



Australian Library and Information Association

Course Accreditation Review 2013

Prepared by

Dr Gillian Hallam

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Executive Summary

This report has been prepared for the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) in response to the request to undertake a literature review and environmental scan to inform discussions of the issues associated with professional accreditation. ALIA is the peak body which develops and monitors the professional standards that ensure the high quality of graduates entering the library and information services (LIS) profession in Australia. Accreditation activities directly address ALIA's object: "To ensure the high standard of personnel engaged in information provision and foster their professional interests and aspirations" (ALIA, 2010a). The association states that, "as a standards body, ALIA has a responsibility to ensure the availability of high-quality educational programs... as a basis for professional practice" (ALIA, 2009a).

The focus on education for librarianship dates back to 1937, when the association (Australian Institute of Librarians) was first established; for many years, as the Library Association of Australia, it was responsible for managing the registration examinations which represented formal entry into the LIS profession, but as academic qualifications became the principal pathway into a profession, there was a move into course accreditation. The first accreditation of librarianship courses took place in 1968, with accreditation of library technician courses following in 1978. This report presents a themed discussion of the issues identified in the literature review and environmental scan to build a full picture of the role of course accreditation in LIS education. This is set against developments in the wider context of quality assurance in Australian tertiary education, to analyse the implications of this changing environment for ALIA's accreditation policies and practices.

The attainment of professional status

Section 2.0 provides a foundation for the report by outlining the avenues for the attainment of professional status in the English speaking world (eg in the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand), noting the growing trend for a wider spectrum of professional eligibility options that encompass a range of employment backgrounds and career pathways. In the Australian LIS profession, graduates of university courses in LIS are eligible to join ALIA as an associate member (AALIA) and graduates of vocational diploma courses are eligible to join as library technician members (ALIA Tec).

Quality assurance in tertiary education

The complex details of quality assurance in tertiary education are examined in Section 3.0. Four common methods of evaluating the quality of academic programs are outlined: quality audit, validation, subject benchmarking and accreditation. Quality assurance in LIS education in Australia is achieved through a blend of these approaches. Institutions engage in rigorous internal validation processes and are subject to external quality audits, as undertaken by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) and the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA). At the program level, LIS courses undergo accreditation by ALIA. To date there have been no subject benchmarking activities in the LIS discipline in this country. A distinction is made between retrospective quality assurance which examines the way courses have been run over a period of time leading up to the accreditation period, as measured against specific evaluation criteria, and prospective quality assurance which looks more holistically at how the quality of learning outcomes is enhanced through critical reflection on teaching practice. ALIA's evaluation processes currently represent a

combination of retrospective and prospective quality assurance approaches, but are trending towards a stronger emphasis on prospective quality assurance mechanisms.

The first decade of the 21st century has seen many new developments in professional education. Five years ago the Australian Federal Government commissioned a review of higher education in Australia, the Bradley Review, which recommended widened participation in tertiary education and a stronger focus on the quality of educational institutions and programs. It was argued that a more demand-driven education market would require more stringent approaches to accreditation and quality assurance, to be achieved through the use of outcome measures and a range of threshold standards (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent & Scales, 2008). TEQSA, which was established in July 2011 to replace the Australian University Quality Agency (AUQA), has oversight over the Higher Education Standards Framework. In the vocational education and training (VET) sector, ASQA is the new national regulator with responsibility for the registration of training organisations and for course accreditation.

Academic institutions are therefore faced with a variety of quality mechanisms which encompass internal audit, external audit and accreditation. TEQSA and ASQA focus on the institution's ownership, management and governance, while TEQSA also examines human resources and infrastructure issues. Both ASQA and ALIA seek evidence of the input and involvement of industry and employers, and all three agencies have an interest in examining the details of program design and development, course delivery and teaching, learning and assessment. In particular, TEQSA requires information about an institution's intentions to seek professional accreditation for a course so that there can be effective liaison with the relevant professional bodies. It is understood that TEQSA regards external professional accreditation as a valuable component of quality assurance and is keen to work with associations to develop complimentary approaches to accreditation. As student numbers rise and technological developments rapidly change the world of teaching and learning, academic staff are under pressure to manage expanding workloads and increased demands on their time. These factors require ALIA to consider the focus of the association's accreditation activities to ensure that processes are not overly onerous and that the potential for overlap and duplication is avoided.

Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)

The Bradley Review recommended a review of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) to improve its structure and to clarify the qualification descriptors with the goal of resolving a number of issues associated with variations in the length and the level of study for some qualifications. Currently, professional level entry into LIS work is achieved through the bachelor's degree, the graduate diploma or the master's degree. Changes to the AQF will require those institutions that offer ALIA accredited courses, particularly the graduate diploma and the master's courses, to examine their programs to determine how the graduate learning outcomes are mapped to the new AQF levels. Institutional policy may mean that adjustments have to be made to some courses, which will directly impact on ALIA's course accreditation activities. ALIA will need to understand and observe the AQF requirements as part of its accreditation of entry-level programs.

Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA)

A further dimension of quality assurance in higher education is achieved through the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) program, managed by the Australian Research Council (ARC) to evaluate

the research strengths of individual universities and the sector as a whole. While the ERA agenda is not directly associated with entry-level professional courses, it does have an impact on academics who undertake teaching and research. The LIS discipline, like many other smaller disciplines that are aligned with applied research, faces a number of challenges in the highly competitive academic world of research funding and ranked research output. It has been predicted that some disciplines with limited research output and small numbers of coursework students run the risk of becoming obsolete.

Professional accreditation

Section 4.0 of the report examines the role and function of professional accreditation as discussed in the literature. Accreditation allows an independent, external eye to be cast of an academic program to ensure that it meets appropriate standards of quality and integrity and is 'fit for the purpose of the profession'. ALIA explicitly states that course accreditation aims to foster excellence in the provision of education for the Australian LIS sector and to ensure that all students experience a quality program. The accredited courses should produce graduates with sound practical information, knowledge and skills to effectively contribute to the delivery of high quality library and information services. The report presents insights into the principles of good practice which seek to ensure that accreditation activities are fair, transparent and robust, outlines the importance of rigorous evaluation methodologies and discusses the role of the review panel. ALIA's accreditation processes, which are documented in the Course Accreditation Manual, generally follow these principles of good practice. The costs of accreditation vary considerably, ranging from associations which do not charge any fees as they view accreditation as an investment in a strong future for the profession, through to those that charge several thousand dollars. ALIA does not require academic institutions to pay for accreditation.

Benefits and drawbacks of accreditation

Course accreditation involves many different stakeholders, including educators, students, graduates and alumni, academic managers, employers, and the staff and volunteers of the professional body. These different stakeholder groups tend to identify diverse benefits and drawbacks, although the expressed opinions may not be shared by all the representatives of each group. This can result in challenges for course coordinators who need to respond to the sometimes conflicting stakeholder interests, especially when the needs and expectations of the professional association and employer groups do not reflect with the needs and expectations of the academic institution. The report examines the stakeholder benefits as experienced by the academic institution, students, teaching staff, employers, and the association; it also explores some of the negative factors associated with accreditation, especially workload issues and the possible lack of consistency which may impede the collection and presentation of evidence.

Quality assurance in LIS programs

Section 5.0 covers quality assurance practices in the LIS discipline. The report discusses the comparative research which was undertaken by the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) with the goal of establishing a set of worldwide standards to inform the equivalency of LIS qualifications. It was hoped that this might be achieved by documenting the different quality assurance mechanisms across the world and developing a database of recognised LIS qualifications and the bodies responsible for the approval processes. However, this task proved too difficult as it

was found that the lack of commonality of program structures and the very diverse learning outcomes signified an immense barrier to internationalisation. At the same time, however, the sector is seen to be converging as the digital information environment that characterises the discipline areas of the allied information professions brings the curricula in information management, records management, heritage studies and archival studies more into line with those offered in the library science field. There are concerns that the narrow focus of accreditation activities of bodies such as the American Library Association (ALA), the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) and ALIA is detrimental and that a broader approach encompassing the allied professions should be adopted.

THE accreditation practices of international associations are reviewed, including recent developments in South East Asia and the Middle East, as well as the established practices of the ALA and CILIP. In 2012, CILIP undertook a review of course accreditation as part of a major national study of professional issues. In March 2013 the CILIP Council approved a revised model of accreditation which will be less paper-intensive, less onerous, less time consuming and more cost effective for the association. CILIP has introduced five new assessment criteria which focus on the provision of high quality learning experiences for the students, the alignment of the program to the new Professional Knowledge and Skills Base (PKSB), employer engagement with the program, the ability of teaching staff to remain up to date with developments in professional practice, and the students' own awareness of and engagement with the professional association. CILIP's accreditation activities will be outsourced to external contractors who will be required to work to tight timelines: the complete accreditation process will be finalised within three months of the initial invitation to accredit a course.

Accreditation practice in the Australian LIS and allied sectors is examined from the perspectives of ALIA, the Australian Society of Archivists (ASA), Records and Information Management Professionals Australasia (RIMPA) and the Australian Computer Society (ACS). The report outlines the focus of ALIA accreditation and explains the process and the communication strategies. It also addresses issues impacting on accreditation which were raised in the ALTC-funded study *Re-conceptualising and re-positioning Australian library and information science education for the 21st century* (Partridge et al, 2011), as well as in ALIA's review of VET courses completed in 2009, *Library technician education in Australia: State of the nation report*. There is consensus, however, that collaboration and cooperation across the allied professions can streamline accreditation processes and minimise duplication. The report concludes with an overview of the arrangements for the reciprocal recognition of accredited LIS courses by other national associations as a strategy to encourage internationalisation in the profession.

The report underscores the value of accreditation to the association: both personal and institutional members believe that the monitoring of professional standards is a very important activity for the ALIA to be involved in and that it performs well in this area. It is hoped that the information and analysis presented in this report will inform Stage 2 of the project by providing an appropriate evidence-base for new practice. It is important for ALIA and LIS educators to work together to develop a streamlined, practical and cost effective approach to accreditation to enhance the value of LIS qualifications in the eyes of all stakeholders, to enhance the reputation of the academic programs and to enhance the reputation of the professional association.

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Appendix 2: *Courses in library and information management*

Appendix 3: *Library and information sector: core knowledge, skills and attributes*

1.0 Introduction

The first Australian professional body for librarians was founded in 1937: the express goal of the Australian Institute of Librarians (AIL) was to establish professional unity in order to raise the standards and the status of librarianship in this country. In 1949 the AIL became the Library Association of Australia (LAA), to be renamed the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA)¹ in 2000. Regardless of its name, the professional association has always served as the standards body for the library and information services (LIS) profession. One of ALIA's objects is the commitment "to ensure the high standard of personnel engaged in information provision and foster their professional interests and aspirations" (ALIA, 2010a). ALIA has a suite of policies which guide the association's role in LIS education, including:

- *ALIA's role in education of library and information professionals* (ALIA, 2009a) (Appendix 1)
- *Courses in library and information management* (ALIA, 2009b) (Appendix 2)
- *Library and information sector: core knowledge, skills and attributes* (ALIA, 2012a)(Appendix 3).

ALIA clearly states its responsibilities as a standards body:

The Australian Library and Information Association is the body which sets and maintains standards for entry into the library and information profession in Australia. It plays a vital role in ensuring that education for the profession produces graduates who have the ability to provide excellent library and information services to benefit the nation and individual clients and who can respond to and meet the ever-changing information needs of a dynamic society.
(ALIA, 2009a)

ALIA therefore strives "to ensure the availability of high quality educational programs... as a basis for professional practice" (ALIA, 2009a). In practice, ALIA undertakes the course accreditation activities for university courses which lead to undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications for LIS professionals, as well as vocational education and training (VET) programs which lead to paraprofessional qualifications in LIS. The professional community recognises and supports ALIA's significant role in this arena.

In recent years, there have been major developments in the area of quality assurance in Australian education, in both the higher education and VET sectors. New quality standards and a regulatory framework have been accompanied by the establishment of government agencies which have oversight over quality assurance in education: the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA)² and the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA)³. Professional associations like ALIA are aware that this changing environment is having a significant impact on all stakeholders, including teaching staff, academic managers, students and employers. It is timely, therefore, for ALIA to examine the changing educational quality assurance environment and to investigate the role the association should play in setting and maintaining professional standards for the LIS sector in Australia.

¹ Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA): www.alia.org.au

² Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA): www.teqsa.gov.au

³ Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA): www.asqa.gov.au

The ALIA Board of Directors commissioned a review of the association's course accreditation process with the aim of developing a clearer understanding of the contextual factors impacting on ALIA's activities. The objective of Stage 1 of the project was to undertake an environmental scan and literature review to present a well-researched discussion of the issues associated with course accreditation, in order to inform the design of a future model of accreditation which might offer the association a more streamlined and cost effective approach. The proposed scope of the review was to examine a range of issues including, but not limited to:

- Current course accreditation practices undertaken by professional associations in the LIS and allied fields, both nationally and internationally
- Current developments in the education sector, with attention paid to the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and its impact on LIS qualifications
- The findings and recommendations of the ALTC-funded study, *Re-conceptualising and repositioning Australian library and information science education* (Partridge et al, 2011)
- Strategic interconnections with other areas of the association's activities, including professional development, membership and governance.

As the end product of the Stage 1 research activities, this report will inform the work to be undertaken in Stage 2 of the project, the goal of which is primarily to reduce the burden on educators, while providing a robust quality assurance device for students, employers and the Association. A range of options will be considered and in consultation with relevant stakeholders from the LIS sector to achieve this goal.

The report presents findings from the desk research undertaken in Stage 1 of the project. A comprehensive search of the published professional literature was undertaken to identify the key themes associated with quality assurance in education, professional accreditation and current practice in the LIS and allied fields. The literature review was augmented by an environmental scan of the websites and interviews with key personnel of the relevant professional associations, educational institutions and government agencies. The structure of the report reflects this exploration and analysis. The report opens (Section 2.0) with a background discussion on the attainment of professional status in order to contextualise the process of professional accreditation. This is followed in Section 3.0 by an exploration and explanation of quality assurance in education generally, and in the Australian higher education and VET sectors specifically. In their discussions with ALIA, LIS educators have reported that the increase in internal and external quality assurance activities at their institutions is having a significant impact on their course accreditation responsibilities, often with the overlap and duplication of processes. In Section 4.0 accreditation practice is examined in detail, to consider the purpose, principles, processes and costs of course accreditation. The benefits to the diverse stakeholders are discussed and some of the perceived drawbacks are highlighted. Accreditation in the LIS and allied fields is the topic of Section 5.0, with a review of both international practices, eg the American Library Association (ALA) and the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP), and national practices, undertaken by ALIA, the Australian Society of Archivists (ASA), Records and Information Management Professionals Australasia (RIMPA) and the Australian Computer Society (ACS).

It is hoped that the report will not only help all stakeholders comprehend the processes involved and the issues to be considered in course accreditation, but also enable LIS professionals to better understand the complex context of quality assurance in Australian education and the implications of these activities for ALIA's course accreditation policies and practices.

2.0 The attainment of professional status

While there is no nationally accepted definition of the concept of a “profession” in Australia, a number of professional bodies make reference to the definition offered by the Australian Council of Professions (Professions Australia):

A profession is a disciplined group of individuals who adhere to ethical standards and who hold themselves out as, and are accepted by the public as possessing special knowledge and skills in a widely recognised body of learning derived from research, education and training at a high level, and who are prepared to apply this knowledge and exercise these skills in the interest of others.

(Professions Australia, n.d.)

Critical elements of professionalism include:

- The possession or use of expert or specialist knowledge
- The exercise of autonomous thought and judgement
- The acceptance of responsibility to clients and wider society through voluntary commitment to a set of principles
- The presence of an association or governing body that sets entry requirements and exercises disciplinary powers.

(Hoyle & John, 1995; Belfall, 1999, cited in Lester, 2009)

In the 21st century, the specialist knowledge and skills needed by a professional are invariably acquired through a course of study. An individual achieves his/her professional qualified status through the successful completion of an academic degree, or through a degree plus further requirements, eg a given period of work experience or, as in the United Kingdom (UK), through chartership. In his study of 23 different professions (including library and information services) in the UK, Lester (2009) found that 21 professions formally specified an academic qualification (undergraduate and/or postgraduate degree). “Of the 21 professions in the study having an academic requirement, 15 use higher education qualifications exclusively, three have compulsory professional examinations, and in the remaining three both are available” (Lester, 2009, p.228). In ‘registered professions’ such as teaching and the health professions, there are formal relationships between the academic qualification, the completion of work experience and the attainment of professional status which is granted by a professional regulator (Lester, 2009, p.229).

Lester posits that “the idea of *being professionally qualified* is ... virtually synonymous with being accredited by a professional or regulatory body” (2009, p.226). Professional bodies in countries such as the UK, United States (US), Canada, Australia and New Zealand have traditionally played a major role in the recognition of the qualified status that serves as the entry point to professional practice. It should be noted, however, that the routes to becoming professionally qualified are subject to a number of pressures and influences (Lester, 2009), including the changing nature of work, a changing education environment and the demand for new career pathways. In recent years, in Australian and worldwide, there have been significant and ongoing changes to the nature of work, with an incremental push for higher level skills in the ‘knowledge economy’. The single-organisation career has practically disappeared; members of the workforce are becoming increasingly responsible for managing their own careers, meaning that greater emphasis is placed on the need for ongoing professional development beyond the initial academic qualification.

In recent years there has been substantial growth in student enrolments in higher education, driven by policies for universities and colleges to widen participation and to accept enrolments from students drawn from disparate backgrounds, who inevitably have more diverse education and work experiences. While these developments have generally resulted in a larger pool of graduates available to the professions, it is countered by significant rises in tuition fees and exacerbated by the pressures of increased competition for employment resulting from the contemporary picture of global economic contraction. Further challenges are apparent in the rapidly changing higher education environment itself, with many new opportunities for flexible learning, online delivery, recognition of prior learning (RPL), credit transfers and program articulation. These developments have led to the demand for an expanded spectrum of professional eligibility options that encompass a range of employment backgrounds and career pathways. Widened eligibility requirements tend to focus more on the applicants' practical experience, rather than their academic achievement.

One emerging characteristic of professional status is the variety of qualification routes stipulated by the different professional bodies to accommodate RPL as a result of employment in an allied professional field, mature entry and/or existing work experience. When Lester examined 16 professions in the UK which had "reasonably well-defined routes to qualified status" (2009, p.230) he found that three professions had a single route, six had 2-3 routes, five had 4-5 routes and two had 6-7 routes.

The range of routes available to potential candidates is becoming increasingly diverse and flexible, encompassing full-time and part-time courses, distance and work-based learning, and school-based learning pathways etc. The Chartered Institute of Waste Management (CIWM) has migrated to a qualifications framework that "rather than dictating specific routes, enable practitioners to assemble pathways to suit their circumstances while meeting the professional body's requirements" (Lester, 2009, p.231). It has been argued that there is considerable potential for work-based learning programs (individual and group) that can not only capitalise on a specific professional setting, but also focus on the holistic attainment of capabilities and proficiencies that will ultimately be of value to practitioners along the different stages of their career journey. One of the trends in professional education that has been identified is a more practitioner-centred grasp of professional knowledge. This means that there is a need for "a deeper understanding of underlying principles, of practical theory and know-how, and of how to maintain currency and develop an evolving repertoire of abilities as a practitioner" (Lester, 2009, p.232). This has been articulated in an increasing focus on professional understandings that are "more reflective, enquiring and interpretive".

