



23 April 2014

# Higher Education Standards Panel

## Call for Comment (Number 3, 23 April 2014)

### Proposed *Higher Education Standards Framework*

The Higher Education Standards Panel (the Panel) is inviting comment on proposed revisions to the current *Higher Education Standards Framework* (the *Framework*).

**Closing date for comments is 27 June 2014.**

#### Panel's approach

This consultation is an important step in revising the *Framework*. Development of the proposed *Framework* has been informed by feedback from previous calls for comment on Draft Standards for Course Design, Learning Outcomes (Coursework) and Research and Research Training, together with feedback from meetings with stakeholders (see <http://www.hestandards.gov.au/engagement#DocumentsforComment>).

#### Background

The Panel is required under the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (Consequential Amendments & Transitional Provisions) Act 2011* to undertake a review of the current *Framework*. As outlined in its previous communiqués (see <http://www.hestandards.gov.au/engagement#Communiqués>) the Panel has, with the assistance of stakeholders, identified a range of opportunities for efficiencies and improvements within the current *Framework*.

#### Consultation process

The Panel is seeking comment on the proposed revisions to the *Framework* and the Standards therein from stakeholders within and beyond the higher education sector. The Panel also asks that this invitation be passed on to any other interested parties.

Consultation documentation and background information are provided as follows:

##### Consultation documents:

- Call for Comment Number 3
- **Background Paper:** Proposed Revisions to the *Higher Education Standards Framework*
- Proposed *Higher Education Standards Framework*

##### Background information:

- Comparison of the ESOS National Code 2007 Parts C & D to the Proposed *Higher Education Standards Framework*
- Comparison of the Proposed *Higher Education Standards Framework* with the current requirements of the Threshold Standards and ESOS National Code 2007

The background information will be made available on the HE Standards website. This background material is not part of the consultation documentation; it is a resource for those who are interested in how the proposed *Framework* compares to existing requirements.

A stakeholder information session for clarification and initial feedback is proposed for **14 May 2014**. Details and registration will be made available at <http://www.hestandards.gov.au>

## Use of feedback

As part of the consultation process, the Panel will collect personal information (e.g. name, position, organisation), including the name of the person or persons making comments, for the purposes of informing the Panel's approach to the development of the proposed *Framework*. Unless requested otherwise, the Panel intends to make all comments available on the HE Standards website, including some of your personal information provided with the submission.

The Panel intends to disclose the content of submissions to assist the sector's consideration of the proposed *Framework*, unless a submission specifically states that it is made on a confidential basis. Automatically generated confidentiality statements in emails are not enough to note your intention that your submission should remain confidential. If you do not want your comments or some of your comments disclosed, please ensure the confidential material is clearly marked 'IN CONFIDENCE'. This can also apply where you are happy for the comments to be disclosed but not the author or organisation. The Panel may use a sector descriptor (e.g. student organisation, private provider) in such cases.

The comments received from stakeholders will be used to inform revisions to the proposed *Framework*. The Panel plans to post a report of its analysis of comments and any consequent revision of the drafts on the HE Standards website.

**Comments will be accepted until 27 June 2014.**

## Format for submissions

Under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, the Panel has an obligation to provide information in a manner accessible to everyone regardless of ability. Accordingly, the Panel needs to make sure that the documents published on its website are consistent with the relevant accessibility requirements. Submissions will be uploaded to the Panel's website progressively as they become available in an accessible format. The Panel may elect not to publish submissions that are not provided in an accessible format.

For accessibility reasons, the Panel would prefer comments to be submitted electronically in MS Word format and limited to 20MB. An email acknowledgement will be sent within two working days of receipt of submissions. If your submission is greater than 20MB, please contact the Higher Education Standards Panel Executive to arrange another method for sending your submission. Comments in hardcopy will also be accepted.

## More information

For further information about the proposed *Framework* or the consultation process please email [info@HEstandards.gov.au](mailto:info@HEstandards.gov.au) or telephone (+613) 8306 2509. The proposed *Framework* can be downloaded from the Higher Education Standards website at:

<http://www.hestandards.gov.au/engagement#Consultations>

## How do I submit my comments?

Comments should be forwarded by **27 June 2014** to:

[info@HEstandards.gov.au](mailto:info@HEstandards.gov.au)

OR

Higher Education Standards Panel Executive  
GPO Box 1672  
Melbourne VIC 3001

**All comments will be held in a register.**



## ***Background Paper: Proposed Revisions to the Higher Education Standards Framework***

### **A. Background to this Consultation**

The Higher Education Standards Panel (the Panel) has consulted widely with the sector in relation to its review of the *Higher Education Standards Framework* (the *Framework*) through meetings with stakeholders (including providers involved in re-registration applications), presentations at various fora, periodic communiques and previous formal calls for comment on proposed material.

The Panel is now in a position to release a complete proposal for revision of the *Framework*. The proposed revisions take account of previous feedback generously given by stakeholders. The Panel has endeavoured to address all of the issues identified during earlier consultations. The Panel looks forward to your further feedback.

### **B. The Context**

The review of the *Framework* is occurring in the context of the broader policy agenda for higher education and in light of the recommendations of the Review of Higher Education Regulation, which are directed at reducing regulatory burden. In proposing a revised *Framework*, the Panel has been cognisant of the recommendations of the Review of Higher Education Regulation and the Government's commitment to enabling high quality higher education and supporting innovation, competition and diversity in higher education.

At the time of the release of this consultation draft of the proposed *Framework*, the Panel had commenced a review of the Provider Category Standards. This will be subject to a later separate consultation process.

### **C. Continuing Consultation**

This is the first phase of consultation with stakeholders on the entire proposed *Framework*. Submissions to this Call for Comment will be accepted until 27 June 2014, after which the Panel will provide an analysis of the feedback received. The Panel will also consult the Minister's TEQSA Advisory Council, and consultations with TEQSA will continue. Subject to the feedback received and any follow up consultation that may be required, the Panel hopes to be in a position to provide advice to the Minister in the latter part of 2014.

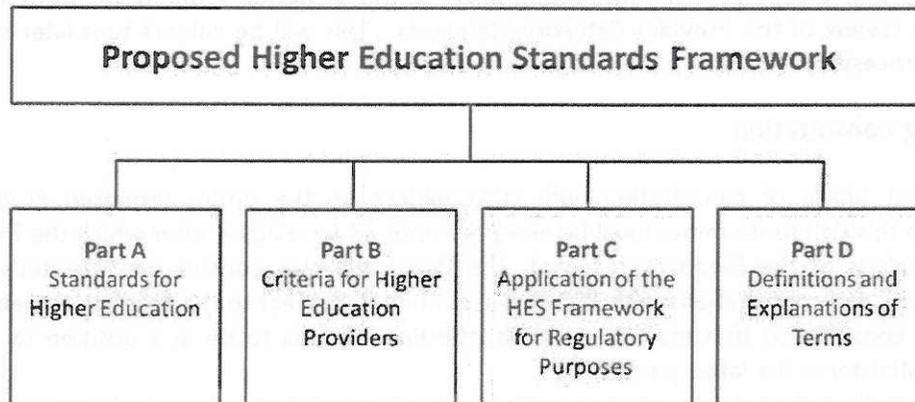
The *TEQSA Act 2011* requires the Commonwealth Minister to consult with Ministerial counterparts from the States and Territories and with TEQSA about advice provided by the Panel. The Minister may also request further advice from the Panel in relation to the feedback received from the Minister's own consultations, before deciding on a final *Framework* and proceeding to establish the *Framework* as a legislative instrument. The practical regulatory implications of a revised *Framework* will need to be considered, as will lead times for the sector and the regulator, including establishing appropriate and timely transitional arrangements.

### **D. Implementation of a revised *Framework***

In the light of the further consultation and other steps required prior to implementation, the Panel envisages that, should the Minister decide to implement a revised *Framework*, practical implementation would take effect sometime after 1 January 2016. This will allow sufficient lead time for the necessary legislative changes to be made and for transition provisions to be implemented.

## E. Proposed Higher Education Standards Framework

- I. Background:** In proposing the revised *Framework* the Panel has taken account of the following general points, aspects of which have been discussed in previous communiques:
- The Panel considers that the current arrangement of (regulated) 'Threshold' and (unregulated) 'Non-Threshold' Standards should be replaced with a single set of regulated standards that are concerned with the quality of higher education and the outcomes achieved.
  - The Provider Category Standards (which are a classification system for providers) and the Criteria for authorising Self-Accrediting Authority for courses of study (which confer a particular responsibility on certain providers) are not standards relating to the quality of higher education, as such. These components are dealt with separately in the proposed *Framework* from the Standards that are directly concerned with the quality of higher education provision and the outcomes achieved.
  - The Panel has received feedback from the sector suggesting that the Panel consider including in the *Framework* some guidance on the application of standards for regulatory purposes. The Panel has responded to this feedback by including a part in the *Framework* to address this matter.
- II. Structure of the Proposed Framework:** In the light of its views on the current *Higher Education Standards Framework*, the Panel is proposing a revised *Framework* consisting of four components:
- Part A - Standards for Higher Education
  - Part B - Criteria for Higher Education Providers
  - Part C - Application of the Higher Education Standards Framework for Regulatory Purposes, and
  - Part D - Definitions and Explanations of Terms (as used in Parts A-C).



## F. Explanation of the Proposed Higher Education Standards Framework

### I. Part A

- a. Overview of Part A:** This Part of the proposed *Framework* is concerned with the Standards for the provision and outcomes of higher education. The Standards in Part A are organised into seven major 'Domains', each of which consists of a number of 'Sections' that contain various 'Standards Statements'. The Standards Statements in Part A replace most of the current Threshold Standards.

*The set of Standards for Higher Education in Part A of the Framework have been drafted to represent collectively the minimum acceptable institutional conditions, arrangements and levels of performance for the provision of higher education in or from Australia by higher education providers registered under the TEQSA Act 2011.*

In proposing a 'minimum' set of standards, the Panel is not implying that any particular Standards are seen as 'low' standards. Rather, the Standards cover the core requirements

that are essential for ensuring the quality of higher education provision and outcomes across a diverse sector.

The Panel believes that most providers will have internal quality assurance processes and arrangements that are able to demonstrate the level of achievement encompassed by the Standards overall, as part of the provider's normal monitoring of its higher education activities.

**b. Underlying principles of Part A:** Taking account of the large amount of feedback received to date, the Panel has sought to construct the Standards in Part A to achieve the following goals, several of which have been discussed in Panel communiques:

- i. The Standards are to be consistent with the Objects and the three Basic Principles for Regulation (necessity, risk and proportionality) of the *TEQSA Act 2011* (which establishes the *Framework*), and take account of the recent Review of the Regulation of Higher Education.
- ii. The Standards are organised according to the characteristics of higher education, rather than by regulatory purposes, such as registration and course accreditation, so as to avoid duplication of Standards.
- iii. The educational experience of students is at the centrepiece of the Standards, *i.e.* Domain 1 – Student Participation and Attainment.
- iv. The Standards will foster informed participation by students, including prospective students, e.g. Domain 7 – Representation, Information and Information Management.
- v. The Standards will be applicable to all providers who undertake the higher education activities<sup>1</sup> encompassed by the Standards, regardless of the category of provider.
- vi. Diversity of educational offerings and different types of educational provider are not inhibited, and the Standards will be applicable to any mode(s) of delivery or participation.
- vii. The Framework will be useful to providers as a framework for internal monitoring, quality assurance and quality improvement of their higher education operations, not just for external regulatory purposes.
- viii. The approaches employed by providers to achieve the Standards are likely to vary according to their particular circumstances. The Standards Statements do not presuppose any particular approaches or types of evidence that individual providers might adopt to ensure or confirm that specific Standards are being met.
- ix. Each Standards Statement addresses a particular risk to quality, or a related set of risks, that are regarded as material risks.
- x. Standards pertaining to a particular quality risk are not repeated throughout the Standards (although this does not preclude distribution of a concept, such as one Standard requiring the collection of data and another requiring the analysis of the data to inform review and improvement).
- xi. Outcomes rather than inputs and processes are addressed where practicable.
- xii. The proposed Standards will facilitate gathering evidence that they have been met through the normal course of internal monitoring by the provider.
- xiii. Nothing in the design of the Standards precludes them from being applied flexibly and differently across different providers for regulatory purposes, according to regulatory necessity and risk.
- xiv. The Standards will not address specific discipline content or discipline-related curriculum details.

