

Learning for a better future

New Zealand Planning Institute
Tertiary Education Policy and Accreditation Procedures

2016





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About TEPAP

This document updates the previous Education Policy and Accreditation Procedures (EPAP; August 2011) and is the outcome of consultations between the New Zealand Planning Institute (NZPI) and its university partners in late 2015 and early 2016. The universities involved in that dialogue were Auckland, Lincoln, Massey, Otago and Waikato.

The newly titled 'Tertiary Education Policy and Accreditation Procedures' (TEPAP) of the NZPI express a set of expectations, protocols and guidelines for quality assurance in the professional education of planners.

TEPAP reflects both a collaborative and an enabling framework for accreditation that is aligned with the NZPI's strategic vision, is outcomes-focused and encourages ongoing dialogue between the NZPI and its university partners. The revised TEPAP is based on the recognition that advancing and renewing a robust, reputable and highly regarded planning profession, will require a constructive and responsive partnership between the NZPI and universities.

TEPAP comprises three sections:

- Section 1 provides a contextual statement on planning as a profession and the role of tertiary education.
- Section 2 records the major substantive elements of the accreditation policy.
- Section 3 details procedural and logistical aspects.

TEPAP represents a change in the NZPI's approach to the accreditation of universities in that it is more permissive and outcomes-focused than the previous EPAP, placing greater responsibility on the universities to substantiate the nature and excellence of their teaching and learning programmes.

Section 1

Context of Planning, the Progression and Tertiary Planning Education

1.1 Planning as a Profession

The NZPI recognises that planning is a diverse future-orientated discipline which addresses the processes and mechanisms through which built and natural environments are produced, managed and transformed in the interests of the economic, social, cultural and environmental aspirations of communities. As a discipline, planning is shaped by and responds to environmental and cultural values, economic circumstances, technological, political and social imperatives, institutional arrangements, and society's ongoing evaluation of resources and the environment in the broadest sense.

1.2 The Professional Planner

A planner brings professional expertise and knowledge to the development and implementation of policy in the interests of productive, liveable and sustainable environments. Planners support communities and provide leadership in making informed choices about the consequences of human actions and in bridging the gap between the present and the future. Planners must consider and balance a range of strategic, policy, technical, legal, administrative, community and environmental factors in their contributions to informed decision-making.

Planners are employed in diverse public and private roles. They use their knowledge and experience in various institutional and community settings to provide leadership, undertake research, solve problems, evaluate alternatives and outcomes, manage change, and envision, advise on and enact desirable future directions.

In applying their expertise, planners must be aware of and responsive to cultural, social, economic, environmental, ethical and political values. In New Zealand, these include the bicultural mandate for planning, including the partnership relationships established by the Treaty of Waitangi/te Tiriti o Waitangi, and New Zealand's increasingly multicultural society.

A key attribute of a planner is the ability to work across disciplinary and institutional boundaries and to integrate knowledge from a range of disciplines within the distinctive framework of the discipline of planning.

A professional planner is someone who has gained a professional qualification through tertiary study, continues to learn post-qualification, undertakes continuing professional development, is a member or is working towards becoming a member of the NZPI, contributes to the planning profession, and is committed to upholding the principles and ethical practices of the planning profession.

Section 1 continued

1.3 The Role of the NZPI

The NZPI is committed to the following vision, purpose, values and focus:

Vision:

- *Planning is essential to achieving a better New Zealand*

Purpose:

- *Driving excellence*
- *Championing planners and the profession*
- *Supporting planners to create a better New Zealand*

Values:

- *Professional*
- *Partnerships*
- *Stewardship*
- *Advocacy*

Focus:

- *Ensure that the planning profession is positive, respected and relevant*
- *Improve the quality of planning practice*
- *Empower our members to act as champions of the profession*
- *Optimise the value of our offering*

The NZPI primarily ensures quality in planning education through the process of the accreditation of university planning programmes. This role is built on mutual recognition of the need to ensure the maintenance of high standards in planning education and to ensure that graduates are effective and ethical practitioners, able to make innovative, sustained and leadership contributions to the planning profession.

