

PROCEDURE

Course Accreditation

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OFFICE OF TASMANIAN
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Course Accreditation Procedure

1. Scope (audience and applicability)

This procedure outlines the steps, together with the roles and responsibilities of organisations and individuals submitting senior secondary courses for accreditation consideration and the accreditation process.

Accreditation provides a level of external scrutiny and quality assurance for a course and enhances the value of the results learners receive.

This document should be read in conjunction with the Department of Education's (Tasmania) *Year 11 and 12 Course Development Procedure* and associated supporting material.

2. Purpose

The *Office of Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification Act 2003* [Section 26(2)] gives the Office of Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification (TASC) the power to accredit senior secondary courses. This document outlines the procedures TASC will undertake to ensure courses are of high quality and are suitable for delivery and assessment in Tasmanian senior secondary education.

The responsibility for curriculum and course development rests with the Department of Education, Tasmania (DoE) in collaboration with the non-government sector.

3. Definitions

Accreditation: is a quality assurance process under which courses are evaluated to determine that required standards are met.

The **course document** sets guidelines and rules for the **knowledge and skills** that must or may be included in a course of study and that a learner must demonstrate to receive a particular award.

Senior secondary course means a course of study that is normally undertaken, or intended to be undertaken, during the final two years of secondary education (being the years of secondary education commonly known as Years 11 and 12) and of a level of complexity of Level 1 or higher.

4. Procedure Details

Prior to developing a course for accreditation consideration

Individuals or organisations considering the development of a senior secondary course for accreditation must ensure that it aligns with the Tasmanian Curriculum Framework for Years 11 and 12, and involves appropriate stakeholder consultation.

It is important that prospective course developers **contact Curriculum Services** in the DoE prior to the commencement of the development process. Curriculum Services (CS) oversees the course development process in collaboration with the non-government sector.

Presentation of accreditation submission

The submission will comprise three (3) parts:

- a) a covering letter
- b) details of consultation undertaken
- c) the proposed course document.

(a) Covering Letter:

The covering letter is to include the following:

- the name/s and contact details of the course proponent/s, an overview of the course development process and those involved in the development
- the title of the proposed course
- the period of accreditation sought and the proposed commencement date (usually the 1st January of the following year)
- rationale (a statement about why the course is needed)
- a brief outline of the consultation undertaken (which sectors/experts/organisations/institutions, and when – also see 'details of consultation undertaken' below)
- any implementation issues (for example, external assessment requirements, teacher professional learning required, resource availability, transition arrangements needed).

(b) Details of Consultation Undertaken

Details required:

- When in the development process was consultation undertaken.
- How was the consultation undertaken (e.g. meetings, phone calls, emails).
- Specific details of who was involved in the consultation, their expertise and the organisation they were representing.
- Issues/suggestions/recommendations/comments that were raised through the consultation process and how these have subsequently been addressed in the proposed course.

(c) Proposed Course Document

The proposed course document will be submitted on the TASC *Course Template* available on the TASC website.

(d) Sending the Submission to TASC

The three parts of the Accreditation Submission are to be emailed to TASC:

enquiries@tasc.tas.gov.au

TASC consideration of submissions

Through legislation, TASC has responsibility to ensure that a proposed course is at the correct level of complexity and the qualification/s to be awarded are appropriate to the course. In addition, TASC is responsible for setting standards for the provision and assessment of senior secondary courses, including quality assurance.

As part of the accreditation process, an analysis of the course against the Senior Secondary Course Accreditation Criteria (see *Attachment A*) will be undertaken and submitted to the TASC Executive Officer for consideration.

Accreditation decisions

The power to accredit or not accredit a course rests with the TASC Executive Officer.

A person aggrieved by a decision regarding accreditation or otherwise of a senior secondary course may apply to the Magistrates Court (Administrative Appeals Division) for a review of that decision.

Once accredited

Proposed updates and amendments to courses are the responsibility of the author of an accredited course who will forward any such requests to TASC. Amendments may be considered either minor or major. Minor amendments are ones that do not alter the outcomes of the course for either the providers of the course or the learners undertaking it. Examples might be: updating terminology; clarifying wording/meaning; and editorial changes. Major changes that alter the delivery of the course, its standards and/or the outcomes for learners will be submitted to the TASC Executive Officer for approval.

Renewal of accreditation

The author of an accredited course can submit a request for renewal of accreditation of that course. The request must be submitted no less than six months prior to the expiry of the original accreditation period. An application for renewal must be based on an evaluation of the course and its implementation. An application for renewal will be considered in light of the Senior Secondary Course Accreditation Criteria.

