



The University of Tasmania (UTAS) welcomes the review of the Threshold Standards and is pleased to provide feedback to the Higher Education Standards Panel (Panel) on the draft Learning Outcomes (Coursework) and Course Design (Coursework) Standards. The development of clear and succinct standard is an increasingly challenging and complex task. We also support the Panel's development of a schematic overview of Higher Education Provision (see Figure 1, HESP, Communiqué No 4, Nov, 2012). The standards work aligns with our own University Standards Framework (USF) (Version 1) which currently has six dimensions: Learning, Teaching, Curriculum, Student Experience, Research and Research Training. The feedback we provide in this paper is underpinned by the lessons we have learnt when implementing a standards framework and accompanying processes across the institution.

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

The University of Tasmania (UTAS) is in agreement with the Panel that the current Threshold Standards are inconsistent. We broadly support the proposed format of the new draft Course Design (Coursework) and Learning Outcomes (Coursework) Standards, with each heading being simply taxonomic rather than a distinct standards statement. The use of Coursework as a descriptor clearly places the emphasis at the course level rather than at the unit level. It also aligns with the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). The progression of standards in each of the new draft Course Design (Coursework) and Learning Outcomes Standards (Coursework) align with coursework activities. For instance, the Course Design (Coursework) Standards outline course design development and implementation: approval processes; academic governance processes; course implementation processes and access to the course outlines; alignment to the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF); content of the course; equivalence, review and improvement of the course.

Similarly, the Learning Outcomes (Coursework) Standards align with coursework activities in student learning: learning outcomes; qualifications; course level learning outcomes; mapping of learning outcomes across the course; accessibility of learning outcomes; assessment of student learning; periodic reviews of assessment; methods of assessment; grades and grading periodically reviewed.

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

We support the inclusion of reference points; however, this needs to be broadened to include external moderation processes (such as the Quality Verification Project; the Achievement Matters Project and the Inter-University Review Project). We support disciplinary communities being included in reference points as UTAS has three Discipline Scholars. There also needs to be some clarification on how reference points can be seen as

processes as well as reference points. For example, Standard 4 in the Course Design (Coursework) Standard is both a *process* and a *reference point*. A lesson we learnt in our standards work is the importance of identifying *internal reference points* as well as external reference points. Suggestions for internal reference points are answered in Question 3.

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

As mentioned above, the Panel has developed a high-level organising framework to underpin the development of the standards (see Figure 1, HESP, Communiqué No 4, Nov, 2012). This framework is to be used as a high level schematic representation to map features of the organisation systematically.