Nevertheless, while over half the professions in the study accept alternative (non-course based) routes for experienced practitioners, the actual selection of this route by candidates was found to be quite rare. The concept of 'credential creep' is clearly apparent, with a move to postgraduate qualifications: Lester reports that 95% of entrants to a chosen profession will have a degree and/or a postgraduate qualification. However, rather than being a matter of credential inflation, it has been argued that the current picture represents "a genuine response to the increasing complexity of practitioners' work and the need for self-management and leadership" (Lester, 2009, p.231).

The attainment of professional status in LIS in Australia

Entry into the LIS profession in Australia is achieved through multiple pathways: professional qualifications include the bachelor degree, graduate diploma and master's degree, and vocational education and training (VET) qualifications encompass vocational certificates and the vocational diploma (CUL11 Library, Information and Cultural Services Training Package). Vocational certificates provide a training pathway for library assistants. ALIA accredits:

- University courses that lead to eligibility to join the association as an associate member (with the post-nominal AALIA)
- VET diploma courses that lead to eligibility to become a library technician member (with the post-nominal ALIA Tec).

Graduates who have attained a VET Diploma may articulate into a bachelor degree program with 64 credit points (representing one year of full-time undergraduate study).

LIS professionals who have gained their qualifications overseas may become associate members or library technician members under the association's widened eligibility processes, with the qualifications formally assessed by VETASSESS or the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR).

Library and information science is recognised as one of the professions where new entrants often make career decisions after the completion of a broadly-focused foundation degree, as well as being one that attracts a high proportion of mature-entry, career change candidates.

Higher education: Librarian

- Master degree
- Graduate Diploma
- Bachelor degree

VET: Library Technician

- Vocational Diploma

International qualifications

- Widened eligibility

Figure 1: Qualification pathways in LIS in Australia

3.0 Quality assurance in tertiary education

The Australian education system has a number of formal quality assurance mechanisms which are found at the government and institutional level as well as through professional peak bodies. Vocational and technical education institutions are accredited by State and Territory Governments, while universities are self-accrediting and operate within a framework of autonomy and accountability. It goes beyond the scope of this document to present a detailed treatise on quality assurance in education. Readers interested in a fuller discussion of the issues are pointed to a number of comprehensive resources on the topic (eg Harman & Meek, 2000; Baird, 2006; Woodhouse & Stella, 2009; Harris, 2009; Gallagher, 2010; Dill & Beerkens, 2012). A brief overview of some of the features of quality assurance is presented, however, in order to contextualise the concept of professional accreditation.

Common quality assurance methods

The issue of academic quality is acknowledged to be subjective, dependent on the various groups which have an interest in education, including students, teachers, academic administrators, employers and government officials. Tammaro (2006) determined that there was a range of quality assurance approaches that reflected the diverse stakeholder perspectives, the different phases of the educational activities and the particular criteria used in the evaluation processes. Four common methods of determining the quality of an academic program can be listed as quality audit, validation, subject benchmarking and accreditation.

Quality audit

The concept of a quality audit refers to the process of quality assessment by which an external body ensures that the institution is 'fit for purpose':

- (i) The institution has a programme of quality assurance procedures, or
- (ii) The overall (internal and external) quality assurance procedures of the system are adequate and are actually being carried out. The "quality audit looks to the system for achieving good quality and not at the quality itself".
(Vlăsceanu et al, 2007, p.77).

Validation

Validation encompasses the internal quality evaluation procedures to determine that a program has met specific institutional criteria, eg that an academic program has met the requirements for an award (Vlăsceanu et al, 2007; Tammaro, 2006). Some critics believe that if the validation approach is too prescriptive, ideas for innovative teaching will be blocked.

Subject benchmarking

Interest in subject benchmarking came to the fore in the UK in response to the Dearing Report (1997) which examined the future of higher education. "The primary task of subject benchmarking is to create a set of learning outcomes and related performance criteria for programs that lead to a particular award... Subject benchmark statements [can] provide a means for the academic community to design and describe the nature and characteristics of programs in a specific subject" (Tammaro, 2006, p.396). In the UK, subject benchmarking provides the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) with a reference point to evaluate academic standards in different institutions. The QAA provides a definition of subject benchmark statements:

Subject benchmark statements set out expectations about standards of degrees in a range of subject areas. They describe what gives a discipline its coherence and identity, and define what can be expected of a graduate in terms of the abilities and skills needed to develop understanding or competence in the subject.

(QAA, 2012)

To date, subject benchmark statements have been developed for 56 different discipline groups in the UK, to reflect the expected graduate outcomes for courses culminating in a Master degree or a Bachelor degree with Honours. In the field of library and information management, the subject benchmark statement relates to the Bachelor degree with Honours (QAA, 2007). The statement was developed through the collaborative work of 15 LIS academics, plus a representative from the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP). The stated purpose of the subject benchmark statements is to provide a fixed, authoritative reference point to enable institutions to make informed judgements about setting their own standards and determining how their own students perform against those standards (Smith, Armstrong & Brown, 1999). Nevertheless, the QAA emphasises that the subject benchmarks “allow for flexibility and innovation in programme design within an overall conceptual framework established by an academic community” (QAA, 2012).

Accreditation

Accreditation has been defined as the process by which a non-governmental or private body evaluates the quality of a higher education institution as a whole or of a specific educational program in order to formally recognise it as having met certain pre-determined minimal criteria or standards (Vlăsceanu, Grünberg & Pârlea, 2007, p.25). As such, accreditation may consider the quality of an entire institution, eg college or university, or be tailored to a specific professional discipline. Accreditation typically seeks to examine the course objectives, curriculum content, resourcing and staff profile. Academic institutions acknowledge that external accreditation of programs by professional bodies represents an important component of a quality assurance framework (University of Adelaide, 2012).

Quality assurance in LIS education in Australia

Quality assurance in LIS education in Australia is achieved through a blend of the approaches discussed:

Institutional level

- *Quality audits* are undertaken by external government agencies, eg TEQSA and ASQA
- The academic institutions themselves have rigorous internal *validation* processes

Program level

- The LIS programs are subject to quality assurance through the *accreditation* activities undertaken by ALIA

Note: To date, there have been no *subject benchmarking* activities in the LIS discipline in Australia.

Retrospective and prospective quality assurance

Quality assurance (QA) has been defined as “an all-embracing term referring to an ongoing, continuous process of evaluating (assessing, monitoring, guaranteeing, maintaining, and improving) the quality of a higher education system, institutions, or programmes” (Vlăsceanu et al, 2007, p.74). Quality assurance is viewed as a regulatory mechanism which focuses on accountability and improvement, “providing information and judgements (not ranking) through an agreed upon and consistent process and well-established criteria”. Biggs (2001) makes a distinction between retrospective quality assurance and prospective quality assurance in higher education.

Retrospective QA “looks back at what has already been done and makes a summative judgement against external standards” (Biggs, 2001, p.222). An evaluation is made against established criteria for ‘good’ educational management and ‘good’ teaching practice.

Prospective QA, on the other hand, focuses on the future by assuring that teaching and learning fits the purpose of the institution through ongoing improvements to teaching. Quality is seen to not be associated with any single performance indicators but with the holistic picture of education and the transformative educational outcomes: “prospective QA is not concerned with quantifying aspects of the system, but with reviewing how well the whole institution works in achieving its mission, and how it may be improved” (Biggs, 2001, p.223). A quality institution, or a quality program, is therefore one which has high level aims that it strives to achieve through superior teaching practice, with continual improvements made to the teaching practice to adapt to changing conditions. The evaluation framework of prospective QA is open, supportive, qualitative and formative in nature.

ALIA’s approach to quality assurance

ALIA’s processes represent a combination of *retrospective* and *prospective* quality assurance. The results of student evaluations represent retrospective data, while critical reflection on teaching quality is a prospective approach. The course accreditation processes undertaken by ALIA are discussed in detail in Section 5.3.1 of this report.

The following discussion examines the recent developments in quality assurance in Australian higher education and Australian vocational education, which have an impact on the institutions offering LIS programs.

3.1 Quality assurance in Australian higher education

Since the late 1990s, Australian higher education has operated within a quality assurance framework that has six different components (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent & Scales, 2008, p.129-130):

1. Qualifications

The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) (see Section 3.3 of this report) specifies the titles for academic qualifications, based on anticipated levels of learning outcomes.

2. *Institutional accreditation and approval*

Specific criteria and processes are in place to approve the establishment and operation of higher education institutions. The Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) has oversight over the National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes and associated guidelines (MCEECDYA, 2009). Provisions of the Higher Education Support Act 2003 (HESA) apply to institutions that receive Commonwealth funding and assistance.

3. *Institutional self-regulation*

Universities and some other institutions approve, monitor and review the courses they offer through internal peer review and quality assurance processes. Processes include:

- Approval processes for new courses and units of study
- Regular review of courses and units
- Internal review of departments, faculties and research centres
- Student evaluations of teaching
- Consultation with employers regarding the suitability of graduates for employment
- Benchmarking with other universities.

4. *Independent quality audit*

Over the period 2002-2011, regular quality audits of universities were conducted by AUQA. The responsibilities and functions of AUQA have now been subsumed by TEQSA. Audit reports are made publicly available on the agency's website.

5. *Information provision*

Data for relevant performance indicators are collected through instruments such as the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) (Graduate Careers Australia, 2012a) and the Graduate Destination Survey (Graduate Careers Australia, 2012b).

6. *External monitoring*

Professional bodies undertake program accreditation in some disciplines.

In 2008, the Federal Government commissioned a review of higher education in Australia, with the appointed independent panel chaired by Professor Denise Bradley. The goal of the review was to determine whether the higher education sector in this country was adequately structured, organised and financed to position Australia to compete effectively in the increasingly competitive global economy. The recommendations for reform were published in the final report, referred to as the Bradley Review, in December 2008 (Bradley et al, 2008). Targets were set to widen participation in higher education and to strengthen the focus on the quality of educational institutions and programs. A new national framework was proposed that included (Bradley et al, 2008, pp.xiii-xiv):

- The Australian Government assuming the primary funding and overall regulatory responsibility for tertiary education
- The Australian Government establishing an independent national tertiary education regulatory body
- The Australian Government progressively extending the tertiary entitlement to the vocational education and training (VET) sector commencing with higher level VET qualifications.

It was argued that a more demand-driven education market would require “a greater focus on accreditation, quality assurance, evaluation of standards and use of outcome measures” (Bradley et al, 2008, p.xv). The new regulatory body should be responsible for accrediting and reaccrediting higher education providers “and accrediting their courses where the provider is not authorised to do so” (Recommendation 20).

Standards-based assessment

One of the significant outcomes of the Bradley Review was the establishment of TEQSA in July 2011, replacing its predecessor, AUQA. With the establishment of TEQSA, there has been a more intensive focus on the notion of standards in higher education as a quality mechanism, as opposed to an emphasis on being ‘fit for purpose’. Standards-based assessment means that “institutions need to demonstrate performance or achievement against a set of explicit thresholds” (Thompson-Whiteside, 2012). While this may appear to be a simple idea, there is currently consternation about the lack of clarity, as well as the lack of consensus, that accompany the issue of academic standards. Academic standards are abstract, multidimensional concepts that are “used and interpreted in a variety of ways by different stakeholders” (Thompson-Whiteside, 2012), with external stakeholders, eg employers, arguably having a very different understanding of academic standards compared with stakeholders within the academic community. The question of ‘authority’ comes to the fore: given the broad scope of stakeholders in the domain of higher education, who is considered the appropriate authority to set the standards for an institution or for a program? It is not yet clear how standards will be set: by government, by TEQSA, by academic institutions, or by a combination of all? Inevitably, the process of setting standards also needs to be viewed from the perspectives of the associated processes of the achievement of standards, the assessment of standards, and the monitoring of standards.

Learning and Teaching Academic Standards Project (LTAS)

One noteworthy activity funded by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC), now the Office of Learning and Teaching (OLT) was the Learning and Teaching Academic Standards (LTAS) project which sought to establish threshold learning outcomes for a wide range of discipline areas, ie to determine “relevant, meaningful and globally competitive learning outcomes for the graduates of today and tomorrow” (Nicoll, 2010). The discipline groups selected already had well developed standards for professional accreditation, with many recognising the need to focus more keenly on graduate outcomes. The LTAS project was clearly influenced by the QAA’s subject benchmarking activities in the UK. In the context of the project, the ALTC (2010) defined academic standards as:

Academic standards are learning outcomes described in terms of discipline-specific knowledge, discipline-specific skills including generic skills as applied in the discipline and discipline-specific capabilities. The standards to be defined are **threshold** standards, expressed as the **minimum learning outcomes** that a graduate of any given discipline must have achieved.

Thompson-Whiteside explains the multifaceted relationship between subject benchmark statements and academic standards:

The UK benchmark statements describe what students should be able to achieve, but do not show the *actual* standards set by departments or individual

academic staff within different departments or institutions. Not do they show the *actual* achievement of students against those standards. Benchmark statements provide consensual, broad, discipline expectations, but the individual institutions, departments and staff interpret those statements and set their own expectations against those guidelines. The students then interpret and aim to achieve those institutional expectations.

(Thompson-Whiteside, 2012)

TEQSA standards

While academic standards that focus on student learning outcomes, ie the anticipated achievements, skills and capabilities of students when they graduate, are of immense value, they do not exist in isolation. The Higher Education Standards Framework (TEQSA, 2012a) is comprised of five critical elements:

- Provider standards
- Information standards
- Qualification standards
- Teaching and learning standards
- Research standards.

The current picture of Australian higher education standards is complex:

- Some standards are determined against a set of principles that are largely qualitative and require interpretation
- Some standards are more quantitative
- Some are set as minimum standards or thresholds
- Some are implied as being set as normative standards
- Some are contextually bound and are aligned towards the mission and contexts of different institutions
- Some have national thresholds
- Some make reference to international standards.

(Thompson-Whiteside, 2012)

Tensions clearly exist due to the multi-level jurisdiction of academic standards: global, national, institutional, departmental and discipline. In this country, the lines of responsibility have not yet been clearly drawn. It is stated in the document *Transforming Australia's higher education system* (DEEWR, 2009) that "TEQSA will... evaluate the performance of institutions and programs... and establish objective and comparative benchmarks of quality and performance" and it will "establish minimum standards for registration and accreditation, as well as academic standards" (p.31). However, it is also stated that "discipline communities will own and take responsibility for implementing academic standards (working with professional bodies and other stakeholders where appropriate) within the academic traditions of collegiality, peer review, pre-eminence of disciplines and, importantly, academic autonomy" (p.31-32).

TEQSA accreditation

TEQSA has the authority to accredit a higher education course of study that leads to a qualification recognised under the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). TEQSA undertakes the accreditation on behalf of higher education providers that do not have the authority to self-accredit courses of study (TEQSA, 2012b). Applicants are required to submit a comprehensive submission which includes details about:

- An overview of the course requirements
- Admission, articulations and pathways
- Course development, approval and coordination
- Course delivery methods and structure
- Teaching and learning arrangements
- Teaching and learning resources
- Course review and improvement processes
- Certification documentation
- Delivery in other languages and offshore delivery.

TEQSA requires information about any intentions to seek professional accreditation for the program so that the agency can liaise with, and involve where appropriate, the relevant professional bodies. In late 2012, TEQSA invited a number of professional bodies to begin to consider opportunities for cooperation in the area of accreditation. TEQSA (2012c) has established a set of principles to guide the interaction with professional stakeholder groups:

- The development of a complementary approach to course accreditation processes and requirements
- The use of professional bodies as a source of expert advice
- The sharing of information with professional bodies to inform TEQSA's regulatory activity and to protect the interests of students and the higher education sector
- Encouraging alignment of professional outcomes with learning outcome requirements of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)
- Fostering communication between TEQSA and professional bodies regarding each other's respective roles.

While the stated goal is to work with professional bodies to explore the possibility of complementary accreditation processes, it is still very early days: "we will be in further contact with professional bodies as this process develops" (TEQSA, Jan 10, 2013, personal communication). The ALTC LTAS project demonstrates that "conversations about standards between the academy, professional bodies and employers are not only desirable but that they are possible and can be productive" (Nicoll, 2010). Inclusive consultation with relevant stakeholders serves to strengthen the discipline community and to foster an interest in curriculum review and renewal.

Cooperation between TEQSA and ALIA

In late 2012, TEQSA invited ALIA to begin to consider opportunities for developing a complementary approach to course accreditation in the LIS discipline. Dialogue with TEQSA is continuing.

3.2 Quality assurance in Australian vocational education and training

In recent years, the vocational education and training (VET) sector has also been focusing on issues of quality assurance. On 1 July 2011, the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) was established as the new national regulator with responsibility for registering training organisations and

accrediting courses. Prior to this, the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) represented the set of standards for VET programs. Since July 2011, the VET Quality Framework has progressively come into effect across the various states and territories, with the goal of achieving greater national consistency in the areas of provider registration, course accreditation and quality monitoring. The VET Quality Framework comprises:

- The *Standards for National VET Regulator (NVR) Registered Training Organisations 2012*
- A series of legislative instruments relating to the registration of training organisations, financial viability and data provision
- The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF).

In addition, there are *Standards for VET Accredited Courses 2012* which apply to the course design of VET accredited courses. A course accredited by ASQA or by a State/Territory accrediting body means that the course itself meets the requirements of the Standards, formally confirming that it:

- Is aligned appropriately to the Australian Qualifications Framework
- Meets an established industry, enterprise, educational, legislative or community need
- Provides appropriate competency outcomes and a satisfactory basis for assessment
- Meets national quality assurance requirements
- Can be included in the Commonwealth Register for Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS) to attract international students.

With the introduction of the new LIS diploma through the CUL11 Library, Information and Cultural Services Training Package, institutions offering the program were required to send documentation to ASQA to obtain accreditation for the course, which is required for CIRCOS, to facilitate students' access to VET Fee-Help services and to formalise the articulation arrangements from a VET institution to a higher education institution. The documentation included learning and assessment plans for units of study plus evidence that the course could be delivered successfully. Comprehensive and rigorous internal self-assessment processes are also conducted (Ian Rogers, March 13, 2013, personal communication).

The challenge of multiple quality assurance systems

Table 1 captures the scope of information provision and accreditation criteria for the three agencies, TEQSA, ASQA and ALIA. TEQSA and ASQA focus strongly on the institution's ownership, management and corporate governance to identify potential risk factors, with TEQSA also considering human resources and infrastructure issues such as student management, physical facilities and ICT systems. ALIA also examines staffing, resourcing and infrastructure factors. Both ASQA and ALIA seek evidence of the input and active support from industry and employers. Under their respective course accreditation standards, TEQSA, ASQA and ALIA all have an interest in examining the details of course design and development, course delivery and teaching, learning and assessment. TEQSA also considers factors associated with research, including the management and supervision of postgraduate students, the facilities provided and the support offered. All three agencies include the need for continuous improvement in their quality assurance criteria.

