

Griffith University response to Review of the Higher Education Provider Category Standards

Griffith University appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the Review of the Higher Education Provider Category Standards (PCS), both through the written submission and face-to-face consultations in Brisbane.

Griffith's position with respect to its status as a university is clear. Since the outset it has played a transformative role, nationally and within its catchment, undertaking practical and innovative research and providing equitable access to high quality university education. Like most universities, Griffith has linked its research, scholarship, learning and teaching activity with a strong culture of engagement where the needs of individuals, communities, industry and government inform the direction of our programs of teaching and research.

Griffith has provided life-changing opportunities for more than 200,000 graduates, mostly from the cities of the Gold Coast, Logan and Brisbane. Over its 45-year history the University has progressively tailored the delivery of its services to meet the distinctive needs of each of those communities. Examples of Griffith's transformative contributions in various communities is seen in the Gold Coast Health and Knowledge Precinct, the South Bank Cultural Precinct and its pivotal role in Logan City to correct historical under-representation in higher education. These long-term contributions are often overlooked in discussions about the PCS and the key characteristics of a university which tend to focus most attention on teaching and research.

On the question of 'fit for purpose' the Provider Category Standards currently set a high threshold for what is classified as a university. In doing so the Standards provide a solid foundation for one of the world's most robust university sectors which underpins the success of Australia's \$34 billion p.a. higher education export sector. International and domestic stakeholders place great trust in the academic and financial integrity of the Australian university sector and a degree of risk is introduced should the Standards be unnecessarily relaxed.

Our third point is that Australia needs an effective tertiary education sector and that will not happen by diluting the university title, rather we need to ensure a robust non-university sector to provide both alternatives and pathways for under-qualified students. The gravitational pull of the university title and cultural disposition toward seeking a university qualification needs addressing however that cannot be solved by adjusting the provider category standards.

The Provider Category Standards should therefore seek to provide better definition around the 127 non-university higher education providers. It would be helpful for members of the public to be more aware of the differences between not-for-profit and for-profit, specialist (including faith-based colleges) and those with a broader range of fields, those with university aspirations and those which act as pathways institutions for single or multiple universities. It is an anomaly that 127 providers are placed into the same category when four of the other five provider categories (university college, Australian university of

specialisation, overseas university, and overseas university of specialisation) comprise just three institutions.

Drawing on the above our key recommendations are:

- That the title of university be reserved for institutions that demonstrate significant education and research outcomes with a demonstrable public good mandate. The social responsibility criteria (B1.2(8)) could perhaps be recast to more fully reflect the transformative role played by universities in their communities.
- The Standards could also be modified to reflect the breadth of non-university Higher Education Providers to allow better differentiation between providers in this expanding category.
- The TEQSA national register should also set out the basis for each non-university provider's registration and provide clear information needed for students and other interested parties to be well-informed.

As a member of the Innovative Research Universities, Griffith University has also had the opportunity to provide input to that submission and broadly endorses the recommendations made.

Thanks again for the opportunity to provide input and I look forward to expanding upon these comments at the face-to-face consultations.

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