**c. Form and style of the Standards in Part A:** The introduction to Part A outlines the structure of the Standards for Higher Education. The Panel has continued with its preferred approach

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<sup>1</sup> Some providers will not undertake research or research training and the corresponding Standards would not be applicable to those particular providers.

to the form and style of the proposed Standards, informed by feedback from stakeholders on earlier drafts. In summary:

- i. the proposed Standards employ taxonomic headings for 'Domains' and 'Sections', rather than overarching Standards Statements that are used in some of the current Threshold Standards
- ii. the proposed Standards are written in a passive voice that describes a 'state of affairs', thus inviting an observer to ask whether or not such a state of affairs exists (the observer could be within or external to the provider); imperatives such as 'a provider must...' have been avoided
- iii. non-mandatory reference points are included where the Panel believes they will be helpful
- iv. the Panel has not shied away from a requirement for professional judgement in determining whether or not a Standard is met, where the Panel believes that is the best method of demonstrating achievement
- v. sometimes the content of a Standards Statement is amplified, typically under a heading of 'including', such as:

*The admissions process ensures that, prior to admission and before fees are accepted, students are informed of their rights and obligations, including:*

- a. *all charges associated with their proposed studies*
- b. *policies, arrangements and potential eligibility for credit for prior learning.....*

In Standards of this style, the amplifying examples would need to be met to comply with the Standard, but that does not preclude providers satisfying the requirements of the stem in other ways of their choosing as well; this is true of any Standards Statements or definitions that use 'include' or 'including', and

- vi. where technical detail is necessary to clarify a Standards Statement, e.g. the content of a record of results, for the sake of clarity and brevity in the Standards Statements, this detail is typically provided in the definitions (Part D) rather than in the body of the Standards Statements in Part A.

The proposed *Framework* has been edited extensively for content, coherency and consistency, but has not yet been subject to professional editing. This will be undertaken when the Panel believes that support for the general thrust of the Standards has been achieved.

Although other forms and styles could be used, the Panel believes the proposed approach will be attuned to the needs of providers, congruent with the culture of the sector and suitable for the proposed uses of the Standards (self-monitoring and external review).

## **II. Part B**

- a. **Overview of Part B: Criteria for Higher Education Providers.** The intent of this Part of the Framework is to separate criteria concerning the characteristics of providers from the Standards concerned with the quality and outcomes of the education they provide (*i.e.* Part A of the Framework). This is seen as both a logical and a practical separation; the two Parts of the Framework typically serve different purposes, both for providers and for regulation.
- b. **Part B1: Criteria for Eligibility to Make an Initial Application for Registration as a Higher Education Provider<sup>2</sup> in Australia.** The intent of this Part is to aggregate in a single document the criteria that are to be met by an entity that is seeking to apply for initial registration as a higher education provider. It is believed that this set of criteria will be clearer and more accessible to intending applicants than the current arrangements.
- c. **Part B2: Criteria for Granting Authority for 'Self-accreditation' of Courses of Study.** This Part contains a revised version of the criteria for self-accreditation that are currently located within the Provider Course Accreditation Standards. The existing criteria are a mix of criteria concerning the track record of the provider, such as '*At least three cohorts of students in*

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<sup>2</sup> All categories of higher education provider.

*Australia have graduated from the course(s) of study ...'; and certain characteristics of its higher education provision, such as 'The higher education provider has highly effective academic governance processes and a robust internal capability to monitor and improve its higher education courses of study'.*

The proposed criteria retain some criteria concerning a provider's 'track record'. However, where the intent of the criteria relates to provision of higher education, the proposed criteria simply point to the relevant Standards in Part A of the *Framework* rather than invoke other 'standards-like' criteria. The Panel believes that the proposed criteria are streamlined and will reduce the potential regulatory burden by reference to standards.

- d. **Part B3: Criteria for Higher Education Provider Categories.** The purpose of this Part is to incorporate the intent of the current Provider Category Standards into the proposed *Framework* as criteria for classification of providers. Like the content of Parts B1 & B2 (above) this material is seen to be of a different kind from the Standards in Part A of the *Framework*. **The Panel is not seeking feedback on its review of the Provider Category Standards as part of this round of consultation.**

### III. Part C

- a. **Overview of Part C: Application of the HES Framework for Regulatory Purposes.** This Part of the proposed *Framework* has been developed partly in response to feedback from providers seeking some direction from within the Standards themselves about how the Standards might be applied for regulatory purposes. In addition, the change to the structure of the Standards necessitates an indication of their application for certain regulatory purposes.

Because the proposed Standards for Higher Education are structured according to the characteristics of higher education rather than a sequence of regulatory activity (*i.e.* in the current Framework there are registration and course accreditation standards), they do not of themselves indicate their application for regulatory purposes. Part C achieves that purpose by specifying the proposed application of the Standards for specific regulatory purposes.

How the Standards are proposed to be applied and which particular Standards have been chosen for each purpose, have been guided by the three basic principles of regulation set out in the *TEQSA Act* (*i.e.* necessity, risk and proportionality). In particular, the proposed application of the Standards takes account of whether a regulatory purpose is for 'initial' purposes or a subsequent purpose such as re-registration or a re-accreditation, where a provider would, ordinarily, have already demonstrated a history of meeting standards.

It is the responsibility of the regulator to determine the scope of its regulatory activity, having regard to the requirements of the *TEQSA Act 2011* and the circumstances of individual higher education providers. Notwithstanding that responsibility, this Part of the *Framework* specifies those aspects of the *Framework* that have been designed to identify significant potential risks with a minimum of regulatory burden on higher education providers.

In specifying the application of particular Standards for certain regulatory purposes, Part C does not absolve a provider from having to meet all of the Standards for Higher Education; that is an obligation of registration. However, the underlying structure and approach to application of the Standards envisages that a provider will assure itself that the Standards are being met in the normal course of its higher education operations.

In ordinary circumstances a regulatory assessment against the specified Standards for a particular regulatory purpose would provide the regulator with risk-based confidence in the provider's capacity to meet the Standards for that purpose.

In specifying the application of the Standards for certain regulatory purposes, this Part of the *Framework* does not limit the scope of the regulator's regulatory activity, nor does it intrude on regulatory decision making as a result of the regulator's assessments against the Standards. Nonetheless, the proposed application of the Standards for regulatory purposes is

intended to reduce regulatory burden by acknowledging the internal monitoring capacities of a provider in the ordinary course of its operations.

The Standards would only be expected to be applied more broadly or in their entirety for external regulatory purposes in exceptional or extraordinary circumstances in the face of significant risks. It is expected that a regulatory assessment involving a wider sweep of the provider's operations beyond a particular specified regulatory purpose, such as a compliance assessment (under Section 59 of the *TEQSA Act 2011*, for example) would still be undertaken according to identified risks.

#### **IV. Part D**

- a. **Overview of Part D: Definitions and Explanations of Terms.** This Part of the *Framework* defines or explains terms used in the *Framework*. A definition of a term may also elaborate on a specific aspect of a Standards Statement *e.g.* the required content of a record of results. In such cases, the elaboration constitutes part of the Standards Statement to which it refers. This approach avoids cluttering the Standards Statements with detail.

#### **G. References to Related Matters**

- I. **AQF:** The sector has expressed strong interest in the relationship between the Higher Education Standards Framework and the Australian Qualifications Framework. The Panel has consulted the AQF Council about the Panel's approach.

As indicated previously, the Panel has taken three approaches to this issue in the proposed Standards for Higher Education:

- a. mandating consistency with the level classifications of the AQF for AQF qualifications (see Part A Standards for Higher Education, Section 1.6 - Qualifications and Certification)
- b. formally incorporating the intent of aspects of the AQF (and of the current Qualification Standards) into the proposed Standards for Higher Education (*e.g.* Credit and Recognition of Prior Learning, Certification of Qualifications), and
- c. noting the AQF as a Reference Point where the Panel believes this may be helpful (*e.g.* in Section 3.1 - Course Design).

- II. **ESOS National Code:** There is a great deal of actual and potential overlap between the current and proposed Standards for Higher Education and the ESOS National Code. In drafting the proposed Standards for Higher Education, the Panel has addressed the overlap wherever practicable, as follows:

- a. The Panel believes that generally speaking the Standards should serve the interests of all students, irrespective of their origin, but nonetheless accepts that there are particular measures relevant only to overseas students, *e.g.* assisting with familiarisation about living in Australia.
- b. Where the intent of a Standards Statement and a part of the Code are similar, particularly in relation to educational outcomes, the Panel has sought to incorporate the same intent so there is no conflict between the Standards and the Code. However, in many cases the Code prescribes requirements and processes in greater detail than the Panel would prefer in the proposed Standards for Higher Education.
- c. In some cases the Code prescribes requirements that the Panel does not believe can reasonably be required of all providers, particularly those who do not have overseas students (these points have been addressed by footnotes where that is workable).
- d. The parts of the Code that relate principally to immigration requirements and outcomes have not been incorporated into the Standards for Higher Education.

The Panel believes this approach to harmonisation with the Code where practicable, particularly in avoiding conflict, will serve the sector well until such time as a more comprehensive review of the relationship is undertaken. The Panel also sees this harmonisation as a cornerstone of simplification of regulatory processes.

## H. Flow-on effects

Without pre-supposing the outcomes of this consultation process, the Panel notes that the changes it proposes to the *Framework* would, if agreed by the Minister, result in some consequential flow-on effects, including potential amendments to the legislation *e.g.* to replace the current framework of Threshold and Non-Threshold standards and to deal with any consequential amendments such as changes to the nomenclature of the proposed Standards if needed. The practical regulatory implications of a revised Framework also need to be considered as will lead times for the sector and TEQSA.

### Call for Comments:

Feedback on the proposed revisions to the *Higher Education Standards Framework* (the *Framework*) is invited by the Panel. It would be helpful if feedback could be framed around the following questions:

- Q1. Do you broadly support the proposed *Framework*? If not, why?
- Q2. Do you wish to make any suggestions in relation to the specific content of the *Framework*?
- Q3. Do you wish to make any overall or general comments about the *Framework*?

## I. Next Steps

**National Fora:** In addition to the initial stakeholder information session proposed for 14 May 2014, and after the Panel has considered detailed feedback from this call for comment, the Panel proposes to hold one or more additional fora with stakeholders, subject to the issues raised. These follow-up fora will provide an opportunity for the Panel to consider and respond to further issues and concerns stakeholders may have in relation to the proposed *Framework*. Details and registration for any subsequent fora will be made available at <http://www.hestandards.gov.au>

**Advice to the Minister:** When the Panel has concluded its consultations it will provide advice to the Commonwealth Minister for Education on a proposed *Framework*.

## J. Further Information

If you require further clarification of the proposed *Framework* to assist in providing feedback, please contact [info@HEstandards.gov.au](mailto:info@HEstandards.gov.au) in the first instance.





**Australian Government**  
**Higher Education Standards**

***Proposed***  
**HIGHER EDUCATION**  
**STANDARDS FRAMEWORK**

**Consultation Draft**  
**April 2014**

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## Introduction to the *Higher Education Standards Framework*

### **Explanatory Note<sup>1</sup> in Relation to the Proposed *Higher Education Standards Framework*:**

This document is intended to replace the current *Higher Education Standards Framework* as specified in the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011 (TEQSA Act 2011)* in its entirety.