Table 1: Comparison of quality assurance criteria

Quality Assurance Documents	TEQSA	ASQA	ALIA
<i>Higher Education Provider Standards</i>	✓		
<i>HE Provider Course Accreditation Standards</i>	✓		
<i>Standards for NVR Registered Training Organisations</i>		✓	
<i>Standards for VET Accredited Courses</i>		✓	
<i>ALIA Course Accreditation Criteria</i>			✓
Information Provision and Assessment Criteria			
<i>Institutional profile</i>			
Type of legal entity	✓	✓	
Organisational structure	✓	✓	
Type of training organisation		✓	
Delivery sites		✓	✓
<i>Corporate governance and management</i>			
Shareholder details	✓	✓	
Key personnel ('fit & proper persons')	✓	✓	
Corporate governance	✓	✓	
Strategic plan	✓	✓	
Risk management plan	✓	✓	
Financial viability	✓	✓	
Financial management		✓	
Financial projections	✓		
Business plans	✓	✓	
Management systems that are responsive to clients, staff, stakeholders & the RTO environment		✓	
Academic governance	✓		
Strategies for accuracy & integrity of marketing		✓	
Records management & security	✓	✓	
Insurance cover, incl. public liability & professional indemnity insurance	✓	✓	
Business continuity plan	✓		
Fraud detection & protection measures	✓		
Compliance with relevant legislation & regulatory requirements		✓	
<i>Stakeholder engagement</i>			
Decision making informed by experiences of trainers & assessors		✓	
Interactions with National VET Regulator		✓	
Relationship with professional association		✓	✓
Relationship with local employers, incl. course advisory committee		✓	✓
<i>Human resources management</i>			
Human resources policies & procedures	✓		
Workforce plan	✓	✓	
Academic staff profile	✓		✓
Anticipated academic positions	✓		
Staff representation on institutional committees & decision-making bodies		✓	✓
Staff professional development resource plans	✓	✓	
Support for staff in design & development of e-learning	✓	✓	✓
Support staff profile	✓		✓

Information Provision and Assessment Criteria	TEQSA	ASQA	ALIA
<i>Student management</i>			
Student numbers		✓	✓
Student records management system		✓	
Process & mechanism to provide students with information about services, fees & charges, rights & obligations prior to enrolment	✓	✓	
Strategies for principles of access & equity		✓	
Admission process and decision-making	✓	✓	
Student grievance procedures	✓	✓	
Student learning support services	✓	✓	✓
Support for students at academic risk	✓	✓	
Student advocacy & personal support services	✓	✓	
Student safety & security	✓		
Student representation	✓		
<i>Facilities</i>			
Physical teaching & learning spaces and facilities	✓		✓
Office accommodation for staff	✓		
Student amenities	✓		
Facilities, equipment & training materials meet academic requirements & are developed in consultation with industry	✓	✓	
Laboratories & technical facilities	✓	✓	✓
Library & learning resources	✓	✓	✓
Capital expenditure projections	✓		
<i>ICT infrastructure</i>			
ICT infrastructure & planning	✓		
Enterprise IT systems	✓		
Website management	✓		
Electronic teaching & learning infrastructure	✓	✓	✓
<i>Course design and development</i>			
Course title	✓	✓	✓
Course development, approval & review processes	✓	✓	✓
Strategies for certification, issuing & recognition of qualifications		✓	
Course duration & student workload as defined by AQF levels	✓	✓	
Course rationale	✓	✓	✓
Admission requirements	✓	✓	✓
English language proficiency	✓	✓	
AQF qualifications pathway policy: articulation & credit transfer arrangements	✓	✓	✓
Inclusion of units of competency or modules from other courses		✓	
Nested courses	✓	✓	✓
RPL arrangements	✓		✓
External standards and expertise used to inform course development	✓	✓	✓
Professional registration/licensing/accreditation*	✓	✓	✓
Learning outcomes for course mapped to AQF	✓		
Employability skills/generic capabilities		✓	✓
Ensuring equivalent outcomes across delivery modes	✓		✓
Intellectual property arrangements	✓		

Information Provision and Assessment Criteria	TEQSA	ASQA	ALIA
<i>Course delivery</i>			
Fees charged			✓
Course coordination	✓		✓
Structure of the course of study incl. subject outlines	✓		✓
Curriculum materials	✓		✓
Delivery sites	✓		✓
Offshore delivery	✓		✓
Delivery modes and attendance options	✓	✓	✓
Use of eLearning	✓		✓
Support for students in accessing and using e-learning	✓		✓
Projected student numbers and market demand	✓		
Teach out or course transition arrangements	✓		
<i>Teaching, learning and assessment</i>			
Course information	✓		✓
Teaching & learning objectives	✓	✓	✓
Teaching & learning plan to develop students' critical & independent thought, lifelong learning	✓		✓
Work-integrated learning: placements & projects	✓		✓
Strategy to engage with employers who contribute to training& assessment		✓	✓
Assessment & moderation practice, integrity of assessment	✓	✓	✓
Feedback on assessment	✓		✓
Strategies to maximise outcomes for individual students		✓	✓
Provide regular returns on attainment of units of competency		✓	
Scholarship of teaching	✓		
Processes to support staff teaching & scholarship	✓		✓
<i>Research</i>			
Students' understanding of research and research methodologies			✓
Support for research activities			✓
Fields of research	✓		
Research management & supervision arrangements	✓		
Accommodation & facilities for research students	✓		
<i>Evaluation</i>			
Academic quality assurance arrangements	✓	✓	✓
Benchmarking activities	✓	✓	
Continuous improvement strategy		✓	
Monitoring to ensure compliance with all aspects of the VET Quality Framework		✓	
Collection of stakeholder feedback, eg: Course Experience Questionnaire Graduate Destination Survey Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire Australian Survey of Student Engagement (ASSE) University Engagement Survey (UES)	✓	✓	✓
Collection of and reporting on quality indicators: Learner engagement Employer satisfaction		✓	

Some academic staff fear that there is a real danger that education institutions will be subject to almost continuous review (Massaro, 2003), forcing universities to find ways to best manage the confluence of the higher education quality agenda with the professional accreditation agenda, amidst high levels of concern about the perceived conflicts between diverse quality assurance systems. Luff and McNicoll (2004) discuss the specific challenges of aligning a university's own quality evaluations with the accreditation of the undergraduate medical degree by the Australian Medical Council (AMC) and the undergraduate degree in nutrition and dietetics by the Dieticians Association of Australia (DAA). O'Keefe and Henderson (2012) stress that quality assurance in education has to be aligned with the need to meet the relevant legislative requirements for registration to practice.

It has been argued that in professional accreditation, where there is a panel of external practitioners and educators, the focus is on competencies and learning outcomes for the broader profession, to ensure that students meet the requirements for safe and competent professional practice. An institution's internal review, on the other hand, is concerned with ensuring that student learning outcomes match the requirements for a specific academic qualification, along with the incentive to strive for quality improvement – within the unique situation of the given institution. “Our concern is to indicate that different quality methods suit different contexts. The gap between quality improvement and professional accreditation can be significant” (Luff & McNicoll, 2004). The situation can be confusing as there are multiple and often conflicting quality agendas – the higher education sector, the profession and the government – which consider diverse quality issues, including academic excellence, workforce suitability and financial accountability. Ideally, the review processes should be as integrated as possible so that each informs the other:

... because accreditation is more fine-grained, it should be applied to all discipline areas, with audit becoming a means of ensuring that the outcomes of accreditation have been properly implemented. At the institutional level, audit would also have the role of ensuring that quality assurance tools exist to guarantee quality outcomes.

(Massaro, 2003, p.92)

It is critical that there is effective collaboration to identify the overlapping goals and expectations of the various stakeholders and to highlight possible gaps and mismatches in the complex area of teaching, learning and assessment. This requires open and productive dialogue between the universities, professional bodies and TEQSA (O'Keefe & Henderson, 2012). Public comments made by Nicoll, Chief Commissioner of TEQSA, indicate that over time, convergence is anticipated: “a major issue for the future will be how TEQSA will manage its processes to avoid unnecessary duplication of course accreditation” (Nicoll, 2010). During the TEQSA course accreditation assessment process, TEQSA will liaise with, and involve as appropriate, the relevant professional bodies. TEQSA has indicated that the agency is supportive of professional accreditation activities and will seek to be informed by industry reports when undertaking quality audits of higher education institutions.

ALIA's role in multiple quality assurance systems

Ongoing developments in the context of quality assurance in education and training require ALIA to consider the focus of professional accreditation for LIS courses in order to avoid any overlap or duplication.

3.3 Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)

Historically, Australian academics, like their colleagues in the UK, New Zealand, the US and Canada, have enjoyed a high level of independence and autonomy in their teaching practice. Discipline-specific teaching and learning standards have generally been established through implicit understandings of those engaged in teaching within the discipline which results in similar sets of values and standards across different academic programs in a given field of study. In recent years, however, there have been a number of policy developments which have driven the development of national and international qualification frameworks. Accordingly, the Bradley Review specifically recommended that the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)⁴ be revised to provide “updated and more coherent descriptors of learning outcomes” (Bradley et al, 2008, p.xx).

The AQF presents the architecture for the various levels of academic qualification, with descriptors of the learning outcomes to be achieved for each qualification. Originally introduced in the mid-1990s, some minor adjustments were made to the framework in 2000 and 2004. Bradley (2008) recommended that the AQF be reviewed to improve and clarify its structure and the qualification descriptors in order to resolve issues associated with variations in the length and the level of study for some qualifications. The revised qualifications framework came into effect on 1 July 2011 and full implementation is scheduled for 1 January 2015. Compliance with the AQF is mandatory for all courses that are accredited by TEQSA and ASQA.

The AQF presents ten levels of academic qualifications:

- Level 1 to Level 6 encompasses Certificate 1 to Certificate 4, Diploma, and Advanced Diploma
- Level 7 covers a Bachelor degree
- Level 8 covers Bachelor Honours, Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma
- Level 9 covers Master’s degrees
- Level 10 covers Doctoral degrees.

There is a strong hierarchy of learning outcomes across these different levels, including the knowledge and skills, with their application by graduates. Clear specifications are provided for each level, such as the admission standard, the associated length of course, and the volume of learning that is applicable at that level. In late 2012, further revisions removed the Postgraduate Certificate and the Postgraduate Diploma, and defined the Graduate Certificate and the Graduate Diploma. Specifically, the revisions to the AQF levels of Graduate Diploma and Master’s qualifications will have direct relevance to LIS education in Australia.

To date, entry-level qualifications for LIS professionals have included Bachelor degrees, Graduate Diplomas and coursework Master’s degrees. Under the AQF, a Bachelor degree (Level 7) should lead to graduates who have “a broad and coherent body of knowledge, with depth in the underlying principles and concepts in one or more disciplines as a basis for independent lifelong learning” (AQF, 2013, p.49). The skills acquired should encompass:

- Cognitive skills to review critically, analyse, consolidate and synthesise knowledge
- Cognitive and technical skills to demonstrate a broad understanding of knowledge with depth in some areas

⁴ Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF): <http://aqf.edu.au/>

- Cognitive and creative skills to exercise critical thinking and judgement in identifying and solving problems with intellectual independence
- Communication skills to present a clear, coherent and independent exposition of knowledge and ideas.

The Graduate Diploma is a Level 8 qualification which typically represents 1-2 years of study. It “qualifies individuals who apply a body of knowledge in a range of contexts to undertake professional or highly skilled work and as a pathway for further learning” (AQF, 2013, p.57). The desired level of knowledge acquired by graduates is “advanced knowledge within a systematic and coherent body of knowledge that may include the acquisition and application of knowledge and skills in a new or existing discipline or professional area” (AQF, 2013, p.57). The graduate’s skills are similar to those at Level 7 (Bachelor degree), with the added dimension of being able to provide solutions to complex problems, to demonstrate an understanding of theoretical concepts, and to transfer complex knowledge and ideas to a variety of audiences. In applying their knowledge and skills, these graduates should be able “to make high level, independent judgements in a range of technical or management functions in varied specialised contexts” and “to initiate, plan, implement and evaluate broad functions within varied specialised technical and/or creative contexts” (AQF, 2013, p.57).

At Level 9, a Master’s degree by coursework is defined as a qualification which enables graduates to “apply an advanced body of knowledge in a range of contexts for professional practice or scholarship and as a pathway for further learning” (AQF, 2013, p.60). The scope of knowledge includes “the understanding of recent developments in a discipline and/or area of professional practice” and “the knowledge of research principles and methods applicable to a field of work” (AQF, 2013, p.60). The desired skills stress both a demonstrated grasp of the theoretical foundations of professional practice, the ability to undertake research and to introduce new developments that contribute to professional practice or scholarship. The acquired knowledge and skills should enable the graduate to independently apply creativity and initiative to new situations in professional practice and to plan and execute a substantial research-based project.

The distinctions between the learning outcomes of a Diploma course, Bachelor degree, a Graduate Diploma and a Master’s degree are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Comparison of learning outcomes for AQF levels 6-9

Level 6 VET Diploma	Level 7 Bachelor degree	AQF Level 8 Graduate Diploma	AQF Level 9 Master’s degree
Graduates at this level will have <i>broad</i> knowledge and skills for paraprofessional/highly skilled work and/or further learning.	Graduates at this level will have <i>broad and coherent</i> knowledge and skills for professional work and/or further learning	Graduates at this level will have <i>advanced</i> knowledge and skills for professional highly skilled work and/or further learning.	Graduates at this level will have <i>specialised</i> knowledge and skills for research, and/or professional practice and/or further learning.

Individual universities are developing policies and procedures for the transitional arrangements for courses affected by the new AQF requirements, because, under the new framework, some existing qualifications will be rendered non-compliant and new compliant courses will need to be developed.

ALIA and the Australian Qualifications Framework

Currently, entry into the LIS profession is achieved through the VET Diploma at paraprofessional level (library technician) and through the Bachelor degree, Graduate Diploma and Master's degree at a professional level (librarian). Changes to the AQF will require institutions offering LIS courses with ALIA accreditation to examine the programs they deliver to determine the explicit graduate learning outcomes, particularly at AQF Levels 8 and 9. Institutional policy may require adjustments to be made to some of the courses offered, which will impact on ALIA's course accreditation commitments. ALIA will need to understand and observe the AQF requirements as part of the Association's processes to accredit courses for entry-level positions in LIS.

3.4 Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA)

A further dimension of quality assurance in higher education is achieved through the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) initiative. ERA is managed by the Australian Research Council (ARC)⁵ and has been developed as a critical element of the Australian Government's higher education and research agenda: "ERA is an assessment system that evaluates the quality of research conducted at Australian universities by discipline. It identifies the research strengths of individual universities and of the sector as a whole" (ARC, 2012). As ERA outcomes directly influence the performance-based block funding provided to universities, there is a strong financial imperative for academic institutions to focus on research quality.

Each university is required to submit detailed information about the institution's research activities, including:

- Academic staff, their publications and other research outputs
- Awards and grants received
- Income from industry and other research sources
- Income from the commercialisation of research activities, patents etc.

Considerable emphasis is placed on the ability of a discipline to obtain nationally competitive funding from the Australian Research Council (ARC) and the Office of Learning and Teaching (OLT)⁶, formerly the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC).

The data collected is evaluated by committees of internationally recognised researchers against a range of discipline-specific indicators and quality assessments to consider factors such as research application, citation analysis and peer review. This information is interpreted as a rating on a five-point scale, with 5 being the highest rating. Universities can then utilise the ERA outcomes to determine the respective levels of research strength, identify opportunities to develop research

⁵ Australian Research Council (ARC): www.arc.gov.au

⁶ Office of Learning and Teaching (OLT): www.olt.gov.au

capacity and to facilitate comparisons of research efforts over time (ARC, 2013). Universities make strong linkages between research excellence and funding opportunities. Partridge et al (2011) outline the implications of ERA for “niche or boutique disciplines” (p.76) such as LIS: “It is... quite possible that disciplines which are not perceived by the university to be of high priority (eg not allowing the institution to be competitive within the ERA program) may be abandoned entirely (Svantesson & White, 2009). Disciplines that have limited research output as well as small student numbers within their coursework programs may be at risk of disappearing” (Partridge et al, 2011, pp.76-77).

In the 2012 ERA research results, only six of the ten universities offering courses in LIS were included in the ratings (covering the period 2005-2010):

Monash University	3
Queensland University of Technology (QUT)	3
University of NSW (UNSW)	3
Charles Sturt University (CSU)	2
RMIT University	2
University of Tasmania	2

The rating of 3 is considered ‘world standard’, the rating of 2 is ‘below world standard’. In the initial ERA ratings in 2010, only three universities were included: QUT and UNSW were awarded a ranking of 4 (‘above world standard’) and CSU had the ranking of 2.

ALIA and Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA)

While the ERA agenda is not directly associated with entry-level courses, it has an impact on academics who undertake teaching and research in LIS. The LIS discipline, like many other smaller disciplines that are aligned with applied research practice, faces a number of challenges in the competitive academic world of research funding and ranked research output. Academics will be required to demonstrate their research strengths through successful grant applications and the number of higher research degree students.

The ALIA course accreditation questionnaire asks the institution to demonstrate evidence of:

- How students develop an understanding of research methodologies
- What awards and research grants staff have received
- How the institution fosters support for research & related activities

If an institution offers a AQF Level 9 (Master’s degree) program in LIS, graduates will need to demonstrate “advanced knowledge of research principles and methods applicable to the field of work or learning” (AQF, 2013).

4.0 Professional accreditation

One explanation of professional accreditation states that the process “exists to establish and maintain standards of quality so that graduates from accredited programs will be prepared in a consistent and predictable way as they enter the profession” (University of Southern Mississippi, n.d.). In principle, accreditation enables an independent, external eye to be cast over an academic program, to ensure that it is “fit for the purpose of the profession” (Carrivick, 2011, p.485). It can be further explained as “a process which assures that educational institutions and their programmes meet appropriate standards of quality and integrity. It is “a collegial process based on self-evaluation and peer assessment for the improvement of academic quality and public accountability” (Majid, Chaudhry, Foo & Logan, 2003, p.58). The peer review process, together with comparability of standards with national applicability, allows accreditation to become “a good closed loop approach to quality assurance, which not only looks at the processes but defines the expected outcomes” (Massaro, 2003, p.94).

Strong linkages with the profession itself represent a critical component of the accreditation process. It has been noted that, in recent years, there has been a push to align academic programs with recognised schema of professional knowledge and skills so that graduates are ‘job ready’. This development reflects both the students’ expectations that their study will lead to employment and the employers’ expectations that graduates will ‘hit the ground running’. Accordingly, it has been posited that professional and industry bodies are keen to influence the content and delivery of courses to ensure their relevance to practice (Pillay & Kimber, 2009).

While many disciplines have had accredited courses since the early 20th century, other newer fields are looking to accreditation as a way to manage emergent fields of knowledge and skills. One nascent profession is financial planning, a new discipline where university degrees have grown organically in recent years. The Financial Planning Association (FPA) in Australia acknowledges that accreditation has the potential to combine intellectual rigour with the practicalities of the profession in order “to develop a unified curriculum that will give structure and purpose to those wanting a career in this field” (Sanders, cited in White, 2012). As a first step, the FPA established the Financial Planning Education Council (FPEC), followed by the launch of a national consultation framework for the curriculum and accreditation requirements for financial planning education. Accreditation is seen as being important to give confidence to the Australian community that there is an educational structure with defined industry standards for graduates entering the workforce.

