.5 Overview of the process for course accreditation and reaccreditation

1. Invitation from an institution to undertake course accreditation. The institutions write to the relevant associations, inviting course accreditation. For a reaccreditation process, the associations will contact institutions due for reaccreditation and invite them to formally request reaccreditation.
2. A course accreditation or reaccreditation panel is established by the association(s). Each member of the panel completes a confidentiality agreement and provides a brief biography for the institution's information.
3. An information guide is provided to the institution which includes the panel biographies, an assessment form to complete, guidelines for accreditation, a timeframe for submission completion and information about the panel visit, if applicable.
4. The institution completes the submission questionnaire and returns it to education@alia.org.au, admin@rimpa.com.au and/or office@archivists.org.au (ATTN Accreditation) by the requested date and provides access to course materials for the panel to review.
5. The institution provides contact information for current and recently graduated students for course feedback interviews. Anonymity is provided for students.
6. The panel reviews the documentation with discussion via teleconferences. Following the initial review of the documentation the panel members may seek further information or clarification about aspects of the course(s).
7. A panel visit is undertaken.

8. The draft reports are provided to the institution for clarification, correction of factual matters as necessary.
9. The reports are submitted to the relevant authority within each association for final sign off.
10. The institution is advised of the outcomes and the association website(s) are updated.

5.6 The panel for course accreditation and reaccreditation

The associations draw on the expertise of their most experienced members to ensure that course accreditation panels are equipped to assess the quality of the training and education provided to students.

Panels meet virtually (online and by teleconference) for all course accreditations. Where practicable physical panel visits are required. In-person visits provide the most robust form of course accreditation and quality assurance for students and are often welcomed by educators for their value in highlighting the course within their institution.

5.6.1 Panel membership

Panel membership is a volunteer position. Panel members are invited to participate based on their expertise, integrity and professional knowledge. Panel members are required to sign a confidentiality agreement and to be familiar with accreditation standards and procedures and with all documentation pertaining to the course accreditation.

In organising a panel, the association(s) will consider such factors as the balance between educators and practitioners, the special fields emphasised in the curriculum and the geographical area in which the institution is located.

Panel members will have no affiliation with the unit delivering the course, and in the case of simultaneous multiple accreditations the panel member will abstain from a particular institution's assessment where there may be a conflict of interest.

The names of panel members will be provided to the course coordinator of the institution concerned. The association(s) will consider carefully any objections made by the institution to the membership of the panel but reserves the right to nominate panel members.

- For joint accreditations involving all three associations, the panel will generally be comprised of a minimum of six experienced professionals. The panel will generally include an educator, practitioner and employer and three other independent experts and maybe supported by Association staff or Board Members.
- For joint accreditations involving two associations, the panel will generally comprise a minimum of four experienced professionals. The panel will generally include an educator, practitioner and employer and at least one other independent expert.
- For accreditation by a sole association, panel membership will be confirmed by that association.

5.6.2 Panel visits

The accreditation or reaccreditation visit is generally conducted over one day. However, it may vary in length depending upon the number of courses being assessed.

For courses delivered on campus, panel visits will, as far as possible, be scheduled in teaching sessions so that panel members can meet with students. Panel members will liaise with the course coordinator to seek input from students who are studying in distance/online modes and are unable to attend meetings scheduled on campus.

The activities of the visiting panel include meetings/consultation with any or all of the following:

- The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and other appropriate senior officers of the institution
- Head of department/school in which the course is taught
- Educators responsible for actual course delivery
- Students
- Support, specialist or administrative personnel
- Members of the course advisory committee
- Graduates
- Employers of the institution's graduates
- Local association members

And

- Evaluation of facilities, equipment and campus resources (eg library, computing and/or media resources).
- If the course is offered online, then assessment of the effectiveness of learning packages supplied to students and supporting library services are examined.
- Observation of the learning environment including learning packages, course materials, and examples of students' assessed work.

5.7 Timeline

The course accreditation and reaccreditation processes will generally take no longer than 12 weeks to complete. Institutions will be given a minimum of six weeks to submit their documentation and supply required information for the panel.

