

Process for Qualification of New Dietetics Education Programs



Dietitians Association of Australia
ABN 34 008 521 480

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Definition of terms and abbreviations

Claim: Any claim, allegation, debt, cause of action, liability, proceeding, suit or demand of any nature and whether present or future, actual or contingent, fixed or unascertained and arising at law, in equity, under statute or otherwise.

Council: Australian Dietetics Council.

Dietetics: The profession that contributes to the promotion of health and the treatment of illness by optimising the nutrition of communities and individuals. It utilises scientific principles and methods in the study of nutrition and applies these to influence the wider environment affecting food intakes and eating behaviours.

NCS: National Competency Standards for Dietitians in Australia (available via <http://daa.asn.au/ncs/>).

Program Qualification (PQ): The status provided to a Dietetics education program that, prior to enrolling students in the program, successfully completes the Program Qualification Process.

Program Qualification Review Team (PQRT): The team appointed by the Council consistent with the Reviewer Terms of Reference. The PQRT is responsible for conducting the review of a University's compliance with the requirements of Program Qualification, and for making recommendations to the Council regarding Program Qualification.

Provisional Accreditation: The accreditation awarded to a program that complies with DAA accreditation requirements but has only recently produced graduate Dietitians. Provisional accreditation may also be used to describe an ongoing program, which has conditions set for the continuing accreditation of the program pursuant to the *Processes for the Accreditation of Dietetics Education Programs*.

Introduction

The Dietitians Association of Australia (**DAA**) is the peak body of dietetic and nutrition professionals, providing strategic leadership in food and nutrition through empowerment, advocacy, education, accreditation and communication. DAA serves and protects the public by assuring the quality and continuing improvement of the minimum accepted standard for accredited Nutrition and Dietetics education programs. This includes ensuring that graduate dietitians have demonstrated competence as described in the National Competency Standards for Dietitians in Australia (**NCS**).

Dietetics is a self-regulated profession, and the DAA is a member of the National Agency of Self Regulating Health Professions (**NASRHP**) that benchmark against the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (**AHPRA**) requirements. The Australian Dietetics Council (**the Council**) is responsible for providing independent high-level strategic advice to the DAA on matters relating to accreditation and recognition. The Council ensures that the DAA delivers accreditation and recognition services that are efficient, effective, equitable, accountable and transparent and are framed in a best practice model. The Council communicates to the DAA via the Executive Manager of Accreditation, Recognition and Journal Services, but operates independently to ensure that impartiality is maintained.

The *Process for Qualification of New Dietetics Education Programs* (**the Process**) details the process for Universities to apply for assessment of a new dietetics education program prior to enrolment of students. This process is a pre-cursor to the accreditation application process, outlined in the *Processes for Accreditation of Dietetics Education Programs*.

This Process should be viewed in conjunction with the following documents which will assist the University in demonstrating evidence of their dietetics education program(s) readiness for application for Provisional Accreditation.

1. Accreditation Standards for Dietetics Education Programs (the Standards)

Details the minimum requirements that Universities need to demonstrate to gain accreditation for their dietetics education program(s).

2. Evidence Guide for the Accreditation of Dietetics Education Programs

Provides contextual information against the Standards to assist Universities in applying for accreditation to submit adequate evidence on compliance.

The fee schedule for accreditation of dietetics education programs is available on the [DAA website](#). Accreditation fees are determined by the DAA (and may change from time to time). All accreditation fees are non-refundable and accrue to the DAA on application.

While the accreditation documents contain the information required to inform the University of the Program Qualification and Accreditation Processes, all Universities are encouraged to maintain ongoing contact with the DAA National Office via the Accreditation Manager:

Dietitians Association
1/8 Phipps Close
Deakin ACT 2600
P 02 6189 1200
E: accreditation@daa.asn.au

Qualification Process

1.1 Purpose

1.1.1 The Program Qualification (**PQ**) stage is designed:

- (a) for the University to establish a formal, publically recognised relationship with the DAA; and
- (b) to assist the University in evaluating its Dietetics education program in readiness to apply for Provisional Accreditation.