In some occupations, professional accreditation is strictly regulated, ie the government enforces the accreditation process on behalf of the community to ensure public safety. Such professions include medicine, nursing, psychology and architecture. In Australia, the Federal Government has oversight over the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA)⁷, with specific accreditation authorities managing the accreditation process for the individual health professions. Qualified individuals in the health profession are required to register to be licensed to practice and the boards of the various health professions are regulated by nationally consistent legislation (O’Keefe & Henderson, 2012). There are also moves to improve teaching quality in Australia with the introduction of national standards for accrediting teaching courses. Other discipline areas are unregulated, eg engineering, journalism and LIS; the respective national professional bodies

⁷ Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA): www.ahpra.gov.au

undertaking accreditation activities as part of their broader professional remit. Chartership refers to the professional recognition of a member of a chartered body, most commonly in the UK. In some disciplines, accreditation may be essential or mandatory for a person to be employed; in other fields having an accredited status may open up wider work opportunities or better remuneration; occasionally accreditation may simply represent the source of individual satisfaction for a practitioner (Lester, 2010).

The status of ALIA accreditation

The LIS profession is an unregulated profession. Graduates of ALIA accredited courses at the professional level are eligible for Associate (AALIA) membership of the association without further assessment, while graduates of ALIA accredited courses at the paraprofessional level are eligible for Library Technician (ALIA Tec) membership. The ALTC study *Re-conceptualising and re-positioning Australian library and information science education for the 21st century* found that although very few advertisements for LIS jobs sought 'eligibility' for ALIA membership, the expressed demand for qualifications (professional and paraprofessional) was increasing, noting that the disciplines sought were not limited to LIS (Partridge et al, 2011, p.60). While little distinction was generally made between the applicants with undergraduate as opposed to postgraduate qualifications, jobs in the academic and school libraries sector were the ones most likely to specifically require postgraduate qualifications. The ALTC study found that there was certainly a strong interest amongst LIS professionals to upgrade the level of qualification they held.

In some countries there are centralised accreditation agencies where the primary activity is course accreditation, eg in the US, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and, internationally, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) which manages the accreditation processes for business and accounting courses in over 650 colleges across 50 countries. In other areas, individual professional bodies are responsible for the accreditation of education programs in their own specific field, as is the case with ALIA. Accreditation practice in the LIS sector is discussed in detail in Section 5.0.

4.1 The purpose of course accreditation

The primary purpose of professional accreditation is to ensure that graduates from specific undergraduate programs are professionally qualified and competent (University of Adelaide, 2012). Accreditation by a professional body is "a voluntary and essentially self-regulating process" (Carrivick, 2011, p.485) which seeks to ensure that relevant standards regarding the desired depth and breadth of the curriculum are met. As it is a voluntary process, academic program leaders need to first establish a strong case within their faculty and their institution to ensure that there is sufficient confidence in the course to apply to the professional body for accreditation. Findings from a study of accreditation for the discipline of geography/environmental science revealed that employers believed an accredited course could give both confidence and respect to the university offering the

program, to the academic department, to the teaching staff and to the curriculum itself. Employers also felt that students graduating from an accredited program were far more aware of the role of the professional association, which often gave candidates an 'edge' in job interviews. In an ideal world, students graduating from an accredited course will want to become members of the professional body responsible for the accreditation.

The fundamental goals of professional accreditation are listed as:

- To promote and advance the profession through the development of better-educated practitioners
- To foster a co-operative approach to graduate and postgraduate education between industry, government and educators to meet the changing needs of society
- To signify that a program has a purpose appropriate to higher education at a professional level and has resources and services sufficient to accomplish its purpose on a continuing basis
- To provide a credible, independently verifiable method to differentiate accredited programs from other non-accredited programs which may not adhere to important professional standards
- To provide an opportunity to the educational institution for improvement and self-analysis, and to show a commitment to continuous improvement
- To check that the program content is current, technically accurate and taught by appropriately qualified staff working in conjunction with the appropriate support staff.

(Carrivick, 2011, p.486-7)

One investigation into accreditation practices conducted by the Professional Association Research Network (PARN)⁸, involving respondents from 28 different professional bodies in the UK, indicated that the primary reasons for undertaking accreditation were to raise professional standards (39%) or to maintain a minimum standard (35%) (PARN, 2011).

It has been argued that programs regulated by professional bodies provide academic staff and students with access to greater expertise and technical knowledge, and offer possibilities for innovative practice (Baldwin, Cave & Lodge, 2012, cited in Dill & Beerken, 2012). While very little research has been undertaken in Australia to examine the interplay between academic institutions and the professions, one study of note was conducted by the Australian Higher Education Council between 1992 and 1995 (National Board of Employment, Education and Training, 1996). Ostwald, Williams & Fuller (2008) outline the key findings from this study:

- The relationship between professional bodies and universities varied significantly between different professions, with some much more closely aligned to their university counterparts than others
- While universities had historically regarded professional accreditation as an intrusion, the rise in quality assurance expectations in higher education meant that accreditation was more recently regarded as one of a large number of valuable processes for assessing stakeholder needs
- Professional accreditation is critical for attracting overseas students to study in Australia

⁸ Professional Associations Research Network (PARN): www.parnglobal.com

- There was a degree of confusion in documentation surrounding the difference between the expected competencies of graduates and those of registered professionals
- There should be more consumer and academic involvement in the development of professional competencies and accreditation processes.

Interestingly, the research study found that professional accreditation processes were perceived to have little impact on the quality of student work or graduate competencies. It was argued that internal quality assurance mechanisms within the university had far greater impact on these factors.

The aims of ALIA accreditation

Course accreditation aims to foster excellence in the provision of education for the Australian library and information services sector and to ensure that all students undertaking a course experience a quality program with an appropriate curriculum delivered effectively and supported by the required resources.

Courses at library professional level and at library technician level aim to produce graduates with sound practical information knowledge and skills which enable them to effectively support the delivery of library and information services that meet client needs and assist them to become information literate.

(ALIA, 2011)

4.2 Principles of accreditation

A body of research work has been undertaken in the UK to examine the practices of independent institutions that grant professional status for their occupations (Lester, 2009). It has been acknowledged that similar principles apply in other English-speaking countries, eg Australia, the US and Canada, and that many of the institutions have reciprocal arrangements with similar bodies in other countries (see also section 5.4 of this report). Lester (2010) has delineated the fundamental principles of professional accreditation, which may be summarised as the need for 'fair, transparent and robust' processes.

- The process must apply explicit and publicly accessible requirements and standards. These standards may be benchmarked with other international accreditation standards and/or developed in consultation with the practitioner community
- The process must be consistent, valid and fair. Accordingly the assessment and monitoring process should be consistent, with the same criteria applied to all candidates. The assessment methods should be appropriate to what is being assessed
- The process must avoid conflicts of interest and sources of obvious bias
- The process should have an appeals procedure that includes recourse to independent arbiters
- The process should have an accountable and transparent system of governance.

Accredited status may bring with it the requirement to stay current in the given field of practice and to demonstrate the ongoing development of knowledge and skills.

Guidelines for good practice in professional accreditation have been developed by Professions Australia (2008), which is a national organisation of 29 professional associations. Professions Australia openly states the need for fair, transparent and robust processes which should encompass:

- The clear statement of the aims of the accreditation process, to define the purpose and scope of the accreditation process. Reference should be made to the need for continuous improvement of the quality of professional education and training in order to respond to evolving community needs and professional practice.
- The development of defined accreditation standards or criteria which draw on valid evidence-based research with the support of relevant stakeholder bodies. The criteria should be made available to the public and reviewed at regular intervals.
- The accrediting body should provide information about its roles and functions, with details of the governance structure and the individuals who are responsible for the accreditation activities. There should be clear communication between the accrediting agency and all key stakeholders.
- Appropriate business practices should be in place, highlighting the need for :
 - Code of conduct for all involved in accreditation
 - Independent assessment practices
 - Avoidance of conflict of interest
 - Confidentiality
 - Document control and records management
 - Continuous review processes and internal audit.
- Adequate funding for the accreditation system, including infrastructure costs and the cost of assessment of individual programs and institutions.
- Collaboration with other accreditation agencies locally and internationally, and with other bodies in the profession.

(Professions Australia, 2008, p.3-4)

Importantly, the professional body needs to produce accreditation processes that education institutions find easy to work with (Wood, 2011). Some professional bodies have adopted the accreditation standards promulgated by Professions Australia: the Forum of Australian Health Professions Councils has customised these standards for the context of education for the health professions in order to reflect the provisions and terminology of the overarching legislation for the regulation of health practitioners in this country (Forum of Australian Health Professions Councils, 2011).

The value of national and international collaboration is highlighted by the University of Adelaide, whereby cross-institutional interactions stimulate ongoing improvements to programs and responses to new developments, and international collaboration through the mutual recognition of accreditation systems promotes broader consistency of professional practice (University of Adelaide, 2012).

The principles of ALIA accreditation

Although ALIA is not a member of the umbrella body, Professions Australia, ALIA follows the general principles of good practice that seek to ensure that accreditation processes are fair, transparent and robust. The Association's accreditation policies and guidelines are publicly available at www.alia.org.au/education/courses/accreditation. A detailed discussion of ALIA's accreditation activities is presented in Section 5.3.1 of this report.

4.3 Processes of accreditation

Historically, criteria for course accreditation were based on certain inputs and resources, eg curriculum content, limits to class sizes, number of full time faculty, student workload and facilities such as adequately equipped classrooms and libraries. In recent times, however, the focus has shifted away from a program administration model of evaluation to an emphasis on learning outcomes, ie the skills, knowledge and understanding that students should acquire. This approach stresses the transformative concept of quality and is described as “a paradigm shift from traditional ways to measure and express learning characterized as input approaches... to output focussed methodologies” (Tamaro, 2006, p.405). This approach has been adopted by the American Library Association (ALA) Committee on Accreditation (Lisa Given, Jan 31, 2013, personal communication). With the introduction of revised accreditation standards in 1992 which stressed the importance of continuous planning processes, the ALA published a guide to outcomes assessment in LIS studies (ALA, 1995).

One important component of effective accreditation processes is the adoption of a rigorous evaluation methodology with systematic, standardised procedures and protocols in order to establish a sound evidence base (Dill & Beerkens, 2012). Professions Australia recommends that clear policies be developed to describe the key elements of the accreditation process, with a list of the documentation to be submitted. The overarching process can be broken down into five main steps (Khoo, Majid & Chaudry, 2003; Vlăsceanu et al, 2007; Professions Australia, 2008):

- *Dialogue*
Consultation with all stakeholders, including faculty members, the parent institution, the profession (practitioners and employers), students and alumni, other library schools, related fields and professions, and the accrediting body. Stakeholder dialogue is a valuable way of building a deeper understanding of industry accreditation and establishing relationships between the academy and the profession.
- *Self-evaluation*
Accreditation processes require those involved in academic programs (faculty, administrators and the staff) to undertake regular and systematic self-evaluation, taking as its reference the set of standards and criteria of the accrediting body. Strengths and weaknesses of the program are identified and potential areas for improvement are highlighted.

- *Accreditation submission*
The documentation that is compiled is acknowledged to be a significant component of the accreditation process. An evidence base has to be built to demonstrate that the program meets the quality standards.
- *External review*
The review panel examines the case for accreditation, with a site visit arranged to review aspects of the program that cannot be adequately assessed through the submitted documentation. The panel reviews the evidence, visits the premises, and gathers stakeholder feedback. A final report is prepared by the panel, with recommendations about the decision on accreditation.
- *Decision on accreditation*
The accrediting body makes its determination and communicates the decision to the academic institution.

While the site visit is seen to be an extremely demanding aspect of the accreditation process, its value is recognised (Ostwald et al, 2008; Lester, 2009; Carrivick, 2011):

- Face-to-face meetings ensure that all the issues are covered
- The determinations and judgements are more effective, with all parties having the opportunity to clarify their position
- Collegiality of and communication between faculty members is encouraged
- There is an ability to showcase excellent practice
- It raises the profile of the course within the institution
- There are marketing and business development opportunities for the association when its representatives meet with students
- There is an opportunity for the program to get immediate feedback.

The accrediting body should have clear policies regarding the role and responsibilities of the assessment team, for example to describe how the team is composed and what qualifications are desired, as well as information about the selection, appointment, training and performance review of team members. Specific attention should be paid to the appointment of experienced academics and practitioners in the given profession, and who have the skills required for the actual assessment activities. Procedures to deal with matters of conflict of interest and confidentiality should be high priorities.

There also needs to be clear information about the processes for the meetings and visits that are scheduled, to state how this element of the process is negotiated and conducted, the duration and scope of the meetings/visits, and the respective responsibilities of the accreditation agency and the host institution, particularly in terms of organising stakeholder interviews and meetings (academic managers, teaching staff, students, employers, advisory committees etc).

The final report should address the accreditation standards and describe the program's level of performance against those standards, with an account of the evidence that supports the assessment. The decisions regarding the outcomes of the accreditation process may include:

- Full accreditation for the maximum period of time, when all criteria are deemed to have been met satisfactorily
- Conditional or limited accreditation, with follow up action and further review required
- Denial of accreditation where there has been a failure to meet the standards.

Recommendations should be provided to the host institution to facilitate the remediation of problem areas and to encourage further enhancements to the program. The accrediting agency should, of course, maintain a current, publicly available list of accredited programs and it should have a policy regarding the release of the completed accreditation reports to other parties.

Ongoing monitoring and reporting by the accredited institutions to the accrediting body is usually required. Professions Australia does not provide any specific guidance about best practice for monitoring the institutions and programs once they are accredited, but indicates that the responsible agency should ensure that it is appraised of any developments that may impact on the accreditation status. The agency therefore needs to determine the arrangements for notification of changes to the programs. Further policies are required to manage an appeals process and to deal with any complaints that may be received. Importantly, the agency needs to consider how to review the accreditation process, both internally within the office and externally with the review team.

The processes of ALIA accreditation

ALIA has well documented accreditation and monitoring processes, presented in the ALIA Course Accreditation Manual. These processes are in line with those discussed in this document. A detailed discussion of ALIA's accreditation processes is presented in Section 5.3.1 of this report.

4.4 The costs of accreditation

Many professional associations highlight their concerns about the cost of accreditation, especially when the cost is covered by the association. Academic institutions may feel that they are already paying 'in kind' through the commitment of staff time and resources to prepare the submission and arrange the site visit. Those academic institutions that are institutional members often argue that they are already contributing to the association's income stream. These views notwithstanding, a number of professional bodies do charge for their accreditation activities, ranging from the recovery of basic administration costs through to making a profit. In the research study undertaken by PARN, 28 professional bodies in the UK were asked about their practices in charging for accreditation. It was found that 18 of the respondents levied fees, with charges covering the direct costs of the processes. Five associations recovered partial costs and only one respondent indicated that the association made a profit from accreditation (PARN, 2011). Education providers in the UK were paying on average £300 - £500 (AUD 435 - AUD 725) to become accredited. In some discipline areas the fees were higher, eg the UK Council for Health Informatics Professionals (UKCHIP) which charged £1800 (AUD 2,800) for full accreditation (Simon Edwards, Dec 20, 2012, personal communication). It is more common for the education institution applying for accreditation to be asked to pay for all the direct costs of a site visit, ie the travel and accommodation costs for the members of the review panel.

In Australia, the government agency TEQSA (2012d) states that its fees for course accreditation are:

- \$22,000 where the provider has no authority to self-accredit a course
- \$10,000 where the provider is authorised to self-accredit a course.

In the VET sector, the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) charges \$2,700 for course accreditation/renewal.

Anecdotally, academic managers at a number of universities have reported that it was “normal practice” for the institution to be asked to pay for accreditation activities. Very few professional bodies publish the details of the fees charged for accreditation services, but those discovered in the environmental scan of Australian associations are outlined in Table 3. The costs presented include a range of cost recovery options, including a non-refundable application fee, the accreditation fee, site visits and an annual maintenance fee. The cost of accreditation in regulated professions, eg health practitioners where accreditation is performed by independent accreditation agencies under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme, is considerably higher than in non-regulated professions. An overview of the costs associated with the accreditation of LIS courses by international associations are presented in Sections 5.2.3 (ALA) and 5.2.4 (CILIP).

Table 3: Accreditation fees levied by professional associations in Australia

Professional body	Application/Preview fee	Accreditation fee	Site visits	Annual fee
Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB International)	USD 4,500	USD 12,000	Full costs of peer review & mentor visits borne by the institution	USD 4,500 (5 yr) USD 2,500 (10 yr)
Australian Community Workers Association (ACWA) [1]	n/a	\$4,400	Incl. in fee, but sampling approach for site visits	\$1,100
Australian Computer Society (ACS)	n/a	\$7,500	Incl. in fee	n/a
Australian Dieticians Association (ADA)	\$5,692.50	\$28,462.50	Incl. in fee	n/a
Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (APAC)	\$2,935	\$5,219 (provider) + \$5,434 (u/g course) + \$6,122 (4 th yr course)	Incl. in fee	n/a
Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA)	n/a	\$3,000	None	n/a
Exercise & Sports Science Australia (ESSA)	n/a	\$3,430	Incl. in fee	n/a
National Herbalists Association of Australia (NHAA)	\$330	\$660	Incl. in fee	n/a
Occupational Therapy Australia (OTA)	\$5,000	\$22,811.25	1 visit incl. in fee Cost recovery for additional visits	n/a
Planning Institute Australia (PIA)	n/a	\$2,200	Incl. in fee	\$330 [2]
CPA Australia & Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia (ICAA)	There are no fees: the professional bodies invest in accreditation as part of their broader academic commitments			

[1] Eligible academic staff of accredited programs receive 50% discount on membership fee; 10 free student memberships are offered to accredited institutions.

[2] Levy to cover maintenance of the accredited course listing on the PIA website, use of the PIA logo on institution websites and promotional material, and to acknowledge the service provided in dealing with enquiries about courses.

The Australian Community Workers Association (ACWA)⁹ has adopted a streamlined approach based on desk-top assessment, with follow up calls made only if clarification is required, and it is unusual for a site visit to be made. The accreditation activities are all undertaken in the online environment and are designed to be “as painless as possible”. Institutions seeking accreditation complete the relevant electronic forms, upload files with supporting documentation and pay the fee online (Jesu Jacob, March 12, 2013, personal communication).

The costs of ALIA accreditation activities

The costs of ALIA’s accreditation activities are borne by the association. Institutions are not required to pay for accreditation.

4.5 Benefits and drawbacks of accreditation

Despite the fact that accreditation activities are widespread across the professions, very few detailed studies have been conducted to investigate the perceived benefits and drawbacks of professional accreditation. While professional associations may conduct periodic reviews of their accreditation processes, external reviews are less common. In the LIS sector, the ALA’s course accreditation standards have been the subject of a number of articles (Watkins, 1994; Watson-Boone & Weingand, 1995; 1996; Kniffel, 1999; Martin, 2002; Gorman, 2004; Dillon & Norris, 2005; Mounce, 2005; Burnett & Bonnici, 2006; McKinney, 2006; Cox, 2010; Hicks & Given, 2013). The themes discussed focus primarily on the issues relating to the LIS curriculum and the professional knowledge and skills required for effective practice. It is argued that there is a paucity of published research that really tests out the impact of accreditation on LIS education; much of the discussion appears in grey literature such as working papers, reports and conference workshops (Mounce, 2005; Mezick & Koenig, 2008; Cox, 2010). Accordingly Cox believes that the topic of ALA accreditation has become more of “a weathervane for debates between practitioners and educators about just what should be taught in library schools and their latter versions” (Cox, 2010, p.270).

