HIGHER EDUCATION STANDARDS FRAMEWORK

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Introduction to the *Higher Education Standards Framework*

Establishment and Underlying Principles

The *Higher Education Standards Framework* (the Framework) is established by the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011*[2] (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 three 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

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[1] This Explanatory Note and those in other sections of the Framework are included for the purposes of consultation; they are not intended to be part of the final version of the *Framework*.
[2] As amended or superseded from time to time.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: 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.

Higher Education Standards Framework

Part A	Part B	Part C
Standards for Higher Education	Criteria for Higher Education Providers	Definitions and Explanations of Terms
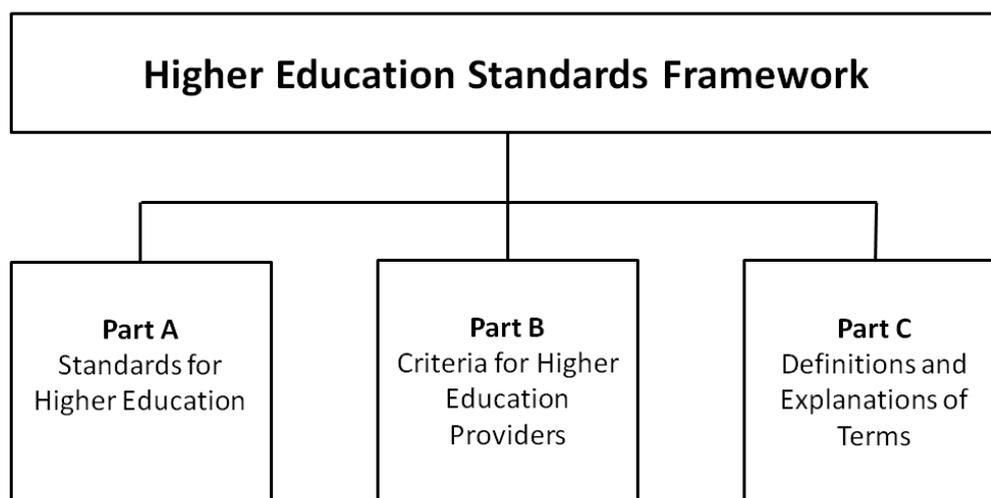
PART A: Standards for Higher Education

Introduction to Part A

The Standards for Higher Education in Part A of the *Higher Education Standards Framework* (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 *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011* (TEQSA Act 2011). The Framework incorporates the education-related elements of the *National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2007* (established under the *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000*).

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.

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

- an articulation of the 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
- 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 of prime importance among the objects of the TEQSA Act 2011 and it is central to 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. The concept of a course of study as used in the Standards encompasses higher degree research training as well as coursework.

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. Institutional Quality Assurance

The first Domain (Student Participation and Attainment) covers the education-related experiences of students from admission through to attainment of a certified qualification(s) (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 the 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 and, in the case of research and research training, contribute to new knowledge as well.

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 (Institutional 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.

The Standards do not seek to encompass all areas of all providers' activities, such as societal contributions through community engagement. Nor do the Standards seek to address directly some aspects of the experience of students that are not proximate to the provider or realistically under the control of the provider, such as long-term career outcomes.

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'. 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. The items listed as Reference Points are generally developed and maintained by peak national bodies and agencies.

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.

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 area of 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 the academic activities of the provider 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 Governance and Accountability and Institutional Quality Assurance are more overarching in nature, and draw in part on the other more specific Domains in the Standards for Higher Education. These Domains 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, the Domains of Governance and Accountability and Institutional Quality Assurance 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 Institutional Quality Assurance and Governance and Accountability 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, and continue to meet, to be registered to operate in or from Australia under the TEQSA Act 2011.

Appropriateness and Effectiveness

Where standards statements specify the existence of a policy and/or process, it is implied that such a policy or process is fit for its intended purpose and effective in its implementation. Repetitious references to appropriateness and effectiveness of individual policies and processes have been avoided in standards statements wherever practicable, however the intent of fitness for and achievement of an intended purpose remains, whether or not it is stated explicitly.

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. Review and improvement activities would also be expected to have been established as part of the provider's own oversight and quality assurance 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 operational maturity, the provider will need to demonstrate for regulatory purposes that its progress to date in meeting the Standards and its capacity and timetable for meeting the Standards in the future are consistent with its present stage of development. Some Standards may not be relevant at an early stage of a provider's development. For example, a provider launching its first higher education course would be expected to have all arrangements in place for the course to meet the Standards for delivery, but not be expected to have surveyed its students or implemented a course review cycle.

Peer Review

Various standards in the Framework contemplate external referencing, benchmarking and other forms of external review, including peer review. Where peer review is expressed or implied, it is intended as peer review initiated by the provider for internal quality assurance purposes, rather than peer review processes that may be initiated or conducted by TEQSA or another external body, such as a professional accrediting body.

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 C 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 are designed to ensure that admitted students have the academic preparation and proficiency in English needed to participate in their intended study, and no known limitations that would be expected to impede their progression and completion.

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

   a. all charges associated with their proposed studies as known at the time and advice on the potential for changes in charges during their 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, tuition protection and refunds of charges.