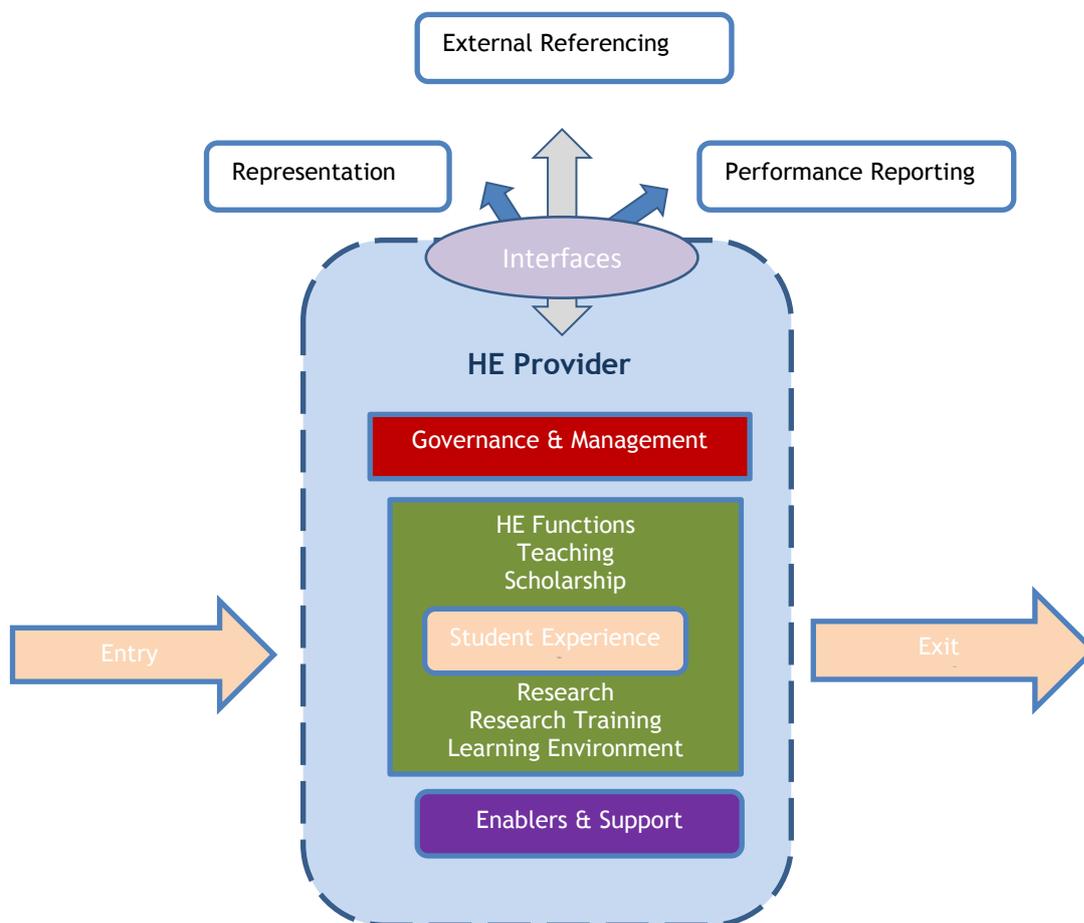


Fig. 1 Schematic Overview of Higher Education Provision

At the moment, there is no schematic overview of how the Learning Outcomes (Coursework) and Course Design (Coursework) Standards may be applied to higher education institutions. This may prove difficult for institutions when mapping standards to particular processes across the institution. We suggest that that Figure 1 is accompanied by a schematic overview of each of the standards using focus areas

developed in the Teaching Standards Framework (TSF) Project, led by Macquarie University (Sachs & Kosman, 2012).

Figure 2 provides a draft schematic overview of the Course Design (Coursework) Standards which can be aligned to higher education provider processes and practices using focus areas.<sup>1</sup> This draft schematic framework may be helpful for institutions when assessing standards across the institution so that staff can unpack delegations of authority, different audiences and different processes.

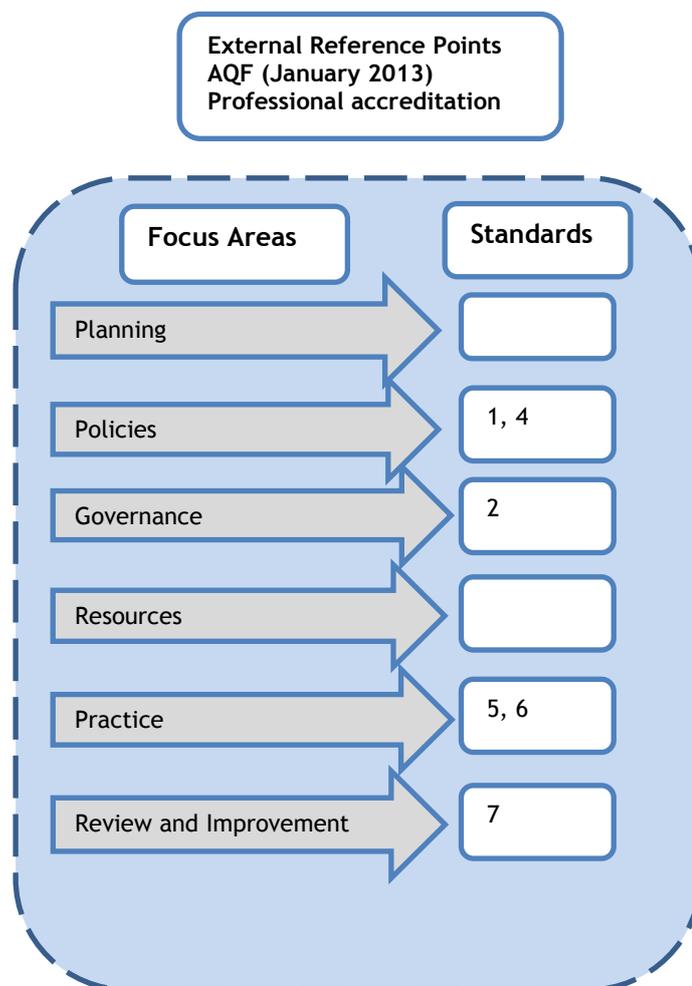


Fig. 2 Draft Schematic Representation of Course Design (Coursework) Focus Areas

What is evident from Fig. 2 is that the Course Design (Coursework) Standards do not currently have standards in planning or resources. Further suggestions on the content of these standards will be discussed in Questions 5 and 7. The schematic representation also adds structure to the standards so that benchmarking opportunities may occur at different focus areas. At the moment, the standards are presented in a linear rather than a multi-level way.