Universities offering planning education are partners with the NZPI in the accreditation process. Accreditation is a means by which planning education can maintain the highest professional and intellectual standards. It is a process that offers an opportunity for planning

academics and professionals to engage across current planning issues, the role of the profession and evolving trends in both planning education and planning practice.

The NZPI assists in promoting planning as a career choice for those entering tertiary education and ensures that future students are directed to accredited degrees that meet the standards and expectations. The role of the NZPI includes the following:

- Maintenance of high standards through robust accreditation procedures.
- Provision of educational awards.
- Working with universities to promote careers in planning.
- Advocating for the highest standards of tertiary education with universities.
- Working with universities to support students both during their courses and in their transition to professional roles.

1.4 Objectives of Planning Education

Planning education equips students to shape the future using critical and creative thinking skills and provides a deep understanding of the complex forces that shape built and natural environments at all spatial scales – from the local to the global.

The objectives of planning education include:

- Generate understandings of planning issues from applied, technical, conceptual and global perspectives.
- Produce competent new planners able to assume responsible roles in a dynamic professional working environment.
- Equip graduates to work both in New Zealand's distinctive context and globally.
- Encourage critical and creative planners who are adaptable, articulate, independent, flexible, reflective and future leaders.

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- Attract and support high-quality students from a diversity of cultural and educational backgrounds.
- Encourage a sensitivity and commitment to working in multicultural, multidisciplinary and multiethnic contexts.
- Promote an understanding of the Treaty of Waitangi/te Tiriti o Waitangi and how its settlements may be implemented through the planning system.
- Promote an understanding of mātauranga Māori.
- Support research and the pursuit of planning knowledge.
- Develop understanding of planning in action in diverse contexts and the nature of ethical practice.
- Facilitate commitment to professional planning values and to lifelong learning.

1.5 The Context of Planning Education

Formal planning education is provided at two distinct levels in tertiary institutions: through accredited undergraduate and postgraduate degrees.

The funding of academic programmes and imperatives for academic research create challenges for universities in staffing, resourcing and delivering planning programmes.

Through the accreditation process, the NZPI adds an additional layer of validation intended to add value through independent quality assurance.

On top of institutional complexity sits a context for planning practice and education that is increasingly affected by the greater global context. Planning has become an

international profession in which planners are flexible in their professional mobility and deliver services in a range of contexts that represents greater diversity than exists in any one national context.

There is a need to educate planners to function in this global market and in distinctly different cultural contexts. Some students may choose to earn a New Zealand qualification in planning, even though they may never practise as a planner in New Zealand.

1.6 Education Strategy

A positive partnership with the universities is vital in promoting the aims of the NZPI around planning education. The NZPI will maintain regular contact with the universities between accreditation visits. It is anticipated that an annual meeting with all university partners will occur; and at least one meeting per annum with each university and the NZPI CEO and a Board member, to discuss any matters arising.

Planning education involves a spectrum of learning opportunities, ranging from tertiary education to continuing professional development. The NZPI also plays a role in delivering education through its Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme delivered to planning practitioners.

Once a student has completed a formal planning qualification, the responsibility for ongoing education transitions from the student and university to the practitioner and employer. The NZPI seeks to provide courses on current issues that are highly relevant to the planning profession and meet the continuing training needs of the planning practitioner.

Section 2

Tertiary Education Policy

2.1 Learning Outcomes in Planning

The NZPI acknowledges that an effective planning programme produces graduates who are creative, good problem-solvers, solution-focused, and confident individuals who can function and thrive in a rapidly changing and dynamic environment. Planning graduates can work well independently and in teams, and function effectively in multidisciplinary circumstances and sensitively in a range of cultural contexts. Graduates are able to apply their skills in a variety of planning settings and to a range of planning processes. They are able to contribute to the profession in taking planning forward to address the challenging demands of a changing global environment.

