

Naturopathic Accreditation Standards:

Guidelines for Post-graduate Programs of Study

The Australian Register of Naturopaths and Herbalists (ARONAH) recognises that post-graduate programs of study advance professional naturopathic knowledge and practice. It is further acknowledged that post-graduate naturopathic study has the potential to impact society through knowledge translation and health outcomes in the domains of health care delivery, health and social policy, academia, clinical practice, knowledge creation, health advocacy and community health promotion.

For the purposes of the Naturopathic Accreditation Standards: Guidelines for Post-graduate Programs of Study, a post-graduate program is defined as a naturopathic program delivered at the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) level 9¹ or higher, or its equivalent in other jurisdictions. Masters programs in naturopathy may advance an existing knowledge base in naturopathy (Advanced Naturopathic Standing) or may serve to advance the clinical and theoretic knowledge of professionals in adjacent clinical practice professions (Direct Entry). Both levels of entry into post-graduate naturopathic practice are addressed in these guidelines.

1. Quality Assurance and Legislative Requirements

Only education providers who are registered with the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (or its equivalent) as a university or other higher education provider (including those with designated self-accrediting authority) can receive professional accreditation for their program of study (see Naturopathic Accreditation Standards). Per Domain 3 of the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015*, ARONAH acknowledges that education providers must obtain professional accreditation of their course of study (HESF, Standard 3.1)² to be compliant with the HESF threshold standards for course design.

As the independent regulatory body responsible for assuring the minimum standards of education and practice for naturopathy in Australia and its member jurisdictions, ARONAH affirms its role in determining whether naturopathic programs of study meet professional accreditation standards. Professional accreditation of naturopathic courses includes both undergraduate and post-graduate programs of study.

2. Post-graduate Program Accreditation Threshold Requirements

In order to receive program accreditation, post-graduate naturopathic programs of study (Advanced Naturopathic Standing or Direct Entry programs) must meet two threshold standards:

1. Ensure the quality of the naturopathic profession and assure public safety by meeting all standards and criteria set out in the Naturopathic Accreditation Standards;³ and,
2. Ensure the quality of the naturopathic profession and assure public safety by meeting or exceeding the guidelines for post-graduate naturopathic programs of study outlined herein.

Failure of the education provider to meet the dual threshold standards in an initial application for program accreditation or a renewal application will result in a negative assessment of the post-graduate naturopathic program as ineligible, and a determination of non-compliance with the professional standards required for entry into naturopathic practice (articulated in the Competency Standards for Naturopathic Practitioners⁴, and the Naturopathic Accreditation Standards) in Australia, or its member jurisdictions.

2.1 Naturopathic Accreditation Standards: Post-graduate Programs of Study

Post-graduate naturopathic programs of study are required to meet all standards and criteria set out in the Naturopathic Accreditation Standards (Table 1) and all post-graduate guidelines outlined in sections 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3, where applicable. Additionally, by admitting an applicant into a post-graduate naturopathic program, education providers accept their responsibility to:

1. Prepare students in alignment with the Competency Standards for Naturopathic Practitioners,
2. Graduate safe and effective practitioners capable of working within the broader context of the nation's healthcare system; and,
3. Support the student's knowledge and development in alignment with naturopathic principles, philosophies and theories (see Naturopathic Accreditation Standards).

Specific directions for Advanced Naturopathic Standing and Direct Entry post-graduate naturopathic programs of study is provided in 2.2 and 2.3 of the guidelines.

Standard 1: Safe Practice
Public safety through safe and competent practice is central to program design, implementation and evaluation.
Standard 2: Governance and Quality Assurance
Governance and quality assurance processes foster a sustainable, high-quality education experience for students, enabling them to achieve competency as a naturopathic practitioner.
Standard 3: Program Design, Implementation and Resourcing

The program design, implementation and resourcing enable students to achieve the Competency Standards for Naturopathic Practitioners.
Standard 4: Student Experience
The education provider's approach to recruiting, enrolling, supporting and assessing students is underpinned by the values of transparency, authenticity, equal opportunity and appreciation of social and cultural diversity.
Standard 5: Student Assessment
The program's curriculum incorporates a variety of approaches to assessment that suit the nature of the learning experience and comprehensively measure achievement against the current Competency Standards for Naturopathic Practitioners.

Table 1: Naturopathic Accreditation Standards, 2021

2.2 Guidelines for Post-graduate Advanced Naturopathic Standing Programs

The following criteria must be met before students can be admitted into a post-graduate Advanced Naturopathic Standing program of study.

Prior level of attainment

Evidence of successful completion of a naturopathic clinical health science program at the Australian undergraduate level (AQF 7) or its equivalent is compulsory.

