



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Education,  
Skills and Employment**

# **Amending the Higher Education Standards Framework: Provider Category Standards**

**Higher Education Standards Panel  
Consultation Paper**

**February 2020**

## Consultation paper

© Commonwealth of Australia 2020

ISBN 978-1-76051-913-1 (PDF)

ISBN 978-1-76051-914-8 (DOCX)



With the exception of the Commonwealth Coat of Arms, the Department's logo, any material protected by a trade mark and where otherwise noted all material presented in this document is provided under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/au/) (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/au/>) licence.

The details of the relevant licence conditions are available on the Creative Commons website (accessible using the links provided) as is the full legal code for the [CC BY 4.0 International](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode) (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>).

The document must be attributed as *Amending the Higher Education Standards Framework: Provider Category Standards—Consultation Paper*.

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	4
Purpose and scope of the consultation paper .....	5
Additional information and supporting documents .....	5
Consultation process and timeline .....	6
Process .....	6
Indicative timeline .....	6
Issues on which the Panel seeks feedback .....	7
1. Amendments to the Provider Category Standards (Part B1) .....	7
2. Amendments to the self-accrediting authority criteria (Part B2) .....	17
3. Provisions for greenfield universities .....	17
4. Transition arrangements for existing providers .....	19
Questions for consideration .....	22
Appendix A: Recommendations of the Higher Education Provider Category Standards Review .....	23
Appendix B: Higher Education Standards Panel Stakeholder Forum—Issues raised .....	25
First Forum Discussion .....	25
Second Forum Discussion .....	26
Issues raised by stakeholders during first Forum discussion .....	28
Issues raised by stakeholders during second Forum discussion .....	28
Appendix C: Draft New Provider Category Standards .....	29
B1 Criteria for Higher Education Provider Categories .....	29
B1.1 ‘Institute of Higher Education’ Category .....	29
B1.2 ‘University College’ Category .....	30
B1.3 ‘Australian University’ Category .....	31
B1.4 ‘Overseas University in Australia’ Category .....	33
Appendix D: Draft amendments to the self-accrediting authority criteria .....	34

## Introduction

In October 2018 the Minister for Education, the Hon Dan Tehan MP, appointed Emeritus Professor Peter Coaldrake AO to review the Higher Education Provider Category Standards (PCS), which form Part B of the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015* legislative instrument (the Threshold Standards). The Higher Education Standards Panel (the Panel) provided steering oversight to the Review. The review considered all of Part B of the Threshold Standards, which encompass both the *Criteria for Higher Education Provider Categories* (Part B1) and the *Criteria for Seeking Authority for Self-Accreditation of Courses of Study* (Part B2).

Part B1 of the Threshold Standards (the PCS) sets out the six categories of provider within the Australian higher education system. They define registration requirements against each category, which are administered by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA). The current Threshold Standards include five categories of university, covering Australia's 43 university category providers, and one category for all other higher education providers, currently totalling 134.<sup>1</sup> Provider numbers fluctuate over time as new providers enter the system or existing providers exit.

Part B2 of the Threshold Standards sets out the standards an institution must meet to be granted authority to self-accredit some or all of its courses of study. TEQSA can grant authority to self-accredit one or more courses of study, all current and future courses of study, or for specific courses of study, fields of education<sup>2</sup> or levels. All universities and 11 other providers can self-accredit some or all of their courses of study. Providers must seek accreditation by TEQSA for any course of study they do not have authority to self-accredit.

Minister Tehan initiated the Review to ensure the PCS remain appropriate to the needs and expectations of students, the sector and the wider community, given significant changes in Australian higher education since their inception. The Review's proposed revisions to Part B of the Threshold Standards aim to build flexibility, accommodate changing practices, and ensure the standards are comparable to international benchmarks.

The Minister released Professor Coaldrake's final report on 15 October 2019, and released the Australian Government's response on 10 December 2019, accepting the aim of all ten of the Review's recommendations, which are extracted at **Appendix A**.

---

<sup>1</sup> As at 20 February 2020, available at TEQSA's National Register for Providers and Courses: [www.teqsa.gov.au](http://www.teqsa.gov.au) > [National Register for Providers and Courses](#).

<sup>2</sup> Typically using the 2-digit fields described in Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2001). 1272.0—Australian Standard Classification of Education (ASCED). [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au) > [Australian Standard Classification of Education \(ASCED\), 2001](#).

## Purpose and scope of the consultation paper

Amendments to the Threshold Standards and the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011* (TEQSA Act) are required to implement the Review's recommendations. Section 58 of the TEQSA Act sets out the requirements to make or vary the Threshold Standards.

These requirements include that the Minister will:

- not make a new Standard unless a draft has been developed by the Panel;
- consult with both the COAG Education Council and TEQSA about the draft; and
- have regard to the draft developed by the Panel, and any advice or recommendations given by the Panel, the Education Council or TEQSA.

On 11 October 2019, the Minister asked the Panel to provide advice on amendments required to the Threshold Standards to implement the Review recommendations. The Panel is consulting with the sector as it drafts its advice.

On 26 November 2019, the Panel held a stakeholder forum before the Fourth Annual TEQSA Conference. The forum provided an opportunity for around 280 stakeholders to engage with the Panel on two key questions emerging from the Review:

- The recommended text and policy settings for the proposed new provider category standards;
- Implementation issues likely to arise in moving to new provider categories, including transitional arrangements.

**Appendix B** summarises issues raised at the forum.

The Panel has developed this consultation paper to seek feedback on draft amendments to Part B of the Threshold Standards. As the Government has accepted the aims of the Review's recommendations, the paper considers processes, outcomes and implementation issues rather than revisiting the substance of the Review's findings. While amendments to the TEQSA Act are beyond the Panel's authority, some amendments may be necessary to facilitate the updated Threshold Standards. For completeness, this consultation paper considers options that include amendments to the TEQSA Act. Any amendments to the TEQSA Act, however, will be a matter for Government to determine.

Following acceptance of the revised Threshold Standards, TEQSA will develop guidance and interpretive resources to enable applicants to understand the requirements of each provider category and of the types of evidence TEQSA will look for when assessing provider registration and course accreditation.

## Additional information and supporting documents

This consultation paper, the [Review report](#) and the [Government response](#) are available on the website of the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup>[www.dese.gov.au](http://www.dese.gov.au) > [Review of the Higher Education Provider Category Standards](#)

# Consultation process and timeline

## Process

Comments on the draft consultation paper, including the draft standards, must be received by email to [HigherEd@dese.gov.au](mailto:HigherEd@dese.gov.au) by 11.59 pm 31 March 2020 to be considered when the Panel finalises its advice to the Minister.

Comments should be Microsoft Word or machine-readable PDF files. Submissions may be made public unless accompanied by a request providing reasons they should not be made public.

In addition to public consultation, targeted consultation with individuals or organisations may be undertaken, depending on the nature of the feedback received.

Questions about this consultation paper should be directed to [HigherEd@dese.gov.au](mailto:HigherEd@dese.gov.au).

## Indicative timeline

Date	Activity
24 February 2020	Public comment on consultation paper opens
31 March 2020	Submissions close
Early May 2020	Provision of final advice to Minister
May-June 2020	Legislated consultation with TEQSA and COAG Education Council commences
Mid-2020	New Higher Education Standards Framework legislative instrument made

## Issues on which the Panel seeks feedback

The Review made detailed recommendations to amend the PCS (**Appendix A**), including proposing to reduce the current six categories to four and to significantly revise the provider category descriptions (Part B1). The Review also proposed revision and simplification of the criteria for seeking self-accrediting authority (Part B2).

A number of issues flow from these and other recommendations in the Review. This consultation paper outlines the Panel's consideration of how best to implement the recommendations and manage the consequential issues and transitional arrangements. Section 1 addresses amendments to the PCS in Part B1. Section 2 addresses amendments to self-accrediting authority in Part B2. Section 3 addresses the Review's recommendation relating to greenfield universities. And the final section, Section 4, addresses transitional arrangements for existing providers.

The Panel is interested in your views on the appropriateness of proposed amendments, processes and arrangements; and also in your views on transitional arrangements, implementation issues and risks the Panel may not have considered. Your submission may address some or all of the issues identified in the consultation paper, or you may make a general statement.

### 1. Amendments to the Provider Category Standards (Part B1)

The Panel seeks your comment on draft amendments to the Criteria for Higher Education Provider Categories (Part B1 of the Threshold Standards), set out in **Appendix C** of this document, with particular reference to the matters discussed in this section.

Currently there are six higher education provider categories in Part B1 of the Threshold Standards. Five of these describe university category providers (Australian University, Australian University of Specialisation, Australian University College, Overseas University, and Overseas University of Specialisation). The sixth category encompasses all other higher education providers (Higher Education Provider). This latter category is presented as a base category. All providers must meet the criteria of the Higher Education Provider category. Providers in the university categories must also meet additional criteria beyond these base requirements.

