



Planning
Institute
Australia

POLICY FOR THE ACCREDITATION OF AUSTRALIAN PLANNING QUALIFICATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

The Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) is the peak body for professional planners in Australia. PIA (referred to in this Policy as the “Institute”) aims to promote the study of urban and regional planning and enhance the skills of practicing planners in Australia. To achieve these aims, the Institute is involved in several learning and quality assurance initiatives, notably through accrediting Australian tertiary education courses, promoting individual certification through the Registered Planner program, and requiring ongoing study through continuing professional education and development.

This Policy sets out the Institute’s purpose for, and method of, accrediting a qualification program. It also describes alternative planning degree pathways, guidelines for planning degree programs, graduate capabilities, competencies, curriculum, and a procedure for accreditation visits.

As a Code of the Institute, this Policy demonstrates the Institute’s commitment to achieving and maintaining high standards in the knowledge, skills and ethics of professional planners as provided by university-based planning education. Accreditation is about the *knowledge and skills* that graduates acquire from an endorsed program that in the Institute’s view qualify them for Full Membership of the Institute combined with two years of experience (with at least 1 year of experience gained after graduation).

The current list of "Accredited Australian Planning Qualifications" is maintained on the Institute’s website (www.planning.org.au).

This Policy uses a number of specific terms. For ease and consistency of use these terms are defined in Appendix A: Definitions.

PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

This Policy describes the criteria for accreditation of academic qualifications leading to membership of the Institute. It outlines the reasons for these criteria and the procedures to evaluate the professional recognition of qualifications. It provides guidelines for universities regarding processes for interim accreditation, full accreditation and re-accreditation, as well as for academics and professional planners involved in these various accreditation reviews. It provides a framework for the Institute's Visiting Boards for assessing the way in which universities are responding to the requirements for accreditation, defines the fundamental competencies to be delivered by tertiary planning education, and outlines more specific knowledge area competencies relating to urban and regional planning.

For accreditation to be achieved, planning degree program providers will need to demonstrate how their program develops the skills and competencies of their students to a sufficient standard as set out in this Policy. Graduates of accredited planning degree programs should be clear thinkers, problem solvers, good researchers and policy analysts, good communicators and team members, productive and effective employees, promoting strong civic and social values. Once employed, these same graduates should be able to fulfil the Institute's expectations when they have completed the required period of experience in professional practice.

The accreditation process is based on the principle of objectives-based learning. This requires that a vision with clear competencies or learning objectives be established for the overall qualification. The emphasis on competencies is focused on what a student can do and demonstrate as a result of completing a qualification.

Planning degree programs that meet the requirements for accreditation are considered to provide a strong and sufficiently diverse platform for professional practice. They also provide the most direct stream of entry into Full Membership of the Institute when supported with an additional two years of practical experience.

OBJECTIVES FOR ACCREDITATION

The Institute's objective is to encourage and support students to undertake accredited planning degree programs to become planning professionals, who can think creatively, analytically and critically, undertake independent research, communicate effectively, and act ethically.

Professional planners are required to have very well developed analytical skills and to exercise a high level of discretion in their professional practice. To adequately meet the demands of the professional planner role, the minimum requirement is an accredited undergraduate or postgraduate level qualification.

Such qualifications should incorporate the achievement of graduate capabilities, competencies in both declarative and performative knowledge as described in this Policy, applied skills, research, critical thinking and ethical behaviour and understanding that enable planning practitioners to describe and define themselves as professionals.

The Institute encourages institutions registered with the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) to put forward planning degree programs for accreditation and the maintenance of this accreditation. This Policy recognises that planning is a broad and diverse field, and that each university will draw upon its academic strengths and resources to shape the content and directions of their planning degree. Each university may seek to provide a broad planning degree program or may focus on a particular specialism or distinctive aspect of planning. Accreditation recognises and encourages diversity, but is underpinned by the concept and requirement that there are certain core competencies, knowledge areas and skill sets that should be part of any Institute accredited planning degree program. These core elements require an agreed and defined length of time commitment to deliver and achieve such a program of learning.

The Policy adopts the approach that each university is encouraged to put forward its own planning degree program in the manner that it sees fit. Each university is invited to demonstrate how its planning degree program meets the requirements of accreditation. The range of content, the delivery style and method, the specialisations offered, and the exact length of the planning degree are at the discretion of the university. The Institute welcomes innovative, creative and aspirational planning degree programs from universities demonstrating how they provide their planning degree program so as to meet the accreditation requirements.

The Policy recognises that the process of accreditation involves extensive reflections and analysis by planning degree programs. The Policy provides support and guidance for the accreditation review process. This Policy also provides a framework for the university to guide and assist in the ongoing development of its planning degree program.

QUALIFICATION PATHWAYS

The Policy acknowledges the increasing pace of change in the worlds of teaching and learning as well as of planning: the role of flexible patterns of teaching and learning, the increasing use of new learning and teaching technologies, the emergence of new knowledge areas, and the internationalisation of planning degree program curricula and student bodies. The Policy recognises that prospective planners enter planning programs via different routes: as school leavers, as graduates of other disciplines, some from closely related areas and some from apparently unrelated areas, and also from planning-related experience in industry. The planning profession embraces this diversity and supports varied pathways as an important element that strengthens the profession.

The Policy intentionally provides scope for universities to develop alternative pathways for programs seeking accreditation. The Institute considers it undesirable to direct or dictate the titling of units (often referred to by universities as subjects and courses), the prescribed length of a program or the nomenclature used to describe a qualification. It is the role of the accreditation process to consider the content of the planning degree program and to satisfy itself that the content is sufficiently comprehensive and delivered in sufficient depth so that a person completing a planning degree program has satisfied a set of stated and agreed learning standards.

