



HEALTH
PROFESSIONS
ACCREDITATION
COLLABORATIVE
FORUM

Australia's accreditation authorities
for regulated health professionals

CONSENSUS STATEMENT: COVID-19

The Health Professions Accreditation Collaborative Forum (Forum) is a coalition of the 15 accreditation authorities appointed to undertake the accreditation functions under the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009* (the National Law).

The Forum is closely monitoring the evolving situation surrounding the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) as it continues as a public health risk. Forum members understand that education providers, and the accredited programs across the regulated health professions are concerned about the many potential impacts of COVID-19 on their operations including ongoing ability to meet the accreditation standards for their specific profession.

The Forum position is guided by publicly available information from the [Australian Government Department of Health](#) and the [World Health Organisation](#) (WHO). The Forum will also consider the statements of its MoU partner, the Tertiary Education and Quality Standards Authority ([TEQSA](#)), and other education and health service standards bodies to ensure consistency of approaches.

The following constitutes the collective position with respect to accredited programs and the impact of COVID-19.

1. Graduating from an accredited program

Forum membership includes representatives of all accrediting authorities for regulated health professions. Authorities perform accreditation functions under the National Law and as such have a responsibility to ensure accredited programs are producing graduates with the knowledge, skills and professional attributes necessary to practise their profession.

We recognise that education providers may need to vary how they meet accreditation standards, including program delivery methods such as learning and teaching approaches.

For the majority of Forum members, outcomes-based standards are already in place and provide flexibility for providers to demonstrate their ongoing ability to meet the accreditation standards, and learning outcomes, in many and diverse ways.

2. Clinical Learning and Experience

Forum members accredit programs that prepare graduates for clinical practice, including by delivering clinical and work based training in the health services in public and private sectors, within/on provider owned and managed premises and via external placements.



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Forum members understand that health profession program providers will need to respond to the additional demands placed on clinical staff and facilities, and this may result in changes in students' clinical learning and experience.

Given the complexity of and variation in the clinical environments in which health profession students learn their clinical skills and gain clinical experience, the impact on access to clinical learning opportunities will be profession specific. The Forum encourages providers to contact the accreditation authority for their profession to discuss specific circumstances about accredited programs as required. The onus remains with the accredited program provider to ensure that students are able to access the clinical learning and experience needed to meet program outcomes.

3. Student numbers

Travel bans and restrictions have impacted the Australian education sector significantly.

Providers planning changes to student numbers in their health profession programs should consider the relevant profession's accreditation standards concerning student admission criteria and student support, as well as requirements that program resources, including clinical placements continue to be adequate to support the student cohort.

COVID-19 is having a significant impact on many individuals and their families, and organisations around the world. Accreditation authorities recognise that students, as the health practitioners of the future, and staff have an opportunity to contribute to the Australian health system response to this virus. Each accreditation authority will be happy to discuss any COVID-19 impacts related to accreditation.

A list of contact details is provided on the next page.

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Contacts for each accreditation authority

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