Programmes can offer students opportunities to study a variety of planning electives as well as diverse non-planning areas as part of their overall study programme. The requirements of TEPAP are that planning content dominates and that universities can demonstrate that all combinations of core courses and elective courses satisfactorily address the requirements for a professional standard of planning education with respect to desired content and outcomes.

The NZPI's overall expectation is the sustainable production of employable and high-quality graduates ready and able to take their place in the professional ranks.

2.2 Content of Planning Programmes

To appropriately contribute to the knowledge of planning graduates, accredited planning programmes must be able to demonstrate that they satisfactorily address the following breadth of content:

- a) *Planning Foundations:* thematic courses in planning, including philosophy, policy, history, values, ethics and theory; and critical reflection to provide students with an overview of the nature and purpose of planning; planning history; contemporary debates and trends; planning theory; and planning at different spatial scales.
- b) *Planning Context:* the context for planning includes knowledge of physical, economic, social and governance processes affecting the natural and built environments; understanding the social, cultural, environmental and economic consequences of management and change in the built and natural environment; and understanding the complexities of interactions between people and their environments and the economic and other drivers of development processes.
- c) *Planning Methods:* for analysing and managing the built and natural environment through techniques and tools for environmental evaluation, impact assessment and urban design; policy development and analysis; planning and monitoring systems; principles of sustainability; and planning for a multiethnic, multicultural society and social equity.

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- d) *Planning Practice*: planning processes and planning practice including the application of the principles of plan making; policy development and implementation, review and evaluation; goal-setting; strategic planning; and planning tools and instruments.
 - e) *Planning Law*: the legal context for planning, including an understanding of government organisational and institutional structures; planning, resource and environmental legislation; related legislation and case law and associated areas.
 - f) *Cultural and Social Aspects of Planning*: cultural aspects of planning must recognise New Zealand's bicultural mandate for planning, including the partnership relationships established by the Treaty of Waitangi/te Tiriti o Waitangi, and New Zealand's increasingly multicultural society as a context for planning and its implications for planning practice; resource and environmental law and treaties; plan development; and management of resources.
 - g) *Specialisations*: specialist fields of knowledge enhance opportunities for planning graduates to develop a particular field of expertise.
 - a) *Critical and strategic thinking*.
 - b) Problem scoping: definition, analysis and resolution.
 - c) *Data handling*: collection, description, synthesis and documentation.
 - d) *Data analysis*: evaluation, monitoring, assessment, spatial and design analysis, geographical information systems, quantitative and qualitative approaches.
 - e) *Plan making and implementation*: plan preparation, reviewing plan effectiveness, policy analysis; risk assessment.
 - f) *Development process*: preparing and assessing resource consents.
 - g) *Contextual understanding*: environmental and sustainability issues, socioeconomic and equity issues; identification of cultural and community values.
 - h) *Bicultural understanding*: mātauranga Māori and te reo Māori.
 - i) *Consultation techniques*: negotiation, mediation and conflict resolution.
 - j) *Communication techniques*: written, oral, graphic, visual and presentation.
 - k) *Workforce context*: working effectively in individual, teamwork and leadership roles.
 - l) *Ethics*: in research and practice; understanding of professional roles and responsibilities.

2.3 Outcomes

University planning programmes prepare students for planning practice by developing core generic competencies. Universities need to be able to demonstrate how their curricula overall and their individual courses, contribute to the development of core competencies in their graduates, including:

Universities need to be able to demonstrate how the course sequence and content is designed to build cumulatively each student's knowledge and skills in planning and planning-related specialisations.

Universities are also encouraged to include practical work experience and interaction with professional planners as part of planning education and to encourage students to become members of the NZPI.

Section 2 continued

2.4 Duration of Planning Degrees

In a bid to acknowledge the diversity of our university partners, their focus and resources, the NZPI has established the following criteria for the accreditation of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

Whilst they can be structured as universities see fit, undergraduate degrees shall be no less than four years of full-time study, or its part-time equivalent, and culminate in the award of a Bachelor's degree or Bachelor's degree with honours.

