



New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects
NZILA ACCREDITATION PROCEDURES 2016

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NEW ZEALAND INSTITUTE
OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

CONTENTS

NZILA ACCREDITATION PROCEDURES 2016

1. OVERVIEW OF ACCREDITATION	2
1.1 Introduction	2
1.2 Overview	2
1.3 Programme Provider Responsibilities	3
1.4 NZILA Responsibilities	3
2.0 NZILA ACCREDITATION STRUCTURES	3
2.1 The NZILA Executive Committee	3
2.2 The Accreditation Panel	3
2.3 Conflict of Interest	5
2.4 Review of panel membership nominations	5
3.0 ANNUAL REPORT	5
4.0 ACCREDITATION	6
4.1 The Accreditation Process	6
4.2 Conditional Accreditation	6
4.3 Appeals	7
4.4 Provisional Accreditation	7
4.5 Variations	8
4.6 Accreditation Fees	8
ATTACHMENT 1: Annual Report Checklist	9
ATTACHMENT 2: The Accreditation Panel Visit Procedures	10
Key Elements	11
Facilities during the visit	11
Student Work	11
Meeting with Staff	12
Meeting with Students	12
Meeting with Graduates	12

NZILA ACCREDITATION PROCEDURES 2016

1.0 OVERVIEW OF ACCREDITATION

1.1 Introduction

This document is to be read in conjunction with the complementary New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects (**NZILA**) Education Policy and Standards. Professional Accreditation of landscape architecture education programmes in New Zealand is a non-government, voluntary system of self-regulation. It is founded on the concept of self-evaluation by the programme provider as a quality assurance process to measure performance and outcomes against stated educational objectives. The role of the NZILA is to provide an independent assessment of that evaluation.

Programmes conducted by New Zealand tertiary institutions outside New Zealand are not automatically accorded the accreditation status of programmes hosted domestically by the tertiary institution. Such programmes will need to demonstrate independent performance measures and outcomes against the stated educational objectives, as well as alignment with International Federation of Landscape Architects (**IFLA**) policies and guidelines including the Guidance Document for Recognition or Accreditation: Professional Education Programmes in Landscape Architecture (2008), and the Charter for Landscape Architectural Education (final draft July 2012).

1.2 Overview

Professional Accreditation is the process of review to evaluate a programme in the light of the educational objectives and the minimum standards and core competencies that are defined in the NZILA Education Policy and Standards.

The NZILA oversees professional accreditation of landscape architecture education programmes in New Zealand in accordance with IFLA guidelines.

The purpose of professional accreditation is to serve the needs of four key stakeholders:

- The community, which is entitled to have confidence in the employment of landscape architects who have adequate knowledge of the theory and practice of landscape architecture;
- The students and graduates who are entitled to assurance that their programme has been independently reviewed and found to meet professional and higher education standards and competencies;
- The tertiary institution for which the process provides a consultative peer review and stimulus to continually improve their educational programmes to meet emerging and future needs;
- The profession which is entitled to have confidence in the level of general and technical knowledge of graduates seeking to engage in the profession of landscape architecture.

NZILA Accreditation is achieved when the NZILA Executive Committee concludes, after review of performance indicators or any other evidence as required, that these objectives either have been or that they will be, substantially met within a defined timeframe.

1.3 Programme Provider Responsibilities

Professional accreditation by NZILA is a voluntary process and, as such, must be initiated by the education provider offering the programme. Any tertiary institution considering the introduction of a new programme in landscape architecture intended for professional accreditation should establish early liaison with NZILA during the programme's development.

It is the responsibility of the programme provider to:

- a. invite NZILA to evaluate the proposed programme or continuing programme for provisional or continuing professional accreditation;
- b. provide NZILA with all necessary documentary evidence to demonstrate that the programme meets its educational objectives and delivers the Education Standards and Professional curriculum standard defined in the Landscape Architecture Education Policy 2016; and
- c. afford NZILA all reasonable physical access to students, staff and facilities required to independently verify the documentary evidence provided.