3. Admission and other contractual arrangements with students, or where legally required, with their parent or guardian, are in writing and include any particular conditions of enrolment and participation 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.

Reference Points

   i. Australian Government, *National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2007* (National Code 2007).

  ii. Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Research, *Good Practice Principles of Graduate Research.*

1.2   Credit and Recognition of Prior Learning

1. Assessment of prior learning is undertaken for the purpose of granting credit for units of study within a course of study or toward the completion of a qualification, such assessment is conducted according to institutional policies, the result is recorded and students receive timely written advice of the outcome.

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 maintained.

1.3   Orientation and Progression

1. Successful transition into courses of study is achieved through orientation programs that are tailored to the needs of student cohorts and include specific consideration for international students adjusting to living and studying in Australia.

2. Specific strategies support transition, including:

   a. assessing the needs and preparedness of individual students and cohorts

b. undertaking early assessment or review that provides formative feedback on academic progress and is able to identify needs for additional support, and

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

3. 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.

4. Processes that identify students at risk of unsatisfactory progress and provide specific support are implemented across all courses of study.

5. Trends in rates of retention, progression and completion of student cohorts through courses of study are monitored to enable review and improvement.

6. Students have equivalent opportunities for successful transition into and progression through their course of study, irrespective of their educational background, entry pathway, mode or place of study.

Reference Points

i. Australian Government, *National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2007* (National Code 2007).
ii. Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Research, *Good Practice Principles of Graduate Research.*

1.4   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 international comparators.

2. The specified learning outcomes for each course of study encompass discipline-related and generic outcomes, including:

    a. specific knowledge and skills and their 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 and further study related to the course of study, including those required to be eligible to seek registration to practise where applicable, and

    d. skills in independent and critical thinking suitable 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 that grades awarded reflect the level of student attainment.

4. On completion of a course of study, students 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 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, critical evaluation and reporting of research, and in presentation, publication and dissemination of their research.

6. Assessment of major assessable research outputs for higher degrees by research, such as theses, dissertations, exegeses, creative works or other major works arising from a candidate's research incorporates assessment by at least two assessors with international standing in the field of research, who are independent of the conduct of the research, competent to undertake the assessment and do not have a conflict of interest, and:

    a. for doctoral degrees are external to the higher education provider, and

    b. for masters degrees by research, assessors at least one of whom is external to the higher education provider.

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*.

    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.

    iv. Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Research, *Good Practice Principles of Graduate Research*.

1.5 Qualifications and Certification

1. Qualifications, other than higher doctoral or honorary qualifications, are awarded only if a course of study leads to the award of that qualification and all of the requirements of the course of study have been fulfilled.

2. Higher doctoral qualifications require significant, sustained original contributions to a field of research over and above the requirements of a doctoral degree and are awarded in accordance with the higher education provider's specific policies and academic governance requirements for the award of Higher Doctoral Degrees.

3. When an Australian Higher Education Qualification is offered, the course of study leading to the qualification is either self-accredited under authority to self-accredit or accredited by TEQSA and the learning outcomes for the qualification are consistent with the level classification for that qualification in the *Australian Qualifications Framework*.

4. Awardees of qualifications are issued with authorised certification documentation including a testamur, and either a record of results or an Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement (graduation statement) that state correctly:

    a. the name of the registered higher education provider issuing the documentation

    b. the full name of the person to whom the documentation applies

    c. the date of issue

    d. the name and office of the person authorised by the higher education provider to issue the documentation, and

    e. if the qualification is recognised in the Australian Qualifications Framework, 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. All certification documentation issued by the higher education provider is:

   a. unambiguously issued by the registered 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.

6. Testamurs state correctly, in addition to the requirements for all certification documentation:

   a. the full title of the qualification awarded, including the field or discipline of study

   b. any subsidiary component of the qualification (such as integrated honours, an area of specialisation or a major study), and

   c. if any parts of the course of study or assessment leading to the qualification were conducted in a language other than English, except for the use of another language to develop proficiency in that language.

7. Records of results state correctly, in addition to the requirements for all certification documentation:

   a. the full name of all courses and units of study undertaken and when they were undertaken and completed

   b. credit granted through recognition of prior learning

   c. the weighting of units within courses of study

   d. the grades and/or marks awarded for each unit of study undertaken and, if applicable, for the course overall

   e. where grades are issued, an explanation of the grading system used

   f. 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, and

   g. any parts of a course or units of study or assessment that were conducted in a language other than English, except for the use of another language to develop proficiency in that language.

8. Graduation statements contain, in relation to a particular course of study and the qualification awarded, the information contained in a record of results, presented in a form that conforms with the requirements for an Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement.

9. Qualifications that do not align with a qualification that is recognised in the *Australian Qualifications Framework* are 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.

10. 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.

11. Any documentation issued with the award of an honorary qualification unambiguously identifies the qualification as an honorary qualification.

Reference Points

    i. Australian Government, *Guidelines for the Presentation of the Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement*, November 2013.

2   Learning Environment

2.1   Facilities and Infrastructure

1. Facilities, including facilities where external placements are undertaken, are fit for their educational and research purposes and accommodate the numbers and educational and research activities of the students and staff who use them.