In so doing, the proposed *Framework*:

**replaces** the following Threshold Standards in the current *Framework*:

- Provider Registration Standards
- Provider Category Standards (see note at Part B3)
- Provider course Accreditation Standards
- Qualification Standards

and:

**proposes** that the concept of 'Non-Threshold Standards' contained in the current *Framework* be discarded.

The Panel believes it is proposing a coherent *Framework* that will support the objects of the *TEQSA Act 2011* under which the *Higher Education Standards Framework* is established, while meeting the needs of providers and regulatory purposes.

### **Establishment and Underlying Principles**

The *Higher Education Standards Framework* (the *Framework*) is established by the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011*<sup>2</sup> (*TEQSA Act 2011*) (Section 58). The *Framework* takes account of the Objects of the *TEQSA Act 2011* (Section 3). It also reflects the three Basic Principles for Regulation articulated in the *TEQSA Act 2011* (Section 13):

- the principle of regulatory necessity
- the principle of reflecting risk, and
- the principle of proportionate regulation.

### **Structure of the *Higher Education Standards Framework***

The *Framework* consists of four parts as follows:

#### **Part A: Standards for Higher Education**

These Standards represent the minimum acceptable requirements for the provision of higher education in or from Australia by higher education providers registered under the *TEQSA Act 2011*.

#### **Part B: Criteria for Higher Education Providers**

These criteria enable categorisation of different types of higher education providers according to certain characteristics, including the types of providers that are eligible to apply

<sup>1</sup> This Explanatory Note and those in other sections are included for the purposes of Call for Comment Number 3, rather than as an intended part of the final version of the *Framework*.

<sup>2</sup> As amended or superseded from time to time.

for registration and whether a provider is responsible for self-accreditation of a course(s) of study it delivers.

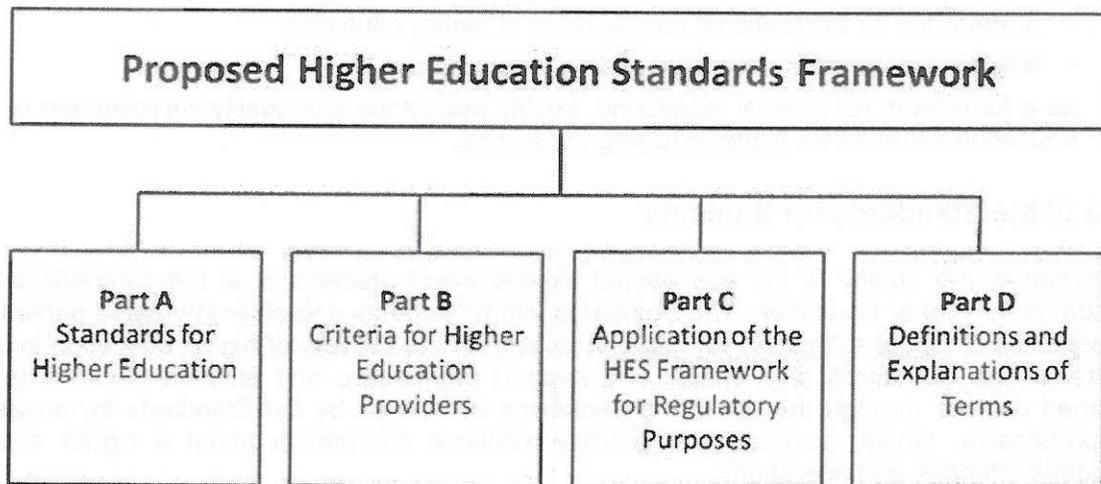
### **Part C: Application of the *Higher Education Standards Framework* for Regulatory Purposes**

This Part specifies the applicability of components of the *Framework* for certain regulatory purposes.

### **Part D: Definitions and Explanations of Terms**

This Part defines the meaning of particular terms used in the *Framework* and/or elaborates on the nature and scope of particular items or concepts that are included in the *Framework*.

Unless the contrary intention appears, the terms and phrases used in the *Framework* have the same meaning as in the *TEQSA Act 2011*.



## PART A: Standards for Higher Education

### Introduction to Part A

The Standards for Higher Education in Part A of the *Framework* represent the minimum acceptable institutional conditions, arrangements and levels of performance for the provision of higher education in or from Australia by higher education providers registered under the *TEQSA Act 2011*.

### Role of the Standards for Higher Education

The Standards for Higher Education set the requirements that higher education providers must meet in order to be registered by TEQSA to operate in Australia and they underpin the regulation of higher education providers by TEQSA in relation to registration and course accreditation.

The Standards also serve other broader purposes in Australian higher education including:

- the articulation of expectations for provision of higher education in Australia as:
  - a guide to the quality of educational experiences that students can expect
  - a reference for international comparisons of higher education
  - a reference for other interested parties, and
- as a framework for internal monitoring, quality assurance and quality improvement of higher education activities for higher education providers.

### Role of the Standards for Students

Protection of the quality of the educational experience of students is at the centrepiece of the Standards for Higher Education. The Standards inform students and other interested parties of the expectations of higher education providers in relation to the delivery of higher education in or from Australia. The Standards also enable and support prospective and enrolled students to make informed choices through the specific expectations articulated by the Standards for provision of comprehensive, timely, accurate and publicly available information about a higher education provider's offerings and operations.

### Focus of the Standards for Higher Education

The main focus of the Standards is on courses of study (programs) that lead to the award of a defined Australian Higher Education Qualification(s). However, the Standards are also applicable to courses of study that lead to other higher education qualifications, and to units of study (subjects, modules) that may be undertaken as part of an uncompleted course of study, or are offered separately from a course of study.

### Form of the Standards

The Standards for Higher Education are organised into seven major 'Domains':

1. Student Participation and Attainment
2. Learning Environment
3. Teaching
4. Research and Research Training
5. Quality Assurance
6. Governance
7. Representation, Information and Information Management

The first Domain (Student Participation and Attainment) covers the education-related experiences of students from admission through to attainment of a certified qualification (or part thereof). The Standards for Student Participation and Attainment focus primarily on a course of study, but they apply equally to the completion of units of study.

The remainder of the Domains focus on actions taken by the higher education provider to achieve the educational outcomes expected for students. The second Domain (Learning Environment) focuses on the nature and quality of the learning environment provided, whether physical, on or off campus, virtual or blended. The Standards for Teaching and for Research and Research Training (Domains 3 & 4) focus on the academic activities of the higher education provider that guide and facilitate learning.

Domains 5 and 6 focus on the mechanisms that are established by the higher education provider to assure itself of the quality of the higher education it provides (Quality Assurance), and to maintain effective governance of its operations (both Academic and Corporate Governance). The final Domain (Representation, Information and Information Management) encompasses the higher education provider's representation of itself to prospective students and others, the provision of information to prospective and enrolled students to enable informed participation in their educational experience, and the information management systems that support the higher education provider's higher education operations.

## **Standards Statements**

Each 'Domain' of the Standards is segmented into 'Sections' and these sections in turn contain a number of 'Standards Statements'. These Standards Statements are the actual 'standards'; the headings of the domains and sections are taxonomic only.

The Standards Statements in each Section form part of a related set of statements in the section, although each Standards Statement is a stand-alone statement. In some Standards Statements the word 'include' or 'including' precedes an elaboration of the Standards Statement. The elaboration that follows 'include' or 'including' is an essential component of the Standards Statement, but it does not preclude additional forms of elaboration being used by a higher education provider. Some Sections of the Standards contain non-mandatory 'Reference Points' (see Part D of the *Framework* for an explanation of Reference Points).

## **Application of the Standards for Internal Purposes by Higher Education Providers**

The Standards for Higher Education are grounded in the core characteristics of the provision of higher education. As a consequence of this foundation, the Standards are intended to be useful to higher education providers as a framework for internal monitoring of the quality of their higher education activities. The Standards encompass the matters that a higher education provider would ordinarily be expected to address in the course of understanding and monitoring its higher education activities and managing any associated risks. Each Standards Statement represents an underlying risk(s) to be managed. This risk may be a risk to the quality of education provided, to the experiences of students in relation to a higher education provider, to the quality of learning outcomes on graduation, to the reputation of higher education in Australia or a combination of these types of risks.

From the standpoint of internal use by higher education providers, the Standards focus on aspects of a higher education provider's operations in different but inter-related ways. Domain 1 (Student Participation and Attainment) focuses primarily on the educational experience for students, while Domains 2-4 (Learning Environment, Teaching, Research and Research Training) focus on academic activities and the environments in which they occur. Together, Domains 2-4 address in specific ways a variety of risks to the quality of higher education and the experiences of students.

The Domains of Corporate Governance, Academic Governance and Quality Assurance are more overarching in nature, and draw in part on the other more specific Domains in the Standards for Higher Education. These three Domains collectively encompass the ways in which a higher

education provider would ordinarily maintain oversight of its higher education operations and be able to assure itself, in the normal course of its business, that the requirements of the Standards for Higher Education are being met. As a consequence of their overarching focus, these three Domains are seen to be the primary locus for internal monitoring of a higher education provider's activities. Any concerns identified by a higher education provider in seeking to meet the Standards for Quality Assurance, Academic Governance or Corporate Governance would be expected to cause deeper examination of the provider's compliance with the Standards for Higher Education overall, guided by the risks that have been identified.

## **Application of the Standards for External Regulatory Purposes**

The Standards for Higher Education are the requirements that all higher education institutions must meet to be registered to operate in Australia. They also underpin regulatory activities in relation to provider registration and course accreditation. How the Standards are designed to be applied for specific regulatory purposes, taking account of the regulatory principles articulated in the *TEQSA Act 2011*, is detailed in Part C of the *Framework*.

## **Applicability of the Standards to Particular Higher Education Providers or Categories of Higher Education Provider**

Under the *TEQSA Act 2011*, it is an obligation of registration that all registered higher education providers meet and continue to meet the Standards for Higher Education. The Standards are applicable to all registered higher education providers where the provider engages in the activities encompassed by the Standards, irrespective of the category of provider. The Standards for Higher Education cover all modes of participation and delivery, and all categories of students.

Some parts of the Standards for Higher Education will not apply to particular higher education providers. For example, Standards related to delivery arrangements between a registered higher education provider and other parties will not be applicable where such arrangements do not exist. Similarly, the Research Standards are not applicable to higher education providers that do not undertake research. However, if research training is conducted, the Standards for Research and for Research Training are both applicable.

Except where particular higher education providers do not engage in all of the higher education activities encompassed by the Standards, such as not undertaking research training for example, all registered providers are required by the *TEQSA Act 2011* to meet the Standards for Higher Education in their entirety.

## **Application of the Standards for Higher Education Providers in Different Stages of Development**

The Standards for Higher Education have been drafted to represent the characteristics of provision of higher education by a higher education provider that is an established 'going concern'. Such a provider would, for example, already have had several cohorts of students graduate from its course(s) of study. Established review and improvement activities would also be expected as part of the provider's oversight of its higher education operations. Such activities would include mechanisms to provide evidence of achievement of learning outcomes and student success, and processes for external referencing against other higher education providers or other courses of study.

To the extent that a higher education provider has not yet reached this level of maturity in its operations, the application of the Standards for regulatory purposes needs to take account of the provider's actual stage of development, as well as the developments that are in prospect and the provider's capacity to fully realise its intentions.

## Definitions and Explanations of Terms

Terms or concepts that have specialised or particular meanings in the Standards Statements are defined and/or explained in Part D of the *Framework*.

# Standards for Higher Education

## 1 Student Participation and Attainment

### 1.1 Admission

1. Admissions policies, requirements and procedures are documented, are applied fairly and consistently, and ensure that admitted students have the academic preparation and skills<sup>3</sup> needed to participate in their intended study and achieve the expected learning outcomes.
2. The admissions process ensures that, prior to admission and before fees are accepted, students are informed of their rights and obligations, including:
  - a. all charges associated with their proposed studies
  - b. policies, arrangements and potential eligibility for credit for prior learning, and
  - c. policies on changes to or withdrawal from offers, acceptance and enrolment and refunds of charges.
3. Admission and other contractual arrangements<sup>4</sup> with students are in writing, and include any particular conditions of enrolment and participation.