In one study, Watson-Boone and Weingand (1995, 1996) reported on a survey of four stakeholder groups: the deans of LIS schools, senior academic administrators, alumni and employers. The research aim was to examine the indicators of effectiveness of those LIS schools with ALA accredited programs. At that time, it was found that the accreditation status of the academic institution was ranked highly by all four cohorts of respondents. Mounce (2005) conducted a later survey of deans or chairs of ALA accredited programs to investigate their perceptions of the degree of influence of the ALA accreditation standards on the LIS program. This research revealed that the accreditation standards as a cohesive entity had more of a positive influence on LIS programs than any of the individual accreditation standards. Deans credited the ALA standards for “good program reputations”, “helping programs keep current” and “[keeping] us in touch with the profession” (Mounce, 2005, p.13).

⁹ Australian Community Workers Association (ACWA): www.acwa.org.au

One study of the impact of accreditation of a Master's degree program in geography/environmental sciences sought to explore the different stakeholder perceptions, including recent graduates, present students, prospective students, program directors and employers (Carrivick, 2011). It should be noted that, given the wide range of stakeholders involved in accreditation activities, many different opinions can be canvassed. Different stakeholder groups tend to identify diverse benefits and drawbacks, although the expressed opinions may not be shared by all representatives of each group. This can result in challenges for program leaders who are sensitive to the conflicting stakeholder interests, especially where the needs and expectations of professional bodies and employers are set against the needs and expectations of the parent institution, resulting in a sense of being caught between 'competing masters'. Nevertheless, one common benefit lies in the fact that key stakeholders, including academic staff, employers and the students themselves, develop a far stronger awareness of the professional knowledge, skills and attributes that are required by practitioners in a given discipline.

Darlymple (2001) highlights the value of academic librarians having a sound understanding of accreditation – not only in terms of their own accredited studies, but also in terms of the role the library plays in effective institutional assessment and in campus-wide course accreditation activities. "Librarians who participate in accreditation activities, both in the campus preparation for accreditation and as members of the site visit team, have the opportunity to view the role of the library in the context of the overall institutional mission and goals" (Dalrymple, 2001, p.31).

4.5.1 Benefits to the academic institution

While professional accreditation may strive to achieve nationally compatible and comparable qualifications, it may also serve to enhance the reputation of the individual program and the institution that offers the program. The University of Adelaide (2012) has summarised the specific benefits that program accreditation brings to the institution:

- It offers an avenue for independent quality assurance
- It confirms the currency of curriculum and standards
- It represents a standard for national and international comparison
- It ensures the recognition of graduates by employers
- It enhances the employment mobility for graduates
- It indicates adherence to a code of ethics.

There is much discussion in the professional literature about the marketing advantages offered by an accredited course to attract student enrolments. It has been reported (Ostwald et al, 2008; Lester, 2009; Carrivick, 2011; CILIP, 2012a) that students actively seek to enrol in an accredited course, with international students particularly keen to ensure that the accredited program is recognised in their home country. Website analytics demonstrate the advantage of listing accredited courses on the association's website, as this is often the starting point for prospective students to research which courses might be available to them in their field of interest. The institutions benefit directly from the referrals they gain from the association's website once prospective students follow the weblinks to the universities' own course information. There is evidence that institutions value accreditation as it provides proof that the course is backed up by external validation (CILIP, 2012a) and that there is a productive relationship between the institution and the professional body.

4.5.2 Benefits to students

The geography/environmental science students who were interviewed by Carrivick (2011) stated that the fact that the status of accreditation had directly informed their decision to enrol in a particular program. It is argued that students become more aware of the learning outcomes that are anticipated through their studies and have a clearer understanding of the skill sets that they have when they graduate. In the context of LIS education and training, students believe that professional accreditation ensures that there is a high level of confidence in the academic content of the course and it offers a sense of employability after graduation (Partridge et al, 2011; CILIP, 2012a). The stamp of approval from the professional body means that students are more aware of their future career paths. Reciprocal accreditation arrangements with international bodies also broaden their career opportunities (CILIP, 2012a).

There is also an appreciation of the linkages with industry: students feel that the program's connections with the association not only give them the chance to attend professional meetings outside of the university, but also increase their awareness of future employers and of employment opportunities in the sector (Carrivick, 2011). Students are often encouraged to join the professional association as student members, with a streamlined application process for those enrolled in an accredited course. "Student membership of a professional body... undoubtedly enables advancement and broadening of knowledge, experience and industry contacts" (Carrivick, 2011, p.494).

4.5.3 Benefits to academic staff

There were correlations between the students' views and those held by program managers who affirmed that professional accreditation played a key role in attracting prospective students to the course. Academics felt that accreditation processes "stimulated staff to think about [professional] competencies and where they are covered in the syllabus" (Carrivick, 2011, p.492). Through self-assessment, the teaching staff have the opportunity to examine the entire curriculum, including the combination of subjects offered, the relevance of the learning content and the appropriateness of the student assessment activities.

The process is an excellent opportunity for the school to look at its program and related programs and for the other constituencies to take note of the school's progress. It is an appropriate time for university administrators, alumni, employers, students, and the profession in general to assess a school and its program. As intense as the process can be, it is widely appreciated for its positive effect on the growth of individual programs and its effect on standards of quality.

(University of Southern Mississippi, n.d.)

Arguments are often made that the accreditation offers the academic program standing and 'a voice' within the university (CILIP, 2012a) so that there is significant value in the way it can be used by academics "politically, to leverage certain intentions towards the university" (Ostwald et al, 2008, p.81). This is reflected in the view that "accreditation is a first line of defence against all sorts of erosion of courses and programs" (Paul Genoni, Jan 31, 2013, personal communication). It has also been noted that accreditation activities can provide teaching staff with excellent professional development opportunities when they were invited to participate in an accreditation panel for other university courses (Ostwald et al, 2008).

4.5.4 Benefits to employers

Accreditation offers employers a pathway to partner with education providers as the requirements for internships, fieldwork or industry experience, which are all strongly encouraged by the professional bodies, enable them to make a direct contribution to educational outcomes through the students' exposure to professional practice. Employers can make a further valuable contribution through their involvement with course reference committees which have two positive outcomes: academic staff can keep up with new developments in industry and employers can keep up with emerging developments in teaching, learning and research. In turn, the students' involvement in an accredited program offers employers the reassurance that the graduates they may employ will have received a solid knowledge base through their studies (CILIP, 2012a).

Carrivick (2011) underscores the multiple opportunities for employer engagement with an accredited academic program:

- Talks from industry professionals
- Academics and professionals co-teaching in academic modules
- Employer consultation, eg course reference groups
- Industry-based projects
- Student placements in industry
- Industry support for fieldwork trips
- Alumni connections, eg for careers advice
- Employer-funded scholarships for students
- Employer-funded research positions
- Industry-hosted career events
- Employment of academics with strong industry experiences
- Employer funding for resources/equipment
- Employers serving on accreditation panels
- External examiners for higher degrees.

Beyond this, open dialogue about the required number of places required in university courses can support workforce planning activities in the given industry sector.

4.5.5 Benefits to the association

In developing and monitoring professional standards, the association brings benefits to the profession as a whole: accreditation helps to "define and promote the profession, the discipline and the links to professional practice" (CILIP, 2012a, p.2). CILIP has reported that accreditation enables the association "to deliver against our vision, mission and or requirements to work for the benefit of the public as stated in the Royal Charter" (CILIP, 2012a, p.3). The association has its finger on the pulse of education, training, employment and workforce issues, and direct links into the education institutions have the potential to build productive partnerships and to grow the association's membership base through the access to students.

4.5.6 Drawbacks of accreditation

While there is a clear appreciation that accreditation helps to maintain educational standards, there is nevertheless widespread concern about the costs of the process, in terms of both the direct financial costs and the indirect costs of the academics' time. Over the years it been reported that LIS schools find the accreditation process "far too time consuming and costly" (Summers, 1998, p.4, cited in Burnett & Boccini, 2006, p.203), and these worries continue today. Critics observe that the

accreditation process may run the risk of having “a substantial negative impact on students” (Ostwald et al, 2008, p.82) as the financial costs of accreditation are generally diverted from the teaching budget and, at the same time, staff resources are directed away from teaching to prepare for accreditation. In computer science education, concerns about the arduous and anxiety-laden nature of the tasks involved in preparing the accreditation documentation have been discussed (Crouch & Schwartzmann, 2003; Yue, 2007; Tan, 2008). The burden of the workload lies predominantly with the academics who have to prepare the documentation and respond to any recommendations. Preparation for a visiting panel for accreditation further increases the workload. The very real pressures of the academic workload in Australian universities have been examined in a study funded by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) (now Office of Learning and Teaching (OLT)) entitled *Out of hours* (Tynan, Ryan, Hinton & Lamont Mills, 2012) which built on an earlier study into the concerns of academics about their increasingly unmanageable work responsibilities (Coates et al, 2009).

These common concerns about the time and effort involved in accreditation activities were echoed by LIS educators in the ALTC study *Re-conceptualising and re-positioning Australian library and information science education for the 21st century* (Partridge et al, 2011), also funded by the ALTC: “[it] is an enormous drain and the previous time it took days and days to get through the whole process, when you are bogged down in that kind of administrivia it takes you away from teaching” (Partridge et al, 2011, p.84). Anecdotal evidence in LIS accreditation, as in other disciplines, indicates that the situation may often be compounded by problems associated with a lack of transparency or a lack of consistency in terms of the forms to be completed and the precise documentation to be submitted (CILIP, 2012a). The danger of the duplication of time and effort to meet multiple quality assurance requirements has become a serious issue for many time-poor academics. As many courses become more multi-disciplinary and move away from ‘traditional’ fields of discipline content, concerns have been expressed about the lack of concordance in the accreditation activities undertaken by the allied professional bodies. This issue is addressed within the context of LIS education in Section 5.0 of this report.

One of the major challenges for academic institutions is to determine how to best deliver a program which is distinctive and characteristic of a specific department, but which remains aligned with the goals of accreditation (Cox, 2010). Some critics of the accreditation process claim that “the profession tries to hem you in from where you are going” (Ostwald et al, 2008, p.82) and “stifles innovation” (Dalrymple, 2001, p.25), while others believe that accreditation can have a “homogenising effect” (Ostwald et al, 2008, p.82) as the review panels may try to look for similar things in every program. This can make it difficult for academics to create a program that has its own ‘identity’.

Panels should not be so deterministic in the way that they address their recommendations [and] say, ‘you must do this; you must do that’. I think that they have to see that they are looking at generic based standards, and that there might be opportunities to improve on those, which they could make broader recommendations about, to give the institutions scope to follow up on them.

(Ostwald et al, 2008, p.82)

In some disciplines accreditation has been described as “a kind of ritualized, adversarial game played out by academics against practitioners” (Walker, 2008, p.250). It is felt that there is a danger for

members of review panels to bring their own subjective experience with them; additionally the way in which people are appointed to panels may result in little consistency (CILIP, 2012a) so that with “different people on the panel you have different recommendations” (Ostwald et al, 2008, p.83).

Further shortcomings include the seemingly superficial nature of site visits which only allows the review panel to ‘dip in’ to identify some issues that they may find inferior in some way, but which may actually be very minor in the whole scheme of things. Some academics feel that reviewers should be immersed in the program for a period of time in order to truly understand the organisational culture and teaching operations. Beyond this, there is a genuine need to ensure that the process is not limited to retrospective quality assurance, to review what had been achieved through the program as it was run in the past, but that it considers prospective quality assurance to determine what might be achievable in the future (Biggs, 2001). Accreditation criteria should be flexible and adaptable so that they reflect the dynamic nature of contemporary professions and the diverse pathways into a profession. The University of Adelaide has recognised the resourcing impost caused by the accreditation of multiple courses and has sought to manage the process more efficiently: the Office of Learning and Quality Support coordinates campus-wide accreditation activities. Working with the Executive Deans of the different faculties, the Office maintains a schedule of all impending professional accreditations and manages the records of all previous accreditations with the centralised storage of accreditation documentation and reports (University of Adelaide, 2012).

Professional bodies are often concerned about the administrative overhead for the association itself, as the paper-based systems for most accreditation processes can be cumbersome and unwieldy, and staff time tends to be stretched. It is important for professional bodies to monitor and review their processes; however, in the PARN study (2011) 50% of respondents simply felt that the demand for their services meant that their accreditation efforts were successful. The fact that many UK professional bodies do not undertake any formal evaluation of their accreditation processes is echoed in Australia. However, the discussions held with professional association staff during the environmental scan raised a high level of interest in the current ALIA initiative to conduct a formal review of accreditation practice and an eagerness to see the findings shared.

Walker (2008) focuses on the ethical issues of accreditation. He highlights the significance of authority, legitimacy and credibility, specifically in connection with the work of the review panels. While a profession, through its association, has traditionally been accepted as a formal, authorising power, radical changes in higher education in recent years have seen new demands for academic and institutional performance which can raise questions about the nature of a profession’s authority and about the role of practitioners the quality assurance process. Questions about professional authority may lead critics to challenge the legitimacy of the criteria that form the basis of accreditation, as well as the credibility of the visiting panel in terms of the intrinsic qualities of expertise, judgement, personal practice and objectivity. An element of doubt is raised about whether the traditional model of professional accreditation is ethically sustainable in the increasingly complex educational environment. Interestingly, Cox (2010) notes that, despite all the challenges and criticisms that course accreditation attracts in the LIS field in the US, no real alternatives have been proposed: “it always seems as if no one is really willing to abandon accreditation for the MLIS degree, expand accreditation to other degrees, or to strengthen it in any noticeable way” (Cox, 2010, p.273). The details of quality assurance in the LIS sector are discussed in the following section of the report.

5.0 Quality assurance in library and information science (LIS) programs

A concise overview of the historical developments in LIS education is presented in a chapter on education for library and information services (Hallam, 2007) in the text *Libraries in the twenty-first century: Charting new directions in information services* (Fergusson, 2007). Briefly, in English-speaking countries, entry into the LIS profession moved from an apprenticeship model introduced in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, to more formalised education pathways, initially through colleges of further education and technical colleges. From the mid-20th century onwards, LIS programs began to be offered by universities; these courses were viewed as an opportunity to increase the professionalisation of librarianship (Rochester, 1997). Reflecting these changes, the role of library associations progressed from that of managing registration examinations to that of developing and monitoring professional standards.

Accreditation offers the profession the opportunity – indeed the obligation – to set the standards for entry-level practitioners. High-quality education is a shared responsibility of both the LIS schools and the profession itself.

(Dalrymple, 1997, p.31)

Additionally, the increasingly globalised world with its ever more international job market is driving the interest in cross-national mobility for students and workers and the need for the mutual recognition of academic qualifications.

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) has recently revised the international guidelines for LIS courses (Smith, Hallam & Ghosh, 2012). While these guidelines provide a general framework for establishing, running and reviewing LIS courses, particularly to assist educators in developing countries, IFLA itself does not undertake any course accreditation activities. Accordingly, the IFLA guidelines serve as advisory statements rather than standards per se. Consequently there are no worldwide standards for determining the equivalency of LIS education programs or graduate outcomes. Many LIS professionals who wish to work in other countries have experienced difficulties when they seek to have their qualifications recognised, and prospective employers face immense challenges when trying to access consistent and authoritative information about the equivalency of qualifications.

In 2000, IFLA undertook a research study to compare and contrast the accreditation and approval mechanisms for LIS qualifications across the world, with the ambitious goal of establishing a database of recognised qualifications and the bodies responsible for approval and/or accreditation. Despite the barriers to data collection for this international study, especially due to the non-standard use of terminology such as “approval”, “accreditation”, “recognition”, “sanctioning” etc, Dalton and Levinson (2000) were able to identify three distinct models of practice that aim to establish and maintain LIS education standards:

- Government monitored processes
- Formalised accreditation/approval processes
- Internal course/departmental standards.

The first model is common in European countries, eg Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France and Poland, where the quality control processes are conducted by the relevant government agencies. The focus is primarily on the higher education institution as a whole. The second model is characterised by

accreditation conducted by professional bodies: this is a model applicable to a small number of countries in the English-speaking world, eg the UK, the US and Australia. In Germany quality assurance is conducted by an independent agency that has an industry-specialisation. The third model of practice, internal quality control, generally runs concurrently with external accreditation processes. Where LIS courses require professional accreditation, they are typically subject to both institution-driven quality assurance and external industry approval. The IFLA study was undertaken over a decade ago, since which time there has been a dramatically heightened interest in quality standards in higher education (see Section 3.0).

In the period 2003-2006, IFLA's Section for Education and Training (SET) conducted a further survey of quality assurance practices in LIS schools in both developed and developing countries (Tammaro, 2006). The goals of the study were to:

- Explore the existence of quality assurance systems in LIS schools
- Consider the role of different stakeholders in quality assurance
- Analyse quality assurance models and procedures
- Evaluate the quality assurance standards, guidelines and quality indicators followed by library schools.

(Tammaro, 2006, p.391)

As a first step, the researchers developed a taxonomy of quality assurance techniques to distinguish between the different approaches to quality assurance. Questionnaires were sent to 160 LIS schools worldwide in an effort to identify current practices in quality assurance. Responses were received from 45 countries. It was found that there was a highly complex range of approaches relating to the educational practices in different countries and to the diverse stakeholders' purposes for the assessment. Almost two thirds (64%) were subject to government monitoring, compared with only 14% having quality assurance processes led by a professional association, such as ALA, CILIP and ALIA. Other external assessors included employers and alumni, or alumni associations. Internal quality controls took place for 36% of all courses, generally in conjunction with another approach. Ten percent of programs were not subject to any form of evaluation. As diverging program structures and differences in the duration of courses make international comparisons very difficult, it can be argued that accreditation represents a distinct barrier to internationalisation.

5.1 Convergence of the allied professions

While professional accreditation has long been undertaken in the 'traditional' field of library science, the increasing diversification of the LIS curriculum presents a new set of challenges. Burnett and Bonnici (2006) argue that "traditional library degree programs remain firmly committed to the values of place, institution and professionalism", while the I-Schools are moving away from these values towards "those of abstract knowledge and disciplinary identity" (Burnett & Bonnici, 2006, p.217) to potentially contest ALA's jurisdiction in accreditation. At the same time, developments in the digital information environment mean that courses covering the discipline areas of the allied information professions, such as information management, records management, heritage studies and archival studies, are becoming more closely aligned with those offered in the library science arena (Mezick & Koenig, 2008). In 2012, IFLA established a working group to explore the convergence of education of information professionals for positions in archives, museums, and libraries. An online forum on the topic was held in February 2013 to explore the critical issues and to consider how LIS courses might best accommodate a multidisciplinary curriculum (IDEALS, 2013).