The Review recommended reducing the number of university categories from five to two, with the number of other categories to increase from one to two (**Review Recommendation 1**). The Australian Government response accepted Review Recommendation 1 but substituted the term 'University College' for 'National Institute of Higher Education'. Following this change, the new provider categories will be:

- 'Institute of Higher Education';
- 'University College';
- 'Australian University';
- 'Overseas University in Australia'.

## B1 Criteria for Higher Education Provider Categories

The Review proposed amending the introductory paragraphs of Part B of the Threshold Standards to reference the objects of the TEQSA Act and TEQSA's regulatory principles, to emphasise the importance of the legislative principles that TEQSA takes into consideration when making regulatory decisions. In line with **Review Recommendation 9**, the proposed preamble to Part B includes a requirement for a provider's registration category to be displayed on the TEQSA National Register and that all registered higher education providers should feature their TEQSA Provider ID and provider category on relevant public facing materials.

Incorporating TEQSA's regulatory principles is consistent with the Panel's view that stakeholders should be able to interpret the Threshold Standards as a standalone document. The proposed draft Preamble is extracted below and appears at **Appendix C**:

All providers of higher education must meet the requirements of Part A of the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2011* and satisfy the requirements set out under the 'Institute of Higher Education' category in order to gain registration by TEQSA.

Higher education providers may seek approval within a particular provider category under subsection 18(1) of the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011* (TEQSA Act). The four provider categories are:

- 'Institute of Higher Education';
- 'University College';
- 'Australian University';
- 'Overseas University in Australia'.

The provider category of each higher education provider will be detailed on the National Register of Higher Education Providers (administered by TEQSA), to signal to the public that the provider is a bona fide provider of quality higher education in Australia.

In assessing applications for registration in a particular provider category, TEQSA will have regard to the objects of the TEQSA Act, in particular, to protect and enhance:

- i. Australia's reputation for quality higher education and training services;
- ii. Australia's international competitiveness in the higher education sector;
- iii. excellence, diversity and innovation in higher education in Australia.

TEQSA will have regard to the basic principles of regulation under Part 2 of the TEQSA Act when exercising its powers and applying these standards. These principles are:

- i. the principle of regulatory necessity;
- ii. the principle of reflecting risk;
- iii. the principle of proportionate regulation.

To provide transparency, all registered higher education providers should feature their TEQSA Provider Identification and provider category on relevant public material.

## B1.1 ‘Institute of Higher Education’ category

The foundation category applicable to providers (currently the Higher Education Provider category) will be renamed ‘Institute of Higher Education’. The new name is intended to reduce the scope for stakeholder confusion between the provider category and the broad ‘higher education provider’ classification defined in Section 5 of the TEQSA Act, which encompasses all entities that offer or confer regulated higher education awards, including universities (**Review Recommendation 2**).

The Review’s proposed standard for the ‘Institute of Higher Education’ category includes requirements that the provider meets the Threshold Standards, that it has a clearly articulated quality higher education purpose, and that its academic and teaching staff are active in scholarship that informs their teaching, supported by the provider, as set out at in **Appendix C**. Requiring the support of the provider for active scholarship and for research when engaged in research supervision is a new condition, which underscores the importance of scholarship to sustained teaching quality, and for research supervisors to be engaged in relevant research.

The Panel has amended the category to reinstate the requirement in the current Higher Education Provider category to provide at least one accredited course of study. This is because it is the Panel’s view that pragmatically, the Threshold Standards need to be interpretable by stakeholders as a standalone document. The draft criteria for the ‘Institute of Higher Education’ category are:

A higher education provider registered in the category offers an Australian higher education qualification and/or an overseas higher education qualification.

The higher education provider

1. meets the requirements of Part A of the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2011*, has a clearly articulated higher education purpose, and offers at least one accredited course of study;
2. The higher education provider’s academic and teaching staff are active in scholarship that informs their teaching, and active in research when engaged in research student supervision, supported by the provider.

Retaining these requirements as part of the category descriptor will maintain the ease of interpretation of the Threshold Standards as a standalone document.

***Question 1: Does the revised description of an ‘Institute of Higher Education’, transcribed above and in Appendix C, provide sufficient clarity for providers seeking to enter the category?***

## B1.2 ‘University College’ category

The Review recommended that a category be created for ‘the highest performing higher education providers which are not universities’ (**Review Recommendation 3**). This category—‘University College’—is designed to ‘serve aspiration, destination, or progression purposes’, including to improve the pathway for providers that aspire to transition to become universities.

The draft amendments propose that, to protect the ‘Australian University’ standard, providers in this category who wish to use the title ‘University College’ must do so in full and not abbreviate it to

'University'. The TEQSA Act and the Guidelines for the use of the word 'university' in a business name may need to be amended to protect the title.

This category is not a reclassification nor a continuation of the current Australian University College category. A provider in the newly-introduced 'University College' category will not be required to undertake research other than in fields where it offers postgraduate degrees by research, unless it is a 'greenfield' applicant that aspires to become an 'Australian University' (as discussed in Section 3). And, as outlined in the draft criteria, although the category remains a pathway for providers wishing to become 'Australian Universities', it is not specifically a transitional category. Under the new criteria, providers can remain in this category for as long as they meet the conditions of registration. The draft criteria are:

The higher education provider offers an Australian higher education qualification and/or an overseas higher education qualification.

The higher education provider:

1. meets the requirements of Part A of the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2011*, has a clearly articulated higher education purpose, and otherwise satisfies the criteria for the 'Institute of Higher Education' category;
2. except in the case of a greenfield 'University College' provider, demonstrates a mature level of development and a track record of compliance against each applicable criterion B1.2 (3-10) below;
3. has authority to self-accredit at least 70 per cent of its total courses of study, at the time of application to TEQSA;
4. has a history of at least five years of successful delivery with strong student outcomes. Student outcomes can be measured against a variety of sources acceptable to TEQSA;
5. has mature and advanced processes for the design, delivery, accreditation, monitoring, quality assurance, review and improvement of courses of study, and the maintenance of academic integrity;
6. demonstrates systematic support for scholarship and demonstrates scholarly activities and outcomes that inform teaching, learning, and professional practice, and make a contribution to the advancement and dissemination of knowledge;
7. identifies and implements good practices and advances in teaching and learning, and shares those practices with the higher education sector more broadly;
8. has sufficient depth of academic leadership and expertise, in the fields of education it delivers, to guide teaching, learning, and academic governance;
9. demonstrates engagement with employers, industry, and the professions in the areas in which it offers courses of study. This engagement may include, but is not limited to, curriculum development, work-integrated learning, and research partnerships; and

10. demonstrates strong civic leadership, engagement with its local and regional communities, and a commitment to social responsibility in the areas it offers courses of study.

A higher education provider registered in this category is not required to position itself to apply for registration in the Australian University category, but may elect to do so.

Providers registered in this category do not need to adopt the 'University College' branding if the name does not suit their mission or purpose. However, those who adopt the branding must use the 'University College' title in full, and not abbreviate it to 'University'.

The Panel has added a criterion relating to civic leadership and community engagement on the basis that this would be consistent with community expectation of a provider category that takes the word 'university' in its name.

Alternative criteria for greenfield 'University College' providers are described in Section 3.

***Question 2: Do you foresee any implementation issues in creating the new 'University College' category?***

***Question 3: Are the requirements in the new 'University College' category sufficiently clear and appropriate to uphold quality and facilitate institutional progression?***

### B1.3 'Australian University' category

The Panel has drafted the revised 'Australian University' category standard to ensure the criteria are clear, distinct, appropriate and achievable, and that they describe a coherent transition pathway for providers with ambitions of moving toward the category. The revised Standard is described in **Appendix C** and extracted in part below. Under the new criteria, to be registered as an 'Australian University':

A higher education provider registered in the category offers an Australian higher education qualification.

