AUSTRALIAN DENTAL COUNCIL

Australian Dental Council

Accreditation assessor manual

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Contents

Contents

Overview

The Australian Dental Council (ADC) is responsible for accrediting dental education and training programs in Australia under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009 (National Law) and the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (NRAS). Accreditation indicates that a program meets the required ADC/DC(NZ) Accreditation Standards for Dental Practitioner Programs (Standards) and is expected to prepare graduates with the knowledge, skills, and attributes needed for safe practice.

In Australia, programs accredited by the ADC are considered by the Dental Board of Australia (DBA) for approval for the purposes of registration, meaning graduates of an accredited and approved program may apply to the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) for registration to practise in Australia.

This manual outlines the types of assessors and their roles, the approach to establishing Accreditation Teams (ATs), and key elements of the accreditation process. It also highlights practices that support a collegiate, constructive and interactive review process.

This manual is for use by those interested in becoming assessors, ADC registered and nominated assessors, ADC staff and secretariat, as well as external parties with an interest in accreditation assessors and processes.

This manual should be read in conjunction with the Accreditation guidelines for dental practitioner programs.

Internationally, the ADC offers accreditation services to education providers delivering dental education and training programs outside of Australia and New Zealand, benchmarking them against Australian Standards. More information is provided in the Guidelines for the accreditation of international dental practitioner programs.

Accreditation context and framework

Detailed information about the accreditation context and framework, including the accreditation philosophy and principles, Standards, and Professional Competencies is provided in the Accreditation guidelines for dental practitioner programs.

Tertiary education regulation in Australia

Assessors must also be aware of the role of tertiary education regulators and any requirements that may have an impact on accreditation of an Australian program.

Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA)

TEQSA regulates higher education program providers, including Australian universities.

It uses the principles of regulatory necessity, risk and proportionality to regulate education program providers against the TEQSA Act and the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards). TEQSA also accredits the courses of non-university providers that do not have the authority to accredit their own courses, for example TAFEs with higher education programs. More information is provided on the TEQSA website.

Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA)

ASQA is the national regulator for the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector. It applies a risk-based approach to the regulation of accredited courses delivered by Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), in accordance with the Standards for RTOs and as

outlined in ASQA's Regulatory Risk Framework. More information is provided on the ASQA website.

Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)

The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) is the national policy for regulated qualifications across education and training in Australia. It brings together qualifications from all sectors into a single, comprehensive national framework.

The AQF comprises 10 levels of qualifications, ranging from Level 1 (Certificate I) to Level 10 (Doctoral degree). The Australian Dental Council (ADC) accredits programs that typically sit at AQF Levels 6 to 9 across both the vocational education and training (VET) and higher education sectors.

The AQF is maintained by the Australian Government Department of Education, in consultation with state and territory governments. More information is provided on the AQF website.

To issue regulated qualifications (such as an advanced diploma, bachelor's degree, or master's degree), education providers must be registered with the relevant national regulator, TEQSA or ASQA, and comply with applicable standards, including alignment with the AQF. Non-compliance may result in regulatory action by the relevant body.

ADC roles and responsibilities in accreditation

Accreditation Committee and International Accreditation Committee

The Accreditation Committee and the International Accreditation Committee advise the ADC on accreditation matters and assess programs against the Standards. Both Committees are supported by assessors appointed to ATs. In this role, assessors are responsible for evaluating programs against the Standards and making recommendations to inform Committee decision-making.

The Committees meet several times each year to consider accreditation matters, make decisions and/or recommendations to the ADC Board, and provide advice on accreditation and related issues.

Since members of the ADC Accreditation Committee and International Accreditation Committee make recommendations to the ADC on the accreditation of programs, Committee members will generally be unable to be appointed as ATs, apart from exceptional circumstances such as when the ADC is unable to find a suitably experienced and skilled assessor to undertake a site visit. In such circumstances, the assessor will be excluded from any discussions or decisions within the Committee regarding the relevant program.

The Accreditation Committee and International Accreditation Committee Charters are available on the ADC website.

Members of the ADC Board are unable to be appointed to an AT due to the conflict of interest in their role as accreditation decision makers.

Assessors

ADC Register of assessors

The ADC maintains a Register of assessors who are suitably experienced and skilled to accredit general and specialist dental practitioner programs.

