

22 April 2013

Higher Education Standards Executive
GPO Box 1672
MELBOURNE VIC 3001

Dear

The University of Wollongong is pleased to make this response to the Draft Standards for Course Design and Learning Outcomes issued by the Higher Education Standards Panel on 5 March 2013. In relation to the consultation questions, we make the following points:

Proposed Format

Q.1 Do you broadly support the proposed format for the standards?

Yes, the format is clear, simple and straightforward. The standards themselves are sequenced in a logical way. However, a preamble to the standards would be helpful. It is suggested that this include an agreed taxonomy of terms used across the Threshold Standards and the Australian Qualifications Framework.

Q.2 Do you support the inclusion of Reference Points as proposed?

Yes, the inclusion of reference points is helpful and we agree that the list should be viewed as being indicative rather than definitive.

Proposed Content – Course Design

Q.4 Do you broadly support the proposed standards for Course Design?

Yes, there is broad support for the Course Design Standards. However, we feel there is a need to define what is meant by the term “course design”, especially in relation to Standard #3 (see below).

Q.5 Do you wish to make any suggestions in relation to the specific content of the standards?

Standard #3 - The term “course design” is used to describe many of the elements which inform course design, but is light on the actual process of course design which should be about constructive alignment of learning outcomes with learning activities and assessment, taking into account both an explicit statement of pedagogical approach and method (e.g. problem-based learning, authentic & situated learning, lecture-based, collaborative learning) and university goals for the curriculum e.g. internationalised, practice-led, research-led, digitally rich. It also does not mention evaluation as an integral part of course design.

*Standard #4 – this standard states that “...the course and the expectations for student learning are consistent with the qualification to be awarded and **informed** by the AQF”. This appears to be a departure from the existing Threshold Standard which states that “the higher*

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education provider ensures that awards which may lead to a qualification located at levels 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 or 10 of the AQF meet the corresponding specifications (including the levels criteria and qualification type descriptors) described in the AQF" [QS 1.1].

While we welcome a more flexible approach to AQF compliance, we feel it is necessary to spell out clearly what is meant by the term "informed" in this context.

Proposed Content – Learning Outcomes

Q.6 Do you broadly support the proposed standards for Learning Outcomes?

Yes, they appear to cover all relevant aspects and are sequenced in a logical way.

Q.7 Do you wish to make any suggestions in relation to the specific content of the standards

Standard #5 - there is a typo "publically"

Standard #8 - It is suggested that a better wording may be "Methods of assessment are consistent with the types of learning outcomes being assessed and are capable of assuring that specified learning outcomes are achieved."

Standard #9 - "The grades awarded to students reflect the level of their attainment" – this standard is ambiguous and it is suggested should be spelled out more clearly.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft standards. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require clarification on any of the above points.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Eeva Leinonen
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)