Australian Sonographer Accreditation Registry (ASAR)
Policy & Procedure 5 - Assessing an Application for Sonography Course Accreditation

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 procedures by which the ASAR Course Assessment Committee determines if a course submitted for accreditation or reaccreditation meets the eight Standards for the Accreditation of Sonographer Courses (SACS).

2. Policy Principles

ASAR is committed to ensuring that all accredited Sonographer courses meet the eight Standards for the Accreditation of Sonographer Courses (SASC). In order to achieve this, the application procedures must be conducted in accordance with the accreditation principles identified below.

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 Secretariat;
2. ASAR Course Assessment Committee;
3. Course Providers wishing to apply for ASAR course accreditation; and
4. Course Providers wishing to apply for ASAR course reaccreditation.

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 Sonographer 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 Accredited Programs
ASAR Accredited Programs are Sonography programs that have met all the Standards for the Accreditation of Sonographer Courses.

ASAR Accredited Qualifications
ASAR Accredited Qualifications are Sonography Qualifications that are awarded following successful completion of courses that have met all the Standards for the Accreditation of Sonographer Courses.

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

Conditional Accreditation
The ASAR Board of Directors may place a condition on the accreditation of a course, such as the requirement for further monitoring of the course.

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.

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.

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.

Presentation Date
The presentation date is the date of formal application; the date the completed Course Accreditation Application pack is received.

Reaccreditation
For the purpose of this policy reaccreditation is the procedure of renewing accreditation of a course in light of any changes that may have taken place within the industry, course content or course delivery. For this reason, an application for re-accreditation requires the same rigor as an application for accreditation.

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

Registered Training Organisation
A Registered Training Organisation (RTO) is a provider that is established or recognised by or under the law of the Australian Government or a State or Territory, to issue qualifications in the vocational education and training sector.

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

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.

Training Organisation
In the context of this policy and procedure a training organisation is either an RTO or higher education provider delivering or wishing to deliver accredited Sonography courses.

Withhold Accreditation
Withhold Accreditation is an action taken when a course seeking initial accreditation is not in compliance with the SASC.

Withdrawal of Accreditation
Withdrawal of Accreditation is an action taken when a course is no longer in compliance with the SASC.

6. Overview of the Accreditation Procedures

The ASAR Course Accreditation procedure allows the Course Assessors appointed to the ASAR Course Assessment Committee to explore through examination of a broad

range of evidence and interviews the extent to which a course owner complies with the SASC.

The accreditation procedure to be followed is:

1. Plan the evaluation
2. Conduct individual analysis of the application and evidence submitted;
3. Consider the analysis completed by each Assessor
4. Request additional evidence if required;
5. Confirm and request further evidence during the Presentation;
6. Complete the overall evaluation of the accreditation application;
7. Draft the SASC Evaluation Report.

7. Roles & Responsibilities

Roles and Responsibilities of those involved in the procedures of assessing applications for accreditation are:

7.1. The Lead Course Assessor

The roles and responsibilities of the Lead Course Assessor are detailed in the ASAR Policy & Procedures 2.4.3 - Appointing the ASAR Course Assessment Committee.

7.2. Course Assessors

The roles and responsibilities of the Course Assessors are detailed in the ASAR Policy & Procedures 2.4.3 - Appointing the ASAR Course Assessment Committee.

7.3. ASAR Secretariat

ASAR Secretariat is to:

a. Identify and update the ASAR policy to ensure the accreditation / reaccreditation procedures address the needs of clinical competency and professional development.
b. Provide regularly updated documentation which clearly outlines the requirements of ASAR for successful accreditation to be achieved.
c. Receive and acknowledge the receipt of the applicant's application pack and supporting evidence.
d. Disseminate copies of the application and evidence to the members of the ASAR Course Assessment Committee.
e. Make all arrangements for the Presentation Day and notify all participants.
f. If required forward request for further evidence from the Course Lead Assessors to the applicant.
g. Receive the written SASC Evaluation Report from the appointed Course Lead Assessors and schedule for endorsement by the Council at the next monthly board meeting.

h. Prepare a brief for the Board regarding the applicant's history and ASAR Course Assessment Committee recommendations.