2. Secure access to electronic information and adequate electronic communication services is available continuously (allowing for reasonable outages for maintenance) to students and staff during periods of authorised access, except for locations and circumstances that are not under the direct control of the provider.

3. The learning environment, whether physical, virtual or blended, and associated learning activities support academic interactions among students outside of formal teaching.

Reference Points

i.   Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Research, *Good Practice Principles of Graduate Research*.

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 experienced by identified groups, and create equivalent 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 peoples.

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.

Reference Points

i.   Universities Australia, *National Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities,* October 2011*.

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 that are accessible if their personal circumstances are having an adverse effect on their education.

2. Timely, accurate advice on access to personal support services is available, including for access to emergency services, health services, counselling, legal advice, advocacy, and accommodation and welfare services.

3. The nature and extent of support services that are available for students are informed by the needs of student cohorts, including mental health, disability and wellbeing needs.

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 campus and online.

5. There is a critical-incident policy together with readily accessible procedures that cover the immediate actions to be taken in the event of a critical incident and any

follow up required.

2.4   Student Grievances and Complaints

1. Current and prospective students have access to mechanisms that are capable of resolving grievances about any aspect of their experience with the higher education provider, its agents or related parties.

2. There are policies and processes that deliver timely resolution of formal complaints and appeals against academic and administrative decisions without charge or at reasonable cost to students, and these are applied consistently, fairly and without reprisal.

3. Institutional complaints-handling and appeals processes for formal complaints include provision for confidentiality, independent professional advice, advocacy and other support for the complainant or appellant, and provision for review by an appropriate independent third party if internal processes fail to resolve a grievance.

4. Decisions about formal complaints and appeals are recorded and the student concerned is informed in writing of the outcome and the reasons, and of further avenues of appeal where they exist and where the student could benefit.

5. If a formal complaint or appeal is upheld, any action required is initiated promptly.

Reference Points

i. Australian Government, *National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2007,* (National Code 2007), Part D, Standard 8.

ii. Standards Australia, *Australian Standard AS ISO 10002-2006, Customer satisfaction - Guidelines for complaints handling in organizations.*

iii. Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Research, *Good Practice Principles of Graduate Research*.

3 Teaching

3.1 Course Design

1. The design for each course of study is specified and the 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 in the course.

2. The content and learning activities of each course of study engage with advanced knowledge and inquiry 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, where applicable, advances in practice.

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.*

   ii. The requirements for professional accreditation of the course of study and registration of graduates to practise where applicable.

   iii. Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Research, *Good Practice Principles of Graduate Research*.

3.2 Staffing

1. The staffing complement for each course of study is sufficient to meet the educational, academic support and administrative needs of student cohorts undertaking the course.

2. The academic staffing profile for each course of study provides the level and extent of academic oversight and teaching capacity needed to lead students in intellectual inquiry suited to the nature and level of expected learning outcomes.

3. Staff with responsibilities for academic oversight and those with teaching and supervisory roles in courses or units of study are equipped for their roles, including having:

   a. knowledge of contemporary developments in the discipline or field, which is informed by continuing scholarship or research or advances in practice

   b. skills in contemporary teaching, learning and assessment principles relevant to the discipline, their role, modes of delivery and the needs of particular student cohorts, and

   c. a qualification in a relevant discipline at least one level higher than is awarded for the course of study, or equivalent relevant academic or professional or practice-based experience and expertise, except for staff supervising doctoral degrees having a doctoral degree or equivalent research experience.

4. Teachers who teach specialised components of a course of study, such as experienced practitioners and teachers undergoing training, who may not fully meet the standard for knowledge, skills and qualification or experience required for teaching or supervision (3.2.3) have their teaching guided and overseen by staff who meet the standard.

5. Teaching staff are accessible to students seeking individual assistance with their studies, at a level consistent with the learning needs of the student cohort.

Reference Points

   i. Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Research, *Good Practice Principles of Graduate Research*.

3.3 Learning Resources and Educational Support

1. The learning resources, such as library collections and services, creative works, notes, laboratory facilities, studio sessions, simulations and software, 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.

Reference Points

   i. Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Research, *Good Practice Principles of Graduate Research*.

4   Research and Research Training

4.1   Research[3]

1. Research and its associated activities are conducted in accordance with a research policy framework that is designed to achieve:

    a. ethical conduct of research and responsible research practice

    b. clarification of ownership and management of intellectual property

    c. successful management of research partnerships

    d. clarification of requirements for publication and authorship, and

    e. resolution of allegations of misconduct in research.

2. Research is conducted, or overseen, by staff with qualifications, research experience and skills relevant to the type of research undertaken and their role.

3. A system for accurate and up-to-date recording of the research outputs of staff and research students is maintained.

Reference Points

i. Australian Government, *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research,* 2007*.*

4.2   Research Training[4]

1. Research training is guided by an institutional research training policy framework that is designed to achieve:

    a. definition and recognition of the rights and responsibilities of research students and supervisors

    b. induction and orientation of research students and supervisors to their roles

    c. monitoring of the progress of research students

    d. assessment and examination of students' work

    e. independence of examiners

    f. presentation and communication of research outputs by students, and

    g. resolution of disputes.

