



# ASCEPT STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2025

*COVID-19 and Beyond*

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# Message from the Board

The *Strategic Plan 2021-2025: COVID-19 and Beyond*, outlines the Board's vision and strategies to ensure ASCEPT remains relevant during, and more importantly, after the one in one-hundred-year pandemic that is COVID-19. This critical document outlines initiatives that will maintain ASCEPT's status as the premier pharmacology and toxicology society in Australasia by retaining current members and providing opportunities for all levels of potential members while ensuring a sustainable Society.

The 2016-2020 Strategic Plan: Towards the Next 50 years, launched during the society's golden anniversary, looked to stabilising our financial standing after some tumultuous years, with goals of increasing and diversifying our membership and delivering more benefits to same. The Board, we believe, has delivered on all of these outcomes – noting that by the end of 2019, ASCEPT's share portfolio was nearing \$1 million.

A collaboration between ASCEPT and Melbourne Convention Bureau secured the 2026 World Congress of Pharmacology for Melbourne. Should target delegate numbers be achieved, the congress will deliver ~\$1 million to ASCEPT, with half this sum reserved as a legacy fund to support future WCP initiatives.

In February 2020, the world changed forever with the emergence of COVID-19. The impact of the devastation that COVID-19 has imposed on vulnerable populations and the global economy and more importantly, how we behave and interact as humans, will not be clear for some time to come. The Board Executive met weekly during the first months of the pandemic, which was continued throughout 2020, to put in place strategies to mitigate the financial, academic and research impacts of the restrictions. The Board have been proactive in providing input to international guidelines for the development and repurposing of medicines for COVID-19 and advising the federal government on same. Early in the pandemic, decisive action by the Board Executive to refocus the society's share portfolio, has meant that the stock market crash had only a minimal effect on the society's finances. The Special Interest Groups (SIG) Chairs have revitalised the forums, and a number of virtual gatherings have been well attended. The positive impact of COVID-19 has been physical separation has brought us closer, albeit virtually.

Moving forward and in an uncertain environment, we held the first fully virtual ASM in 2020 (24-26 November), and had over 300 registrations with excellent attendance at all sessions. Surprisingly great sponsorship support meant that all student delegates received free registration.

Fifty years on, the present members of ASCEPT continue to generate world class research and provide leadership of Departments of Pharmacology and Toxicology, Medical Schools, Schools of Pharmacy and Research Institutes around the globe. The Society has a strong relationship with both the pharmaceutical industry and government. Its members provide numerous representations to State and Commonwealth Departments of Health, the Therapeutic Goods Administration, and National Prescribing Service. Many national and international boards and (government) working parties benefit from having ASCEPT members providing expert input. ASCEPT has been a constituent and voting member of the International Unions of Pharmacology and Toxicology (IUPHAR and IUTOX, respectively) for many years, and maintains strong membership of key committees of both entities. This demonstrates that ASCEPT continues to be relevant to education, industry and government both nationally and globally.

The last decade has seen significant change for ASCEPT. In 2016, the membership approved the new constitution. The change of Council to Board means that although ASCEPT remains a learned society, it is now a Company, and Board Members are bound by company law to ensure the appropriate management. The Global Financial Crisis impacted heavily on the financial reserves of ASCEPT, resulting in the Board making the difficult decision to reduce incentives for members, in particular grants for travel and attendance at the flagship Annual Scientific Meeting. The Board is delighted to report that such measures and recent dividends from the Australian Medicines Handbook have stabilised our financial status.

ASCEPT is committed to inclusive participation. In 2019, the Society launched the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. The Policy is an important milestone for the Society and it outlines ASCEPT's vision of achieving equity and inclusion through placing diversity at the forefront of the Society's goals, through balancing representation across all society activities in alignment with the diverse composition of the society membership, and equity across all society activities and interactions.

Having achieved important milestones as part of the *2016-2020 Strategic Plan: Towards the Next 50 years*, we move to 2021, and our new five-year strategy, *Strategic Plan 2021-2025: COVID-19 and Beyond* to continue our efforts in advancing education, research and therapeutics for the benefits of patients and society.

# Mission

ASCEPT seeks to advance health by promoting and advocating education and research in pharmacology and toxicology and the application of these two disciplines.

