



**Higher Education Standards Panel  
 Draft Standards for Research, Research Training and Learning Outcomes (Research Training)  
 Call for Comment (Number 2, 28 May 2013)**

**INSTRUCTIONS**

*The Higher Education Standards Panel (HESP) has invited comment on proposed revisions to the current Higher Education Threshold Standards.*

*This is the second Call for Comment from HESP. The first sought feedback on the proposed format of the standards, exemplified by sets of draft standards on Course Design (Coursework) and Learning Outcomes (Coursework). HESP is now seeking specific comment on research standards because research is only represented in a limited way in the current Threshold Standards and was mooted as part of the 'non-threshold' standards. The sets of draft research standards are as follows:*

- **Research**
- **Research Training**
- **Learning Outcomes (Research Training)**

*The proposed research standards would be included in the Threshold Standards and would NOT be 'non-threshold' standards, although they would only apply to providers who conduct research or research and research training.*

*The questions included in the Call for Comment and the text of the draft research standards are extracted in the table below. Please include any comments in the right-hand column to facilitate compilation and development of a University response.*

**RESEARCH**

Feedback on the proposed draft standards for **Research** is invited by the Panel.

	<b>Question</b>	<b>Feedback</b>
Q1	Do you broadly support the proposed standards for Research? If not, why?	Yes. The draft standards are generally clear and supportable.
Q2	Do you wish to make any suggestions in relation to the specific content of the standards? [See below]	Some minor suggestions for further simplification and clarification are included below.

**Draft Research Standards**

*Applicable to providers that conduct research, or conduct research and offer research training.*

1	<p>All research activities of staff and students, including research conducted as part of research training, are carried out in accordance with the provider's academic governance requirements for research, encompassing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. ethical conduct of research and responsible research practice</li> <li>b. ownership and management of intellectual property</li> <li>c. research partnerships</li> <li>d. publication and authorship</li> <li>e. resolution of allegations of misconduct in research, and</li> <li>f. compliance with prevailing regulatory requirements that are applicable to the field of research.</li> </ul>	<p>This standard could usefully include another sub-point explicitly mentioning 'data management and storage'</p>
2	<p>Research is conducted by or under the direct supervision of staff with relevant qualifications, research experience and skills in the fields of research concerned.</p>	
3	<p>Staff engaged in research are formally inducted into their roles.</p>	<p>Suggest this say 'Staff and students engaged in research...' to align it with the reference to staff and students in Draft Research Standard #1 (DRS-1) above.</p>
4	<p>The concept of 'research-active' staff is defined and complied with in the implementation of research policy and practices.</p>	
5	<p>An accurate, secure and up-to-date repository of the research outputs of staff and research students is maintained.</p>	<p>Provision of data storage is also important; we have proposed that this is included in DRS-1.</p>
6	<p>Research performance is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. monitored and reported against institutional goals, both in aggregate and by field of research</li> <li>b. analysed by reference to national or international comparators, and</li> <li>c. assessed against goals for improvement.</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>Reference Points</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. <i>Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research</i> (Australian Government, 2007).</li> <li>ii. <i>Excellence in Research for Australia</i>.</li> </ul>	

	[Other comments]	
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## RESEARCH TRAINING

Feedback on the proposed draft standards for **Research Training** is invited by the Panel.

	Question	Feedback
Q3	Do you broadly support the proposed standards for Research Training? If not, why?	Yes. The draft standards are generally clear and supportable.
Q4	Do you wish to make any suggestions in relation to the specific content of the standards?	We propose below some minor amendments to the wording, and raise some questions that might lead to improved clarity.

### Draft Research Training Standards

*Applicable to providers that conduct research and offer research training.*

1	<p>Research training is conducted in accordance with the provider's academic governance requirements for research training, encompassing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. requirements for admission and approval of candidature that take into account the preparedness of the candidate, the availability of qualified, competent and accessible supervision and the resources necessary for the candidature</li> <li>b. the rights and responsibilities of students and supervisors</li> <li>c. induction and orientation of students and supervisors</li> <li>d. monitoring and maintaining progress</li> <li>e. assessment, examination and the independence of examiners</li> <li>f. publication of research findings, and</li> <li>g. resolution of disputes.</li> </ul>	<p>We suggest point d should be modified to say 'monitoring and maintaining progress during candidature' in order to avoid the possible interpretation that the current phrasing could mean 'monitoring and maintaining progress in academic governance.'</p>
2	<p>Coursework formally included in a course of study that involves research training, whether as a component of or an adjunct to research training, meets the academic governance and quality assurance requirements required of other coursework offered by the provider.</p>	<p>The way this is written, it could include non-HDR courses such as honours and coursework masters that include some research. This may not be the intention, since coursework in those courses would have a similar standards requirement set elsewhere.</p>
3	<p>Each research student is supervised by a principal supervisor who is research active</p>	<p>Does the term 'research student' need to be defined (e.g. as it is in the next standard DRTS-</p>

