Australian Sonographer Accreditation Registry (ASAR)
Policy & Procedure 4 - Appointing the ASAR Course Assessment Committee

1. Preamble

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

This policy details the roles and responsibilities of the ASAR Course Assessment Committee (the Committee) and ASAR's practices for appointing the members of that Committee.

2. Policy Principles

ASAR is committed to ensuring that all accredited Sonography Courses meet the eight Standards for the Accreditation of Sonography Courses (SASC). In order to achieve this, the application procedure must be conducted in accordance with the accreditation principles identified below. It is the responsibility of the members of the Pool when participating in accreditation activities to ensure these principles are adhered to.

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.

2.1. Establishment of the ASAR Course Assessment Committee

The Committee is to be established by the ASAR Board of Directors under by-laws in the constitution which have been subject to approval by members.

2.2. Terms of Reference for the ASAR Course Assessment Committee

The ASAR Board of Directors devolves responsibility for the review of applications for accreditation of Sonography Courses to the appointed members of the ASAR Course Assessment Committee under specified Terms of Reference.

Having reviewed all the evidence provided by the Course Provider seeking course accreditation the Committee makes a recommendation to the ASAR Board of Directors in regard to the outcome of the applications for accreditation; however only the Board of Directors can determine the status of courses seeking accreditation.

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.

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4. Scope

This policy applies to:

1. ASAR Council
2. ASAR Secretariat; and
3. ASAR Course Assessment Committee Members.

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 Sonographer Courses (SASC).

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

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 Course Assessor Pool
The ASAR Course Assessor Pool (the Pool) is a cohort of people approved by the Board who have skills and expert knowledge of sonography, specialist disciplines, and/or expertise in education.

ASAR Secretariat
The ASAR Secretariat is the ASAR office management.

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 Assessors
Course Assessors are members of the ASAR Course Assessor Pool who have been selected to participate on a Course Assessment Committee.

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

Higher Education Provider
A higher education provider is a body that is established or recognised by or under the law of the Australian Government, a State, the Australian Capital Territory or the Northern Territory to issue qualifications in the higher education sector.

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 re-accreditation requires the same rigor as an application for accreditation.

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.

Vocational Education & Training
Vocational Education and Training (VET) is an education that prepares trainees for jobs at various levels usually based on manual or practical activities, traditionally non-academic, related to a specific trade, occupation, or vocation.

6. Composition of the ASAR Course Assessment Committee

The Committee is responsible for accrediting sonography courses to ensure the education provided meets the SASC. Members are selected from the ASAR Course Assessor Pool for their skills and knowledge of sonography, specialist disciplines and/or expertise in education, in response to changing demands, expectations and needs of the course to be accredited. The Committee comprises a minimum of three members.

The Committee can only be appointed by the ASAR Board of Directors and potential Course Assessors can be selected only from the ASAR Course Assessor Pool.

Good governance requires the Committee to be able to bring all the necessary skills and perspectives, appropriate to the strategic needs of the organisation, into its decision-making. In response to changes over time the composition of the Committee will reflect the expertise required for each course being assessed.

6.1. ASAR Course Assessor Pool
The ASAR Course Assessor Pool (Assessor Pool) is a cohort of individuals approved by the Board who have skills and expert knowledge of sonography, specialist disciplines, and/or expertise in education.

6.2. Structure of the Committee
The Committee must comprise a minimum of 4 people including:

a. Course Lead Assessor

b. Course Assessor who is an education specialist as applicable;

The Committee is to include:

a. Course Assessor who is a Discipline Specialist relative to the discipline being reviewed; and
b. Co-opted persons who are deemed by ASAR to be able to make a major contribution to the accreditation procedure.

7. Course Assessors

All Course Assessors are to be selected from the ASAR Course Assessor Pool by the ASAR Board of Directors

7.1. Lead Course Assessor

The Lead Course Assessor will be the Chair and is to have acted as a Course Assessor on other Course Assessment Committees.

On establishment of the Pool the first three Committees must be chaired by a member of the ASAR Board of Directors, and for 2 years at least one other member must have served on a previous Committee.

7.2. Course Assessors

The ASAR Board of Directors normally selects a minimum of two members of the Assessor Pool to act with the Lead Course Assessor to serve on the Committee.

7.3. Notification of the Committee Membership

Once the ASAR Board of Directors has selected individuals from the Pool to be appointed to the Committee, each Course Assessor is to be notified in writing of their Committee Membership by the ASAR Secretariat.

In return the applicant must acknowledge in writing receipt of notification of the Committee Membership and confirm acceptance of same. If the applicant objects to the Committee Membership they must raise the objection in writing to the ASAR Board of directors within 14 days of the notification of the Committee Membership. The ASAR board will consider any objection on a case by case basis and advise the applicant of the outcome.

