POLICY

Name:	**COURSE DESIGN, APPROVAL, AND REVIEW**
Policy No:	PP3119
Approved by:	ACER Academic Board
Last reviewed:	July 2019
Responsible Division/ Department	Professional Resources Division/ACER Institute

1. Purpose

To design, approve, and review Courses and Units, and provide academic direction that enhances and assures the quality and continuous improvement of all Courses and Units.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all TEQSA-accredited Higher Education Courses and Units that involve coursework, and all professional learning courses which are internally accredited by ACER.

3. Definitions

See: Glossary of Terms

4. Legislation and Related Documents

ACER Student policies
Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) 2nd edn. (Jan 2013)
Disability Standards for Education 2005
Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015
TEQSA Guidance Note: Course Design

5. Principles

Courses submitted for approval within ACER are the result of rigorous development and continuous improvement in their content, delivery and assessment. These objectives are embedded in the following principles:

i. Courses are grounded in research evidence and sound conceptual and theoretical underpinnings.

ii. Continuous improvement demands continuous involvement from all stakeholders, and ACER supports a collaborative approach to the development of curriculum.

iii. Process reviews are carried out on a regular basis to identify changes, and/or modifications which, when implemented, will ensure effective and efficient practice.

iv. Learning technologies are embedded in overall curriculum design and logically linked to learning outcomes.

v. <u>ACER's Professional Learning Quality Principles</u> and Graduate Attributes are used to guide the development, review, and evaluation of Higher Education Courses and Units.

vi. Higher Education Courses and Units comply with the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) requirements outlined in the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards 2015), and the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF).

vii. ACER supports innovative course design by investing in current and relevant educational technology, online infrastructure, and learning spaces.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

These are outlined in the Schedule of Authorities and Delegations (internal).

7. Higher Education Course and Unit Design

7.1 The design for each Course of study is specified, and the specification includes:

- Structure, duration and modes of delivery.

- The qualification(s) to be awarded on completion of an accredited Course of study.

- The Units of study (or equivalent) that comprise the Course of study.

- Details of admission criteria, entry requirements and pathways, including English language requirements.

- Expected Course Learning Outcomes, methods of assessment, and indicative Student workload.

- Compulsory requirements for completion.

- Exit pathways, articulation arrangements, pathways to further learning, and for a Course of study leading to a Masters' qualification the proportion and nature of research or research-related study in the Course. Consideration will be given to the development of qualification pathways and articulation arrangements for students to progress into and between qualification levels.

- Course and Unit nomenclature must comply with TEQSA and the AQF, and with ACER PP3128 Nomenclature Policy.

7.2 The educational aims and learning outcomes for a Higher Education Course or Unit must be consistent with the level of classification for that qualification in the AQF, and expressed as knowledge, skills and the application of knowledge and skills as specified in the relevant AQF criteria and the award-level descriptor.

7.3 Course and Unit learning and teaching activities, and other ACER learning activities and tools will be designed to incorporate current and appropriate learning technologies that are accessible to all users.

7.4 Each Course or Unit of study is designed to enable achievement of expected learning outcomes regardless of a Student's place of study or the mode of delivery; this includes development of content that will help to create an online collaborative community.

7.5 Mapping will be used to show how the learning strategies embodied in individual Units work together to produce student learning outcomes, and how Units work together to build Course Learning Outcomes.

7.6 Design strategies will ensure that all learning and teaching activities, resources, assessment and criteria for grading, and learning outcomes (including Graduate Attributes) will be aligned so that Courses and Units are explicitly coherent.

7.7 Course Learning Outcomes will be informed by national and international comparators and appraised using peer review and feedback from external stakeholders to ensure they are responsive to discipline, professional, and employer needs and priorities.

7.8 Courses and Units will be designed to accommodate student diversity, including the under-representation and/or disadvantage experienced by identified groups, and create equivalent opportunities for academic success regardless of students' backgrounds.

7.9 Course and Unit design will include provision for activities that contribute to a deep knowledge and understanding of digital systems, data and information, to enable Students to take an active role in meeting current and future needs.

8. Higher Education Course and Unit Approval

i.   All Higher Education Courses and Units are subject to rigorous internal governance, and require formal approval from the ACER Academic Board.

ii.   Documentation for a new Higher Education Award Course, or significant changes to an existing Higher Education Award Course must then be submitted to, and approved by, TEQSA.

iii. The content and learning activities of each Course of study will engage with advanced knowledge and inquiry consistent with the level of study and the expected Course Learning Outcomes.

iv. Course Learning Outcomes will embrace specific, generic, employment-related, and life-long learning outcomes.

v. Teaching and learning activities will include the use of relevant and current learning technologies and are arranged to foster progressive and coherent achievement of expected Learning Outcomes throughout each Course of study.

vi. Sufficient evidence will be provided to demonstrate that the Course or Unit can be offered within an appropriate teaching and learning environment, and within available resources. For example, market research and a business case (including financial impact) are required, and may be requested, before a new Course or Unit can be approved.