1.2 Application

1.2.1 The University should submit a PQ Application to DAA at least 12 months before the first cohort of students are enrolled (or such other time as the DAA may agree in its absolute discretion).

1.2.2 The PQ Application must include detailed information on the following:

- (a) the structure and content of the curriculum including:
 - 1. a detailed curriculum map against the National Competency Standards (**NCS**) showing where each competency is planned to be addressed;
 - 2. subject outlines for each unit of study;
 - 3. subject sequencing; and
 - 4. where required, necessary pre-requisite requirements for entry.
- (b) the University's proposed professional placement program;
- (c) plan for staff resourcing; and
- (d) projected enrolments.

1.2.3 The program will only be formally "Qualified" if all phases of the PQ process are completed to the DAA's reasonable satisfaction.

1.3 Process

The process for PQ is outlined in this Section 1.3, and also in figure 1 on page 8.

1.3.1 Upon receipt of a PQ Application and provided that the relevant fee is paid by the University, the DAA must:

- (a) confirm to the University in writing, that it has received the PQ Application within five (5) business days of receipt;

- (b) ensure that the Council appoints a Program Qualification Review Team (**PQRT**) pursuant to the Reviewer Terms of Reference within 20 business days. The PQRT is responsible for reviewing the PQ Application; and
 - (c) confirm to the University in writing, within five (5) business days after the appointment of the PQRT, that a PQRT has been appointed.
- 1.3.2 The PQRT must complete a review of the PQ Application within 40 business days of their appointment. The PQRT may, in its absolute discretion, seek further information or evidence from the University. If the PQRT seeks further information or evidence, the University must provide a written response (with supporting evidence if requested) to the PQRT within 20 business days of that request.
- 1.3.3 Within five (5) months of the PQRT's appointment the PQRT must complete their report on the PQ Application and provide that to the Council.
- 1.3.4 Within 15 business days of receipt of the PQRT report, the Council must review the report, and make a recommendation to the DAA Board as to whether to award PQ to the University.
- 1.3.5 Within 15 business days of receipt of the recommendation from the Council, the DAA Board must determine if they are reasonably satisfied that the University and the University's dietetics education program meets the DAA requirements for PQ.
- 1.3.6 If, in the DAA Board's absolute discretion, the University or the University's program does not meet the requirements for PQ then the dietetics education program will not be "Qualified".
- 1.3.7 If, in the DAA Board's absolute discretion, the University and the University's program meets the requirements for PQ then the DAA Board will formally endorse the dietetics education program as "Qualified".
- 1.3.8 Whilst the DAA Board must consider the recommendation of the Council in making the decision in paragraph 1.3.4, the DAA Board is not required to follow that recommendation.
- 1.3.9 The University will be notified of the outcome within five (5) business days of the DAA Board making the decision in paragraph 1.3.5.

1.4 Error of Fact in the DAA's decision

- 1.4.1 The University will be provided 10 business days, from the date that the DAA notifies that University of the decision pursuant to paragraph 1.3.9, to review the Accreditation Review Report and raise any identified errors of fact with the DAA.
- 1.4.2 Where the DAA is notified of an error of fact(s), pursuant to paragraph 1.4, the PQRT will meet within five (5) business days from receipt of this notification to discuss the impact of the error on the DAA Board's decision. The PQRT's recommendation will be passed on to the Council within two (2) business days of the PQRT meeting.

- 1.4.3 The Council will convene within five (5) business days to discuss the impact of the error of fact(s) and determine the impact on the DAA Board's decision. If the decision is not altered by the error of fact(s):
- (a) the PQRT report will be amended accordingly and sent to the DAA Board for information; and
 - (b) the updated PQRT report will be sent to the University within five (5) business days of the Council meeting.
- 1.4.4 If the DAA Board's decision in paragraph 1.3.5 will be altered by the error of fact(s):
- (a) the PQRT report will be modified according to this decision and a formal recommendation regarding the PQ status within two (2) business days of the Council meeting;
 - (b) the DAA Board will meet within seven (7) business days from the Council meeting to make a final determination on the program's "qualification"; and
 - (c) The updated PQRT report and the DAA Board's updated decision will be sent to the University within five (5) business days from the DAA Board meeting.

