

Program Development and Approval Policy

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Approved by	Academic Board
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Purpose

The development and approval of higher education programs of study at Sydney Institute of Higher Education (SIHE) is a process of consultation, research, design, and multiple cycles of review and improvement before final internal approval. This process is designed to ensure that the proposed program will be delivered to the highest standard, and will comply with the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021*.

The *Program Development and Approval Policy* defines the procedures to guide the governance of academic standards in program development and approval at SIHE.

Scope

This policy is applicable to all parties involved in the program development and approval process.

Principles

The program development approval process should be impartial, structured and transparent.

SIHE recognises that the development of a new program is a serious undertaking. Programs may be proposed in response to new advancements in the disciplines that SIHE teaches, or changes in strategic direction of SIHE owing to shifts in student demand.

The *Academic Board* is responsible for ensuring that all SIHE programs are of the highest quality, and must only approve programs for delivery that can demonstrate sufficient quality.

The *Academic Quality Committee* is responsible for advising the *Academic Board* during the development and review process.

All programs must:

- Adhere to the SIHE's strategic goals and academic values
- Comply with the Threshold Standards 2021
- Meet the relevant AQF level specification requirements
- Provide a pathway to further study
- Be built upon defined learning outcomes
- Demonstrate a process of constructive alignment in the development of learning outcomes and

assessment

- Have assessments appropriate for testing student achievement of learning outcomes
- Have specified admissions criteria and pathways that are applied fairly and consistently
- Be intellectually challenging and draw on advanced knowledge appropriate to the learning outcomes
- Provide equivalent quality outcomes to all those who meet entry requirements, regardless of their background or study mode
- Have a strong foundation in theoretical frameworks, contemporary research and scholarship, and trends in relevant industries
- Integrate processes of continual review improvement.

SIHE must facilitate equivalent access to higher education programs and associated services with a focus on ensuring that those from underrepresented and/or disadvantaged groups have full access, including:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- Students who are part or full-time carers
- Students with disabilities
- Students experiencing mental or physical health concerns
- Mature-age students
- Students who are single parents
- International students
- Students for whom English is a second language.

Procedures

Program Proposal

For any initial program development proposal, the following evidence must be presented in a written report:

- How the program fits in with the SIHE's future strategic goals
- A market analysis of demand from students and employers for the proposed program
- A business case outlining the cost to SIHE of delivering the program, any financial risks, the basis for predicted income
- A process document describing how the program can be improved, expanded or discontinued that conforms with SIHE policy
- An overview of the proposed program content, including:
 - a list of all units that will be taught;
 - any specialised materials or resources required to teach for each unit;
 - a set of assessment tasks for each unit;
 - a report that demonstrates how this program has been benchmarked against similar courses offered by other higher education providers;
 - a statement outlining how the proposed program will demonstrate SIHE's high academic standards.

Approval of program development

The initial proposal will be reviewed by the *Academic Board* and the *Corporate Governance Board*. The *Corporate Governance Board* will give preliminary approval to the initial proposal for the staff time required to develop a full program proposal for *Academic Board* to review and approve.

The *Academic Board* will determine whether the proposed program has the capacity to:

- align with the *Threshold Standards 2021* and AQF requirements
- meet industry and pedagogical best practice
- be competitive with other comparable higher education providers.

The proposed Program Director will take this feedback into account when moving to develop a full proposal.

Approval to begin full program development must be recorded in the meeting minutes of the *Academic Board* and *Corporate Governance Board*.

The following factors are likely to lead to rejection of the program development proposal:

- The report is not comprehensive enough to provide reasonable evidence regarding the above aspects.
- Enrolment rates and graduate employment rates are predicted to be low
- Changes in legislation or funding offer additional barriers to delivering the program
- SIHE does not have and cannot reasonably obtain the resources necessary to deliver the program.
- Program development

In consultation with the *Learning and Teaching Community of Practice* and the *Academic Quality Committee* where necessary, the proposed Program Director will begin the program development process by generating the following information:

Benchmarking against comparable providers (refer to the *Benchmarking Policy*)

- Program rationale, structure, curriculum, and assessment with reference to the latest academic developments in the relevant field and the appropriate AQF level requirements
- A set of graduate attributes for the program that reflect level of learning appropriate as well as the overall SIHE graduate attributes
- Learning outcomes of each individual study unit within the program mapped against the graduate attributes and against assessment processes used
- The learning outcomes of the program mapped against the appropriate Australian Qualifications Framework level
- Required staffing arrangements to successfully deliver and support the program
- Records of external industry expert advice sought in the development process
- Accessibility measures that will be implemented.

All program development must be undertaken with reference to the anticipated diversity of the SIHE student cohort. Accessibility arrangements must be proposed in the earliest possible stage of the development process.

This information will be collated and submitted to the *Learning and Teaching Community of Practice* and

the *Academic Quality Committee* for review.