There are three categories of assessors on the Register which are:

- Academic assessor
- Clinical assessor
- Community assessor (Australian general dental practitioner programs).

An individual may be appointed to the Register as both an academic and clinical assessor. An individual appointed as a community assessor cannot take on the role of academic or clinical assessor.

The ADC considers applications to be added to the Register of assessors submitted through the following means:

- expression of interest from an individual
- following a call for applications
- nomination by a current member
- nomination by a representative body/association.

Applicants must submit an application for appointment to the Register and include:

- a brief, current curriculum vitae (maximum 2 pages),
- a covering letter outlining how they meet the relevant criteria and
- contact details for two peer referees who can comment on the applicant's suitability for the role.

Applications are assessed by the Executive Director, Accreditation, Policy and Research (EADPR) against the criteria outlined above. Following this assessment, the EADPR makes a recommendation to the Accreditation Committee about whether the applicant should be appointed to the Register of Assessors. The Accreditation Committee considers the recommendation and determines whether the applicant will be appointed to the Register. Applicants are then advised of the outcome of their application.

Assessors appointed to the Register of Assessors are engaged by the ADC as casual employees and remunerated by the ADC in accordance with the Examiner, Item Writer and Assessor remuneration guidelines (provided to assessors upon appointment).

At intervals of up to three years, assessors will be invited to indicate whether they wish to remain on the Register, subject to ongoing eligibility and satisfactory performance.

Specialist assessors nominated by an academy or society for a specific event.

The ADC will appoint at least one specialist assessor per specialty from the Register of Assessors to the AT. For Australian specialist programs, the relevant specialist academy or society may be invited, or may request, to nominate a second specialist assessor for appointment to the AT.

All assessors, whether appointed by the ADC or nominated by a specialist academy or society, are responsible for assessing the program against the ADC Accreditation Standards.

A nominated specialist assessor must not be based in the same state or territory as the education provider and must comply with all other requirements of an ADC assessor. The nominated specialist assessor is not required to be included on the ADC Register of Assessors or to be engaged as an ADC casual employee. The costs associated with a nominated specialist assessor must be borne by the relevant specialist academy or society.

The ADC Chief Executive Officer and the Chair of the Accreditation Committee will be notified of any nominated specialist assessor. The education provider will be given the opportunity to raise any objections to the nomination. If approved, the nominated specialist assessor will be appointed as a full member of the AT.

Assessor requirements

All assessors, whether on the ADC register or nominated are required to:

- complete a standing notice of interest, review it prior to participating in each AT and agree to notify the ADC as soon as any changes to this occur
- undertake training as determined by the ADC
- confirm the assessor role they are eligible to undertake, as outlined below.

Dental practitioner assessors

All assessors (ADC registered assessors and nominated assessors), other than community assessors, must confirm that they are eligible to participate in an AT as an academic or clinical assessor (or both) in accordance with the eligibility criteria below.

Academic assessor criteria:

- hold current registration as a dental practitioner with the relevant regulatory body, without conditions relating to conduct or performance, and comply with the requirements for registration and practise within their jurisdiction
- higher level qualification(s)
- research experience
- broad range and senior level teaching experience
- contemporary knowledge of and experience in student assessment, teaching procedures and teaching materials
- contemporary knowledge of and experience in teaching administration and leadership, quality assurance, program evaluation and program design
- experience in providing academic and/or professional advice or services.

Clinical assessor criteria:

- hold current registration as a dental practitioner with the relevant regulatory body, without conditions relating to conduct or performance, and comply with the requirements for registration and practise within their jurisdiction
- understanding of what attributes, skills and competencies are required of dental practitioners
- understanding of the professional and clinical standards required for dental practitioners to deliver oral health care
- knowledge of the tertiary education sector
- peer recognition
- understanding of the dental health needs of individuals and the community.

Assessors appointed to the register have a responsibility to advise the ADC if their registration has been cancelled or suspended or if current conditions, reprimands or undertakings have been imposed prior to participating on an AT.

Community assessors

A person is eligible to be appointed to the Register as a community assessor if they are not, and have never been, registered as a dental practitioner with a relevant regulatory body.

