



RTO 22373

Student Handbook

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Level 6, 555 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

GPO Box 1637
Melbourne VIC 3001

Tel: 61 3 8665 3100
Fax: 61 3 8665 3130

Email: bookkeeping@nia.org.au
Website: www.nia.org.au/bookkeeping

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Mission statement

The mission of the National Institute of Accountants (NIA) is to provide professional recognition and support to drive business success.

The mission of the Registered Training Organisation (RTO): to provide quality training and assessment services to prepare students for a fulfilling professional career in accounting; is consistent with and aligns with the NIA mission.

Overview

The RTO is a key business / operating unit of the NIA and the policies and procedures of the RTO will be consistent with and fully in accord with the policies and procedures of the NIA.

Officers and representatives of the RTO are officers and representatives of the NIA.

The following policies and procedures should be read in conjunction with the policies and procedures of the NIA.

Code of Conduct

All students are expected to:

- Conduct themselves professionally at all times
- Strive to achieve a high level of proficiency through commitment to their studies

Access and equity

It is unlawful for any NIA employee to discriminate against any group or individual by reason of any personal attribute, including:

- Gender
- Race, national, ethnic or social origin
- Parenthood, family responsibilities or status as a career
- Disability or impairment
- Sexual preference or lawful sexual activity
- Age

If a student believes they have a legitimate complaint against the RTO or its staff in relation to issues of access or equity they should request details of the specific guidelines and procedures for resolution which are detailed in the *NIA Equal Opportunity, Harassment and Bullying Policy*.

Client selection

The NIA encourages all those having a genuine interest in an accounting career to apply for admission into courses appropriate to their personal and professional aspirations.

NIA programs are designed for flexible delivery so as to maximise the opportunity for access and participation. Entry requirements are noted in the relevant *Program Outline*.

Fees, charges and refunds

Fees and charges

The NIA provides flexibility for program candidates in the selection of a preferred mode of assessment. This flexibility is reflected in the fee structure. The fees charged per program are dependent upon the number of units to be assessed and the completion mode selected for each unit.

All programs require the payment of an *Application Fee* to cover administrative costs and the issue of initial program materials.

Additional *Materials/Assessment Fees* are levied for each unit to cover the costs of learning materials, student support and assessment services.

No *Materials/Assessment Fees* apply to units where the candidate has been granted a Credit Transfer exemption by the NIA.

Our flexible enrolment options allow candidates to enrol and pay for one or more units at the commencement of the program up to a maximum of \$500 in *Materials/Assessment Fees*. Candidates may then progressively enrol in and pay the relevant *Materials/Assessment Fees* for additional units throughout their 12 month enrolment period.

Candidates are required to pay the *Materials/Assessment Fees* applicable at the time of their enrolment in a particular unit or units.

There is no further application fee when additional units are added to an existing program enrolment unless the enrolment period has extended beyond twelve months in which case a re-enrolment fee of 50% of the current *Application Fee* may be imposed.

Full details of the fees and charges are provided in the *Program Outline* and *Detailed Enrolment Application* form for each program.

Refunds and Withdrawals

The *Application Fee* is non-refundable once initial program materials are issued marking the commencement of the program.

Refunds of *Materials/Assessment Fees* are generally only available within thirty (30) days of materials being mailed out by the NIA. To be eligible for a full refund of *Materials/Assessment Fees* all related

Distance Learning materials must be returned to the NIA in good order. If course materials are not returned in good order the NIA reserves the right to withhold part of the *Materials/Assessment Fees*.

Refunds of *Materials/Assessment Fees* for units selected in Skills Recognition mode are generally only available within thirty (30) days of payment.

Refunds will not normally be available for units from which applicants withdraw after the 30 day period. Requests for refunds outside this 30 day period may be considered at the discretion of NIA with reference to special circumstances.

All requests for refunds must be provided to the NIA in writing.

In the event of the cancellation by the NIA of a program or unit(s) a refund of all fees will be made by the NIA in respect of the program, unit(s) or services not yet provided.

Program information

Program information is provided to students in the *Program Outline* distributed to all students.

Specific information can also be found on the NIA website at www.nia.com.au/bookkeeping.

Training that meets your needs

The NIA is committed to ensuring you receive training, assessment and support services that meet your individual needs. To achieve this, we need to know what your needs are.

If at any point throughout your studies you require assistance or support, please discuss these needs with NIA staff and we will help. If you have special needs, including learning, mobility, visual impairment or hearing please notify staff as soon as possible, preferably at the start of your program. We will then consider what adjustments are needed to learning and assessment processes.

If you do not tell us about any conditions that may affect your learning, we will be less able to assist.

Note that any information provided to the NIA in relation to your needs will remain strictly confidential.

Language, literacy and numeracy

English is the language of business communication in Australia and all training and assessment is conducted in English. It is also expected that all candidates will have appropriate numeracy skills.

If you are having, or anticipate difficulties relating to language, literacy or numeracy you should contact the NIA at the earliest opportunity and a suitable staff member will consider your concerns.

