



ALIA Statement of support for the role of Course Coordinator in Vocational Education and Training

Background

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) is the professional body for the library and information sectors accrediting courses at higher education and vocational education levels. Over the last 12 months, ALIA accreditation has applied to the Diploma of Library and Information Services in 15 TAFEs and one private registered training organisation.

When accrediting courses ALIA reviews the course content in relation to the Association's core knowledge, skills and attributes; its alignment with the appropriate AQF level (for higher education); and the industry training package (in the case of the Diploma). Significant emphasis is placed on the quality and capacity of the staff delivering ALIA accredited courses, not only in their teaching roles, but also regarding their research outputs (for higher education) and the administrative support available. Emphasis is also placed on the student experience and student feedback on the course.

The issue

It has been a noticeable trend over the last five years, that TAFEs have been reducing their investment in course coordinators (the administrative support role) and expecting lecturers to pick up some or all of these tasks, in addition to their teaching role. At the very least, this has a negative effect on the student experience. At worst, it has serious implications for the capacity of lecturers in terms of delivering the course and ensuring that students graduate with a full understanding of the subjects they have taken. This has the potential to devalue the course and to damage the reputation of the TAFE institution and ALIA as the accrediting body.

Investigation

In response to these concerns, ALIA conducted a survey of course coordinators in April 2019. The questions and results are provided as Appendix 1. In summary, responses confirmed the issues identified: lecturers doubling up as course coordinators; course coordinators overloaded with administrative tasks and without the time in their paid working hours to complete the full requirements of the role.



Response

Having identified and confirmed the issue, ALIA's accreditation content will be adjusted to pay greater attention to the role of course coordinator.

In the next round of TAFE accreditations, due at the end of 2020, ALIA will be seeking assurance that administrative support is adequately funded and supported by the institution. This will be a mandatory requirement for accreditation.

ALIA will also be raising the issue through Professions Australia, to alert other accrediting bodies to the results of this investigation and the possible relevance to other subject areas.

For more information

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APPENDIX 1

Course coordinators in Vocational Education and Training July 2019

The Australian Library and Information Association has been concerned for some time about the lack of consistency concerning the role, duties and hours assigned to the role of course coordinators who deliver of the ALIA accredited Diploma of Library and Information Services course in TAFE colleges around Australia.

In April 2019 all course coordinators of the ALIA accredited Diploma of Library and Information Services were surveyed about their role. There were ten email and phone responses from a possible fourteen respondents.

Does anyone else assist you with the role of course coordinator?

Seven out of ten respondents do this job by themselves. The other three respondents receive some additional administrative support.

What do course coordinators do?

Course coordinators perform a wide range of duties/roles, including;

- Talking to prospective students
- Information sessions
- Recognition of prior learning
- Supporting current students
- Assisting with industry placements
- Course mapping and administration
- Quality and compliance
- Validation and moderation
- Vocational and industry
- Educational leadership – team and program leadership, mentoring and managing and developing staff
- Course administration including course completion
- Learning management system – putting up courses, monitoring, updating
- Industry consultation, organising and running course advisory meetings
- Orientation and induction for new students and staff
- Teaching and assessment
- Timetabling and allocation of teaching staff
- First contact for complaints or concerns
- Unit and course reviews
- Budgeting
- Professional development and research
- Training plans



How many hours a week do you have to perform the role of course coordinator?

Respondents either had some time allowed for the role of course coordinator, or more typically, for some specific parts of the role, for example, allocated time for recognition of prior learning or for elearning (looking after course units on the learning management system). Other course coordinators were given allocated time to look after industry placements. Another respondent received time to liaise with a central area to create resources.

How many hours a week does the course coordinator role realistically take?

Time taken to perform the role of course coordinator varied but was **always** more than any allocated time. For example, one respondent was allocated nine hours a week for the role, but spent 15-20 hours; another allocated three hours, yet stated the role took 10-12 hours.

Time also varied according to the time of semester with different roles being busier at different times. For example, at the end of semester, more time was spent on student support, enquiries and assessment and results.

Any other comments on the role that you undertake as course coordinator?

- The role of course coordinator is varied and interesting.
- The role always takes more time than allotted.
- The current course coordinator is not a librarian but a business teacher, so library teachers have less input but provide greater expertise in handling complex enquiries.
- Jobs and titles are being reassigned but the role remains an important one.

Issues

Students often enter the Diploma of Library and Information Services with complex queries around previous studies and work experience, so recognition of prior learning and the nature of enquiries can be time consuming.

The course coordinator has to be across both processes and procedures of specific courses and institutional processes.

Pressure to move all enquiries through a general online student portal can result in inaccurate or brief information and advice.



Conclusion

The impression gained from responses to our survey was that course coordinators were overloaded with work and undervalued for the contribution they make.

ALIA does not support removing the role of course coordinator. As subject specialists, course coordinators are best situated to provide accurate course advice and assist in retaining and developing students.

ALIA does support a review of the demands on course coordinators and recommends that TAFE institutions aim to fully resource the role in future.

Course coordinators can greatly assist in the positive delivery of courses, and in positive outcomes for students. One course coordinator commented that *'it's a buzz when such a diverse group of students gains the qualification, and especially so when they gain employment'*.