The higher education provider:

1. meets the requirements of Part A of the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2011*, has a clearly articulated higher education purpose, and otherwise satisfies the criteria for the 'Institute of Higher Education' category, and meets the additional criteria in B1.3 (2-16) below;
2. demonstrates a mature level of development and a track record of compliance against each applicable criterion below;
3. automatically has authority to self-accredit each course of study that leads to a higher education qualification in all fields of education unless TEQSA determines that the university has a specialised focus;
4. has the support of the relevant State, Territory or Commonwealth government for its application for registration in the Australian University category;

5. self-accredits courses of study in at least three broad (2-digit) fields of education, or one or two broad fields in the case of a university with a specialised focus, and has had at least 75 per cent of these self-accredited courses of study go through at least one cycle of review and improvement by the provider;
6. delivers Doctoral Degrees (Research) in:
  - a. at least three, or at least 50 per cent, of the broad (2-digit) fields of education in which it delivers courses of study, whichever is greater; or
  - b. all broad (2-digit) fields of education in which it has authority to self-accredit courses of study in the case of a university with a specialised focus;
7. has a history of at least five years of successful delivery with strong student outcomes. Student outcomes can be measured against a variety of sources acceptable to TEQSA;
8. has mature and advanced processes for the design, delivery, accreditation, monitoring, institutional quality assurance, review and improvement of courses of study, and the maintenance of academic integrity;
9. demonstrates systematic support for scholarship and demonstrates scholarly activities and outcomes that inform teaching, learning, and professional practice and make a contribution to the advancement and dissemination of knowledge;
10. identifies and implements good practices and advances in teaching and learning, and shares those practices with the higher education sector more broadly;
11. has breadth and depth of academic leadership and expertise in the fields of education it delivers, to guide teaching, learning, and academic governance;
12. demonstrates engagement with employers, industry, and the professions in areas in which it offers courses of study. This engagement may include, but is not limited to, curriculum development, professional engagement, work-integrated learning, and research partnerships; and
13. demonstrates strong civic leadership, engagement with its local and regional communities, and a commitment to social responsibility.

**‘Australian Universities’ with a specialised focus**

The revised ‘Australian University’ category will include a sub-group of ‘universities with a specialised focus’ that offer courses of study and undertake research in one or two 2-digit fields of education only. Their authority to self-accredit courses of study will similarly be limited to those fields of education. These universities may deliver courses of study in other fields but TEQSA will need to accredit any such courses of study.

To accommodate this sub-category’s specialised focus, the Panel recommends the Government amend Section 45(1) of the TEQSA Act. Section 45 establishes that Australian University category providers can accredit the courses of study they offer. The recommended amendment would add a sub-category of providers such that an exception to this authority applies where TEQSA has determined that the provider has a specialised focus, with self-accrediting authority limited to the

courses of study that are encompassed by this focus. The power to make that judgment would be included elsewhere in the TEQSA Act—possibly Section 21 (Registration) or Division 2 (Conditions of registration).

This amendment will effectively create a sub-category within the revised ‘Australian University’ category that does not have full self-accrediting authority but has explicit acknowledgment and standing in the TEQSA Act.

Under the revised criteria for the ‘Australian University’ category (extracted from **Appendix C**):

Where an ‘Australian University’ wishes to specialise in one or two broad fields of education only, TEQSA will deem it to have a specialised focus and self-accrediting authority will be limited to the one or two broad (2-digit) fields of education in which it specialises.

Where an ‘Australian University’ with a specialised focus delivers courses of study in new broad (2-digit) field/s of education, the provider must be successful in seeking authorisation to self-accredit courses of study in the new field/s within 10 years from the commencement of those courses of study. Upon reaching at least three broad (2-digit) fields of education (including Doctoral Degrees (Research)), the ‘Australian University’ is no longer deemed to have a specialised focus.

***Question 4: Is there sufficient clarity for providers about the distinct requirements in the revised ‘Australian University’ category for providers offering courses of study in three or more broad fields of education versus those with a ‘specialised focus’?***

#### **Threshold research requirements**

The Review proposed that the PCS include ‘a threshold benchmark of quality and quantity of research’ and that this benchmark be augmented over time (**Review Recommendation 5**). The Review proposed that new entrants to the ‘Australian University’ category undertake research at or above world standard in at least three or 30 per cent of the broad (2 digit) fields of education offered, whichever is greater. It further recommended that this benchmark should rise over time so that within ten years of entering the category, institutions should be undertaking research at or above world standard in at least three or 50 per cent of the broad fields of education offered, whichever is greater.

Two key issues arising from this recommendation are:

- the implementation and timing of the benchmarks; and
- how ‘world standard’ is measured.

#### **Research benchmarks to increase over time**

The Review recommended that the research benchmark increase over time, to allow universities to build their research capacity to meet the requirement. By 2030 or, for a new university, within 10 years of entering the category, each institution should deliver world standard research in at least three or half of the broad fields of education in which they offer courses of study, whichever is greater.

For a new provider, the starting point is a lower threshold of three or 30 per cent of the broad fields of education in which they offer courses of study, whichever is greater. This benchmark will commence from the time they enter the 'Australian University' category, and apply for 10 years.

As described in 'Australian University' criteria B1.3 (10-13) below, extracted from **Appendix C**, the Panel's draft 'Australian University' Standard has been reworked from the model presented in the Review, with the intention of making the criteria clearer for different provider cohorts depending on their stage of maturity. The draft criteria state:

The undertaking of research that leads to new knowledge and original creative endeavour and research training are fundamental to the status of a higher education provider as an 'Australian University'. To be registered and remain registered in the 'Australian University' category, the higher education provider:

14. from 1 January 2030, undertakes research at or above one or both of the benchmark standards described in B1.3 (16) that leads to the creation of new knowledge and original creative endeavour in:
  - a. at least three, or at least 50 per cent, of the broad (2-digit) fields of education in which it delivers courses of study, whichever is greater; or
  - b. all broad (2-digit) fields of education in which it has authority to self-accredit, in the case of a university with a specialised focus.

TEQSA will use existing national benchmarking exercises where they are available. Where they are not available, TEQSA will benchmark against standard indicators.

For the first ten years after entry to the 'Australian University' category a new entrant:

15. undertakes research at or above one or both of the benchmark standards described in B1.3 (16) that leads to the creation of new knowledge and original creative endeavour in:
  - a. at least three, or at least 30 per cent, of the broad (2-digit) fields of education in which it delivers courses of study, whichever is greater; or
  - b. all broad (2-digit) fields of education in which it has authority to self-accredit, in the case of a university with a specialised focus.

Following this period, the provider's research requirements will be assessed against the percentage set out in criterion B1.3 (14).

Where an 'Australian University' provider delivers courses of study in new broad (2-digit) field/s of education, the provider may request that those field/s not be considered in the quantum of fields for the purposes of compliance of this criterion for a period of no more than ten years from the commencement of those course of study offerings.

#### **Types of research subject to new benchmarks for quality and quantity**

The Government's response supports the adoption of clearer definitions of the quality and quantity of research required to be categorised as an 'Australian University'. It noted, however, that while 'world standard' is an ideal benchmark, the Threshold Standards must also recognise work of national standing in fields specific to Australia. This may include (but is not limited to) research into

Australian society, history and culture, or where it may be in the national interest to develop and support particular fields of research.

The Government's response also recognised that 'consideration will need to be given to the design of the research benchmark standards to ensure that they do not discourage research specialisation that is in the national interest, or unfairly penalise smaller universities including those operating in regional, rural and remote locations.' The Panel supports this undertaking.

Given the caveats in the Government's response, the Panel has identified two categories of research that may be benchmarked under this criterion. The revised 'Australian University' PCS sets the following benchmark standards for research (**Appendix C**):

16. The benchmark standards for research are:

- a. **research that is 'world standard'** measured using best practice indicators; and/or
- b. **research of national standing in fields specific to Australia**, in the case of research that is not easily captured by existing standard indicators.

Standard indicators to be used in assessment may include (but are not limited to) peer-reviewed journal papers, rate of publication, weighted publications, success in competitive grant rounds and other direct funding, citation analysis, impact measures, and existing assessment exercises.

The Panel seeks stakeholder feedback on how these benchmarks should be framed, so as to encompass the range of research activity of importance to the higher education sector and not to unfairly penalise smaller universities including those operating in regional locations.

The existing national assessment exercise, the Australian Research Council's (ARC) Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA), uses a combination of research indicators to underpin expert committee ratings of research quality against world standard.<sup>4</sup> The Review noted that ERA currently assesses research using the Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classification (ANZSRC) of fields of research administered by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of the PCS, these fields could be correlated to fall within one or more of the 12 ASCED 2-digit fields of education.<sup>6</sup>

***Question 5: Do you consider the benchmarks above (i.e. that research be 'world standard and/or be of national standing in fields specific to Australia) are appropriate for the revised 'Australian University' category standard?***

---

<sup>4</sup> Note the most recent round of ERA was 2018 and next round will be 2023.

<sup>5</sup> ABS (2008). 1297.0 – Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classification. [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au) > [Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classification \(ANZSRC\), 2008](#). Note the ANZSRC is currently under review: [www.arc.gov.au](http://www.arc.gov.au) > [ANZSRC Review](#) (submissions closed on 10 February 2020). The revised ANZSRC is expected to be released in mid-2020.

<sup>6</sup> ABS (2001). 1272—Australian Standard Classification of Education [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au) > [Australian Standard Classification of Education \(ASCED\), 2001](#).