Where, owing to the nature of disadvantage an assessment in the standard format is not appropriate and would not fairly indicate the student's abilities, an alternative form of assessment may be provided.

Welfare and guidance

If candidates believe that their personal welfare and situation is having an impact upon their ability to complete tasks they should in the first instance contact the Manager RTO and a suitable staff member will consider your concerns.

Candidate support

The Manager RTO and assessors will provide email and telephone support for candidate queries. Please refer to the final page of this document for contact details.

Common queries will form the basis of an FAQ resource available to all candidates.

Further details about support for candidates are available in the *Program Outline*.

The NIA does not endorse or have input into other support programs that may be made available by others to NIA program participants. Support such as mentoring sought by an individual from external parties is not a matter over which the NIA exercises any influence.

Change of personal details

Upon change of name, address, telephone number or other details the candidate is required to notify the NIA with the relevant information. The change must be advised in writing. No responsibility will be accepted by the NIA for a candidate's failure to follow the above procedure.

Credit Transfer

As a RTO, the NIA fully recognises AQF qualifications and statements of attainment issued by other Australian RTOs.

This national recognition means that NIA will generally grant a credit transfer for a unit of competency where a candidate / student has:

- successfully completed the same unit of competency or a unit of competency with equivalent outcomes within the last five years; and
- provided the NIA with certified true copies of relevant transcripts of results.

Please note that the period of time noted above may be reduced where current practice requirements have changed significantly in the period since studies were completed.

Skills Recognition

Skills Recognition is available for most units of competency. Skills Recognition provides Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) which has been gained through work experience and other learning. The learning outcomes of each unit provide the RPL benchmarks. Candidates may receive full recognition or advanced standing for one or more complete units of competency.

Candidates requesting RPL to demonstrate competency must follow the procedures outlined in the *Skills Recognition Kit*. The kit describes, for each unit, the workplace tasks that cover assessment criteria and the nature and types of evidence which will be considered suitable for the purpose of demonstrating competency. A *Submission Template* is provided to each candidate to assist in the provision of this evidence for Skills Recognition.

Successful applicants will be notified promptly of the Skills Recognition outcome.

Please note that not all units may be available in Skills Recognition mode. Some units of competency are better suited to formal study and assessment, particularly where they may be a pre-requisite for regulatory accreditation. Details of any such units of competency are provided in the *Program Outline*.

Distance Learning

Distance Learning materials will generally be provided by mail. The materials are comprehensive and are designed for self-paced, independent learning. They include a range of practical activities and assessment tasks.

Candidates will require at least Windows 2000 compatibility and reasonable email and internet access in order to undertake Distance Learning.

Candidates will be provided with an individual Training and Assessment Plan which will provide them with a suggested time frame in which to undertake their Distance Learning.

Please note that some units of competency may require formal supervised assessment. In these cases, candidates must nominate and have approved by the NIA, a suitable time, location and supervisor for the formal assessment.

Candidates will be notified of assessment results at the completion of each unit.

Commencement dates

The commencement date in a program is the date on which materials are issued after the first *Detailed Enrolment Application* form is processed.

The candidate's enrolment extends for the period specified in the *Program Outline* as program duration.

Applications for extension beyond the original program duration must be made in writing prior to the expiry of the enrolment period and supported by evidence of extenuating circumstances such as a medical certificate. Extensions will only be granted at the discretion of the RTO following consideration of all circumstances and evidence.

In the absence of extenuating circumstances, extensions beyond program duration are not encouraged and may incur an additional fee.

While it is noted that there will be many legitimate instances when other matters interfere with your commitment to the program, our experience shows that extended enrolment can reduce the likelihood of successful completion.

The above policy is to apply when a candidate wishes to defer a scheduled assessment session or the due date for an assessment task.

Complaints and appeals procedures

The NIA RTO takes all complaints and appeals seriously and will address them promptly and fairly.

Should a candidate have a complaint or appeal, the steps are as follows:

1. Candidate should discuss the issue/complaint with the staff concerned and/or the Manager RTO.
2. Failing resolution, the candidate may submit a formal complaint/appeal in writing and include the following information:
 - Submission date of the complaint or appeal
 - Name of candidate
 - Nature of complaint or appeal
 - Date of the event which led to the complaint
 - Attachments (as applicable)
 - Steps taken to deal with the problem

The candidate should address the complaint or appeal for the attention of the Manager RTO.

3. The Manager RTO will review all evidence relating to the complaint and discuss the matter with other staff involved and/or the General Manager Member Knowledge as appropriate.
4. The candidate will be given the opportunity to present their case in person.
5. The Manager RTO will keep the candidate informed of any decisions or outcomes and of the processes in place to deal with the complaint.
6. The Manager RTO will advise the candidate of the outcome of the complaint within 21 days of submission.
7. A candidate may be assisted or accompanied by a support person at all times throughout the process, regardless of the nature of the grievance or complaint.
8. The Manager RTO will ensure that the NIA acts immediately on any substantiated complaint. If the internal or external complaint handling process results in a decision that supports the candidate, the NIA will immediately implement any decision and/or corrective and preventative action and advise the candidate of the outcome.
9. Copies of all documentation, outcomes and further action required will be filed centrally for quality improvement and audit purposes and also in the candidate's file.

