

## **Curtin University Feedback on Draft Standards for Research, Research Training and Learning Outcomes (Research Training)**

### General

Curtin University supports the overall approach to the draft standards relating to research, including the specific inclusion of these in the Proposed Framework for Standards for Higher Education published in Communique #8.

We note that the term “field of research” is used in many places in the draft standards. This phrase may be interpreted to mean specifically FOR as defined by the Australian and New Zealand Research Classification (2008). If this were the intent of the standards, then our view is that this would create too narrow a focus for the standards. Analysis based on FOR has the potential to reinforce research silos and does not encourage cross-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary research activities which are essential to address major research priorities at both a national and international level. We would suggest the broader term ‘research discipline’ or ‘area of research’ to allow institutions to demonstrate appropriate monitoring and review of research that can reflect each institution’s research strategy and profile.

### Draft Standards for Research.

Q1. Curtin University broadly supports the proposed standards for Research.

Q2.

Draft Standard #2. It is unclear how ‘skills in the fields of research’ would be defined and measured given the range of research techniques and approaches utilised within research institutions. Adding ‘in the fields of research concerned’ is redundant given that the qualifications and experience is required to be ‘relevant’. We feel the standard would achieve the same outcome if it was phrased “Research is conducted by or under the direct supervision of staff with relevant qualifications and research experience”.

Draft Standards #4. Curtin University supports an institutional level definition of ‘research active’ given previous difficulties in achieving sector-wide agreement on a definition. This will allow universities to set benchmarks which reflect the diversity of research intensity across the sector.

### Draft Standards for Research Training.

Q3. Curtin University broadly supports the proposed standards for Research Training.

Q4.

Draft Standard #4. Supervision of research Masters level students should be able to be undertaken by a supervisor with a research Masters qualification, as long as Draft standard #3 (that the supervisor is research active in the relevant discipline) is met. We do not feel that a research Masters student must be supervised by someone with a doctoral degree. This also aligns with the arrangement where a doctoral student can be supervised by the holder of a doctoral degree.

Draft Standard #6. The standard would be better if the phrase “and publish” were removed and the standard ended with “..and to present their research findings”. ‘Present’ covers a wider range of forms for dissemination of research findings, including publication, but also encompasses creative production which is more appropriate for research students in the creative arts.

Draft Standards for Learning Outcomes (Research Training).

Q5. Curtin University broadly supports the proposed standards for Learning Outcomes (Research Training).

Q6.

Draft Standard # 2.

We support the aim to ensure learning outcomes for research training are comparable across Australia, but note that there is yet no national consensus on such learning outcomes. We would strongly encourage the Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies (DDOGS) group to work together to agree on learning outcomes. These could then form an external reference point for the Learning Outcomes (Research Training) standards.

Draft Standard #3 d

A requirement for all research training students to demonstrate skills in publication of research findings (apart from being inappropriate for research students in the creative arts as stated above in comments on Research Training Draft Standard #6), may create the expectation that research students have a publication at least in press prior to completion. This would have the undesirable outcome of potentially delaying students from completing their degree given the extended timelines for review and publication in some areas of research and this process is beyond the control of the institution or the student.

Draft Standard # 3 e

We support the requirement for research students to demonstrate generic skills, but do not agree that this needs to be specifically demonstrated by skills in transferring across environments or research areas. This statement could more appropriately either end after “...required for research”, or the opening statement for Draft Standard #3 re-worded to state “..candidates will have demonstrated *generic skills required for research*, at a level consistent with the qualification awarded, and:...”.

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