

## NZPI's New Education Policy and Accreditation

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In December 2009, despite concern expressed by Lincoln and other universities, the New Zealand Planning Institute (NZPI) Council approved a new Education Policy. The Policy is interesting in that it moves in a different direction to that being taken in Australia and does not fit with the direction of the Bologna Convention on education and the direction being taken in Europe. In some respects, it signifies a shift of the pendulum back towards Town Planning and away from regional and environmental planning. A Bachelors degree must comprise four years study to meet the new NZPI policy and the three year plus one model (acceptable previously and still accepted in Australia) does not fit the new NZPI Policy.

NZPI accreditation of planning programmes enables a student completing that programme to enter the NZPI as a Graduate member. After a further three years of professional work experience, they are eligible to apply for full membership.

Lincoln University has given the new policy considerable thought. In doing so, it has considered the value attributed by employers to its multidisciplinary Bachelor of Environmental Management and Planning (BEMP) programme and the flexibility it allows students to diversify into planning or other related aspects of environmental management and to join a range of professional bodies.

It has decided:

- not to seek re-accreditation of the BEMP degree for the time being. The undergraduate programme is accredited until 2012 provided graduates complete a fourth year of prescribed courses in 2013. Planning will continue to be taught within the existing BEMP degree but Lincoln will not seek re-accreditation by the NZPI under the current circumstances. Therefore the current 2010 first semester intake of students into the accredited undergraduate programme will be last to be able to meet the requirements of NZPI through Lincoln University without an MEP degree.
- to concentrate Lincoln's resources on offering a new NZPI accredited two year masterate degree in Planning, alongside or in place of the existing Master of Environmental Policy degree. Admission to the planning masterate would be open to graduates from a variety of disciplines.
- to work closely with Canterbury planning practitioners during the process of developing and delivering the Master of Planning degree.

While it recognises that not offering an accredited undergraduate degree in planning at Lincoln after 2012 may disadvantage South Island local authorities in terms of staff recruitment, the University's decision has been endorsed by the Lincoln University Planning Advisory Board at its inaugural December 2009 meeting. The undergraduate accreditation option could be revisited in the future if circumstances change.

The decision also means that Lincoln BEMP students will continue to have a range of other options available to them for professional careers in environmental management and planning

(e.g. the Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand (EIANZ) and the New Zealand Association of Resource Management (NZARM)).

The NZPI is considering introducing a new class of provisional membership that would provide a pathway to full NZPI membership for students who completed the BEMP, but who did not complete the two year accredited post graduate qualification. This would mean that such BEMP graduates would have a seven year post-completion period before being eligible for full membership.

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