Course accreditation is generally valid for five years, but this may be shortened or lengthened at the application of the institution or an association.

6. Criteria for the assessment of courses

6.1 Overview

Courses will be assessed against the *Statement of foundation skills and knowledge for Australian information professionals working in archives, libraries, records management and related positions* and the individual associations' core statements of knowledge, skills and attributes.

Consideration is given to academic rigour, exposure to current and developing practices, the use of appropriate study tools, the inclusion of the core statement in the curriculum, and the balance of hours between course topics or the modular framework into which the course fits.

Relevance:

- The span and quality of courses offered
- The range and relevance of the course to the information profession and to libraries, archives and records management, as appropriate
- Employer engagement

Teaching practice:

- The qualifications, expertise and experience of staff
- The professional involvement and commitment of the teaching team
- Work placement opportunities for students

Outcomes:

- Feedback from students
- The calibre of students as evidenced by assessments and subsequent employment
- Quality assurance mechanisms

Institution:

- The relationship with the parent institution (if relevant)
- Resourcing

The associations recognise the wide range of skills and expertise needed for the efficient provision of information and the effective management of information services. Courses should provide students with appropriate knowledge and skills to enable them to enter the profession and, over time, upgrade their skills and knowledge through further professional development to provide the opportunity to take on higher level positions. The inclusion of generic management and transferable skills, such as project management, are welcomed.

The associations also recognise that course content must be modified from time to time to reflect the rapidly changing information environment, whether this is changing the emphasis or widening the scope of the subject.

ALIA, ASA and RIMPA expect courses offered to reflect the current concerns of society, such as the creation of an understanding of the essential nature of lifelong learning, the acknowledgement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's rich culture and heritage, and the continuing importance of freedom of access to information and resources and equal opportunities for all Australians.

Note: It is a requirement that the institution will hold institutional membership of the appropriate association(s) from which accreditation is being sought.

6.2 Requirement of courses

Courses must:

- Deliver the foundation skills and knowledge and any additional association's specific core knowledge, skills and attributes at the level appropriate to ensure the highest standard of professional practice.
- Provide supervised assessed practical experience, through work placements and in other appropriate ways, as an integrated component to link theory to the practice of the profession. (A work placement should be designed to offer opportunities for students to engage in authentic learning activities which allow students to gain practical experience).
- Be rigorous, grounded in theoretical frameworks and contribute to the development of students' ability to think critically, analytically and reflectively.
- Reflect employer requirements.

6.3 Assessment

Courses must demonstrate an appropriate standard and level of assessment. Course providers must ensure that:

- Assessment strategies and tasks encourage the accumulation of the knowledge, skills and attributes necessary for professional practice.
- Assessment instruments are valid, reliable, fair and practicable.
- Learners play an active role in their own assessment.
- Appropriate supervision of work-based learning components of the course is provided.
- A variety of approaches to assessment is used.
- Feedback to students is provided on a regular and timely basis.

6.4 Staffing

The institution responsible for delivery of the course must demonstrate that:

- The number and levels of permanent and casual staff qualified to teach and administer the course are adequate and appropriate.
- Teaching staff hold appropriate academic and professional qualifications, have teaching experience and demonstrate a sound contribution and commitment to the information profession (libraries, archives and records management as appropriate).
- Teaching staff engage in professional development both as teachers and as members of the appropriate information profession(s).
- Through the professional involvement and commitment of the teaching team, the course remains relevant to the current and emerging needs for practice in the profession.
- A mechanism for course coordination exists through which at least one full-time qualified member of staff is available to plan the teaching and learning activities of the course and to advise and assist students.
- Permanent teaching staff are encouraged to become personal members of the relevant association(s).

6.5 Student feedback

The institution offering the course will support confidential student (distance and face to face cohort) feedback on the course to the panel.

