

AASW
ASWEAS

Accreditation Appeal Policy

V1.0 September 2023



AASW
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Australian Association
of Social Workers

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The Australian Association of Social Workers (**AASW**) accredits social work programs provided by the Higher Education Providers (**HEPs**) under the Australian Social Work Education Accreditation Standards (**ASWEAS**).
- 1.2 This policy applies to the following accreditation decisions:
- a) a decision not to accredit a social work program (including a decision to revoke the accreditation of an existing program);
 - b) a decision not to approve variations of an accredited program; and
 - c) a decision imposing conditions on an accredited program.
- (Accreditation Decision/s).**
- 1.3 If a HEP disagrees with an Accreditation Decision, that HEP may apply to appeal the Accreditation Decision in accordance with this policy.
- 1.4 The appeal will involve the following steps:
- a) a review of the Accreditation Decision against the chosen grounds for appeal as stated in Clause 3; and
 - a) a decision as to whether the Accreditation Decision should be affirmed or set aside and substituted with a different decision in accordance with Clause 5.2.

2. Procedure to apply for an appeal of an Accreditation Decision

- 2.1 An application for an appeal of an Accreditation Decision must:
- a) be made within thirty (30) business days of the date of the letter advising the HEP of the Accreditation Decision;
 - b) be made in writing and submitted to the AASW either by email to education@asw.asn.au or by sending the application by prepaid post to AASW at PO Box 2008, Royal Melbourne Hospital VIC 3050. The AASW will not accept oral applications for an appeal of an Accreditation Decision;
 - c) clearly identify the appealable Accreditation Decision under Clause 1.2;
 - d) clearly state the ground/s for appeal (see Clause 3.1);
 - e) particularise the basis and reasons for each ground/s; and

- f) include and annex any relevant material on which the HEP wishes to rely.
- 2.2 It is the responsibility of the HEP to ensure that application(s) for the appeal are received by AASW within thirty (30) business days from the date of the letter advising the HEP of the initial Accreditation Decision. This includes applications sent to AASW by post. If an application for appeal is not received by AASW within the thirty (30) business day period, then AASW is not required to consider the appeal of the Accreditation Decision.

3. Grounds for appeal

- 3.1 Without limiting the grounds that a HEP may apply for an appeal of an Accreditation Decision, an appeal of an Accreditation Decision may be made on the basis of one or more of the following grounds:
- a) relevant procedures when making the initial Accreditation Decision were not observed;
 - b) relevant and significant evidence or information was not considered (or not properly considered) in making the initial Accreditation Decision;
 - c) irrelevant information, misinformation or information which was unfairly prejudicial to the HEP was considered in making the initial Accreditation Decision;
 - d) an error was made in relation to a finding on a material fact; and/or
 - e) the manner in which the accreditation process was conducted was procedurally unfair.
- 3.2 An application for appeal should include all information and supporting documents that the HEP seeks to have considered and which supports their grounds of appeal. AASW may, but is not obliged to, provide the HEP with further opportunity to supply additional supporting evidence. If AASW provides the HEP with further opportunity to provide additional supporting evidence of the appeal, then any information the HEP wishes to be considered in the review must be provided by the date specified by AASW. AASW may also utilise any information that was supplied as part of the HEP's initial accreditation submission in the consideration of the appeal.

4. How AASW will undertake the appeal process

- 4.1 When the application for appeal of an Accreditation Decision is received by AASW, then AASW will confirm receipt of the application.
- 4.2 The appeal application fee to meet the cost of the appeal will be invoiced on receipt of the appeal application documentation by the AASW Financial team, once notified by the AASW Accreditation team.
- 4.3 Within twenty (20) business days of AASW's receipt of the HEP's application for appeal (and provided the HEP has paid the appeal fee), the AASW will convene (and notify the HEP of) the panel that will determine the application for appeal, consisting of:

- a) a nominee of the AASW Accreditation Council;
- b) an experienced ASWEAS Chair or senior accreditor; and
- c) an independent person nominated by the AASW CEO, at their discretion, with relevant experience and who is not a social worker.