Process for accreditation consideration

- Submission received by TASC.
- Analysis of proposed course against the Senior Secondary Course Accreditation Criteria.
- Briefing (including the analysis report) prepared for the TASC Executive Officer's consideration.
- TASC Executive Officer's decision.
- Course developer notified in writing of accreditation decision (usually within 2 weeks of the decision).
- Course details appear on TASC course register and website.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

The TASC Executive Officer will:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make a decision regarding the accreditation of a course, including the length of time for which the course is to be accredited.
TASC will:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analyse the proposed course against the Senior Secondary Course Accreditation Criteria.• Notify course author of issues/concerns or any additional information that is required to facilitate accreditation.• Brief the TASC Executive Officer to inform decision making regarding accreditation of a course(s) including:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ the analysis report against the Senior Secondary Course Accreditation Criteria○ a recommendation regarding the period of accreditation of the proposed course○ recommendations regarding the proposed course's contribution/s to the TCE○ recommendations regarding the characteristics of the proposed course (level of complexity, size value and robustness (see <i>Attachments B – C</i>).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a publically available <i>Register for the Accreditation of Courses</i> that includes the course title, decision of the TASC Executive Officer regarding the accreditation of a course, and length of course accreditation. • Determine or validate proposed course quality assurance mechanisms and award algorithms.
Course developers, including the Department of Education, in collaboration with the non-government sector will:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the need for a course. • Undertake research on current curriculum and course provision in the area. • Inform TASC of its intention to develop or amend a course. • Consult with key stakeholders on the consultation draft. • Develop a draft course document that aligns to the agreed structure and contains the agreed information. • Use the TASC-developed course document template. • Follow agreed procedures with regard to course complexity, outcomes and standards, coherence, assessment and award requirements. • Ensure language used in course documentation is inclusive.

6. Risk Management

Risk management for this procedure is the responsibility of the TASC Executive Officer.

7. Associated Documents and Materials

See also the Department of Education, Tasmania procedures and course development support material:

- *Years 11 and 12 Course Development Procedure*
- *Years 11 and 12 Curriculum Development and Review Cycle*.

Authorised by:	Katrina Beams
Position of authorising person:	Executive Officer
Date authorised:	12 July 2016
Developed by:	TASC
Date of last review:	December 2015
Date for next review:	July 2017
This document replaces:	Accreditation Guide for Developers of Senior Secondary Courses

Appendix A

Senior Secondary Course Accreditation Criteria

1. Rationale

- The proposed course has a clearly identifiable rationale which includes consideration of strategic need, demand and coherence together with evidence of appropriate consultation with stakeholders.
- Brief statements of rationale will be included in the course documentation.
- Additional information such as evidence of demand, names and contact details of stakeholders consulted, analysis of data, will be presented in the application accompanying the course documentation.

2. Coherence

2.a General Coherence

The proposed course:

- must have educational aims and learning outcomes appropriate for students in the senior secondary phase of education in Tasmania
- must be at least at the equivalent of the types of competencies characteristic of AQF Cert I
- has a balance of learning of both domain-specific and generic skills and knowledge
- meets TASC's specifications document (if applicable)
- aligns with the Tasmanian Curriculum Framework for Years 11 and 12.

(For information about AQF Certificates see the Australian Qualifications Framework Handbook available on the AQF website at: <http://www.aqf.edu.au/>)

2.b Internal Coherence

- There is clarity regarding what content is compulsory, and what (if any) is optional. Language used reflects this (e.g. 'must' or 'will' not 'should' or 'could').
- (If applicable) the degree of optional content (e.g. choice between units/topics) is limited. Options allow for some specialisation, but there is a significant 'core' of common content.
- There is clarity regarding the sequence for delivery of content (e.g. notations to say if the order in which contents listed in the document reflects compulsory or suggested delivery sequencing).
- There is a clear match between the stated Learning Outcomes, Content and Criteria/Standards.

Note: while some Learning Outcomes may be aspirational (non-assessed e.g. 'develop a positive attitude towards...') the number of such objectives is limited and they are clearly labelled as being aspirational. Overwhelmingly there is a clear match between the outcomes and the criteria/standards.

2.c Coherence with other courses

- If applicable, there are clear linkages between a Level 3 course and a 'Foundation' course at Level 2 (or other specified TASC accredited pathway courses).

Note: a 'Foundation' course is not a simplified or 'easier' version of a Level 3 course. It has its own distinctive features (content, standards, criteria etc) but prepares students who wish to study at Level 3 in the same/similar learning area.

Senior Secondary Course Accreditation Criteria

3. Overlap with other courses

Does the proposed course duplicate, by titles or coverage

- other TASC senior secondary accredited courses? or
- nationally accredited VET courses?