2. Students are admitted to research training only where the training can be provided in a supervisory and study environment of research activity or other creative endeavour, inquiry and scholarship, and the supervision and resources required for their project are available.

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, and who is active in research and publishing in, or otherwise making original contributions to, a relevant field or discipline

    b. at least one associate supervisor with relevant research expertise, and

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[3] Section 4.1 is applicable to higher education providers that conduct research, or conduct research and offer research training.
[4] 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.

c. the principal supervisor is a member of the staff of the higher education provider, or has a relevant adjunct appointment, or is otherwise formally contracted and accountable 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 included as a formal assessable requirement 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.

Reference Points

i. Australian Government, *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research,* 2007.

ii. Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Research, *Good Practice Principles of Graduate Research*.

5 Institutional Quality Assurance

5.1 Course Approval and Accreditation

1. There are processes for internal approval of the delivery of a course of study, or, where a provider has authority to self-accredit, internal accreditation, of all courses of study leading to an Australian Higher Education Qualification.

2. Course approval and self-accreditation processes are overseen by peak institutional academic governance processes and they are applied consistently to all courses of study, before the courses are first offered and during re-approval or re-accreditation of the courses.

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 of the *Higher Education Standards Framework*

   b. the decision to (re-)approve or (re-)accredit a course of study is informed by overarching academic scrutiny of the course of study that is competent to assess the design, delivery and assessment of the course of study independently of the staff directly involved in those aspects of the course, and

   c. the resources required to deliver the course as approved or accredited will be available when needed.

5.2 Academic and Research Integrity

1. There are policies that promote and uphold the academic and research integrity of courses and units of study, research and research training activities, and institutional policies and procedures address misconduct and allegations of misconduct.

2. Preventative action is taken to mitigate foreseeable risks to academic and research integrity including misrepresentation, fabrication, cheating, plagiarism and misuse of intellectual property, and to prevent recurrences of breaches.

3. Students are provided with guidance on what constitutes academic or research misconduct and the development of good practices in maintaining academic and research integrity.

4. Academic and research integrity and accountability for academic and research 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.

   ii. Australian Government, *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research,* 2007.

5.3 Monitoring, Review and Improvement

1. All accredited courses of study are subject to periodic (at least every seven years) comprehensive reviews that are overseen by peak academic governance processes and include external referencing or other benchmarking activities.

2. A comprehensive review includes 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 also takes account of emerging developments in the field of education, modes of delivery, the changing needs of students and identified risks to the quality of the course of study.

3. Comprehensive reviews of courses of study are informed and supported by regular interim monitoring, of the quality of teaching and supervision of research students, student progress and the overall delivery of units within each course of study.

4. Review and improvement activities include regular external referencing of the success of student cohorts against comparable courses of study, including:

   a. analyses of progression rates, attrition rates, completion times and rates and, where applicable, comparing different locations of delivery, and

   b. the assessment methods and grading of students' achievement of learning outcomes for selected units of study within courses of study.

5. All students have opportunities to provide feedback on their educational experiences and student feedback informs institutional monitoring, review and improvement activities.

6. All teachers and supervisors have opportunities to review feedback on their teaching and research supervision and are supported in enhancing these activities.

7. The results of regular interim monitoring, comprehensive reviews, external referencing and student feedback are used to mitigate future risks to the quality of the 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 course design, teaching, supervision, learning and academic support.

5.4 Delivery with Other Parties

1. Work-integrated learning, placements, other community-based learning and collaborative research training arrangements are quality assured, including assurance of the quality of supervision of student experiences.

2. When a course of study, any parts of a course of study, or research training are delivered through arrangements with another party(ies), whether in Australia or overseas, the registered higher education provider remains accountable for the course of study and verifies continuing compliance of the course of study with the standards in the *Higher Education Standards Framework* that relate to the specific arrangement.

6   Governance and Accountability

6.1   Corporate Governance

1. There is a formally constituted governing body, which includes independent members, that exercises competent governance oversight of and is accountable for 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 attends to governance functions and processes diligently and effectively, including:

   a. obtaining and using such information and advice, including independent advice and academic advice, as is necessary for informed and competent decision making and direction setting

   b. defining roles and delegating authority as is necessary for effective governance, policy development and management; and monitoring the implementation of those delegations

   c. confirming that the provision of higher education and research training and the conduct of research, whether by the provider or through an arrangement with another party, are governed by the registered provider's institutional policies, and the operations of the provider and any associated party(ies) are consistent with those policies

   d. undertaking periodic (at least every seven years) independent reviews 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 that agreed actions are implemented, and

   e. maintaining a true record of the business of the governing body.

3. The governing body takes steps to develop and maintain an institutional environment in which freedom of intellectual inquiry 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[5] in the deliberative and decision making processes of the higher education provider.