***Question 6: What factors should TEQSA consider in determining whether the research at an Australian University is ‘world standard’, in particular where an existing benchmarking exercise, such as the ERA, is not available?***

***Question 7: On what basis should TEQSA assess whether an Australian University meets the benchmark for research of ‘national standing in fields specific to Australia’?***

#### B1.4 ‘Overseas University in Australia’ category

The Review proposed tying the revised ‘Overseas University in Australia’ category to the revised criteria for the ‘Australian University’ category. The draft Standard is at **Appendix C** and extracted below:

The higher education provider delivers at least one overseas higher education qualification in Australia. Its profile in Australia may be an element of its broader international offerings.

The higher education provider:

1. is recognised as a university by its home country registration or accreditation authority or equivalent governmental authority, the standing and standards of which are acceptable to TEQSA; and
2. meets criteria equivalent to those for the ‘Australian University’ category.

***Question 8: Do the draft criteria for the revised ‘Overseas University in Australia’ category provide sufficient clarity for providers wishing to enter the category?***

#### Industry engagement, civic leadership, and community engagement

The Review recommends that requirements related to industry engagement, civic leadership, and community engagement should be introduced in both the university categories and included in the new ‘University College’ category.

These measures have been included in the draft standards at a high level without benchmarks. In the draft amendments, a provider in the ‘University College’, ‘Australian University’ or ‘Overseas University in Australia’ categories must:

demonstrate engagement with employers, industry, and the professions in areas in which it offers courses of study. This engagement may include, but is not limited to, curriculum development, professional engagement, work-integrated learning, and research partnerships;

demonstrate strong civic leadership, engagement with its local and regional communities, and a commitment to social responsibility.

***Question 9: Are the requirements for industry engagement, civic leadership, and community engagement sufficiently clear in the draft standards?***

## 2. Amendments to the self-accrediting authority criteria (Part B2)

In **Review Recommendation 8**, the Review proposed extensive changes to the Criteria for Seeking Authority for Self-Accreditation of Courses of Study (Part B2 of the Threshold Standards). The proposed new criteria for self-accrediting authority represent a significant streamlining of the current criteria.

The Review proposed a less complex framework for Part B2, simplifying the description of the two key categories of self-accrediting authority—Unlimited (self-accrediting authority for all higher education courses of study that the provider delivers, or may deliver, in **any** level or field of education) and Limited (self-accrediting authority for higher education courses of study that the provider delivers, or may deliver, in a **specific** combination of levels and/or fields of education).

The Panel proposes adoption, largely unchanged, of the text proposed in the Review report. **Appendix D** of this document provides a concordance comparing the current text with the draft amendments.

***Question 10: Do you have any comment on the draft amendments to the criteria for seeking authority for self-accreditation (Part B2 of the Threshold Standards), described in Appendix D?***

## 3. Provisions for greenfield universities

The Review recommended that the TEQSA Act be amended to allow for ‘greenfield’ universities (**Review Recommendation 7**). The National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes, which preceded the Threshold Standards, made provision for greenfield universities—providers that are established as a university from their inception, without first gaining experience as a higher education provider.<sup>7</sup> In essence, the National Protocols enabled a new provider to be provisionally registered as a university for a period of up to five years from commencement of operation, where it was determined that ‘there is a high probability of the criteria for an established university being fully satisfied at the end of this period’. Such institutions were intended to use the name ‘University College’ during the provisional registration, which is where the current Australian University College category originated.

Currently, neither the TEQSA Act nor the Threshold Standards make provision for greenfield universities. The only pathway to university status formally accommodated under the current regulatory framework is for a higher education provider to establish a record of ‘sustained and sustainable’ achievement against all of the higher education standards applicable to them. After at least five years of successful delivery, the provider would then need to apply for and gain self-accrediting status. This would then be followed by at least another five years successful record of accrediting at least 85 per cent of its courses of study. Only at that point—at least ten years from establishment and most likely longer—could it apply to seek university status.

To meet the intent of Recommendation 7 of the Review, the Panel’s preference is that a provider enter as a new provider in the ‘University College’ category, with at least a five-year transition pathway to becoming an ‘Australian University’. This reflects the approach that previously existed

---

<sup>7</sup> Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs. (2006). *National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes*. Clauses 8.11–8.16, pp 11–12. Retrieved from: [www.curriculum.edu.au](http://www.curriculum.edu.au) > [National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes](#).

under the National Protocols. Should an approach from a provider be of sufficient merit to meet the 'Australian University' PCS directly, TEQSA may make a determination under Section 21 of the TEQSA Act as to whether a greenfield applicant to the category could be registered as a greenfield provider in the 'Australian University' category instead.

The Panel's intention is to limit greenfield University Colleges to those applicants who are seeking entry to the Australian University category.

***Question 11: Do you think there should be provision for greenfield entry to the 'University College' category as a destination, as well as a pathway to the 'Australian University' category?***

### Alternative provisions for a greenfield applicant

A greenfield applicant to the 'University College' category is distinguished from a provider that progresses to the 'University College' category through the usual pathway as an 'Institute of Higher Education'. As such, it requires additional criteria. A greenfield 'University College' applicant will have aspirations to become an 'Australian University', and will lack the track record of a provider on the usual pathway.

The Panel proposes the following alternative criteria for establishing a greenfield 'University College' with a view to transitioning to an 'Australian University' within five years (also outlined in **Appendix C**, B1.2). These criteria will not apply to providers entering the category via the 'Institute of Higher Education' pathway, only to greenfield applicants.

At the time of application to TEQSA for entry to the 'University College' category as a newly established entity (greenfield University College), the higher education provider:

11. will provide strong evidence of financial backing necessary to sustain a greenfield University College during start-up (at least the first five years);
12. has clear and credible policies, plans and procedures to meet the criteria in the 'University College' category;
13. has realistic and achievable plans to comply fully with the 'Australian University' category standard, including achieving research benchmarks; and
14. is engaged in a period of sponsorship or mentoring by an existing registered 'Australian University' category provider.

In addition, before transition to the 'Australian University' category, the provider will demonstrate compliance against each of the criteria in that category.

Providers registered in this category must use the 'University College' title in full, and not abbreviate it to 'University'.

### Meeting the self-accrediting threshold requirement

Under Section 21(1)(a) of the TEQSA Act, TEQSA can only grant a new provider registration in a particular provider category if it is satisfied that the provider meets the Threshold Standards. As with any new provider, the evidence required to satisfy a standard before the provider commences operations will be very different to what is required once it has been delivering education for several

years. For a new 'University College', however, the proposed criteria around self-accrediting history and the record of sustained and sustainable success in meeting the standards that is implicit in that requirement present a significant barrier to satisfying the thresholds set out in the category. To mitigate this, specific criteria relating to self-accrediting authority should be included for a greenfield 'University College'. TEQSA, as the regulator, would then apply a set of conditions that the provider must achieve over the start-up period, enabling TEQSA to monitor the provider's development. The draft criteria are set out at B1.2 (11-14) above and in **Appendix C**.

To enable the establishment of a greenfield 'University College', the Review proposed amending the TEQSA Act (**Review Recommendation 7**). However, given Section 21 of the TEQSA Act already enables TEQSA to grant registration to new providers and take account of their growing maturity in meeting the Standards, the Panel prefers that criteria for this kind of greenfield provider be drafted as part of the 'University College' category standard, to allow a different standard of test for a greenfield 'University College' versus a provider entering the 'University College' category from the 'Institute of Higher Education' category. The Panel proposes that within the 'University College' category, a greenfield provider be required to demonstrate the *capacity* to achieve the standards, including the self-accrediting authority requirement, within a transitional period of five years. In this way, a new provider could satisfy the current framing of Section 21(1)(a) of the TEQSA Act by meeting the modified requirements embedded in the Standard itself.

Continued operation in the category after the provisional period will be conditional on the provider fully meeting the criteria for the category. As with any provider, TEQSA may set other conditions on registration.

***Question 12: Do you have any comments on the implementation issues associated with greenfield universities?***

#### **4. Transition arrangements for existing providers**

##### **Arrangements the existing Australian University College category**

At the time of writing there is only one Australian University College. Existing Australian University College category providers at the date the new Threshold Standards take effect may have more limited course of study offerings than others in the current Australian University category, but will be on a pathway and trajectory towards achieving Australian University status over time, as required under the current Australian University College category. Unlike the current Australian University of Specialisation category, the Australian University College category requires delivery of courses of study in at least three broad fields of education and its self-accrediting authority is not limited to one or two fields of education.

The key difference between the existing Australian University and Australian University College categories is that Australian Universities must offer higher degrees by research (masters and doctorates) in at least three broad fields of education; whereas Australian University Colleges need to offer masters by coursework in three broad fields and masters and doctorates by research in at least one field of education.