Appealing a decision

All candidates have the right to appeal decisions made by the NIA. Appeals may include decisions in relation to:

- Assessments conducted
- Deferral, suspension, or cancellation decisions made in relation to enrolment, or
- Any other decision made as a result of the NIA's internal complaints procedure

All appeals must be lodged in writing to the General Manager Member Knowledge, detailing the candidate's reasons for their dissatisfaction with the NIA's decision.

The process for all formal appeals will begin within 10 working days of the appeal being lodged.

The General Manager Member Knowledge will ensure that the NIA acts on any substantiated appeal.

Appeals will be categorised as assessment appeals or general appeals and processed accordingly.

Appeals against assessment

Candidates may appeal against an assessment result shown on their record.

The assessment appeals process is as follows:

- The candidate is required in the first instance to notify their assessor. The assessor will review the candidate's record and, where appropriate to ensure a fair and equitable decision, may re-assess the candidate. The assessor will complete a written report regarding the review and any re-assessment.
- If the candidate remains unsatisfied they may submit a formal written appeal, detailing the reasons for their dissatisfaction with the assessment decision. This formal appeal must be submitted to the General Manager Member Knowledge.
- An independent assessor will be assigned to review the assessment decision and, within 21 days of submitting the appeal, the candidate will be notified in writing of the outcome.
- The candidate will also be advised of the option to activate the external appeals process should they still be dissatisfied with the assessment decision. The candidate must notify the NIA if they wish to proceed with the external appeals process.

General appeals

- Where a candidate appeals a decision or outcome of a formal complaint they are required to notify the NIA in writing within 20 working days of the grounds of their appeal. Any supporting documentation should also be attached. The appeal must be submitted to the General Manager Member Knowledge.

- The General Manager Member Knowledge will review the initial complaint and make a decision based on the grounds of the appeal. The candidate will be notified in writing of the outcome of the appeal and the reasons for the decision.
- The candidate will also be advised of the option to activate the external appeals process should they still be dissatisfied with the outcome. The candidate must notify the NIA if they wish to proceed with the external appeals process.

External appeals procedure

If the issue has not been resolved to the candidate's satisfaction through the NIA's internal processes the candidate may request that the matter be referred to an external independent/third party mediator. The NIA will ensure that the requested mediation is arranged and all parties have the opportunity to formally present their case.

The candidate may also contact the National Training Complaints Hotline, telephone: 1800 000 674 or contact the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA):

Level 6, 35 Spring Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000
Postal Address: GPO Box 2317, Melbourne, Vic, 3000
Ph: (03) 9637 2806
Fax: (03) 9651 3266
Email: vrqa@edumail.vic.gov.au
Website: www.vrqa.vic.gov.au

Details of the VRQA complaints procedure are at: www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/complaints/vet.htm.

Disciplinary procedures

The NIA imposes penalties for deliberate academic misconduct such as unauthorised copying and plagiarism. This includes presenting as if it is your own work, the work of another person, work done in collaboration with another person or persons and extracts from books, journals, websites or other sources without properly acknowledging the original source.

Where plagiarism or unauthorised copying is suspected candidates will be given an opportunity to explain their actions. Where the actions are not deemed to be deliberate, academic misconduct candidates will be given the opportunity to present alternative evidence.

Any penalties imposed will take into consideration the extent and intent of the plagiarism and may include being assessed as Not Yet Competent and/or being excluded.

If a candidate is excluded from the program any fees paid for incomplete units will not be refunded.

Privacy policy and access to student records

NIA acknowledges the importance of privacy and of safeguarding the personal information of users of our services. Any personal details provided to NIA will be protected in line with the National Privacy Principles and the laws and regulations regarding such matters as are applicable in Australia. NIA will not collect or monitor any personal information about you without your consent nor will it use or disclose to others your personal details without prior authorisation unless it is required by the law or the courts; it is necessary because of the service you are using or for a service you have requested; to implement our terms of service; or to protect the rights or property of others.

Students may request access to their records by contacting the Manager RTO.

NIA also acknowledge there will be circumstances in which information submitted as evidence may be of a commercial nature. NIA is committed to confidentiality and gives an unequivocal undertaking to treat all such information with the confidentiality it deserves. If you have any concerns in this regard please contact NIA for clarification.

Relevant legislation

A range of legislation is applicable to all staff and students. Information on relevant legislation can be found at the following websites.

Occupational Health & Safety	www.worksafe.vic.gov.au
Equal Opportunity Commission	www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/Home.asp
Vocational Education & Training	www.skills.vic.gov.au
WorkCover	www.worksafe.vic.gov.au
Privacy Commissioner	www.privacy.gov.au

Contact Details – National Institute of Accountants

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