However, in putting forward an apparent open-ended approach the Institute recognises that the credibility of accreditation rests on the ability of programs to demonstrate that a set of minimum standards covering fundamental core competencies, knowledge areas and skill sets is delivered. Individual universities establish their reputation within the planning profession and the broader community on the basis of their achievement of those standards, the quality of their programs, the reputation of their academic staff, and the capabilities of their graduates.

In terms of the duration of planning degree programs, this Policy is based on the principle that the scope of material a planning degree program must address should be delivered by the university and taken by each student within a minimum and maximum period of time. While the Institute looks to the quality of the program and its content, there is a core quantum of material to be included. The Policy provides for a minimum number of semesters/trimesters across which the program will deliver this quantum for each planning qualification. However, the Institute is open to a university being able to demonstrate convincingly to a Visiting Board that a planning degree program of a different length and structure can adequately cover the range of material and can ensure that the quality of the content of the program and the student experience has not been compromised.

This Policy sets out six pathways as a qualification or sequence of qualifications suitable for accreditation by the Institute providing that the content delivers the stated

requirements, having regard to the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)¹. The Policy recognises that the actual names of these qualifications are the responsibility of the university, but may be commented upon by the Visiting Board in its report.

The six identified pathways are:

Undergraduate (AQF Levels 7 & 8)

1. A full-time, undergraduate specialist planning degree program, usually extending over eight semesters or equivalent (AQF Level 7).
2. A full-time, undergraduate, specialist planning degree program, usually extending over a period of eight semesters or its equivalent and including a substantial independent research project usually produced towards the end of the program (AQF Level 8).
3. A full-time, undergraduate specialist planning degree program, usually extending over six semesters or equivalent (AQF Level 7), followed by a two-semester honours research component (3+1 model, AQF Level 8).
4. A full-time six semester undergraduate specialist planning degree program (AQF Level 7) followed by a two semester postgraduate program, usually described as a graduate diploma (AQF Level 8).

Postgraduate (AQF Level 9)

5. A full-time four semester specialist planning coursework degree program (AQF Level 9), usually referred to as a Masters degree, and suitable for any student holding an AQF Level 7 degree in any subject.
6. A full-time three semester, Masters level coursework planning degree program (AQF 9) following a six semester undergraduate program (AQF Level 7) in a related or cognate discipline area.

The Institute is open to consideration of other pathways or arrangements of program structure that can deliver against the Policy's competency, knowledge and skills requirements. It is the responsibility of the university to demonstrate how the proposed course structure meets the requirements of the Policy.

Where a university arranges its teaching in trimesters rather than semesters, it is required to describe the study load expectations associated with a trimester and to demonstrate that the planning degree program can adequately cover the expected range of material without compromising the overall quality of the program.

¹ Australian Qualifications Framework Council (2013), *Australian Qualifications Framework* (2nd ed, January 2013). Canberra, ACT: Australian Qualifications Framework Council.

GUIDELINES FOR PLANNING DEGREE PROGRAMS

In setting criteria for the educational content of accredited programs, the Institute does not specify a precise planning curriculum. Rather, it identifies core and desirable capabilities, competencies, skills and knowledge, and ethical standards, which are expected to be demonstrated in all accredited planning degree programs.

Resourcing

The Institute encourages planning programs to develop their own educational focus and to develop specialist areas of study that are relevant to planning practice. The Institute requires that adequate educational resources support planning programs in delivering accredited qualifications. Adequacy is measured by a requirement that the head of the planning program (however described) has sufficient autonomy within the university to provide academic leadership in planning and to initiate changes to planning education. Adequacy is also measured in terms of the number and quality of staff (including urban and regional researchers, experienced educators, active and connected planning practitioners, members of the Institute and outstanding specialists), relative to the number of students, the quantity and quality of accommodation, equipment and library resources, and support for staff research, teaching and professional development. There should also be an appropriate balance between permanent and casual/fixed term members of the program team. Overall the resource support must be sufficient to ensure that the objectives of the qualification can be achieved.

Program Identity

The planning program should have a clear identity within its university and have a recognised individual responsible for the leadership and administration of the planning program. This person needs appropriate and formal standing within the university and might be designated the discipline or program head. An important element that the Policy and the Visiting Board considers is the degree of autonomy afforded to the program leader, including some influence over the allocation and management of program resources. It will be the responsibility of the university to demonstrate that the program depth and breadth can be managed and delivered by the available academic staff. The Policy specifies capabilities and competencies for graduates and therefore requires that planning programs have the resources and staff capacity to deliver these. Small planning programs with limited staff numbers need to clearly demonstrate that the planning degree program is drawing in (and using effectively) resources such as staff from other parts of the university and experienced planning practitioners.

Research

Research conducted by staff is a critical element of an accredited planning degree program. A high quality research program not only enhances the research/teaching nexus and supports students in their study and practice of planning but also promotes research-informed policy and decision making. Research foci can also shape (and be shaped by)



the structure and identity of the program. A planning program needs to demonstrate to the Visiting Board that it has research active staff and that there is a connection between the research program and student learning and teaching.

