Australian Sonographer Accreditation Registry (ASAR)
Policy & Procedure 11 - Review and Continual Improvement of the Accreditation Framework

1. Preamble

It is ASAR's objective to promote high standards of medical sonography in Australia which includes setting uniform, minimum standards of sonographer education and education by assessing and accrediting courses in all disciplines of sonography.

The Accreditation Framework and the procedures which underpin it must undergo an ongoing cycle of review to maintain consistency with the principles of accreditation and for continuous improvement. All stakeholders should have an opportunity for input or participation in the periodic review of the Framework as a whole.

2. Policy Principles

This policy details the procedures by which the ASAR will conduct regular review of the Accreditation Framework to ensure all elements continue to be of relevance. It will also ensure ASAR remains in a robust position to respond to and operate within the evolving education and training sector.

ASAR seeks to continually improve the Accreditation Framework over time by constantly evaluating and improving all aspects of the framework including its efficiency, effectiveness and flexibility.

3. Accreditation Principles

The accreditation principles underpinning the approach to accreditation are:

Legitimacy
The accreditation procedure must be legitimate and acceptable to stakeholders. Such legitimacy includes impartiality in relation to particular stakeholder groups; and appropriate respect for the academic autonomy of course providers. The accreditation procedure must also be consistent with current legislation and guidelines.

Validity
The accreditation procedure must be valid in that the procedures are appropriate for assessing the determination of criteria. These criteria must be evidence-based and explicitly related to the necessary graduate competency outcomes and other specified purposes of the accreditation procedure. The period and status of accreditation must be appropriate to the nature of the programs and developments in the professional field.

Efficiency
The accreditation procedure must cover what is necessary and sufficient and not be unnecessarily burdensome for course providers, Course Assessment Committee members or other participants.

Accountability & Transparency
The accreditation procedure and its outcomes should also be transparent to stakeholders and the public as long as appropriate confidentiality and protection of privacy is maintained.

Procedural fairness
The accreditation Procedure must meet the principles of procedural fairness.

Quality and improvement
The accreditation procedures and criteria should facilitate the development of programs of the highest academic and professional quality and facilitate the continuous improvement of programs over the period for which they are accredited.

Ongoing cycle of review
The accreditation procedures must undergo an ongoing cycle of review to maintain consistency with these principles and for ongoing improvement.

4. Scope

This policy applies to:

1. ASAR Board of Directors
2. ASAR Secretariat
3. ASAR Course Assessment Committee Members
4. Course Providers delivering accredited Sonography Courses

5. Definitions

Accreditation
For the purpose of this policy accreditation means that an ultrasound course has been assessed by ASAR as complying with all the ASAR Standards for the Accreditation of Sonography Courses (SASC).

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Accreditation Framework
The Accreditation Framework establishes the policies, procedures and standards within which sonography courses are granted accreditation for a specified time, having met transparent and defined requirements. The accreditation framework includes:

a. the Course Accreditation Application Pack,
b. supporting policies, procedures, and
c. Standards for the Accreditation of Sonography Courses.

Australian Qualifications Framework
The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) is the national policy for regulated qualifications in Australian education and training. It incorporates the qualifications from each education and training sector into a single comprehensive national qualifications framework.

Australian Sonographers Association
The Australian Sonographers Association (ASA) is the peak body and leading voice for sonographers in Australia. The ASA guides the advancement of the sonography profession to ensure the community has access to quality sonographic services.

Australian Sonographer Accreditation Registry
Australian Sonographer Accreditation Registry (ASAR) accredits ultrasound courses offered by various providers and establishes the criteria against which all courses are to be assessed. ASAR also maintains a register of accredited medical and student sonographers, with the continuing professional development (CPD) activities of accredited medical sonographers recorded and monitored.

ASAR Board of Directors of Directors
The ASAR Board of Directors of Directors is the body appointed by the members of the company to take responsibility for achieving ASAR's objects

The number and nature of Directors is defined in section V of the ASAR Constitution.

ASAR Course Assessment Committee
ASAR Course Assessment Committee members will be selected from a pool of people who have skills and expert knowledge of sonography, specialist disciplines, and/or expertise in education. Committees will be established in

response to changing demands, expectations and needs of the course seeking accreditation.

ASAR Constitution
The ASAR Constitution sets out the rules governing the conduct of the organisation.

ASAR Secretariat
The ASAR Secretariat is the ASAR office management.

Course Assessors
Members of the ASAR Course assessor pool who have been selected to participate on a Course Assessment Committee.