#### Reference Points

- i. *National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2007 (The National Code 2007)*.

### 1.2 Credit and Recognition of Prior Learning

1. Assessment of prior learning is undertaken for the purpose of granting credit for units within a course of study or toward the completion of a qualification, such assessment is conducted according to institutional policies and the outcome is confirmed during enrolment.
2. Credit through recognition of prior learning is granted only if:
  - a. students granted such credit are not disadvantaged in achieving the expected learning outcomes for the course of study or qualification, and
  - b. the integrity of the course of study and the qualification are not compromised.

### 1.3 Orientation and Transition

1. Students are assisted towards a successful transition into higher education through orientation<sup>5</sup>.
2. Specific strategies support transition, including:
  - a. assessing the preparedness<sup>6</sup> of and potential risks for individual students and cohorts<sup>7</sup> during transition
  - b. undertaking early assessment or review that provides formative feedback on academic progress and is able to identify needs for additional support, and

<sup>3</sup> 'academic preparation and skills' includes proficiency in English.

<sup>4</sup> For students who are legally unable to contract, admission and contractual arrangements are made only with the consent of a parent or legal guardian.

<sup>5</sup> 'orientation' includes a specific orientation program provided for overseas students to assist in adjusting to living and studying in Australia.

<sup>6</sup> 'preparedness' includes educational preparedness and consideration of the likely challenges for students in participating in the social and learning environments associated with their course of study.

<sup>7</sup> 'individual students and cohorts' includes overseas students if applicable.

- c. providing access to informed advice and timely referral to academic or other support.

## 1.4 Progression

1. Methods of assessment or monitoring that determine progress within or between units of study or in research training validly assess progress and, in the case of formative assessment, provide students with timely feedback that assists in their achievement of learning outcomes.
2. Students have equivalent opportunities for successful progression and completion irrespective of their educational background, field of education, entry pathway, mode or place of study.
3. Processes for identifying students at risk of unsatisfactory progress and providing specific support are implemented across all courses of study.
4. Trends in rates of retention, progression and completion of student cohorts through units and courses of study are monitored.

## 1.5 Learning Outcomes and Assessment

1. The expected learning outcomes for each course of study are specified, consistent with the level and field of education of the qualification awarded and informed by national and/or international comparators.
2. The specified learning outcomes for each course of study encompass discipline-related and generic outcomes, including:
  - a. mastery of the knowledge, skills and application that characterise the field(s) of education or disciplines involved
  - b. generic skills and their application in the context of the field(s) of education or disciplines involved
  - c. knowledge and skills required for employment related to the course of study, including those required for registration to practise if applicable, and
  - d. capacity for independent and critical thought and for life-long learning.
3. Methods of assessment are consistent with the learning outcomes being assessed, are capable of confirming that all specified learning outcomes are achieved and grades awarded reflect the level of student attainment.
4. On completion of a course of study, students will have demonstrated the learning outcomes specified for the course of study, whether assessed at unit level, course level, or in combination.
5. On completion of research training, students will have demonstrated specific and generic learning outcomes related to research, including:
  - a. a detailed understanding of the specific topic of their research, within a broad understanding of the field of research
  - b. capacity to scope, design and conduct research projects independently
  - c. technical research skills and competence in the application of research methods, and
  - d. skills in analysis, criticism and reporting of research and presentation and publication of their research.
6. Assessment of major assessable research outputs<sup>8</sup> for higher degrees by research

<sup>8</sup> 'major assessable research outputs' include theses, dissertations, exegeses, creative works or other major works arising from a candidate's research.

incorporates external assessment by:

- a. for doctoral degrees, at least two independent experts with international standing in the field of research who are external to the higher education provider, are competent to undertake the assessment and do not have a conflict of interest, and
  - b. for masters degrees, at least two independent experts who are competent to undertake the assessment and do not have a conflict of interest, at least one of whom is external to the higher education provider and has international standing in the field of research.
7. The outputs arising from research training contribute to the development of the field of research, practice or creative field and, in the case of doctoral degrees, demonstrate a significant original contribution.

#### **Reference Points**

- i. *Australian Qualifications Framework (second edition January 2013)*.
- ii. Learning outcomes statements developed for the field of education or discipline by discipline communities or professional bodies.
- iii. The requirements for professional accreditation of the course of study and registration of graduates where applicable.

## **1.6 Qualifications and Certification**

1. A qualification is awarded only if a course of study<sup>9</sup> leads to the award of that qualification and all of the requirements of the course of study have been fulfilled.
2. When an Australian Higher Education Qualification is offered, the course of study leading to the qualification is accredited and the learning outcomes for the qualification are consistent with the level classification for that qualification in the *Australian Qualifications Framework*<sup>10</sup>.
3. Awardees of a qualification are issued with secure certification documentation including an authorised testamur, and either an authorised record of results or an authorised Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement (graduation statement).
4. When a qualification recognised in the *Australian Qualifications Framework* is awarded, the testamur and/or the graduation statement is certified with either the logo of the *Australian Qualifications Framework* or the words, 'This qualification is recognised within the *Australian Qualifications Framework*'.
5. A qualification that does not align with a qualification that is recognised in the *Australian Qualifications Framework* is not described using the nomenclature of the *Australian Qualifications Framework* or implied to be a qualification recognised in the *Australian Qualifications Framework* or an equivalent qualification.
6. Students who complete one or more units of study that do not lead to the award of a qualification have access to an authorised record of results for the units undertaken.
7. Documentation issued with the award of an honorary qualification unambiguously identifies the qualification as an honorary qualification.

#### **Reference Points**

- i. *Guidelines for the Presentation of the Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement (April 2013)*.

<sup>9</sup> Except for a Higher Doctoral Degree where the qualification is offered in accordance with the higher education provider's policies and academic governance requirements for Higher Doctoral Degrees, or an honorary degree.

<sup>10</sup> *Australian Qualifications Framework (Second Edition January 2013)*.

## 2 Learning Environment

### 2.1 Facilities

1. Facilities<sup>11</sup>, whether physical or virtual, are fit for their educational purpose and accommodate the numbers and educational activities of the students and staff that use them.
2. Secure access to electronic information and communication is available continuously<sup>12</sup> to students and staff.
3. The learning environment<sup>13</sup> supports academic and social interactions among students outside of formal teaching.

### 2.2 Diversity and Equity

1. Institutional policies, practices and approaches to teaching and learning are designed to accommodate student diversity, including the under-representation and/or disadvantage for identified groups, and create equal opportunities for academic success regardless of students' backgrounds.
2. Specific consideration is given to the recruitment, admission, participation and completion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
3. Participation, progress, and completion by identified student subgroups are monitored and the findings are used to inform admission policies and improvement of teaching, learning and support strategies for those subgroups.

### 2.3 Wellbeing and Safety

1. All students are advised of the actions they can take, the staff they may contact and the support services available if their personal circumstances are having an adverse effect on their education.
2. The nature and extent of support services that are available for students are informed by the needs of student cohorts, including mental health and wellbeing needs.
3. Timely, current advice on access to personal support services is available, including for access to emergency services, health services, counselling, financial and legal advice, advocacy, and accommodation and welfare services.
4. A safe environment is promoted and fostered, including by advising students and staff on actions they can take to enhance safety and security on and off campus and online.
5. There is a critical incident policy together with readily accessible procedures to cover the immediate action to be taken in the event of a critical incident and any follow up required.

### 2.4 Student Grievances and Complaints

1. Students have access to mechanisms to address grievances about any aspect of their experience with the higher education provider, its agents or related parties.
2. There are policies and processes<sup>14</sup> for the timely handling of formal complaints and

<sup>11</sup> 'facilities' includes facilities in which work placements are undertaken and excludes private spaces used for online and distance education over which the higher education provider has no control.

<sup>12</sup> 'continuously' allows for reasonable downtime for maintenance.

<sup>13</sup> 'learning environment' may be physical, virtual or blended.

<sup>14</sup> Policies and processes for the handling of formal complaints and appeals do not affect students' statutory entitlements.

appeals against academic and administrative decisions, and these are applied consistently, fairly and without reprisal.

3. Institutional complaints-handling and appeals processes include provision for advocacy and support for the complainant or appellant.
4. Decisions about complaints and appeals are recorded and the student concerned is informed in writing of the outcome and the reasons.
5. If a complaint or appeal is upheld, any action required is initiated promptly.

#### **Reference Points**

- i. *National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2007 (The National Code 2007), Part D, Standard 8.*
- ii. *Australian Standard AS ISO 10002-2006/Amdt 1-2011, Customer satisfaction - Guidelines for complaints handling in organizations.*

## 3 Teaching

### 3.1 Course Design

1. The rationale and design for each course of study are specified.
2. The content and learning activities of each course of study engage with advanced knowledge and enquiry consistent with the level of study and the expected learning outcomes, including:
  - a. current knowledge and scholarship in relevant academic disciplines
  - b. study of the underlying theoretical and conceptual frameworks of the academic disciplines or fields of education or research represented in the course, and
  - c. emerging concepts that are informed by recent scholarship, current research findings and advances in practice<sup>15</sup>.
3. Teaching and learning activities are arranged to foster progressive and coherent achievement of expected learning outcomes throughout each course of study.
4. Each course of study is designed to enable achievement of expected learning outcomes regardless of a student's place of study or the mode of delivery.
5. Where professional accreditation of a course of study is required for graduates to be eligible to practise, the course of study is accredited and continues to be accredited by the relevant professional body.

#### Reference Points

- i. *Australian Qualifications Framework (Second Edition January 2013)*.
- ii. The requirements for professional accreditation of the course of study and registration of graduates to practise where applicable.
- iii. *Good Practice Principles of Graduate Research* developed by the Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Research.

### 3.2 Course Delivery

1. The staffing for delivery of a course of study reflects the expected learning outcomes for the course of study and the educational needs of student cohorts undertaking the course of study.
2. Staff who have academic oversight of, or teach<sup>16</sup> in a course or unit of study are equipped for their roles, including having:
  - a. a qualification in a relevant discipline at least one level of qualification higher<sup>17</sup> than is awarded for the course of study, or equivalent relevant academic or professional experience and expertise
  - b. knowledge of contemporary developments in the discipline or field that they teach, informed by continuing scholarship
  - c. an understanding of contemporary teaching, learning and assessment principles relevant to the discipline they teach, their teaching role, the mode of delivery and the needs of the student cohort, and
  - d. a scholarly capacity to lead students in intellectual inquiry at the level of the desired learning outcomes.

<sup>15</sup> Where practice is applicable to the field of education or research.

<sup>16</sup> Some parts of a course or unit of study may be taught by teachers who do not meet Standard 3.2.2 in its entirety where necessary to meet a particular educational need or as part of career development in teaching (such as practitioners or higher degree students, who do not hold a qualification higher than awarded for the course of study), provided their teaching is supervised by staff who meet Standard 3.2.2.

<sup>17</sup> Except for supervision of a doctoral degree, where a doctoral degree or equivalent research experience is required.

3. Teaching staff are accessible for students seeking individual assistance with their studies, at a level consistent with the learning needs of the student cohort.
4. Work-integrated learning or other community-based learning for students is quality assured, including assurance of the quality of supervision of student experiences.
5. When a course of study is delivered through arrangements with another party<sup>18</sup>, whether in Australia or overseas, the registered higher education provider is fully accountable for the course of study and verifies continuing compliance of the course of study with the *Higher Education Standards Framework*.

### 3.3 Learning Resources & Educational Support

1. The learning resources<sup>19</sup> that are specified or recommended for a course of study relate directly to the learning outcomes, are up to date and, where supplied as part of a course of study, are accessible when needed by students.
2. Where learning resources are part of an electronic learning management system, all users have timely access to the system and training is available in use of the system.
3. Access to learning resources does not present unexpected barriers, costs or technology requirements for students, including for students with special needs and those who study off campus.
4. Students have access to learning support services that are consistent with the requirements of their course of study, their mode of study and the learning needs of student cohorts, including arrangements for supporting and maintaining contact with students who are off campus.