Intra and Cross Institutional Collaboration

The Institute encourages collaboration between planning programs and other discipline and unit areas, within and between universities, where this can best achieve tuition in the core curriculum and specialised areas. The Institute also encourages engagement between universities, planning practitioners and the broader community and, where appropriate and practical, part-time teaching by relevant qualified practitioners. The Institute encourages approaches to teaching, research and learning in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

Practical Experience and Experiential Learning

The Institute endorses a combination of academic planning education and appropriate models of work or practical experience. Practical experience can be gained through a variety of methods. These include practical studies of a supervised nature, structured workplace placements, or appropriately supervised project involvements. The Policy recognises that there is no single “model” of practical experience. Practical work is considered to be a key means of delivery of practice, professionalism and aspects of ethics. The Policy looks to ensure that planning degree programs have a clear and well-reasoned structure and approach to practical work. Where professional work experience is a formal requirement of a qualification, the Visiting Board will evaluate the quality and supervision of the work experience. The Visiting Board will need to be satisfied that the work experience program included in the qualification will assist in the acquisition of core knowledge and skills. Where a program does not include a formal requirement for professional work experience, the Visiting Board will consider individual demonstration of prepared, supervised, and reflective work-integrated learning that forms part of the educational curriculum to demonstrate how skills, knowledge and competencies obtained through work experience are acquired.

In order to strengthen links to professional practice, the Institute encourages the core staff of planning programs to be members of the Institute and for the program head to be a Full Member.

There has also been useful research undertaken in recent years on the effectiveness and scope of experiential learning in planning that indicates that this can be very effective in student learning and in accommodating different learning methods. The Institute supports the incorporation of suitably designed experiential learning modes within accredited planning degree programs.



Method of Delivery

The Institute expects that a diversity of learning and teaching modes will be utilised in the delivery of planning degree programs. The Institute is supportive of incorporating both traditional and innovative methods of learning (e.g. studio based learning, project based learning, case based learning, online and different forms of assessment) as desirable components of an accredited program.

When incorporating innovative methods of delivery, the university must set out the objectives for how these methods are best used to develop relevant planning skills and competencies.

Advisory Committee

The Institute requires that a program advisory committee be established for each university offering accredited planning degree programs. This should comprise representatives from the local industry and planning profession, recent graduates and current students. At least one member should be a representative of the relevant Division of the Institute.

CAPABILITIES, COMPETENCY AND SUPPORTING KNOWLEDGE

The accreditation process is based on the principle of objectives-based learning, which requires that clear learning objectives be established for the program and all the units comprising it.

The establishment of these objectives provides a number of benefits. Educators are able to more directly link their own teaching and assessment to professional accreditation objectives, and students are more directly able to understand the purposes of the range of learning experiences provided to them.

The listing of competency objectives and performance indicators is designed to allow flexibility for programs to develop their own strengths and specialisations, while maintaining relative certainty to the university, the community and to the Institute that professional standards are being met. The performance indicators are provided to guide those responsible as to the intended scope and direction of the respective competencies and not as absolute prescriptions.

Performance indicators provide a suggested list that a program may seek to achieve. Programs are provided with the opportunity to propose a justified alternative list of performance indicators. In practice a university may integrate the delivery of capabilities, competencies and supporting knowledge in a variety of different ways. It is the responsibility of planning degree program providers to demonstrate the manner in which they achieve the objectives and performance indicators of the Policy.

This section of the Policy sets out the capabilities and competency areas, and supporting knowledge areas identified by the Institute, and outlines the associated objectives and Indicators sought with each of those areas.

The Policy defines three components or levels in relation to skills and knowledge:

- A. Generic Capabilities and Competencies
- B. Core Curriculum Competencies
- C. Supporting Knowledge Areas

A. Generic Capabilities and Competencies

The development of generic capabilities in students is typically embedded in every university's mission. Planning assumes and requires a range of capabilities and specific competencies that contribute to what it is to be a high quality planning professional.

Programs should be able to demonstrate that students have acquired a range of abilities that cover the following:

- Recognise the need for, locate and be able to use credible information to develop new skills and knowledge;
- Perform critical analysis and synthesis;
- Develop and evaluate arguments;
- Apply creative thinking processes to complex problems;
- Make meaningful new connections between challenging, contradictory or unlikely elements;
- Think strategically and apply planning concepts, skills and knowledge in a range of spatial settings;
- Write and present with clarity, cohesion, logic, structure, relevance, accuracy and precision of expression in a range of contexts;
- Effectively use voice, body-language, structure, word choice, graphics, and presentation technologies, across a range of media, appropriate to the knowledge base and cultural background of the audience;
- Work as a team member, with commitment to shared goals, team processes and appropriate interpersonal skills, including respect, reliability, mutual supportiveness and time management;
- Operate in a manner that recognises the position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first peoples of Australia, the relationship of those peoples to planning practice in historical and contemporary terms; and compliance to the maximum extent possible with accepted international standards of best practice working with Indigenous communities;
- Awareness of challenges and opportunities posed by operating in diverse and globally oriented settings;
- Work in diverse employment situations requiring the application of the theory, knowledge and practice of planning.

B. Core Curriculum Competencies

A planning curriculum is expected to enable students to build their competency in each of three core curriculum areas:

1. Professional and Ethical Planning Practice
2. Plan making, Land Use Allocation and Management, and Urban Design
3. Governance, Planning Law, Plan Implementation and Planning Administration

Each of the three core curriculum areas is explained below in terms of competency objectives to be demonstrated. A planning program should be able to list a number of performance indicators, either from the lists below or additional indicators that demonstrate a student's competency for each core area.

1. Professional and Ethical Planning Practice

Competency - Planners should be able to work in a variety of professional environments, meeting high standards of conduct and ethical behaviour relevant to a variety of circumstances. Planners need to be able to act competently and responsibly in complex situations and in a professional and ethical manner, while understanding, promoting and actively working in the public interest.