7.4. ASAR Board

The roles and responsibilities of the Board in regard to assessing the application for accreditation are:

Selection of the ASAR Course Assessment Committee

The Council devolves responsibility for the review of applications for accreditation of sonographer courses to the members ASAR of the Course Assessment Committee who are selected and appointed by them. The Board:

a. Selects a number of Course Assessors from the ASAR Course Assessor Pool who have the skills and knowledge of sonography, specialist disciplines or expertise in education and training that meet the needs of the course to be accredited.
b. Identifies one Course Assessor who has suitable experience and expertise to act as Course Lead Assessors at accreditation or reaccreditation.
c. Invites a minimum of 3 Course Assessors to participate in the ASAR Course Assessment Committee
d. Course Assessors will be reimbursed for their time spent on the ASAR Course Assessment Committee on a cost recovery basis.

Accreditation of Sonography Courses

The ASAR Board is the only body with the authority to take decision regarding accreditation of sonography courses. Their decisions will be informed by ASAR Course Assessment Committee recommendation. At the board meeting the Board will:

a. review the SASC Evaluation Report submitted by the ASAR Course Assessment Committee and moderate the recommendation;
b. determine if the ASAR Course Assessment Committee recommendation regarding accreditation is to be upheld and award full, conditional or withdraw or withhold accreditation to the course;
c. formally approve full ASAR accreditation, for the appropriate period of accreditation, for those courses which have fulfilled all the SASC; and
d. endorse the ASAR Course Assessment Committee recommendations for improvement and recommendations regarding any ongoing monitoring of the provider

8. SASC Evaluation Tool Template

The Assessors are provided with a tool and template for collating evidence against each SASC and reporting their findings. These ensure that the Assessor can review the information provided and help them recognise compliance or non-compliance with the required standards.

This tool will also help new Course Assessors ensure that no key areas are missed, especially in a complex or lengthy application.

8.1. The SASC Evaluation Tool

The SASC Evaluation Tool allows the assessor to clearly identify if and how well the course meets the SASC by assessing the evidence provided against the quality considerations for each of the criteria of the 8 standards. It also provides a section for recording the evidence provided to support the evaluation of whether the course is compliant or non-complaint.

8.2. Formulating the Preliminary Review Findings

These finding are formulated by identifying:

a. the expected outcomes – as described in each criteria of the standard;
b. what was seen – a description of the evidence collected against the appropriate criteria;
c. identification of any gaps – a description of any rectification / further evidence that is required before submission of a recommendation to the Board

9. The SASC Evaluation Report

The SASC Evaluation Report outlines the ASAR Course Assessment Committee's findings, which it has reached through its interpretation of the specific evidence it has gathered against the SASC. These reports:

1. attempt to address all relevant areas, but without excessive detail or presuming to be exhaustive;
2. note both commendable practices and areas for improvement;
3. do not comment on individual people (positively or negatively);
4. do not contain statements that cannot be substantiated. Hence, if the Committee has formed the view that comment on a particular matter needs to be made, it has firm evidence on which to base its comment.

9.1. Content and Format

All SASC Evaluation Reports contain a summary of findings and more detailed comments in the body of the report.

The format of the report is to be based on the SASC Evaluation Report Template.

9.2. Writing the Evaluation Report

The writing of the evaluation report is the responsibility of the Course Lead Assessor, in consultation with the other Committee members. An iterative procedure is followed, allowing all committee members to submit their individual review and provide comments on the final draft as desired.

When the Committee is satisfied with the report, it is forwarded to the ASAR Secretariat for submission to the Board in conjunction with a Brief regarding the applicant's history and ASAR Course Assessment Committee recommendations.

Once the Board has reviewed the recommendation the Report is to be amended by the Lead Course Assessor to reflect the Board's input, if any.

9.3. The Evaluation Observations

The Evaluation Observations provide a description of the findings of the evaluation and are based on evidence recorded in the evaluation tool. The observations must provide a succinct summary of the reasons for the finding of compliance or non-compliance. Findings of non-compliance must be recorded at criteria level to support the evaluation conclusion.

9.4. Evaluation conclusion

The evaluation conclusion (reported at Standard level) is a summary of evidence of compliance or non-compliance with each Standard. In the case of non-compliance, the audit conclusion will also describe the action required to meet the relevant Standards without recommending specific strategies.

9.5. Recommendations for improvement

In the case of compliance, the report may include recommendations offered for consideration by the applicant without recommending specific strategies.

9.6. Ongoing Monitoring

The Course Assessors may also make recommendations regarding any ongoing monitoring of the course owner / provider.