<sup>18</sup> Standard 3.2.5 includes arrangements with other parties for research training.

<sup>19</sup> 'learning resources' includes literature, creative works, notes, laboratory facilities, studio sessions, simulations and software.

## 4 Research and Research Training

### 4.1 Research<sup>20</sup>

1. Research and research-related activities<sup>21</sup> are conducted in accordance with a research policy framework that addresses:
  - a. ethical conduct of research and responsible research practice
  - b. ownership and management of intellectual property
  - c. research partnerships
  - d. publication and authorship, and
  - e. resolution of allegations of misconduct in research.
2. Research is conducted, or overseen, by staff with relevant qualifications, research experience and skills for the type of research undertaken.
3. A system for accurate and up-to-date recording<sup>22</sup> of the research outputs of staff and research students is maintained.

#### Reference Points

- i. *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (Australian Government, 2007)*.
- ii. *Excellence in Research for Australia*.

### 4.2 Research Training<sup>23</sup>

1. Research training is provided in a supervisory and study environment<sup>24</sup> of research activity or other creative endeavour, enquiry and scholarship and is guided by an institutional research training policy framework.
2. Students are admitted to research training only if the resources required for their project will be available and continuity of supervision is assured.
3. Each research student is supported by continuing supervisory arrangements, including:
  - a. a principal supervisor who holds a doctoral degree or has equivalent research experience, is active in research and is publishing in a relevant field or discipline
  - b. at least one associate supervisor with relevant research expertise, and
  - c. at least one of the supervisors is a member of the staff of the higher education provider or is otherwise formally contracted to the provider for supervisory duties.
4. Research students participate in an induction to research that includes codes of conduct, ethics, occupational health and safety, intellectual property and any additional matters that are necessary for the type of research to be undertaken.
5. Coursework that is formally included in a course of study that involves research training, whether as a component of or an adjunct to the research training, meets the academic governance and quality assurance requirements required of other coursework offered by the higher education provider.

<sup>20</sup> Section 4.1 is applicable to higher education providers that conduct research, or conduct research and offer research training.

<sup>21</sup> 'research-related activities' include research conducted as part of research training or a course of study leading to a Bachelor Honours qualification.

<sup>22</sup> The 'system for... recording of the research outputs' may be maintained by the higher education provider or maintained elsewhere (e.g. through electronic links to a remote database) and may include references to locations of physical outputs (e.g. a work of art).

<sup>23</sup> Section 4.2 is applicable to higher education providers that conduct research and offer research training that leads to a higher degree by research qualification.

<sup>24</sup> The 'supervisory and study environment' may exist solely within the higher education provider that offers research training or be created in collaboration with another party.

## Reference Points

- i. *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (Australian Government 2007).*
- ii. *Good Practice Principles of Graduate Research* developed by the Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Research.

## 5 Quality Assurance

### 5.1 Course Approval and Accreditation

1. A process for approval<sup>25</sup> or accreditation<sup>26</sup> of courses of study<sup>27</sup>, which is overseen by peak institutional academic governance processes, is established and applied consistently to all courses of study, before the courses are first offered and during re-approval or re-accreditation of the courses.
2. All self-accredited<sup>28</sup> courses of study are subject to a cycle of review and re-accreditation of not more than seven years.
3. A course of study is approved or accredited, or re-approved or re-accredited, only when:
  - a. the course of study meets, and continues to meet, the applicable Standards<sup>29</sup> of the *Higher Education Standards Framework*
  - b. the decision to (re-)approve or (re-)accredit a course of study is informed by academic oversight through a formal academic governance process that is independent of the staff involved in the design, delivery and assessment of the course of study, and
  - c. the resources required to deliver the course as approved or accredited will be available when needed.

### 5.2 Academic Integrity

1. There are policies to promote and uphold the academic integrity of higher education, research<sup>30</sup> and research training<sup>31</sup> activities, and policies and procedures to deal with misconduct and allegations of misconduct.
2. Preventative action is taken to address foreseeable risks to academic integrity including misrepresentation, fabrication, cheating, plagiarism and misuse of intellectual property and to prevent recurrences of breaches.
3. Students are provided with guidance to develop good practices in maintaining academic integrity and are informed about what constitutes academic misconduct.
4. Academic integrity and accountability for academic integrity are maintained in arrangements with any other party involved in the provision of higher education, including placements, collaborative research, research training and joint award of qualifications.

#### Reference Points

- i. Reports of studies on good practice in maintaining academic integrity commissioned by the Office for Learning and Teaching and the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (2011-2013).

### 5.3 Monitoring, Review and Improvement

1. All courses of study are subject to comprehensive reviews at least every seven years, which are overseen by peak academic governance processes and include

<sup>25</sup> 'process for approval' means the higher education provider's internal approval of a course of study, prior to seeking accreditation of the course by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA).

<sup>26</sup> 'accreditation' applies to courses of study that the higher education provider has authority to self-accredit.

<sup>27</sup> For the purposes of Standard 5.1.1 'approval' and 'accreditation' apply to courses of study, not to individual candidatures such as higher degrees by research.

<sup>28</sup> 'self-accredited' applies where the higher education provider has authority to self-accredit the course of study.

<sup>29</sup> As specified in Part C of the *Higher Education Standards Framework*.

<sup>30</sup> 'research' applies where the higher education provider conducts research.

<sup>31</sup> 'research training' applies where the higher education provider conducts research and research training.

external referencing or other benchmarking activities.

2. Comprehensive reviews of courses of study are informed and supported by more frequent monitoring<sup>32</sup> of the quality of teaching, supervision<sup>33</sup>, student progress and the overall delivery of units within each course of study.
3. Review and improvement activities include regular external referencing against comparable courses of study, including by referencing:
  - a. the progress of student cohorts through courses of study, attrition rates and completion times and rates, and
  - b. the grading of students' achievement of learning outcomes for selected units of study within courses of study.
4. Students have opportunities to provide feedback on their educational experiences and student feedback informs monitoring, review and improvement activities.
5. Staff<sup>34</sup> have opportunities to review feedback on their teaching and research supervision and are supported in enhancing these activities.
6. The results of regular monitoring, comprehensive reviews and external referencing are acted on to mitigate future risks to the quality of education provided and to guide and evaluate improvements, including the use of data on student progress and success to inform admission criteria and approaches to teaching, supervision, learning and academic support.

<sup>32</sup> 'more frequent monitoring' means at least every three years.

<sup>33</sup> 'supervision' applies to supervision of research students undertaking research training.

<sup>34</sup> For the purposes of Standard 5.3.5, 'staff' means anyone who teaches or supervises research training, even if not actually an employee of the higher education provider.

## 6 Governance

### 6.1 Corporate Governance

1. There is a formally constituted governing body that is accountable for and capable of governance oversight of all of the higher education provider's operations, including accountability for the award of higher education qualifications, for continuing to meet the requirements of the *Higher Education Standards Framework* and for the provider's representation of itself.
2. The governing body monitors the performance of the higher education provider and assures itself that the provider is operating effectively, including assurance that:
  - a. the governing body and the entity comply with the requirements of the legislation under which the provider is established or incorporated, any other legislative requirements and the entity's constitution or equivalent
  - b. the provider's future directions in higher education have been determined, performance targets have been established, progress against targets is monitored and action is taken to correct underperformance
  - c. the business model will maintain and sustain the quality of higher education that is offered
  - d. the financial position of the entity is monitored and understood, effective financial safeguards and controls are operating, financial statements are audited independently by a qualified auditor against Australian accounting and auditing standards and continuing financial viability is a reasonable expectation
  - e. mechanisms for competent academic governance of higher education provision and other academic activities have been implemented, are effective and operate according to an institutional academic governance policy framework
  - f. educational policies and practices support participation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and are sensitive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and culture
  - g. risks to higher education operations have been identified and material risks are being managed and mitigated effectively
  - h. qualifications are awarded legitimately through delegated authority
  - i. there are safeguards to mitigate disadvantage to students who are unable to progress in a course of study due to unexpected changes to the higher education provider's operations
  - j. the occurrence and nature of complaints, allegations of misconduct, breaches of academic integrity and critical incidents are monitored and action is taken to address underlying causes, and
  - k. lapses in compliance with the *Higher Education Standards Framework* are identified and monitored and corrective action is taken.
3. The governing body takes steps to create an organisational culture where freedom of intellectual enquiry is upheld and protected, students and staff are treated equitably, the wellbeing of students and staff is fostered, informed decision making by students is supported and students have opportunities to participate<sup>35</sup> in the deliberative and decision making processes of the higher education provider.
4. In carrying out its work the governing body attends to governance processes diligently including:

<sup>35</sup> Standard 6.1.3 does not require, nor does it preclude, student membership of the governing body or other governance structures of the higher education provider.

- a. obtaining and using such information and advice, including independent advice and academic advice, as is necessary for informed and competent decision making
- b. maintaining a true record of the business of the governing body, and
- c. undertaking or overseeing periodic<sup>36</sup> reviews and improvement of the effectiveness of the governing body and academic governance processes and ensuring that the findings of such reviews are considered by a competent body or officer(s) and agreed actions are implemented.

#### Reference Points

- i. *ASX Corporate Governance Principles (2010)*<sup>37</sup>.

## 6.2 Academic Governance

1. Processes and structures are established and responsibilities are assigned to provide governance of academic policies, to maintain academic oversight of the quality of teaching, learning, research<sup>38</sup> and research training<sup>39</sup> and to provide academically-informed advice to the corporate governing body on academic matters.
2. Academic oversight assures the quality of teaching, learning, research and research training by:
  - a. monitoring the implementation of academic policies
  - b. confirming that delegations of academic responsibility are observed
  - c. approving and accrediting<sup>40</sup>, or advising on approving and accrediting, courses of study and their associated qualifications
  - d. maintaining oversight of academic integrity
  - e. evaluating the quality and effectiveness of educational innovations or proposals for innovations
  - f. evaluating the monitoring, review and improvement of academic activities, and
  - g. reporting to the corporate governing body on the quality of teaching, learning, research and research training.
3. Students have opportunities to participate in academic governance.

<sup>36</sup> 'periodic' means at least every seven years.

<sup>37</sup> As amended from time to time.

<sup>38</sup> Where research is undertaken by the higher education provider.

<sup>39</sup> Where research and research training are undertaken by the higher education provider.

<sup>40</sup> 'accrediting' applies if the higher education provider has authority to self-accredit courses of study.

## 7 Representation, Information and Information Management

### 7.1 Representation

1. Representation of the higher education provider, its educational offerings and charges, whether directly or through agents or other parties, is accurate and not misleading.
2. Courses or units of study that are offered or intended to be offered are not described as accredited<sup>41</sup> until such accreditation has been obtained.
3. Where units of study are offered separately from a course of study and are represented as eligible for gaining credit towards a course of study or a qualification:
  - a. the course(s) of study and qualification(s) for which credit may be gained are specified, and
  - b. the terms on which credit may be granted are defined.
4. Agents and other parties that are involved in representing the higher education provider are bound by formal contracts, their performance is monitored and prompt corrective action is taken in the event or likelihood of misrepresentation or unethical conduct.
5. Representations, whether expressed or implied, about the outcomes associated with undertaking a course of study, eligibility for acceptance into another course of study, employment outcomes or possible migration outcomes are not false or misleading.

#### Reference Points

- i. *National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2007 (The National Code 2007)*.
- ii. *Statement of Principles for the Ethical Recruitment of International Students by Education Agents and Consultants (The London Statement), 2012*.

### 7.2 Information for Students<sup>42</sup>

1. Accurate, relevant and timely information<sup>43</sup> for students is publicly available and accessible<sup>44</sup> to enable informed decision making about educational offerings and experiences.
2. There are policies and processes to ensure information and advice given to overseas students and decisions taken in relation to overseas students meet statutory requirements.
3. Students are given reasonable notice of changes to a higher education provider's operations and any consequences that may affect their choice of, or ability to participate in, an intended course(s) of study.