Performance Indicators

1. Knowledge of unique and special position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and Indigenous peoples, their rights and interests, knowledge, culture and traditions, and the appropriate protocols of respect and recognition for engaging with them on matters affecting their rights and interests.²
2. Knowledge of the diversity of populations served, including the cultures of ethnic groups in Australia, other groups with special needs, including children and older people, and a capacity to engage meaningfully with diverse groups.
3. Knowledge of the development of planners' roles over time and in various contexts including the challenges and requirements of contemporary circumstances.
4. Knowledge of and capacity to use relevant technical tools for data collection, analysis and mapping, and have knowledge of quantitative methods, spatial mapping, relevant digital software, and geographic information systems (GIS).

² Relevant content may be subject to transitional arrangements.

5. Knowledge of and capacity to use project management and risk management principles, techniques and tools.
6. Capacity to make appropriate choices in ethically ambiguous situations based on knowledge of social, economic, environmental, and cultural aspects of planning.
7. Capacity to work productively as an individual or in a team, with other planners, or with multidisciplinary and diverse groups, including lay people, while representing and maintaining professional opinions and standards.
8. Capacity to mediate and negotiate to resolve planning conflicts.
9. Capacity to apply and develop planning knowledge to identify problems, devise ways to investigate and solve these problems drawing on research-based evidence, and producing solutions as the basis for appropriate action.
10. Capacity to apply theoretical and technical planning skills to unfamiliar or emergent circumstances, even with incomplete information.
11. Capacity to communicate in written, oral, and graphical form about planning issues, development proposals and actions via a range of media to various audiences in a manner appropriate to the situation.

2. Plan Making, Land use Allocation and Management, and Urban Design

Competency - Planners produce various types of plans, policies, strategies and guidelines. Planners need to be able to select the techniques, approaches and tools appropriate to the task and situation, including the ability to subsequently implement plans in the particular circumstances of a place. Planners allocate land uses, resources and manage the process of land use change. Planners undertake the preparation of plans to implement design concepts and establish desirable patterns and forms of development.

Performance Indicators

1. Knowledge of relevant aspects of the history of planning in Australia and internationally and of different planning approaches in their historical and comparative context.
2. Knowledge of planning theories and capacity to critically apply these theories when undertaking planning, including theories that recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' and Indigenous peoples' rights, interests, laws, perspectives and knowledge systems.
3. Knowledge and theories of urban and regional planning and environmental planning and design, including but not restricted to principles of land use, urban form, infrastructure systems, ecological systems, global trends and

emerging issues, climate change, transport, the integration of land use and transport, heritage conservation, landscape and human settlement patterns.

4. Knowledge of the main types of plan-making processes and implementation techniques including strategic planning, statutory planning, urban design and place-making together with the capacity to select appropriate processes and implementation methods according to the scale and circumstance of intervention.
5. Knowledge of key legal principles and practices in plan making and implementation, including an understanding of native title as a specific land tenure in Australian land and environmental law.
6. Knowledge of the main processes and forms of governance relevant to planning and of the influence of politics upon these, and the related capacity to design and implement workable and democratic participatory processes in association with communities and other stakeholders.
7. Capacity to perform key planning tasks via strategic and statutory frameworks.
8. Capacity to gather qualitative and quantitative data relevant to different planning circumstances including global trends and emerging issues, to analyse it and to communicate its relevance and any shortcomings of findings.
9. Capacity to prepare plans and urban designs to address and manage land use and development issues and opportunities.
10. Capacity to review, evaluate and monitor planning processes.
11. Capacity to critically evaluate and assess plans, planning tools, built environment proposals, and likely outcomes.

3. Governance, Law, Plan implementation and Administration

Competency - Planners able to work effectively within legal frameworks in the development, implementation and administration of statutory plans, policies and regulations.

Performance Indicators

1. Capacity to interpret and use land tenure systems and relevant acts and case law to undertake typical plan-making and implementation actions with regard to planning law requirements.
2. Knowledge of wider legal and related governmental principles and frameworks underpinning planning, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander law, lore, governance systems and customs.

3. Knowledge of statutory processes associated with plan making, implementation and administration.
4. Knowledge of the principles and practices of legal interpretation and the drafting of legislation and regulations.
5. Knowledge of the operation of appeal systems including the role of courts and tribunals, including the role of expert evidence.
6. Capacity to act in typical planning roles using planning law, such as giving basic advice about fundamental principles to lay people and other professionals.
7. Capacity to develop implementable planning regulations and policies.

C. Supporting Knowledge Areas

The integrated nature of knowledge and the interrelationships between different areas of knowledge sets the scene for the design of a distinctive and rigorous planning degree program. The supporting knowledge areas listed below are not intended as either mandatory units or definitive descriptors. It is the province of planning programs to develop a coherent program that incorporates the generic, core and supporting areas covered by this Policy. The Institute acknowledges the benefits of different universities having different specialisations in planning. How a university designs its supporting knowledge components can enhance their distinctiveness and specialized expertise and provide greater overall choice to prospective students. The Policy acknowledges that questions of focus and emphasis are the responsibility of the university.

The Institute supports initiatives by planning programs that demonstrate how the university has sought to integrate areas of competence in innovative and imaginative approaches and that promote the integration and not the fragmentation of knowledge, values and skills.

The following knowledge areas (in alphabetical order) are representative of areas of knowledge that encapsulate techniques of planning methodology and generally accepted content that would be normally expected in planning degree programs:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' and Indigenous peoples' rights, interests and planning approaches
- Economic Planning
- Environmental Planning
- Social Planning
- Transport Planning
- Urban Design



These indicative supporting knowledge areas are elaborated in Appendix B, but could additionally include tourism and recreation planning, community-based planning, and natural resource management planning. The Policy recognises that universities as appropriate will identify other knowledge content elements.