1.4 NZILA Responsibilities

NZILA will maintain an Education Portfolio within the Executive Committee responsible for responding to requests for provisional or continuing professional accreditation of programmes in landscape architecture. The Education Portfolio's responsibilities will be to:

- a. manage the Accreditation Panel who will be responsive to an education provider in the establishment of a new programme for which accreditation is intended;
- b. manage liaison between the education providers and NZILA Executive;
- c. maintain the Accreditation Panel responsible for regular verification of the self-evaluation documentation provided by the education providers;
- d. receive and act upon the documentation and advice received from the education providers and the Accreditation Panel in regard to the granting, confirmation or withdrawal of professional accreditation of a programme; and
- e. facilitate ongoing liaison and consultation between education providers and NZILA in the interests of advancing education in landscape architecture.

2.0 NZILA ACCREDITATION STRUCTURES

2.1 The NZILA Executive Committee

The NZILA Executive Committee has ultimate responsibility for overseeing the Education and Accreditation Policy implementation.

The NZILA Education Portfolio holder, on behalf of the NZILA Executive Committee, oversees and manages the NZILA Education and Accreditation processes, and liaises with the Accreditation Panel that implements the Policy and carries out the Accreditation Procedures.

2.2 The Accreditation Panel

At least once in the cycle of each five-year accreditation period, an Accreditation Panel visits each programme.

The membership of the panel is to comprise three experienced Registered Landscape Architects.

The membership of the panel should, as far as practicable, reflect the following selection criteria:

- a. have a diverse range of practice experience and collectively have current or past experience in both public and private practice;
- b. at least one member should be involved in a larger practice or public sector department operating across regional boundaries;
- c. ideally one member should have previous experience of evaluating programmes of higher education;
- d. ideally comprise graduates from more than one programme;
- e. have a gender mix; and
- f. comprise practitioners from across New Zealand.

Consistency and continuity of accreditation evaluations is to be ensured by a progressive turnover/replacement of panelists.

The Chair of the Accreditation Panel will provide a direct liaison link between it and the Education Portfolio. This person will be well informed about the contemporary tertiary education environment on a national scale. The Chair will monitor all annual reviews conducted, with the objective of maximising uniformity of evaluation processes and applied performance measures across all accredited programmes.

Before each visit, the Accreditation Panel members review previous Programme Annual Reports and other sources of information to assess actions and issues.

The Accreditation Panel will request clarification and/or further evidence in order to determine the degree to which the programme is meeting the educational objectives of the NZILA Education Policy and Standards.

The process normally takes place over two days and includes:

- A formal review of a representative range of student work. Student work will typically comprise samples of work over each of the years of the programme and across all courses to demonstrate assessment procedures and benchmark standards for the full range of achievement levels (i.e. fail through pass and good to excellent and outstanding grades);
- An inspection of facilities and resources;
- Interviews with staff and students; and
- A meeting with a senior tertiary institute executive such as the Dean or an Assistant Vice-Chancellor to report on the institute support for the programme and to provide an institutional context for the programme.

After the visit the Panel submits a draft report to the provider to enable them to check the information accuracy. Once this has been completed, the panel submits its final report to the Executive Committee. The report to the Committee includes information about, and recommendations in regard to the on-going accreditation status of the programme. The Executive Committee determines whether or not to accept the recommendations of the Accreditation Panel.

This report also informs the NZILA national policy directions and becomes the basis for the education providers programme annual report for the next five years. The Panel's report is compiled using an agreed checklist to achieve national consistency of information.

The Executive Committee may initiate other visits from time to time as required.

2.3 Conflict of Interest

The NZILA's accreditation processes rely heavily on the volunteer time of registered members to serve on the Accreditation Panel as well as a commitment from programme staff to fulfil the NZILA's education and accreditation requirements.

The NZILA Executive Committee relies on the members of the panel to offer independent advice and professional leadership. The panel members are required to have no close ties or alliances with the programme and staff to ensure an objective and open review of the programme.

Any connections with the relevant education provider or other direct or indirect connections that may be viewed as a conflict of interest or hindrance to participation and contributions must be discussed with the Education Portfolio holder to ensure that there is no possible conflict or perception of conflict. It is acknowledged that programmes may rely upon local practitioners to contribute to individual courses. Those practitioners will have varying degrees of direct or indirect involvement with the programme, and so the NZILA acknowledges that these members will approach any roles or responsibilities as part of an accreditation visit in line with their professional responsibilities as set out in the NZILA Code of Conduct.