The Government emphasised in its response that implementation of Review Recommendation 1 should not disadvantage providers currently registered in the Australian University College category,

or any new entrants to the category prior to changes to the Threshold Standards being enacted. The Panel is of the view that TEQSA as the regulator, will determine the appropriate category that any provider will transition to, and may impose conditions in its determination.

***Question 13: Do you identify any issues of concern for providers in the Australian University of Specialisation and Australian University College categories that transition to the new 'Australian University' category—either with or without a 'specialised focus'?***

**Arrangements for the existing Australian University of Specialisation category**  
For providers in the current Australian University of Specialisation category, which offer courses of study in a limited range of fields of education and self-accrediting authority limited to those one or two fields of education, there is a clear correspondence with the new sub-category of 'Australian University' with a specialised focus. At the time of writing there is only one University of Specialisation on the register.

The Panel is of the view that TEQSA, as the regulator, will determine whether at the date the new Threshold Standards take effect, providers in the existing Australian University of Specialisation category will transition to the new 'Australian University' category with a specialised focus, and whether to impose any conditions to enable the provider to meet the 'Australian University' criteria within a specified period of time or set of actions. Details of the field or fields of education in which the providers will focus will be determined and documented by TEQSA in consultation with affected providers.

### **Arrangements for existing university category providers**

Transition arrangements are needed to accommodate the movement of existing Australian Universities to the changed requirements of the new 'Australian University' category, particularly with regard to new research benchmarks outlined above. The Government response noted that 'New benchmarks for quantity and quality of research may require some Australian universities to increase research performance and output, or to specialise in their areas of strength'.

TEQSA as the regulator may impose conditions on providers that do not meet the new research requirements at the date the new Threshold Standards instrument takes effect. The Panel is of the view that these providers should be given a period of five years grace before they will be held accountable against increased requirements under the new provider category standards. Once that period of five years has expired, providers would be fully accountable for their performance against the new requirements and any benchmarks applicable to the revised category standard. Existing providers that already meet the new research requirement will be required to remain compliant from the date of implementation of the new Standards, and will not be permitted to meet a lower threshold during the transition period.

TEQSA will develop guidance material, which may include creation of a transition schedule to map transition and identify providers that require a transition period. The Department of Education, Skills and Employment will support all providers in the revised 'Australian University' category to pursue the capability necessary to meet the new research benchmarks and any other new or increased requirements in the revised Threshold Standards.

## Arrangements for other providers

With the establishment of the new 'University College' category, TEQSA will need to provide clear guidance on the application process for registration as a 'University College'.

Under the Panel's preferred approach, at the date the new Standards instrument takes effect, all existing providers in the Higher Education Provider category will become 'Institutes of Higher Education'. As the 'University College' is a new category, no occupant of the existing Higher Education Provider category will automatically transition to this category. Entry to the 'University college' category will require application and assessment by TEQSA against the new Standards.

***Question 14: Are there other aspects of the transition of providers occupying the Higher Education Provider category to the new categories that the Panel has not considered but should?***

## Questions for consideration

### 1. Amendments to the Provider Category Standards (Part B1)

*Question 1:* Does the revised description of an ‘Institute of Higher Education’ in **Appendix C B1.1**, provide sufficient clarity for providers seeking to enter the category?

*Question 2:* Do you foresee any implementation issues in creating the new ‘University College’ category?

*Question 3:* Are the requirements in the new ‘University College’ category in **Appendix C B1.2** sufficiently clear and appropriate to uphold quality and facilitate institutional progression?

*Question 4:* Is there sufficient clarity for providers about the distinct requirements in the revised ‘Australian University’ category for providers offering courses of study in three or more broad fields of education versus those with a ‘specialised focus’ (**Appendix C B1.3**)?

*Question 5:* Do you consider the research benchmarks outlined in **Appendix C B1.3 (16)** (i.e. that research be ‘world standard and/or be of national standing in fields specific to Australia’) appropriate for the revised ‘Australian University’ category standard?

*Question 6:* What factors should TEQSA consider in determining whether the research at an Australian University is ‘world standard’, in particular where an existing benchmarking exercise, such as the ERA, is not available?

*Question 7:* On what basis should TEQSA assess whether an Australian University meets the benchmark for research of ‘national standing in fields specific to Australia’?

*Question 8:* Do the draft criteria for the revised ‘Overseas University in Australia’ category in **Appendix C B1.4** provide sufficient clarity for providers wishing to enter the category?

*Question 9:* Are the requirements for industry engagement, civic leadership, and community engagement sufficiently clear in the draft standards (**Appendix C B1.2 (9-10)**)?

### 2. Amendments to the self-accrediting authority criteria (Part B2)

*Question 10:* Do you have any comment on the draft amendments to the criteria for seeking authority for self-accreditation (Part B2 of the Threshold Standards), described in **Appendix D**?

### 3. Provisions for greenfield universities

*Question 11:* Do you think there should be provision for greenfield entry to the ‘University College’ category as a destination, as well as a pathway to the ‘Australian University’ category?

*Question 12:* Do you have any comments on the implementation issues associated with greenfield universities (**Appendix C B1.2 (11-14)**)?

### 4. Transition arrangements for existing providers

*Question 13:* Do you identify any issues of concern for providers in the Australian University of Specialisation and Australian University College categories that transition to the new ‘Australian University’ category—either with or without a ‘specialised focus’?

*Question 14:* Are there other aspects of the transition of providers occupying the Higher Education Provider category to the new categories that the Panel has not considered but should?

# Appendix A: Recommendations of the Higher Education Provider Category Standards Review

## Recommendation 1

There should be a simplification of the current provider categories. Our universities are currently over-categorised, while all other higher education providers are grouped in a single undifferentiated category. The current five university categories should be reduced to two categories and the current single category for other higher education providers (that are not universities) should be increased to two categories.

Current Categories	Proposed Revised Categories
Higher Education Provider	Institute of Higher Education
Australian University	National Institute of Higher Education
Australian University College	Australian University
Australian University of Specialisation	Overseas University in Australia
Overseas University	
Overseas University of Specialisation	

## Recommendation 2

In line with Recommendation 1, the current ‘Higher Education Provider’ category should be renamed ‘Institute of Higher Education’ category to build distinctiveness and to avoid confusion with the broad definition of ‘higher education provider’ under the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011*.

## Recommendation 3

In line with Recommendation 1, a new category titled ‘National Institute of Higher Education’ should be created to serve aspiration, destination, or progression purposes. This category will be reserved for the highest performing higher education providers which are not universities. National Institutes of Higher Education will be recognised for meeting additional criteria to those required of other higher education providers outside the universities and will have a significant measure of self-accrediting authority status.

Item	Related Action
‘National Institute of Higher Education’ category	The Australian Government should consider policy arrangements that may support high quality providers that meet the standards of the proposed ‘National Institute of Higher Education’ category.

## Recommendation 4

The Higher Education Provider Category Standards must enable providers to transition to other categories and grow their course and research offerings. This should be complemented by a guidance framework developed by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency. This will better assist providers in their successful transition to other categories and will both encourage and support excellence, differentiation, and innovation.

## Recommendation 5

Along with teaching, the undertaking of research is, and should remain, a defining feature of what it means to be a university in Australia; a threshold benchmark of quality and quantity of research should be included in the Higher Education Provider Category Standards. This threshold benchmark for research quality should be augmented over time.

## Recommendation 6

Requirements related to industry engagement, civic leadership, and community engagement should be introduced or bolstered in the university categories of the Higher Education Provider Category Standards. Industry engagement requirements should also be part of the proposed 'National Institute of Higher Education' category.

## Recommendation 7

To ensure Australia's higher education sector is positioned to support innovation, population growth, and demand for higher education in the future, the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011* should be amended to allow for 'greenfield' universities.

## Recommendation 8

The criteria for seeking self-accrediting authority should be amended to simply and clearly articulate the types of self-accrediting authority (limited and unlimited) that can be authorised by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency and the requirements to be demonstrated by providers seeking self-accreditation status.

## Recommendation 9

The essential purpose of regulating the nomenclature of institutions via the Higher Education Provider Category Standards is consumer protection. There should be, therefore, greater transparency and awareness-raising of the Higher Education Provider Category Standards, including the requirements expected of providers by different category type. This will be for the benefit of potential students, industry, and employers, both domestic and international.

Item	Related Action
The National Register of Higher Education Providers	To enable consumers to be better informed of the requirements expected of providers registered under different categories, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency should provide more descriptive information on the National Register of Higher Education Providers.
Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Provider ID and provider category	To assist in transparency for consumers, all registered higher education providers should feature their Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Provider ID and provider category on relevant public material.
Communications strategy	To build understanding and recognition of the different categories of higher education providers in Australia, a concerted communications strategy should be actioned with national and international audiences in mind.