Requirements for final approval

In consultation with the feedback from the *Academic Quality Committee*, a full program proposal will be submitted to the *Academic Board* to review. The full program proposal must, at minimum, include the following requirements for final program approval:

- The name of the qualification
- The structure, duration and modes of delivery
- An outline of measures in place to ensure no student is disadvantaged by their location or mode of study
- A plan for ensuring that all students have access regardless of background, identity, disability, or other factors
- Program rationale and the names of the units that constitute the program
- Entry requirements and proposed student pathways, including entry pathways, further education, articulation and program exit arrangements
- The full set of program and individual unit learning outcomes
- An outline of learning and teaching activities that shows progression towards each learning outcome
- The assessment strategy for every unit in the program
- Proposed student workload (calculated in number of face-to-face and number of private study hours required)
- Compulsory requirements for completion of the program, including an indication of core versus elective units and any other hurdle requirements
- Any unit prerequisites within the program
- If the program includes a research component, a description of the proportion and nature of the research component within the program
- Evidence that the program engages with and/or will engage with current and emerging theory, conceptual frameworks, and scholarship at an appropriate level of complexity
- Where relevant, evidence of the professional accreditation standards to ensure that the program complies with each accrediting body
- An endorsement by the provisional Program Director
- An updated business plan outlining projected costs, partnerships needed for program delivery or accreditation, and student and market demand.

Approval of program

The *Academic Board*, as advised by the sub-committees, comprising of the *Student Academic Support Committee*, *Academic Quality Committee*, and *Learning and Teaching Community of Practice*, will scrutinise the above materials and may either return the proposal with feedback, reject the proposal, or give provisional approval in writing.

Provisional approval will only be granted if the *Academic Board* can assure itself that the program meets all the standards outlined in this policy, is of sufficient academic quality, that required resources are available (or will be upon final accreditation) and the program meets the requirements of the *Threshold Standards 2021*.

The decision will be communicated to the relevant parties in writing. On receiving provisional approval, the Program Director will begin to prepare documents for any required external approval processes, including preparing a TEQSA course accreditation application, after which the program would obtain final approval.

Policy Implementation and Monitoring

The *Academic Board* delegates responsibility for the implementation of this policy to the positions and bodies identified in 'Procedures' above, including the *Academic Quality Committee*, the *Learning and Teaching Community of Practice*, and the provisional Program Director.

To monitor policy implementation, the *Academic Board* must review and provide feedback on each report submitted by a Committee or academic leader during the program development process in a timely manner.

Based on these monitoring activities, the *Academic Board* must provide a report to the *Corporate Governance Board* and ensure that findings are taken into account in planning, quality assurance and improvement processes.

Definitions

Academic Board: the governing body responsible for academic matters, including learning and teaching, program approval, workforce planning, academic staff appointments, research and professional development, academic policies and procedures, overseeing student grievances and appeals processes. The *Academic Board* reports to the *Corporate Governance Board*.

Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF): National guidelines that regulate Australian post-compulsory education and training qualifications. The framework identifies learning outcomes for each AQF level and qualification, policy requirements, educational and economic objectives, governing and monitoring arrangements.

Program: A sequenced program of units that a student enrolls in and for which they receive a degree upon graduation.

Academic Quality Committee: A committee dedicated to developing the initial proposal of new higher education programs at SIHE, including external benchmarking and external input.

Program Director: The most senior academic staff member responsible for the delivery of a specific program at SIHE. The Program Director is responsible for the planning and development of a program, particularly unit curriculum information, and works in conjunction with other senior academic staff.

Learning and Teaching Community of Practice: An academic management community of practice that reports to and advises the *Academic Quality Committee* responsible for monitoring the quality of learning and teaching at SIHE including progress towards achieving objectives of the *Learning and Teaching Plan* and the adequacy of all forms of support for learning and teaching present at SIHE.

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA): Australia's regulatory and quality agency

for higher education. TEQSA’s primary aim is to ensure that students receive high quality education at any Australian higher education provider.

Review schedule

This policy will be reviewed by the *Academic Board* every three years.
























Version History				
Version number:	Approved by:	Approval date:	Revision notes:	Next review date:
1	Academic Board	25/10/2017		25/10/2020
2	Academic Board	28/08/23	Standard review. No changes to content. Update committees to reflect merging of program advisory and program monitoring committees.	29/11/2025

End of document: "Program Development and Approval Policy"

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Related Documents

		Academic Standards Policy
		Learning and Teaching Policy
		Program Review and Continual Improvement Policy
		Graduate Attributes and Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)
		Learning and Teaching Plan
		Academic Board - Terms of Reference
		Admissions Committee - Terms of Reference
		Audit and Risk Committee - Terms of Reference
		Corporate Governance Board - Terms of Reference
		Teaching and Learning Community of Practice - Terms of Reference
		Academic Quality Committee - Terms of Reference
		Program Director - Business
		Program Director - ICT