2.4 Review of panel membership nominations

The education provider shall be provided with the names of those nominated to form the NZILA panel before such membership is confirmed. The education provider shall have the right without prejudice to veto the nomination of former employees without a requirement to justify that decision. A former employee of an education provider may not be a member of the review panel for the education provider if the review covers the period during which the former employee was working for that education provider.

3.0 ANNUAL REPORT

Each year the Head of Programme submits a report to the Executive Committee, via the Executive Officer. It is then provided to both the Education Portfolio holder and the Accreditation Panel. This Annual Report is the central instrument of self-evaluation for professional accreditation purposes.

The Annual Report by the Head of Programme should provide information on the programme using the supplied checklist in Appendix 2. The report should include an indication of future directions and any planned changes to the vision, objectives or content of the programme. The report is submitted to the NZILA Executive Officer by the end of February each year, reporting on the previous 12 months of the programme.

Most education providers will have institutional mechanisms for regular review, monitoring and improvement of the performance of its programmes that will demand some form of internal annual reporting at school, department, faculty or institute-wide level. Wherever practicable these mechanisms should be utilised, rather than duplicated, in reporting annually to the NZILA on accreditation matters.

These reports are confidential to each school, the Executive Committee and the Accreditation Panel, and will not be distributed further, even in summary form, without the express permission of the school concerned.

All programmes will receive notification from the Executive Officer acknowledging receipt of the

annual report.

The Accreditation Panel in turn will provide feedback to the Executive Committee on the Annual Report. Any initiatives suggested by the school will be considered by the Executive Committee, which will advise (in writing) the committee's assessment of the implications of such initiatives on the continued achievement of accreditation requirements.

Failure by an accredited programme to provide an annual report may result in reduction of the programme's accredited status to conditional accreditation (see below) and, if not supplied within three months from the date of such notice, in withdrawal of accreditation.

4.0 ACCREDITATION

4.1 The Accreditation Process

Following the Accreditation Panel visit and receipt of recommendations, the Executive Committee will determine the on-going accreditation status of the programme for the next five years.

The Head of Programme will be informed of this determination via the NZILA President. Accreditation status for the programme will be granted for five years, until the next review by the Accreditation Panel, unless the annual report identifies extraordinary changes to the programme that would entail a review of this status.

The prerogative remains with the Accreditation Panel to raise serious issues or concerns directly with the Educational portfolio holder at any time. Following the notification of such issues the process is as follows:

- The Education portfolio holder would then notify the Executive Committee of the matters raised;
- The Executive committee would request the Chair of the Accreditation Panel to seek more information and make recommendations on any further actions;
- If required, the Executive Committee may initiate an Accreditation Panel visit to seek solutions and/or to make a recommendation on the on-going accreditation of the programme in question.

4.2 Conditional Accreditation

NZILA may issue an 'on notice' warning to a programme due to extraordinary circumstances such as non-compliance with agreed procedures or on-going evidence that indicates that policy objectives are not being met. In such cases the programme will be determined to have Conditional Accreditation with conditions that include a time limit for the stated causes for concern to be substantially addressed and reviewed.

The Executive Committee will require documentation that the stated conditions have been met before reinstating professional accreditation.

Failure to comply with stated conditions may lead to withdrawal of professional accreditation of the programme.

4.3 Appeals

An education provider may appeal the adverse outcome of an accreditation review that results in refusal to accredit or withdrawal of accreditation or the imposition of conditions relating to accreditation.

An appeal must be in writing stating fully the grounds on which the appeal is made and signed by the Dean or Head of Programme of the institution.

Lodgement of an appeal should be made to the Education portfolio holder within four working weeks of formal notification of the Executive committee's resolution on the Accreditation Panel's report and recommendations.

On receipt of an appeal, the Executive Committee will appoint an Appeals Panel with membership chosen under the same requirements that are in place to appoint the Accreditation Panel. The Appeals Panel will elect a Chair and the Education portfolio holder will act as Secretary to the Panel and coordinate its deliberations. The hearing of an appeal will take place at a time and place designated by the Panel Chair within 45 days of the receipt of the documented appeal.

The hearing may be conducted via telephone conference or video link, subject to agreement by all parties. The Chair will preside at the hearing and rule on procedural matters. The Appeals Panel may either affirm the Accreditation Panel's recommendation or recommend that it reconsider that decision, giving reasons in either case. All decisions must be agreed by a majority of the Appeals Panel members.

