

**Kenvale College submission to the  
Commonwealth Review into Higher  
Education Provider Category  
Standards**

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## Review into Higher Education Provider Category Standards

### Discussion questions

1. **What characteristics should define a ‘higher education provider’ and a ‘university’ in the PCS?**
  - The nature and level of teaching and learning and assessment, and
  - The extent and depth of scholarly, research and creative activities.
2. **Are the PCS fit for purpose in terms of current and emerging needs?**
  - No
  - Why? Because the emergence of “polytechnics” in Victoria is providing a *de facto* new category.
3. **Should some categories be eliminated or new categories be introduced?**
  - New categories could be introduced because there is great variation within each of the current categories and this can be confusing for clients and the sectors.
  - What should be the features of any new categories? Perhaps a quinquupartite system:
    - Community Colleges (VET only)
    - Polytechnics (VET & HE)
    - Higher Education Colleges (HE + scholarly activity))
    - University Colleges (Self-accrediting HE + research))
    - Universities (as now), but
      - Research-intensive, and
      - Teaching-intensive (not Teaching-only).

The terms “Registered Training Organisation” and “Higher Education Provider” do not generally resonate well internationally. This can make it harder for small Australian institutions to compete to their maximum efficiency and effectiveness in the overseas markets.

While it could be argued that those HEPs which aspire to the use of the term “university” could try to become a university of specialisation, the category of university college might better convey their scope to the international tertiary education community – see attachment.

4. **Do specific categories need to be revised?**
  - Yes, HEPs in general, with the better ones able to become university colleges, and stay so if they choose and satisfy TEQSA. The better HEPs are under-sold on both the domestic and international markets
  - How? University Colleges could be of two types:
    - Proto-universities (as now in a theoretical sense), and
    - Single-purpose providers – see attachment.
5. **How would the needs of providers, students, industry, regulator and broader public interest be served by your suggested changes to the PCS?**
  - Clarification of the role and meaning of a provider category and its place in the ‘pecking’ order.
  - See, for instance, for a wider perspective: Jack, Andrew, 2019. “UK Universities Face their Toughest Test”. *The Financial Times*, February 5.

Attached is an outline of some relevant aspects of University Colleges in the UK and in Canada.

## **UNIVERSITY COLLEGES IN CANADA & THE UNITED KINGDOM**

### **Introduction**

Among the seven types of Australian higher education institutions in the TEQSA Provider Standards, there is the category of University College. Apart from the Australian Defence Force Academy, which is a university college of UNSW, there are currently no other university colleges in Australia, although some residential colleges at Australian universities use this nomenclature in their literature, as does their peak representational body, University Colleges Australia.

A university college according to the Provider Standards must be a proto-university, self-accrediting for five years, and with significant research activity in at least three distinct fields. There is no room for a higher education provider which offers high quality teaching within the context of substantial dedication to scholarly activity which informs this teaching and which does not entertain aspirations to be either a comprehensive university or a university of specialisation.

This raises the question of what happens in the rest of the world? There are at least ten other countries which have university colleges (or their equivalent). Sometimes the title 'university college' denotes degree-granting institutions which do not have full university status, sometimes they are affiliated to a larger university, and sometimes they attain this status as permanent entities when they achieve degree-granting powers. Two such countries in the English-speaking world which utilise this last criterion are Canada and the United Kingdom. In the latter the Privy Council is the ultimate authority, whereas the responsibility rests with the Provincial governments in Canada.

This paper attempts to summarise the characteristics of university colleges in these two countries. The arrays have been tabulated from the university college websites, which vary considerably in the extent and depth of the information about their academic courses and history.

### **Some Canadian University Colleges**

Canada has a number of university colleges which offer externally approved degrees and which are permanent, insofar as anything is permanent in higher education. There are also other institutions with the name university college but they are affiliated with universities whose degrees and diplomas they offer. University Colleges combine Canadian university and college traditions, with a strong base of applied and academic programs offered in campus environments. As the name suggests, a university college offers university degrees as well as college diploma and certificate programs. As a component of the Canadian university system, university colleges offer students a choice of either academically-oriented university degree programs or the more practically-oriented college diplomas and certificates. As part of the Canadian college system, university colleges are distinguished by their strong student support services, small classes and strong campus environments. They also may offer combined degree/diploma programs, university transfer programs and applied degree programs.

The colleges considered here began their lives as Church-based liberal arts colleges, some of which have added some vocational postgraduate programs. The liberal arts programs are still at the core of their missions. Some have undergraduate and pre-preparatory courses, as well as some pre-professional transfer programs articulated to some Canadian universities. They are still generally linked to the founding Churches and often programs which link into the ministry preparation in these churches for those who wish to follow those paths.

The degrees are externally accredited: in Alberta by Campus Alberta Quality Council, and in Ontario by the Council of Ontario Universities. The names of the institutions with the university college title are approved by the Alberta Ministry of Advanced Education and Ontario Legislature respectively. The postgraduate programs for the degrees of master and doctor in theology or ministry

are generally also approved by the relevant ecclesiastical or pontifical authority. All of the university colleges are members of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, and those in the table below are also members of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities.