Another suggestion in developing resources to support the interpretation of the standards is the addition of an organising framework, as set out in the TSF Project (Sachs & Kosman, 2012) and in the AQF (see Table 1 for example). This organising

<sup>1</sup> The focus area 'Management Responsibility' was not included as it was deemed separate in Fig. 1. Also, Review and Improvement has replaced 'Monitoring, Evaluation & Risk'.

framework presents the standards in an organised, systematic way from planning right through to review and improvement and external reference points. Table 1 outlines a taxonomic structure that can support staff in systematically working through various standards, either as a collective or focus on a particular area. For instance, the focus area of ‘Practice’, that is, Standards 5 and 6, can be applied and evaluated at the course level with unit and course coordinators.

Table 1. Course Design (Coursework) Organising Framework

<b>Course Design (Coursework)</b>	
<b>Planning</b>	<p>5. The content of each course of study:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Is drawn from current knowledge and scholarship in relevant academic disciplines</li> <li>b. Includes study of the underlying theoretical and conceptual frameworks of the academic disciplines and the field of study, and</li> <li>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).</li> </ol> <p>6. Each course of study is designed to enable equivalent student learning outcomes regardless of a student’s place or mode of study.</p>
<b>Policies</b>	
<b>Governance</b>	
<b>Resources</b>	
<b>Practices</b>	
<b>Review and Improvement</b>	
<b>Reference Points</b>	

The final suggestion relates to performance indicators. Currently the standards do not have performance indicators. Will these be developed by the Panel? If the Panel’s intention is to only develop standards our suggestion is that advice be given to higher education institutions on the development of internal performance indicators to assess standards for both quality assurance and quality enhancement purposes. For example, an excerpt from Curriculum Dimension in the USF outlines focus areas, standards and performance indicators (see Table 2).

Table 2. Excerpt from USF Curriculum Dimension

<b>Focus Areas</b>	<b>Standards</b>	<b>Performance Indicators</b>
Practices	5.11 UTAS graduate attributes are embedded across the curriculum	Industry and professional feedback inform changes to the curriculum. Graduates demonstrate achievement of all graduate attributes
	5.12 All courses have a Statement of Curriculum Philosophy which provides	Statement of Curriculum Philosophy in Course/Major Reports

	course level learning outcomes	
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### Course Design (Coursework) Standards

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

The University broadly supports the Course Design (Coursework) Standards.

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

Table 3 below outlines suggestions to the specific content of the Course Design (Coursework) Standards.

Table 3. Suggestions to specific content of the Course Design (Coursework) Standards.

Standard	Suggestions
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.	No additional suggestions.
2. Processes for course design are approved and overseen by the provider's peak academic governing body.	Add 'including accreditation'. Processes for course design, <i>including accreditation</i> , are approved and overseen by the provider's peak academic governing body.  We support accreditation both as a process and a reference point.
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 standard could unpacked as follows:  Course design encompasses: a. Rationale for the course of study b. Course structure c. Modes of delivery d. <i>Course learning outcomes</i> e. <i>Generic attributes</i> f. Methods of assessment g. Programmed study workload  Course support material encompasses: a. Entry requirements b. Pathways c. Articulation arrangements d. Exit pathways e. Pathways to further study f. Any compulsory requirements for completion  All courses of study are documented and publically accessible in a current version.
4. The nature and scope of the course and the expectations for student	Add 'design' before nature, change the word 'scope' to 'duration' to reflect the

<p>learning are consistent with the qualification to be awarded and informed by the Australian Qualifications Framework.</p>	<p>volume of learning; which is an integral part of the qualification descriptor for every course.</p> <p>The design, nature and duration of the course and the expectations for student learning are consistent with the qualification to be awarded and informed by the Australian Qualifications Framework.</p> <p>We support this standard as a process as well as a reference point.</p>
<p>5. The content of each course of study:</p> <p>d. Is drawn from current knowledge and scholarship in relevant academic disciplines</p> <p>e. Includes study of the underlying theoretical and conceptual frameworks of the academic disciplines and the field of study, and</p> <p>f. 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).</p>	<p>We would make one small change:</p> <p>Includes <i>knowledge of adult learning principles</i>; the study of underlying theoretical and conceptual frameworks of the academic disciplines and the field of study, and</p>
<p>6. Each course of study is designed to enable equivalent student learning outcomes regardless of a student's place or mode of study.</p>	<p>We would add 'and supported with online learning technologies'.</p> <p>Each course of study is designed and integrated with online learning technologies to enable equivalent student learning outcomes regardless of a student's place or mode of study.</p>
	<p>We would add another standard under Standard 6.</p> <p>Each course of study undertakes regular mapping of learning outcomes, graduate skills and assessment to ensure a coherent student experience.</p>
<p>7. The peak academic governing body of the provider oversees periodic (at least 5 years) review and improvement of the design of each course of study.</p>	<p>We consider benchmarking of courses to be an important process, as well as reference point. There needs to be an element of externality and validation in an institution's processes.</p> <p>We would make one small change: The peak academic governing body of the provider oversees periodic (at least 5 years) <i>benchmarking</i>, review and improvement of the design of each course of study.</p>