Some faculty are concerned that this movement towards interdisciplinary scholarship and research may deter prospective students who seek to become 'library practitioners' (Cox, 2010). There is a fear that "other related programs may still be omitted from the current accreditation process" (Martin, 2002, p.481) typically undertaken by bodies such as the ALA, CILIP and ALIA. Cox (2010) feels that institutions offering LIS programs may not be willing to invest heavily in the accreditation of an MLIS program when the evaluation pertains to only one narrow portion of the curriculum which, in its entirety, covers the expansive fields of the information profession.

In the US in 1999, serious efforts were made to draw together eight professional associations whose interests encompassed librarianship, archives, records management and other information specialisations, with the goal of establishing an external agency that had responsibility for program accreditation across all the allied fields (Association of Research Libraries (ARL), 2001; Martin, 2002; Cox, 2010). The ALA Ad Hoc Task Force on External Accreditation recognised that, while the existing LIS accreditation processes had certain strengths, there were some weaknesses that could be potentially overcome only by joining together with other related professional associations and creating "an accreditation structure that recognizes the rapidly developing and changing profession of librarianship in the 21st century" (Martin, 2002, p.481). In 2001, in principle support for a new organisation with responsibility for professional standards was given by the Special Libraries Association (SLA), Medical Library Association (MLA), American Association of Law Libraries (AALL), Society of American Archivists (SAA), American Society for Information Science and Technology (ASIST), Canadian Library Association (CLA) and the Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE). However, the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) and the Urban Libraries Council (ULC) did not support the proposal (ARL, 2001) and the initiative was ultimately abandoned.

5.2 Accreditation of LIS programs: International practice

In addition to the research work conducted by Dalton and Levinson (2000) and Tammaro (2006), further investigations into the potential role of professional associations in LIS accreditation have been undertaken in regions such as South East Asia and the Middle East.

5.2.1 South East Asia

In the Philippines, students graduate from a bachelor or master's degree and then sit a licensure examination to acquire a certificate of registration as a librarian and a professional identification card. The practice of librarianship is regulated by The Philippine Librarianship Act 2003, which recognises the important role libraries and librarians play in national development and civil society (Khoo et al, 2006). On average, less than 50% of candidates pass the examination, and when a substantial proportion of graduates from a library school fail, recommendations are made to close the program.

This practice differs greatly from that in other South East Asian countries and there has been a desire to find some common ground. Discussions on the options for regional accreditation of LIS programs were held in the early 2000s and a survey was undertaken in early 2002. The anticipated benefits of regional accreditation included:

- Better coordination among LIS programs in the region
- Wider acceptance of LIS education
- Higher credibility and recognition of LIS degrees

- Better job prospects for LIS graduates
- Better quality of LIS programs and their graduates
- Enhanced mobility for LIS graduates in the region.

(Khoo et al, 2003).

It was proposed that responsibility for the development and coordination of an accreditation scheme should lie with the Congress of Southeast Asian Librarians (CONSAL)¹⁰, with local accreditation committees convened by the respective national library associations.

In 2006, in conjunction with the Asia-Pacific Conference on Library and Information Education and Practice (A-LIEP) in Singapore, a meeting was held to bring together LIS educators and leaders of a number of professional associations, including ALIA, in order to progress the discussions. Despite the high level of interest and engagement, the concept of regional accreditation was found to be too complex due to the differences in education system in the various countries (Foo, Khoo, Chaudhry & Majid, 2006). Further hindrances were identified as:

- Lack of funding for accreditation activities
- Low levels of understanding of accreditation within some of the professional associations
- Lack of relevant experts to develop and implement accreditation processes
- Resistance from the various LIS programs
- Fear of being exposed in the eyes of stakeholders
- Government rules and regulations.

Since then, progress towards collaborative accreditation activities in the region has been slow. The program at Nanyang Technological University remains the only LIS program on offer in Singapore. The need for quality assurance arrangements led to the Library Association of Singapore setting up a committee in 2011, comprising chief librarians or their representatives, to oversee LIS education and training, to give the library school feedback on the curriculum and to advise what competencies are needed in library service (Christopher Khoo, Jan 2, 2013 personal communication). Developments in Malaysia, on the other hand, have seen the establishment of a formal accreditation system for higher education programs in that country: the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) oversees the quality of higher education providers. Working within this framework a committee involving representatives of the MQA, the National Library, the Librarians' Association of Malaysia, three LIS schools and employers, has developed the documentation for *Standards and Criteria for Programs in Library and Information Science* which forms the accreditation framework (Singh, 2007).

5.2.2 The Middle East

A general awareness about the merits of LIS course accreditation has been noted in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), ie Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (Rehman, 2008; Rehman, 2012). Rehman argued that LIS education in the region could benefit from the similarities that exist in the region in terms of the political environment, the language, and the cultural and socio-economic domains. Although nine LIS courses (predominantly undergraduate programs) are currently offered in four of the GCC states: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar (Rehman, 2012), it was felt that it would be immensely difficult to achieve consensus about accreditation amongst the different academic institutions. While accreditation is viewed as desirable, there is to date a lack of agreement about which agency might be the responsible body.

¹⁰ Council of Southeast Asian Librarians (CONSAL): www.consal.org

Some stakeholders felt the Arabian Gulf Chapter of the SLA could be the accrediting agency, while others believed a new organisation should be established. Other options included one of the national professional associations, the regional consortium of universities or the Ministry of Education. Rehman (2012) has reported that most of the agencies proposed would have neither the authority nor the capability to undertake formal accreditation programs. The preferred option pointed to the forum of the deans of libraries within the GCC Universities Forum, which could be invited to take on the responsibilities of policy formulation, the development of guidelines and instruments, financial management and establishing review panels. Nevertheless the pattern of low levels of professional engagement in the region means that it is unlikely that demand for accreditation would be driven by the professional community. A forum of LIS educators in the region may help drive the proposed initiative forward.

5.2.3 American Library Association (ALA)

In contrast to the nascent status of professional accreditation in Asia and the Middle East, the American Library Association (ALA)¹¹ first established a Board of Education for Librarianship in 1915 – almost one century ago. The ALA's *Minimum standards for library school* were published in 1925, with the goal of acknowledging librarianship to be a profession achieved through academic education, as opposed to training and apprenticeships. A very detailed analysis of the accreditation journey in the US is presented by Burnett and Bonnici (2006).

Today, responsibility for LIS course accreditation in the US sits under the auspices of the ALA Committee on Accreditation (COA)¹² and the Office of Accreditation (OA)¹³. The OA serves as the secretariat for all operational matters associated with course accreditation. The COA is concerned with setting policy direction and monitoring the appropriateness and relevancy of accreditation standards.

The COA consists of 12 members appointed by the ALA president-elect. Of the 12 members, 10 are personal members of ALA appointed to represent educators and practitioners. Of these 10 members, one must be Canadian. The remaining two COA members must be appointed from the public-at-large to represent the public interest.

(ALA, 2012a)

Within this framework, there are three subcommittees with oversight over, respectively, planning, programming and standards review. The COA is itself recognised by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA)¹⁴, a non-government organisation which has oversight over voluntary self-assessment and peer review accreditation processes in the US.

The ALA describes accreditation as “a voluntary, nongovernmental and collegial process of self-review and external verification by peer reviewers” (ALA, 2012b, p.6), designed to ensure the quality and integrity of LIS courses and to improve the quality of LIS education offered by academic institutions. At a higher level, academic institutions are accredited by one of a number of institutional accrediting agencies, while the ALA COA is specifically responsible for the accreditation

¹¹ American Library Association (ALA): www.ala.org

¹² ALA Committee on Accreditation (COA): www.ala.org/groups/committees/ala/ala-coa

¹³ ALA Office of Accreditation (OA): www.ala.org/offices/accreditation

¹⁴ Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA): www.chea.org

of programs that lead to a first professional degree in LIS. In the US, this is only the Master's qualification (MLIS); the ALA does not accredit undergraduate programs or vocational courses. There are currently 63 accredited programs in the US, Canada and Puerto Rico, with three candidates currently being processed. The interests of LIS educators are central to another professional body, the Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE)¹⁵.

Two ALA documents are central to the accreditation process:

- *Accreditation process, policies and procedures (AP3)* (ALA, 2012b)
- *Standards for accreditation of Master's programs in Library and Information Studies* (ALA, 2008).

The ALA website hosts a range of additional resources to support the accreditation process, eg directory of accredited programs, glossary of terminology, information on training, blogs, newsletters and reports.

The ALA advises that the *Standards* are indicative, not prescriptive, with the goal of fostering excellence in LIS education. "The requirements for evaluation include assessments, not only of educational processes and resources, but also for the success of those processes and resources to achieve established objectives expressed as student learning outcomes" (ALA, 2008, p.4). Evaluation results should also be used by educators to inform continuous improvement and planning for the future.

The standards cover the following thematic areas:

1. Mission, goals and objectives
2. Curriculum
3. Faculty
4. Students
5. Administration and financial support
6. Physical resources and facilities.

There are no specific references to a body of knowledge or any detailed competencies, but a broad approach to the discipline is adopted:

The phrase 'library and information studies' is understood to be concerned with recordable information and knowledge and the services and technologies to facilitate their management and use. Library and information studies encompasses information and knowledge creation, communication, identification, selection, acquisition, organization and description, storage and retrieval, preservation, analysis, interpretation, evaluation, synthesis, dissemination, and management.

(ALA, 2008, p.3)

The scope of the first professional degree is acknowledged to be a general foundation for LIS practice. Subsequent to the publication of the revised standards in 2008, the ALA approved the document *Core competences of librarianship* (ALA, 2009). Approval was given by the ALA Executive Board in October 2008 and the document was adopted by the ALA Council in January 2009. The core competences represent the basic knowledge and capabilities to be acquired by graduates of ALA-accredited programs:

¹⁵ Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE): www.alise.org

1. Foundations of the profession
2. Information resources
3. Organization of recorded knowledge
4. Technological knowledge and skills
5. Reference and user services
6. Research
7. Continuing education and lifelong learning
8. Administration and management.

For further areas of specialised knowledge, stakeholders are pointed to the range of statements issued by professional associations such as the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL), Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), Medical Library Association (MLA) (ALA, 2012c).

The cycle of accreditation is scheduled to begin with a letter of intent to seek accreditation (Candidacy) sent to the COA two years ahead of an anticipated site visit. Initial accreditation requires a Pre-Candidacy application, which is then followed by the Candidacy processes. The final report and the response from the academic institution is sent to the COA six weeks after the site visit. The COA convenes twice a year, at the ALA Annual Conference and at the ALA Midwinter Meeting, to discuss the pending accreditation reports. The process is finalised two weeks after the COA meeting. This means that, overall, the candidacy process can take two and a half to three years to be completed. The period of accreditation is seven years.

The cost of accreditation is as follows (in US dollars) (ALA, 2012b):

Precandidacy (for new, non-accredited LIS programs to be considered potential candidates)

Application fee	\$1000.00
Annual fee	\$2000.00

Candidacy (Formal intention to seek accreditation)

Application fee	\$1000.00
Annual fee	\$922.88

Accreditation (comprehensive review)

Accreditation fee (annual)	\$1000.00
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Plus direct costs*

**Direct costs:*

All review-related expenses, including, but not limited to, preparation and distribution of documents; conference calls and other communication modes such as internet access; and travel, lodging, and meals for any on-site visit by members of the review panel.

There may also be significant indirect costs: anecdotally it has been reported that some LIS schools hire writers to prepare the accreditation documentation and pay for qualitative research with stakeholders.

The ALA accreditation processes have not been without their critics. Practitioners have debated the extent to which “the nonprescriptive, outcomes-oriented standards” actually meet the needs of employers of LIS professionals, while many faculty members are eager to see a sharper focus on research and knowledge building (Burnett & Bonnici, 2006). The tensions between “the needs for practitioners and the expectations of the academy that its schools be concerned with the discovery

and transmission of new knowledge” (Summers, 1998, p.10) have long permeated this debate and are likely to continue into the future (for a synopsis of the issues articulated in the US, see Cox, 2010, pp.273-276).

5.2.4 Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP)

The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP)¹⁶ was founded in 2002 as a result of the merger of the Library Association (LA) and the Institute of Information Scientists (IIS). The Library Association itself was founded in 1877; in 1885 it assumed the role of examining body, with candidates who passed the examinations being added to the professional register of librarians. As professional education moved into the academic arena in the 1960s and 1970s, the Library Association ceased to be the examining body. From 1985 onwards the association focused on the development of accreditation processes that would ensure “the recruitment of quality assured graduates into the profession” (Huckle, 2003, p.78). In 1999, prior to the official merger of the two professional bodies, the LA and the IIS amalgamated their course accreditation operations by establishing the Joint Accreditation Administration (JAA) (Enser, 2002).

Since the formal establishment of CILIP as the unified body in 2002, professional accreditation has been managed by the Accreditation Board which reports to the CILIP Council. CILIP accredits undergraduate and postgraduate LIS courses, which may be full time or part time, offered as face-to-face or as distance learning programs. CILIP-accredited courses are offered by 11 universities in the UK, one in the Republic of Ireland, and one in Germany (CILIP, 2012b). Courses are accredited by CILIP for five years.

During the course of 2012, CILIP undertook a major project which is referred to as the *Future Skills* project (CILIP, 2012c). The stimulus for the project came from the study, *Defining our Professional Future* (CILIP, 2010), which highlighted the membership’s concerns about the association’s ongoing relevance in a changing world. This study led to the development of new vision and mission statements that focus on the value of professional skills and excellence. Three of the goals of the *Future Skills* project are directly relevant to LIS course accreditation (CILIP, 2012c):

- To review CILIP’s Body of Professional Knowledge (BPK) and ensure its relevance to all sector workers
- To review the Accreditation and Seal of Recognition process and CILIP’s relationships with the providers in Further and Higher Education and other awarding bodies
- To review the Chartership and Certification offer including Fellowship and revalidation, and how it meets the needs of all library, information and knowledge workers.

The domains of accreditation encompass current and developing practice in librarianship, knowledge management and information science.

Courses should provide students with a theoretical framework for research and practice in the information field. CILIP does not seek to stipulate the exact content but will expect the aims and objectives of the course(s) to be consonant with the Body of Professional Knowledge (BPK).

(CILIP, 2005, p.4).

¹⁶ Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP): www.cilip.org.uk

A new *Professional Knowledge and Skills Base (PKSB)* was introduced in 2012 (CILIP, 2012d) and work is currently being undertaken to determine the best ways for program leaders in institutions applying for accreditation to map their course content to the new PKSB (Figure 2).

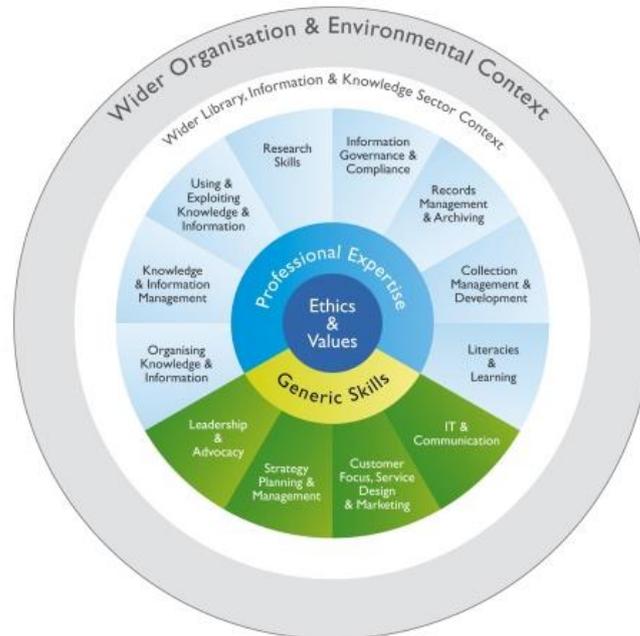


Figure 2: Professional Knowledge and Skills Base (PKSB) (CILIP, 2012e)

In March 2013, the Council of CILIP approved a revised model for accreditation, acknowledging it to be a core activity of the association. A number of concerns associated with existing course accreditation processes had been identified, primarily with respect to the process being too time-consuming for those involved, too paper-intensive and that the whole process extended over an excessively long period of time (CILIP, 2012a). CILIP has therefore been working towards a new model of accreditation that will strive to be more 'nimble' and more cost effective (Simon Edwards, Dec 20, 2012, personal communication): the goal is to have processes that are "streamlined, well defined, fit-for-purpose, transparent, clear, easily understood and user friendly" (CILIP, 2012a, p.4).

In the past, CILIP had introduced a 'light-touch' model, with the accreditation processes completed as a document-only model and a site visit only offered for new courses. However, with the revised model of accreditation, site visits will be re-introduced in order to allow for more open communication about the education programs being assessed, to meet students and to inspect the facilities. CILIP is moving to online submission and assessment of materials via a new Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

There are five assessment criteria in the new CILIP accreditation model (CILIP, 2012a,p.8-9):

1. The learning provider is providing a high quality learning experience for students
 - The learning provider is validated through any internal quality assessment procedures
 - The learning provider is validated through any external quality assessment procedures
 - There is good support from the senior management for the department and the delivery of programmes
 - There is evidence of an ongoing dialogue to gain and respond to student feedback
 - There is evidence that there are sufficient resources and facilities to support learners
2. The relevance of the programme to the Professional Knowledge and Skills Base
 - The learning provider is able to demonstrate that the programme is relevant to the PKSB
3. The learning provider engages with employers to ensure that programmes are relevant to students
 - Evidence that employers are involved in shaping programmes
 - Evidence that employers support/complement course delivery
 - Evidence of the kind of roles students progress to on completion of courses
4. Staff are up to date with current professional practice
 - There is a staff development policy in place
 - Staff are keeping up to date through membership of relevant professional bodies, continuing professional development, research and practical projects
5. Students are encouraged to engage with CILIP
 - Confirmation that students are introduced to CILIP, its products and services and how it can support their career development.

Under this revised model of accreditation the association will widen its scope to review all LIS qualifications (academic and vocational), to include entire courses or programs as well as modules of programs.

A completely new approach will be adopted with the accreditation activities undertaken by two independent contractors who will complete the evaluation in two and a half days: they will make the initial assessment of an institution's application and identify key issues (one day), complete the accreditation visit and finalise the decision making (one day), and document the final decision (half a day). It is believed that this business model will increase the distance between CILIP staff and the decision-making process and so ensure a more robust, unbiased process. CILIP staff will be able to work more closely with learning providers and offer more effective advice, support and guidance (CILIP, 2012a).

The timelines for the accreditation processes will be:

- Submission date to feedback on initial assessment and confirmation of visit: *maximum 2 weeks after submission date*
- Site visit: *maximum 7 weeks after submission date*
- Confirmation documents received by institution: *1 week after site visit.*

The goal of this schedule is to complete the accreditation activities within eight weeks of the submission of the request for accreditation. The assessors will be remunerated for their work at the

rate of £500 (AUD 725) per day (plus travel expenses) and institutions will be asked to pay an administration fee which covers a percentage of the association's cost.

To date, CILIP has not required any annual monitoring of accredited programs. In future, however, informal meetings with academic staff will be held annually to allow for CILIP staff to be briefed about developments with the course and to build effective dialogue between educators and the association. Additionally, as the LIS schools in the UK and Ireland are members of the British Association for Information and Library Education and Research (BAILER)¹⁷, the potential exists for representatives of CILIP to participate in BAILER forums to discuss matters of mutual interest (Simon Edwards, Dec 20, 2012, personal communication).

