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# Course Development and Review Policy – Higher Education

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**Policy Code:** ACA-023    **Version:** 6.0    **Effective Date:** 21 June 2012

## Purpose:

This Policy provides the framework for the design, development and review of courses delivered by the Colleges within the context of continuous improvement and quality enhancement. The College's courses emphasise the centrality of the learner to the learning process and reflect the principles and philosophies of adult learning.

**Definition of “College”** – *In the higher education sector, the Australian College of Natural Medicine Pty Ltd (ACNM) trades as Endeavour College of Natural Health, and Wellnation. For the purpose of this Policy, any reference to ‘College’ or ‘the College’ should be considered a reference to each or any of these respective trading names.*

## Scope:

- All campuses (including online)
- All students
- All higher education courses

## Policy Statement:

The College is committed to providing students with a high quality, transformational learning experience leading to a professional degree which will:

- Provide students with an accredited qualification in their chosen field of study
- Extend students' abilities to apply for and engage in a range of career options.

The Colleges' courses:

- Advance the College's mission and strategic goals consistent with the College's Strategic Plan;
- Are designed to produce graduates of high professional quality, who are equipped with the knowledge and skills to contribute to the wider community and society in general, are

empowered to become leaders within their chosen profession and which promote life-long learning;

- Are supported by resources which facilitate the offering of quality learning experiences and educational outcomes;
- Are planned and reviewed in consultation with internal and external experts;
- Are consistent with internal policy;
- Adhere to regulatory and professional standards, and take account of current best practice; and
- Are aligned to the needs of industry.

## Context

The College is unique in its philosophy, arena of expertise and professional orientation. Its educational programs are responsive to market demand, professional requirements, commercial imperatives and societal change. The expectation of students is that they master a rapidly growing body of specialised knowledge, develop generic, transferable skills for use in a global workplace and meet professional requirements for registration and practice. Accordingly, there is a strong commitment for new and existing courses to be attuned to the changing circumstances of the day, exhibit exemplary academic standards and be aligned to the objectives of the respective College's vision, mission and strategic plan.

**The College is a non-self-accrediting institution (NSAI)**, therefore all courses are accredited by the national regulatory body, Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA). The processes for accreditation by TEQSA are established by legislation and seek to create national consistency in accreditation standards and processes across all institutions.

In addition, some courses are accredited by external professional bodies such as the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA).

This Policy provides the framework for aligning the College's internal processes with external accreditation processes, while enabling the College to successfully manifest its mission, values, and strategic goals.

This Policy addresses the design, development, accreditation and review of higher education courses. It covers:

- Quality assurance and enhancement
- Course design
- Course development and accreditation
- Review and continuous improvement (including re-accreditation)

The Policy should be read in parallel with the associated set of procedures for the development and review of higher education courses. The procedures identify roles and responsibilities and the mechanisms for acquiring evidence to support quality assurance, course enhancement risk management and strategic planning.

## Quality Assurance and Enhancement

The College has an integrated governance and management strategy to ensure academic quality assurance which encompasses the quality, relevance and currency of its courses. The College's academic quality assurance is aligned with the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015 (HES Framework)*. The strategy aims to promote the goals of: excellence and accountability in teaching and scholarship; quality in academic outcomes and service delivery; strategic academic planning; and positive and productive relationships with external educational, professional and community organisations.

Key elements of the strategy are:

- Design guidelines for courses and subjects using established governance processes – aligned to *HES Framework* Section 5.1 Course Approval and Accreditation and Section 5.3 Monitoring, Review and Improvement
- A clearly defined pathway and approvals process for the development of new courses and subjects using established governance processes – aligned to *HES Framework* Section 5.1 Course Approval and Accreditation
- A systematic cycle of review for existing courses and subjects to ensure quality and to promote continuous improvement using established governance processes by analysing student and staff feedback, Examiners' Committee outcomes, Course and Departmental Reports and implementations of appropriate policies, including *Moderation of Assessment Policy* and *Assessment Policy – Higher Education* – aligned to *HES Framework* Section 5.3 Monitoring, Review and Improvement and Section 5.2 Academic and Research Integrity

Under the *Academic Governance Framework*, course development and review is governed and advised through the College Council, Academic Board, Teaching and Learning Committee, Research Degrees Board, Course Advisory Committees and Subject Advisory Committee/s, comprised of both internal and independent members:

**The College Council** oversees and monitors academic standards, courses, activities and outcomes within a quality and academic risk framework.

