ACPET Guidance
Statement

This statement provides guidance for non-university higher education providers on conferring the title of Professor or Associate Professor.

1. Background

The Australian university sector has long held the view that it had exclusivity over conferring the title professor (and its many variants) on academic staff.

In order to clarify the regulator’s view on this notion of exclusivity, ACPET member Melbourne Institute of Technology wrote to the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) seeking guidance on use of the term professor outside the university sector. In response to this enquiry, and in order to develop an informed position on this question, the VRQA commissioned the Centre for the Study of Higher Education at Melbourne University to produce a paper outlining the current policies, conventions and practices among Australian higher education institutions when using the title professor.

The paper recommended, among other things, that for the purposes of understanding and clarity that the non self-accrediting sector considers reaching a policy decision covering the use of the title professor within non-university higher education providers.

As a sign of ACPET’s ongoing commitment to leadership and quality in the education industry this guidance statement has been developed under the auspices of ACPET’s Higher Education Committee and subsequently endorsed by the National Board in response to that recommendation.

2. Overview

This statement provides guidance for non-university higher education providers on developing a policy to confer the title of Professor or Associate Professor upon a member of academic staff. It is not as and of itself a policy document. Higher education providers should design their own policy and procedure within their own quality assurance framework to guide their particular institution with regards to the rules and processes that govern the conferring of academic titles within their own particular institution. Under the guidance of the institution’s governing body and Academic Board a detailed procedure should be developed to document the process through which an academic title is conferred. Such a process would normally include the form that applications from academic staff members should take, the process by which an application is assessed (it is highly recommended to involve academics independent of the institution), and how an academic title is withdrawn.

Conferring of academic titles should be administered by the institution’s Academic Board (or equivalent) and endorsed by the institution’s governing body.

Professors and Associate Professors are expected to actively engage in scholarship and provide appropriate leadership for both staff and students in their disciplines.

2 As listed in the International Association of Universities Handbook of Universities.
3 An eminent person can be defined as a person who is recognized beyond the norm for others in their specific field of study and who can demonstrate with evidence that they have advanced their field of study through an extensive publishing record in peer reviewed journals and conferences.
4 As listed in the International Association of Universities Handbook of Universities.
3. Professor or Associate Professor

3.1 The Academic Board in consultation with the institution’s governing body may appoint to academic staff and confer the title of Professor or Associate Professor upon an academic staff member who is:

- Prior to accepting the appointment, a Professor or an Associate Professor at another Australian or overseas recognised higher education provider that is engaged in teaching and/or research activities closely related to a particular academic area of the institution; or
- A person of eminence in a particular academic field; with demonstrated continuing involvement in scholarship; or
- A visiting Professor or Associate Professor from Australian or overseas recognised higher education provider for the duration of their stay.

3.2 The position of Professor or Associate Professor may be:

- A paid or honorary position; or
- Sponsored by an external funding body.

3.3 A Professor or Associate Professor shall hold office on such conditions and perform such duties as the institution’s Academic Board may determine in consultation with the governing body.

3.4 An initial appointment as a Professor or Associate Professor shall be for any period as determined by the Academic Board in consultation with the governing body and may be re-appointed for a further period as determined by the Academic Board in consultation with the governing body.

3.5 The title of Professor or Associate Professor will lapse if the person leaves the employment of the institution but may be conferred by the person’s new institution in accordance with that institution’s policy.

4. Adjunct Professor and Adjunct Associate Professor

4.1 An Adjunct Professor or Adjunct Associate Professor may be appointed by an institution’s Academic Board, after undertaking a review of that person’s employment history, academic achievements and credentials and overall contribution to their field of study, in consultation with the governing body if that person:

- Is not employed as salaried member of staff of the institution for the term of the proposed appointment;
- Is capable of furthering the reputation of the institution through appropriate conduct and performance

4.2 The appointment shall be for any period as determined by the Academic Board in consultation with the governing body.

4.3 An Adjunct Professor or Adjunct Associate Professor shall perform such duties as the Academic Board may determine in consultation with the governing body.