6.2   Corporate Monitoring and Accountability

1. The provider is able to demonstrate, and the corporate governing body assures itself, that the provider is operating effectively and sustainably, including:

   a. the governing body and the entity comply with the requirements of the legislation under which the provider is established, recognised 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, realistic performance targets have been established, progress against targets is monitored and action is taken to correct underperformance

   c. the provider is financially viable and applies, and has the capacity to continue to apply, sufficient financial and other resources to maintain the viability of the entity and its business model, to meet and continue to meet the requirements of the *Higher Education Standards Framework*, to achieve the provider's higher

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[5] 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.

education objectives and performance targets and to sustain the quality of higher education that is offered

d. the financial position, financial performance and cash flows of the entity are monitored regularly and understood, financial reporting is materially accurate, financial management meets Australian accounting standards, effective financial safeguards and controls are operating and financial statements are audited independently by a qualified auditor against Australian accounting and auditing standards

e. risks to higher education operations have been identified and material risks are being managed and mitigated effectively

f. mechanisms for competent academic governance and leadership of higher education provision and other academic activities have been implemented and these are operating according to an institutional academic governance policy framework and are effective in maintaining the quality of higher education offered

g. educational policies and practices support participation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and are sensitive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and cultures

h. qualifications are awarded legitimately

i. there are credible business continuity plans and adequately resourced financial and tuition 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, including if the provider is unable to provide a course of study, ceases to operate as a provider, loses professional accreditation for a course of study or is otherwise not able to offer a course of study

j. the occurrence and nature of formal complaints, allegations of misconduct, breaches of academic or research 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 prompt corrective action is taken.

Reference Points

i. ASX, *Corporate Governance Principles and Recommendations* (3rd Edition), July 2014, or as amended.

ii. Universities Australia, *Voluntary Code of Best Practice for the Governance of Australian Universities*, July 2011.

6.3   Academic Governance

1. Processes and structures are established and responsibilities are assigned that collectively:

    a. achieve effective academic oversight of the quality of teaching, learning, research and research training

    b. set and monitor institutional benchmarks for academic quality and outcomes

    c. establish and maintain academic leadership at an institutional level, consistent with the types and levels of higher education offered, and

    d. provide competent advice to the corporate governing body and management on academic matters, including advice on academic outcomes, policies and practices.

2. Academic oversight assures the quality of teaching, learning, research and research training effectively, including by:

a. developing, monitoring and reviewing academic policies and their effectiveness

b. confirming that delegations of academic authority are implemented

c. critically scrutinising, approving and, if authority to self-accredit is held, accrediting or advising on approving and accrediting, courses of study and their associated qualifications

d. maintaining oversight of academic and research integrity, including monitoring of potential risks

e. monitoring and initiating action to improve performance against institutional benchmarks for academic quality and outcomes

f. critically evaluating the quality and effectiveness of educational innovations or proposals for innovations

g. evaluating the effectiveness of institutional monitoring, review and improvement of academic activities, and

h. monitoring and 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.

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, whether by TEQSA or by a professional accreditation body for the purposes of registration to practise, 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 with the provider, 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.   Australian Government, *National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2007* (National Code 2007)*.*

ii. *Statement of Principles for the Ethical Recruitment of International Students by Education Agents and Consultants* (The London Statement) released by the British Council, 2012*.*

7.2   Information for Prospective and Current Students

1.   Accurate, relevant and timely information for students is publicly available and accessible, including access for students with special needs, to enable informed decision making about educational offerings and experiences.

2.   Information for students is available prior to acceptance of an offer, written in plain English where practicable, accompanied by an explanation of any technical or specialised terms, and includes:

     a. information to assist in decisions about courses or units of study, including the course design, prerequisites, assumed knowledge, 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 where applicable

     b. information to assist in planning for and participation in educational and other activities, including contact points, advice about orientation and induction, delivery 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 including 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 international students, disciplinary procedures, misconduct and grounds for suspension or exclusion

d. information to give access to current academic governance policies and requirements including 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 including 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, including an explanation of processes for resolution of grievances and complaints and internal and external appeals processes, guidance on how to participate in the processes and sources of assistance including advocacy, and

g. information to assist international students studying in Australia if applicable, including 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).

3. There are policies and processes that ensure information and advice given to international students holding or applying for an Australian student visa and decisions taken in relation to such students meet statutory requirements.

4. Students are given reasonable notice of changes to a higher education provider's operations including information about increases in fees and associated costs and any consequences that may affect their choice of, or ability to participate in, an intended course(s) of study.

7.3   Information Management

1. There is a repository of publicly-available current information about the higher education provider's operations that includes:

   a. the registered name of the higher education provider, trading name(s) if different, regulatory status and authority to provide courses of study to international students studying on an Australian student visa

   b. the instrument establishing the entity

   c. the members of the governing body and senior executive

   d. the financial standing of the provider

   e. indicative total student enrolments

   f. a high-level organisational chart that includes the organisational units that deliver courses of study, such as schools or faculties

   g. the locations at which higher education is offered, including overseas if applicable

   h. an overview of teaching campuses, facilities, learning resources and services provided for students

   i. a list of all higher education courses of study that are offered, including indicative estimated annual enrolments

j. arrangements with other parties to deliver courses of study or to conduct [research training](#)

k. where public annual reports are required of the provider, the three most recent annual reports

l. how to lodge a [complaint](#) about the higher education provider, and

m. contact details.

2. The list of all higher education [courses of study](#) within the repository of information 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 [international students](#) studying on an Australian student visa, and

f. the duration of each course of study.