### 7.3 Information Management<sup>45</sup>

1. There is a repository of current publicly available information about the higher education provider's operations, which includes a list of all higher education courses of study that are offered.

<sup>41</sup> 'accredited' includes accreditation by a professional body if such accreditation is required for eligibility to practise.

<sup>42</sup> For the purposes of Section 7.2, 'students' includes prospective and current students.

<sup>43</sup> Information written in plain English where practicable, and accompanied by an explanation of any technical or specialised terms that are used.

<sup>44</sup> 'accessible' includes access for students with special needs.

<sup>45</sup> Information required by Section 7.3 may be made available indirectly such as through a website link, provided the information remains accessible and such links are maintained by the higher education provider.

2. Information systems and records are maintained, securely and confidentially as necessary to:
  - a. maintain accurate records of enrolments, progression, completions and award of qualifications
  - b. prevent unauthorised or fraudulent access to private or sensitive information, including information where unauthorised access may compromise academic integrity
  - c. document and record responses to complaints, allegations of misconduct, breaches of academic integrity and critical incidents, and
  - d. demonstrate accountability against the *Higher Education Standards Framework*.

## **PART B: Criteria for Higher Education Providers**

### **Explanatory Note in Relation to PART B:**

Part B: As outlined in the background paper to this Call for Comment, the Higher Education Standards Panel has identified aspects of the current Threshold Standards that relate to certain characteristics of providers, such as provider category and self-accrediting authority, which are not necessarily related directly to the quality and outcomes of the education they provide.

The purpose of Part B of the Framework is to separate out these characteristics of providers, or potential providers, from the Standards that are applicable to the education they provide (as encompassed by the Standards for Higher Education in Part A of the Framework).

This is seen to be both a logical and a practical separation; the two Parts (A & B) of the Framework typically serve different purposes, both for providers and for regulation. All providers that carry out the activities encompassed by the Standards for Higher Education (Part A) are expected to meet those Standards, irrespective of how a particular provider is categorised or whether or not it has authority to self-accredit courses.

Part B1: The Panel believes there are benefits to providers and regulation in bringing together and streamlining the eligibility requirements for application for initial registration as a higher education provider into a single set of Criteria as set out in Part B1. This is intended as a streamlining exercise; no new requirements are imposed.

Part B2: The Criteria for Granting Authority for 'Self-Accreditation', which are currently located within the Course Accreditation Standards, have also been streamlined and incorporated in Part B2, as described in the Background Paper to the Call for Comment. The revised criteria still retain some criteria concerning a provider's 'track record'. However, where the intent of the criteria relates to provision of higher education, the revised criteria now simply point to the relevant Standards in Part A of the Framework, rather than invoke other 'standards-like' criteria. The Panel believes that the revised criteria are now streamlined and will, by direct reference to Standards, reduce potential regulatory burden. For consistency in the architecture of the proposed Framework, Part C specifies the relevant Standards for this purpose. Thus the Criteria in Part B2 are intended to be read together with Part C4 of the Framework for regulatory purposes.

Part B3 is intended to incorporate the intent of the former Provider Category Standards, i.e. the classification of providers. The Panel has commenced its review of the Provider Category Standards but is not yet in a position to provide material for comment. Feedback on the proposed Part B3 of the Framework, or the current Provider Category Standards, is thus not being sought in this round of consultation.

## Introduction to Part B

This Part of the *Higher Education Standards Framework* (the *Framework*) sets out criteria for higher education providers for the following regulatory purposes:

- determining eligibility to apply for initial registration as a higher education provider
- granting authority for self-accreditation of courses of study, and
- classification of different types of higher education providers.

## PART B1: Criteria for Eligibility to Make an Initial Application for Registration as a Higher Education Provider<sup>46</sup> in Australia

An applicant is eligible to apply for registration as a higher education provider in Australia if:

1. The applicant is an entity of a type consistent with the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011* (TEQSA Act 2011).
2. A principal purpose of the entity to be registered is the provision of higher education in or from Australia.
3. The applicant has a governing body and a constitution (or equivalent) that meets the requirements of the instrument under which the applicant is established or incorporated.
4. Members of the governing body meet the Australian residency requirements, if any, of the instrument under which the applicant is established or incorporated, or otherwise there are at least two members of the governing body who are ordinarily resident in Australia.
5. The applicant has, or will have, operations and staffing in Australia for the delivery of higher education.
6. The members of the governing body are fit and proper persons<sup>47</sup>.
7. The applicant has fulfilled, and is reasonably expected to continue to fulfil, its regulatory obligations as a corporation in Australia, if applicable.
8. The applicant applies for accreditation of a higher education course of study at the time of application for registration as a higher education provider in Australia, and tenably expects to commence delivery of an accredited course of study in or from Australia from the date of commencement of its registration as a higher education provider.
9. The applicant is not engaged in, or reasonably expected to be engaged in, any proceedings or actions that may jeopardise its intended delivery of higher education.
10. The application for registration discloses accurately and in full:
  - a. the registered name of the applicant entity and trading name if different
  - b. the ownership of the entity
  - c. any parent entities, predecessors and other related entities
  - d. the entity's constitution
  - e. the members of the governing body
  - f. the higher education course(s) of study and qualification(s) that are proposed to be offered initially
  - g. other parties with whom it is proposed to deliver higher education in Australia and overseas, if applicable

<sup>46</sup> All categories of higher education provider.

<sup>47</sup> As defined by TEQSA from time to time.

- h. other educational activities undertaken or proposed in Australia or overseas
- i. any previous applications for approval to provide higher education in Australia or overseas made by the applicant or related entities and any conditions imposed on such approvals if granted
- j. if approval to offer higher education has ever been withdrawn from the applicant or related entities
- k. if any serious offences have been committed by the applicant or related entities in Australia or overseas, and
- l. such other information as may be requested by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA).

## **PART B2: Criteria for Granting Authority for ‘Self-accreditation’ of Courses of Study**

1. Each higher education provider that is registered in the ‘Australian University’ provider category and meets the requirements under Section 45(1) of the *TEQSA Act 2011*, is authorised under the *TEQSA Act 2011* to self-accredit each course of study that leads to a higher education qualification that it offers or confers.
2. For a higher education provider that is approved by TEQSA for registration in the ‘Australian University College’ provider category, TEQSA will authorise the higher education provider to self-accredit all courses of study.
3. For a higher education provider that is approved by TEQSA for registration in the ‘Australian University of Specialisation’ provider category, TEQSA may authorise the higher education provider to self-accredit all courses of study in its one or two broad fields of study only.
4. For a higher education provider that is approved by TEQSA for registration in the ‘Higher Education Provider’, ‘Overseas University’ and ‘Overseas University of Specialisation’ provider category, TEQSA may authorise the higher education provider to self-accredit a course of study or courses of study, at one or more higher education qualification levels, and in one or more broad fields of education or discipline areas, if the following criteria are met:
  - 4.1 the higher education provider has a history of successful operation of the course(s) of study it delivers
  - 4.2 at least three cohorts of students have graduated from the course(s) of study, and
  - 4.3 the higher education provider has no issues or conditions outstanding from its most recent registration and course accreditations by TEQSA or a recognised registration or accreditation authority, and has no history of significant compliance problems in any other assessments, audits or reviews of its higher education operations conducted by TEQSA, external professional bodies or government agencies,

**having regard to the relevant Standards for Higher Education as specified in Part C4.**

## PART B3: Criteria for Higher Education Provider Categories

### Note in Relation to Provider Category Standards:

At the time of the release of this consultation draft of the proposed *Higher Education Standards Framework* (the *Framework*), preliminary work on a review of the 'categories' of higher education providers had commenced.

This review may lead to changes in the categorisation of higher education providers that will have flow-on effects on the *Framework*.

Because of the timing of the review of provider categories, the Higher Education Standards Panel has decided:

1. not to include a detailed review of the current Provider Category Standards as part of this consultation
2. to retain the substantive content of the current Provider Category Standards essentially unchanged (as Part B3 of the *Framework*), except for any editorial amendments that are necessary to maintain consistency with the style and content of the revised *Framework*, and
3. to revisit the relevant section of the *Framework* when the results of the review of provider categories are known.

## PART C: Application of the *Higher Education Standards Framework* for Regulatory Purposes

### Explanatory Note in Relation to PART C:

The current standards for regulatory purposes are the Threshold Standards. Under the *TEQSA Act 2011* all registered providers must meet the Threshold Standards as a condition of registration (Section 21) and the regulator is empowered to assess whether a provider continues to meet the Threshold Standards (Section 59). The Threshold Standards are also subdivided for regulatory purposes, particularly for registration and course accreditation purposes.

The proposed *Higher Education Standards Framework* (the *Framework*), particularly the proposed Standards for Higher Education (Part A), is structured according to the characteristics of higher education, rather than specific external regulatory purposes. The Panel intends the Standards to be useful to providers as a framework for internal monitoring of their activities, not just for external regulatory purposes. A structure based on provision and outcomes of higher education is seen to be better suited to these dual purposes.

As a consequence of not sub-dividing the proposed Standards for Higher Education according to regulatory purposes, the Panel has identified a need to specify which Standards have been designed to be most relevant to the regulatory purposes of registration and course accreditation. The purpose of Part C of the *Framework* is to provide that specification for those regulatory purposes.

The Panel believes that it has specified subsets of the Standards for Higher Education in a way that supports a particular regulatory purpose while presenting only a minimum regulatory burden for that purpose. Indeed, the Panel believes that providers will wish to meet the specified Standards as part of their internal monitoring in the ordinary course of their higher education activities.

This approach does not imply that all of the specified Standards are to be applied instrumentally for every regulatory assessment. A regulatory assessment is required to *have regard to* the specified Standards, but nothing in the proposed specifications precludes discretionary application of the specified Standards according to the context of individual providers and the basic principles of regulation (as articulated in the *TEQSA Act 2011*), to achieve the least regulatory burden.

Specification of the application of particular standards for the regulatory purposes of registration and course accreditation does not absolve registered providers from the requirement of the *TEQSA Act 2011* to meet, and continue to meet, the Standards for Higher Education in their entirety, as is the case with the current Threshold Standards. The *TEQSA Act 2011* provides for the regulator to examine any aspect of a higher education provider's operations for the purpose compliance assessments outside of the particular regulatory purposes of registration and course accreditation.

In commending the approach set out in Part B, the Panel has taken note of requests from the sector that the Standards themselves should contain an indication of their application for regulatory purposes. Feedback on the utility and content of Part C is invited as part of any overall feedback given on the proposed *Framework*.

## Introduction to Part C

The *Higher Education Standards Framework* (the *Framework*) is to be applied for external regulatory purposes by TEQSA according to the Basic Principles for Regulation outlined in the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011* (*TEQSA Act 2011*):

- the principle of regulatory necessity
- the principle of reflecting risk, and
- the principle of proportionate regulation.

This Part of the *Framework* sets out the intended application of the *Framework* for certain specific regulatory purposes, within the overarching context of the Objects and Basic Principles for Regulation of the *TEQSA Act 2011*. The specific regulatory purposes encompassed by this Part of the *Framework* are:

- determining eligibility to apply for initial registration as a higher education provider
- initial registration of a higher education provider
- initial accreditation of a course(s) of study
- classification of registered higher education providers into particular categories of provider
- granting authority to a higher education provider for self-accreditation of one or more course(s) of study, and
- re-registration of a higher education provider or re-accreditation of a course(s) of study.

It is the responsibility of TEQSA to determine the scope of its regulatory activity, having regard to the requirements of the *TEQSA Act 2011* and the circumstances of individual higher education providers. Notwithstanding that responsibility, this Part of the *Framework* specifies those aspects of the *Framework* that have been designed to apply for particular regulatory purposes with a minimum of regulatory burden on higher education providers.

