

Senate Standing Committee on Economics
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education Portfolio
Additional Estimates Hearing 2011-12
15 February 2012

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY, INNOVATION, SCIENCE, RESEARCH AND TERTIARY EDUCATION

TOPIC: 2011 HERDC and online publications

REFERENCE: Written Question – Senator Mason

QUESTION No.: AI-188

At the Supplementary Estimates, the issue of how online publications are reported was raised, in particular online theses, and how these have been handled under the 2011 Higher Education Research Data Collection process. I understood, in effect, that a new definition that excluded online theses would be prepared for 2012, to avoid a repeat of the situation where one university used the expansive definition of online publications to include online theses in their count.

Please provide an update on the status of this issue, and confirm whether the new parameters or new definition have yet been worked out? If so, how does the new definition address last year's problem?

ANSWER

The Higher Education Research Data Collection (HERDC) Specifications are updated each year in close consultation with the sector. Following a consultation process and endorsement by Universities Australia the Department released the 2012 Specifications in January. The 2012 specifications include a provision indicating that 'books only published electronically' do not meet the criteria under HERDC. This change prevents institutions from being able to count theses published online as books under HERDC.

This year the Department will convene a working group comprising membership from the higher education sector and publishing industry to review the "Research Publications Return" section of the HERDC Specifications. The working group will examine in detail the parameters by which research published electronically should be defined and included in the HERDC. Outcomes from the review will be used to inform the development of the 2013 HERDC Specifications.