1.5 Requests for Further Information

- 1.5.1 At any stage of the PQ process, the DAA, the PQRT or the Council may request further information or evidence to determine a University's and/or program/s compliance with the PQ requirements. The University must provide all information or evidence requested in a reasonable timeframe.
- 1.5.2 The DAA acknowledges that a University may withhold information or evidence if legislation applicable in the University's jurisdiction prevents such disclosure. For example, withholding 'sensitive information' pursuant to the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) if the University does not have the appropriate consent or withholding 'medical records' pursuant to the *Health Records (Privacy and Access) Act 1997* (ACT).

1.6 Consequences of the DAA's Decision

- 1.6.1 The University acknowledges that the purpose of the PQ Process is for the DAA to assist the University in evaluating its Dietetics education program in readiness to apply for Provisional Accreditation.
- 1.6.2 The University acknowledges that any decision by the DAA Board is given to assist the University evaluate its Dietetics education program, as an information guideline to assist with the Provisional Accreditation application.
- 1.6.3 Whilst the DAA Board may determine the Dietetics education program is "Qualified" or "Not Qualified" nothing prevents a University from immediately applying to the DAA for Provisional Accreditation of the Dietetic education program.
- 1.6.4 The University agrees that it must undertake the PQ Process prior to applying for Provisional Accreditation, but it is not mandatory to be "Qualified" prior to such an

application. As a consequence the University agrees that the DAA is not liable for any Claims which arise as a consequence of the DAA Board's decision in paragraph 1.3.

1.7 Period of Program Qualification

- 1.7.1 The maximum period which a University can hold the PQ Status is four years for an undergraduate Dietetics education program and two years for a postgraduate Dietetics education program.
- 1.7.2 Notwithstanding the maximum period of PQ in paragraph 1.7.1, the DAA may grant a shorter period of qualification or may permit programs to pursue Provisional Accreditation subject to specific conditions being met by the University (in the DAA's absolute discretion).

1.8 Publication of Program Qualification

- 1.8.1 Universities who make statements regarding their program:
- (a) do so at their own risk and the University indemnifies the DAA from and against all Claims the DAA suffers, incurs or is liable for either directly or indirectly arising from any statements or representations made by the University;
 - (b) must do so without making any representations on behalf of the DAA and without referring to the DAA's position in respect of the credentialing of graduates, the PQ process or the Accreditation process generally;
 - (c) must consider that timelines outlined in the Processes rely on applications being complete and compliant with the DAA's expectations, delivering information in a form that readily conveys the information in a manner that not only meets the requirements of the Processes but does so in a manner that is readily comprehended by the DAA; and
 - (d) must acknowledge that an application may be stalled, interrupted, delayed, suspended or terminated due to a range of reasons contemplated by the Processes and otherwise due to the normal considerations and contingencies due to assessments of evidence based applications.
- 1.8.2 Without diminishing the disclaimer and indemnity in paragraphs 1.8.1(a) and 1.8.1(b), Universities who have submitted their PQ application and have yet to receive an outcome, who make statements referred to in the preceding paragraph are required to use warnings that the applications made may not succeed within the minimum timelines provided in the Processes and are required to use the following standard wording on webpages or Dietetics education program materials to ensure consistency and reflect an accurate understanding of the application process.
- 1.8.3 Universities who have submitted their PQ application and have yet to receive an outcome, the University is permitted to use the following wording on their website:

This dietetics program is not currently accredited but the University has submitted a Program Qualification application to the Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) and has sought advice regarding the processes for accreditation. The

University is planning to submit an accreditation application within the required timelines, and aims to achieve accreditation prior to graduation of the first cohort of students. A graduate of an accredited program is eligible to become a member of DAA with dietetics qualifications, and to join the Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) Program. Full details of the stages in the DAA accreditation process are available at www.daa.asn.au > Universities & recognition of qualifications > Accreditation of dietetic programs > [include [link once finalised](#)]. All inquiries regarding the progress of the program's accreditation review should be directed to the University's Dietetics Program Coordinator.

1.8.4 The DAA reserves the right to review University webpages and program materials to ensure compliance with this paragraph 1.8.