In accordance with the Basic Principles for Regulation of the *TEQSA Act 2011*, the *Framework* is not intended to be applied more broadly or in its entirety for external regulatory purposes, other than in extraordinary or exceptional circumstances accompanied by significant risk. Nonetheless, registered higher education providers are required to comply with the *Framework* as relevant to their operations at all times and TEQSA is able to draw on any part of the *Framework* to assess compliance according to risk.

## **PART C1: Determining Eligibility to Apply for Initial Registration as a Higher Education Provider**

A regulatory decision determining the eligibility of an application for registration as a higher education provider will have regard to the Criteria for this purpose specified at Part B1 of the *Framework*.

## PART C2: Initial Registration of a Higher Education Provider and Accreditation of an Initial Course of Study<sup>48</sup>

A higher education provider registered under the *TEQSA Act 2011* must deliver at least one accredited course of study. Regulatory consideration of an application for initial registration as a higher education provider will include consideration of an application for accreditation of an initial course of study that is proposed to be delivered by the provider.

A regulatory decision in relation to initial registration of a higher education provider will have regard to the Standards for Higher Education (Part A of the *Framework*) specified at Table C2, taking account of the Basic Principles for Regulation as articulated (Section 13) and elaborated (Sections 14-16) in the *TEQSA Act 2011*.

Regulatory decision making in relation to initial registration of a higher education provider will also have regard to the maturity of a provider's operations. In the case of developing higher education providers, regulatory decision making is to take account of:

- the higher education provider's actual stage of development
- developments that are necessarily in prospect, and
- the higher education provider's capacity to realise those prospective developments.

A regulatory decision in relation to accreditation of an initial course of study will have regard to the Standards for Higher Education (Part A of the *Framework*) specified at Table C2, taking account of the Basic Principles for Regulation as articulated (Section 13) and elaborated (Sections 14-16) in the *TEQSA Act 2011*.

**Table C2: Initial Registration of a Higher Education Provider and Accreditation of an Initial Course of Study**

Higher Education Standards	Applicable Standards (Registration) <sup>49</sup>	Applicable Standards (Accreditation)	Comments in Relation to Accreditation
<b>1. Student Participation and Attainment</b>			
1.1 Admission		1.1.1	As applicable to the particular <u>course of study</u> .
1.2 Credit and Recognition of Prior Learning		1.2.2	As applicable to the particular <u>course of study</u> .
1.3 Orientation and Transition		1.3.2	If not already encompassed by 3.1-3.3.
1.4 Progression	1.4.3	1.4.1	If not already encompassed by 3.1-3.3.
1.5 Learning Outcomes and Assessment		•	1.5.5-1.5.7 only for <u>Higher Degrees by Research</u> .
1.6 Qualifications and Certification		1.6.2-1.6.5	1.6.3 <u>testamur</u> only.
<b>2. Learning Environment</b>			
2.1 Facilities	•	2.1.1	As applicable to the particular <u>course of study</u> .
2.2 Diversity and Equity		•	
2.3 Wellbeing and Safety	•		

• = Whole Section Applicable

<sup>48</sup> Applicable to external accreditation of a course of study for higher education providers that do not have authority to self-accredit the course of study.

<sup>49</sup> To the extent that the higher education provider is able to meet the Standards at this stage of its development or, for those Standards that are contingent on operating and delivering higher education, the provider is able to demonstrate a capacity to meet the Standards in future.

Higher Education Standards	Applicable Standards (Registration) <sup>48</sup>	Applicable Standards (Accreditation)	Comments in Relation to Accreditation
2.4 Student Grievances and Complaints	•		
<b>3. Teaching</b>			
3.1 Course Design		•	
3.2 Course Delivery		•	Professional accreditation (3.1.5) does not need to proceed ahead of regulatory accreditation, but is a condition of it.
3.3 Learning Resources	3.3.2, 3.3.3	3.3.1, 3.3.4	
<b>4. Research and Research Training</b>			
4.1 Research	• <sup>50</sup>	•	Bachelor Honours Degrees and Higher Degrees by Research only.
4.2 Research Training	• <sup>51</sup>	•	Higher Degrees by Research only.
<b>5. Quality Assurance</b>			
5.1 Course Approval and Accreditation	• <sup>52</sup>	5.1.1, 5.1.3	As applicable to the particular <u>course of study</u> .
5.2 Academic Integrity	• <sup>53</sup>	•	As applicable to the particular <u>course of study</u> .
5.3 Monitoring, Review and Improvement	• <sup>54</sup>	5.3.4	Mechanisms for students to provide feedback only.
<b>6. Governance</b>			
6.1 Corporate Governance	•	6.1.2c, h, i	As applicable to the particular <u>course of study</u> .
6.2 Academic Governance	•	6.2.2e	If applicable to the particular <u>course of study</u> .
<b>7. Representation, Information and Information Management</b>			
7.1 Representation	•	7.1.1	As applicable to the particular <u>course of study</u> .
7.2 Information for Students	• <sup>55</sup>	7.2.1	As specified in <u>D/E 13.a</u> .
7.3 Information Management	•		

• = Whole Section Applicable

<sup>50</sup> If research or research and research training are conducted.

<sup>51</sup> If research training is conducted.

<sup>52</sup> Course of study approval only, unless self-accrediting.

<sup>53</sup> As applies to all courses of study.

<sup>54</sup> Proposed processes only.

<sup>55</sup> Standard is 7.2.2 applicable only if overseas students are enrolled.

## PART C3: Accreditation of a Course of Study for a Registered Higher Education Provider

A regulatory decision in relation to accreditation of a further course(s) of study for a higher education provider that is already registered (*i.e.* already has at least one accredited course of study as per Part C2) will have regard to the Standards for Higher Education (Part A of the Framework) specified at Table C3, taking account of the Basic Principles for Regulation as articulated (Section 13) and elaborated (Section 14-16) in the TEQSA Act 2011 and the provider's history of accreditation and delivery of other courses of study.

**Table C3: Accreditation of a Course of Study for a Registered Higher Education Provider**

Higher Education Standards	Applicable Standards <sup>56</sup>	Comments
<b>1. Student Participation and Attainment</b>		
1.1 Admission	1.1.1	As applicable to the particular <u>course of study</u> .
1.2 Credit and Recognition of Prior Learning	1.2.2	As applicable to the particular <u>course of study</u> .
1.3 Orientation and Transition	1.3.2	If not already encompassed by 3.1-3.3.
1.4 Progression	1.4.1	If not already encompassed by 3.1-3.3.
1.5 Learning Outcomes and Assessment	●	1.5.5-1.5.7 only for <u>Higher Degrees by Research</u> .
1.6 Qualifications and Certification	1.6.2-1.6.5	1.6.3 <u>testamur</u> only.
<b>2. Learning Environment</b>		
2.1 Facilities	2.1.1	As applicable to the particular <u>course of study</u> .
2.2 Diversity and Equity	●	
<b>3. Teaching</b>		
3.1 Course Design	●	
3.2 Course Delivery	●	Professional accreditation (3.1.5) does not need to proceed ahead of regulatory accreditation, but is a condition of it.
3.3 Learning Resources	3.3.1, 3.3.4	
<b>4. Research and Research Training</b>		
4.1 Research	●	Bachelor Honours Degrees and <u>Higher Degrees by Research</u> only.
4.2 Research Training	●	<u>Higher Degrees by Research</u> only.
<b>5. Quality Assurance</b>		
5.1 Course Approval and Accreditation	5.1.1, 5.1.3	As apply to 'Approval' only, where not already demonstrated.
5.2 Academic Integrity	●	As applicable to the particular <u>course of study</u> .
5.3 Monitoring, Review and Improvement	5.3.4	Mechanisms for students to provide feedback only.
<b>6. Governance</b>		
6.1 Corporate Governance	6.1.2c, h, i	6.1.2h and 6.1.2i if not already demonstrated.
6.2 Academic Governance	6.2.2e	If applicable to the particular <u>course of study</u> .
<b>7. Representation, Information and Information Management</b>		
7.1 Representation	7.1.1	As applicable to the particular <u>course of study</u> .
7.2 Information for Students	7.2.1	As specified in <u>D/E 13.a</u> .

● = Whole Section Applicable

<sup>56</sup> Specific to the particular course of study, to the extent that the higher education provider has not already demonstrated it has met the Standards e.g. for the purposes of accreditation of another relevant course(s) of study.

## PART C4: Granting Authority for Self-accreditation of a Course(s) of Study

A regulatory decision in relation to granting authority for self-accreditation of courses of study will have regard to the Criteria for this purpose specified at Part B2 of the *Framework*, as well as the Standards for Higher Education (Part A of the *Framework*) specified at Table C4, taking account of the likelihood of the higher education provider continuing to meet these Standards.

**Table C4: Granting Authority for Self-accreditation of a Course(s) of Study**

Higher Education Standards	Applicable Standards <sup>57</sup>	Comments
<b>1. Student Participation and Attainment</b>		
1.1 Admission	1.1.1	
1.2 Credit and Recognition of Prior Learning	1.2.1, 1.2.2	
1.3 Orientation and Transition	1.3.1, 1.3.2	
1.6 Qualifications and Certification	•	
<b>3. Teaching</b>		
3.1 Course Design	3.1.2, 3.1.5	
3.2 Course Delivery	3.2.2b-d, 3.2.4, 3.2.5	As applicable to all self-accredited courses of study.
<b>4. Research and Research Training</b>		
4.1 Research	•	If <u>research training</u> is offered.
4.2 Research Training	•	If <u>research training</u> is offered.
<b>5. Quality Assurance</b>		
5.1 Course Approval and Accreditation	•	As applicable to all self-accredited courses of study.
5.2 Academic Integrity	•	As applicable to all self-accredited courses of study.
5.3 Monitoring, Review and Improvement	•	As applicable to all self-accredited courses of study.
<b>6. Governance</b>		
6.1 Corporate Governance	6.1.2c, e, j, k 6.1.4c	
6.2 Academic Governance	•	
<b>7. Representation, Information and Information Management</b>		
7.1 Representation	7.1.2	
7.2 Information for Students	•	7.2.2 is applicable only if <u>overseas students</u> are enrolled.

• = Whole Section Applicable

<sup>57</sup> Specifically to the extent that the higher education provider has not already demonstrated that it has met the Standards e.g. for the purposes of internal approval of relevant course(s) of study.

## PART C5: Re-registration of a Higher Education Provider or Re-accreditation of a Course(s) of Study

A regulatory decision in relation to re-registration of a higher education provider or re-accreditation of a course(s) of study will have regard to:

- the Objects (Section 3) of the *TEQSA Act 2011*
- the Basic Principles for Regulation as articulated (Section 13) and elaborated (Sections 14-16) in the *TEQSA Act 2011*
- the higher education provider's recent history and its performance since its previous registration or accreditation, and
- the higher education provider's capacity to monitor its operations internally, having regard in particular to the Standards for Higher Education (Part A of the Framework) specified at Table C5<sup>58</sup>.

**Table C5: Re-registration of a Higher Education Provider or Re-accreditation of a Course(s) of Study**

Higher Education Standards	Applicable Standards <sup>59</sup>	Comments
<b>4. Research and Research Training</b>		
4.1 Research	•	If research or research and <u>research training</u> are offered.
4.2 Research Training	4.2.1	If <u>research training</u> is offered.
<b>5. Quality Assurance</b>		
5.1 Course Approval and Accreditation	•	
5.3 Monitoring, Review and Improvement	•	
<b>6. Governance</b>		
6.1 Corporate Governance	6.1.2, 6.1.3, 6.1.4b, c	
6.2 Academic Governance	•	
<b>7. Representation, Information and Information Management</b>		
7.1 Representation	•	
7.2 Information for Students	•	
7.3 Information Management	•	

• = Whole Section Applicable

<sup>58</sup> In the case of a mature higher education provider with a positive history, managed risks and a demonstrable capability for effective internal monitoring of its higher education operations as evidenced in relation to the Standards specified at Table C5, detailed regulatory application of the remainder of the Standards for Higher Education would ordinarily not be warranted.