All community assessors must confirm that they are eligible to participate in an AT in accordance with the eligibility criteria below.

- experience of contributing to collective decision making through participation in meetings, committees, groups or fora
- experience of involvement in a consumer, community or public capacity with a professional training program or as part of a national or local forum or group involved with the provision of health services (Desirable)
- knowledge (or the ability to quickly gain knowledge) of one or more of the following: education; quality assurance; risk management; the delivery of dental or health services
- ability to consider a wide range of information to make informed and reasoned decisions
- excellent oral and written communication skills and interpersonal skills, including the ability to communicate with a range of stakeholders.

Assessor responsibilities

All assessors should perform their role in accordance with the ADC Code of Conduct and the ethical and professional considerations below.

An assessor should perform their role ethically by:

- being impartial through unbiased evaluations
- maintaining confidentiality regarding all documentation reviewed, discussions held, and interviews undertaken
- declaring perceived potential or actual conflicts of interest
- not using information gained in confidence for personal benefit or the benefit of another organisation
- being respectful of provider staff and stakeholders.

An assessor should perform their role professionally by:

- participating in training
- being familiar with the Accreditation Standards and Professional Competencies
- reading and evaluating the evidence provided
- helping to formulate questions for, and ask questions of, provider staff and stakeholders
- contributing to AT discussions and the formulation of AT findings, including quality improvement recommendations
- assisting in writing the AT report
- providing timely responses to requests from the secretariat.

Assessors that fail to fulfil these responsibilities and abide by the conditions of appointment may be removed from the Register of Assessors at the discretion of the ADC.

Conflicts of interest

The accreditation procedures are designed to ensure fairness and impartiality throughout the accreditation process. Assessors are appointed for their professional and educational expertise, and care is taken to avoid the appointment of individuals with a conflict of interest or a predetermined view of the program under review. Given the extent of interaction within the dental sector, AT members may have, or be perceived to have, conflicts of interest arising from their other roles or activities.

Proposed AT members must declare any actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest that may affect, or be seen to affect, their ability to perform their role impartially. Prior to confirmation of appointment, all proposed AT members must complete and submit a Notice of Interests.

Conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:

- Personal conflicts, such as close personal relationships or significant personal conflict with senior staff of the education provider
- Professional conflicts, such as past, current or prospective employment with the institution, or roles as an advisor, examiner or consultant, or association with a competing institution
- Ideological conflicts, such as a strong predisposition for or against particular educational approaches or methodologies.

Assessors must declare any actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest at any stage of the accreditation process, including those arising after appointment. Assessors should consider whether their involvement could reasonably be perceived to affect their impartiality. Any concerns should be raised with the ADC Secretariat and, where appropriate, with the Chair of the AT or the relevant Committee. The ADC will determine whether a conflict exists and how it will be managed.

Where a conflict of interest is identified, withdrawal from the assessment process may not be required. In some cases, disclosure and appropriate management of the conflict may be sufficient. Assessors should seek guidance from the ADC Secretariat if they are uncertain.

Education providers are given an opportunity to comment on the proposed membership of an AT and may raise concerns where they consider a proposed member has a conflict of interest or bias that could affect objective assessment. The ADC will consider any such concerns and, where substantiated, will revise the composition of the AT.

Confidentiality

The accreditation procedures are designed to ensure confidentiality is maintained throughout the accreditation process. To undertake their role, the ADC requires education providers to submit detailed information, which may include sensitive or commercial-in-confidence material such as plans, budgets and internal evaluations.

Assessors, members of the Accreditation Committee and International Accreditation Committee, Board members and ADC staff must maintain the confidentiality of all information provided to the ADC for the purposes of program accreditation.

Information collected through the accreditation process is used only for the purpose for which it is obtained.

Accreditation decisions are made following consideration of the evaluation report by the Accreditation Committee or International Accreditation Committee and, where applicable, the ADC Board. Until a decision is made and formally communicated, all recommendations and deliberations remain confidential to the ADC, the AT and the education provider.

All assessors are required to enter into an agreement with the ADC that includes confidentiality obligations as a condition of their appointment. Assessors must comply with these obligations at all stages of the accreditation process.

All communication with the program must be through the ADC Secretariat. AT members must not make direct contact with the program being reviewed, either by email or other means.

