

**AUSTRALIAN OSTEOPATHIC COUNCIL INC.
AOC**

16 December 2008

Attention: Practitioner Regulation Sub-Committee

e-mail:nraip@dhs.vic.gov.au

Consultation Paper
Proposed arrangements for accreditation.

The Australian Osteopathic Council and Australian and New Zealand Osteopathy Registration Boards wish to make the following comments.

3. Proposed new accreditation arrangements

3.4 Scope of accreditation

Proposal 3.4.1

It is proposed that, in preparation for commencement of the national scheme, national boards will consider whether there is a need for specialist endorsements in their profession.

Agree

Proposal 3.4.2

In the case of the medical profession, it is proposed that the national board take advice from the Australian Medical Council on the list of specialties and associated specialist qualifications, against which the board could endorse individual registrants as specialists.

Not Applicable

Proposal 3.4.3

It is proposed that, in line with the IGA, the national scheme legislation will provide that while boards may approve the initial list of specialties, any new specialties or specialty areas of practice will require Ministerial Council approval.

Agree

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Proposal 3.4.4

It is proposed that the Ministerial Council specify that the core accreditation functions initially assigned to the external accreditation bodies, are the core functions listed in the consultation paper where those functions are currently undertaken by the body.

Agree

Proposal 3.4.5

It is proposed that the Ministerial Council specify that it would be acceptable for boards to delegate to external accreditation bodies or committees, other functions related to accreditation or other matters for which the boards have responsibility; but the boards would not be required to do so.

Agree

Proposal 3.4.6

It is proposed that the national scheme legislation allow for changes to and expansion of the range of courses accredited, with any such expansion requiring the approval of the relevant standards by the Ministerial Council.

Agree

Proposal 3.4.7

It is proposed that the legislation provide general powers of delegation to boards, allowing them to delegate other functions to external accreditation bodies where they consider this is the best way to achieve the objectives of the national scheme, and where this is consistent with their powers under the legislation.

Agree

3.5 Governance arrangements for external accreditation bodies

Stakeholders are invited to provide comment on how guidance to be provided on the governing body of external accrediting bodies can provide for community input, and input from education providers and professions, but still provide independence in decision-making.

This is an ambiguous statement. We would suggest that whatever general guidelines have existed to date be used both in Australia and New Zealand.

Proposal 3.5.1

It is proposed that the agency's requirements in relation to the national scheme should be specified in the contract with the specific accreditation body.

Should be agency's and board requirements specified in the contract with the accreditation body with the boards requirements taking precedence.

Proposal 3.5.2

It is proposed that the terms of contracts between the agency and the external accrediting body include, but not be limited to, the following matters:

- (a) The objectives of the national scheme;*
- (b) The accreditation framework standards developed by the agency;*
- (c) The budget for the accreditation functions it is performing for the national board;*
- (d) The contribution to the cost of those functions to be drawn from registration fees;*
- (e) Monitoring and reporting arrangements;*
- (f) Requirements relating to contributions to the national board's annual report; and*
- (g) Provisions relating to termination of the contract.*

Suggest including ownership of records, Intellectual property rights and a dispute process.

Proposal 3.5.3

It is proposed that the arrangements between the agency and any external accreditation body form part of the health profession agreement between the agency and each national board, providing both the national board and the agency with input into the arrangements.

Could be cumbersome - it might lead to confusion over accountabilities and who is actually in charge of which contracts. The Board should have final approval of the arrangements, not the agency.

Proposal 3.5.4

It is proposed that the national scheme legislation provide that the agency must consult with the boards on the development of standards to govern registration and accreditation processes within the scheme.

The National Board should be responsible for accreditation. The agency should support the Board by entering into contracts with accreditation bodies as needed on Board approval.

Proposal 3.5.5

It is proposed that the external body assigned to undertake accreditation in the first three years will have the ability to delegate parts of the accreditation function to other agencies while remaining responsible for the overall function, provided there is no conflict of interest and where this was the arrangement at the time the accreditation function was assigned.

Agree

Proposal 3.5.6

As per Bill A, it is proposed that the national scheme legislation provide that accreditation bodies and committees of the national board be required to consult widely when developing standards for accreditation.

Agree

Proposal 3.5.7

It is proposed that the national scheme legislation provide that the agency be required to publish on its website the standards for accreditation (following approval by the Ministerial Council) as well as all its fees and charges relating to accreditation.

Agree

Proposal 3.5.8

It is proposed that the contract with the external accreditation body require that body to provide information to the national board in financial reports pertaining to accreditation functions and activities undertaken during the year, including: standards developed; courses accredited or monitored; the number of qualifications assessments of overseas trained practitioners undertaken, and the decisions made as a result of these assessments; and anything else requested by the national board for inclusion in the agency's annual report.

Agree

3.6 Accreditation committees

Proposal 3.6.1

It is proposed that the Ministerial Council require that accreditation committees comprise two registered practitioners from the relevant profession, two members with education and training expertise, two community members, and two representatives from the national board.

