DRAFT QUALIFICATION STANDARDS

Preamble

It is important that students have the confidence in the credibility and integrity of their higher education award. The Qualification Standards set out the requirements to ensure that awards issued are quality assured, protected against fraudulent use and provide pathways for lifelong learning.

The Qualification Standards strongly reflect the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) as Australia’s national policy for regulated qualifications. The AQF encompasses higher education, vocational education and training and school qualifications, providing for national recognition and a consistent understanding across Australia of what defines each qualification type.

Under TEQSA and in line with the AQF, providers may offer a higher education award which leads to a qualification which can be located against levels 5, 6, 7, 8 9 or 10 of the AQF. Providers delivering these awards must ensure the award meets the corresponding specification as described in the AQF as per the level it is located.

TEQSA is also responsible for monitoring any higher education awards which cannot be located against an existing level of the AQF. These awards would likely be developed and established in response to industry, professional, community or student needs. Where a provider offers these awards, they must meet explicit criteria for the delivery of non-AQF awards and the Provider Course Accreditation Standards.

Publicly available information on the awards providers offer and their authorisation to do so is an important tool to ensure students can make informed choices about their education. Following the commencement of TEQSA’s regulatory powers (on 30 January 2012) all registered higher education providers will be listed on the National Register of Higher Education Providers (National Register) which will contain accurate, current and verifiable information about the provider and the awards they offer. The existing AQF Register will link to the National Register to ensure that students can access information regarding the awards providers offer and their credit transfer arrangements.
1. Higher education awards delivered meet the appropriate criteria.

1.1 Higher education awards leading to an AQF qualification, must meet the corresponding specifications (including the levels criteria and qualification type descriptors) described in the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF).

1.2 Where a higher education provider offers a higher education award which does not lead to an Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) qualification and is not able to be located against an existing level of the AQF, the provider meets the criteria defined by TEQSA for the delivery of these awards.

2. Certification documentation issued is accurate and protected against fraudulent use

The higher education provider issues appropriate certification documentation and maintains processes to authenticate awards and reduce fraudulent use of awards.

3. Articulation, recognition of prior learning and credit arrangements

The higher education provider maintains processes to provide for the recognition of prior learning, credit transfer and articulation of awards. These processes must be designed to both maximise the credit students can gain for learning already undertaken and preserve the integrity of learning outcomes or discipline requirements of the award to which it applies.
1.1 Delivery and issuance of AQF qualifications

Higher education awards which lead to an AQF qualification, must meet the corresponding specifications (including the levels criteria and qualification type descriptors) described in the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) (http://www.aqf.edu.au).

1.1.1 Higher education awards leading to a Diploma meet the AQF Diploma specification.

1.1.2 Higher education awards leading to an Advanced Diploma meet the AQF Advanced Diploma specification.

1.1.3 Higher education awards leading to an Associate Degree meet the AQF Associate Degree specification.

1.1.4 Higher education awards leading to a Bachelor Degree meet the AQF Bachelor Degree specification.

1.1.5 Higher education awards leading to a Bachelor Honours Degree meet the AQF Bachelor Honours Degree specification.

1.1.6 Higher education awards leading to a Graduate Certificate meet the AQF Graduate Certificate specification.

1.1.7 Higher education awards leading to a Graduate Diploma meet the AQF Graduate Diploma specification.

1.1.8 Higher education awards leading to a Masters Degree (Research) meet the AQF Masters Degree (Research) specification.

1.1.9 Higher education awards leading to a Masters Degree (Coursework) meet the AQF Masters Degree (Coursework) specification.

1.1.10 Higher education awards leading to a Masters Degree (Extended) meet the AQF Masters Degree (Extended) specification.

1.1.11 Higher education awards leading to a Doctoral Degree meet the AQF Doctoral Degree specification.

1.1.12 The award is titled using nomenclature consistent with the AQF Qualifications Issuance Policy (http://www.aqf.edu.au) appropriate to the level and qualification type at which the award is located.

1.1.12.1 In issuing an award leading to a AQF Masters Degree (Extended) under 1.1.10, the provider is permitted to use the title:

- ‘Juris Doctor’ for a Masters Degree (Extended) for legal practice
- ‘Doctor of..’ for a Masters Degree (Extended) for: medical practice; physiotherapy; dentistry; optometry and veterinary practice.

1.1.12.2 The provider does not identify or refer to a Masters Degree (Extended) under 1.1.10 as a Doctoral Degree in any written, oral or electronic information provided to students in relevant certification documentation or any institutional promotional materials.
1.2 Delivery and issuance of non-AQF awards

Where a higher education provider offers a higher education award which does not lead to an Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) qualification and is not able to be located against an existing level of the AQF, the provider should:

1.2.1 Demonstrate a clear industry, professional or community need for the award.

1.2.2 Demonstrate a sound educational rationale for the award.

1.2.3 Facilitate comparability with AQF qualifications by describing the award using the AQF taxonomy of learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, application of knowledge and skills and generic learning outcomes).

1.2.4 Ensure the award is titled appropriately and does not use nomenclature which is already used for an award leading to an AQF Qualification.
2. Certification documentation issued is accurate and protected against fraudulent use

The higher education provider issues appropriate certification documentation and maintains processes to authenticate and reduce fraudulent use of higher education awards.

2.1 Issuing higher education awards

2.1.1 The higher education provider issues graduates who complete a higher education award:
- a testamur, and
- a record of results,
and may also issue an Australian Higher Education Graduate Statement (graduation statement).