AT functions and roles

The ADC appoints an AT to undertake the assessment of each program. The AT operates in accordance with ADC policies and procedures by:

- reviewing documentation submitted by the education provider relevant to the Accreditation Standards
- conducting site visits, including interviews with staff, students and other stakeholders, and observing facilities and clinical environments
- preparing the accreditation report for consideration by the Accreditation Committee or International Accreditation Committee.

ATs have three key functions:

- to evaluate available evidence and determine whether a program meets the Accreditation Standards
- to make recommendations to the Accreditation Committee or International Accreditation Committee regarding accreditation outcomes
- to identify areas for quality improvement, including recommendations and commendations.

The AT does not make accreditation decisions; it provides findings and recommendations to inform Committee decision-making and may contribute to the monitoring of accredited programs, where required.

AT composition

All programs

When forming an AT, assessors are selected to ensure an appropriate mix of expertise in clinical practice within relevant dental professions, dental education and assessment, and accreditation processes.

The composition of the AT also aims to provide geographical representation and, where possible, gender balance. ATs for follow-up visits may be smaller than the original team and may include some members of the original team and/or new members.

An AT is appointed to evaluate one or more programs from a single education provider, depending on the circumstances. An AT typically comprises three to five members but may be smaller or larger where required, such as for a limited review against a defined set of Accreditation Standards or a concurrent review of multiple programs.

In selecting the AT, consideration will be given to ensure that there is:

- an experienced clinician in the relevant discipline with standing in the profession
- a senior dental academic with strong understanding of modern educational principles and practice.

The membership of the AT is determined by the Manager Accreditation, with input from the Chair of the Accreditation Committee or International Accreditation Committee and other committee members as required.

In accepting the appointment to an AT, an assessor must confirm that they are:

- are available to participate in all stages of the assessment, including the site visit(s), drafting and/or review of reports by the AT; and
- are willing to assist the ADC in the review of future condition and monitoring reports as required.

Observers may be appointed in accordance with the Observers of accreditation events policy.

General dental practitioner programs

For programs leading to general registration, the AT typically includes:

- a Chair who is an experienced academic and/or clinical assessor
- an academic and/or clinical assessor with expertise relevant to the program
- at least one community assessor (Australia only).

Specialist dental practitioner programs

For programs leading to specialist registration, the composition of the AT is designed to ensure appropriate specialist input for each specialty under review. Specialist assessors focus on discipline-specific aspects of the program, including curriculum design, clinical training, assessment of competence and specialist workforce capability. The Chair, with support from the ADC Secretariat, integrates these inputs into a consistent evaluation across all Accreditation Standards.

Where a single specialist program is being assessed, the AT will include:

- a Chair who is an experienced academic and/or clinical assessor (who may be a general or specialist dental practitioner)
- at least one specialist assessor for the specialty under review
- additional assessors with relevant academic and/or clinical expertise.

Where multiple specialist programs are being reviewed concurrently, the AT will include:

- a Chair who is an experienced academic and/or clinical assessor (who may be a general or specialist dental practitioner)
- where appropriate, a Deputy Chair or Co-Chair to support the review of multiple specialties
- at least one specialist assessor for each specialty under review
- additional assessors to ensure appropriate expertise across education, assessment and accreditation processes.

In these circumstances:

- the Chair and Deputy Chair (or Co-Chairs) lead the assessment of Accreditation Standards and criteria that apply across all programs
- specialist assessors provide primary input on Accreditation Standards and criteria specific to their specialty.

The ADC may appoint a specialist assessor from outside Australia to ensure independence or where suitable assessors are not available within Australia. This may be necessary where, for example, a peak body for a specialty is involved in developing or delivering the program being assessed.

Specialist assessors may also be nominated by a specialist academy or society in accordance with ADC policies.

AT roles

AT Chair

To be eligible for the role of AT Chair, the assessor must have undertaken at least three accreditation reviews.

In addition to the attributes expected of AT assessors, Chairs are expected to demonstrate:

- leadership: demonstrates sound judgement, is confident and decisive, and acts impartially.
- ability to chair effectively: establishes and maintains a clear and structured approach, facilitates input from all assessors, builds consensus, distils key issues, and ensures that discussions and decisions are accurately summarised and recorded.
- effective communication: communicate clearly and confidently, with demonstrated experience in report writing.

