

9 July 2013

Higher Education Standards Panel Executive  
TEQSA  
GPO Box 1672  
MELBOURNE 3001

Dear Executive

### **Call for Comment – Research Standards**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a comment on the Draft Standards for Research, Research Training, and Learning Outcomes (Research Training).

The College of Law is not a research institution (we do not offer research degrees or formal research training) but we do offer coursework Masters degrees with a small research component, as seems now to be required under the revised AQF.

To that end, we are affected by the Draft Standards and so have an interest in how they are framed and how they will impact on our activities. We respond to the questions as follows:

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

Yes, as long as the standards apply proportionately to the kind and level of research activities undertaken by each institution.

*Q2. Do you wish to make any suggestions in relation to the specific content of the standards?*

We are a little concerned in the way that the proposed standards apply to all institutions regardless of provider category. The College does not provide research degrees, but is attempting, gradually, to increase its research footprint. It is therefore interested in the definition of 'conduct research' or being 'research active'? According to the introduction, it seems that it is up to the College to define these terms and apply them consistently, which we are content to do, but we are wary of industry-accepted definitions creeping in over time and standards more appropriate for universities becoming normative.

In particular, standard 1f seems to conflict with the basic idea (standard 4) that an institution may itself define within its own academic governance standards what it means by 'conduct research' or 'research active'. If an institution wishing to grow gradually into a field of research fears being trapped by definitions more appropriate to a very different category of provider, it may be dissuaded from developing.

We are also concerned about the Guiding Principle that examination of major assessable components of research training include independent external assessment by examiners of international standing. This is, at this stage, only relevant to research training, but research training, in a small way, is now more or less mandatory in all coursework Masters degrees under the new AQF. The College allows its Applied Law Masters students to undertake a Major Project by research and is also including research modules in all Applied Law subjects, but it would be (we believe) grossly out of proportion to require (at some future point) an international moderation component within this level of activity.

We agree with the principle but are wary of its application to comparatively low levels of research and research training as presently feature at the College of Law.

Q3. Do you broadly support the proposed standards for Research Training? If not, why?

Yes, subject to the same caveats as above.

Q4. Do you wish to make any suggestions in relation to the specific content of the standards?

Similar to our response at 2, the standards need to be proportionate in how they apply to different levels of research activity. For example, our Applied Law Masters students who take the research elective are currently supervised by a senior lecturer with a doctoral degree, but that may not always be the case. The main criteria for appointment at the College of Law is a minimum 5 years post-admission experience in legal practice. Such people rarely have PhDs. We are therefore reliant on our academic equivalence policy when it comes to appointing lectures to teach in our Masters Programs and would hope that this facility remains open, if necessary, even in the case of a research supervisor. (See standard 4.)

Q5. Do you broadly support the proposed standards for Learning Outcomes (Research Training)? If not, why?

Yes, subject to the same caveats as above.

Q6. Do you wish to make any suggestions in relation to the specific content of the standards?

No.

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?

We would just emphasise the need to appreciate that while we see the sense in having just one set of standards applicable to all categories of provider, we would like to see a Guiding Principle added that took into account the proportionality of a particular provider's research footprint in order to preclude any disincentive to development.

Yours faithfully

**Lewis Patrick**  
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