

Higher Education Standards Panel

Response to consultation on Draft Standards for Research, Research Training and Learning Outcomes (Research Training)

Research standards

1. 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:
 - a. ethical conduct of research and responsible research practice
 - b. ownership and management of intellectual property
 - c. research partnerships
 - d. publication and authorship
 - e. resolution of allegations of misconduct in research, and
 - f. compliance with prevailing regulatory requirements that are applicable to the field of research.
2. Research is conducted by or under the direct supervision of staff with relevant qualifications, research experience and skills in the fields of research concerned.
3. Staff engaged in research are formally inducted into their roles.
4. The concept of 'research-active' staff is defined and complied with in the implementation of research policy and practices.
5. An accurate, secure and up-to-date repository of the research outputs of staff and research students is maintained.
6. Research performance is:
 - a. monitored and reported against institutional goals, both in aggregate and by field of research
 - b. analysed by reference to national or international comparators, and
 - c. assessed against goals for improvement.

Reference Points

- i. *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research* (Australian Government, 2007).
- ii. *Excellence in Research for Australia*.

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

These draft standards are broadly supported, however, HEPs that deliver both VET and HE courses focus on applied research, professional practice and technology transfer rather than "blue skies" or discovery research. For this reason, these providers have a tendency to adopt Boyer's conceptualisation of research.

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

Point 6b: Having a requirement to benchmark research performance will not be easy or meaningful for a small higher education provider that has a portfolio of Associate Degree courses and is therefore primarily focussed on scholarship to support teaching. These providers will not be engaged in the ERA assessment and will therefore have to establish other mechanisms for benchmarking performance.

Requiring institutions to evaluate their research against institutional goals would be sufficient for all providers. If it were a goal of the institution to participate in the ERA then this would then form part of the assessment.

Reference points: Add Boyer's Model and categorisation of research as a reference point (Boyer EL. *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*. Princeton, NJ: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1990.) i.e; the Scholarship of Discovery; the Scholarship of Integration; the Scholarship of Application and the Scholarship of Teaching. For many applied HEPs this is a more robust model of scholarship/research that supports the work undertaken in the fields of application and teaching.

Research Training

1. Research training is conducted in accordance with the provider's academic governance requirements for research training, encompassing:
 - 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
 - b. the rights and responsibilities of students and supervisors
 - c. induction and orientation of students and supervisors
 - d. monitoring and maintaining progress
 - e. assessment, examination and the independence of examiners
 - f. publication of research findings, and
 - g. resolution of disputes.
2. 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.
3. Each research student is supervised by a principal supervisor who is research active 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. 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.

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.
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.
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.

Reference Points

- i. *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (Australian Government 2007).*
- ii. Guidelines developed by the Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Research.¹

Q3 *Do you broadly support the proposed standards for research training? If no why not?*

Yes

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

Content is acceptable

Learning Outcomes (Research Training)²

1. The learning outcomes for all courses of study are specified.³
2. The learning outcomes are comparable to those for the same or similar qualifications offered elsewhere in Australia, and are informed by international comparators.²

¹ Titles to be advised.

² Applicable to providers that conduct research and offer research training.

³ Will be common to coursework and research training.

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 conduct research projects independently and in collaboration
 - c. technical research skills and competency in the application of research methods
 - d. skills in analysis, criticism, presentation, reporting and publication of research findings, and
 - e. generic skills required for research, including capacities to transfer across different environments and fields of research.
4. Assessment of theses, dissertations, exegeses, creative works or other major assessable research outputs and materials is undertaken:
 - 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
 - b. for masters degrees, by at least one independent expert who is external to the provider and any collaborating institution involved in the work.

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

The standards should allow for interdisciplinary research. The current wording focuses on knowledge and understanding within a field of research. PWA suggests the wording under 2a be revised to state:*one or more fields of research.*

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

Point 3b: Under 3b is it necessary that a candidate completing a research training degree be able to *research independently and in collaboration*? We would prefer to see the focus of the standard being on researching independently.

Point 3d: Under 3d we would prefer to use the term *critical evaluation* or *critique* rather than *criticism*.

Point 3e: Under 3e what are graduates expected to be able to transfer? Is it knowledge or are you expecting graduates to be able to transfer their research skills across modes of research, for example, science research methods to social sciences? If so is this realistic in a graduate?

We would expect a graduate from a research training degree to be skilled in the research methodologies appropriate to their field of research. A post-doctoral student would be expected to develop the skills to apply known research methodologies to unfamiliar fields of research and to be able to adapt their practice.