The Chair is responsible for leading the evaluation of the program, including:

- chairing AT meetings and teleconferences
- leading questioning during interviews with education provider representatives and stakeholders
- supporting the preparation of the accreditation report, including professional content
- leading the formulation of the ATs overall recommendation.

Role of the ADC Secretariat

The ADC Secretariat provides policy and procedural advice, coordinates engagement with education providers in relation to accreditation submissions and site visit arrangements, and supports the AT throughout the accreditation process. The Secretariat supports the AT in the preparation and editing of accreditation reports and administers the feedback and evaluation processes associated with the accreditation function.

The administrative responsibilities of the ADC Secretariat include:

- advising education providers on accreditation processes and requirements
- coordinating accreditation schedules, including the timing of reviews and site visits
- facilitating the formation of ATs, including identifying and contacting assessors and Chairs and seeking advice from the relevant Committee Chair where required.
- coordinating site visit arrangements in liaison with the education provider
- managing the progression of the AT report and overall recommendation through the Accreditation Committee or International Accreditation Committee and, where applicable, the ADC Board.
- notifying the DBA of accreditation decisions for Australian programs
- arranging publication of accreditation outcomes, including summary reports
- oversee monitoring of accredited programs
- supporting the development and review of accreditation policies, procedures and guidance materials
- preparing documentation to support AT activities, including meeting records, requests for additional information and site visit resources.

Evidence gathering techniques

ATs should consider both quantitative and qualitative information, identifying strengths, risks and areas for improvement, and recognising examples of good practice.

The site visit enables the AT to verify the information provided in the accreditation submission. AT members should be familiar with the submission and identify, in advance, key issues for clarification and lines of enquiry.

Three key techniques are used to gather and assess information:

- sampling
- tracking (or trailing or drilling down)
- triangulation.

Sampling

Effective accreditation relies on targeted sampling. Sampling occurs at two levels:

- Scoping: identifying areas of focus based on analysis of the accreditation submission, including areas of risk, change or significance
- Selection: determining the specific information, documentation or stakeholders to be reviewed within those areas.

Sampling may be used to confirm the reliability of information provided and to explore areas requiring further investigation. Where initial sampling supports the completeness and accuracy of the submission, the AT may place greater reliance on that information and avoid unnecessary duplication.

Sampling may include:

- aspects of the program that present risk or complexity
- recent or proposed changes to curriculum or delivery
- areas identified for improvement by the education provider.

The AT may review both documentary information (for example, committee minutes or assessment materials) and information obtained through interviews.

Tracking (trailing or drilling down)

Tracking is a focused form of sampling that examines a specific issue in depth across different levels or areas of the education provider. This technique is used to test how policies, processes or planned changes are implemented in practice. For example, the AT may review selected components of a new curriculum in detail to assess alignment with the provider's stated approach.

Tracking may involve:

- following a process or decision through relevant documentation
- testing implementation through interviews with staff and students
- requesting additional information where required.

Triangulation

Triangulation involves assessing information from multiple sources to test consistency and reliability.

This may include comparing:

- documentation (such as policies, reports or evaluations)
- stakeholder perspectives (for example, academic staff, students and clinicians)
- observed practices during the site visit.

Consistent information across sources increases confidence in the provider's claims. Where inconsistencies arise, the AT should assess their significance and consider whether they represent isolated issues or systemic concerns that may affect the program's ability to meet the Standards.

AT members should actively seek opportunities to triangulate information throughout the review.

Use of findings

The AT should determine whether any gaps or inconsistencies identified are significant and affect the education provider's capacity to meet the Accreditation Standards, and where appropriate, consider their underlying causes.

ATs should adopt a risk informed approach, focusing attention on areas of complexity, change or uncertainty where there is greater potential impact on program quality or public safety.