## Recommendation 10

The recommended changes to Part B of the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015* (as set out in Appendix D of the Review) should be referred to the Higher Education Standards Panel for deliberation. The HESP will then advise the Minister for Education on further required actions.

# Appendix B: Higher Education Standards Panel Stakeholder Forum—Issues raised

HESP Stakeholder Forum, 26 November 2019, Sofitel Melbourne on Collins

## First Forum Discussion

### B1: Criteria for the Higher Education Provider Categories

The overall view of the changes to the Provider Category Standards included concerns about lack of detail of implications of implementation. The major issues include the following.

#### Transitional arrangement:

- Concern about transitional arrangements for providers currently in the process of applying for the Australian University College and Australian University of Specialisation categories.
- How will this new structure affect movement between categories?
- A long transition period required to allow providers to meet the new PCS.

#### Category requirements:

- Lack of clarity around requirements for each category.
- Would the Threshold Standards need to be revised to facilitate the change in categories for a provider, particularly from a National Institute of Higher Education (now a 'University College, as per the Government response) to an Australian University? What evidence will be needed to demonstrate meeting this requirement (e.g. scholarly activities)?

### B1.1—'Institute of Higher Education' Category

#### Naming conventions:

- Even understanding the difficulties with nomenclature the term 'institute' is confusing—an 'institute' having national presence cannot use the title 'national institute'.
- Confusion in cases where providers have the term 'institute' already in their titles.
- National Institute of Higher Education sounds like a single institution.
- International perspective and market perception of the title 'NIHE' and 'IHE': will require increased effort to raise awareness of new terminology.

#### Disadvantage smaller providers:

- Will categories stifle innovation as they may impact smaller emerging providers
- Challenges have greater impact on smaller providers, particularly on cohort years
- May lead Government departments to disadvantage (small) providers over universities.

### B1.2—'National Institute of Higher Education' Category

#### Main difference between National Institute of Higher Education and Institute of Higher Education:

- Will the difference between NIHE and IHE provide clarity for students?

#### Self-accrediting requirements:

- Concern regarding the requirement to self-accredit at least 70 per cent of total courses of study for a NIHE. Difficult hurdle. Not everyone aspires to achieve this level of self-accrediting authority (SAA). SAA is lengthy and expensive but there is no linked resourcing or Commonwealth Supported Places (CSP).
- Seventy per cent appears high and easier to achieve for providers that deliver fewer or a low number of programs.
- Question about the rationale for 70 per cent SAA, as opposed to another number. Why not 100 per cent? Partial (70 per cent) SAA may be confusing for consumers.

### B1.3—‘Australian University’ Category

#### Research:

- Research requirements may limit private providers moving to the new Australian University category. Government funding provides a significant advantage to existing providers.
- Regional universities may need special consideration to meet research requirements due to different student cohorts and strategic priorities.
- How closely will TEQSA track the Australian Research Council’s (ARC) Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) process?
- How does TEQSA evaluate research when private HEPs do not participate in ERA?
- If research is tied to an institution not a degree, how does this improve student experience?
- Will a research focus shut the door on institutions that are traditionally teacher-focused to transition to universities?
- How to protect, recognise and value quality learning and teaching practices at universities?

#### Greenfields:

- What is the timeframe to meet the criteria?
- Cost of research will be a factor in meeting the new criteria.

### B1.4—‘Overseas University in Australia’ Category

#### Issues:

- Retention of overseas university category—rationale seems inconsistent.
- Overseas unis working in Australia?
  - How will they be measured?
  - Will they take business away from Australian institutions?
  - Will they have an unfair advantage?
- Other stakeholders noted favourably that the differentiation between Australian and overseas universities is positive.

## B2: Criteria for Seeking Self-Accrediting Authority (SAA)

#### Self-Accrediting Issues:

- Limited and unlimited SAA have been more clearly defined in the Review’s proposed amendments, but the criteria for each is not clearly differentiated.
- Resources to improve understanding of the process and requirements for moving from limited SAA to unlimited SAA would be valuable.
- Pros—good for private providers. Cons—hard to achieve; regulator is risk adverse; have to have a clean slate for five years, time-consuming.

## Second Forum Discussion

### A. What transitional arrangements need to be considered by the Panel to assist providers during the implementation phase of the new PCS?

#### Pathways:

- What happens to those providers already in the pipeline to transition to existing university categories?
- No articulated pathways from NIHE to becoming an Australian University.
- What happens if someone doesn’t transition from University College to an Australian University within five years?

#### Flow on Effects/Risks:

- Impact of the categories on other systems e.g. Government/CRICOS/Visas etc.
- Further consultation on implementation and transition after the categories are settled.
- If a provider loses the title ‘university’ what happens? And what happens to your students?

- Issue of unresolved compliance for unlimited self-accrediting status—need reasonable opportunity to resolve de-registration or status lost
- Due to new pathways for greenfield organisations will there be any grandfathering period?

**Implementation Requirements:**

- Clear communication to all providers throughout the process
- Clarity on all criteria—concrete guidelines must be provided. Poorly articulated criteria will lead to a lack of clarity in the sector
- Set of timeframes to meet the new requirements of current provider status.

**B. What is the best timing to commence the implementation of the PCS?**

**Timing:**

- Deadlines for other issues outlined before determining implementation timeline.
- Staged (5 years)—Start with universities categories (registration extended) vs ‘Big Bang approach’ (2 years).

**Current Provider Category Matters:**

- Providers in the SAA category looking to move between categories or already into change process should be dealt with case-by-case.
- Next cycle needs to roll through because of current ‘in progress’ application processes

**C. What supporting materials are needed to assist providers during the implementation phase?**

**Supporting Materials:**

- Clarity around whether supporting materials are independent or a part of the Standards.
- Material to be contextualised to provider type/category.
- Support materials need to include transparent and well-defined matrixes.

**Regulatory Guidance:**

- Clear guidelines to assist in meeting standards including templates, scenarios, case studies.
- One central point of contact for questions or information (e.g. TEQSA or the department)
- Mentorship from TEQSA to providers through supportive case managers
- More custom support to take providers’ circumstances and aspirations into consideration
- Document well for overseas stakeholders including international partners of institutions to explain the changes and no loss of states implied.

**D. Are there any implementation risks the Panel should be aware of?**

**Financial Costs:**

- Costs to providers—legal, regulatory, marketing, reputational if ‘lower’ category.
- Cost to students caught in transition.
- What costs will be associated in movement between categories?

**Research:**

- What would happen to a current university which did not meet the research R?
- Risk of resources being moved from teaching and learning to meet research requirements.
- Standardised measurements for ‘world standard research’ and expectations
- No clear pathway for non-research provider to become research institutions

**Self-Accrediting:**

- Standards for ‘self-accrediting’ are unsustainable for private providers
- De facto two-tier system for self-accrediting between private providers and universities

**Potential Disadvantages:**

- Uneven playing field with different standards across Australian and overseas universities
- Disadvantage to new providers who are not supported in shifting their systems
- Revised categories may stifle innovations.
- Disincentive for dual-sector institutions.

## Issues raised by stakeholders during first Forum discussion

Issues raised	Tables who raised the issue	% stakeholders
B1.3—Research Issues	25—33 separate issues raised	100 per cent
B1.1—Naming Conventions	11	44 per cent
B2—Self-accrediting Issues	10	40 per cent
B1—Transitional arrangements	7	28 per cent
B1—Category requirements	6	24 per cent
B1.2—Main difference between NIHE and IHE	5	20 per cent
B1.1—Disadvantages smaller providers	3	12 per cent
B1.3—Greenfields Issues	3	12 per cent
B1.4—Overseas University Issues	3	12 per cent
B1.2—Self-accrediting requirements	2	8 per cent

## Issues raised by stakeholders during second Forum discussion

Issues raised	Tables who raised the issue	% stakeholders
C—Supporting Materials	23	92 per cent
B—Timing Issues	20	80 per cent
A—Flow on Effects/Risks	12	48 per cent
A—Implementation requirements	9	36 per cent
C—Regulatory Guidance	9	36 per cent
A—Pathways Issues	8	32 per cent
D—Potential Disadvantages	8	32 per cent
B—Current Provider Category Matters	7	28 per cent
D—Research Issues	4	16 per cent
D—Financial Costs	3	12 per cent
D—Self-Accrediting Issues	2	8 per cent

## Appendix C: Draft New Provider Category Standards

### B1 Criteria for Higher Education Provider Categories

All providers of higher education must meet the requirements of Part A of the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2011* and satisfy the requirements set out under the 'Institute of Higher Education' category in order to gain registration by TEQSA.