Course
A course is the full program of study and experiences required to be undertaken before a qualification recognised under the AQF, and approved by a regulatory authority, can be conferred. Some organisations will also use the term 'program' to refer to a course.

Course Owner
The course owner is the legal entity that is the proponent or applicant for the course for the purpose of establishing a nationally recognised course in the Higher Education Sector.

Course Provider
The course provider is the organisation that issues the testamur for a nationally recognised course and is responsible for learning and assessment including those situations where the course provider enters into contracting or auspicing agreements for the course delivery and assessment.

The course owner and provider may be one organisation.

Lead Course Assessor
The Lead Course Assessor is selected from the ASAR Course Assessor Pool and will normally have acted as a Course Assessor on other Course Assessment Committees.

Reaccreditation
For the purpose of this policy reaccreditation is the procedures of renewing accreditation of a course in light of any changes that may have taken place within

the industry sector or in available Training Packages. For this reason, an application for reaccreditation requires the same rigor as an application for accreditation.

Continuing Accreditation is granted to a course when it is re-evaluated at specified intervals.

Sonographer
A Sonographer is a highly skilled medical imaging professional who utilises ultrasound imaging systems to undertake diagnostic medical sonographic examinations across a range of contexts.

6. The Accreditation Framework

The Accreditation Framework establishes the policies, procedures and standards within which sonography courses are granted accreditation for a specified time, having met transparent and defined requirements. The accreditation framework includes:

1. Course Accreditation Application Pack,
2. supporting policies, procedures, and
3. Standards for the Accreditation of Sonography Courses (SASC).

6.1. The Course Accreditation Application Pack

The Course Accreditation Application Pack has been developed to assist organisations seeking course accreditation with the ASAR against the SASC. ASAR recognises the enormous amount of work that goes into writing up a course accreditation or reaccreditation application; but it also recognises that the procedures need to be rigorous.

6.2. Supporting Policies and Procedures

There are a number of policies and procedures that support the accreditation procedure ensuring it adheres to the accreditation principles.

P&P #	ASAR Action
1	Establishing & Managing the ASAR Course Assessor Pool
2	Determining Eligibility for Accreditation of Courses
3	Applying for Accreditation of Sonography Courses
4	Appointing the ASAR Assessment Committee
5	Assessing an Application for Sonography Course Accreditation
6	Reporting Accreditation Decisions

P&P #	ASAR Action
7	Lodging an Appeal Against an Accreditation Decision
8	Notification of Accreditation Status and Use of ASAR Logo
9	Annual Reporting Requirements for Accredited Sonography Courses
10	Making Complaints about Accredited Sonography Courses
11	Review and Continual Improvement of the Accreditation Framework
12	Moderation of Accreditation Decisions

6.3. Standards for the Accreditation of Sonography Courses

The Standards for the Accreditation of Sonography Courses (SASC) provide specific criteria for measuring whether a course fulfils the defined requirements. The standards will be used to assess every application for accreditation. To be successful an application is required to satisfactorily address all criteria for all eight standards.

The standards and criteria have been developed in consultation with a representative committee of key stakeholders, including regulators, professional bodies, and academics. The development procedure has also ensured that the standards reflect and embrace the concepts and principles of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and course accreditation from both the higher education and Vocational Education and Training (VET) sectors.

7. Review of the Course Accreditation Application Pack and Accreditation Procedures

Following every accreditation, feedback will be gathered from:

1. The Applicant
2. ASAR Course Assessment Committee
3. ASAR Board of Directors
4. ASAR Secretariat

Each group will complete an evaluation form providing comment on:

1. the usability and effectiveness of the Standards for the Accreditation of Sonography Courses (SASC),
2. Course Accreditation Application Pack,
3. the quality and validity of the Policies & Procedures,
4. the usefulness of the Tools & Templates in assisting the completion of the procedures effectively and any required changes, and

5. the effectiveness of the Accreditation procedure in identifying problematic programs

8. Review of the Standards for the Accreditation of Sonography Courses

The SASC will be subject to review and validation.

Effective validation ensures that the SACS continue to meet the needs of those receiving Sonography education and provide outcomes that are accepted by enterprise and other key industry stakeholders. These procedures serve to enhance industry acceptance of the outcomes of the ASAR accredited programs.

Recommendations for change that result from the validation procedures must be incorporated into the Accreditation Framework.

9. Continuous Improvement

Continuous improvement is an ongoing effort to improve products, services, or procedures. ASAR seeks to continually improve the Accreditation Framework over time by constantly evaluating and improving all aspects of the Accreditation Framework, including its efficiency, effectiveness and flexibility.