The information in the table below has been compiled from websites – with difficulty, because of the inconsistency of presentation or lack of information, and because of the oversimplification which generally accompanies tabular summaries. There is no national regulator in Canada nor are there detailed provincial criteria for the title of university college, though the title ‘university’ is protected by Canadian federal law. The table below shows the UK University Colleges in 2011. All but three (‡) have since become ‘universities’, so it would seem that even when there is no imperative to become a university the temptation to do so is overwhelming!

In summary, these colleges are stable because of their foundations and links, filling niches in Canadian higher education. They are small but financially secure even though their fees seem small in comparison with those on offer in Australia. They do not seem to be ambitious to acquire large student numbers, nor to aspire to ‘full’ university status. They seem to encourage scholarly activity among their academic staff whose numbers in each field are small but sufficient to enable succession planning. Adjunct staff from specialised fields with appropriate experience and expertise assist with the more specialised postgraduate programs.

Name of Institution	Year of Foundation	Undergraduate									Postgraduate					
		BA	BSc	B Ed	B Soc Sc	B Bus	B Health	B Music	BPhil	B Th	Educ'n	Arts	Infirmaon	Careers etc	Phil	Theology
Ambrose University College,	1982	√	√	√								M		GD		M
<b>Canadian University College‡</b>	<b>1907</b>	√	√	√				√						M		M
Concordia University College	1921	√	√	√		√	√						M	GD		M
<b>Dominican University College‡</b>	<b>1900</b>				√				√	√					D	D
<b>Redeemer University College‡</b>	<b>1982</b>	√	√	√												
St Mary's University College	1986	√									M					
<b>The King's University College‡</b>	<b>1979</b>	√	√	√	√											

### Some United Kingdom University Colleges

The United Kingdom has five categories of degree-granting institutions. Of these, Colleges of Higher Education can apply for the title of university college when they receive degree-granting status (Taught-degree Awarding powers) in their own right, as distinct from offering the degrees under a validation arrangement with a university.

The table below shows the UK University Colleges in 2011. All but three (‡) have since become ‘universities’, so again it would seem that even when there is no imperative to become a university the temptation to do so is overwhelming! The two university colleges in Belfast are in a federal relationship with Queen’s University Belfast.

The British university colleges can apply to become full universities once their effective full-time student enrolment reaches a magic figure of 4,000. 'University colleges' can, though, remain in this category. As in Australia there are other institutions with 'University College' in their title such as University College, London, now a university in its own right but formerly a constituent college of the then federated University of London.

Most of the UK university colleges started their lives in a variety of ways. Some originally specialised in design or hospitality or sports and were the responsibility of local authorities; some were teacher training colleges, some of which were faith based. Some have widened their range of courses, while others have remained focused on their historical strengths. Most offer foundation degree programs (akin to Australian Associate degrees) and short courses in their key areas. Several have participated and done quite well in the UK Research Assessment Exercises. Most are dedicated to encouraging a research culture within the institution or in partnership with a university. Most tend to be larger than similar higher education providers in Australia.

Name of Institution Including location	Specialised Undergraduate Programs						Postgraduate Programs (Level)									
	BA (Hons)	BSc	BEng	BEd	LLB	BA (Lib)	PG	MEd	MA	MArch	MSc	MEng/Sc	MPhil	MBA/MB	LLM	PhD
The Arts University College at Bournemouth	√								√	√			√			√
<b>University College Birmingham</b> ‡	√	√					√		√		√	√				
Bishop Grosseteste University College Lincoln	√	√					√		√							
University College Falmouth	√						√		√				√	√		√
Harper Adams University College, Newport, Shropshire		√	√				√				√	√		√		√
Leeds Trinity University College, Horsforth, Leeds	√	√							√				√	√		√
Newman University College, Birmingham	√	√					√		√				√			√
Norwich University College of the Arts	√								√				√			√
University College Plymouth St Mark & St John	√	√		√				√	√							
Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester		√							√		√			√		
<b>St Mary's University College, Belfast</b> ‡				√		√	√	√								
St Mary's University College, Twickenham	√	√			√		√		√		√		√		√	√
<b>Stranmillis University College (Belfast)</b> ‡	√			√			√	√	√							

## Concluding Comments

Australian Non-University Higher Education Providers would be eligible to apply for university college status if they were in the United Kingdom or Canada. The size of the student population is not an issue nor is there a requirement to be offering research degrees. Similarly, the breadth of courses does not matter: what does matter is the quality and the depth in these courses.

Many universities and colleges in the UK and Canada have collaborative articulation arrangements.

- While these are possible in Australia, could more be done to encourage such collaboration?
- Are the provider standards for university college status in Australia too inflexible?
- Are they then reducing the international competitiveness of a section of the Australian Higher Education Sector?
- Are they disadvantaging Australian students who are satisfying the requirements for university-level qualifications without the recognition of this in their institutional name?
- What is the need for a requirement of five years prior self-accrediting status?
  - Does this requirement indicate that the current criteria for becoming a self-accrediting institution are not considered to be robust enough?
  - Does it ignore that some higher education providers would see their international competitiveness better served by having the external regulator as their accrediting agent? After all, Australia is one of the very few OECD countries with self-accrediting universities and some other higher education providers.