# Our Values

The pursuit of knowledge and advancement of health, collegiality, cooperation and innovation within the disciplines of pharmacology and toxicology.

## OUR GOALS ARE TO:

1. Promote the advancement of health by promoting development of, as well as the effective and safe use of, medicines through research, education and advocacy.
2. Position ASCEPT as the premier Society for research, education and training in the disciplines of pharmacology and toxicology
3. Build and maintain ASCEPT's profile as the key Society for advocacy of clinical and experimental pharmacologists and toxicologists in Australasia
4. Attract and serve a diverse membership by providing opportunities and skills training to empower ASCEPT members to thrive in every stage of their career, and
5. Position ASCEPT as a respected, authoritative and valued independent source of advice on and contribute to policy development in Australasia and globally in the disciplines of pharmacology and toxicology

# Strategic Plan Overview

In order to achieve its mission, ASCEPT's focus will include:

1. Leadership and Engagement
2. Research
3. Education
4. Advocacy
5. Sustainability

# 1. Leadership and Engagement

Members of ASCEPT are highly valued and the most important part of the Society. Member and student member support and participation in ASCEPT initiatives and activities are crucial for the sustainability and success of ASCEPT. It is the role of the ASCEPT Board to seek and facilitate opportunities and activities of members to promote pharmacology and toxicology and ultimately the advancement of health. ASCEPT, its mission, values and goals have to be seen as relevant, beneficial and worthwhile for its members. Members of ASCEPT need to recognise benefits for their contributions to ASCEPT and importantly feel valued as an ASCEPT member.

## OBJECTIVE

ASCEPT will deliver initiatives to achieve its mission and goals.

## STRATEGIES

- 1. Seek and facilitate strategic opportunities for ASCEPT members, including:**
  - communicate opportunities for members to actively participate in ASCEPT Annual Scientific Meetings (ASMs)
  - encourage members to nominate for leadership positions within ASCEPT Special Interest Groups (SIGs) and the Education Forum
  - encourage members to nominate (including self-nominate) for awards both within and outside ASCEPT
  - encourage members to nominate (including self-nominate) for ASCEPT Committees
  - nominate and endorse members for national and international Committees
- 2. Communicate effectively with the membership, including:**
  - distribute timely and relevant information
  - communicate opportunities for members to actively participate in the organisation
  - research and implement the optimal use of technology to meet changing members' needs and expectations, as well as increase the efficiency of the organisation
- 3. Ensure adequate resources for member initiatives by**
  - supporting SIG initiatives outside the ASCEPT ASM
  - providing avenues for feedback on services from new, ongoing and exiting members
- 4. Provide opportunities for student leadership and engagement, including:**
  - formal mentoring from senior ASCEPT members
  - representation among SIG and Forum leadership groups
  - support of a student-led Student Forum and associated activities
  - foster opportunities for student representation outside the society
- 5. Engage with external stakeholders, including:**
  - foster understanding of key pharmacological and toxicological principles, including drug development, safety, and efficacy, among allied disciplines and the broader community
  - develop strategic partnerships with industry either directly or through more industry-focused associations, centres and/or programs
  - identify the needs of the healthcare sector, and where ASCEPT members can better address these needs, through research, education and input to policy
  - Engage with government and regulators to provide trusted expert advice
- 6. Maintain a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship that encourages development of new services, together with timely review of those services, while attracting new members, enhancing career growth and allowing for retention of existing members with alignment to our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.**

## KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Positive and diverse membership retention
- Increased numbers of members involved in ASCEPT activities
- Thriving SIGs with activities organised outside of the ASCEPT ASM
- Increased proposals for ASM symposia from SIGs
- Positive student engagement with an active Student Forum

- Increased accessibility of our members to the ASM and activities outside the ASM through conscious consideration of equity, diversity and inclusion
- Increased engagement with key stakeholders
- Increased impact of the society's activities

## 2. Research

Key to the success of ASCEPT and its ability to contribute to the advancement of health is the ability of its members to conduct leading research in experimental (basic and applied) and clinical pharmacology and toxicology. It is important that our members have the opportunity to present their research findings in high profile formats including plenary and symposia presentations. In turn, these will contribute to career development, peer recognition and funding opportunities. Our annual scientific meetings are the showcase of our Society for research. They are an important nurturing ground for early career researchers.