If the Appeals Panel affirms the recommendations of the Accreditation Panel, there is no further remedy available and the recommendation remains.

If the appeal is upheld, the Appeals Panel will make recommendations to the Executive Committee for further action.

The cost of an appeal is on the same basis as the costs incurred for an accreditation visit. *Refer 4.6 Accreditation Fees*

4.4 Provisional Accreditation

Where a new programme is being planned, or a substantial restructure of an existing programme or programmes is to be undertaken, the School should formally apply for NZILA accreditation. In relation to new programmes, provisional accreditation may be granted, subject to available evidence before the programme commences.

The NZILA requires schools to give ample notice of the implementation of a new programme or a substantial restructure of an existing programme, in order that the Accreditation Panel has time to advise on and respond to the new programme content or the restructured programme. The NZILA takes no responsibility if this development process cannot be completed in time for the programme's introduction or if information is not supplied and thus cannot be responded to in a timely manner.

The Accreditation Panel will make an assessment and recommend to the Executive Committee whether or not the programme should be granted NZILA Accreditation.

4.4.1 Key Submission Stages:

- 1 Notify the Education portfolio holder of the intention to alter the programme or to introduce a new programme – supply proposed timelines;
- 2 If a new programme is being proposed, the Education portfolio holder will assume that the provider has set up an industry group to assist in establishing the broad outline for the proposed programme.
- 3 The tertiary provider would then need to complete a formal submission, a document that

details how the proposed programme meets NZILA education and accreditation criteria.

- 4 The document is submitted to the NZILA, via the Education portfolio holder.
- 5 The document is reviewed by the Accreditation Panel who makes a recommendation to the Executive Committee.

4.4.2 Provider Responsibility

By agreeing to accept the NZILA's professional accreditation for the new programme, the programme/school is agreeing to performance reviews, such as annual reporting required during the accreditation period that allows the NZILA to validate the provisional accreditation given in advance.

While the programme is still being considered for NZILA Accreditation, the School shall not make any statements to students or potential students about the likelihood of the success of the application for NZILA Accreditation, such as that the "NZILA Professional Accreditation is pending".

4.5 Variations

The NZILA Executive Committee reserves the right to vary its decisions on the accreditation of particular programmes based on a case by case assessment of situations that may develop, in particular where such circumstances are not covered by these guidelines and policy documents.

4.6 Accreditation Fees

The institution requesting accreditation will pay for all reasonable travel, accommodation and meals for panel members during their visit. All travel will be at economy class at the lowest available cost. The NZILA provides the Accreditation Panel who donate their time and professional expertise as a service to the profession.

Unless there are other exceptional circumstances, there should be no further charges for the Accreditation Processes.

ATTACHMENT 1: Annual Report Checklist

Key Contents

This list is indicative of the kind of headings that might be appropriate for the annual report. Much of the content will remain constant from year to year unless there are major changes in either the course or the institution providing the programme. The normal annual task is therefore limited to dealing with change in detail from year to year. Provided that the appropriate base data has been established and the Accreditation Panel maintains familiarity with the operation of the programme, a typical Annual Report should not involve more than 10 –15 A4 pages. It may include:

TITLE OF PROGRAMME TO BE ACCREDITED

Course title
Status within the education provider

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (highlighting contemporary changes/issues only)

REPORT FOCUS AND SCOPE

COURSE VISION AND OBJECTIVES

Vision
Objectives

SUMMARY ANALYSIS OF COURSE/STUDENT DATA/PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Enrolments data, course completions and attrition
Student Awards
Graduate Destination Survey outcomes
Teaching Quality (awards, promotions, professional development, student evaluations of teaching)

RESPONSES TO FEEDBACK FROM THE INSTITUTE

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES AND DEVELOPMENTS

Response to Accreditation comments
Current Academic Staff Profile
Staffing issues
Accommodation and Facilities
Relationship with local branch of the NZILA

ACTIONS AND COURSE IMPROVEMENTS

Course improvements, reviews, reorganisation
Introduction of new programmes, professional development courses etc.
Community Service
Staff activities, research, grants, and publications.

CURRENT ACADEMIC CURRICULUM SYNOPSIS

ATTACHMENT 2: The Accreditation Panel Visit Procedures

Key Information

The following information should be provided to the Panel ahead of its visit, unless this has already been included in an Annual Report provided within 6 months of the visit.