6.6 Resourcing

The institution offering the course should demonstrate that it has:

- Teaching and learning materials available which will support the course in all its delivery modes, suit different learning styles, reflect standards and quality of pedagogy appropriate to the course level and assist students to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Adequate accommodation, equipment and funding to support the course in whatever delivery mode it is offered.
- Adequate administrative and clerical support.
- Appropriate access to library and information services, ICT resources and other teaching and learning resources which adequately support the course and contribute positively to student learning.
- Access to information agencies of various types for student visits, projects and placements.
- Mechanisms in place which encourage consultation between course providers and industry practitioners and employers.

6.7 Quality assurance mechanisms

Course providers must be able to demonstrate that they have in place appropriate quality assurance mechanisms that support the course. These may include but are not limited to:

- Processes and procedures for course development.
- Consultation mechanisms between course providers and practitioners.
- Established methods for evaluating course content and delivery.

6.8 Infrastructure

The institution offering the course must establish and convene appropriate mechanisms for industry consultation. Institutions are encouraged to liaise with the associations during course design and development processes to ensure the desired standards are achieved.

6.9 Employer Engagement

The educators instructing in the course must liaise on a formal and informal basis regularly with employers and participate in an industry, employer and practitioner course advisory committee that meets at least every six months. Meeting minutes are to be provided to the associations.

6.10 Educators' engagement with the profession

The educators instructing in the course need to demonstrate how they maintain currency with the profession, engage with practitioners and contribute to the profession. A strong program of professional development for teaching staff is strongly encouraged.

6.11 Work placement opportunities for students

The institution needs to:

- Demonstrate how students are provided with work placement/practicum opportunities.
- The length of the work placement and the learning expectations.
- Provide details of the practical skill assessment process during work placement, especially for distance/ online education students.

6.12 Graduate outcomes

The institution needs to:

- Provide information on recent graduate employment outcomes, and
- Demonstrate how they engender a commitment to lifelong learning and ongoing professional development in their graduates.

7. Course accreditation and reaccreditation reports

Each accrediting association independently produces a written report and sends this to the institution being accredited or reaccredited.

- The Panel members of each association prepares their draft report taking into account the documentation provided by the institution, student feedback and discussions with stakeholders during a site visit.
- The draft report is then sent to the institution for clarification or correction of factual matters.
- The final report, with recommendations, is forwarded to the relevant governing bodies (e.g. ALIA Board of Directors, ASA Council, and RIMPA Education Portfolio Committee).
- Further information and clarification about issues raised in the report may be sought.
- Following endorsement by the governing bodies of the associations, the final report is forwarded to the institution. A confidential copy is retained by the associations. Any further distribution of the report is the prerogative of the institution in question.
- Websites are updated with the current course accreditation dates.

8. Annual Course Returns

An Annual Course Return (ACR) must be provided for each accredited course offered by an institution. The associations use the ACR to review and monitor courses through the period of accreditation to ensure that they continue to meet the accreditation criteria and to assist in the production of trend data. The associations may seek further information, clarification or action on matters of concern arising from an ACR.

An ACR is generally initiated in the first half of the year requesting the previous year's information. An ACR is not required for the year a course is undergoing accreditation or reaccreditation.

9. Completion of the course accreditation process

9.1 Accreditation or reaccreditation granted

Accreditation or reaccreditation may be granted in full, or with conditions, for a period of up to five years. If an Annual Course Return (ACR) is required by an association, reaccreditation is subject to the submission by the institution of a satisfactory ACR.

An accreditation period of less than five years may be granted where the associations believe that there are areas of the course which require further consideration and action. These will be covered in the course accreditation report and an action plan proposed and confirmed.

An accreditation period may be extended by agreement.

9.2 Accreditation or reaccreditation withheld

Where a course does not meet the criteria for accreditation or reaccreditation, the association(s) will work with the institution to identify how the criteria may be met, should the institution still seek accreditation.

Accreditation or reaccreditation will be denied where appropriate action to meet the criteria cannot be agreed between the association(s) and the institution. Accreditation may be granted or withheld independently by each association.

10. Appeals

While the associations are obliged to grant accreditation to any course which meets their criteria, they are under a corresponding and equal obligation to deny accreditation to any course which does not meet the criteria.