If relevant, does the course document identify where any outcomes meet the requirements of VET units of competence in Training Packages to the extent that a learner may reasonably expect an RTO to grant direct recognition (RPL, credit transfer) for those units on the basis of successful achievement in the TASC accredited course?

Overlap between VET and a proposed course:

- a course must identify any potential overlap between the content (skills, knowledge, competencies, learning outcomes) of the course and the skills, knowledge required in competencies of training packages
- where a proposed course has content that appears to be the same as that in a Training Package but is intended to be different, the course must be explicit about the nature of this difference
- a proposed course that includes content found in competencies in VET training packages may be accredited where TASC considers the requirements of its delivery as VET to Tasmanian senior secondary students are insufficiently relevant to the achievement of the intended outcomes [For example, reading and writing skills at Australian Core Skills Framework levels 1-3 are not clearly and distinctly different across everyday adult contexts including work to the extent that assessment requires current industry competence]
- in accrediting a course with content found in competencies in VET training packages TASC will decide the support (course requirements and quality assurance) for relevant RPL, credit transfer or articulation.

4. Assessment

- There is clarity regarding any prescribed assessment instruments and work requirements.
- The standards are expressed in clear, unambiguous language. The standards must clearly describe *features/characteristics* of the evidence of student work required by the standard.
- (If applicable) the standards are comparable with ACARA/ CCAFFL /VET standards in regard to their level of complexity and wording.
- The degree of difficulty/complexity of the standards and the range of criteria are comparable with those in accredited courses in the same/similar learning area and level of complexity/size value.

5. Labelling and terminology

- The names used in courses and for results (awards) are simple, plain, readily understandable.
- Are the names used for awards/title consistent with current TASC practice?
- The language used to describe the course, assessment and standards is simple, plain and readily understandable.

See also DoE 'Without Prejudice: Guidelines for Inclusive Language'.

6. Delivery

- The methods of delivering the proposed course are likely to achieve the purposes, aims and learning outcomes of the course.
- Details should be provided of any critical delivery methodology/ies necessary to achieve the outcomes of the course. It should not mandate delivery methods unless they are necessary to achieve the outcomes of the course.

Senior Secondary Course Accreditation Criteria

7. Access

- (If applicable) any limitations to access based on age, gender, employment, cultural, social or educational background or other requirements are explicit, clearly stated and justified.

8. Quality Assurance

- The assessment processes to be used to determine whether a student has achieved the learning outcomes of the course are of standard sufficient to deliver:
 - a match between the standards for achievement specified in the course and the standards demonstrated by students
 - a level of comparability of results/awards essentially the same as for all other TASC accredited courses
 - community confidence in the integrity and meaning of results.

Course proponents are encouraged to suggest/recommend a quality assurance model. For Level 3 and 4 courses draft suggestions for the External Assessment Specifications may be developed and submitted with the accreditation submission.

The final decision regarding course characteristics, assessment processes and quality assurance rests with TASC.

9. Resource Requirements

- What, if any, special requirements are there for providers of the course (e.g. special equipment, resources)?
- Are these clearly described?
- What requirements are there for TASC (e.g. quality assurance, external assessment)?

10. Evaluation

- The proposed course must identify course evaluation processes, including a mechanism for review during the first year of delivery.

11. Size /Complexity

- Are the level of complexity and size value of the course clearly described?
- Does the 'amount' of content/assessment regime match the size value indicated?
- Does the nature/aim/purpose of the course, its content, learning outcomes and assessment standards match the characteristics of the learning at this level of complexity?

TASC will formally assign a size value and level of complexity to the course (See Attachment C).

12. Qualifications

- List the qualifications (including award types) to be conferred on successful completion of the course.

Attachment B: Criteria and Standards Schedule for Robustness

TASC uses a five level system to reflect the degree of reliability and validity of results issued in a course. Robustness level 1 is the lowest, level 5 the highest. Courses must have a robustness level of 2 or higher in order to contribute to a student's participation and achievement standard for the TCE. TASC assigns an overall level of robustness using the criteria listed below. The blanks in the table represent cases intermediate between the higher and lower entries. The word 'achievement' is used here in sense that VET practitioners would use the word 'competence' or 'element of competence'. The notion of 'comparability' of results is the idea that, when two learners from different providers/assessors have a result labelled as the same, the achievement of the two learners is usefully similar and so the results are thus fit to be compared one with another.