<sup>59</sup> As applicable to re-registration of all higher education providers and re-accreditation of courses of study for non-self-accrediting higher education providers.

## PART D: Definitions and Explanations of Terms

### Introduction to Part D

This part of the *Higher Education Standards Framework* defines and/or elaborates particular terms and concepts in Parts A-C, including those that have a specialised meaning in this particular context.

Where a term used in the Standards for Higher Education ([Part A](#)) is defined by a set of characteristics, those characteristics form part of the Standards Statement to which they refer. For example, 'Course Design Specification' lists the features of the design that are to be included in the specification of the design of a course of study.

#### D/E 1. Australian Higher Education Qualifications

Australian Higher Education Qualifications include:

Higher Doctoral Degree *†
Doctoral Degree *†
Masters Degree (Research) *†
Masters Degree (Coursework) *
Masters Degree (Extended) *
Graduate Diploma *
Graduate Certificate *
Bachelor Honours Degree
Bachelor Degree
Associate Degree
Advanced Diploma
Diploma

\* = 'Higher Degrees', also known as 'postgraduate degrees/qualifications'

† = 'Higher Degrees by Research'

or such other qualification included in levels 5-10 of the *Australian Qualifications Framework*. Australian Higher Education Qualifications are awarded only by higher education providers registered under the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011 (TEQSA Act 2011)*.

#### D/E 2. Changes to a (the) Higher Education Provider's Operations

Changes to a higher education provider's operations include where the higher education provider ceases to offer a course of study, loses accreditation for a course of study by the relevant professional body, is unable to continue to offer supervision or resources for research training, ceases to operate as a provider, or is otherwise unable to deliver a course of study as offered.

Changes to a higher education provider's operations also include changes to the delivery of a course of study that may affect the participation of students in their chosen course of study, such as significant changes to the content of the course, deletion of opportunities for expected specialisations or majors, changes to the locations of delivery that have a significant impact on access, altered modes of participation or delivery, limitations or withdrawal of learning support, additional requirements for completion and unheralded increases in fees or associated costs, such as requirements for new technology.

### **D/E 3. Comprehensive Reviews**

Comprehensive reviews and related improvement activities include the design and content of each course of study, the expected learning outcomes, the methods for assessment of those outcomes, the extent of students' achievement of learning outcomes; and take account of emerging developments in the field of education, modes of delivery and the changing needs of students.

### **D/E 4. Conditions of Enrolment and Participation**

Conditions of enrolment and participation that may apply to individual students or courses of study include any requirements for undertaking particular courses of study that may not apply to other courses more generally, such as health requirements for students undertaking clinical work, requirements for security checks, particular language requirements and particular requirements of work placements.

### **D/E 5. Course of Study**

Courses of study are a coherent sequence of units of study leading to the award of a qualification(s). The use of 'course of study' in the Standards includes both coursework and higher degree by research programs unless otherwise specified. Courses of study are sometimes known as 'programs'.

### **D/E 6. Course Design Specification**

Course design specification includes:

- a. the qualification(s) to be awarded on completion
- b. structure, duration and modes of delivery
- c. the units of study (or equivalent) that comprise the course of study
- d. entry requirements and pathways
- e. expected learning outcomes, methods of assessment and indicative student workload,
- f. compulsory requirements for completion
- g. exit pathways, articulation arrangements, pathways to further learning, and
- h. for a course of study leading to a Bachelor Honours, Masters or Doctoral qualification, includes the proportion and nature of research or research-related study (e.g. units of study relating to research methods) in the course.

### **D/E 7. Credit for Prior Learning**

'Credit' is interpreted broadly to include specified and unspecified credit, exemptions, advanced standing, credit transfers and other similar outcomes.

### **D/E 8. Graduation Statement**

A graduation statement is an official record of completion of a course of study and the award of a qualification. It contains, in relation to the particular course of study and the qualification awarded, the information contained in a record of results, and is presented

in a form that conforms with the requirements<sup>60</sup> for an Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement.

**D/E 9. Higher Degree**

A higher degree means a Higher Doctoral Degree, a Doctoral Degree, a Masters Degree, a Graduate Diploma or a Graduate Certificate. A Bachelor Honours Degree is not classified as a higher degree. A higher degree is sometimes known as a 'postgraduate degree/qualification'.

**D/E 10. Higher Degree by Research**

A higher degree by research means a Higher Doctoral Degree, a Doctoral Degree or a Masters Degree in which research constitutes at least two thirds of the course of study and the course of study leads to an original contribution to the field of research and/or practice. A Bachelor Honours Degree is not classified as a higher degree by research. A higher degree by research is sometimes known as a 'research degree/qualification' or a 'postgraduate degree/qualification'.

**D/E 11. Higher Education Provider**

A Higher Education Provider is a provider that is registered under the *TEQSA Act 2011*.

**D/E 12. Information about the Higher Education Provider's Operations**

Information about the higher education provider's operations includes:

- a. the registered name of the higher education provider, trading name if different, regulatory status and authority to provide courses to overseas students
- b. the instrument establishing the entity
- c. the members of the governing body and senior executive
- d. a high-level organisational chart that includes the organisational units that deliver courses of study, such as schools or faculties
- e. the locations at which higher education is offered, including overseas if applicable
- f. an overview of teaching campuses, facilities, learning resources and services provided for students
- g. arrangements with other parties to deliver courses of study or to conduct research training
- h. the three most recent annual reports
- i. how to lodge a complaint about the higher education provider, and
- j. contact details.

**D/E 13. Information for Students**

Information available to students includes:

**a. Information to assist in decisions about courses or units of study**

This includes course design specifications, when and where courses/units are offered, application dates, arrangements for recognition of prior learning, standing credit transfer arrangements, pathways to employment and eligibility for registration to practise if applicable.

**b. Information to assist in planning for and participation in educational and other activities**

This includes contact points and advice about orientation and induction, delivery

<sup>60</sup> *Guidelines for the Presentation of the Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement (April 2013)*.

arrangements, technical requirements for access to IT systems for online activities, timetables, access to learning resources, avenues to participate in decision making and opportunities to participate in student representative bodies.

**c. Information to outline the obligations of students and their liabilities to the higher education provider**

This includes expected standards of behaviour, financial obligations to the higher education provider, critical deadlines, policies for deferral, change of preference/enrolment and leave of absence, particular obligations of overseas students, disciplinary procedures, misconduct and grounds for suspension or exclusion.

**d. Information to give access to current academic governance policies and requirements**

This includes admission, recognition of prior learning, transition, progression, assessment, grading, completion, qualifications, appeals, academic integrity, equity and diversity, intellectual property and withdrawal from or cancellation of enrolment.

**e. Information to facilitate access to services and support**

This includes the types of services available such as educational resources including English language support, personal support services, cultural support and ancillary services, hours of availability, how to access services and emergency contact details where applicable.

**f. Information to assist in resolution of grievances**

This includes an explanation of grievance-resolution, complaints and internal and external appeals processes, guidance on how to participate in the processes and sources of assistance including advocacy.

**g. Information to assist overseas students studying in Australia if applicable**

This includes indicative costs of living and studying in Australia, accommodation options, arrangements for health care and, where applicable, schooling obligations related to school-aged dependants (including the possibility that school fees may be incurred).

**D/E 14. Institutional Research Training Policy Framework**

An institutional research training policy framework includes:

- a. the rights and responsibilities of research students and supervisors
- b. induction and orientation of research students and supervisors
- c. monitoring and maintaining research student progress
- d. assessment and examination of students' work
- e. the independence of examiners
- f. presentation and communication of research outputs, and
- g. resolution of disputes.

**D/E 15. List of All Higher Education Courses of Study**

A list of all higher education courses of study includes:

- a. the accreditation status of each course of study
- b. the qualification(s) offered
- c. whether the qualification is recognised in the Australian Qualifications Framework

- d. confirmation of recognition of each course of study by the relevant professional body(ies) if such recognition is required for registration of graduates to practise
- e. whether each course of study is authorised to be offered to overseas students
- f. the location(s) where each course of study is offered, and
- g. the organisational unit(s) responsible for the delivery of each course of study.

**D/E 16. Overseas Student**

An overseas student is a person who holds a student visa for higher education study within Australia.

**D/E 17. Record of Results**

A record of results certifies study undertaken with a higher education provider. It records correctly:

- a. the registered name of the higher education provider issuing the record of results
- b. the full name of all courses and units of study undertaken and when they were undertaken and completed
- c. credit granted through recognition of prior learning
- d. the weighting of units within courses of study
- e. the grades and/or marks awarded for each unit of study undertaken and, if applicable, for the course overall
- f. where grades are issued, an explanation of the grading system used
- g. where a course of study includes a significant particular focus of study such as honours, an area of specialisation or a major study, a definition of that component of significant focus
- h. the full name of the person to whom the record applies
- i. the date of issue
- j. any parts of a course or units of study or assessment that were conducted in a language other than English<sup>52</sup>, and
- k. the name and office of the person authorised by the higher education provider to issue the record of results.

A record of results may be called a 'statement of attainment', but must include the same information as a record of results.

**D/E 18. Reference Point**

Reference Points are significant codes or frameworks that the Higher Education Standards Panel judges to be of relevance to higher education providers in considering how particular Standards for Higher Education may be met or demonstrated.

Reference Points are an adjunct to the Standards for Higher Education but are not themselves Standards Statements. Use of the Reference Points by higher education providers is not mandatory; the Standards do not require a provider to consult the Reference Points or to comply with positions advocated within the Reference Points. The items listed as Reference Points are generally developed and maintained by peak national bodies and agencies.

**D/E 19. Research Training**

Research training means a course(s) of study leading to a higher degree by research.

#### **D/E 20. Safeguards to Mitigate Disadvantage to Students**

Safeguards to mitigate disadvantage to students include contingency plans for transition to an equivalent course of study where practicable and/or refund of tuition fees and other charges paid in advance for services not delivered, whether by the higher education provider or through a tuition protection scheme.

#### **D/E 21. Secure Certification Documentation**

Secure certification documentation, including testamurs, records of results, statements of attainment and graduation statements, is:

- a. unambiguously issued by the higher education provider
- b. readily distinguishable from other certification documents issued by the higher education provider
- c. protected against fraudulent issue
- d. traceable and authenticable
- e. designed to prevent unauthorised reproduction, and
- f. replaceable by the higher education provider through an authorised and verifiable process.

#### **D/E 22. Testamur**

A testamur is a document that certifies the award of a qualification. It states correctly:

- a. the registered name of the higher education provider awarding the qualification and issuing the testamur
- b. the full title of the qualification awarded, including the field or discipline of study
- c. any subsidiary component of the qualification (such as integrated honours, an area of specialisation or a major study)
- d. the full name of the person who has been awarded the qualification
- e. the date of issue
- f. if any parts of the course of study or assessment leading to the qualification were conducted in a language other than English<sup>61</sup>
- g. the name and office of the person authorised by the higher education provider to issue the testamur, and
- h. where applicable, certification<sup>62</sup> that the qualification is recognised in the *Australian Qualifications Framework*.

#### **D/E 23. Unit of Study**

Units of study are the components of study that collectively constitute a course of study. Units are sometimes known as 'subjects' or 'modules'. In some cases units of study may be offered for stand-alone study rather than as part of a course of study.

<sup>61</sup> This does not include the use of another language to develop proficiency in that language.

<sup>62</sup> Optional if a graduation statement containing this certification is issued.





29 April 2014

# Erratum

## Proposed *Higher Education Standards Framework*

In the Proposed *Higher Education Standards Framework* Consultation Draft:

- Page 37 of 38 contains incorrect footnote number 52. On page 37, Definition/Explanation 17.j should read:

“j. any parts of a course or units of study or assessment that were conducted in a language other than English<sup>61</sup>, and”.