Post-graduate clinical experience

At the time of application, a student admitted into a post-graduate Advanced Naturopathic Standing program must possess at least two (2) years clinical experience in naturopathic clinical practice within the last 5 years and must evidence recency of practice.

Less than two (2) years post-graduate clinical experience in the last 5 years is considered insufficient recency and clinical practice experience to qualify for entry into a post-graduate naturopathic program that is expected to be embedded in practice and expand on clinical expertise and knowledge relevant to advanced reflective practice.

A total of 14 hours of continuing professional development per year can be used to evidence recency of practice requirements.

Professional registration

Enrolled students must be registered with ARONAH.

2.3 Guidelines for Post-graduate Direct Entry Naturopathic Programs

In order to meet the Naturopathic Accreditation Standards and ensure that graduates understand naturopathic principles, philosophies and theories, education provider's delivering direct entry post-graduate programs in naturopathy are expected to ensure that students meet the core knowledge requirements of naturopathic practitioners.

While the Naturopathic Accreditation Standards are not intended to be prescriptive, they do specify the minimum content requirements for naturopathic programs of study. Where foundational knowledge of naturopathic philosophy and principles are not included in post-graduate naturopathic curriculum, the education provider must ensure that students have access to appropriate bridging courses or external learning opportunities (that may include,

but are not limited to, work-integrated learning) to ensure that core naturopathic knowledge requirements are met and to ensure that all graduates understand the fundamental principles of naturopathy as a medical system of whole-person centred care.

Program Entry Requirements

The following criteria must be met before students can be admitted into a Direct Entry post-graduate naturopathic program.

Prior level of attainment

Evidence of successful completion of an approved clinical health science practitioner program at the Australian undergraduate level (AQF 7) or its equivalent is compulsory. Only applicants who have previously been awarded an undergraduate clinical health science qualification or higher in a discipline where health practitioners are trained to treat a breadth of clinical complaints in a primary or community-based clinical care model can be admitted to a post-graduate naturopathy program. Education providers are expected to assess compulsory clinical health science practitioner equivalency prior to issuing a Letter of Offer for enrolment. Approved clinical practice health qualifications determined to meet criteria for admission into a Direct Entry post-graduate program are:

- Clinical Nutrition
- Nursing
- Midwifery
- Medicine
- Chinese Medicine

Post-graduate clinical experience

At the time of application, a student admitted into a Direct Entry post-graduate program in naturopathy must possess at least one (1) year of post-registration clinical experience in their respective discipline within the last 5 years and must evidence recency of practice.

Less than one (1) year of post-registration clinical experience in the last 5 years is considered insufficient recency and clinical practice experience to qualify for direct entry into a post-graduate naturopathic program.

A total of 14 hours of continuing professional development per year can be used to evidence recency of practice requirements.

Professional registration

Enrolled students must be registered with ARONAH or the relevant registration agency for their profession. Past and current professional registration must be without conditions or undertakings.

Glossary of Terms

Accreditation: Quality evaluation of an educational program that is judged against professional accreditation standards to ensure that education leads to professional registration with the self-regulatory body.

Australian Register of Naturopaths and Herbalists: An independent regulatory body to ensure minimum education and practice standards for naturopathy and Western herbal medicine in Australia.

Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF): A qualification earned through completion of a nationally regulated (accredited program) of study certifying satisfactory achievement of AQF aligned learning outcomes.

Clinical Education: The components of the program of study through which students learn, develop and apply clinical knowledge and skills, and professional praxis, such as translational research, reflective practice and clinical leadership.

Clinical Experience: Learning that occurs in a clinical setting with a patient.

Naturopathic Accreditation Standards: A standard used to assess whether a naturopathic program and the education provider delivering the program graduates safe and effective practitioners.

Recency of Practice: Demonstration that practitioners have undertaken sufficient practice to maintain professional naturopathic competence.⁵

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency: National tertiary education quality assurance and regulatory agency.

References

1. Australian Qualifications Framework (2013). Available from <https://www.aqf.edu.org>
2. Tertiary Education Standards and Quality Agency (2015). HESF Domain 3: Teaching. Available from <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/hesf-domain-3>
3. Australian Register of Naturopaths and Herbalists. Naturopathic Accreditation Standards. Available from www.aronah.org
4. Australian Register of Naturopaths and Herbalists. Competency Standards for Naturopathic Practitioners. Available from http://www.aronah.org/wp-content/uploads/ARONAH_Competency-standards_Naturopaths.pdf
5. Chinese Medicine Board of Australia (2021). Recency of Practice. Available from www.chinesemedicineboard.gov.au