Programs are encouraged to support students in developing suitable ways of demonstrating and illustrating their skills, competencies and professional experiences, including through traditional curriculum vitae, e-portfolios and social media platforms such as LinkedIn and in keeping these up to date.

PROCEDURES FOR ACCREDITATION

Reviews for both accreditation of new qualifications and continued accreditation are undertaken by Visiting Boards appointed by the National Education Committee. Detailed procedures in relation to Visiting Boards are set out in Appendix C: Documentation and Processes for Visiting Boards.

Visiting Boards are usually composed of three members, two members of the Institute from the Division in which the planning program is located and one other, normally a senior and experienced academic, from interstate. The academic member would normally chair the Visiting Board.

As far as practicable, reviews of all accredited qualifications and programs offered by the same university will be undertaken at the same time.

Accredited qualifications are normally reviewed by the Institute through a Visiting Board process every five years to ensure that the standards outlined in this Policy are being met on a continuing basis.

Initial Accreditation Requests

Heads of planning programs who wish to have a new qualification accredited should contact the Institute to indicate their interest in accreditation. These requests should be accompanied by a summary of the proposed qualification and/or planning degree program. Following an initial review by the National Education Committee, formal feedback will be provided on the outline document. The planning program is then required to develop the outline into a more substantial document, incorporating information for a Visiting Board visit of at least one day's duration. Planning programs are encouraged to undertake this process in consultation with their program advisory committee.

Following on from the Visiting Board's assessment and based on the advice of the National Education Committee, interim accreditation of a new qualification is offered until the first cohort of students has graduated and their performance can be assessed. A subsequent Visiting Board can recommend full accreditation subject to a satisfactory review at that time.

Re-Accreditation Requests

Programs seeking reaccreditation of existing qualifications are to contact the Institute to request a Visiting Board. This request should be made during the fourth year of current accreditation so that arrangements can be made for a Visiting Board prior to the expiry of accreditation. When a Visiting Board has been arranged, the head of the planning program will be asked to provide a written report and arrange meetings between staff, students and senior academics and the Visiting Board, in consultation with the chair of the Visiting Board. The Visiting Board's review of the program(s) at the university will normally extend over two days.

Accreditation of Joint Degrees

If a planning program has created a joint degree, which includes an existing accredited qualification, then the head of the planning program may apply to the Institute for the joint degree to be accredited. This review may or may not involve a Visiting Board, at the discretion of the National Education Committee.

Accreditation of Additional Program

If a planning program proposes a new qualification in addition to an existing accredited qualification, then the head of the planning program may apply to the Institute for the new degree to be accredited. This may or may not involve a Visiting Board at the discretion of the National Education Committee.

Transitional Arrangements

This revised policy introduces new criteria for accredited courses to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander planning issues. The Institute acknowledges that given this is a new requirement, it may take some time to incorporate the relevant content. In acknowledgement of this, a transition phase is in place until the end of 2021.

Any course undergoing accreditation that does not meet the transitory requirements noted throughout this document, may still receive accreditation. In this instance the accreditation report supplied by the university should instead include a plan and timeframe showing how the university will be in full compliance by 1 January 2022.

Institute's Determination of Accreditation

The Visiting Board process is designed to work in a collaborative and supportive manner with planning degree program providers as part of a structured process of self-reflection by those providers. Visiting Boards make recommendations in a formal report. The report is then submitted to the National Education Committee and the Committee makes a recommendation to the Institute's Board of Directors ("the Board") regarding acceptance of the report. The Board (or their delegate) will consider this recommendation and the findings and recommendations of the Visiting Board and will determine whether to continue accreditation of qualifications or accredit new qualifications.

A written record of the Institute's determination will be sent to the head of the planning program with a copy of the final report of the Visiting Board and any other relevant documentation.

The Institute will announce the results of the review process on its website and update its register of accredited programs. Universities are encouraged to promote their (re)accreditation in any material promoting their planning degree programs.

Appendix C contains further information on the timeframes and procedures for submitting reports and approval processes.

APPENDIX A: DEFINITIONS

This appendix defines key terms used in the policy.

Competency means the ability to do something successfully or efficiently.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. The Institute recognises the diversity of cultures, languages, kinship structures and ways of life of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. There is no single cultural model that fits all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and the Institute recognises they retain their distinctive cultural identities whether they live in urban, regional or remote areas of Australia.

Accreditation Policy means *PIA's Policy for the Accreditation of Australian Planning Qualifications* (2016).

Australian Qualifications Framework means the Framework (2013) as published by the Australian Qualifications Framework Council that underpins Australian tertiary qualifications.

Indigenous is defined as those communities, peoples and nations (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples) that have “historical continuity with pre-invasion and precolonial societies that developed on their territories, [and] consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems.”³

Institute means the Planning Institute of Australia (PIA).

Knowledge as acquired by planning students can be categorised into two types:

- “Declarative” knowledge denotes factual understanding of issues with students able to demonstrate that they “know about” information or understandings; and
- “Performative” or functional knowledge builds upon declarative knowledge. It denotes the skills and capacity to perform practical tasks to an acceptable standard (“know how to do”) and is exhibited by a planner’s competencies and skills, exercised in a professional and ethical manner.⁴

³ Martínez Cobo, José. (1986/7) *Study of the Problem of Discrimination against Indigenous Populations*. United Nations Commission on Human Rights, UN Doc. E/CN.4/RES/1986/35. Accessed 28 April 2016.

http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/MCS_xvii_en.pdf

⁴ March, A., Hürlimann, A. & Robins, J. (2009): *Bologna & Accreditation of Australian Urban Planners*

<https://minerva-access.unimelb.edu.au/bitstream/handle/11343/59081/March%20et%20al%20AP%202012%20pre%20print.pdf?sequence=1>



Learning Outcomes means the graduate, program and or unit learning outcomes expected for an approved program under the Australian Qualifications Framework (2013).