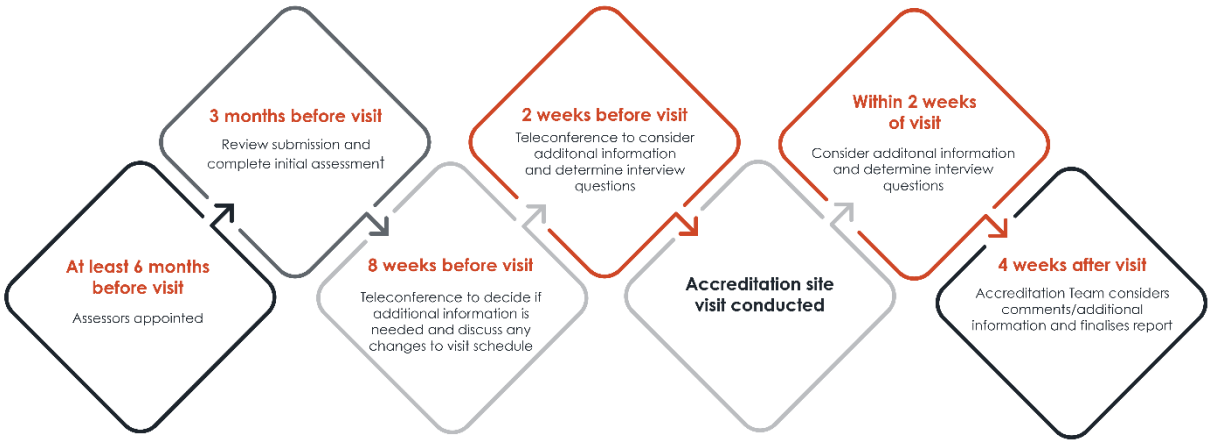
The AT forms an overall, on balance judgement as to whether each Accreditation Standard is met, taking into account all relevant information rather than assessing criteria in isolation.

The accreditation process

Timeline

Key activities in the accreditation review process are detailed below. Timelines may vary for programs outside Australia.

Figure 1. Key activities for ATs in the accreditation review process



Responsibilities of education providers

The education provider is required to prepare and upload a comprehensive accreditation submission describing the program's design, delivery, governance and outcomes, supported by evidence demonstrating how each Accreditation Standard is met.

Further guidance on preparing an accreditation submission is provided in the Accreditation guidelines for dental practitioner programs.

Reviewing the education providers submission

Once the education provider uploads its accreditation submission, the ADC Secretariat provides the AT with access to the submission (in electronic format), together with other relevant documentation, such as previous accreditation reports and recent annual monitoring reports.

The AT undertakes a preliminary assessment based on the accreditation submission and identify areas for further exploration and any additional information required prior to the site visit. These issues form the basis for discussion at the initial AT teleconference.

Teleconference

ADC Secretariat staff communicate with the AT members to arrange a teleconference to:

- confirm that AT members have returned all required declarations and received all necessary documentation
- confirm travel and accommodation arrangements
- confirm arrangements for the training and review session prior to the site visit
- discuss the submission and the AT members' preliminary assessment, guided by the feedback
- identify any additional information to request prior to the visit or view on site
- determine issues to be explored with the education provider during the site visit
- discuss and determine questions for the interview sessions
- agree on people to be interviewed
- determine any changes to the draft schedule for the visit.

The ADC Secretariat summarises and circulates the meeting outcomes. The ADC Secretariat will forward any requests for additional information or clarification and any requests for amendments to the site visit schedule to the education provider.

A second teleconference will be organised two to three weeks prior to the site visit to address any issues and to identify the key questions that AT members would like to ask during the site visit.

The site visit

Accreditation normally includes a structured site visit conducted by the AT at the education provider's campus(es).

Purpose of the site visit

The site visit is a key stage in the accreditation process and enables the AT to:

- verify and clarify information provided in the accreditation submission
- gather additional information to inform the accreditation decision
- assess how the program operates in practice.

In doing so, the AT tests the education provider's claims against observed practice, refines preliminary findings, and builds a robust body of information to support its assessment against the Accreditation Standards.

Site visits may include interviews with staff, students and other stakeholders, observation of facilities and clinical environments (where relevant), and triangulation of information. Where appropriate, the AT may observe students in clinical settings.

Site visits for new programs are adapted to reflect the circumstances of the provider and the program.

Prior to the site visit

Prior to the visit, AT members are expected to prepare by:

- being familiar with the accreditation submission and supporting documentation
- identifying key issues for clarification and lines of enquiry
- contributing to the development of questions for interviews
- reviewing the responsibilities of the assessor role.