Postgraduate degrees will culminate in the award of a Master's degree with no less than two years of full-time study, or its part-time equivalent, for graduates with undergraduate degrees in fields other than planning.

Accredited planning degrees shall culminate in the award of a single, stand-alone planning qualification.

The NZPI will not accept for accreditation:

- a) Any qualification that is based on the completion of more than one component, such as a three-year Bachelor's degree and an additional postgraduate qualification.
- b) Any qualification that culminates in the award of a degree where optional elective courses or courses taken after graduation are required to fulfil NZPI accreditation requirements (e.g. 'top-up' papers).
- c) Any qualification where students may be awarded a non-accredited version of essentially the same degree with the same name or title.

2.5 Specialisation

Specialisation as part of an accredited degree is encouraged but does not serve as a required component of planning education. The NZPI recognises that through university policies, their regional settings and the expertise of staff, different planning programmes will have particular areas of specialisation.

Universities may concentrate on one or more specialist fields of study appropriate to their overall academic mission and context, e.g. environmental planning, urban and rural planning, urban design, social planning, and Māori planning. The expectation in the accreditation process is that universities will demonstrate the complementarity of the requisite core education in planning and a body of specialised knowledge.

2.6 Conjoined Degrees

The NZPI supports in principle the possibility of conjoined degrees and recognises the interdisciplinary and professional advantages that may be conferred.

However the content and learning outcomes expected in a standard professional planning must not be compromised. If the planning content of the degree is below the threshold of substance and quality required, then the University will need to provide additional instruction to ensure that the desired standards are reached.

Conjoined degrees will normally require the joint approval of the NZPI and the other professional organisation involved (e.g. NZIA, NZILA).

2.7 Naming of Planning Degrees

Degrees accredited by the NZPI must include the term 'planning' in the name of the degree as a professional recognition strategy.

Conversely, and given the resources expended in the quality assurance of accredited degrees, the NZPI discourages the use of the term 'planning' in any degree which is not accredited. Where a university chooses to follow this course of action, the non-accredited status of the degree will need to be prominently displayed for students, employers and the wider community.

The NZPI may consider withholding accreditation from programmes where there is potential for confusion between accredited and non-accredited degrees as a result of naming.

2.8 Planning Programme Leadership and Instruction

It is in the interests of our university partners, the NZPI and the planning profession that accredited undergraduate and postgraduate degrees be taught by qualified and capable teaching staff.

The NZPI requires that the director, head or coordinator of the planning programme will be a full-time academic who is professionally and academically qualified with experience in planning education and is an NZPI member, or member of an associated overseas planning institute. Where NZPI membership has not been obtained that person will need to

demonstrate he or she is actively committed and working towards achieving full membership.

The majority of core or compulsory courses in any planning degree will be taught by academics or practitioners who have achieved professional recognition in planning (membership of the NZPI; or membership of an equivalent overseas planning institute and are actively committed and working towards achieving full membership).

Notwithstanding the above, all courses in accredited undergraduate and postgraduate planning degrees shall, in all cases, be taught by qualified and experienced academics and practitioners as recognised by conventional university standards (usually those holding an appropriate postgraduate degree).

Whilst it is recognised that there will be variation in the focus of different programmes, it is expected that all programmes will meet the indicators of quality in terms of content (2.2) and outcomes (2.3). Also valued will be demonstrable excellence in teaching and a commitment to innovation in teaching methods.

The NZPI recognises the value of diversity within the teaching staff to provide sufficient breadth of planning perspectives to ensure that planning graduates can engage in a range of practice areas, develop critical thinking and understand a variety of planning contexts.

Section 2 continued

2.9 Programme Resources and Measures of Quality

It shall be demonstrated that planning programmes for which accreditation is sought have an adequate range and depth of educational resources and processes to support the programme.