National Education Committee is a Committee of the Institute established to oversee the implementation of this Policy and to offer advice and recommendations to the Institute as necessary.

Planning is a profession (also referred to as town planning, urban and regional planning, environmental and spatial planning) concerned with shaping cities, towns and regions by managing land use, development, infrastructure and services⁵. The Australian Bureau of Statistics defines planning and planners as: “urban and regional planners develop and implement plans and policies for the controlled use of urban and rural land, and advise on economic, environmental, and social needs of land areas”.⁶ Planners working in the private sector advise their clients of the requirements of various planning schemes and policies and of how the implementation of these plans and policies might affect their development proposals. The planning profession shares a corpus of knowledge and methods that it draws on to analyse and regulate land use change and development. Within the broad concept of planning there is scope for more specialised areas that extend and refine the spatial approach of urban and regional planning.

Profession is defined as an organised grouping of particularly qualified persons who are “are meant to be distinct from others by practicing intellectual and non-routine thinking, based upon considerable discretionary consideration and action” of which Planning is deemed a profession.⁷ Professions are widely seen as adhering to a code of conduct with ethical behaviour at its core.

Qualification is used to denote the degree or diploma attained after the successful completion of the appropriate period of university study in compliance with the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF).

Planning Degree Program is defined as a collection of units within a Planning Program that seeks to be accredited.

Planning Program describes the organisation of planning education within a university. In some universities the planning program may take the form of a department or a school or be constituted as one amongst several related programs in a larger academic area.

⁵ Planning Institute of Australia, http://www.planning.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=684&Itemid=618 accessed 2 Nov 2009

⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics Catalogue 1220.0 - Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO) Second Edition, 1997

⁷ March, Hürlimann, & Robins, „Bologna & Accreditation of Australian Urban Planners“.



Semester means a period of study generally comprising 12 to 14 weeks. A full time student enrolment is generally considered to be 4 units of study or their equivalent in each semester. Universities operating semesters usually divide their teaching year into two periods of study or semesters.

Trimester means a period of study of approximately 12 weeks. Universities operating trimesters usually divide their teaching year into three periods of study or trimesters. The Institute recognises that Universities may have their own definition of semesters/trimesters and encourages each university to clarify its own position.

Unit means a unit of study (sometimes referred to as a subject or a course) which typically incorporates about 120 hours of overall study, with at least 36 hours of direct student engagement (widely referred to as contact hours), and which can include electronically mediated communication and engagement.

University means a university or a tertiary education provider registered with the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency.

Visiting Board means a board constituted by the Institute's National Education Committee to review qualifications submitted by a university for accreditation or re-accreditation.

APPENDIX B: SUPPORTING KNOWLEDGE AREAS

Individual universities are expected to determine a range of knowledge areas that their program will embrace.

Planning emphasises the importance of integrated approaches to issues, strategies and plan preparation. Planning knowledge in itself is an integrated concept embracing a clear process or sequence. Areas of study provide opportunities to demonstrate that integration and sequence.

Six main areas of supportive knowledge are identified (alphabetically ordered):

1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other Indigenous perspectives on planning
2. Economic Planning
3. Environmental Planning
4. Social Planning
5. Transport Planning
6. Urban Design

A university may decide to include all of these six areas in their qualifications, add complementary areas, or substitute alternative areas of study. The choice of supporting knowledge areas, their relationship to the core curriculum, and contribution to generic learning outcomes needs to be documented and explained as part of the planning program's distinctiveness.

The list of Performance Indicators below provides guidance as to competency and learning outcomes to which a planning degree program may draw upon in designing a suitable program of study. Programs have the discretion to propose a justified alternative list of Performance Indicators and appropriate outcomes for additional or alternative knowledge areas as part of the planning program's distinctiveness.

1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' and other Indigenous peoples' rights, interests and perspectives on planning

Competency - Planners are aware of the content and significance of Indigenous rights and perspectives when practicing as planners and of possible tensions with non-Indigenous professional traditions and expectations.

Performance Indicators

1. Ability to understand the different cultural beliefs and assumptions built into various theories and methods of planning practice, the ways those methods and assumptions have been used to marginalise and dispossess Indigenous

peoples, the contribution Indigenous perspectives and theories are able to make to mainstream theories, and how their rights may be better recognised and accommodated through planning systems.⁸

2. Capacity to engage respectfully with the full range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's rights and interests and their special place as the first peoples of Australia.
3. A sound working knowledge of how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' rights and interests are recognised and protected under Australian law including through land rights schemes, cultural heritage and its protection, joint management arrangements, and native title legislation.
4. Knowledge and understanding of the protocols for engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples including an understanding of the concept of free, prior and informed consent as set out by the Australian Human Rights Commission and best practice ethical guidelines.
5. A broad knowledge of Indigenous peoples and cultures at an international level including any international charters, instruments and precedents.

2. Economic Planning

Competency - Planners take a collaborative role in the production and implementation of economic development plans and strategies, whether these are discrete economic plans, components of other plans, or by providing economic planning analyses of others' plans or actions.

Performance Indicators

1. Knowledge of the spatial-economic underpinnings of urban regions and cities including the economic principles of land use distribution.
2. Knowledge of the fundamentals of the economics of development including land and property development.
3. Knowledge of the fundamentals of market feasibility, commercial decision-making, comparative advantage and property markets.
4. Capacity to analyse spatial economic plans at a basic level.

