



Accreditation Standards for Osteopathic Courses in Australia

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This document sets out the standards required by the Australasian Osteopathic Accreditation Council (AOAC) for the accreditation of courses leading to the award of qualifications that confer eligibility to apply for registration as an osteopath in Australia.

These Standards were developed through a process involving widespread consultation and discussion. AOAC conducted initial meetings with senior staff of all three universities providing programs of study in osteopathy in Australia—RMIT University, Southern Cross University and Victoria University. The Council circulated draft versions of the standards to stakeholders for comment. AOAC conducted two workshops so stakeholders could give feedback on and discuss the new standards as they evolved. This overall process focused on aspects of the educational and professional context in which the standards will be applied, including on the stakeholders who will do so.

This document should be read in conjunction with the Osteopathy Board of Australia [Capabilities for Osteopathic Practice](#)

Preamble

In preparing the final accreditation standards, AOAC affirms a number of interrelated principles. Accreditation standard, for a health profession, means a standard used to assess whether a program of study, and the education provider that proves the program of study, provide the persons who complete the program with the knowledge, skills and professional attributes required to practice the profession in Australia. As with all accreditation standards, these are contextual and relate to the political, professional and educational environments in place when they were developed. They have a finite life expectancy and will, in due course, be reviewed and superseded.

Accreditation standards are important to the profession into which graduates of programs of study enter including, in this instance, osteopaths. Educational providers, professional associations, as well as current and intending students therefore have a significant interest in the evolution and impact of these standards. Effective accreditation is an on-going process, not a series of discrete events. Successful accreditation depends upon maintaining robust, respectful and productive relationships between the accrediting authority and providers and regulators. These standards are intended to be compatible with the accreditation standards and processes regulated by the Australian regulatory body for higher education (currently TEQSA) and outlined in the Australian Higher Education Standards Framework.

Worldwide, higher education operates in a digital, open, flexible, borderless online space. This includes education for osteopaths. It is important that the education of those who wish to register and practise as osteopaths takes place in an environment in which teaching and clinical practice is informed by and engaged with research evidence and scholarship. The specific nature of this, and the ways in which staff are engaged, may vary between education providers.

Context of this edition of the accreditation standards

The consultation process that supported the *Accreditation Standards for Osteopathic Courses in Australia (2016)* emphasised aspects of the educational and professional context in which the standards and different stakeholders operate. During consultations, stakeholders viewed the final preceding version of the standards and drafts of the current version.

Field 1 Education provider context and governance

Standard 1.1 Education provider registration and standing

- 1.1.1 The education provider delivering or planning to deliver a program of study in osteopathy is a registered Higher Education Provider recorded on the National Register of higher education providers (TEQSA).
- 1.1.2 Throughout the accreditation process, the education provider will make available documentation produced for TEQSA and other internal and external quality assurance processes as deemed necessary by AOAC, to fulfil its duty to confirm its current status to the Board [*or any other regulator*]. Information received in this context will be treated as commercially sensitive and details will remain confidential.

This information enables AOAC to confirm that the education provider:

- 1.1.2.1 Has comprehensive systems of corporate and academic governance in place
- 1.1.2.2 Satisfies statutory requirements relating to financial viability and sustainability
- 1.1.2.3 Has effective systems of corporate and academic management in place
- 1.1.2.4 Uses comprehensive quality assurance systems to monitor academic provision and performance
- 1.1.2.5 Applies appropriate risk management systems.

Standard 1.2 Program accreditation

- 1.2.1 The program of study has been accredited against the criteria listed in the standards used by the relevant higher education regulator.

Standard 1.3 Resource allocation

The education provider demonstrates that they have:

- 1.3.1 Committed the specialised resources, such as laboratories, learning resource centres, treatment tables and space, needed to teach practical skills subjects commensurate with the curriculum designed for and number of students enrolled in the education program
- 1.3.2 Electronic resources that are appropriate, up to date and well maintained
- 1.3.3 The number of teaching staff allocated to the program necessary to deliver a program that provides graduates with the knowledge, skills, and professional attributes to practise osteopathy in Australia
- 1.3.4 Allocated to the program teaching staff who are equipped with the skills and experience to effectively deliver the program
- 1.3.5 Measures in place to ensure that all institutional obligations to students are, and continue to be, met
- 1.3.6 Adequate resource and personnel planning in place to design the curriculum and meet the needs of student cohorts
- 1.3.7 Mechanisms in place to monitor program delivery to ensure resources are sufficient to continue to produce graduates who have demonstrated the capabilities required for osteopathic practice.