**The Academic Board** is a mainly internal body which monitors coursework academic courses,

activities and outcomes across the College.

**The Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC)** is a body made up of internal and independent members established by the Teaching and Learning Specialist to monitor the development and quality of teaching and learning across the College.

**The Research Degrees Board (RDB)** is a body made up of internal and independent members which monitors research courses, activities and outcomes across the College.

**A Course Advisory Committee (CAC)** is established by the Director of Education to ensure the quality, relevance and currency of a course.

The CAC assists in identifying the need and demand for a course and to assist the College with industry- and content-specific advice, and guidance in the development and continuous improvement of courses.

CACs advise the College Council through the Academic Board on matters pertaining to Courses in accordance with the Committee's Terms of Reference.

**A Subject Advisory Committee (SAC)** may be established on a case-by-case basis by the Director of Education (or requested by another Committee of the College) in circumstances where specialist expertise is desired for the development of a new subject or for the review and / or major revision of an existing subject.

The SAC advises the relevant Party (Director of Education or relevant Committee) on matters pertaining to subjects in accordance with these Committee's Terms of Reference.

For each governing body's Terms of Reference, see the [Academic Governance Framework](#).

## Course Features

### Course Structure

Courses and subjects are structured on a system of credit points.

### Credit Points

For each 2 credit points (or credits) allocated to a subject, it is expected that students will be engaged in approximately 5 hours of study per week for 16 weeks. This includes:

- 3 hours face-to-face learning per week for 13 weeks or equivalent eLearning
- 2 hours study per week for 13 weeks

- 5 hours study during the two study weeks and exam week.

## Health Science Awards

The standard annual workload for Bachelor of Health Science award courses is 32 credits.

A standard semester workload, except Summer Semester (Intensive Delivery mode), is 16 credits.

The minimum credits required and the minimum duration for Health Sciences undergraduate awards are as follows:

• 1-year Diploma	32 credits	1 Year full-time (FT) study
• 2-year Associate degree	64 credits	2 Years FT study
• 3-year Bachelor degree	96 credits	3 Years FT study
• 4-Year Bachelor degree	128 credits	4 Years FT study

## Other Undergraduate Awards

Non-health science undergraduate awards may have a different total number of credits and semester credit load as determined by the College and in line with other Australian Universities.

## Post Graduate Awards

The minimum credits required and the minimum duration for postgraduate health science coursework awards are as follows:

• Graduate Certificate	16 credits	Half year FT study (1 Semester)
• Graduate Diploma	32 credits	1 year FT study
• Masters degree	64 credits	2 Years FT study

## Course and Subject Design

In designing and developing courses, the College adheres to:

- The standards and guidelines established by the national regulator, TEQSA
- The standards and guidelines established by relevant professional bodies and peak industry associations
- Recognised best practice arising from:
  - Academic research in relevant fields of expertise
  - Aligned peer institutions of higher education.

## Course Design

As stated in the purpose of the current Policy, the College's courses emphasise the centrality of the learner to the learning process and reflect the principles of adult learning. They are

designed to:

- provide a critically reflective theoretical and experiential learning context;
- integrate theory and practice within a dynamic learning environment;
- foster innovation, critical thinking, and ethical professional practice; and
- promote and foster personal and professional development.

Each course has a well-defined set of graduate learning outcomes which are aligned to the relevant graduate level outcomes as specified by the AQF in relation to knowledge, skills and the application of knowledge and skills.

New courses that lead to a professional qualification will be reverse engineered based on approved Professional Threshold Learning Outcomes developed by the profession in question, or failing that, developed by the College in relation to the relevant regulatory agency template.

The volume of learning for each course will be commensurate with the relevant AQF level.

Courses are comprised of a suite of core and (possibly) elective subjects which are sequenced to reflect the developing expertise of the learner. Where applicable, prerequisite and co-requisite subjects will be specified.

## Subject Design

Each subject has a unique set of well-defined learning outcomes which are aligned to the graduate-level outcomes specified for the Course.

A variety of learning activities, resources, assessment methods and tasks are used in order to reflect the diversity of the subject-level learning outcomes.

Each subject will exhibit alignment between its learning outcomes, activities / resources and assessment tasks.

Alignment between AQF levels, course graduate learning outcomes, subject learning outcomes and assessment tasks will be maintained.

Subjects may be delivered in more than one mode with variations in design arising in relation to:

- The length of the semester: regular Semesters are 18 weeks in length. This incorporates 13 teaching weeks, one (1) week non-teaching week, two (2) study / practical examination week and two (2) final examination weeks. Some subjects require student attendance in practical examination weeks to ensure the required practical hours are achieved, however this is clearly stated in the Subject Outline. Summer Semester (Intensive Delivery mode) is six (6) weeks in length.