⁸ Jones, DS, Low Choy, D, Revell, G, Heyes, S, Tucker, R & S Bird, *Re-casting Terra Nullius Blindness: Empowering Indigenous Protocols and Knowledge in Australian University Built Environment Education*, Office of Learning & Teaching, Canberra, 2016.

5. Capacity to produce basic spatial economic plans and development strategies at a level demonstrating understanding and use of relevant market related concepts.
6. Capacity to link economic understandings with other ethical and practical dimensions of planning, such as socio-spatial disparities associated with globalisation.

3. Environmental Planning

Competency - Planners take a collaborative role in the production and implementation of environmental plans, whether these are discrete plans, components of other plans, or by providing environmental planning analyses of others' plans or actions.

Performance Indicators

1. Knowledge of the main principles of sustainable development, ecological systems, resilience and key issues including climate change.
2. Knowledge of natural hazards and planning approaches to managing those hazards.
3. Capacity to undertake and use environmental impact assessments.
4. Capacity to produce basic environmental plans at a level demonstrating understanding of broader principles and policy implementation.
5. Capacity to practically and critically link plans into wider frameworks of environmental action and influence at a variety of scales.

4. Social Planning

Competency - Planners take a collaborative role in the production and implementation of social and cultural plans, whether these are discrete social plans, components of other plans, or by providing social planning analyses of others' plans or actions.

Performance Indicators

1. Knowledge of the main sources of information about communities, including census and survey data.
2. Ability to undertake basic primary and secondary data gathering and analysis utilising quantitative and qualitative methods.
3. Knowledge of basic demographic statistics, analysis and presentation.
4. Working knowledge of principles and issues of social impact analysis.

5. Recognition of social and cultural diversity and the capacity to assess the equity, health and social inclusion aspects of urban and regional plans and practices.
6. Capacity to produce basic social plans – including planning for social infrastructure and remediation of socio-spatial disparities - at a level demonstrating understanding of the main components of social plan production and implementation.

5. Transport Planning

Competency - Planners take a collaborative role in the production and implementation of transport plans, whether these are discrete plans, components of other plans, or by providing planning analyses of others' plans or actions.

Performance Criteria

1. Knowledge of the relationship and integration between transport and land use.
2. Knowledge of the principles of transport planning and modelling.
3. Knowledge of various transport modes and their operation.
4. Capacity to understand and critique key concepts in transport economics and project planning.
5. Capacity to critique plans and design proposals, according to sustainable transport planning principles, linking these with other forms of planning and urban change influences.
6. Capacity to contribute to the production of transportation plans and policies at a sufficient level to demonstrate a good understanding of the main components of transport plan production and implementation.

6. Urban Design

Competency - Planners take a collaborative role in the production and implementation of urban design plans, whether these are discrete urban design documents or components of other plans, or by providing urban design analyses of others' plans or actions.

Performance Indicators

1. Knowledge of the role of urban design as a discipline in the improvement and management of the public realm and urban spaces and places.
2. Capacity to read and understand drawings and plans, including visualisation of the items represented, and to recognise and be able to critique inadequate drawings and representations.



3. Capacity to produce basic urban design plans at a level showing understanding of the main components of urban design plan production and implementation.
4. Capacity to write policy and draft controls relevant to achievement of urban design outcomes.

APPENDIX C: DOCUMENTATION AND PROCESSES FOR VISITING BOARDS

Procedures and Timelines for a Visiting Board

In order to ensure sufficient time for adequate preparation by the Visiting Board and review of submission material this Policy sets indicative timelines, outlined below.

Prior to any visit, the Institute will provide the Visiting Board with copies of the report of the previous Visiting Board (in the context of reaccreditation), a report on the qualification(s) prepared by the head of the planning program, a draft schedule for the visit and any other relevant material. The university should provide its documentation no later than five weeks prior to requesting the scheduled visit. The head of the planning program should send one electronic and one hard copy of their report.

The Visiting Board members will then review the documentation provided by the head of the planning program to identify any areas where they feel that more information may be needed. Any requests for further information will be conveyed by the chair of the Visiting Board to the Institute, and to the head of the planning program no later than two weeks prior to the visit.

All Visiting Board members will confer prior to commencing their formal review to identify and discuss any issues requiring particular attention, and to determine whether any changes are needed to the draft schedule of the visit. The chair of the Visiting Board will discuss any changes to the schedule with and agreed to by the head of the planning program, preferably one week prior to the visit.

At the end of the visit, and prior to the Visiting Board departing from the university, the chair of the Visiting Board will verbally summarise, for the head of the planning program, the agreed position of the Visiting Board at that time in relation to the qualification(s) and programs being examined, provide details on any additional required information or other relevant reflection on the planning program.

Within four weeks of the accreditation visit, the Visiting Board will produce a draft report that will make recommendations about the accreditation of qualifications and give reasons for those recommendations. Recommendations may include **mandatory** requirements regarding the curriculum or mode of delivery of the program as well as **suggestions** for improving the program. This report is to be sent to the head of the planning program for factual accuracy verification and for any initial response to the recommendations. Once these comments have been received and agreement has been reached among members of the Visiting Board, a draft final report is produced for consideration by the National Education Committee within two weeks. This report will make clear which (if any) requirements are mandatory and must be implemented within a clearly specified timeframe, and which are advisory and will be considered during subsequent reviews.



Each Visiting Board has discretion in making recommendations as to whether the qualification they are reviewing is appropriate for recognition by the Institute. All recommendations are considered by the National Education Committee, which may ask the Visiting Board for additional information and consideration of relevant issues.