1.9 Exclusion of Liability

1.9.1 The University bears the onus to provide to the DAA:

- (a) full information and documentary evidence to support its application; and
- (b) whenever requested by the DAA, supplementary full information and documentary evidence as requested by the DAA in a timely fashion.

1.9.2 The University agrees:

- (a) that it bears the onus of demonstrating to the DAA that the Dietetics education program which is the subject of an PQ Application meets or exceeds the relevant requirements of their application; and
- (b) that it bears the onus of satisfying the DAA that the evidence supplied in support of its PQ Application conveys the information intended to support the application.

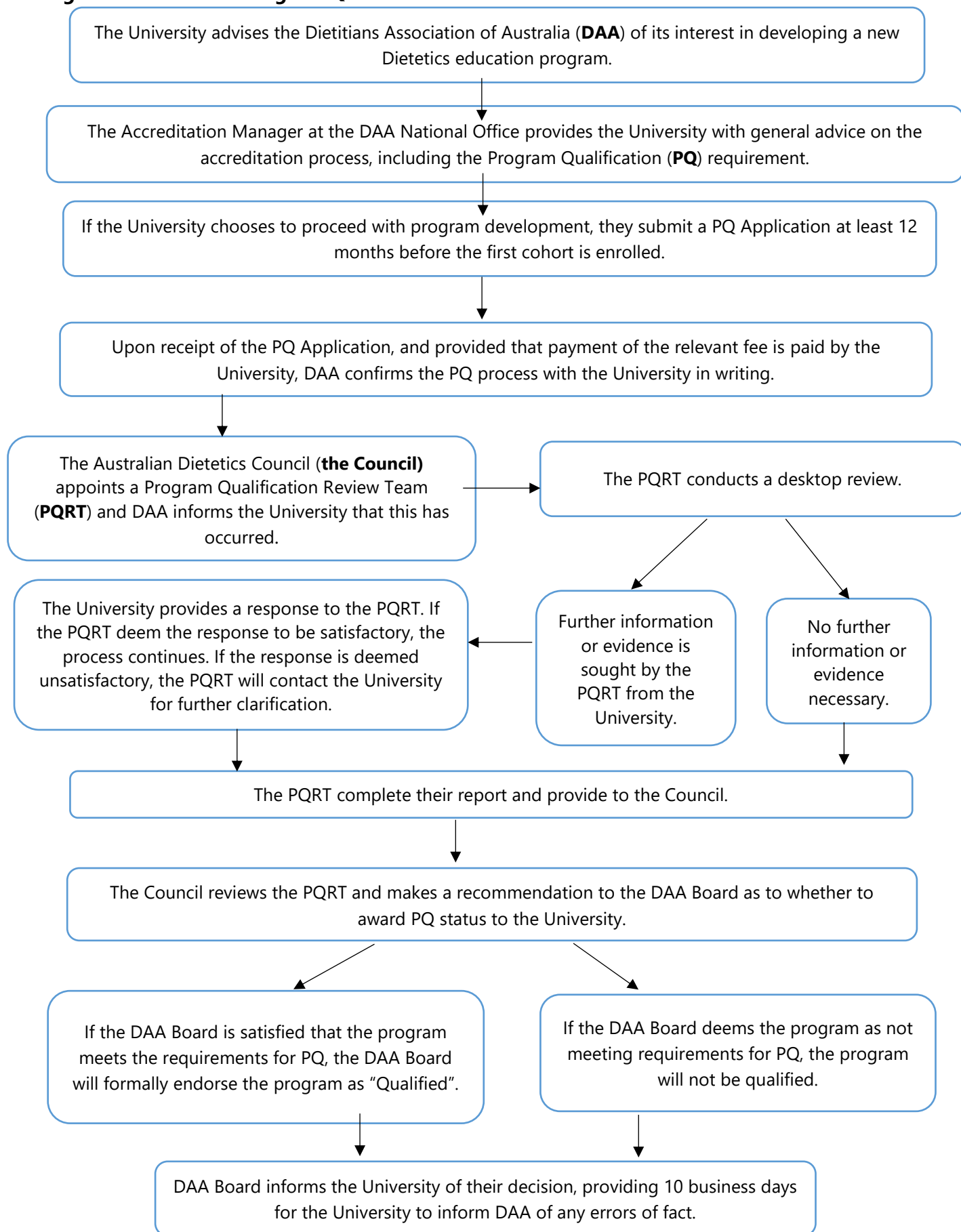
1.9.3 The University is solely responsible for ensuring that it meets the timelines and the DAA's expectations, delivering information in a form that readily conveys the information in a manner that meets the requirements of the Processes.