- a. a description of the educational institution, its relationship with the landscape architectural programme, and the involvement of staff with the profession and NZILA.
- b. the academic rationale, key objectives for the programme and strategies for achieving these objectives
- c. a statement on measures for obtaining student feedback and consultation on the manner in which the programme is delivered
- d. a statement of the profile of the academic staff, and an outline of teaching, research activities, and community involvement
- e. copies of academic handbooks, departmental plans, annual reports, publications, and summaries of course outlines
- f. an appraisal of the operation of the programme (if already holding accreditation), including reference to any reviews, major changes which have taken place including changes to courses, staffing and resourcing, special features of the programme, provision for audits and bench marking, relationship with other departments and faculties, relationship with other accredited programmes (such as external reviews) and likely future directions
- g. a critical self-evaluation of the programme objectives within the context of the current operation of the programme
- h. details of entry standards, criteria and methods of selection
- i. student enrolments, drop-out rates, failure rates, pass rates and grades
- j. staff/student ratios
- k. an outline of available resources including academic staff, non-academic staff, accommodation and finance

Accreditation Timetable

The institution should provide the Panel Chair with a draft timetable prior to the visit so that a final version can be confirmed at least two weeks in advance of the visit.

There is no prescriptive format but the timetable should allow for:

- Time at the beginning of the visit for the Panel Chair to provide an overview and raise any issues identified in the Annual Report, and for the Head of Programme to provide an overview and comment on any outstanding points including a review and update on the previous Accreditation report. Ideally this will occur during the introductory meeting with the Head of Programme and senior members of staff.
- Time at the end of the visit for de-briefing with Head of Programme and senior staff. This will include a presentation from the Panel Chair of a draft report, either written or verbal. The Panel may reserve the right to hold comment on the final outcomes if it requires further evidence on particular criteria.

The final formal recommendation is made by the Executive Committee on receipt of the Accreditation Panel report, and then is sent to the Head of Programme concerned. The School will have a month to respond to any issues raised.

The Accreditation Visit

Key Elements

- An introductory discussion with the Head of Programme and senior members of staff;
- Inspection of student work;
- Inspection of the school facilities both in use and when not being used, including building accommodation, range of equipment and student resource material;
- Discussion with staff responsible for specific areas of study; where applicable this should include part-time staff;
- Discussion with both full time and part time teaching staff as a group in closed session;
- Discussion with students in closed session;
- Where possible, discussion with recent graduates in closed session;
- A meeting with the Head of the Programme and Faculty Dean or those holding equivalent positions;

Facilities during the visit

The Accreditation Panel will require the use of a lockable meeting room for the duration of their visit.

Student Work

The Panel requires easy and unlimited access over the two days of the visit to a range of student work completed during the previous 12 months (or 24 months for biennial courses). Work can be provided in hard copy or (preferably) in digital form. This will require securing and appropriately storing student work well ahead of the accreditation visit.

The student work is to include:

- Work from all years arranged to demonstrate development by the students over the period of the programme, including all core courses, a range of electives and examples of portfolios from

the final year of the programme that achieved a range of results, including excellent, good, competent and fail grades.

- All course outlines, assignments and assessment criteria (as used by both course leaders and students) to demonstrate the institution's assessment procedures and benchmarking standards.

Given the quantity of material to be reviewed over the two-day visit, the institution should consider including a spreadsheet setting out the various courses throughout the programme and cross-referenced against the NZILA Professional curriculum standard. This enables the Accreditation Panel to review student work in a methodical and efficient manner, by course as well as by year, by identifying which courses address any given subject through the various years of the programme. Mapping of the graduate profile will assist in this regard.

Meeting with Staff

This should include both full time and part time staff and any practicing landscape architects who regularly teach classes. It should be held in a closed session.

Meeting with Students

The panel requires at least one meeting with students with no staff present. This group should be as representative as possible of the different years to allow the panel to obtain a comprehensive overview of the student experience. It may be expedient to ask student association representatives to participate in this session. The students are to be briefed in advance by the programme staff as to the role of the Accreditation Panel's work and the NZILA Accreditation processes.

Meeting with Graduates

If possible, the panel would benefit from a meeting with a range of recent graduates of the programme over the five-year accreditation period. Ideally the mix would include a range of work types such as a sole practice, a small practice, a large practice, and a local or regional authority or central government department.