Accreditation Submission

Requests for interim, full accreditation and re-accreditation should be accompanied by a substantive but succinct report prepared by the head of the planning program on behalf of the university. The expectation is that the case for accreditation will provide information on the following matters:

- Profile of the university, its major groupings (such as faculties and schools) and the planning degree program;
- Organisation of the planning degree program including staffing, IT resourcing, accommodation and student characteristics, including recruitment, retention and graduation rates;
- Description of the curriculum and its development over time;
- How the qualification delivers the outcomes sought in terms of educating and training planners as set out in this Policy;
- Any special approaches to learning and teaching and to pedagogy that might be of benefit to the wider profession; and
- Any other particular aspects and issues for consideration.

A template will be provided by the Institute that sets out the reporting format and sections. This template is filled in by the university seeking accreditation, and returned to the Institute. This content will then be passed onto the Visiting Board. The Visiting Board will have their own space within the report to then provide comment and assessment.

Indicative schedule for a Visiting Board

The head of the planning program should propose a draft schedule for the visit. This should include a series of meetings with staff in the planning program, senior university administrators, students (current and past), review of student work, and inspection of university facilities such as classrooms and other student spaces, staff facilities, library and IT resources.

The head of the planning program is asked to arrange for staff to explain the work of each year, its relationship with the preceding and following years, and the relationship between unit areas in that year. The purpose of this is to demonstrate the structure of the qualification and the integration of units.

Uncommitted time also needs to be programmed to facilitate the internal deliberations of the Visiting Board.



The schedule can be adapted to meet the institutional circumstances and timing of the visit as necessary. The Visiting Board will want ideally to see the planning program functioning as normally as possible.

Normally the Visiting Board would expect meetings to include:

- Detailed discussion with the head of the planning program. An initial meeting would normally take place at the beginning of the visit so the Visiting Board can obtain an overview of the qualification and clarify information already provided;
- Discussion with the staff responsible for specific areas of study;
- Discussion with students and recent graduates;
- A meeting with employers;
- A meeting with the course advisory committee;
- A meeting with senior colleagues in the Faculty or School in which the planning program is situated (e.g. Deans, Associate Deans, Departmental Head); and
- A meeting with the Vice Chancellor of the University or his/her nominee.

ADDENDUM: VISITING BOARD PROCESSES DURING A PANDEMIC

Composition and Procedures for a Visiting Board during a Pandemic.

In 2020 COVID-19 has impacted on PIA's accreditation process with travel, face-to-face meetings and university capacity being reduced during the pandemic. This appendix is to set out a process to manage the continuing issues during this and any future pandemics.

University Capacity

The first consideration during a pandemic relevant to this policy is the immediate impact on the university sector (universities, academics, and students) caused from the outbreak. If it has been considerable, a postponement of accreditation visits may be considered, weighing up the risk of accreditation and capacity.

Guiding Principles

- Universities will be supported by PIA to have the flexibility to rapidly manage changes required under impacts of pandemics (e.g. online teaching, work placement alternatives etc.)
- Open communication between PIA and accredited universities about changes caused by the pandemic is critical. This is to assure universities of retaining accreditation and PIA assured of continuing high standard of education
- PIA and Universities will have the ability to move reaccreditation visits as required due to health restrictions and to manage workloads and changes.
- PIA will maintain the guiding principle of courses achieving the outcomes required in the policy as the paramount, not a focus on the how to achieve the outcome.

Specific COVID-19 measures – 2020

All reaccreditations due in 2020, 2021 and 2022 have an additional year of accreditation to manage the stoppage of all accreditations during 2020. Some universities will need to bring their reaccreditation forward if they have made substantial changes to a course. This will be managed in a triaged fashion with correspondence between PIA and each impacted university.

Reaccreditation visits will begin again in 2021 with a high likelihood of impacts from the pandemic still being felt and possible travel restrictions in place in some locations.

Visiting Board two-day visits to the university campus

During a pandemic, the usual process of sending in a visiting board comprised of an out-of-state academic (chair of the visiting board) plus two local PIA members may be impacted. The Board usually spends two days visiting a university campus as part of the reaccreditation process but social distancing, lockdown requirements and closures of state borders may make this impossible. Flexibility in the length of the visits and providing a virtual process may be necessary.



Guiding Principles

Whilst the pandemic is still impacting on Australia and requiring social distancing measures, lockdown curfews and impacting on the ability for inter-state travel, the following measures will be put in place:

- Flexibility for the chair to join the meetings virtually if state travel restrictions are in place and local PIA members can attend the campus in person
- Flexibility for the full visiting board to conduct the visit virtually if isolation restrictions are in place and it is still possible to meet with the necessary university representatives virtually
- Flexibility for the meeting schedule to break from the two-day format and spread across more days with shorter periods to allow for a virtual format
- The universities and visiting board members will abide by social distancing measures in accordance with the state health requirements to ensure safety of all involved if attending face-to-face

Specific COVID-19 measures – 2020

The above flexible arrangements will be worked through by PIA Staff in consultation with the university and Visiting Board members for as long as COVID-19 continues to impact on the usual approach to accreditation visits.

VERSION CONTROL

Authorising Entity:	Board
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Version	Author	Revision Notes	Date Approved
1	PIA Education Committee	Original document	2011
2	Michelle Riepsamen	Administrative review to align with Board approved changes to Code of Membership, removal of Chapters, separation of fee schedule. Approved by Board Resolution 2015-08-21/5.3.	21/8/2015
3	Michelle Riepsamen	Complete review in consultation with the PIA Education Committee.	29/9/2016 V3 re-endorsed 30/11/2018
4	PIA Education Committee	Addition of words under the Practical Experience and Experiential Learning heading. Approved by Board Resolution 2019-04-17/2.7	17 April 2019
5	PIA Education Committee Board	Addition of Pandemic Addendum	20 November 2020 27 November 2020