

Higher Education Standards Panel Executive
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Dear Panel Executive,

Please find enclosed the response from Victoria University to Draft Standards for Research, Research Training and Learning Outcomes (Research Training).

If you have any questions regarding the University's response or wish to discuss any matters further, please don't hesitate to contact Professor Warren Payne.

Yours sincerely

Donna Hannan
Acting Pro Vice-Chancellor
(Research and Research Training)

Victoria University
Response to the Discussion Paper
Draft Standards for Research, Research Training and
Learning Outcomes (Research Training)

Victoria University welcomes the opportunity to respond to the *Discussion Paper: Draft Standards for Research, Research Training and Learning Outcomes (Research Training)*. The University is broadly supportive of the approach outlined in the discussion paper, and would like to make brief comment on the following:

- Draft Standards for Research
- Draft Standards for Research Training
- Draft Standards for Learning Outcomes (Research Training)

Draft Standards for Research

Victoria University broadly supports the proposed standards for Research. The University supports the autonomy provided to institutions to define 'research active' to ensure that the definition aligns with the institution's research strategies and priorities.

Draft Standards for Research Training

Victoria University broadly supports the proposed standards for Research Training. However, the University sees some inconsistencies in the terminology and its use within the standards, specifically the use of the terms 'research training' and 'research student' and the inclusion of programs other than research higher degrees.

The core definitional issue relates to what higher education activity is defined as research training, with research training being considered by some to encompass all programs and activities that have the development of research skills as an explicitly enunciated outcome. The University notes that the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research adopts this broad definition with the term research trainees adopted and including all who are engaged in the process of learning about how to conduct research, irrespective of their course/course level (if students) or employment arrangements (e.g. research assistants). In such a definition, initial research training through undergraduate unit/s, honours and Masters by coursework (i.e. non higher degrees by research) programs can be considered to constitute research training, and all students could be defined as research students. In contrast, a narrower definition also commonly adopted equates research training with the learning and professional development delivered higher education programs defined as research higher degree (RHD) programs with the term research student reserved for those enrolled in RHD programs.

Most of the items in the draft standard appear to be drafted to fit appropriately with standards and academic governance arrangements for RHD programs (e.g. 1, 3, and 8). In contrast, others (e.g. 2, 4) appear to assume that the research training is not necessarily within an RHD program.

The University is concerned with some of the standards if the broader definition of research training is intended. For example, the expectation of a minimum of two supervisors (3.) is entirely appropriate for RHD programs, but in our view, initial research training at honours or undergraduate or postgraduate coursework level does not and should not necessarily require the involvement of two supervisors. The standards seem overly prescriptive for a number of other aspects of initial research training that are incorporated in what are not formally research degrees, but rather are components within non-RHD programs. Victoria University is concerned about the unreasonable regulatory burden and potential duplication in academic governance and oversight that would be placed on universities if research training elements in non-RHD programs are required to be monitored and reported against these Research Training standards.

Draft Standards for Learning Outcomes (Research Training)

Victoria University broadly supports the Learning Outcomes (Research Training). In particular, the University acknowledges and is extremely supportive of the explicit recognition of the importance of generic and transferable skills as a core component and outcome from research training.

However, please note the point made above in relation to the need for greater clarity in the definition of Research Training. The University notes that the learning outcomes detailed under 1-3 are expressed generically and could be applied to both RHD and non-RHD research training elements. In contrast, item 4 (dealing with assessment) operates at a different level of specificity and appears to refer to outputs from RHD programs only.