

Notes from Discussions on ACS Accreditation at Heads and Profs Meeting - Monday, January 20, 2014

Notes by Prof John Roddick

Note that these notes go beyond what was generally agreed by the group as the group did not "ratify" specific points. Rather they imperfectly reflect, and in some cases extend, the perceptions of the group as recorded by John Roddick, Justin Zobel, Michael Johnson and Andrew Woodward.

Do we need accreditation?

- Overwhelmingly yes.
 - Immigration benchmark
 - Quality benchmark (assists with TEQSA arguments)
 - Internal advantages
 - Recruitment advantages
 - Motivates continual improvement
 - Global recognition (good for students)

Accreditation of AQF8 (Honours) and AQF9 (Masters) Programs

- Considerable discussion.
- Big difference between conversion (non-cognate) masters v. extension (cognate) masters.
- Current ACS accreditation requires ALL professional awards to include (as opposed to assume) all aspects of accreditation standard including communication, ethics, etc. Extension (cognate) masters commonly do not include this and thus are currently not being accredited.
- ACS recognises that this is causing some concern and inequity in the system, particularly in respect of the timing of the phasing out of existing accreditations and with respect to international student recruitment.
- **Group urged ACS to extend/reinstate current accreditations of masters awards to 2015 to allow the introduction of the "Specialist Professional" level accreditation as well as the rollout of the AQF.**

Suggestion for a "Specialist Professional" level

- **Group recommended the introduction of a "Specialist Professional" level of accreditation that would capture extension (cognate) masters and perhaps (still to be considered) some 4-year AQF8 (Honours) programs** (although may not include 1-year honours years unless combined to specific undergraduate degrees as a 3+1). The 4-year AQF8 (Honours) category may include BEng(Software)(Hons) degrees.
- Would build on Professional level accreditation and provide a level of recognition for specialist studies. Would also help to put a level of ACS accreditation on a par with that of EA accreditation.
- Such qualifications would normally expect to have, either:
 - As an entry requirement, a degree in computing that, at least in terms of content, would be capable of being accredited under the Seoul Accord. As such will be able to assume some aspects of Professional accreditation. Or

- All aspects of professional accreditation in addition to the specialist study.
- Specialisations would be decided by ACS but may include
 - Computer Science (in consultation with CORE)
 - Information Systems (perhaps in consultation with ACHPIS)
 - Software Engineering (in consultation with EA)
 - Others as required (eg e-health), normally in consultation with a specialist organisation.
- Specialisations would include:
 - At least one year of specialised study demonstrably at AQF8 or above in a specialised area (eg, CS, IS, SWEng...).
 - Specialised study is above "advanced study" outlined in ACS Professional accreditation.
 - Specialised study would mean topics for which substantial prerequisite computing knowledge at years 2 and 3 would normally be required (ie. not reheated undergraduate topics masquerading as postgraduate).
 - Graduates would "be expected to have expert, specialised cognitive and technical skills in computing and be able to independently research and apply established theories to a body of knowledge or practice" (words taken from AQF9 criteria). Ie. there would normally be a substantial research thesis.
 - Courses, and particularly the research thesis, would be expected to be externally benchmarked.
 - For AQF8 4-year honours degrees, the one-year of coursework as well as the research thesis may mean that some of the specialised study may need to be undertaken in year 3. Any such study must be in addition to the advanced study claimed as part of the normal professional accreditation.