- The mode of delivery: Subjects can be delivered in either or multiple of on-campus, online or intensive delivery (Summer School) modes.

Where a subject is offered in more than one mode, each mode will be custom-designed to ensure comparable outcomes even though the learning activities / resources and experiences may not be the same.

## Course Development of New Courses

The development of a new course for accreditation is a major academic undertaking and is to be viewed as a long-term project requiring careful planning, management and resourcing. Accordingly, a clearly defined pathway and approvals process is in place for the development of new courses and subjects to ensure:

- Compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements
- Compliance with requirements for registration of graduates and / or membership of graduates with professional bodies
- The outcomes of internal processes align with external requirements whilst conforming to College quality assurance processes.

The development pathway articulates a staged approach to the planning and development of new courses for accreditation which identifies key stages where approvals by the relevant governing bodies and / or senior management are necessary.

The Director of Education (DOE) is responsible for course development projects and has a quality assurance oversight role.

The development pathway commences when a proposal for a new course is put forward. Proposals can arise directly from members of the College Boards, Committees or Senior management. The key stages involve:

1. Preliminary Proposal - developed for approval by the Dean and Operations Director.
2. Preliminary Approval - the preliminary proposal is presented to the Board of Directors for approval and a preliminary commitment to funding.
3. Development Approval – the preliminary proposal is presented to the College Council for development approval.
4. New Course Proposal - after receiving preliminary funding approval and course development approval, the new course proposal is fully scoped and developed. Market demand, sector benchmarking, projected enrolments, projected staffing needs, proposed admission requirements / hurdles, facilities and resources needs, financial viability are all

considered and included in the course business plan and full proposal. This proposal is presented to the College Council for project approval.

5. Project Management Plan – the project management plan providing details of the project structure and methodology is developed and presented to College Council at the same time as the New Course Proposal above for approval.
6. Development and Advisory expertise - A Course Development Task Force (internal) to provide advice and undertake the development work is appointed by the Director of Education. A Course Advisory Committee is formed by the DOE to advise on course development and to monitor the course once accredited. Where the course is proposed to include specialist subject/s, one or more Subject Advisory Committees (SACs) may also be formed by the DOE to provide input in to the course development process.
7. Sign Off: internal approval processes -
  - On completion, the course structure and subject outlines are presented to the CAC for endorsement.
  - Once endorsed, the course structure and subject outlines are presented to the Academic Board for endorsement.
  - Once endorsed, the documentation is submitted to the National Compliance Manager for review and compilation as a TEQSA submission.
  - The completed course and all relevant documentation to be submitted to TEQSA is presented to the College Council for feedback and approval.
8. Submission - the Compliance team makes final changes based on College Council feedback for approval of the Dean and Operations Director prior to lodgement with TEQSA. The preparation of the final documentation is the responsibility of the National Compliance Manager.
9. TEQSA feedback – professional experts are engaged by TEQSA to assess the course content and structure and may provide valuable feedback on the course through the TEQSA approval process. Any feedback provided by TEQSA experts will be considered and incorporated into the course throughout the accreditation process or immediately following accreditation through the normal internal governance course review process.
10. Professional bodies – where possible, relevant professional body accreditation will be sought at the same time as TEQSA accreditation is sought. Where a professional body requires approval processes to be conducted before or after TEQSA accreditation, the College will follow the guidelines of the relevant professional body relating to submission timelines.

## Course Review and Continuous Improvement

The College conducts regular and cyclical reviews of all courses and subjects to ensure compliance, relevance, currency and the quality of teaching, learning and outcomes.

A range of quality assurance practices and mechanisms are used to inform the process of continual improvement to course content and delivery. These practices are formal and informal, internal and external.

Mechanisms for monitoring the quality of courses and subjects include:

- College Council
- Academic Board
- Research Degrees Board
- Course Advisory Committees
- Subject Advisory Committees
- Examiners' Committee
- Moderation of assessment processes and outcomes
- Cyclical reviews of courses and subjects through Course and Departmental Reports, focus groups and specialised and / or requested reports

Information and data is collected through a range of instruments including:

- FileMaker and Learning Management System – student progression analysis, demographics analysis, engagement analysis, assessment submission analysis, grade analysis and statistical oversight at all levels – from a specific assessment to the overall course
- Quality Feedback Monitor (QFM) – online feedback mechanism available to all students and staff 24 hours a day and first stage of grievance process
- Staff Feedback (through surveys and Course Reports) – staff satisfaction surveys, informal feedback to Heads of Department / Associate Heads of Department, annual Course Reports
- Student Feedback (through internal and external surveys) – internal surveys include end of teaching period surveys for each subject specific to mode of delivery; external surveys include Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) surveys – Student Experience Survey (annually), Graduate Outcomes Survey (including course experience questions).