	in the relevant field of research, there is at least one associate supervisor with relevant research expertise and continuity of relevant supervisory expertise is maintained throughout the candidature.	4)? See also the following comment.
4	In the case of supervision of students in a course of study that leads to a research higher degree, the principal supervisor holds a doctoral degree or has equivalent research experience.	We suggest that DRTS-3 and DRTS-4 could be combined into one: 'Each student in a course of study that leads to a research higher degree is supervised by a principal supervisor who holds a doctoral degree or has equivalent research experience, and is research active in the relevant field of research. There is also at least one associate supervisor with relevant research expertise, and continuity of relevant supervisory expertise is maintained throughout the candidature.'
5	Research students receive an induction about codes of conduct for research, ethics, occupational health and safety, intellectual property and additional matters that are specific to the field of research.	Suggest that the statement(s) about supervision could be placed after the ones about induction (DRTS-5) and guidance/support (DRTS-6)
6	Research students are guided and supported to shape the directions of their research, to develop capacities for independent research and to present and publish their research findings.	
7	The standing of research arising from research training is monitored, including by reviewing all examiners' reports independently of supervisors to obtain: a. informed external views on the standing of the work in the field of research, and b. in the case of doctoral degrees, evidence of a significant original contribution to the field of research.	It is not at all clear what this means or is trying to achieve. Is it a statement about the requirements of HDR examinations, or does it mean that examiners' reports should be mined for evidence of research standards (independently of examination outcomes)?
8	The quality and extent of research training is monitored against institutional goals, both in aggregate and by field of research, encompassing: a. durations of candidature and rates of progression, completion and attrition b. quality of supervision c. contributions of research students to institutional research performance d. feedback from students, and	

	e. actions taken to improve research training.	
	<b>Reference Points</b> i. <i>Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research</i> (Australian Government, 2007). ii. Guidelines developed by the Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Research ( <i>Titles to be advised</i> )	
	[Other comments]	

### LEARNING OUTCOMES (RESEARCH TRAINING)

Feedback on the proposed draft standards for **Learning Outcomes (Research Training)** is invited by the Panel.

	Question	Feedback
Q5	Do you broadly support the proposed standards for Learning Outcomes (Research Training)? If not, why?	Yes. The draft learning outcomes are generally clear and supportable, except that DRTLO-4 reads more like a standard than a learning outcome.
Q6	Do you wish to make any suggestions in relation to the specific content of the standards?	Yes, see the comment at Q5 and the elaboration under #4 below.

### Draft Learning Outcomes (Research Training) Standards

*Applicable to providers that conduct research and offer research training.*

1	The learning outcomes for all courses of study are specified. <i>(Will be common to coursework and research training)</i>	
2	The learning outcomes are comparable to those for the same or similar qualifications offered elsewhere in Australia, and are informed by international comparators. <i>(Will be common to coursework and research training)</i>	
3	On completion of research training, candidates will have demonstrated, at a level consistent with the qualification awarded: a. a detailed understanding of the specific topic of research, located within a broad understanding of the field of research b. the capacity to scope, design, plan and	With reference to point b, not all research is

	<p>conduct research projects independently and in collaboration</p> <p>c. technical research skills and competency in the application of research methods</p> <p>d. skills in analysis, criticism, presentation, reporting and publication of research findings, and</p> <p>e. generic skills required for research, including capacities to transfer across different environments and fields of research.</p>	<p>collaborative, so it is not clear whether and how all research degree graduates should demonstrate the capacity to conduct research projects in collaboration.</p>
4	<p>Assessment of theses, dissertations, exegeses, creative works or other major assessable research outputs and materials is undertaken:</p> <p>a. for doctoral degrees, by at least two independent experts with international standing who are external to the provider and any collaborating institution involved in the work, and</p> <p>b. for masters degrees, by at least one independent expert who is external to the provider and any collaborating institution involved in the work.</p>	<p>This reads like a <u>standard</u> rather than a <u>learning outcome</u>. Perhaps it could be covered in a modified version of DRTS-7 about examination standards, or if it is to remain as a learning outcome it should be restated in the form 'doctoral graduates will have made a substantial original contribution to knowledge, as judged by two independent experts with international standing...'</p>
	<p><b>Reference Points</b></p> <p>[None identified]</p>	
	<p>[Other comments]</p>	

**Other Comments:**

Q7 Do you wish to make any **Overall or General Comments** about the form, style, scope or any other aspects of the proposed set of research-related standards?