The AT will typically meet prior to the visit to confirm the approach, review the schedule and agree on key areas of focus.

During the site visit

During the visit, the AT:

- follows the agreed schedule of interviews and activities
- gathers information through interviews, observation and review of documentation
- meets regularly to share information, test findings and develop preliminary conclusions.

AT members should contribute to discussions, support the Chair in managing the process, and maintain a consistent and structured approach to information gathering.

Professional conduct during the site visit

AT members must maintain, and be seen to maintain, a professional and impartial approach throughout the visit.

In particular:

- interactions with staff and stakeholders must be limited to matters directly relevant to the assessment
- informal meetings, social interactions or other engagement outside the review process must not occur
- questioning and discussion should be respectful, objective and focused on the Accreditation Standards.

At the same time, the AT should build constructive working relationships with the education provider to support a collegiate and effective review process.

Gathering information through interviews

Interviews are a key component of the site visit and enable the AT to gather and test information relevant to the Accreditation Standards.

To support confidentiality and encourage open and candid responses, interview sessions are conducted in accordance with Chatham House Rule. This means that information obtained may be used, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of participants will be disclosed. Interviewees are not informed of comments made in other interview sessions.

At the commencement of each interview, the Chair will outline the purpose of the site visit and interview. Refer to Appendix 1: AT Resource – Interview protocol.

Approach to interviews

AT members should:

- explore discrepancies between information provided in the accreditation submission and information obtained during interviews
- seek clarification and confirmation where required
- actively listen and engage with interviewees
- focus on significant issues relevant to the Accreditation Standards
- distinguish between views that are broadly representative and those that are individual opinions.

Planning and conducting interviews

Effective interviews require preparation and focus. Time during the site visit is limited, and questioning should be targeted and aligned with identified lines of enquiry.

An interview worksheet will be provided to guide questioning based on commonly explored areas. AT members may adapt these questions or include additional questions as required, provided they remain relevant to the Accreditation Standards.

The AT will refine interview questions during the second AT teleconference and at the meeting prior to the site visit, including allocating questions across AT members.

Questioning and discussion should be fair, respectful and focused. At the same time, questioning should be sufficiently rigorous to enable the AT to form a clear and evidence-based view of the program.

Not all aspects of the accreditation submission will require detailed discussion during interviews. Where the information provided is clear and comprehensive, interviews should focus on areas requiring clarification, further exploration, or verification.

Styles of questioning

A range of questioning styles may be used to gather and test information during interviews.

In exploring a particular issue, AT members should generally begin with open-ended questions to elicit information, followed by focused probing questions to clarify responses. This may be supported by closed questions, where appropriate, to confirm understanding.

Effective questioning

Assessors should:

- ask clear, concise and focused questions
- use open-ended questions to explore issues, followed by targeted follow-up questions
- refer to the accreditation submission where appropriate to demonstrate familiarity with the material
- listen actively and respond to the information provided
- focus on significant issues relevant to the Accreditation Standards
- ensure all participants are given the opportunity to contribute.

Assessors should avoid:

- asking multiple or overly complex questions
- using lengthy preambles or leading statements
- offering opinions, advice or personal examples
- making assumptions or putting words into the interviewee's response
- referring to practices at their own organisation
- making commitments or suggesting outcomes.

Site visit schedule

The site visit schedule is designed to maximise opportunities for structured and interactive discussions with staff, students, members of the profession and other relevant stakeholders. These discussions enable participants to present their views and support the AT in assessing the program against the Accreditation Standards.

The schedule should also provide opportunities for the AT to observe relevant facilities and, where appropriate, students undertaking clinical activities.

Adequate time must be included in the schedule for confidential AT meetings to review information, reflect on findings and test emerging conclusions.

Site visits vary from one to four days in duration. The length may vary depending on the scope of the review, including:

- longer visits for multi-campus providers or concurrent reviews of multiple programs

- shorter visits (for example, one day or part-day) for targeted reviews against a limited set of Accreditation Standards.

For new programs, the schedule is adapted to reflect the circumstances of the education provider and the stage of program development.

