

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Feedback on Draft Higher Education Standards relating to Course Design (Coursework) and Learning Outcomes (Coursework)</b></p>
--

**Question 1. Do you broadly support the proposed format of the standards. If not, why?**

The template seems self-evident and a statement of good practice. A statement of the scope of a standard is important.

**Question 2. Do you support the inclusion of Reference Points as proposed. If not, why?**

Yes. Assuming it is possible to compile and maintain a more complete list (see suggestions at Question 7), the Reference Points are useful as intended, that is to provide prompts as to the possible relevance or relationship of the standards to broader contextual factors.

**Question 3. Do you wish to make any suggestions in relation to the format of the standards?**

There is a need to avoid duplication between standards; there is substantial duplication between these two standards. The scope and purpose of each set of standards needs to be clearly articulated and then applied as a filter to what is specified in those standards. Clauses 1 to 5 of Learning Outcomes either overlap or are additional clauses relevant to Course Design standards. Removing these from the Learning Outcomes standard seems to suggest that it is more of an Assessment standard.

Wherever possible, terminology which is clear and most commonly used across the sector should be adopted and even then, a glossary should be used to ensure comprehension. For instance:

- the reference to “provider’s peak academic governing body” in 2 and 7 is somewhat unclear; is it the peak academic quality body such as Academic Board, or the peak governing body which could be taken to Council, noting that Academic Boards often report to their Councils?
- “course” is not as clear and consistent a term as “award” or “program”, and
- the meaning of “programmed student workload” in 3 is unclear; does programmed mean “minimum” or “average”.

**Question 4. Do you broadly support the proposed standards for Course Design? If not, why?**

Yes, generally, subject to adjustments responding to the comments made elsewhere in this and other feedback.

**Question 5. Do you wish to make any suggestions in relation to the specific content of the standards?**

1. *The provider utilises defined processes for designing and assuring the quality of the design of each course of study and the qualifications to which it leads.*
2. *Processes for course design are approved and overseen by the provider’s peak academic governing body.*

The interpretation of “overseen” would potentially appear to take academic governance into management unless the intended meaning is “monitored” or “quality assured.”

3. *Course design encompasses the rationale for the course of study, course structure, modes of delivery, learning outcomes, methods of assessment, entry requirements and*

*pathways, programmed student workload, articulation arrangements, exit pathways, pathways to further study and any compulsory requirements for completion and that these features of all courses of study are documented and publically accessible in a current version.*

This appears to be confusing or indeed referring to both “Course designs” that is Award design and (component) Subject design.

Is this meant to be “at a minimum encompasses”?

Student workload is normally specified relevant to the unit value independent of any specifics of awards or courses.

4. *The nature and scope of the course and the expectations for student learning are consistent with the qualification to be awarded and informed by the Australian Qualifications Framework.*

Should not all reference points inform the nature and scope? Or is AQF more than a reference point?

5. *The content of each course of study:*
  - a. *is drawn from current knowledge and scholarship in relevant academic disciplines*
  - b. *includes study of the underlying theoretical and conceptual frameworks of the academic disciplines and the field of study, and*
  - c. *encompasses relevant emerging concepts that are informed by recent scholarship, current research findings and advances in practice (where practice is applicable to the field of study).*
6. *Each course of study is designed to enable equivalent student learning outcomes regardless of a student’s place or mode of study.*
7. *The peak academic governing body of the provider oversees periodic (at least every 5 years) review and improvement of the design of each course of study.*

The wording of this is potentially problematic particularly “oversees” in that it does not seem to provide for “the review and improvement of the design” to be part of a broader review of the course of study including management matters. And again what the term “oversees” encompasses is unclear, in this case “oversees the review” and “oversees the improvement” would appear to entail different meanings of the term, with the latter being more “quality assures” rather than “manages”.

**Question 6. Do you broadly support the proposed standards for Learning outcomes? If not, why?**

No. As stated elsewhere a significant proportion of these standards duplicates the Course Design standards and the remaining appear to be more Assessment standards. Perhaps rather than standards around Learning Outcomes, it is more the role of Learning Outcomes like the role of “peak academic quality governing body” that needs to be covered in any of the teaching and learning standards.

**Question 7. Do you wish to make any suggestions in relation to the specific content of the standards?**

1. *The learning outcomes to be achieved on completion of a course of study are specified for each course of study.*

2. *The learning outcomes for each course of study are consistent with the qualification awarded, are comparable with those for courses of study that lead to the same or a similar qualification in Australia and are informed by international comparators.*
3. *The learning outcomes for each course of study are informed by:*
  - a. *the mastery of specific disciplinary and/or interdisciplinary knowledge and skills that characterise the field of study*
  - b. *the generic skills and attributes required of graduates*
  - c. *the application of generic skills and attributes in the context of the field of study including the communication skills required, and*
  - d. *the requirements of employment related to the field of study.*
4. *The relationship between the overall learning outcomes for each course of study and the learning outcomes for units that contribute to the course of study is demonstrable.*
5. *The specified learning outcomes for each course of study are available to the staff and students who are involved and are publically accessible in a current version.*
6. *The assessment of student learning, whether at unit level, course level, or in combination, encompasses all specified learning outcomes for each course of study.*
7. *Learning outcomes for each course of study and the methods for assessment of those outcomes are informed by periodic reviews (at least every 5 years), which take account of external reference points that are relevant to the course of study.*
8. *Methods of assessment are consistent with the types of learning outcomes being assessed and are capable of validly and reliably confirming that specified learning outcomes are achieved.*

This is an Assessment standard.

9. *The grades awarded to students reflect the level of their attainment.*

This is an Assessment standard.

10. *The grading of students' achievement of learning outcomes for selected units within courses of study is referenced periodically (at least every 5 years) against the grading of students' achievement in comparable units or courses in other Australian institutions.*

This is an Assessment standard.

This appears on first reading to be a highly specific numeric process that requires a sharing of information across institutions. It is perhaps intended more to require "reference periodically ... against the **grading standards applicable** in comparable units .."

The phrases "units or courses" reinforces the earlier comment about the confusing use of course for "award" and for "subject".

### Reference Points

- i. Australian Qualifications Framework (January 2013).
- ii. Learning outcomes statements developed for the field of study by Office for Learning and Teaching discipline communities or other disciplinary or professional bodies.

This should be a reference point for The Course Design standards.

- iii. *The requirements for professional accreditation of the course of study and registration of graduates where applicable.*