<p>Reference Points</p> <p>i. Australian Qualifications Framework (January 2013)</p> <p>ii. The requirements for professional accreditation of the course of study and registration of graduates where applicable.</p>	<p>We would include two more reference points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External benchmarking of course design processes and assessment</li> <li>• Discipline standards developed for the field of study by the Office for Learning and Teaching discipline communities or other disciplinary or professional bodies.</li> </ul>
	<p>We would also add another standard on resources because it is critical that institutions are able to sustain courses: The allocation of adequate resources is documented and reviewed to support course design, review and renewal.</p>
	<p>We would also add another standard on planning: The higher education provider has plans for learning and teaching including infrastructure, information resources, and resources to support course design, development and review.</p>

Table 4 below outlines the revised Course Design (Coursework) Standards using the organising structure.

Table 4. Revised Course Design (Coursework) Standards

<b>Course Design (Coursework) Standards</b>	
<b>Planning</b>	1. The higher education provider has plans for learning and teaching including infrastructure, information resources, and resources to support course design, development and review.
<b>Policies</b>	2. The design, nature and duration of the course and the expectations for student learning are consistent with the qualification to be awarded and informed by the Australian Qualifications Framework.
	3. 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.
<b>Governance</b>	4. Processes for course design, including accreditation, are approved and overseen by the provider's peak academic governing body.
<b>Resources</b>	5. The allocation of adequate resources is documented and reviewed to support course design, review and renewal.

<p><b>Practices</b></p>	<p>6. Course design encompasses:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Rationale for the course of study</li> <li>b. Course structure</li> <li>c. Modes of delivery</li> <li>d. <i>Course Learning outcomes</i></li> <li>e. <i>Generic attributes</i></li> <li>f. Methods of assessment</li> <li>g. Programmed study workload</li> </ol> <p>Course support material encompasses:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Entry requirements</li> <li>b. Pathways</li> <li>c. Articulation arrangements</li> <li>d. Exit pathways</li> <li>e. Pathways to further study</li> <li>f. Any compulsory requirements for completion</li> </ol> <p>All courses of study are documented and publically accessible in a current version.</p> <p>7. The content of each course of study:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Is drawn from current knowledge and scholarship in relevant academic disciplines</li> <li>b. Includes knowledge of adult learning principles; the study of underlying theoretical and conceptual frameworks of the academic disciplines and the field of study, and</li> <li>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).</li> </ol> <p>8. Each course of study is designed and supported with online learning technologies to enable equivalent student learning outcomes regardless of a student’s place or mode of study.</p> <p>9. Each course of study undertakes regular mapping of learning outcomes, graduate skills and assessment to ensure a coherent student experience.</p>
<p><b>Review and Improvement</b></p>	<p>10. The peak academic governing body of the provider oversees periodic (at least 5 years) benchmarking, review and improvement of the design of each course of study.</p>
<p><b>Reference Points</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Australian Qualifications Framework (January 2013)</li> <li>ii. The requirements for professional accreditation of the course of study and registration of graduates where applicable.</li> <li>iii. External benchmarking of course design processes and assessment</li> <li>iv. Discipline standards developed for the field of study by the Office for Learning and Teaching discipline communities or other disciplinary or professional bodies.</li> </ol>

## Learning Outcomes (Coursework) Standards

### 8. Do you broadly support the proposed standards for Learning Outcomes? If not, why?

The University broadly supports the Learning Outcomes (Coursework) Standards. We welcome Standards 4, 6 and 10 in the Learning Outcomes (Coursework) Standards.

### 9. Do you wish to make any suggestions in relation to the specific content of the standards?

Table 5 below outlines suggestions to the specific content of the Learning Outcomes (Coursework) Standards.

Table 5. Suggestions to specific content of the Course Design (Coursework) Standards.