3. Information systems and records are maintained, securely and confidentially as necessary to:

a. maintain accurate and up-to-date 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 or research integrity

c. document and record responses to [formal complaints](#), allegations of misconduct, breaches of academic or research integrity and [critical incidents](#), and

d. demonstrate compliance with the Higher Education Standards Framework.

PART B: Criteria for Higher Education Providers

Explanatory Note in Relation to PART B:

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. 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 point to Standards in Part A of the Framework that are of particular relevance to self-accreditation, such as the establishment of sustainable review and improvement processes. The Panel believes that the revised criteria are now more streamlined and the requirements will be clearer and more explicit for providers.

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. Subject to minor editing to make them consistent with the revised Framework, the existing Provider Category Standards are intended to stand as Part B3 of the Framework until such time as the review of the Categories has been completed.

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

- seeking 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 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.

7. The applicant has fulfilled, and is reasonably expected to continue to fulfil, its regulatory obligations as a corporation in Australia.

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(s) if different

    b. the ownership of the entity

    c. any parent entities, predecessors and other related entities

    d. the entity's constitution (or equivalent)

    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

    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 Classification of Higher Education Provider Categories

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Note in Relation to Provider Category Standards:

At the time of the release of this consultation draft of the *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

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.

All providers of higher education that gain registration by TEQSA through meeting the Higher Education Standards Framework become 'Higher Education Providers'. This title signals to the public that the provider is a bona fide provider of quality higher education in Australia.

Higher education providers are able to seek approval within a particular provider category under subsection 18(1) of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011. There are several provider categories that use the word 'university':

- Australian University
- Australian University College
- Australian University of Specialisation
- Overseas University
- Overseas University of Specialisation.

A higher education provider must meet the additional criteria for use of a provider category that uses the word 'university'.

In this Framework, unless the contrary intention appears, the terms and phrases used have the same meaning as in the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011.

Section 1   "Higher Education Provider" Category

The higher education provider offers an Australian higher education qualification and/or an overseas higher education qualification

1.1   The higher education provider meets the Higher Education Standards Framework and offers at least one accredited course of study.

1.2   The higher education provider has a clearly articulated higher education purpose that includes a commitment to and support for free intellectual inquiry in its academic endeavours.

1.3   The higher education provider delivers teaching and learning that engage with advanced knowledge and inquiry.

1.4   The higher education provider's academic staff are active in scholarship that informs their teaching, and are active in research when engaged in research student supervision.

Section 2   "Australian University" Category

The higher education provider offers an Australian higher education qualification

2.1   The higher education provider self-accredits and delivers undergraduate and postgraduate courses of study that meet the Higher Education Standards Framework across a range of broad fields of study (including Masters Degrees (Research) and Doctoral Degrees (Research) in at least three of the broad fields of study it offers).

2.2   The higher education provider has been authorised for at least the last five years to self-accredit at least 85% of its total courses of study, including Masters Degrees (Research) and Doctoral Degrees (Research) in at least three of the broad fields of study.

2.3   The higher education provider undertakes research that leads to the creation of new knowledge and original creative endeavour at least in those broad fields of study in which Masters Degrees (Research) and Doctoral Degrees (Research) are offered.

2.4   The higher education provider demonstrates the commitment of teachers, researchers, course designers and assessors to the systematic advancement and dissemination of knowledge.

2.5   The higher education provider demonstrates sustained scholarship that informs teaching and learning in all fields in which courses of study are offered.

2.6   The higher education provider identifies and implements good practices in student teaching and learning, including those that have the potential for wider dissemination nationally.

2.7   The higher education provider offers an extensive range of student services, including student academic and learning support, and extensive resources for student learning in all disciplines offered.

2.8   The higher education provider demonstrates engagement with its local and regional communities and demonstrates a commitment to social responsibility in its activities.

2.9   The higher education provider has systematic, mature internal processes for quality assurance and the maintenance of academic standards and academic integrity.

2.10 The higher education provider's application for registration has the support of the relevant Commonwealth, State or Territory government.

Section 3   "Australian University College" Category

The higher education provider offers an Australian higher education qualification

3.1 The higher education provider has realistic and achievable plans to meet all the criteria for an "Australian University" Category within five years of its approval to use the title "Australian University College".

3.2 The higher education provider self-accredits and delivers undergraduate and postgraduate courses of study that meet the Higher Education Standards Framework across a range of broad fields of study (including Masters Degrees (Coursework) in at least three broad fields of study and Masters Degrees (Research) and Doctoral Degrees (Research) in at least one of the broad fields of study it offers).

3.3 The higher education provider undertakes research that leads to the creation of new knowledge and original creative endeavour at least in those broad fields of study in which Masters Degrees (Research) and Doctoral Degrees (Research) are offered.

3.4 The higher education provider demonstrates the commitment of teachers, researchers, course designers and assessors to the systematic advancement and dissemination of knowledge.

3.5 The higher education provider demonstrates sustained scholarship that informs teaching and learning in all fields in which courses of study are offered.

3.6 The higher education provider identifies and implements good practices in student teaching and learning, including those that have the potential for wider dissemination nationally.

3.7 The higher education provider offers an extensive range of student services, including student academic and learning support, and extensive resources for student learning in all disciplines offered.