Data collected through formal feedback mechanisms such as surveys and the QFM is analysed by the Director, Student Services and Retention and the National Compliance Manager. Regular reports are submitted to the College Council for review, along with recommendations for changes arising from student and staff feedback. Implementation of recommendations

arising from reports is the responsibility of the Director, Student Services and Retention, the Director of Education and relevant Heads of Department / Associate Heads of Department.

## Cyclical Reviews

In reviewing courses and subjects, all reviewers (relevant academic staff and governing body members) will be provided with the [Course Review Procedure - HE](#) and the [Guidelines for Changing Higher Education Courses and Subject Outlines](#) to assist in the monitoring and review process. These documents provide a framework for the review of data and the generation of critical issues for review purposes.

## Subject Review - Annual

The College is committed to an annual review of each subject offered in accredited courses. Heads of Department / Associate Heads of Department may conduct reviews every Semester if deemed necessary.

The review encompasses the clarity of purpose of the subject within the course, alignment of learning outcomes with course outcomes, appropriateness and relevance of content and assessment items to meet the subject learning outcomes, grade distributions and student progress. The review is conducted by the Subject Coordinator in consultation with the Head of Department / Associate Head of Department.

Student feedback is a large factor in these regular reviews. Subject feedback is gathered every teaching period and changes incorporated into the subject content through governance approval processes as considered timely by the Head of Department / Associate Head of Department.

In cases of specific content, subjects may also be reviewed by a Subject Advisory Committee formed to monitor the relevance and appropriateness of the content of that subject. In such cases, the subject will be closely reviewed after every teaching period of offering for the first year, then annually in subsequent years.

## Course Review - Annual

The College is committed to the annual review of accredited courses.

The objective of these reviews is to ensure that a particular courses' aim, structure, subjects, learning objectives, assessment activities, resources, study modes and delivery methods are monitored and changed when and where necessary according to the principles of continuous improvement and quality assurance.

A Course Report template for reporting data collated from student and teacher feedback and the previous year's results (grade distributions, student progress, students at risk and

assessment-item specific if necessary) is used to ensure uniformity of reporting across Departments.

This review is conducted by the Head of Department / Associate Head of Department, unless otherwise specified. The Course Report for the calendar year is presented to the first Course Advisory Committee meeting of the following calendar year. Course Reports are also reviewed by the College Council for approval of any recommendations arising from reports.

Where recommendations arising from Course Reports require additional resourcing, the relevant Course Report/s are presented to the Board of Directors for funding approval.

### Benchmarking review - triennial

The College endeavours to form partnerships with similar higher education institutions to develop and implement ongoing benchmarking relationships.

The Director of Education (in consultation with Heads of Department / Associate Heads of Department) undertakes a triennial benchmarking process and analysis to inform the College of the following:

- Student need and demand for course offerings based on student enrolment statistics, market research and analysis;
- Critical review and assessment of the range and diversity of subjects within a course;
- The adequacy and appropriateness of course-related information provided to students;
- Ongoing evaluation of the modes of study and the course delivery method;
- Comprehensive data analysis (based on subject and course feedback / evaluation data) to indicate significant trends.

A report with recommendations is presented to the College Council for approval. Recommendations arising from the review are to be implemented by the Director of Education in consultation with the relevant Head/s of Department / Associate Head/s of Department.

### In-Depth Review of Courses for Re-Accreditation

The College is committed to an in-depth cyclical review of its courses at least once every accreditation period in preparation for the submission of a re-accreditation application to TEQSA.

The Review is conducted by the relevant Course Advisory Committee approximately 4.5 to 5 years after accreditation approval.

The objective of these reviews is to ensure that a particular course is adhering to the principles of continuous improvement and quality assurance.

The review encompasses all aspects of the course including – its structure (graduate outcomes, subjects and learning outcomes), content assessment, resources and activities; delivery modes student outcomes teaching and scholarship.