There needs to be flexibility about the size of the committee but still retain an appropriate mix of expertise. A member may fill dual roles on the committee.

Proposal 3.6.2

It is further proposed that the Ministerial Council require the relevant national board to appoint an accreditation committee chair from among these members.

Agree

Proposal 3.6.3

It is also proposed that the Ministerial Council require that the process by which the national board selects members for an accreditation committee be open and transparent. Positions should be advertised and allow for expressions of interest from individuals and nominations from groups.

Agree

Proposal 3.6.4

It is proposed that the legislation will give general delegation powers to boards to allow them to delegate other functions to agency staff and committees, and to external accreditation bodies, where they consider it is the best way to achieve the objects of the national scheme and where it is consistent with their powers under the legislation.

Agree

3.7 Linkages

Proposal 3.7.1

It is proposed that any organisation disadvantaged by an accreditation decision of the board should have the right to seek merit or process review and, if required, go beyond that to an external process of review.

Agree

3.8 Indemnity

Proposal 3.8.1

It is proposed that the national scheme legislation will provide that all bodies and their agents under the scheme will be indemnified for work performed in relation to the scheme. These indemnity arrangements will extend to external accreditation bodies and committees and persons acting for those bodies and committees.

Agree

3.10 Accreditation processes

Proposal 3.10.1

It is proposed that the Ministerial Council request that the agency consider the following matters in developing standards for the accreditation processes:

- (a) *The document Standards for Professional Accreditation Processes developed by Professions Australia in consultation with the Forum of Health Professions Councils;*

- (b) *The need to meet any relevant international guidelines relating to the specific professions;*
- (c) *The need to align standards with relevant international standards and clearly indicate the international standards on which these standards are based when presenting them to boards for consideration;*
- (d) *The need to ensure that accreditation assessment panels provide sufficient public accountability and independence.*

Agree - except that the Board, not the agency, be responsible for such matters.

Proposal 3.10.2

It is proposed that the legislation provide for ongoing monitoring of education courses and institutions, including: a requirement for accredited education providers to report to the accreditation body or committee, any significant curriculum changes or resourcing issues that would adversely impact on students and compromise their ability to register; and requirements for the accreditation body or committee to report any such adverse events to the relevant national board as soon as it becomes aware of them.

The accreditation body should only report adverse events to the national Board when it is fully informed of the facts and implications of such events.

4. Linkages with Commonwealth, State and Territory government bodies

Proposal 4.1

It is proposed that accreditation reports will be made publicly available in the agency's annual report and on its website. These reports will include recommendations and outcomes of accreditation processes and information on education and training courses.

Most Universities and Institutes these days are run as businesses and could regard some aspects of accreditation reports as "commercial in confidence". We suggest that entire reports not necessarily be made public without consultation with the training provider. An executive summary should always be made available.

5. International linkages

Proposal 5.1

It is proposed that the national scheme legislation provide that standards for accreditation are developed in consultation with New Zealand and any other country with which Australia has (or develops) a mutual recognition agreement.

Agree

6. Transitional arrangements

Proposal 6.1

It is proposed that transitional arrangements to be included in the national scheme legislation will include requirements for:

- (a) Current boards to provide the new national boards with their lists of accredited courses prior to the commencement of the new scheme;*
- (b) Standards for courses or education providers that exist on 30 June 2010, to continue until they are replaced with standards developed under the national scheme and approved by the Ministerial Council;*
- (c) Education and training courses and education providers which are accredited by current boards on 30 June 2010 to be deemed to be accredited under the national scheme until they have been reaccredited under the new provisions; and*
- (d) A lead time of at least one full year for the introduction of any new accreditation standards following approval by the Ministerial Council to allow course providers to make any required changes to their courses.*

Under (d) one full year is not enough. The lead time for major changes in university courses is longer than this. We would suggest 2 years as an appropriate lead time.

7 TTMRA

Given TTMRA the AOC and the Australian Osteopaths Registration Boards are mindful of the need to encourage ongoing dialogue between Australia and New Zealand particularly in relation to program accreditation and assessment of overseas trained persons. For this reason the Osteopathic Council of New Zealand has been included in discussion on this consultation paper.

8 General

Throughout the paper there is ambiguity in the use of the term “standards”. In any legislation the term needs to be clarified by having a descriptor such as “accreditation standard”, “governance standard”, “practice standard” etc. There also needs to be a clear distinction between the separate functions of accrediting bodies “program accreditation” and “assessment of overseas qualifications”.

Regards

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In consultation with:

Chiropractic & Osteopathy Board of South Australia
Osteopaths Registration Board of NSW
Osteopaths Registration Board of Victoria
Chiropractors & Osteopaths Registration Board of Tasmania
Chiropractors & Osteopaths Board of the ACT
Osteopaths Registration Board of Western Australia
Osteopaths Board of Queensland
Chiropractors & Osteopaths Registration Board of the NT
The Osteopathic Council of New Zealand