

8 March 2019

Emeritus Professor Peter Coaldrake
Department of Education and Training
50 Marcus Clarke St
Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Peter

The Australian Technology Network of Universities (ATN) would like to thank the Department of Education and Training for the opportunity to provide a submission on the Review of the Higher Education Provider Category Standards.

The ATN is a national collaborative group of four major Australian universities: University of Technology Sydney, RMIT University, University of South Australia and Curtin University. The ATN firmly believes that a sustainable, accessible, quality education and research system are core to Australia's long-term prosperity and societal wellbeing.

The ATN recommend that no substantial changes are made to the Provider Category Standards. The ATN believes that the Provider Category Standards are fit for purpose in terms of current and emerging needs.

Australia's model for categorisation has remained fundamentally unchanged for two decades and the Provider Category Standards has proven to serve the role it was designed to. Although there has been transformation in the tertiary sector, it is the resilience of our institutions that enable us to meet the challenges of the future of work and does not affect the relevance of the Provider Category Standards. The existing categories under the Provider Category Standards are sufficient and do not require fundamental change as they clearly define the roles of each provider.

ATN has always been of the view that 'leadership in all aspects of university activity' is the key decider in determining what makes a university. Australia's universities are self-accrediting institutions and deliver courses of study that meet the Higher Education Standards Framework. Our universities are also leaders in research, have a commitment to teaching and good practice in teaching, deliver student services and resources, and engage with domestic and international communities to disseminate and share knowledge, expertise and best practice.

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In a time where lifelong learning is the focal solution to meet the challenges of the future workforce, the nexus between research and teaching is going to be more important than ever. It is critical that universities are not focused solely on either teaching or research. They must do both to meet the demands of upskilling and reskilling in the future of work. Australians will most likely need to reengage in formal learning throughout their professional careers. With universities utilising cutting-edge world-class research to inform not only the content of their teaching, but also the pedagogy, it is imperative that the research teaching nexus continues to be a vital part of university operations. Further, strengthened relations between universities and industry would enable effective life-long learning informed by the latest research and industry practice. Universities, where teaching is underpinned by world class research, will be the institutions that deliver resilience in a time of uncertainty.

To be a leader in all aspects of university activity means to lead in teaching and research. Research leads to the creation of new knowledge - teachers, course designers, and assessors then systematically disseminate this knowledge to the broader Australian community. These functions support and reinforce the other.

The ATN would not support a research body categorised and defined as a university if this institution could not sufficiently demonstrate leadership in the sector across all areas and activities. A research only institution would not have the capacity for creative endeavours to be disseminated and therefore would not be a leader in this space. ATN supports the notion that only institutions that engage in both research and teaching can be defined as a university.

To be a leader in teaching and research does not limit a provider from narrowing their offerings to specialise in select fields. Australian tertiary institutions and industry stakeholders would do well to collaborate in genuine partnerships which could see economies of scale should the tertiary sector explore specialised fields of research or teaching. So long as the institution meet the core criteria of the standards and continue to provide a leadership role, the ATN does not oppose a university specialising in specific fields of research and teaching but only if the institution so chooses. An Australian university must be self accrediting and deliver undergraduate and postgraduate courses of study that meet the Higher Education Standards Framework across a range of broad fields of study, including Masters Degrees (Research) and Doctoral Degrees (Research) in at least three of the broad fields of study it offers. The ATN does not propose to reduce this threshold but makes clear that universities can narrow their focus as per their mission. Not all universities are comprehensive as their offerings are tied to their vision and how best the university can serve the community in which they operate.

The ATN believe the Provider Category Standards are fit for purpose for both present and future needs. The ATN believes that providers in the university category provide sector leadership across all activities and this differentiates universities and regular higher education providers. The ATN does not believe there should be teaching only or research only universities due the importance of the research teaching nexus and how vital this will be to ensuring Australians can consistently engage in meeting the challenges of the future of work.

The ATN would be happy to engage in further consultation with the Department as needed.

Please do not hesitate to contact the ATN Directorate on (02) 5105 6740 or via e-mail at info@atn.edu.au to discuss any elements of the submission further.

Yours sincerely,



Alec Webb
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