3.8 The higher education provider demonstrates engagement with its local and regional communities and demonstrates a commitment to social responsibility in its activities.

3.9 The higher education provider has systematic, well developed internal processes for quality assurance and the maintenance of academic standards and academic integrity.

3.10 The higher education provider's application for registration has the support of the relevant Commonwealth, State or Territory government.

Section 4 "Australian University of Specialisation" Category

The higher education provider offers an Australian higher education qualification

4.1 The higher education provider self-accredits and delivers undergraduate and postgraduate courses of study that meet the Higher Education Standards Framework in one or two broad fields of study only (including Masters Degrees (Research) and Doctoral Degrees (Research) in these one or two broad fields of study it offers).

4.2 The higher education provider has been authorised for at least the last five years to self-accredit at least 85% of its total courses of study in one or two broad fields of study only, including Masters Degrees (Research) and Doctoral Degrees (Research) in these broad field/s of study.

4.3 The higher education provider undertakes research that leads to the creation of new knowledge and original creative endeavour at least in those broad fields of study in which Masters Degrees (Research) and Doctoral Degrees (Research) are offered.

4.4 The higher education provider demonstrates the commitment of teachers, researchers, course designers and assessors to the systematic advancement of knowledge.

4.5 The higher education provider demonstrates sustained scholarship that informs teaching and learning in all fields in which courses of study are offered.

4.6 The higher education provider identifies and implements good practices in student teaching and learning, including those that have the potential for wider dissemination nationally.

4.7 The higher education provider offers an extensive range of student services, including student academic and learning support, and extensive resources for student learning in all disciplines offered.

4.8 The higher education provider demonstrates engagement with its local and regional communities and demonstrates a commitment to social responsibility in its activities.

4.9 The higher education provider has systematic, mature internal processes for quality assurance and the maintenance of academic standards and academic integrity.

4.10 The higher education provider's application for registration has the support of the relevant Commonwealth, State or Territory government.

Section 5 "Overseas University" Category

The higher education provider offers an overseas higher education qualification

5.1 The higher education provider is recognised as a university by its home country registration or accreditation authority or equivalent governmental authority, the standing and standards of which are acceptable to TEQSA.

AND

5.2 The higher education provider meets criteria equivalent to those for the "Australian University" Category.

Section 6 "Overseas University of Specialisation" Category

The higher education provider offers an overseas higher education qualification

6.1 The higher education provider is recognised as a university by its home country registration or accreditation authority or equivalent governmental authority, the standing and standards of which are acceptable to TEQSA.

AND

6.2 The higher education provider meets criteria equivalent to those for the "Australian University of Specialisation" Category.

PART B3: Criteria for Seeking Authority for Self-Accreditation of Courses of Study

Providers with Authority to Self-Accredit some or all Courses of Study

Registration of a higher education provider in certain categories of provider may confer self-accrediting authority on the provider. A 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. TEQSA will authorise a higher education provider that is registered in the 'Australian University College' provider category to self-accredit all of its courses of study. A higher education provider that is registered in the 'Australian University of Specialisation' provider category self-accredits some of its courses of study and TEQSA may authorise the provider to self-accredit all of the courses of study it offers, in its one or two broad fields of education only.

Types of Self-Accrediting Authority that may be Sought

1. A [higher education provider](#) that is registered in the 'Higher Education Provider', 'Overseas University' or 'Overseas University of Specialisation' provider category, or any other registered provider that proposes to extend the scope of its self-accrediting authority, may seek authorisation from TEQSA to self-accredit:

    a. one or more existing courses of study

    b. one or more existing courses of study and new course(s) of study at the same qualification level in the same narrow or broad field of education

    c. one or more existing courses of study and new course(s) of study at the same qualification level in nominated new narrow or broad field(s) of education

    d. one or more existing courses of study and new courses of study at one or more new qualification levels in the same narrow or broad field of education

    e. one or more existing courses of study and new courses of study at one or more qualification levels in nominated new narrow or broad fields of education, or

    f. all higher education courses of study that it offers, or may offer, irrespective of level of qualification or field of education.

Providers Seeking Authority from TEQSA to Self-Accredit Nominated Courses of Study

2. A provider that is seeking authorisation to self-accredit a nominated course(s) of study as specified in Part 1 (a-e) is able to demonstrate:

    2.1 sustained and sustainable achievement of all of the Standards for Higher Education (Part A) that apply to the provider, including for course approval processes in particular and any delivery arrangements with other parties

    2.2 there are no unresolved compliance matters with TEQSA, or conditions outstanding from the most recent registration and course accreditations by TEQSA or a recognised registration or accreditation authority, and there is no history of significant continuing compliance problems in any other assessments, audits or reviews of its higher education operations conducted by TEQSA, professional bodies or government agencies

    2.3 a history over at least five years of successful delivery of the course(s) of study for which self-accrediting authority is sought, which is supported by evidence of student success based on analysis of trend data including completion rates and times, attrition rates and grades awarded that are referenced against credible national or international comparators and encompass at least three cohorts of graduates from each course of study

    2.4 where a cycle of review and improvement is required by the Standards for Higher Education (Part A) in relation to courses of study and their oversight (see Table B2), the provider has, in relation to all course(s) of study proposed for self-accreditation:

        a. completed at least one cycle of review and improvement in relation to all relevant standards

        b. demonstrated successful implementation of evidence-based improvements arising from the reviews, and

        c. has established these review and improvement activities as effective sustainable features of the provider's operations across all courses of study.