Robustness level	Criterion		
	Nature of the evidence of achievement	Reliability/precision of the evidence	Validity/truth of the evidence
5	The evidence is plentiful and varied, tangible, directly related to the achievement, readily open to scrutiny	It can be shown that the result would not change much with a different assessor or with assessment on another occasion or context and there are monitored procedures/processes that ensure the comparability of results from different providers	The match of the evidence and the level of performance implied by the result is clear and evident to all reasonable inquirers
4	The evidence is ample and directly related to the achievement and much of it is open to scrutiny		
3	The evidence is ample and mostly directly related to the achievement but although tangible evidence is not available for scrutiny, there are clear reasons to trust the sources from which it came	It is not likely that the result would change significantly with a different assessor or with assessment on another occasion or context and there are processes for comparability of results from different providers	There is a relationship between the evidence and some aspects of the level of performance implied by the result
2	The evidence is sufficient and available, but at best mostly indirectly related to the achievement and largely inferential		
1	The evidence is slight, indirectly related to the achievement, tenuously inferential, not open to view	It is likely that the result could change significantly with a different assessor or with assessment on another occasion and there is no process for comparability of results from different providers	The evidence is at best tenuously related to the level of performance implied by the result

SOURCE: *Extending the range of qualifications and learning recognised on the Tasmanian Certificate of Education: A report from the TQA non-TCE recognition steering group (March 2005) Appendix 6.1*

Attachment C: Course Size and Complexity

Determining course size

The course size is an indication of the amount of learning in the course – that is, how big the course is. It is a measure of the quantum of learning required independent of the mode of delivery. A size value of 1 equates to 10 hours design time.

TASC senior secondary courses are generally given sizes of 5, 10 and 15 (small, medium and large). The size value is assigned at the time of development and takes into account such factors as the number and range of:

- learning outcomes
- content to be covered
- assessment criteria.

While size value takes into account information about the amount of class contact time (or its equivalent) that the majority of students might require to complete the course, it is not a prescription of actual delivery time. The size value of a course is intended as guidance to a course provider in allocating student contact time (or equivalent). Delivery time is influenced by an array of factors such as: mode of delivery; the level of pre-existing knowledge and skills of individual learners; outside class-time activities; and individual learning tasks. The allocation of contact time (or its equivalent) by the provider needs to be a reasonable decision – one that, in general, affords learners taking the course an equitable opportunity to develop the required skills, knowledge and understanding prescribed in the course's content and reach the required standards.

Levels of Complexity

TASC assigns a complexity level to TASC accredited courses, TASC recognised courses, and VET certificates and units of competency. Levels of complexity in senior secondary education range from Level 1 to Level 4 (4 being the highest level of complexity in senior secondary education). Accredited senior secondary Level 3 and 4 courses contribute to the calculation of the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR).

The complexity level of an accredited course reflects the complexity/difficulty of the learning embodied in the course. The nature of the learning must be applicable to the level. The level is not a factor of whether the course is introductory or not. Nor is it a level of learner achievement – this is captured by the awards.

The characteristics of learning at Levels 1 - 4

Level 4 – in general, courses at this level provide theoretical and practical knowledge and skills for specialised and/or skilled work and/or further learning, requiring:

- broad factual, technical and some theoretical knowledge of a specific area or a broad field of work and learning
- a broad range of cognitive, technical and communication skills to select and apply a range of methods, tools, materials and information to:
 - complete routine and non-routine activities
 - provide and transmit solutions to a variety of predictable and sometimes unpredictable problems
- application of knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, judgement and limited responsibility in known or changing contexts and within established parameters.

Level 3 – the learner is expected to acquire a combination of theoretical and/or technical and factual knowledge and skills and use judgement when varying procedures to deal with unusual or unexpected aspects that may arise. Some skills in organising self and others are expected. Level 3 is a standard suitable to prepare learners for further study at the tertiary level. VET competencies at this level are often those characteristic of an AQF Certificate III.

Level 2 – the learner is expected to carry out tasks and activities that involve a range of knowledge and skills, including some basic theoretical and/or technical knowledge and skills. Limited judgement is required, such as making an appropriate selection from a range of given rules, guidelines or procedures. VET competencies at this level are often those characteristic of an AQF Certificate II.

Level 1 – the learner is expected to carry out tasks and activities that draw on a limited range of basic knowledge and skills. The tasks and activities generally have a substantial repetitive aspect to them. Minimum judgement is needed as there are usually very clear rules, guidelines or procedures to be followed. VET competencies at this level are often those characteristic of an AQF Certificate I.

The relationship between these levels of complexity and the AQF system may be represented as follows:

Level	AQF Level
Level 4	Level IV
Level 3	Level III
Level 2	Level II
Level 1	Level I

