

## HESTANDARDS - Info

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**From:** Jean-Etienne Joullié [\_\_\_\_\_] ]  
**Sent:** Thursday, 11 July 2013 9:58 AM  
**To:** HESTANDARDS - Info  
**Cc:** Michael Berrell; Frank Prestipino; Roger Alexander; Teaching and Learning  
**Subject:** comments on draft standards for Research and Research Training

Dear Panel,

Please find here below the comments the International College of Management, Sydney, would like to offer in response to your Call for Comment (number 2, 28 May 2013).

Please accept our apologies for the delay with which these comments are submitted. Feel free to revert to me for further information.

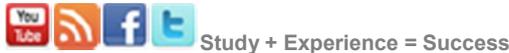
Sincerely Yours,



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### ***Q4 (suggestions in relation to the content of the standards for Research Training).***

Research Training is about training for research, i.e. training to become a researcher. In this context, although coursework components can be required to complement the knowledge of research students in some particular areas or to educate them with regard to specific aspects of research (such as tools, methods, ethics, etc.), they cannot be formally part of a research training program that would apply to all students. It should be up to research students, in coordination with their supervisors, to assess, early in their research training program, which coursework is required in their particular situation and given their particular research objectives. Coursework and research work are antagonistic by nature, since the former is about acquiring and reproducing well-defined knowledge outcomes, while the latter is about discovering new ones. The formal inclusion of coursework in a research training programs frames expectations of research students and thus automatically, if insidiously, devaluates the importance and priority that must be granted to genuine research.

In this regard, what constitutes, in the context of a doctoral degree, a “significant original contribution to the field of research” should be clearly defined as interpretation of this expression cannot be left to institutions. Universities and departments worldwide have been tempted to lower the requirements for doctoral degrees and have, as a consequence, awarded doctoral degrees to substandard contributions. In Australia, there is even a short-term and vested interest to do so, i.e. to maximise the likelihood of securing the funding which becomes available when research candidates complete successfully their program. The doctoral qualification is the highest one the university system confers however; its undermining weakens the entire edifice. It is not an overstatement to say that the reputation of a university is essentially linked to that of its research. Maintaining the profile and international

ranking of Australian universities demands that the reputation of their doctoral degrees is safeguarded through stringent requirements.

***Q6 (suggestions in relation to the content of the standards for Learning Outcomes (Research Training)).***

An essential Learning Outcome of Research Training has been overlooked: self-knowledge on the part of the research candidate. Academia today is a very competitive environment for individuals; before committing to a career in academe, one must discover if one is genuinely able to conduct independent, original and long-haul research work. Engaging in a research training program (such as that leading to a doctoral degree) is thus not only about producing new knowledge; it is also, and equally importantly, about discovering if one has 'the right stuff' to becoming a genuine academic, i.e. a producer and conveyer of new knowledge.

This being the case, the support available to research candidates should be provided only sparingly and only as deemed required by the candidates and their supervisors. Too many research candidates have been nurtured or even spoon-fed by their institutions by way of countless seminars, progress reports and evaluations, with supervisors having to step in, supplement or carry their students over the line as deadlines loom. Although well-intentioned (if not entirely altruistic), this level of support is self-defeating on two accounts: it produces substandard research work and leaves the (eventually 'successful') candidates with the false impression that they are fit for academic work. This is a lose-lose game.