Providers Seeking Authority from TEQSA to Self-Accredit All Courses of Study

3. Where a provider is seeking self-accrediting authority under Criterion 1f for all courses of study that it offers, or may offer, in addition to meeting Criteria 2.1 - 2.4, the provider is

able to demonstrate the necessary capacity and capability to provide new courses leading to any level of higher education qualification in any field of education, including:

  a. processes for the design, delivery, accreditation, monitoring, quality assurance, review and improvement of existing courses of study that are transferrable to any new courses of study and any new level of qualification offered

  b. capability in planning and establishment of new courses of study in new broad fields of education

  c. capacity for competent academic governance, oversight and scrutiny of the accreditation of new courses in new broad fields of education

  d. sufficient breadth and depth of academic leadership, scholarship and expertise in relevant disciplines to guide entry into and sustain new levels and broad fields of higher education, and

  e. where professional accreditation is applicable to otherwise self-accredited courses, professional accreditation can reasonably be expected to be obtained and maintained.

Table B3: Standards Referring to Review and Improvement Activities

Higher Education Standards	Applicable Standards
2. Learning Environment	
2.2 Diversity and Equity	2.2.3
5. Institutional Quality Assurance	
5.3 Monitoring, Review and Improvement	●
6. Governance and Accountability	
6.1 Corporate Governance	6.1.2d
6.2 Corporate Monitoring and Accountability	6.2.1f
6.3 Academic Governance	6.3.2

● = Whole Section Applicable

PART C: Definitions and Explanations of Terms

Introduction to Part C

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

D/E 1. **Accreditation of a Course of Study**

A formal process through which a course of study is authorised to be offered by a higher education provider. For providers that are authorised to self-accredit the course of study, the accreditation is granted through a formal internal governance process; otherwise the accreditation must be obtained from TEQSA. A course of study that is self-accredited or accredited by TEQSA may also be 'accredited' by a professional body for different and separate purposes. Accreditation of a course of study by a professional body does not of itself entitle a provider to offer the course of study.

D/E 2. **Approval of a Course of Study**

A formal internal governance process that determines that a course of study is suitable to be offered by the higher education provider. Unless a provider has authority to self-accredit the course of study, course approval must be followed by accreditation of the course of study by TEQSA.

D/E 3. **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'

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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 4.   Changes to a (the) Higher Education Provider's Operations

Changes to a higher education provider's operations 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 5.   Complaint

A complaint is an expression of a grievance about a higher education provider or its operations. Lodging of complaints is expected to initiate a process, whether formal or informal, to address the grievance.

D/E 6.   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 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.   Critical Incident

A traumatic event, or the threat of such (within or outside Australia), which causes extreme stress, fear or injury.[6]

D/E 9.   Formal Complaint

'Formal complaint' is the term used to distinguish those complaints that use a formal complaints-resolution process from complaints about matters that are resolved readily without entering into a formal process.

D/E 10.   Grievance

A grievance means any issue or concern that is raised for resolution through a complaint. 'Grievance' is used generically, whether the grievance is considered minor or more serious in nature.

D/E 11.   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 12.   Higher Degree by Research

A higher degree by research means a Higher Doctoral Degree, a Doctoral Degree or a

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[6] Australian Government, *National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2007* (National Code 2007).

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 research degree/qualification'.

D/E 13.   Higher Education Provider

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

D/E 14.   Institutional Benchmarks

Institutional benchmarks might include minimum acceptable entry criteria, progression and completion rates, grade distributions, criteria for academic appointments and many others, several of which may be embedded in academic policy frameworks.

D/E 15.   International Student

An international student is a student who is studying either in Australia or offshore for an Australian higher education qualification at a registered higher education provider and is not an Australian citizen, Australian permanent resident or New Zealand citizen. An international student includes (but is not limited to) the holder of an Australian student visa, sometimes known as an 'overseas student'.

D/E 16.   Recording of Research Outputs

The 'system for… recording of the research outputs of staff and research students' 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).

D/E 17.   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 <u>not</u> 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 18.   Research

Research is defined as the creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way so as to generate new concepts, methodologies, inventions and understandings. This could include synthesis and analysis of previous research to the extent that it is new and creative. This definition of research is consistent with a broad notion of research and experimental development (R&D) as comprising 'creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man [human-kind], culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications'.[7]

D/E 19.   Research-related Study

Research related study means study about research rather than the conduct of research itself, such as a study of analytical techniques or experimental methods.

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[7] Australian Research Council, *Research Impact Principles and Framework*.

D/E 20.   Research Training

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

D/E 21.   Safeguards to Mitigate Disadvantage to Students

Safeguards to mitigate disadvantage to students encompass financial and tuition safeguards including sufficiently resourced contingency plans for teaching out the course of study or transition of affected students to an equivalent course of study and/or refund of tuition fees and other charges paid in advance for services not delivered, whether resourced directly by the [higher education provider](#) or through a tuition protection scheme.

D/E 22.   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.