Higher education providers may seek approval within a particular provider category under subsection 18(1) of the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011* (TEQSA Act). The four provider categories are:

- 'Institute of Higher Education';
- 'University College';
- 'Australian University';
- 'Overseas University in Australia'.

The provider category of each higher education provider will be detailed on the National Register of Higher Education Providers (administered by TEQSA), to signal to the public that the provider is a bona fide provider of quality higher education in Australia.

In assessing applications for registration in a particular provider category, TEQSA will have regard to the objects of the TEQSA Act, in particular, to protect and enhance:

- i. Australia's reputation for quality higher education and training services;
- ii. Australia's international competitiveness in the higher education sector;
- iii. excellence, diversity and innovation in higher education in Australia.

TEQSA will have regard to the basic principles of regulation under Part 2 of the TEQSA Act when exercising its powers and applying these standards. These principles are:

- i. the principle of regulatory necessity;
- ii. the principle of reflecting risk;
- iii. the principle of proportionate regulation.

To provide transparency, all registered higher education providers should feature their TEQSA Provider Identification and provider category on relevant public material.

#### B1.1 'Institute of Higher Education' Category

A higher education provider registered in the category offers an Australian higher education qualification and/or an overseas higher education qualification.

The higher education provider

1. meets the requirements of Part A of the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2011*, has a clearly articulated higher education purpose, and offers at least one accredited course of study;

2. The higher education provider's academic and teaching staff are active in scholarship that informs their teaching, and active in research when engaged in research student supervision, supported by the provider.

## **B1.2 'University College' Category**

A higher education provider registered in the category offers an Australian higher education qualification and/or an overseas higher education qualification.

The higher education provider

1. meets the requirements of Part A of the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2011*, has a clearly articulated higher education purpose, and otherwise satisfies the criteria for the 'Institute of Higher Education' category;
2. except in the case of a greenfield 'University College' provider, demonstrates a mature level of development and a track record of compliance against each applicable criterion B1.2 (3-10) below;
3. has authority to self-accredit at least 70 per cent of its total courses of study, at the time of application to TEQSA;
4. has a history of at least five years of successful delivery with strong student outcomes. Student outcomes can be measured against a variety of sources acceptable to TEQSA;
5. has mature and advanced processes for the design, delivery, accreditation, monitoring, quality assurance, review and improvement of courses of study, and the maintenance of academic integrity;
6. demonstrates systematic support for scholarship and demonstrates scholarly activities and outcomes that inform teaching, learning, and professional practice, and make a contribution to the advancement and dissemination of knowledge;
7. identifies and implements good practices and advances in teaching and learning, and shares those practices with the higher education sector more broadly;
8. has sufficient depth of academic leadership and expertise, in the fields of education it delivers, to guide teaching, learning, and academic governance;
9. demonstrates engagement with employers, industry, and the professions in the areas in which it offers courses of study. This engagement may include, but is not limited to, curriculum development, work-integrated learning, and research partnerships; and
10. demonstrates strong civic leadership, engagement with its local and regional communities, and a commitment to social responsibility in the areas it offers courses of study.

A higher education provider registered in this category is not required to position itself to apply for registration in the Australian University category, but may elect to do so.

Providers registered in this category do not need to adopt the 'University College' branding if the name does not suit their mission or purpose. However, those who adopt the branding must use the 'University College' title in full, and not abbreviate it to 'University'.

#### **Alternative criteria for establishing a greenfield 'University College'**

At the time of application to TEQSA for entry to the 'University College' category as a newly established entity (greenfield University College), a higher education provider:

11. will provide strong evidence of financial backing necessary to sustain a greenfield University College during start-up (at least the first five years);
12. has clear and credible policies, plans and procedures to meet the criteria B1.2 (3-10) in the 'University College' category;
13. has realistic and achievable plans to comply fully with the 'Australian University' category standard, including achieving relevant research benchmarks; and
14. is engaged in a period of sponsorship or mentoring by an existing registered 'Australian University' category provider.

In addition, before transition to the 'Australian University' category, the provider will demonstrate compliance against each of the criteria in that category.

Providers registered in this category must use the 'University College' title in full, and not abbreviate it to 'University'.

### **B1.3 'Australian University' Category**

A higher education provider registered in the category offers an Australian higher education qualification.

The higher education provider:

1. meets the requirements of Part A of the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2011*, has a clearly articulated higher education purpose, and otherwise satisfies the criteria for the 'Institute of Higher Education' category, and meets the additional criteria in B1.3 (2-16) below;
2. demonstrates a mature level of development and a track record of compliance against each applicable criterion below;
3. automatically has authority to self-accredit each course of study that leads to a higher education qualification in all fields of education unless TEQSA determines that the university has a specialised focus;
4. has the support of the relevant State, Territory or Commonwealth government for its application for registration in the Australian University category;
5. self-accredits courses of study in at least three broad (2-digit) fields of education, or one or two broad fields in the case of a university with a specialised focus, and has had at least 75 per cent

of these self-accredited courses of study go through at least one cycle of review and improvement by the provider;

6. delivers Doctoral Degrees (Research) in:
  - a. at least three, or at least 50 per cent, of the broad (2-digit) fields of education in which it delivers courses of study, whichever is greater; or
  - b. all broad (2-digit) fields of education in which it has authority to self-accredit courses of study in the case of a university with a specialised focus;
7. has a history of at least five years of successful delivery with strong student outcomes. Student outcomes can be measured against a variety of sources acceptable to TEQSA;
8. has mature and advanced processes for the design, delivery, accreditation, monitoring, institutional quality assurance, review and improvement of courses of study, and the maintenance of academic integrity;
9. demonstrates systematic support for scholarship and demonstrates scholarly activities and outcomes that inform teaching, learning, and professional practice and make a contribution to the advancement and dissemination of knowledge;
10. identifies and implements good practices and advances in teaching and learning, and shares those practices with the higher education sector more broadly;
11. has breadth and depth of academic leadership and expertise in the fields of education it delivers, to guide teaching, learning, and academic governance;
12. demonstrates engagement with employers, industry, and the professions in areas in which it offers courses of study. This engagement may include, but is not limited to, curriculum development, professional engagement, work-integrated learning, and research partnerships;
13. demonstrates strong civic leadership, engagement with its local and regional communities, and a commitment to social responsibility.

#### **‘Australian University’ with a specialised focus**

Where an ‘Australian University’ wishes to specialise in one or two broad fields of education only, TEQSA will deem it to have a specialised focus and self-accrediting authority will be limited to the one or two broad (2-digit) fields of education in which it specialises.

Where an ‘Australian University’ with a specialised focus delivers courses of study in new broad (2-digit) field/s of education, the provider must be successful in seeking authorisation to self-accredit courses of study in the new field/s within 10 years from the commencement of those courses of study. Upon reaching at least three broad (2-digit) fields of education (including Doctoral Degrees (Research)), the ‘Australian University’ is no longer deemed to have a specialised focus.

#### **Research requirements**

The undertaking of research that leads to new knowledge and original creative endeavour and research training are fundamental to the status of a higher education provider as an ‘Australian University’. To be registered and remain registered in the ‘Australian University’ category, the higher education provider:

14. from 1 January 2030, undertakes research at or above one or both of the benchmark standards described in B1.3 (16) that leads to the creation of new knowledge and original creative endeavour in:
  - a. at least three, or at least 50 per cent, of the broad (2-digit) fields of education in which it delivers courses of study, whichever is greater; or
  - b. all broad (2-digit) fields of education in which it has authority to self-accredit, in the case of a university with a specialised focus.

TEQSA will use existing national benchmarking exercises where they are available. Where they are not available, TEQSA will benchmark against standard indicators.

For the first ten years after entry to the 'Australian University' category, a new entrant:

15. undertakes research at or above one or both of the benchmark standards described in B1.3 (16) that leads to the creation of new knowledge and original creative endeavour in:
  - a. at least three, or at least 30 per cent, of the broad (2-digit) fields of education in which it delivers courses of study, whichever is greater; or
  - b. all broad (2-digit) fields of education in which it has authority to self-accredit, in the case of a university with a specialised focus.

Following this period, the provider's research requirements will be assessed against the percentage set out in criterion B1.3 (14).

Where an 'Australian University' provider delivers courses of study in new broad (2-digit) field/s of education, the provider may request that those field/s not be considered in the quantum of fields for the purposes of compliance of this criterion for a period of no more than ten years from the commencement of those course of study offerings.

16. The benchmark standards for research are:
  - a. **research that is 'world standard'** measured using best practice indicators; and/or
  - b. **research of national standing in fields specific to Australia**, in the case of research that is not easily captured by existing standard indicators.

Standard indicators to be used in assessment may include (but are not limited to) peer-reviewed journal papers, rate of publication, weighted publications, success in competitive grant rounds and other direct funding, citation analysis, impact measures, and existing assessment exercises.