Field 2 Standards relating to the osteopathic curriculum

Standard 2.1 Assessment

The education provider demonstrates that:

- 2.1.1 There is a coherent strategic approach to assessment.

- 2.1.2 A range of formative and summative assessment methods are used, including clear and consistent mapping of assessments of learning outcomes and capabilities.
- 2.1.3 All assessment items are well-publicised and communicated to students, including the mechanism for managing assessments, a special assessment consideration process, appeals and other essential procedures.
- 2.1.4 The assessment strategy incorporates an evidence-informed approach that enables a fair, valid and reliable judgement of student performance.
- 2.1.5 Internal and external moderation policies and processes are in place to ensure all assessment events are appropriate and reliable and apply standards that have been benchmarked with relevant education providers.
- 2.1.6 Assessments of student performance are conducted by assessors trained in using approved assessment methodology.
- 2.1.7 Clinical components of the curriculum are used to assess students at appropriate and well-publicised intervals, to develop and reinforce the skills and habits of reflective practice, and encourage evidence-informed and person-centred practice.
- 2.1.8 Assessments are combined to create assessment profiles demonstrating that graduates meet the osteopathic capabilities required for safe, inter-professional, innovative and evolving osteopathic practice.

Standard 2.2 Scholarship and research in the curriculum

The education provider provides evidence that:

- 2.2.1 The program of study incorporates knowledge and enquiry consistent with the level of qualification and expected learning outcomes, including:
 - (i) current knowledge and scholarship in osteopathy and related disciplines and fields
 - (ii) study of the underlying theoretical and conceptual frameworks of osteopathy and related disciplines, and/or fields of education or research
 - (iii) emerging concepts informed by recent scholarship, current research findings and advances in practice
- 2.2.2 Effective mechanisms are in place to ensure that learning and teaching is informed by up-to-date evidence.
- 2.2.3 The curriculum ensures that students have in-depth understanding of the importance of using evidence to inform clinical practice; this involves a curriculum requiring students to employ the skills needed to identify, critically evaluate, interpret and integrate evidence into their clinical practice.

Standard 2.3 Learning outcomes and curriculum content

The education provider:

- 2.3.1 Designs the curriculum so that students are required to achieve the capabilities expected by their professional registration body of graduates who are seeking registration
- 2.3.2 Ensures the curriculum incorporates delivery methods appropriate to the stages and components of the program
- 2.3.3 Demonstrates evidence of the proportion of face-to-face learning, self-directed study and other modes of delivery
- 2.3.4 Ensures cultural competence is appropriately integrated into the program and clearly articulated as learning outcomes (this includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures)
- 2.3.5 Ensures the program of study leads to the award of a qualification at Australian Qualifications Framework Level 7 or higher.

Standard 2.4 Clinical content

2.4.1 Location:

Clinical education is provided in one or more locations that can be shown to be:

- (i) Adequate in size for the number of patients attending
- (ii) Appropriate to the number of students enrolled in the program and using the facility, and monitored to ensure each location contributes effectively to anticipated program learning outcomes
- (iii) Well-equipped and well managed to provide high-quality professional care to patients, to the standards required under relevant federal and state/territory legislation for the provision of healthcare services
- (iv) Equipped to provide standards of experience and supervision consistent across locations and, if relevant, providers
- (v) Staffed by personnel appropriately trained and equipped to contribute to educational and assessment elements of the program.
- (vi) Drawing on a patient group presenting a broad range of physical and mental health problems relevant to those seen in general osteopathic practice in Australia
- (vii) Suitable for innovative educational approaches through supervision and assessment strategies and/or by engaging students in multi-disciplinary healthcare settings
- (viii) Collecting information that enables the education provider to submit an annual clinic audit report that analyses patient numbers, demographics and presenting complaints.

2.4.2 Clinical education:

The education provider can show that the clinical education element of the program:

- (i) Is conducted under the supervision of osteopathic and other healthcare practitioners experienced in professional practice.
 - (ii) Supports clinical supervisors in developing high levels of skill in clinical education.
 - (iii) Provides students with extensive clinical experience in screening, diagnosis, treatment and health management for a range of patients and clinical conditions consistent with general osteopathic practice in Australia.
 - (iv) Incorporates simulation-based learning, where necessary, to ensure students develop a comprehensive range of diagnostic and examination skills.
 - (v) Ensures transparency with respect to cost to participating students.
 - (vi) Develops graduates able to meet the capabilities required for osteopathic practice.
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