5.3 Accreditation of programs in the LIS and allied professions: Australian practice

Across the wider information and ICT fields in Australia, course accreditation activities are undertaken by ALIA, the Australian Society of Archivists (ASA)¹⁸, Records and Information Management Professionals Australasia (RIMPA)¹⁹ and the Australian Computer Society (ACS)²⁰. An overview of the roles played in course accreditation by these professional bodies is discussed.

5.3.1 Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA)

In Australia, ALIA acts as the leading standards body for the library and information profession. ALIA holds responsibility for the accreditation of the programs which lead to LIS and teacher librarianship qualifications. The association has formally 'recognised' librarianship courses since 1968 and library technician courses since 1978, guided by the association's education policies. The terminology was changed from 'course recognition' to 'course accreditation' in 2009. ALIA's course accreditation process is directly linked to the categories of membership of the association, specifically in terms of the Associate membership (AALIA), which requires members to hold an ALIA-accredited LIS qualification at either undergraduate or postgraduate level, and the Library Technician membership (ALIA Tec), with members holding an ALIA-accredited library technician qualification. Other categories of ALIA membership currently include general Member, Student, Retired, Associate Fellow and Fellow, as well as Institutional Member.

At the professional level, ten universities offer ALIA-accredited professional courses at undergraduate and postgraduate levels (ALIA, 2012a). This compares with 16 universities in 1990. Today only three of the ten institutions offer courses at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels; seven universities offer only postgraduate programs (Graduate Diploma or Master's). Two universities offer programs only at the Master's level. Three universities also offer specialist courses leading to a postgraduate teacher-librarian qualification. In addition, ALIA currently accredits 17 paraprofessional courses leading to library technician qualifications with the Diploma in Library/Information Services (ALIA, 2012b). One institution has arrangements for the Diploma course to be studied through Open Universities Australia (OUA) (OUA, 2012).

ALIA's role in the education of LIS professionals is delineated in its policy documents (ALIA, 2009a; ALIA, 2009b, ALIA, 2012a):

¹⁷ British Association for Information and Library Education and Research (BAILER): www.bailer.org.uk

¹⁸ Australian Society of Archivists (ASA): www.asa.org.au

¹⁹ Records and Information Management Professionals Australasia (RIMPA): www.rimpa.com.au

²⁰ Australian Computer Society (ACS): www.acs.org.au/

As a standards body, ALIA has a responsibility to ensure the availability of high-quality educational programs both as a basis for professional practice and as a means of ongoing professional development. To this end, ALIA works collaboratively with educators, employers and training providers to promote and encourage continuous improvement in the education of library and information professionals, institutional support for library and information courses and the contribution of practitioner expertise to courses offered at entry-level to the profession and for ongoing professional development.

(ALIA, 2009a).

New developments in the design and operation of ALIA's Professional Development (PD) scheme have the potential to build members' interests in education, training and development. The strategies of opening the MyPD recording tool to all members, introducing a new membership category of membership (Certified Professional) based on the formal recognition of ongoing learning and professional development and establishing a suite of PD specialisations, eg health librarianship, school librarianship, knowledge management, will serve to strengthen the intrinsic value of the accreditation of entry-level programs (ALIA, 2013, p.21).

ALIA's accreditation focus

In accrediting courses at the professional level and the library technician level, ALIA draws on its core education policies: *ALIA's role in education of library and information professionals* (ALIA, 2009a) (Appendix 1), *Courses in library and information management* (ALIA, 2009b) (Appendix 2) and *Library and information sector: core knowledge, skills and attributes* (ALIA, 2012a) (Appendix 3). The core knowledge statement encompasses the content domains of:

- Knowledge of the broad context of the information environment
- Information seeking
- Information infrastructure
- Information organisation
- Information access
- Information services, sources and products
- Information literacy education
- Generation of knowledge.

The statement also highlights the importance of generic skills and attributes:

- Effective communication skills
- Professional ethical standards and social responsibility
- Project management skills
- Critical, reflective and creative thinking
- Problem solving skills
- Business acumen
- Ability to build partnerships and alliances
- Effective team relationship skills
- Self-management skills
- A commitment to lifelong learning
- Relevant ICT and technology application skills
- Appropriate information literacy skills.

Seven key criteria are taken into consideration when a course is reviewed:

- Course design
- Curriculum content
- Student assessment
- Staffing
- Resourcing
- Quality assurance mechanisms
- Infrastructure.

As courses may be offered in diverse ways – eg face-to-face, online, or as a hybrid of both – ALIA seeks to ensure that learning outcomes will be consistent across the various delivery modes (ALIA, 2011). All accredited courses are listed, with links to the institutions, on the ALIA website (ALIA, 2012b; ALIA, 2012c).

ALIA's accreditation process

Institutions seeking accreditation for a LIS course are required to submit documentation to respond to the seven criteria listed above and to be open to scrutiny through a site visit by a panel of LIS educators and industry practitioners. The course accreditation process is presented diagrammatically in Figure 3.

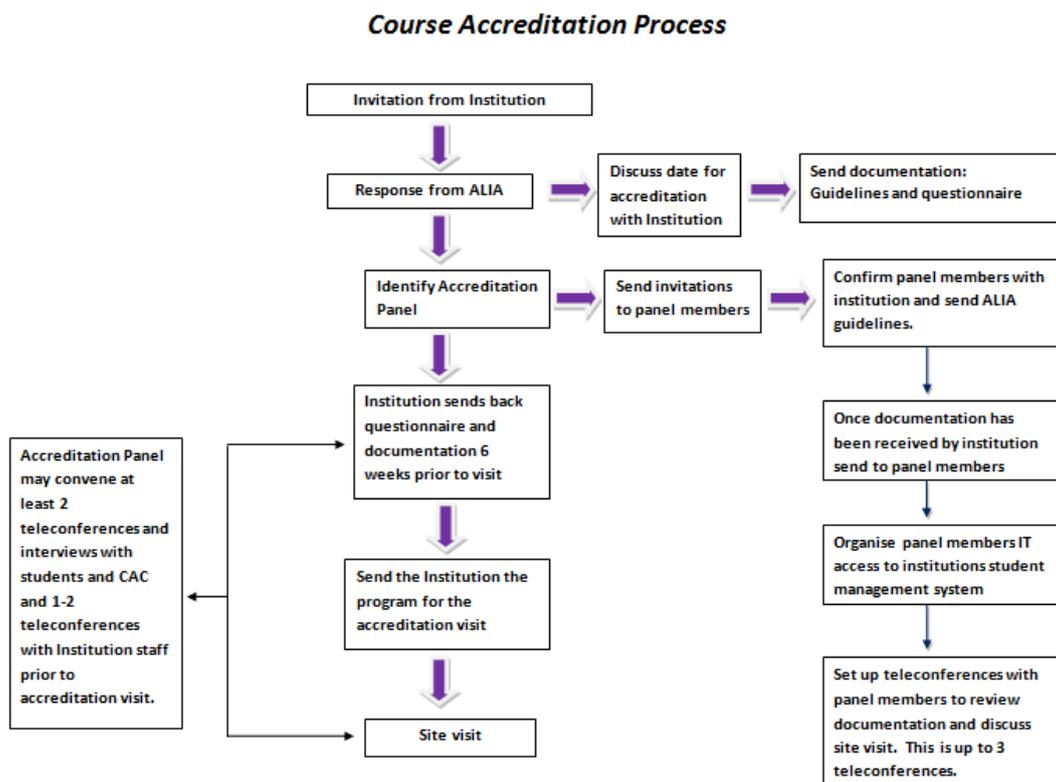


Figure 3: ALIA course accreditation process

A report is prepared for each course that is accredited. Figure 4 outlines the report writing process from its initiation to its ultimate delivery to the institution to confirm the formal accreditation status.

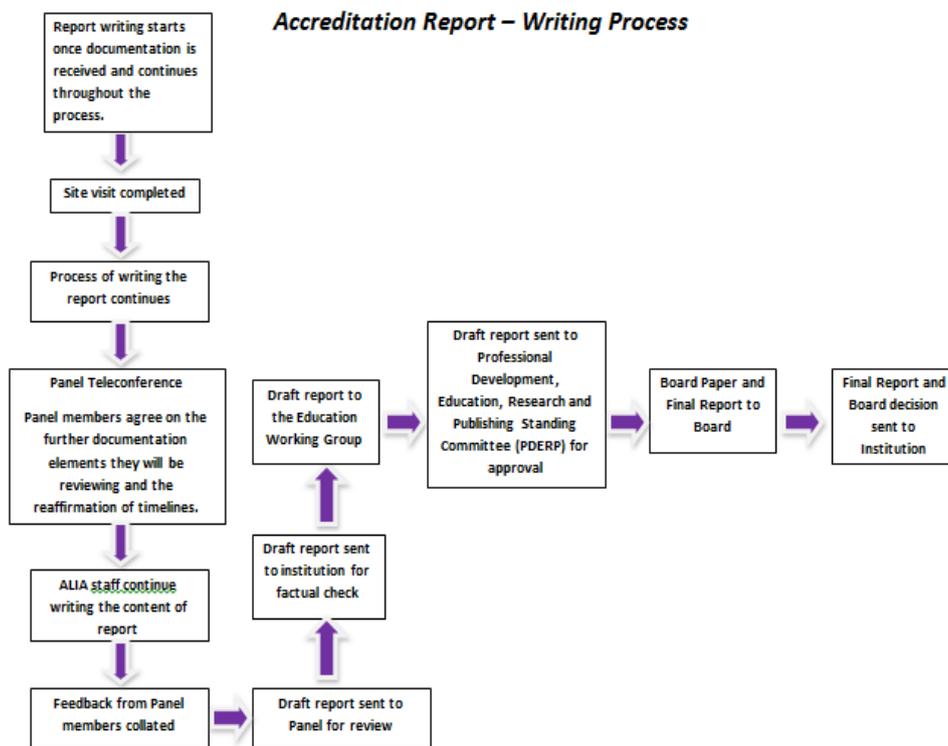


Figure 4: Accreditation report writing process

The individual accredited courses are monitored through the submission of an Annual Course Return (ACR) and program leaders are required to attend an ALIA-hosted education forum every year. In 2005, the ALIA Education Reference Group reviewed the ACR with the goal of streamlining the process and ensuring that the data collected would be comparable across the different education institutions in order to develop a cohesive picture of LIS education in Australia.

Accreditation of higher education courses

The ALTC-funded study, *Re-conceptualising and re-positioning Australian library and information science education for the 21st century* (Partridge et al, 2011), was undertaken by a collaborative research team with representatives from all ALIA-accredited higher education institutions, as well as one dual sector institution which runs an accredited library technician program. The study examined a wide range of issues associated with LIS education in Australia. Three sub studies were conducted, each focusing on a discrete stakeholder group: LIS students, the LIS workforce and LIS education. This last study involved a survey of and interviews with LIS educators. The main themes relating to professional accreditation that emerged in this area of research were (Partridge et al, 2011, pp.84-5):

- Concerns regarding the professional associations' perceived 'territories'
- Challenges associated with ALIA's accreditation processes
- The interplay between professional accreditation and program content.

LIS educators felt that it was disconcerting to have a number of different professional associations (ALIA, RIMPA and ASA) involved in the accreditation space, as it was felt that they all had their own narrow interests, described as “too many little territories, little empires” (Partridge et al, 2011, p.84). This has resulted in significant challenges for program leaders to adequately meet the individual and highly specific needs of the different associations. There was a clear preference for the introduction of coordinated accreditation activities across the broad information environment. These concerns notwithstanding, academics commended the focus of ALIA’s accreditation activities which were not overly prescriptive, but open and flexible: “we’ve managed to do things our own way, but we’re able to map what we do towards the body of knowledge” (Partridge et al, 2011, p.84).

In addition to concerns about time consuming process, educators criticised ALIA on two fronts: firstly for its overly bureaucratic processes, and secondly for the lack of understanding of the higher education environment which was evident in the failure to grasp “what is actually realistic and reasonable to expect to do to get through their accreditation process” (Partridge et al, 2011, p.84). It was felt that “industry bodies have not kept pace with the changes in educational practices” (Partridge et al, 2011, p.23), particularly in terms of the qualifications accepted for Associate membership (By-law 1, Clause 18). In December 2011, the ALIA Board approved changes to the interpretation of Clause 18.2 of By-law 1, which states that, to become an Associate member of the association, “holders of a postgraduate qualification must also hold either an undergraduate level course or its equivalent in another discipline that has been accepted by the tertiary institution conducting the aforementioned course as meeting the prescribed entry requirements for the course” (ALIA, 2012d). ALIA’s original interpretation of the clause was such that recognition of prior learning (RPL) was not viewed as an equivalent to an undergraduate level course. Postgraduates who did not hold a Bachelor degree were not eligible to become Associate members of ALIA; this could only be achieved if they applied and paid for the association’s widened eligibility assessment.

However, both the AQF and TEQSA have highlighted the importance of multiple pathways into a career. The AQF “supports individuals’ lifelong learning goals by providing the basis for individuals to progress through education and training and gain recognition for their prior learning and experiences” (AQF, 2013, p.8). TEQSA’s *Qualification standards* (see Section 3.1) set the key principle that “credit for previous studies or learning should be maximised, subject to preserving the integrity of learning outcomes and/or discipline requirements of the award” (TEQSA, 2013, p.4). ALIA has acknowledged the changing higher education environment by recognising that learning occurs through a variety of experiences and should be supported through increased flexibility in career pathways. Accordingly, ALIA now interprets By-law 1, Clause 18.2 as an acceptance of universities’ own assessment of students’ RPL and credit transfer applications to determine equivalence to an undergraduate degree for entry into a postgraduate LIS degree, with direct admission to Associate membership of ALIA. This strategy fosters “sustainability, equity and cohesion amongst the various sectors within the LIS profession” so that “graduating students from accredited programs are eligible to join their respective peak body as an associate member” and brings ALIA into in line with policies at the ASA and RIMPA (Partridge et al, 2011, p.23).

Accreditation of VET courses

The accreditation processes undertaken for VET courses are fundamentally the same as those undertaken for higher education programs. Some experimentation occurred a few years ago,

whereby the need for panel visits was removed; however the visits were resumed after two or three years (Ian Rogers, Feb 20, 2013, personal communication). In 1996 a national training package was introduced to replace the diverse State and Territory diplomas. The training package, auspiced as a National Actrac Project, was in place from 1996 to 2000. In 1999 CREATE (Cultural Research Education and Training Enterprises) Australia conducted a review of the training package, with ALIA and employers in the LIS sector providing considerable input into the revisions to the training package. It was generally felt that the training package was appropriately aligned with industry needs and the then seven year cycle of accreditation was interrupted for a period of time. In 2004, responsibility for the Museum, Library/Information Services Training Package was transferred to Innovation and Business Skills Australia (IBSA)²¹. The training package underwent a further review in 2007, resulting in Version 2.

In 2008 the ALIA Board of Directors determined that it would be timely to review the library technician programs to examine how the national training package was delivered across disparate education institutions and to consider the degree to which the student learning outcomes met industry expectations. Through a program of professional development days hosted by ALIA, library technician educators from all states and territories of Australia collaboratively explored the concepts of quality teaching and learning and shared ideas and expertise. The 2008 meeting specifically enabled participants to review the criteria for ALIA course accreditation, to ratify the content and format of the accreditation questionnaire to be completed by all institutions and to discuss the logistics for the program of site visits that was scheduled for 2009.

A total of 17 library technician courses were assessed, with site visits to all institutions conducted between February and June 2009. These site visits were undertaken by a panel comprised of the chair of the ALIA Education and Professional Development Standing Committee, the Education Manager and an experienced library technician from each local area. While each institution received its own accreditation report, a comprehensive summary of the national review activities, *Library technician education in Australia: State of the nation report*, was published by ALIA, highlighting the variations in current practice for each assessment criterion and presenting recommendations for good practice in library technician education (ALIA, 2010b). This report also set out a series of recommendations to encourage a wider understanding of the importance of professional standards in the LIS sector and to guide future accreditation practice.

At the end of the national review period, ALIA sought feedback on the effectiveness and relevancy of the course accreditation process, with online questionnaires completed by the course coordinators and by the local panel members. The survey responses are discussed in detail in the ALIA *State of the Nation* report (ALIA, 2010b). Course coordinators provided some valuable comments about the documentation required, as some had found aspects of the process confusing. Suggestions were made that a checklist approach may help clarify the submission of relevant documents. Course coordinators appreciated the planning work they had done at the annual meeting in 2008 and felt that the professional development days had helped build good working relationships with the review panel.

Specific feedback was provided about strategies to improve the course recognition process. Respondents felt that collecting and collating the required information was overly onerous. There

²¹ Innovation and Business Skills Australia (IBSA): www.ibsa.org.au

was an interest in having “less paper - more electronic provision of documentation”. It was acknowledged, however, that the accreditation experience had enabled course coordinators to feel a strong level of preparedness for their involvement in future internal and external audits.

Costs of ALIA accreditation

All costs of accreditation, including the site visit, are currently borne by the association. In 2011, ALIA undertook an analysis of its accreditation activities and estimated the total cost to be around \$170,000 in a financial year (Carroll, 2012), although there can be fluctuations depending on the number of courses that are accredited in any given year. This figure takes into account the proportional salaries and on costs for national office staff, travel and accommodation for site visits, teleconferences and office overheads (support staff, administration costs, ICT and utilities). However, it is felt that the total cost has dropped as changes had been made to accreditation processes and procedures (Harry Carroll, March 22, 2013, personal communication). Members of the association who serve on review panels do so in a volunteer capacity and receive no remuneration for their time. Academic institutions cover their own costs of the staff time spent putting the submission together and organising the site visit.

The value of ALIA accreditation

A survey of ALIA members conducted in 2008 indicated that the accreditation of LIS qualifications and courses was ranked by personal members as the most important activity undertaken by ALIA, and by institutional members as the second most important activity, and that the association performed well in this area (InSync Surveys, 2008). At the May 2012 Board meeting, an interim report was tabled which highlighted the value placed on professional accreditation by academic managers at the institutions most recently accredited, with the activities viewed as a significant mechanism for quality assurance and benchmarking. The ALTC study (Partridge et al, 2011) revealed that the strategic value of accreditation is generally accepted by LIS educators; it can help reassure students about the quality of the course offered and can play a role as an advocacy tool within the profession. On the other hand it has been noted that, anecdotally, some educators in Australia believe, as do their peers in the UK, the US and Canada, that current accreditation practice places too great an emphasis on the ‘library world’ as opposed to the broader ‘information world’, meaning that some contemporary employers have little interest in course accreditation.

In recent years there has been an informal working group of association representatives who have responsibility for education, learning and professional development within the allied professions: ALIA, Australian Society of Archivists (ASA), Records and Information Management Professionals (RIMPA) and Museums Australia. The group has held periodic teleconferences to discuss and share understandings about developments in education and accreditation across the wider library and information sector.