2.2 Identification and authentication of higher education awards

2.2.1 Where the award leads to an AQF qualification under 1.1, the provider identifies the award as an award recognised by the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) on the testamur or graduation statement by:
- the words 'The award is recognised within the Australian Qualifications Framework', or
- the AQF logo authorised by the AQF Council.

2.2.2 Where the award leads to a non AQF award under 1.2, the provider may identify that the award has been accredited under the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency on the testamur, graduation statement or record of results.

2.2.3 Providers issuing awards under 1.2 must ensure that these awards cannot be mistaken for an AQF qualification or a qualification recognised under the AQF.

2.2.3.1 Certification documentation does not include the use of the words or the AQF logo as prescribed in 2.2.1.

2.2.3.2 The provider does not refer to the award as an AQF qualification or a qualification recognised under the AQF in any written, oral or electronic information.

2.2.4 The provider identifies if any part of the award has been delivered and / or assessed in a language other than English on the testamur, the graduation statement or record of results.

2.2.5 Information included on the testamur will correctly identify:
- the provider
- the graduate receiving the award
- the award by its full title

1 This does not include the use of another language to develop proficiency in that language.
2.2.6 Information included on the graduation statement will identify:

- the provider
- the graduate receiving the award
- the award by its full title
- the graduate’s academic achievements and other relevant activities

and include:

- a description of the Australian Qualifications Framework as described in the ‘Guidelines for the Presentation of the Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement’ and any AQF logo authorised by the AQF Council
- a description of the Australian education and training system as described in the ‘Guidelines for the Presentation of the Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement’ and may also contain details about the delivery and assessment methodologies, industry or professional accreditation and any negotiated equivalencies with international awards.

2.3 Issuing statements of attainment

2.3.1 The provider issues a statement of attainment to students who complete one or more accredited units of a higher education award which, if wholly completed, would lead to an award located at levels 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 or 10 of the AQF.

2.4 Identification and authentication of statements of attainment

2.4.1 The statement of attainment identifies the student, the accredited units by their full title and the date issued.

2.4.2 The provider ensures that the statement of attainment is in a form which cannot be mistaken for a testamur or graduation statement for a completed higher education award.

2.4.3 The provider identifies the statement of attainment with the words ‘A statement of attainment is issued when an individual has completed one or more accredited units’.

2.4.4 The provider identifies if any accredited units have been delivered and / or assessed in a language other than English on the statement of attainment.²

² This does not include the use of another language to develop proficiency in that language.
2.5 *Reproduction and replacement of documentation*

2.5.1 The provider maintains appropriate mechanisms to prevent fraudulent reproduction of certification documentation and statement of attainment documentation.

2.5.2 The provider permits the replacement of certification documentation and statement of attainment documentation and maintains processes to authenticate and verify replacement documentation.
3. **Articulation, recognition of prior learning and credit arrangements**

The higher education provider maintains policies and processes to provide for the recognition of prior learning, credit transfer and the articulation of higher education awards. These processes must be designed to both maximise the credit students can gain for learning already undertaken and preserves the integrity of learning outcomes or discipline requirements of the award to which it applies.

3.1 The provider has clear, accessible and transparent policies and processes to provide awards pathways and credit arrangements for students. These policies:
- ensure that pathways into and between awards are available to all students
- are publicly available, widely promoted and easily accessible to all prospective and existing students to enable them to:
  - make well-informed choices between alternative pathways
  - take into account the credit that may be available to them, and
- are regularly reviewed to maximise applicability to new and updated awards and to student and industry needs.

3.2 The provider can demonstrate that its decision to give credit into or towards an award:
- is evidence based, equitable and transparent
- is applied consistently and fairly with decisions subject to appeal and review
- recognises prior learning regardless of how, when and where it was acquired, provided that the prior learning is relevant and current and has a relationship to the learning outcomes of the award
- is academically defensible and takes into account the students’ ability to successfully meet the learning outcomes of the award
- is decided in a timely way so that students’ access to award is not unnecessarily inhibited
- allows for credit to be used to meet prerequisites or other specified requirements for entry into an award or for the partial fulfilment of the requirements of an award, and
- formally documented for the student including any reasons for not giving credit.

3.3 Credit can be given in the form of block, specified or unspecified credit.

3.4 The provider will recognise prior learning or advanced standing for relevant and current informal or non-formal learning for entry requirements or credit towards an award.

3.5 Where the provider negotiates credit agreements with other providers for any award, it must maximise the credit available to eligible students for both entry into and credit towards the award.

3.6 In negotiating credit towards awards, the provider will take into account the comparability and equivalence of the:
- learning outcomes
- volume of learning
- program of study, including content, and
- learning and assessment approaches.
3.7 For awards leading to AQF qualifications, the provider, in negotiating credit towards a higher level AQF qualification in the same or related discipline, will, in addition to 3.6, use the following as the basis for negotiations:

- 50% credit for an Advanced Diploma or Associate Degree linked to a 3 year Bachelor Degree
- 37.5% credit for an Advanced Diploma or Associate Degree linked to a 4 year Bachelor Degree
- 33% credit for a Diploma linked to a 3 year Bachelor Degree
- 25% credit for a Diploma linked to a 4 year Bachelor Degree.

3.8 The provider maintains publically available registers of their credit transfer and articulation arrangements.