It is expected these will include:

- Appropriate teaching, studio and study space.
- Adequate resources and budget for all teaching needs, including field trips.
- An adequate range of infrastructure and institutional support to service computing needs and research programmes.
- Adequate building accommodation appropriate for the needs of the programme.
- Access for both students and staff to the required range of teaching, research and resource materials.

- An active research environment, supported by the University, where academics are engaged in theoretical, applied and policy research and students are encouraged to develop research skills.
- Demonstration of ongoing quality assurance processes at the University and/or programme level.
- Commitment to supporting and enhancing the profile of planning in the community, schools and other institutions as appropriate.
- Encouraging student membership of the NZPI.

It is recommended that all programmes have an advisory committee in a form that suits the particular programme. Membership of the advisory committee shall as a minimum include an NZPI representative along with representatives from the local professional community, and have a chairperson of suitable professional and community stature who is not directly connected to the teaching programme.

Section 3

Accreditation Procedures

3.1 The Procedures

Accreditation procedures are provided to ensure that accreditation, including the site visit, follows an orderly process for both the University and the NZPI Accreditation Committee.

3.2 Initiating the Accreditation Process

- a) Universities are encouraged to communicate with the NZPI as they develop new or substantially revised planning degrees.
- b) A university preparing to offer a new or substantially modified planning programme, including a new degree at a university with an existing accredited planning programme, shall notify the NZPI at least one year in advance that a proposed course will require an accreditation review. Additionally, the University shall notify the NZPI as soon as possible after seeking approval for a new degree from the relevant tertiary education authorities.
- c) Accreditation of programmes that are being re-accredited will normally take place five years after the previous accreditation visit. The NZPI and the University will schedule the accreditation visit several months in advance as the University prepares its application for accreditation.

3.3 The Timing of Accreditation

Accreditation of a new planning programme shall take place no earlier than six months after the University submits to the NZPI a formal proposal for a new planning programme. Provisional accreditation will normally be granted to a new planning programme that meets the requirements of Section 2.

3.4 The Accreditation Committee

The Accreditation Committee shall normally comprise four members:

- a) A senior and experienced planning academic who has not been a staff member of any present planning programme in New Zealand during the past ten years. This person will chair the Committee and normally will be recruited from overseas, usually Australia, and will be an appropriately qualified member of the planning institute of that country.
- b) Two full members of NZPI nominated by the NZPI Board. These will normally be experienced practitioners with complementary interests drawn from the public or private sector.
- c) A person experienced in and able to evaluate the tangata whenua aspects of the programme.

Section 3 continued

Additional full members of the NZPI and/or tangata whenua representatives may be selected as ex-officio members of the Committee to provide technical support and oversight, historical perspective, or substitutions for regular Committee members.

The Accreditation Committee will normally serve for five years or one full cycle of accreditation visits nationally. As far as possible, membership of the Accreditation Committee will be maintained for all accreditation visits in this cycle, but if necessary, members may be replaced.

The Accreditation Committee reports directly to the NZPI Board.

Members of the Accreditation Committee may be invited by the Board to meet informally with a university between accreditations, if considered appropriate.

3.5 Contents of the Application

The application documentation for accreditation shall include:

- a) A description of the educational institution, including a brief history of the programme, the structure and resources of the academic unit in planning, and a discussion on the academic governance of the planning programme and its relationship to other academic programmes and units; as well as the Advisory Committee and any student committees.
- b) A statement on the overall vision and specific goals for planning education, including any specialisations or areas of professional focus, staff (including practitioner) input, areas of research, and academic excellence.