5.3.2 Australian Society of Archivists (ASA)

The body of professional knowledge in the field of records management, information management and archival studies is articulated in the *Statement of knowledge for recordkeeping professionals* developed jointly by the Australian Society of Archivists (ASA) and Records and Information Management Professionals Australasia (RIMPA) (ASA & RIMPA, 2006). The *Statement of knowledge* is closely aligned with the recordkeeping and records management training packages. In August 2012, RIMPA and ASA published a joint exposure draft, *Draft statement of knowledge*, with an

invitation to the profession to provide comments and feedback (ASA & RIMPA, 2012). The revised version of the knowledge statement draws on an archival studies unit in the CUL11 Library, Information and Cultural Services training package, the Universal Declaration of Archives; the protocols and treaties that are relevant to Indigenous communities in Australasia are also acknowledged.

The ASA currently accredits four university courses at the levels of bachelor's degree, graduate diploma and coursework master's degree, all of which offer core programs in the fields of archives, records and recordkeeping (ASA, 2007). Courses are assessed to determine whether graduates are eligible for professional membership with one year's relevant work experience: "Courses presented for accreditation need to be of a quality and depth such that graduates with one year's work experience could be considered to have the conceptual, theoretical and practical skills and knowledge to be professional members" (ASA, 2005). The ASA does not accredit VET courses.

The criteria for course accreditation encompass the requirement that institutions demonstrate how their courses demonstrate student learning outcomes that pertain to:

- The ASA/RIMPA *Statement of Knowledge for Recordkeeping Professionals*
- The continuum model of recordkeeping
- AS ISO 15489 – 2002 Records Management standard.

The accreditation team maps the course documentation to the core knowledge areas. The focus is strongly on the academic content and the context of the course in the field of archives and recordkeeping, rather than on course delivery mechanisms, staffing levels or university facilities. There is a flexible approach to site visits: the accreditation of new courses generally includes a panel visit, while re-accreditation of programs may not require a visit. The ASA states that a visit may be coordinated with the accreditation visits made by other professional associations. The period of accreditation is five years and institutions are required to prepare and submit an annual course return. No charges are levied by the association.

Given the current AQF and TEQSA developments, the ASA has found it timely to undertake a review of accreditation processes. The review period will allow time for further revisions to the joint *Statement of knowledge for recordkeeping professionals*, which represents the conceptual foundation for accreditation. No accreditation activities will be undertaken in 2013 and, where an institution's accreditation status has expired, appropriate extensions have been given. The ASA has indicated that it is keen to minimise duplication of quality assurance activities by working with allied professional bodies, to streamline the processes and to introduce strategies for online access to the institution's learning environments. (Lee Amoroso, March 19, 2013, personal communication).

5.3.3 Records and Information Management Professionals Australasia (RIMPA)

RIMPA accredits undergraduate, postgraduate and VET programs, as well as short courses, with two foci for accreditation. Firstly, it undertakes the evaluation of courses which have been developed to meet the statement of professional knowledge: these courses should be either wholly concerned with recordkeeping and information management, or provide evidence that at least 40% of a course can be mapped to the content requirements. Secondly, RIMPA is responsible for the accreditation of courses which cover 'secondary knowledge areas' that are typically broader in scope and generally concerned with "the study of information from its generation to its exploitation, and its transmission

in a variety of forms through a variety of channels” (RIMPA, 2011). These courses are typically in the wider discipline areas of business and management.

The evaluation of courses is based on:

- Academic rigour
- Exposure to current and developing practices in records management
- Use of appropriate study tools
- Inclusion of core *Statement of knowledge for recordkeeping professionals* in the curriculum.
- Generic management and transferable skills, project management
- Exposure to professional practice, eg through practical placements.

The documentation to be submitted should provide:

- A clear outline of the program of study and how it is delivered
- Organisational support for the course
- Evidence of consultation with the profession
- Course statistics, including graduate employment data
- Reports of external examiners
- Details of staffing and resourcing.

Assessors specifically evaluate the following course characteristics:

- The relevance of the course to the archive and information science profession
- The professional involvement and commitment of the teaching team
- The relationship with the parent institution
- The expertise and experience of staff
- The span and quality of courses offered
- The calibre of students as evidenced by assessments and subsequent employment.

(ASA & RIMPA, 2006)

The association has adopted a checklist approach to map the course details to the core accreditation requirements (RIMPA, 2011). Guidance is offered to institutions preparing their accreditation applications. The application is reviewed by a panel of assessors including the CEO and the Chair of the Board of Directors, with a recommendation being put to the full Board of Directors. The period of accreditation is five years and the cost of accreditation is absorbed by RIMPA. In 2012, 11 courses were accredited: eight universities in Australia, two in New Zealand and one in Scotland. VET courses offered by four registered training organisations (RTOs) were also accredited (RIMPA, 2012). There are no mechanisms in place to monitor the education programs that they have accredited (cf ALIA’s Annual Course Return) (Partridge et al, 2011).

5.3.3 Australian Computer Society (ACS)

The Australian Computer Society (ACS)²² is responsible for the accreditation of information technology programs which offer pathways to becoming a Certified Technologist (CT) or a Certified Professional (CP). Accreditation is conducted at the bachelor’s and master’s degree levels in higher education and the diploma and advanced diploma in the VET sector.

²² Australian Computer Society (ACS): www.acs.org.au

The ACS utilises three key resources in its evaluation activities:

- The *ICT Profession Core Body of Knowledge (CBOK)*
 - This is considered a framework on which to base both the depth and breadth of ICT study (ACS, 2008).
- *Skills Framework for the Information Age (SFIA)*
 - SFIA is an international competency skills framework for aligning workforce capabilities with the needs of the organisation (SFIA Foundation, n.d.)
- Seoul Accord Graduate Attributes
 - Bachelor degree accreditation is subject to the Seoul Accord, with professional associations from the UK, the US, Canada, Japan, Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan being signatories (Seoul Accord, 2011).

The process involves both documentation and a two day panel visit. The relevant documentation is submitted using a short online form, with a wiki for the supplementary materials. Efforts were made to reduce the visit to one day, but it was found that the extended visit was more effective and thus more valuable for all stakeholders (Ruth Graham, March 15, 2013, personal communication). The period of accreditation is five years. In the field of software engineering, accreditation activities are conducted jointly with Engineering Australia. As the evaluation criteria are slightly different, two separate reports are produced, but the two bodies align the timing of activities and the logistics for the panel visits. The ACS undertakes about 15 accreditations per year and strives for cost recovery through an accreditation fee of \$7,500 which includes the panel visit. Higher fees apply to private universities and to offshore accreditation activities. TEQSA has held meetings with staff of the ACS and representatives of the Council of Australian Deans of Information Technology (CAUDIT) to emphasise the value the agency places on professional accreditation as a quality assurance mechanism.

5.4 Reciprocal recognition of accredited LIS courses

While there are significant global drivers for internationalisation of professions, it is widely acknowledged that the recognition of foreign academic qualifications is a challenge for all professions. Within the LIS profession, library associations across the world regularly receive requests from employers, as well as from job seekers, about the equivalency of foreign credentials. The different levels of LIS qualifications can cause some consternation in terms of equivalency; in the US and Canada, for example, the ALA only accredits Master level programs, while in Australia ALIA accredits courses at the master's, graduate diploma, bachelor's and diploma levels. CILIP also accredits courses at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. ALA accreditation policy states:

The master's degree from a program accredited by the American Library Association (or from a master's level program in library and information studies accredited or recognized by the appropriate national body of another country) is the appropriate professional degree for librarians.

(ALA, 2013)

The ALA provides a list of countries have been identified as having "formal" accreditation processes, meaning that individuals who have received their LIS degrees from an institution in one of those countries is considered acceptable for employment in the US. The countries include:

- Australia
- New Zealand

- United Kingdom
- Ireland
- Singapore (Nanyang Technological University)
- Germany (Humboldt University, Berlin).

The ALA therefore recognises professional qualifications at the master's level only for graduates of accredited programs in these countries. Accreditation of LIS programs in Canada is undertaken by the ALA, but the Canadian Library Association (CLA) also offers reciprocal recognition for LIS professionals who have completed master's courses in the UK, Australia and New Zealand (CLA, 2011). In return, ALIA recognises ALA and CILIP accredited qualifications (ALIA, 2010c). Assessment of other LIS qualifications is managed by VETASSESS²³ and by ALIA. Consideration is given to both the academic qualification and professional experience to determine the candidate's readiness to work in the Australian library and information sector. Australian LIS professionals who wish to work abroad generally enrol directly into a master's program or upgrade their qualifications to ensure that they can apply for equivalency.

²³ VETASSESS: www.vetassess.com.au

6.0 Conclusion

In the ALIA *State of the nation report* (ALIA, 2010) it was recommended that the association work with library technician educators to review, revise and improve the strategies and processes for library technician course accreditation. In the context of the present review, the recommendation can naturally be extended to include LIS educators in higher education. A workshop was held in mid February 2013, associated with the ALIA Information Online Conference, which provided an opportunity for LIS educators to consider the issues of academic workload in the changing educational environment and the role that course accreditation might play in the future. The workshop participants focused on a number of key questions regarding ALIA's accreditation practice:

- What courses should be accredited by ALIA?
- Who should be directly involved in the accreditation process?
- How can duplication in quality assurance processes be eliminated?

The workshop produced some constructive ideas which can assist ALIA as the association develops to streamline its accreditation practice and processes.

ALIA, like other professional bodies, wishes to ensure that its accreditation processes are clearly defined, transparent and consistent. ALIA has a mature and effective accreditation process in place, but as new pressures and practices are introduced into higher education and VET, it is important that the association monitors the education environment and anticipates the impact of reform. The present review provides the association with the opportunity to examine its current policies and practices in order to consider the options for an improved model of accreditation that cuts the volume of paperwork, decreases the administrative overhead, and significantly reduces the financial costs to both the association and the individual education institutions seeking accreditation. It is hoped that the information and analysis presented in this report will inform Stage 2 of the project by providing an appropriate evidence-base for new practice. It is imperative that ALIA and LIS educators work together to develop a streamlined, practical and cost effective approach to accreditation which ensures that high standards of professional education are maintained, productive dialogue is fostered between LIS educators and the association, and the interest and commitment of ALIA members is increased. The ultimate goals should be to manage professional accreditation in ways that enhance the value of LIS qualifications in the eyes of all stakeholders, enhance the reputation of the academic programs and enhance the reputation of the professional association, and to achieve this within an affordable economic paradigm.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: ALIA's role in education of library and information professionals

Appendix 2: Courses in library and information management

Appendix 3: Library and information sector: core knowledge, skills and attributes

ALIA's role in education of library and information professionals

The phrase 'library and information professionals' refers to those members of the profession who have completed an entry-level qualification in library and information management at either Associate or Library Technician level.

ALIA objects addressed

To promote and improve the services provided by all kinds of library and information agencies.

To ensure the high standard of personnel engaged in information provision and foster their professional interests and aspirations.

Principle

The Australian Library and Information Association is the body which sets and maintains standards for entry into the library and information profession in Australia. It plays a vital role in ensuring that education for the profession produces graduates who have the ability to provide excellent library and information services to benefit the nation and individual clients and who can respond to and meet the ever-changing information needs of a dynamic society.

Statement

The library and information sector in Australia serves the information needs of a democratic, progressive, technologically sophisticated and culturally diverse society. Library and information professionals contribute to the knowledge-base of Australia and the globalised society. Library and information professionals have a responsibility to assist their clients to become information literate so that they can effectively seek and use the information they need.

To fulfil this important role library and information education must equip graduates with:

- the core knowledge, skills and generic attributes to deliver the highest-quality library and information services;
- the skills to promote and defend the ethical values and importance of library and information services to the community;
- an understanding and appreciation of the information and learning needs of clients of library and information services;
- an understanding of the characteristics of the dynamic environment in which they and their clients operate;
- an understanding of the sector and its importance to the nation so they can contribute to the ongoing development and improvement of the profession;
- an appreciation of the historical background which has formed the current information environment;
- an understanding of the importance of research activity within the profession to encourage the expansion and diversification of its knowledge base;
- a commitment to lifelong learning and professional development undertaken in partnership with employers, educators and training providers.

As a standards body, ALIA has a responsibility to ensure the availability of high-quality educational programs both as a basis for professional practice and as a means of ongoing professional development. To this end, ALIA works collaboratively with educators, employers and training providers to promote and encourage continuous improvement in the education of library and information professionals, institutional support for library and information courses and the contribution of practitioner expertise to courses offered at entry-level to the profession and for ongoing professional development.

Courses in library and information management

The phrase 'library and information professionals' refers to those members of the profession who have completed an entry-level qualification in library and information management at either Associate or Library Technician level.

ALIA objects addressed

To promote and improve the services provided by all kinds of library and information agencies.

To ensure the high standard of personnel engaged in information provision and foster their professional interests and aspirations.

Principle

The education of library and information professionals is a key factor in the development of excellence in services provided by libraries and information agencies. Courses educating new professionals for the library and information sector must develop graduates capable of providing a high standard of service to benefit the nation and individual clients living in a culturally diverse community that responds to global social, technological, legislative and economic change.

Statement

Library and information management courses need to be grounded in the principles of the profession so that graduates can understand and apply its theoretical and practical dimensions. Courses need to be flexible and adaptable in order to respond to change which impacts on the delivery of library and information services to clients.

The Australian Library and Information Association works collaboratively with educators and training providers, employers and practitioners to promote the development and continuous improvement of courses in library and information management. Initial education should prepare library and information graduates who can achieve excellence in practice. Through the course accreditation process, the Association will ensure that courses:

- consist of a curriculum that delivers the core knowledge, skills and generic attributes to ensure the highest standard of professional practice;
- are offered in a number of delivery modes and through flexible delivery options across the institutions providing library and information management courses;
- are appropriately resourced by the providing institution in the number and levels of staff qualified to teach and administer the course and in the infrastructure available to support the course;
- have appropriate quality-assurance mechanisms set in place by the providing institution;
- are advised and supported by industry through mechanisms which enable consultation between course providers and practitioners;
- encourage and facilitate teaching staff exchanges into industry and practitioner exchanges to the teaching environment;
- provide workplace experience as an integrated component to link theory to the practice of the profession;
- offer opportunities for students to engage in authentic learning activities [for example, fieldwork, project work and access to resources in libraries and information agencies].

The Library and Information Sector: Core Knowledge, Skills and Attributes

Preamble

The library and information sector has a distinctive area of knowledge and skills which is required for effective professional practice. Library and information specialists need to acquire the relevant disciplinary expertise, demonstrate employment-related skills and be prepared for a challenging and dynamic future in many diverse environments.

Core Knowledge Statement

The library and information specialist must ensure a high standard of library and information practice through education and training, while continuing to evolve and develop with the overall framework of core knowledge, skills, attributes and encompassing the changing nature of the discipline to ensure a flexible, adaptable and innovative profession.

Library and Information Sector Objectives

- Ensure comprehensive professional standards within library and information sector education
- Promote and improve the services within the library and information environment
- Ensure the high standard of personnel engaged in the library and information sector and foster their professional interests and aspirations.

Statement of Intent

The library and information sector in Australia serves the information needs of a democratic, progressive, technologically sophisticated and culturally diverse society. A key focus of the sector is enabling people to connect with the world of information, interacting with information and utilising information in all aspects of their lives. The sector fosters lifelong learning, personal fulfilment, improved decision making, knowledge development, innovation, imagination, creativity and cultural continuity.

People who work in the sector will have specialist industry knowledge and skills as well as employability attributes. The level to which individuals have requisite knowledge, skills and attributes depends on their formal qualifications, work experience, professional development, and the role/s they perform.

The library and information sector (librarians, information specialists and library technicians) require the knowledge through education to have the ability and expertise to deliver library and information services to meet the information needs of their clients and encourage them to acquire the skills necessary to assist them to become information literate so they can effectively seek, locate and use the information they require.

All require sound practical knowledge and skills in order to effectively support the delivery of these library and information services. Experienced library and information specialists provide additional support by supervising staff and assisting in planning, implementing and evaluating services and systems.

The library and information sector is characterised by a diverse workforce that is successful in:

- Promoting and defending the core values of the library and information profession;
- Understanding and responding to cultural, social, information and learning needs of clients/stakeholders and customers;

- Managing the storage, organisation, access, retrieval, dissemination and preservation of information and enabling free access and use of information;
- Developing, delivering and evaluating information facilities, services, sources and products in response to client needs
- Envisioning and planning future directions for the library and information sector;
- Advancing library and information science in its adaptability, flexibility and autonomous application to information services;
- Engaging with clients, community and other industries.

Core knowledge and skills

Knowledge of the broad context of the information environment

Library and information specialists must be able to:

- Understand, analyse and interpret the contexts in which information is originated, described, stored, organised, retrieved, disseminated, modified and used;
- Understand the ethical, legal and policy issues that are relevant to the sector;
- discuss future directions and negotiate alliances for library and information sector development aligned with corporate, social and cultural goals and values.

Information seeking

Library and information specialists must be able to:

- understand and investigate how information is effectively sought and utilised;
- identify and investigate information needs and information behaviour of individuals, community groups, organizations and businesses through creation, collaboration and partnerships;

Information architecture

Library and information specialists must be able to:

- understand the importance of information technology and architecture to determine the structure, design and flows of information;
- analyse information flow and user needs to develop systems and interfaces that adhere to recognized usability and accessibility guidelines.
- work collaboratively with information technology service providers

Information organisation and access

Library and information specialists must be able to:

- enable information access and use through systematic and user-centred description, categorisation, digitization, storage, preservation and retrieval.
- provide and promote free and equitable access to information and client services;
- facilitate the acquisition, licensing or creation of information in a range of media and formats.
- create accurate and standards-driven metadata for enhanced and persistent access to information resources in an online environment

Information services, sources and products

Library and information specialists must be able to:

- design and deliver customised information services and products;
- assess the value and effectiveness of library and information facilities, products and services;
- market library and information services;
- identify and evaluate information services, sources and products to determine their relevance to the information needs of users;
- use research skills to provide appropriate information to clients;
- use information and communicate knowledge;
- deliver information literacy education
- understand the need for information skills in the community;
- facilitate the development of information literacy and the ability to critically evaluate information.
- facilitate the promotion of reading and literacy across all sectors understand the use of online resources, databases and relational databases

Information Management

- forecast, plan, facilitate and evaluate appropriate resource management to library and information services.
- identify ethical and legal aspects and distribution of information manage the environment, physical and digital assets under the control of the library, including collection building, preservation and capacity planning

Generation of knowledge

Library and information specialists must be able to:

- expand knowledge according to the state of research and practice in information behaviour.
- continue lifelong learning through a professional development scheme
- systematically gather and analyse data and disseminate the findings to advance library and information science theory and its application to the provision of information services;
- demonstrate a commitment to the improvement of professional practice through a culture of research, evidence-based information practice and knowledge retention;
- demonstrate effective and appropriate research skills.
- demonstrate effective and appropriate taxonomy and metadata creation and management skills.

Employability skills and attributes

The generic skills and attributes for library and information professionals include:

- effective communication skills;
- professional ethical standards and social responsibility;
- ability to fulfil client needs/customer service
- project management skills;
- critical, reflective, and creative thinking;
- problem-solving skills;
- marketing;
- accounting
- human resource skills
- ability to build partnerships and alliances;
- effective team relationship skills;
- self management skills;
- a commitment to life-long learning;
- relevant information and communications technology and technology application skills;
- appropriate pedagogical information literacy skills.
- general knowledge
- supervisory skills