9. Course and Unit review and evaluation

9.1 Review:

i. All Higher Education Courses of study are subject to periodic (at least every seven years) comprehensive reviews that are overseen by peak academic governance processes and include external referencing, or other benchmarking activities.

ii. A comprehensive review of a Higher Education Course includes the design and content of each Course of study, the expected Course Learning Outcomes, the methods for assessment of those outcomes, the extent of Students' achievement of learning outcomes, and also takes account of emerging developments in the field of education, modes of delivery, educational technology, the changing needs of Students, and identified risks to the quality of the Course of study.

iii. Evaluation is an integral element of ACER's review and development. Interim reviews and minor reviews of all Courses and Units incorporate approved evaluation processes.

9.2 Evaluation:

i. Feedback from the Unit/Course Staff Members will be collected and analysed at the conclusion of each Unit and Course.

ii. Feedback from students, graduands, and employer bodies will also be collected and analysed.

iii. Student retention and attrition data will be considered as part of the evaluation process.

iv. All relevant data collected will contribute to immediate minor adjustments to content and delivery strategies and will constitute a report to be presented to the ACER Course Development and Quality Committee, or to its subcommittee as required by The Director.

v. Staff Members who participate in Course and Unit evaluation processes will do so with integrity and honesty.

vi. The use of learning technologies will be evaluated annually to ensure that Courses, Units, and other ACER learning and teaching activities, incorporate technology and tools that are appropriate, accessible, and current.

10. Professional learning – course design and approval

    i.   Professional learning courses are designed for a specific audience .

    ii.   Professional learning courses have a robust quality assurance process based on TEQSA Standards and the requirements of professional bodies.

    iii.   ACER may offer a Unit that forms part of a TEQSA-accredited Higher Education Course as a stand-alone Non-Award Unit for the purposes of professional development, and/or to maximise learning potential in a specific area of study, and/or to provide the knowledge and skills required to enrol in a Course of study.

    iv.   Sufficient evidence must be provided to show that a professional learning course can be offered within an appropriate teaching and learning environment, and within available resources.

    v.   Course design takes into account points 7.3 to 7.8 of this policy, while acknowledging that some professional learning may be intentionally designed to be delivered in face-to-face or blended mode.

    vi.   Professional learning courses are internally accredited by ACER, and awarded an ACER-approved certificate.

    vii.   There is an approved design, review and approval process for professional learning short courses. It is governed by an independent subcommittee of the Course Development and Quality Committee (CDQC), and endorsed by the CQDC.

    viii.   The subcommittee of the Course Development and Quality Committee (CDQC) makes recommendations for reviews of professional learning courses.

    ix.   Professional learning courses are evaluated as outlined in section 9.2 of this policy.

11. Dispute Resolution

Should a dispute arise in relation to the interpretation or application of this policy or its procedures a Grievance may be notified and managed in accordance with the ACER PP3111 Student Grievance Resolution Policy.

12. Awareness of Policy

The Director will take reasonable steps to disseminate and explain this policy to Staff Members and Students who may be affected by it. The policy will be available online at: www.acer.org/professional-learning/postgraduate/students/policies

13. Version Control

Authorised by	ACER Academic Board
Maintained by:	Director, ACER Institute
Written:	March 2013
Next Review:	December 2020
Version:	6

Version	Date effective	Approved by	Amendment
1.	21/1/2013	E. Hartnell-Young	Logo, Page Numbers
2.	12/03/2013	C. Kemp	Last Review date updated, Version Control details included, formatting
3.	12/11/2015	G. Appleby	Definitions, Purpose, Scope, Awareness of Policy, Version Control details, formatting
4.	17/8/2016	P. Taylor-Guy	Renamed Policy Updated purpose Aligned with Threshold Standards 2015 Statements without dedicated roles and responsibilities moved out of section 6 Added section 7 Added section 8 Added section 9 Remove table of definitions and add link. Update Legislation and Related Documents. Update Version Control.
5.	1/8/2018	P. Taylor-Guy	Aligned this policy with the proposed Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy. Replaced roles and responsibilities with a Schedule of Delegations. Added new principles around learning technology at iv and vii. Added new section at 7.3 Added wording in 7.2 Added new section at 7.6 Updated wording 7.7 Added new section 7.8 Added new section 7.9 Updated 8.1 iii. New section 9.1 vi

6.	July 2019	P. Taylor-Guy	Quality check Amended scope - incorporation of PL short courses Refers to Schedule of Authorities and Delegations Checked policy against TEQSA requirements Added to 7.1 vii Added new section 8 ii Added new section 10 Aligned the policy and procedures with ACER's internal accreditation process for professional learning courses Updated version control Checked formatting Changed next review date