### OBJECTIVE

To promote excellence in experimental and clinical pharmacological and toxicological research

### STRATEGIES

1. Organise scientific meetings, including the ASM, that promote and showcase excellence in experimental and clinical pharmacology and toxicology research
2. Provide opportunities for members to give plenary and symposia presentations
3. Nurture and promote early career researchers through opportunities and awards (particularly the Garth McQueen Prize, Early Achievement Award for Women, Gillian Shenfield Early Educator Award and Certara New Investigators Award) and opportunities to represent ASCEPT on international society committees (e.g., IUPHAR, IUTOX) and on organising committees for local and international conferences
4. Nominate members to give high profile presentations at scientific meetings
5. Support and promote representation on pharmacology and toxicology funding policy committees (particularly National Competitive Grant and Fellowship Schemes)
6. Recognise and promote (internally and externally) the research achievements of ASCEPT members
7. Facilitate identification of research priorities relevant to ASCEPT members and communication of these to the membership, funding bodies and policy makers
8. SIGs to foster increasing research collaboration and exchange of information among scientists and health care professionals
9. SIGs to coordinate and stage scientific sessions at the Annual Scientific Meeting (ASM), provide advice and support to the Board, keep the broader membership of ASCEPT aware of their activities through annual reports and use of the online forums
10. Collaborate with other synergistic societies in terms of policy development and co-hosting, or representation at, scientific meetings
11. Foster a culture of equity, diversity and inclusion, for example when planning attendance and participation in the ASM as well as on our Board, Committees, SIGs, Forums and Working Groups

### KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Increased availability of plenary and symposium presentations for ASCEPT members at ASMs and other synergistic meetings
- Sustained attendance at ASMs in line with membership numbers
- Increased scientific meetings support
- Support of SIGs to ensure increased outputs
- Increased prioritisation of pharmacology and toxicology research



## 3. Education

Education underpins all aspects of our society's activities and its membership. Education is the foundation for the multiple pathways for application of pharmacology and toxicology - whether it be in research, medicine, pharmacy, allied health, industry or translating and communicating the fundamental principles and research findings into clinical practice. The ASCEPT Education Forum plays a critical role in the strategic vision for education moving beyond 2020.

### The role of the Education Forum is to:

- promulgate the significance of education in all its forms,
- advocate for our skilled educators,
- contribute to national and international agendas in pharmacology and toxicology,
- lead careers development and mentorship as well as professional development in pharmacology and toxicology education, and
- lead quality teaching of pharmacology and toxicology through curriculum development, educational research and clinical training.

The ASCEPT Education forum is an inclusive community that encompasses the diversity of the Society's membership, from experimental pharmacologists and toxicologists through to clinical researchers, physicians, pharmacists, allied health professionals and our critically important student cohorts. Education is, therefore, a priority of the whole Society, with the Education Forum providing the conduit to coordination and implementation of education-related initiatives.

### OBJECTIVES

- To advocate and promote quality of pharmacology and toxicology education in its many forms from undergraduate through to postgraduate coursework, research education, industry and clinical training, and community education
- To support career and professional development in pharmacology and toxicology

### STRATEGIES

1. Lead the development of education programs relevant to pharmacology and toxicology
2. Promote teaching of pharmacology and toxicology in Universities by pharmacologists and toxicologists
3. Provide high quality education opportunities and resources that inspire members to excel and progress their teaching careers
4. Nurture and promote early career educators through opportunities and awards (for example, the Gillian Shenfield Early Educator Award) and opportunities to represent ASCEPT on international society committees (e.g., IUPHAR, IUTOX) and on SACs for local and international conferences
5. Lead, promote and support initiatives to develop translational training for pharmacologists and toxicologists, particularly in entrepreneurship and innovation
6. Advocate for increased numbers of training positions for Clinical Pharmacologists
7. Promote and disseminate excellence in education of Clinical Pharmacologists such that they provide transdisciplinary pharmacology education for clinicians and become advocates for the quality use of medicines in collaboration with stakeholder institutions and colleges
8. Engage SIGs with the ASCEPT Education Forum and its activities through content expertise and contribution to nationally led curricula and quality education practices
9. Disseminate ASCEPTs' education activities and expertise through international communities (e.g., IUPHAR and related societies), and other STEMM societies, to promote the Society as leaders in biomedical education
10. Increase the visibility of Education Forum activities to promote the relevance of education to the broader ASCEPT membership and wider community to further engage members and drive Society membership
11. Advocate for the role and importance of pharmacology and toxicology education through community and political means
12. Provide skills training and mentoring to optimise student and early career members' career development and opportunities for career advancement

## KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Development and delivery of teaching- and curriculum-focussed workshops and symposia to empower members to excel and progress their teaching careers
- Development of early career and student education events outside the ASMs
- Enhanced uptake of ASCEPT Mentorship Program
- Creation of a student education award to recognise the excellence of our student member educators
- Increased student membership attendance at ASMs through continued engagement in educational activities
- Increased attendance of Clinical Pharmacology trainees at ASMs and ASCEPT Clinical Weekends
- Increased Clinical Pharmacology training positions
- Involvement in development and endorsement of training modules for clinicians
- Increased engagement of SIGs with ASCEPT Education Forum activities and outputs
- Involvement in curriculum development and review activities at the local, national and international levels
- Contribution to education initiatives of other relevant stakeholders (e.g., IUPHAR, IUTOX, Science Australia)
- Contribution to popular media, raising community awareness and consumer education
- Enhancement of the educational training workshop component of ASMs
- Promotion of Education Forum activities via ASCEPT website, social media, entire membership communications and more widely

## 4. Advocacy

ASCEPT is the leading society in Australasia for the representation of pharmacologists and toxicologists. ASCEPT is recognised by the Australian Academy of Sciences, international organisations (IUPHAR and IUTOX), and numerous government and other professional bodies. To maintain this position, ASCEPT needs to be proactive in advocating for its members to be appointed to these bodies as well as associated committees as representatives of ASCEPT. ASCEPT needs to ensure it has a 'voice' that speaks to issues of relevance and concern. ASCEPT also has an important role to play in advocating more broadly for the adoption of sound pharmacological and toxicological principles throughout medical research, particularly with respect to the development, safety and efficacy of medicines.

### OBJECTIVE

To maintain and strengthen ASCEPT's position as the leading Society that represents pharmacologists and toxicologists through advocacy

### STRATEGIES

1. Proactively support and promote the discipline of pharmacology and toxicology
2. Support and endorse ASCEPT member participation on external committees
3. Provide evidence-based position statements relevant to pharmacology and toxicology (to government and industry)

### KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Increased member participation on external committees and other bodies (particularly those related to research funding and medicines policy)
- Increased number of evidence-based position statements in key areas of pharmacology and toxicology

## 5. Sustainability

The ability of ASCEPT to meet its objectives, to represent pharmacologists and toxicologists in Australasia, to provide services to members and the broader community, depends on continued financial stability. The strategic plan (2016-2020) recognised that expenditure which resulted in the asset portfolio of ASCEPT was eroded by approximately 50% since 2010 had to be reversed. This financial instability of ASCEPT as an organisation led the Board to make tough financial changes such as removing financial support for its membership at ASM and other events. This intervention by the Board, along with careful management of the share portfolio post global financial crisis and through the Covid-10 downturn, and improved dividends from the AMH, has seen a return to financial sustainability in the later stages of the last 5-year plan. Indeed, student travel awards returned for the 2019 ASM and student registration was supported for the 2020 virtual ASM. The ASCEPT Board will need to continue to make financially responsible decisions to ensure the future of ASCEPT.

### OBJECTIVE

To maintain and grow the financially stable position of ASCEPT

### STRATEGIES

1. Separate ASCEPT ASM, other meetings and operational budgets
2. Budget ASMs and other meetings to run on a cost neutral basis
3. Review ASCEPT sponsored prize money associated with ASCEPT awards until the financial situation permits
4. Identify and reduce ASCEPT running costs
5. Continue to hold joint conferences with key national and international societies (e.g., APSA, PAGANZ, WCP)
6. Seek multi-year sponsorship of both the Society and the ASM
7. Underwrite conference(s) of international standing with a proven record of cost benefit to the society
8. Maintain charity status through review of requirements and original application to ensure compliance.

### KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Cost-neutral or profitable ASMs
- Maintenance and growth of ASCEPT's financially stable position
- Multi-year sponsorship of the ASM
- Joint conferences with key national and international societies (e.g., APSA, PAGANZ, WCP)
- The review and continued maintenance to ensure charity status remains