10. Status of Accreditation

On the basis of the ASAR Course Assessment Committee evaluation findings the Board can:

1. Grant accreditation to the course which remains in effect until due procedures has demonstrated cause for its withdrawal;
2. Place a condition on the accreditation, such as the requirement for further monitoring of the course. The applicant will be advised in writing of any conditions on the accreditation.
3. Withhold or withdraw course accreditation if a course provider fails to meet the SASC,

10.1. Period of accreditation

The period of accreditation differs for new and continuing courses. The following guidelines will be applied by ASAR.

Course Type	Maximum Accreditation Period
New Course	The nominal minimum duration of the course plus one year
Continuing Course	Five years

The official course accreditation date will be the date on the letter informing the applicant that accreditation has been approved. This date will be strictly adhered to by ASAR. Only students enrolled on or after the course accreditation date will be eligible for ASAR accreditation.

10.2. Unsuccessful courses

The process for appealing decisions is detailed in the ASAR Policy & Process for Lodging an Appeal against an Accreditation Decision. The ASAR Policy & Process for Lodging an Appeal against an Accreditation Decision is governed by the rules set out in Section 12 of the ASAR Constitution.

Where course accreditation is withheld or withdrawn, current students will be allowed to continue and finish the course.

11. Procedures Summary

Trigger	ASAR Action	Responsibility
Application pack and supporting evidence received	Acknowledge the receipt	ASAR Secretariat
	Select of the ASAR Course Assessment Committee	ASAR Board
	Invite selected Course Assessors to participate	ASAR Board
	Appoint Course Lead Assessors	ASAR Board
ASAR Course Assessment Committee appointed	Disseminate copies of the application and evidence	ASAR Secretariat
	Plan the evaluation	Course Lead Assessors
	Make arrangements for the Presentation Day	ASAR Secretariat
	Conduct individual analysis of the application and evidence submitted	All Course Assessors
	Consolidate and moderate evaluations	Course Lead Assessors
	Request additional evidence if required	Course Lead Assessors

	Forward request for further evidence	ASAR Secretariat
	Draws up agenda for Presentation Day	Course Lead Assessors
Presentation Day	Deliver 10 – 20 minute presentation	Applicant
	Confirm and request further evidence during the Presentation	All Course Assessors through Chair
	Provide applicant with an opportunity to ask questions	Course Lead Assessors
All additional evidence received	Complete the accreditation evaluation	Course Lead Assessors
	Draft the SASC Evaluation Report	Course Lead Assessors
	Review and agree on final content of SASC Evaluation Report	All Course Assessors
	Forward final copy of SASC Evaluation Report to ASAR Secretariat	Course Lead Assessors
	Receive the written SASC Evaluation Report	ASAR Secretariat
	Schedule for review / endorsement by the Board at the next board meeting	ASAR Secretariat
	Prepare a Brief for the Board regarding the applicant's history and Committee recommendations	ASAR Secretariat
	Review the SASC Evaluation Report and Brief	ASAR Board
	Moderate the Report findings / recommendation	ASAR Board
	Uphold / amend Committee recommendation	ASAR Board
ASAR Board meeting	Formally approve / withhold / withdraw accreditation	ASAR Board

	Formally record the Council's decision	ASAR Secretariat
	Amend the SASC Evaluation Report to reflect the Board's input	Course Lead Assessors
	Formally notify the applicant of Board's decision	ASAR Secretariat
	For unsuccessful applications provide details of the appeals procedures	ASAR Secretariat
	Register and file all documentation	ASAR Secretariat
	Add the details of accredited course to the ASAR Register	ASAR Secretariat

12. Tools & Templates

The following tools and templates are to be used when evaluating an application for accreditation and drafting documentation associated with that evaluation:

- 5.1 - SASC Evaluation Tool
- 5.3 - Agenda for Presentation Day Template
- 5.4 - SASC Evaluation Report Template
- 5.5 - ASAR Board Assessment Brief
- 5.6 - Letter Requesting further Evidence
- 5.7 - Letter Confirming Date Time & Location of Presentation Day
- 5.8 - Letter of Thanks to Assessors - including copy of SASC Evaluation Report (to be sent at same time as course provider is notified)

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 Sonographer 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:

- ASAR P&P 3 - Applying for Accreditation of Courses
- ASAR P&P 4 - Appointing the ASAR Course Assessment Committee
- ASAR P&P 6 - Reporting Accreditation Decisions
- ASAR P&P 7 - Lodging an Appeal against an Accreditation Decision

15. Complaints and Questions

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

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
	Christopher Edwards, Chair, ASAR Board	01/05/2019	01/05/2019