QUT

Queensland University of Technology

2 George Street GPO Box 2434
Brisbane Qld 4001 Australia
Phone +61 7 3138 8086 Fax +61 7 3138 4061
Email vc@qut.edu.au www.qut.edu.au

Professor Margaret Sheil AO
Vice-Chancellor and President

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Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency
GPO Box 1672
MELBOURNE   VIC   3001

Via email: standards@teqsa.gov.au

QUT response to the TEQSA Discussion Paper: *Making and assessing claims of scholarship and scholarly activity*

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to TEQSA's deliberations as outlined in the Discussion Paper *Making and assessing claims of scholarship and scholarly activity*. I am pleased to attach a brief submission outlining QUT's response.

The University's contact officer for this submission is:

Sonya Betros
Director, Planning, Reviews and Quality
07 3138 2359 | 0422 928 152
sonya.betros@qut.edu.au

I trust QUT's comments will be of assistance to TEQSA in its deliberations.

Yours sincerely

Professor Margaret Sheil AO
Vice-Chancellor and President

Queensland University of Technology

Response to the TEQSA Discussion Paper
Making and assessing claims of scholarship and scholarly activity

Queensland University of Technology (QUT) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the TEQSA Discussion Paper *Making and assessing claims of scholarship and scholarly activity*.

QUT endorses the Universities Australia (UA) submission to the present consultation, and offers the following additional responses to the questions raised in the Discussion Paper.

> **Principle 1: To provide evidence of scholarship for regulatory purposes, the proposed scholarly activity must be consistent with an established typology of 'scholarship'.**

Discussion Question 1: Is the above approach to classification of activities as scholarship appropriate? If not, why not and what amendments would you propose?

The process of developing frameworks for scholarly activity (including an institutional typology) is generally a useful one that may highlight opportunities to improve or enhance practice, although we strongly argue that each institution must be free to adopt, adapt or develop the framework it considers most suited to its mission and circumstances. The discussion paper's over-emphasis on conformity to or comparability with the Boyer model should be liberalised to allow the priority of fitness for purpose over orthodoxy.

QUT has well-established processes supporting the integration of scholarship with course and unit review, but has not yet implemented a defined institutional typology of scholarly activity. In considering the development of such a typology, QUT is concerned to ensure flexible definitions of scholarship are preserved in order to accommodate the activities of a diverse range of academic staff (such as casual, part-time or teaching-only staff).

QUT's vision for the learner experience is one which enables learners to develop depth in professional knowledge. As such, QUT emphasises direct exposure to authentic, up-to-date professional ways of working, and we see currency in professional practice as an entirely valid basis for scholarship-informed teaching. Any QUT typology of scholarly activity would encompass this emphasis.

> **Principle 2: Evidence of scholarship must include demonstrable links to intended outputs or outcomes of that scholarship and be accompanied by mechanisms to monitor and evaluate those outputs or outcomes.**

Discussion Question 2: Is the proposed approach of linking scholarly activity to intended outputs and/or outcomes relevant to the Higher Education Standards (HES) Framework reasonable? If not, why not and what amendments would you propose?

It is difficult to see how any attempt at the measurement of "impact on student outcomes" would be meaningful, in light of the complex factors that influence graduate outcomes: it is not credible that causation could be reliably demonstrated while extraneous influences are eliminated, to the extent that regulatory oversight could rely on what remains as evidence of scholarship. Additionally, any attempt to monitor any given presumed link between scholarly activity and desired outcomes would not only impose a significant burden on regulator and institution alike, but would very likely drive unintended perverse behaviour as well.

QUT supports TEQSA's institutional framework-level focus: course review and curriculum design frameworks supporting scholarship-informed teaching are useful and produce important evidence for quality assurance. Additionally, the QUT Academic Career Framework provides guidance on the integration of scholarship, research and teaching, and supports performance planning conversations. Beyond this, QUT cautions against attempts to link individual instances of scholarly activity to enhanced graduate outcomes, due to the likelihood and potential impact of multiple uncontrolled confounding variables.

QUT also shares UA's concerns about the incorporation of the production of new knowledge (i.e. research) into this discussion about remaining current with developments in the field (scholarship). For the present purposes this distinction must be rigorously maintained, and it is discouraging to see this conflation projected in an advanced policy paper.

> **Principle 3: Activities such as professional and community engagement, professional development and routine professional/artistic practice will not be regarded as scholarship unless they meet the requirements of Principles 1 and 2.**

Discussion Question 3: Is it appropriate to distinguish various forms of external engagement from 'scholarship' as identified under Principles 1 and 2? If not, why not and what amendments would you propose?

The attempt to differentiate between "engaged scholarship" (as an acceptable form) and community engagement (as a form often deemed unacceptable) is unworkable and regressive. As noted above, QUT has a deep strategic emphasis on real world learning contexts, including exposure to current professional knowledge, and sees great potential in enhancing student learning through the outcomes of professional or community engagement activities. Furthermore, we argue that this orientation reflects the Commonwealth Government's interest in exposure to professional contexts and the production of 'Job-Ready Graduates.'

A simplistic attempt at such a Boolean distinction fails to reflect the continuity of learning contexts that extend well outside the classroom to include praxis in the field. This tension may not be insoluble, but allowing for and in fact encouraging this means of maintaining currency for the benefit of students must not only be tolerated but included positively in any institutional typology or supporting guidance. QUT supports the development of guidelines that define these critical elements, and eliminates ambiguity or disapproval.

> **Principle 4: Providers will be able to present a plan to create an environment of scholarship, which is monitored and reviewed, together with an aggregate representation of their involvement in scholarship within the context of the requirements of the HES Framework.**

Discussion Question 4: Is it workable for providers to be able to demonstrate their planning, monitoring and involvement in scholarship in the aggregate as proposed? If not, why not and what amendments would you propose?

The development of flexible, bespoke institutional frameworks around scholarly activity (including typology, reporting, reward and recognition and links to strategic planning) is feasible and will provide useful insights at the aggregate level.

Principle 5: TEQSA will accept different approaches to scholarship that reflect the nature of the provider.

Discussion Question 5: Are there any potential issues you foresee with the application of Principle 5 by TEQSA?

QUT welcomes flexibility in the establishment of scholarship frameworks to reflect unique institutional qualities.

Discussion Question 6: Are there specific types of scholarship inputs and outputs within each provider type that should be considered as integral requirements to ensure that the reputation of the sector is upheld?

The requirements for an products of flexibility in developing institutional typologies for scholarly activity are unlikely to cluster into convenient typologies. Rather than seeking taxonomical organisation, TEQSA should embrace the reality of institutional uniqueness and recognise that fitness for purpose within each specific institutional context is the surest path to policy effectiveness.