(Appeal Assessment Panel).

- 4.4 The Appeal Assessment Panel members will be familiar with accreditation processes, will not have been involved in the Accreditation Decision of the program the subject of the appeal and will not have any perceived or actual conflict of interest with the HEP. If a HEP has any bona fide concerns that one or more members of the Appeal Assessment Panel have a conflict of interest, it must notify AASW in writing within ten (10) business days of the HEP being notified of the make-up of the Appeal Assessment Panel with full details of the basis for the concern. The AASW Accreditation Council will consider any conflict concerns raised and will notify the HEP of its decision as to whether the members of the Appeal Assessment Panel are confirmed (and will not be changed) or whether it proposes changes to the members, and the AASW Accreditation Council's decision on this issue will be final and not be subject to further review within AASW. The applicable time frames in the appeals process will be extended by the period that the AASW Accreditation Council is considering any conflict concerns raised by the HEP.
- 4.5 The Appeal Assessment Panel will be provided with the documentation lodged by the HEP, a copy of the Accreditation Decision letter, the Accreditation Report, and any other documentation from the record of the accreditation process as requested by the Panel.
- 4.6 Although the Appeal Assessment Panel will predominately make its decision based on the material provided to it, the Appeal Assessment Panel may call for additional information from the HEP and/or AASW. The Appeal Assessment Panel may also obtain information from any other source that the Appeal Assessment Panel considers relevant to its consideration of the appeal.
- 4.7 The Appeal Assessment Panel is entitled to obtain independent legal advice if a question of law arises during the review. The AASW is responsible for the cost of its independent legal advice. Any such advice will remain confidential and privileged of AASW and is not required to be shared with the HEP.
- 4.8 The internal appeal review will be conducted in accordance with the principles of procedural fairness.
- 4.9 Subject to any extensions under clause 4.4 or 4.10, the Appeal Assessment Panel will endeavour to issue its decision within forty (40) business days of the date that the HEP is notified of the Appeal Assessment Panel under clause 4.3.
- 4.10 If the Appeal Assessment Panel is unable to finalise its decision within the period referred to in clause 4.9, the date for providing the appeal decision may be extended by a further twenty (20) business days, and written notice of any such extension will be provided to the HEP.

4.11 Nothing in this policy prevents the HEP or AASW pursuing any other legal avenues or remedies available at law in respect of an Accreditation Decision or the appeal (including by commencing legal proceedings).

4.12 In this policy, a reference to "business day" means any day except Saturdays, Sundays and declared public holidays in Victoria, Australia.

5. The Appeal Assessment Panel decision

5.1 The Appeal Assessment Panel will determine whether the program of study and the HEP that provides the program of study:

- a) meets the accreditation standard based on the ASWEAS; or
- b) substantially meets the accreditation standard based on the ASWEAS and could fully meet the accreditation standard within a reasonable time if it implemented additional changes (which would be the subject of conditions on the accreditation approval).

5.2 The Appeal Assessment Panel may:

- a) affirm the Accreditation Decision; or
- b) set aside the Accreditation Decision, and substitute it with a decision to:
 - i. accredit the program of study (including, where applicable, approve any variation in the program); or
 - ii. accredit the program of study with conditions; or
 - iii. not accredit the program of study.

5.3 The Appeal Assessment Panel will report its decision to the AASW Accreditation Council and the AASW Accreditation Council will confirm that the review has been conducted in accordance with the ASWEAS and this policy. The AASW CEO will notify the AASW Board of the Appeal Assessment Panel's decision.

5.4 The HEP will then be notified of the outcome of the appeal, including a statement outlining the decision of the appeal.

5.5 The effective date of the appeal decision (and any new substituted Accreditation Decision) will be the date that the HEP is notified of the outcome.

5.6 The decision of the Appeal Assessment Panel in respect of an appeal of an Accreditation Decision will be final and will not be subject to further review within AASW.

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1.0	28 th Sept 2023	CEO	New document