Standard	Suggestions
1. The learning outcomes to be achieved on completion of a course of study are specified for each course of study.	No additional suggestions.
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.	There is no mention of international comparators in the reference points. This standard could be reworded: 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 <i>and are equivalent to international standards.</i>
3. The learning outcomes for each course of study are informed by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The mastery of specific disciplinary and/or interdisciplinary knowledge and skills that characterise the field of study</li> <li>b. The generic skills and attributes required of graduates</li> <li>c. The application of generic skills and attributes in the context of the field of studying including the communication skills required, and</li> <li>d. The requirements of employment related to the field of study.</li> </ul>	Take out 'attributes required' because attributes cannot be measured.
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.	This is no mention of mapping or alignment or progressive development of learning outcomes.  This standard could be reworded:

	The course level learning outcomes and unit learning outcomes are mapped to ensure alignment and a progressive development of learning over the course of study.
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.	There is overlap with Standard 3 in the Course Design (Coursework) Standards. We suggest it stays only in the Course Design Standards section.  All courses of study are documented and publically accessible in a current version.
6. The assessment of student learning, whether at the unit level, course level, or in combination, encompasses all specified learning outcomes for each course of study.	Standard 6 is not clear because it assumes all learning outcomes should be in all units and courses. The assessment in each course of study aligns to the progressive development of learning outcomes across units and to the overall course level learning outcomes.
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.	Learning outcomes and methods of assessment for each course of study 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.	The methods of assessment are aligned to student learning outcomes and are capable of validly and reliably confirming that the specified learning outcomes are achieved.
9. The grades awarded to students reflect the level of their attainment.	We fully support the inclusion of Standard 9 & 10. It is very important to have two outcome focused standards.
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.	See above. We would add 'is referenced and reviewed periodically'.
Reference Points I. Australian Qualifications Framework (January 2013) II. Learning outcome statements developed for the field of study by the Office for Learning and Teaching discipline communities or other disciplinary or professional bodies. III. The requirements for professional accreditation of the course of study and registration	We would add: External evaluation of student learning outcomes and course experience  We would take out: 'where applicable'.

of graduates where applicable.	
	We would add another standard: Processes for the quality assurance and quality enhancement of all learning outcomes and the assessment of those learning outcomes is documented and overseen by the provider's peak governing body.
	We would also add another standard on resources because it is critical that institutions are able to sustain courses: The higher education provider has in place adequate resources, including sessional staff and professional development, for the assurance of learning outcomes and graduate attributes.
	We would also add another standard on planning: The higher education provider plans for learning and teaching include principles and definitions of learning outcomes, generic skills and assessment.

Table 6 outlines the revised Learning Outcomes (Coursework) Standards in the organising structure.

Table 6. Revised Learning Outcomes (Coursework) Standards

<b>Learning Outcomes (Coursework) Standards</b>	
<b>Planning</b>	1. The higher education provider plans for learning and teaching include principles and definitions of learning outcomes, generic skills and assessment.
<b>Policies</b>	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 <i>and are equivalent to international standards</i> .
<b>Governance</b>	3. Processes for the quality assurance and quality enhancement of all learning outcomes and the assessment of those learning outcomes is documented and overseen by the provider's peak governing body.
<b>Resources</b>	4. The higher education provider has in place adequate resources, including sessional staff and professional development, for the assurance of learning outcomes and generic skills.
<b>Practices</b>	5. The learning outcomes for each course of study are informed by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The mastery of specific disciplinary and/or interdisciplinary knowledge and skills that characterise</li> </ul>

<p><b>Review and Improvement</b></p>	<p>the field of study</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b. The generic skills required of graduates</li> <li>c. The application of generic skills in the context of the field of studying including the communication skills required, and</li> <li>d. The requirements of employment related to the field of study.</li> </ul> <p>6. The course level learning outcomes and unit learning outcomes are mapped to ensure alignment and a progressive development of learning over the course of study.</p> <p>7. The assessment in each course of study aligns to the progressive development of learning outcomes across units and to the overall course level learning outcomes.</p> <p>8. The methods of assessment are aligned to student learning outcomes and are capable of validly and reliably confirming that the specified learning outcomes are achieved.</p> <p>9. The grades awarded to students reflect the level of their attainment.</p> <p>10. The grading of students' achievement of learning outcomes for selected units within courses of study is referenced and reviewed periodically (at least every 5 years) against the grading of students achievement in comparable units or courses in other Australian institutions.</p>
<p><b>Reference Points</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Australian Qualifications Framework (January 2013)</li> <li>ii. Learning outcome statements developed for the field of study by the Office for Learning and Teaching discipline communities or other disciplinary or professional bodies.</li> <li>iii. The requirements for professional accreditation of the course of study and registration of graduates.</li> <li>iv. External evaluation of student learning outcomes and course experience</li> <li>v. International comparators</li> </ul>