#### **B1.4 'Overseas University in Australia' Category**

The higher education provider delivers at least one overseas higher education qualification in Australia. Its profile in Australia may be an element of its broader international offerings.

The higher education provider:

1. is recognised as a university by its home country registration or accreditation authority or equivalent governmental authority, the standing and standards of which are acceptable to TEQSA; and
2. meets criteria equivalent to those for the 'Australian University' category.

## Appendix D: Draft amendments to the self-accrediting authority criteria

### Draft new B2: Criteria for Seeking Self-Accrediting Authority

A higher education provider that is registered in the 'Australian University' provider category and meets the requirements under Section 45(1) of the TEQSA Act 2011 is authorised under the TEQSA Act 2011 to self-accredit each course of study that leads to a higher education qualification that it offers or confers. TEQSA may limit the self-accrediting authority of a registered Australian University provider, under Section 32(1) and Section 33 of the TEQSA Act.

Providers can apply to TEQSA for self-accrediting authority. The types of self-accrediting authority that can be authorised by TEQSA are:

- **Unlimited:** self-accrediting authority for all higher education courses of study that the provider delivers, or may deliver, in any level or field of education; or
- **Limited:** self-accrediting authority for higher education courses of study that the provider delivers, or may deliver, in a specific combination of levels and/or fields of education.

A provider that is seeking authorisation for unlimited or limited self-accreditation must demonstrate that:

1. it has consistently maintained compliance with Part A of the *Higher Education Standards Framework*;
2. it has a five year track record of applications for course of study accreditation that have consistently been found by TEQSA to meet Part A of the *Higher Education Standards Framework* and there are no outstanding conditions imposed on any of the provider's courses of study;
3. there are no unresolved compliance matters or conditions outstanding from the most recent registration by TEQSA or a recognised registration or accreditation authority. There is also no history of continuing compliance issues in any other assessments, audits, or reviews of its higher education operations conducted by TEQSA, relevant professional bodies (if appropriate) or government agencies; and
4. it has:
  - a) completed at least one cycle of review and improvement in relation to the course(s) of study in which self-accreditation is sought;
  - b) demonstrated successful implementation of evidence-based improvements arising from the reviews; and
  - c) established course review and improvement activities as effective features of the provider's operations across all courses of study.

## Concordance between current B2 and proposed B2

### Key

Deleted text

Unchanged text

Amended text (minor amendments)

Significantly amended or new text

Existing Higher Education Standards Framework	Recommended new Criteria for Higher Education Providers
<p><b>Criteria for Seeking Authority for Self-Accreditation of Courses of Study</b></p> <p><del>Providers with Authority to Self-Accredit some or all Courses of Study</del></p> <p>Registration of a higher education provider in certain categories of provider may confer self-accrediting authority on the provider. A higher education provider that is registered in the ‘Australian University’ provider category and meets the requirements under Section 45(1) of the TEQSA Act 2011 is authorised under the TEQSA Act 2011 to self-accredit each course of study that leads to a higher education qualification that it offers or confers. TEQSA will authorise a higher education provider that is registered in the ‘Australian University College’ provider category to self-accredit all of its courses of study. A higher education provider that is registered in the ‘Australian University of Specialisation’ provider category self-accredits some of its courses of study and TEQSA may authorise the provider to self-accredit all of the courses of study it offers, in its one or two broad fields of education only.</p> <p><b>Types of Self-Accrediting Authority that may be Sought</b></p> <p>1. A higher education provider that is registered in the ‘Higher Education Provider’, ‘Overseas University’ or ‘Overseas University of Specialisation’ provider category, or any other registered provider that proposes to extend the scope of its self-accrediting authority, may seek authorisation from TEQSA to self-accredit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. one or more existing courses of study</li> <li>b. one or more existing courses of study and new course(s) of study at the same qualification level in the same narrow or broad field of education</li> <li>c. one or more existing courses of study and new course(s) of study at the same qualification level</li> </ul>	<p><b>Criteria for Seeking Self-Accrediting Authority</b></p> <p>Providers can apply to TEQSA for self-accrediting authority. The types of self-accrediting authority that can be authorised by TEQSA are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Unlimited: self-accrediting authority for all higher education courses of study that the provider delivers, or may deliver, in any level or field of education; or</li> <li>■ Limited: self-accrediting authority for higher education courses that the provider delivers, or may deliver, in a</li> </ul>

Existing Higher Education Standards Framework	Recommended new Criteria for Higher Education Providers
<p>in nominated new narrow or broad field(s) of education</p> <p>d. one or more existing courses of study and new courses of study at one or more new qualification levels in the same narrow or broad field of education</p> <p>e. one or more existing courses of study and new courses of study at one or more qualification levels in nominated new narrow or broad fields of education, or</p> <p>f. all higher education courses of study that it offers, or may offer, irrespective of level of qualification or field of education.</p> <p><b>Providers Seeking Authority from TEQSA to Self-Accredit Nominated Courses of Study</b></p> <p><b>1. A provider that is seeking authorisation to self-accredit a nominated course(s) of study as specified in 1a—1e above is able to demonstrate:</b></p> <p>a. <b>sustained and sustainable achievement of all of the Standards for Higher Education (Part A) that apply to the provider, including for course approval processes in particular and any delivery arrangements with other parties</b></p> <p>b. <i>there are no unresolved compliance matters with TEQSA, or conditions outstanding from the most recent registration and course accreditations by TEQSA or a recognised registration or accreditation authority, and there is no history of significant continuing compliance problems in any other assessments, audits or reviews of its higher education operations conducted by TEQSA, professional bodies or government agencies</i></p> <p>c. <i>a history over at least five years of successful delivery of the course(s) of study for which self-accrediting authority is sought, which is supported by evidence of student success based on analysis of trend data including completion rates and times, attrition rates and grades awarded that are referenced against credible national or international comparators and encompass at least three cohorts of graduates from each course of study</i></p> <p>d. where a cycle of review and improvement is required by the Standards for Higher Education (Part A) in relation to courses of study and their</p>	<p><b>specific combination of levels and/or fields of education.</b></p> <p>■ A provider that is seeking authorisation for unlimited or limited self-accreditation must demonstrate that:</p> <p>■ it has consistently maintained compliance with Part A of the Higher Education Standards Framework;</p> <p>■ it has a five year track record of applications for course accreditation that have consistently been found by TEQSA to meet Part A of the Higher Education Standards Framework and there are no outstanding conditions imposed on any of the provider's courses;</p> <p>■ there are no unresolved compliance matters or conditions outstanding from the most recent registration by TEQSA or a recognised registration or accreditation authority. There is also no history of continuing compliance issues in any other assessments, audits, or reviews of its higher education operations conducted by TEQSA, relevant professional bodies (if appropriate) or government agencies;</p> <p>■ it has:</p>

Existing Higher Education Standards Framework	Recommended new Criteria for Higher Education Providers
<p>oversight (see Table 3), <i>the provider has</i>, in relation to all course(s) of study proposed for self-accreditation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. completed at least one cycle of review and improvement in relation to all relevant standards</li> <li>ii. demonstrated successful implementation of evidence-based improvements arising from the reviews, and</li> <li>iii. has established these review and improvement activities as effective sustainable features of the provider’s operations across all courses of study.</li> </ul> <p><del>Table 3—Standards Referring to Review and Improvement Activities—deleted.</del></p> <p><del>Providers Seeking Authority from TEQSA to Self-Accredit All Courses of Study</del></p> <p><del>1. Where a provider is seeking self-accrediting authority under Criterion 1f for all courses of study that it offers, or may offer, in addition to meeting Criteria 2a—2d, the provider is able to demonstrate the necessary capacity and capability to provide new courses leading to any level of higher education qualification in any field of education, including:</del></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><del>a. processes for the design, delivery, accreditation, monitoring, quality assurance, review and improvement of existing courses of study that are transferrable to any new courses of study and any new level of qualification offered</del></li> <li><del>b. capability in planning and establishment of new courses of study in new broad fields of education</del></li> <li><del>c. capacity for competent academic governance, oversight and scrutiny of the accreditation of new courses in new broad fields of education</del></li> <li><del>d. sufficient breadth and depth of academic leadership, scholarship and expertise in relevant disciplines to guide entry into and sustain new levels and broad fields of higher education, and</del></li> <li><del>e. where professional accreditation is applicable to otherwise self-accredited courses, professional accreditation can reasonably be expected to be obtained and maintained.</del></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ completed at least one cycle of review and improvement in relation to the course(s) of study in which self-accreditation is sought;</li> <li>■ demonstrated successful implementation of evidence-based improvements arising from the reviews; and</li> <li>■ established course review and improvement activities as effective features of the provider’s operations across all courses of study.</li> </ul>