In order to safeguard the rights of institutions seeking accreditation of their courses, a formal appeals procedure is made available. This procedure may be used by any institution which believes one or more of the following to be the case:

1. That the course accreditation panel appointed by the association(s) did not conform to the policies and procedures approved by the association(s) for the conduct of course accreditation.
2. That the course accreditation panel did not determine fully the facts of the case in accordance with the criteria.
3. That the relevant authority within the association(s) or the course accreditation panel did not apply the criteria correctly to those facts.

Any institution which is refused accreditation of a course may appeal against that decision by submitting a written statement setting forth in detail the grounds on which the appeal is based. The appeal must be submitted to education@alga.org.au, admin@rimpa.com.au or office@archivists.org.au within six weeks of notification of the decision.

Copies of this statement will be distributed in confidence to the relevant authority within the association(s) and the course accreditation panel for the institution concerned. The association(s) will appoint an Appeals Committee to consider the appeal. The Appeals Committee will have no fewer than five members all of whom will be Professional Members of the association(s). No member of the Board(s) of the association(s) may serve on the Appeals Committee, and no member of the Appeals Committee will be, or will have been, affiliated with the institution concerned in any way. One member of the Appeals Committee will serve as convenor.

The names of the members of the Appeals Committee will be notified to the course accreditation panel and to the institution, and either party may, within 14 days, object in writing to the appointment of any one or more of the members of the Appeals Committee. The grounds for objection are to be stated, and the Board(s) of the association(s) will then determine whether the person(s) concerned is to be appointed to membership of the

Appeals Committee or, if not, will appoint a person or persons in their place. No additional objections will then be allowed.

The convenor of the Appeals Committee will organise the committee's first meeting as soon as possible after committee membership is confirmed. Subject to the qualifications set out in the following paragraphs, the Appeals Committee may determine its own procedure and may meet as and where it deems necessary for the efficient conduct of its investigation. In the course of its investigation the Appeals Committee will seek evidence from the Board(s) of the association(s), the course accreditation panel, and the institution, and may seek evidence from any other party. Meetings of the Appeals Committee will be closed to observers and its deliberations will be confidential.

The only issues which may be raised by the appealing institution and which may be considered by the Appeals Committee are the following:

1. Whether the course accreditation panel conformed to the policies and procedures approved by the association(s) for the conduct of course accreditation.
2. Whether the course accreditation panel fully determined the facts of the case in accordance with the criteria; and
3. Whether the Board(s) of the association(s) and the course accreditation panel correctly applied the criteria to those facts.

The Appeals Committee will not consider:

1. Any evidence pertaining to conditions which developed subsequent to the reporting of the course accreditation panel; or
2. Any challenge to the criteria themselves as appropriate standards by which to assess an educational program, or any challenge to the interpretation of the criteria by the Board(s) of the association(s).

The Appeals Committee will report its findings in writing to the Board(s) of the relevant association(s). At their next meeting, the Board(s) will determine the success of the appeal. In advising the institution of the outcome of the appeal, it should provide reasons for the outcome of the appeal.

All costs incurred in hearing and determining the appeal are to be met by the appealing institution. It should also be noted that the fee paid for the course accreditation process will be non-refundable.

11. In conclusion

ALIA, ASA and RIMPA work collaboratively with educators and training providers, employers and practitioners to promote the development and continuous improvement of courses in the information sector. The education of information professionals is a key factor in the development of excellence in services provided by information agencies. ALIA, ASA and RIMPA course accreditation and reaccreditation supports the development of graduates capable of providing these high standards of service. We look forward to working with all stakeholders now and in the future, to ensure that information science education in Australia remains world class.

12. Contacts

Contacts within the three associations are:

- ALIA –Trish Hepworth, Director of Policy and Education, trish.hepworth 02 621582160401 838 244
- ASA – Julia Mant, Chair, Accreditation and Professional Training Committee, jmant@archivists.org.au
- RIMPA – Anne Cornish, GM, Anne.Cornish@rimpa.com.au 0419 366 109

The associations' websites are www.alia.org.au; www.archivists.org.au; www.rimpa.com.au.