The report with recommendations is presented to the College Council for its approval as part of the re-accreditation process; this may include recommendations for re-accreditation for continuing teaching, or for teach-out purposes only. In some cases, this may include recommendation for non re-accreditation.

Recommendations arising from the review are to be implemented by the Director of Education in consultation with the relevant Head/s of Department / Associate Head/s of Department.

## Course and / or Subject Change Process

If courses or subjects require changing, processes outlined in the [Course Review Procedure - HE](#) should be followed and the relevant governing body approvals sought.

In addition, if a change significantly impacts on the course or students (including course outcomes), further regulatory guidance or approval may be required to ensure the course remains compliant with accreditation requirements. TEQSA's [Material Change Notification Policy](#) outlines the requirements of notifying TEQSA of a material change and how to identify changes requiring TEQSA notification.

If a course is to be changed, the National Compliance Manager should be involved in discussions from an early stage to ensure TEQSA guidance is sought where necessary and TEQSA notification is provided in a timely manner to ensure minimal student impact.

## Subject Outlines

Once Subject Outlines are approved as part of an accredited course, they are managed by the relevant Office of the Director of Education in conjunction with the Quality & Compliance department. Approved changes to the Subject Outlines are only to be made upon direction from the relevant College Council or Director of Education (according to the [Guidelines for Changing Higher Education Courses and Subject Outlines](#)). Formal publication is standardised by the Quality & Compliance department.

The process of changing subject outlines may include the requirement to form a specialist SAC. Any subject change recommendations arising from the SAC will require endorsement by the relevant CAC, Director of Education and approval by Academic Board or College Council (depending on level of approval as delegations allow).

## Course Structures

Once Course Structures are approved as part of an accredited course, they are managed by the relevant Office of the Director of Education with assistance from the Marketing and Quality & Compliance departments. Approved changes to the Course Structures are only to be made upon direction from the College Council (according to the [Guidelines for Changing Higher Education Courses and Subject Outlines](#)). Formal publication is standardised by the Quality & Compliance department.

## Related Procedures:

[Course Development Procedure - HE](#)

[Course Review Procedure - HE](#)

### Definitions:

**Course** - A course is an entire program of study that spans several years and is made up of multiple subjects.

**Postgraduate course** - any course offered at level 8 or above on the AQF. The following courses are considered to be postgraduate by the College:

- Bachelor Honours Degree (Level 8)
- Graduate Certificate (Level 8)
- Graduate Diploma (Level 8)
- Masters Degree (Level 9)
- Doctoral Degree (Level 10)

**Subject** - A subject refers to a 14 – 17 week unit of study centred around a specific theme or topic.

**Student** – is an individual person who is formally enrolled to study at the College. The individual person is that who appears on the College's documents such as enrolment, admission and payment documents, and who is assigned an individual student ID.

**Undergraduate course** at the College means any higher education course offered at levels 5 to 7 on the AQF. The following higher education courses are considered to be undergraduate by the College:

- Diploma (Level 5)
- Associate Degree (Level 6)

- Advanced Diploma (Level 6)
- Bachelor Degree (Level 7)

## Further Information:

**Related Policies:**      [Moderation of Assessment Policy](#)  
[Assessment Policy – Higher Education](#)

**Benchmarking:**      Christian Heritage College  
Griffith University  
Queensland University of Technology  
Study Group Australia  
University of Queensland  
University of Sydney  
University of Wollongong

**Supporting Research and Analysis:**      TEQSA Guidelines

**Related Documents:**      [Academic Governance Framework](#)  
[Guidelines for Changing Higher Education Courses and Subject Outlines](#)

**Related Legislation:**      [Australian Qualifications Framework](#)  
[Higher Education Standards Framework 2015](#)  
[TEQSA Material Change Notification Policy](#)

**Guidelines:**      Not applicable

<b>Policy Author:</b>	National Compliance Manager
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<b>Recommending Body:</b>	Academic Board Meeting date: TBA
<b>Approval Body:</b>	College Council Meeting date: 9 June 2017
<b>Policy Status:</b>	Revised
<b>Responsibilities for Implementation:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director of Education</li> <li>• Director, Student Systems and Retention</li> <li>• Heads of Department / Associate Heads of Department</li> <li>• National Compliance Manager</li> </ul>
<b>Key Stakeholders:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic staff</li> <li>• All Students</li> <li>• College Council</li> <li>• Director of Education</li> <li>• Director, Student Systems and Retention</li> <li>• Dean and Operations Director</li> <li>• Heads of Department / Associate Heads of Department</li> <li>• National Compliance Manager</li> </ul>