- c) Details of the degree(s) to be accredited, including course structure, sequence and content. The proposal must address how the degree and course content will meet the requirements outlined in Section 2, in particular (a) content of planning programmes and (b) outcomes of education.
- d) A description of the space, equipment and resources available to students and staff.
- e) Reference to any major reviews or changes that have taken place, special features of the programme, provision for audits and benchmarking, relationships with other accredited programmes (such as external reviews), and likely future directions.
- f) Identification of progress towards meeting the recommendations of the last accreditation review (if applicable).
- g) Details of full-time academic staff, with brief CVs.
- h) An outline of teaching and research activities, and community involvement including any involvement of staff with the profession and the NZPI.
- i) Summary details on all staff teaching the courses, including part-time, sessional and adjunct staff.
- j) Details of student enrolments, including the number of degree-seeking students enrolled in each year of the programme and the number of annual graduates.
- k) Appropriate information detailing student feedback on learning and teaching.
- l) Evidence of graduate satisfaction, employment and contributions to the profession and community.

Supporting documentation in the form of copies of academic handbooks, brochures, departmental plans, annual reports, publications, and summaries of course outlines, etc., can also be made available.

3.6 Submission and Review of the Application

Existing programmes being re-accredited shall normally have an application for accreditation submitted to the NZPI at least one month prior to the accreditation site visit. It is good practice to send a draft of this report to the head or director of the programme for comment in advance of finalisation.

New programmes and existing programmes with conditional accreditation must have applications for accreditation submitted at least four full weeks prior to a meeting of the NZPI Board.

The NZPI Board will conduct a preliminary review of the application to determine whether the programme should proceed to a full review by the Accreditation Committee. If the application is rejected, the NZPI Board shall identify deficiencies in the programme that must be addressed before the application can proceed.

When finalised, applications will be sent or made available electronically to all Committee members in advance of the visit. Hard copies of the report shall be available at the visit. Additional and detailed supporting documentation for the Committee can be made available in hard copy or electronic formats.

3.7 The Accreditation Visit

The NZPI will cover all travel costs for an Accreditation Committee visit. It is expected that universities shall bear the balance of all other costs, including local accommodations of suitable quality and meals for the Committee members.

Re-accreditation reviews for one or more degrees will normally be of two days' duration. Additional time may be required if more than two planning programmes are being evaluated. Shorter visits for provisional and interim accreditation, if needed, involving the full Committee or nominated members can be negotiated with the NZPI as particular circumstances present themselves.

The NZPI will brief the Committee members prior to their visit on any issues concerning the degree that is to be accredited, including issues that have arisen since the last accreditation visit.

The leader of the planning programme will draft a schedule for the visit in consultation with the Chair of the Committee. This schedule should include periods in which the Accreditation Committee will be able to discuss aspects of the accreditation assessment as a group.

The Accreditation Committee will review programme and course material made available during the site visit, such as

- University documentation providing background to academic and research policies.
- Complete course syllabi and outlines with learning objectives, course assignments and reading for all planning courses.
- Examples of student work.

Section 3 continued

During the visit, Committee members will be expected to meet a range of stakeholders, including:

- Staff members (full-time and part-time).
- Senior academics within the main administrative unit housing the planning programme (such as Heads of School and Deans).
- A senior representative of the University (e.g. VC, DVC, PVC).
- Current students.
- Recent graduates.
- Members of the Advisory Committee.
- Employers of graduates.

3.8 The Accreditation Report

The Accreditation Committee will produce a report within four weeks of the visit. The report of the Committee may include recommendations for full accreditation or conditional accreditation. Changes to existing and proposed degrees may be recommended. Full accreditation shall not be recommended

for new planning programmes, as there will be no history of prior student enrolment or graduation.

The report will be formally referred to the University for clarification of any matters and for any comments university staff may wish to make.

The report and comments will then be presented to the NZPI Board for consideration. The Board will consider the report of the Accreditation Committee and its recommendations as well as the comments from the University being reviewed.

The Board may grant full or conditional accreditation to a programme, recommend changes to a programme, or withhold accreditation.

In instances where accreditation has been withheld, the Board will provide a statement of its reasons and may invite the University to respond. Further consultation may be initiated by the University and the NZPI Board.

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NZPI Education Partners

