



ALIA submission in response to the Australian Government Review of the Higher Education Provider Category Standards

8 March 2019

1. About us

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) is the professional organisation and peak body for the Australian library and information services sector.

On behalf of our 5,000 personal and institutional members, we provide the national voice of the profession in the development, promotion and delivery of quality library and information services to the nation, through leadership, advocacy and mutual support. We represent school, public, academic, research, corporate, law, health, government, National, State and Territory libraries and the people who staff them.

2. Introduction

We welcome this opportunity to respond to the review of the Higher Education Provider Category Standards and to express our view that:

- Providing a fit-for-purpose library and information service is a key characteristic for a quality higher education provider.
- An excellent student experience can only be achieved if students have access to the latest information resources relating to their field of study.
- Australian universities' ability to compete with the best in terms of research requires a research infrastructure supported by libraries and library and information professionals.

3. Discussion question: what characteristics should define a 'higher education provider' and a 'university' in the PCS?

Whatever the decision of the panel in relation to this question, we ask that the members confirm a library and information service as a critical requirement for every higher education provider. The library should provide students with appropriate content relating to the courses taught by the institution and employ qualified staff, not only to manage the service, but also to provide research, information and digital literacy training for students, staff and researchers.

Having said that all higher education providers must offer a library and information service, we believe the form that service takes is one of the differentiating factors between a higher education provider and a university.

In service terms, where a higher education provider has a strong research focus (ie a university), the creation of metadata, the storage, facilitation of long-term access and dissemination of research are fundamental to the institution's responsibilities – and this is a role for academic libraries.

In space terms, the *TEQSA Guidance Note: Staffing, Learning Resources and Educational Support*¹ recognises that information resources are increasingly available online but while this reduces the floor area needed for print collections, higher education libraries are overwhelmed by the demand for library study space. Australian universities are investing in new, state-of-the-art library buildings, as shown below.

With the gap between higher education offerings in different countries narrowing, as nations compete for overseas students, the value of quality campus libraries and library services for remote users may have been underestimated as an attraction and a potential element of the decision-making process.

Showcase university libraries are a highly visible symbol, supporting Australia's reputation globally for high quality higher education delivery and clearly demonstrating the investment these institutions are making in learning outcomes for students.



Caulfield Library, Monash University

¹ <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/latest-news/publications/guidance-note-staffing-learning-resources-and-educational-support>



Sir Louis Matheson Library, Monash University



John Phillips Library, Western Sydney University

4. Summary

As the Association representing library and information professionals, we seek to ensure that the Higher Education Standards Provider Category Standards reflect the need for students, researchers and educators to have ready access to quality library and information services, and to highlight the role of libraries as one of the differentiating factors between universities and other higher education providers.

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