1.9.4 The DAA does not accept any liability or responsibility for any Claims arising, whether directly or indirectly, as a result of:

- (a) the DAA not understanding or seeking clarification of information tendered in support of an PQ Application or any additional or supplementary evidence or reports; or
- (b) a University failing to obtain an "Qualified" status for their PQ Application, whether at all or within the anticipated or expected timelines.

1.9.5 The University indemnifies the DAA from and against all Claims which the DAA may suffer, incur or be liable for either directly or indirectly arising from the University's breach of the Processes.

Figure 1. Process for Program Qualification



Appendix 1 Reviewer Terms of Reference

Accreditation, Program Qualification and Non-Domestic Placement Site Approval Reviewers

Purpose

Reviewers are responsible for the assessment of Accreditation, Program Qualification and Non-Domestic Placement Site Approval applications as detailed in the

1. Accreditation Processes for Dietetics Education Programs, and
2. Process for Qualification of Dietetics Education Programs.

Accreditation Review Teams review and assess evidence against the Accreditation Standards for Dietetics Education Programs and/or Program Qualification requirements and provide recommendations to the Australian Dietetics Council (ADC) on a Program's compliance to the relevant Accreditation Standards and/or Program Qualification requirements.

Role of Reviewers

Reviewers appointed to an Accreditation Review Team are required to:

- Prepare for and actively participate in a desktop review
- Participate in regular Review Team teleconferences
- Assist with preparing and reviewing requests for further information/clarification
- Assess available evidence against the relevant Accreditation Standards and/or Program Qualification requirements
- Attend and contribute to a two-day site visit and/or Non-Domestic Placement site visit, where necessary
- Contribute to the final Review Team report and recommendations
- Assist with assessment of documentation submitted post review, if required.

To be appointed to an Accreditation Review Team, Reviewers must first be appointed by the ADC to the Reviewer Pool via application against the selection criteria set out below.

Reviewer Pool Selection Criteria

Selection Criteria

Essential

1. Currency of full APD status for at least five years
2. Significant experience in dietetic education, with an in-depth understanding of educational principles and competency-based assessment

Desirable

1. AdvAPD or FDAA
2. Experience in accreditation assessment processes

Term

Reviewers are appointed to the Reviewer Pool for a three year period with the option to extend for a further two years.

Responsibility and Reporting

Reviewers appointed to the Reviewer Pool may be selected to participate in a maximum of two consecutive reviews in a 12 month period.

Reviewers appointed to a Program Qualification or Accreditation or Non-Domestic Placement Site Approvals Review Team are responsible to the Council via the Accreditation Manager.

All Review Teams are considered current until all necessary reporting requirements have been completed to the ADC's and the DAA Board's satisfaction.

Program Qualification Review Team

Composition

A minimum of one dietetic practitioner and one dietetic academic reviewer will be appointed by the ADC to the Program Qualification Review Team.

Provisional, Full and Re-Accreditation Review Team

Composition

A minimum of three dietetic reviewers and one optional non-APD expert will be appointed by the ADC to the Accreditation Review Team (ART).

Chairperson: The Chair is responsible for the leadership of the ART and for ensuring key tasks are completed to an acceptable professional standard within the required time frame. Whenever possible, the Chairperson should be a member of the ADC.

plus

Members:

- a. One dietetics ADC member or one reviewer pool member
- b. One reviewer pool member
- c. An optional non-APD ADC expert

Non-Domestic Placement Site Approvals Review Team

Composition

A minimum of two reviewers will be appointed by the ADC to the Non-Domestic Placement Site Review Team.

Chairperson: The ADC Chair or Deputy Chair wherever possible, or an alternative Council member.

Members: One reviewer pool member.