8. Roles & Responsibilities

Roles and Responsibilities of the Committee Members are:

8.1. The Lead Course Assessor

The Lead Course Assessor is to:

a. Ensure familiarity with ASAR documentation relevant to accreditation including all referenced documents.
b. Liaise with the ASAR Board of Directors to ensure that the expertise of the appointed Course Assessors covers specialist disciplines relevant to the course to be accredited.
c. Ensure all nominated Course Assessors have received, and have reviewed, all the documents and reports necessary for accreditation.
d. Submit requests for any additional evidence required by Course Assessors to secretariat for action.
e. Act as Point of Contact for the applicant.
f. Request and receive written reports from all nominated Course Assessors no less than 4 weeks before Presentation Day.
g. Provide any documentation which may be requested by the applicant.
h. Draw up the agenda to be followed by the Course Assessors attending the Presentation Day.
i. Receive all questions to ASAR posed by the applicant at the Presentation Day in the first instance and delegate them where appropriate.
j. Consolidate assessments and draft final written report
k. Within 2 months of Presentation date (plus agreed additional time to receive and process requested additional documentation) provide the ASAR Board of Directors with a written report in support of the recommended accreditation outcome, including any qualifications agreed by the Committee
l. Amend the Accreditation Report to reflect input by the ASAR Board of Directors.

8.2. Course Assessor

The Course Assessor is to:

a. Ensure familiarity with ASAR documentation relevant to accreditation including all referenced documents.
b. Liaise with the Lead Course Assessor to ensure all the documents necessary for assessing the application have been received.
c. Conduct a preliminary review of the application no later than 4 weeks before Presentation Day.
d. Liaise with the Lead Course Assessor regarding the agenda for Presentation Day.

e. Attend the Presentation Day, take questions delegated by the Lead Course Assessor and
f. Liaise with the Lead Course Assessor regarding the final written Accreditation Report to be submitted to the ASAR Board of Directors.

9. Fees

Assessors will be reimbursed for their out of pocket expenses on a cost recovery basis.

10. Conflicts of interest

ASAR has a Conflict of Interest Policy which applies to the Assessor Pool.

10.1. Notice of Interest

ASAR requires that Assessor Pool members maintain current Notices of Interest at all times. This includes any personal or professional interests which may, or might be perceived to influence, their capacity to impartially undertake their roles as members of the Committees.

10.2. Disclosure

When announcing the membership of a Committee, ASAR will disclose all and any declared interests of those Committee members.

11. Confidentiality of accreditation procedures and activities

All committee members and ASAR staff involved in the accreditation procedures will hold all documents, correspondence, discussions, recommendations, outcomes and actions related to any accreditation procedures as confidential.

11.1. Confidentiality Agreement

ASAR require that a written confidentiality agreement is completed by all members of the Committee.

11.2. Use of Documentation

For any accreditation procedure, considerable information is required from the course owner. This may include sensitive information, such as commercial in confidence material, strategic plans, appraisals of strengths and weaknesses. Confidentiality, within the ASAR Board of Directors, its Committees and co-opted individuals, is paramount. All information provided for any accreditation procedure should be used only for the purpose for which it was obtained.

11.3. Publication of Material

ASAR only disclose the accreditation status of the program and qualification to the public. If ASAR wish to publish material which identifies an individual educational body or course owner or provider, it requires their permission in writing.

The accreditation report and the accreditation decision are conveyed to the course owner and a copy is held in confidence by ASAR. The final report can be made public by the course owner at its discretion.

12. Procedure Summary

Trigger	ASAR Action	Responsibility
Application pack completed and submitted to ASAR by course owner with accompanying evidence	Select suitable Course Assessors from ASAR Course Assessor Pool	ASAR Board of Directors
	Invite Assessor Pool members to participate in the accreditation procedure	ASAR Board of Directors
	Appoint Lead Course Assessor	ASAR Board of Directors
	Appoint co-opted Course Assessors	ASAR Board of Directors
	Send Letter of Appointment to all Course Assessors	ASAR Secretariat
	Notify the applicant in writing of the Committee Membership	ASAR Secretariat
	Respond to any objections to the Committee Membership	ASAR Board of Directors
	Disclose all and any declared interests of those Committee members	ASAR Secretariat

	Acknowledge in writing receipt of notification of the Committee Membership	Assessor Pool member

13. Tools & Templates

The following tools and templates are to be used when appointing members to the Committee.

- 4.1 - Letter of Appointment to Course Assessment Committee – attach or direct to:
  - Accreditation Guide
  - associated Policies and Procedures.
  - ASAR Course Assessor Pool Notice of Interests
  - ASAR Course Assessor Pool Confidentiality Agreement
- 4.2 - External letter acknowledging appointment to Course Assessment Committee
- 4.3 – Letter to notify the applicant of the ASAR Course Assessment Committee Membership – detailing conditions
- 4.4 - External letter acknowledging receipt of notification of the ASAR Course Assessment Committee Membership – accepting conditions
- 4.5 Confidentiality Agreement

14. Standards Documents

The Committee members must be familiar 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.

15. Related Policies and Procedures

Other ASAR Policies and Procedures which relate to this document are:

- ASAR P&P 1 - Establishing the ASAR Course Assessor Pool
- ASAR P&P 3 - Applying for Accreditation of Courses

16. Complaints and Questions

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

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Version	Authorisation	Approval Date	Effective Date
V2-01	Michelle Pedretti, Chair, ASAR Board	03/12/2012	03/12/2012
V2-02	Michelle Pedretti, Chair, ASAR Board	01/05/2015	05/01/2015
V2-02	Christopher Edwards, Chair, ASAR Board	01/05/2019	01/05/2019