

Higher Education Standards Panel

Call for comment (Number 1, March 2013)

Draft Standards for Course Design and Learning Outcomes

Concept of Reference Points

Q1. Do you broadly support the proposed format for the standards? If not, why?

Yes

Q2. Do you support the inclusion of Reference Points as proposed? If not, why?

Yes

Q3. Do you wish to make any suggestions in relation to the format of the standards?

We would ask that the development of reference points be sufficiently comprehensive as to recognise and inform the varied contexts of Higher Education delivery for all organisations required to comply with the standards.

Course Design (Coursework)

Q4. Do you broadly support the proposed standards for Course design? If not, why?

Yes

Q5. Do you wish to make any suggestions in relation to the specific content of the standards?

Section 5 may need amendment in order to provide for subjects whose primary function is to explore the history of an academic area. In this circumstance knowledge, skills and application are required about the historical past as much as they are a requirement to recognise and inform the development of current trends.

Learning Outcomes (Coursework)

Q4. Do you broadly support the proposed standards for Learning Outcomes? If not, why?

Yes

Q5. Do you wish to make any suggestions in relation to the specific content of the standards?

The difference between graduate attributes, graduate learning outcomes and subject learning outcomes needs clearer definitions and examples. Conversations with other providers have indicated there is wide ranging variations in the interpretations of these.

Section 10 may need further clarification as different student cohorts vary greatly and therefore so may results.

For example a mature aged cohort quite commonly outscores an under 20 cohort as the breadth of experience they bring to their study greatly enhances their critical thinking capacity and their part-time status gives them more time to dedicate to each unit of study so they often engage with study at a deep level.

Different institutions are also measuring for different outcomes so results may be incompatible for referencing against.

For example some institutions are clinically directed and others maintain a research focus. Therefore one will focus on the ability of students to apply their skills in work related contexts while the other will be concerned with the research capacity demonstrated by students.

The differing size of an institution greatly impacts the grading pattern. A university class with a 1000 students per unit generates a different quantity and style of data to one with only 10 students per unit. Therefore the ways information is collected and analysed may need to differ in order to provide useful planning information for the institution. Many academic disciplines have external reporting requirements from association and industry bodies, altering the types of information they are required to track and in addition to this there may be incompatibilities in reporting requirements across states. This will make it difficult to compare certain data areas in states where higher education providers are not plentiful.