ASAR will:

1. collect feedback from stakeholders,
2. consider preventative and corrective actions as a means to identify potential and actual areas for improvement,
3. seek relevant industry input, and
4. undertake internal audit procedures.

The continuous improvement procedures will be documented for action by the ASAR Secretariat and reported to the ASAR Board of Directors at least annually.

9.1. Involvement of ASAR Members and Staff

All ASAR Members, staff and industry are encouraged through good communication mechanisms to have input into the continuous improvement of the ASAR Quality Management System, in particular the Accreditation Framework. Continuous improvement proposals are to be submitted to the ASAR Secretariat using the Continuous Improvement Record form and recorded in the Continuous Improvement Register. Any concern raised will be considered at the next board Meeting.

9.2. Endorsement of Change

All significant requirements for continuous improvement will be referred to the ASAR Board of Directors for consideration. All changes to the Quality Management System, including changes to the Accreditation Framework are to be endorsed by the Board.

9.3. Communication of Changes

Changes to the quality system as a result of identification of continuous improvement are to be documented on the website.

9.4. Reporting of Non-conformance

ASAR Secretariat are to identify and report any quality system non-conformances so that corrective action can be implemented. Non-conformance is to be reported using the Continuous Improvement Record form and recorded in the Continuous Improvement Register.

10. Procedure Summary – Review

Trigger	ASAR Action	Responsibility
Completion of each Accreditation Procedures	Provide Applicant with Feedback Form	ASAR Secretariat
	Provide Committee with Feedback Form	ASAR Secretariat
	Provide Board with Feedback Form	ASAR Secretariat
	Collect Feedback from Applicant	ASAR Secretariat
	Complete Feedback Form	ASAR Course Assessment Committee
	Complete Feedback Form	ASAR Board of Directors
	Complete Feedback Form	Applicant
	Collate Feedback and Make suggestions for improvement	ASAR Secretariat
	Provide Continuous Improvement Plan to Board for endorsement	ASAR Secretariat
	Endorse Continuous Improvement Plan	ASAR Board of Directors

	Implement Continuous Improvement Actions	ASAR Secretariat

11. Procedures Summary – Continuous Improvement

Trigger	ASAR Action	Responsibility
Area for improvement identified	Complete Continuous Improvement Record	All stakeholders
	Number the Record and add to Continuous Improvement Register	ASAR Secretariat
	Decide on action to be taken	ASAR Secretariat
	If necessary, take to ASAR Board of Directors for consideration	ASAR Secretariat
	Endorse all proposed changes	ASAR Board of Directors
	Action the endorsed change	ASAR Secretariat
	Communicate the change	ASAR Secretariat

12. Tools & Templates

The following tools and templates are to be used when reviewing of the Accreditation Framework:

- 11.2 - Feedback Form - Applicants
- 11.3 - Feedback Form - Assessors
- 11.4 - Feedback Form - The ASAR Board of Directors
- 11.5 - Feedback Form - ASAR Secretariat

The following tools and templates are to be used when reviewing the Quality Management System including the Accreditation Framework:

- 11.6 - Continuous Improvement Register
- 11.7 - Continuous Improvement Record Form

13. Supporting Documentation

Organisations seeking accreditation or re-accreditation are advised that the

application pack must be read in conjunction with:

- The Standards for the Accreditation of Sonography Courses available from the ASAR website; and
- The ASA Competency Standards for the Entry Level Sonographer available from the ASA website.

14. Related Policies and Procedures

The other ASAR Policies and Procedures which relate to this document are:

- 1 - Establishing & Managing the ASAR Course Assessor Pool
- 2 - Determining Eligibility for Accreditation of Courses
- 3 - Applying for Accreditation of Sonography Courses
- 4 - Appointing the ASAR Assessment Committee
- 5 - Assessing an Application for Sonography Course Accreditation
- 6 - Reporting Accreditation Decisions
- 7 - Lodging an Appeal Against an Accreditation Decision
- 8 - Notification of Accreditation Status and Use of ASAR Logo
- 9 - Annual Reporting Requirements for Accredited Sonography Courses
- 10 - Making Complaints about Accredited Sonography Courses
- 12 - Moderation of Accreditation Decisions

15. Complaints

Any complaints regarding this policy should go through the ASAR complaints procedure.

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V2-01	Michelle Pedretti, Chair, ASAR Board	03/12/2012	03/12/2012
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