Scheduling considerations

To support an effective and efficient visit:

- interview sessions should be structured to minimise duplication and limit the number of times participants are required to attend
- where appropriate, a single session may address multiple aspects of a participant's role
- interview groups should be structured to support independent and open discussion.

To encourage candid responses, participants should not be interviewed alongside individuals with whom they have a direct reporting relationship (for example, staff should not be interviewed in the same session as their line manager).

The schedule is indicative and may be adapted to reflect operational and logistical considerations, including clinical service delivery.

The detailed site visit schedule is finalised by the education provider in consultation with the ADC Secretariat, typically following the AT teleconference.

More information about Site visits including indicative schedules is provided in the Accreditation guidelines for dental practitioner programs.

The evaluation report

Following the site visit, the AT prepares an evaluation report documenting its assessment of the program against the Standards. Drafting of the report commences during the site visit, with support from the ADC Secretariat, and draws on evidence from the accreditation submission, documentation reviewed, and information gathered through interviews and observations.

More information about the evaluation report is provided in the Accreditation guidelines for dental practitioner programs.

Accreditation outcomes

Information about accreditation outcomes and decision making is provided in the Accreditation guidelines for dental practitioner programs.

Feedback and evaluation

To support continuous improvement of the accreditation process, the ADC invites education providers and assessors to provide feedback following each accreditation review.

Feedback is collected through an online survey and is used to inform improvements to accreditation processes, policies and guidance materials.

Destruction of materials

Assessors must securely destroy all confidential material relating to a program following completion of the accreditation process.

Destruction should occur once all aspects of the review have been finalised following consideration of the education provider's comments.

Confidential material includes both hard copy and electronic records, such as:

- the accreditation submission and supporting documentation
- any additional information provided by the education provider
- assessment and interview worksheets
- draft versions of the accreditation report
- email correspondence relating to the assessment
- any other material obtained or generated during the accreditation process

Hard copy materials must be disposed of securely, for example by shredding or through an approved secure document disposal service.

Electronic materials must be permanently deleted from all devices and storage locations.

Where an assessor is unable to securely dispose of confidential material, they must contact the ADC Secretariat to arrange for its secure return and disposal.

Ongoing monitoring of accredited programs

More information about monitoring of accredited programs is provided in the Accreditation guidelines for dental practitioner programs.

Resources and logistics

Practical aspects of the visit

The ADC Secretariat will confirm all practical arrangements for the site visit, including dates, times, travel and accommodation.

ADC registered assessors

Assessors appointed to the ADC Register of Assessors are engaged by the ADC as casual employees. Travel, accommodation and remuneration are provided in accordance with the Examiner, Item Writer and Assessor remuneration guidelines.

Nominated specialist assessors

Travel, accommodation and any other costs associated with nominated specialist assessors are the responsibility of the nominating specialist academy or society.

Appendix 1: AT Resource – Interview protocol

For each interview, the Accreditation Team (AT) selects relevant generic questions from the question library and develops additional questions based on its review of the education provider's accreditation submission.

Questions are allocated across AT members. AT members may take notes during interviews. Interviews may also be transcribed to support accuracy and consistency in the evaluation and reporting process.

Chair Introduction Script (Site Visit Interviews)

1. Acknowledgement of Country
   [Include the relevant Acknowledgement of Country for the location of the site visit.]
2. Introduce the members of the Accreditation Team and ADC staff.
3. Thank you for taking the time to meet with us today. Your participation is voluntary, and we appreciate your contribution.
4. We are here on behalf of the Australian Dental Council as part of the accreditation review of this program.
5. The purpose of this interview is to hear your perspectives on the program, including what is working well and any opportunities for improvement.
6. We are evaluating the program and its systems, processes and outcomes, rather than the performance of individual staff members.
7. This interview is one of a number of discussions being held to help the Accreditation Team understand the perspectives of students, staff and other stakeholders.
8. Please feel free to speak openly and candidly. Individual comments will not be attributed to any person in the accreditation report.
9. A transcript will be generated to assist the Accreditation Team in preparing its report. This is not an audio recording. The transcript will be used only for accreditation purposes and to support preparation of the accreditation report.
10. Information shared during this interview will be treated confidentially and considered in accordance with the Chatham House Rule.
11. Does anyone have any questions before we begin?