**Research Training Quality Paper - Information Sessions Consultation Questions**

**Consultation question 1**

Should there be national minimum quality requirements for higher degrees by research?   
Should an institution only be eligible for funding schemes in fields where it meets minimum requirements?

**Consultation question 2**

Should institutions be required to provide a minimum standard of physical resources in order to receive Research Training Scheme funding?

**THINK ABOUT:** how to ensure students have access to the tools they need for their work

**Student opportunities**

* For budding researchers, broad experience is vital – exposure to a wide variety of people, sites and events
* Local and international fieldwork and presentation opportunities

**Consultation question 3**

Should universities providing research training be required to ensure that students have sufficient access to opportunities such as conference attendance and international study?

**THINK ABOUT:** How to accommodate the varying needs of different disciplines and research projects?

**Supervision**

* What works well; where there’s room to improve
* One size doesn’t fit all
* Institutional policies on student supervision

**Consultation question 4**

What is the best way of ensuring that PhD supervisors provide high quality support to students? Should requirements be nationally consistent?

**THINK ABOUT**: What is the essentials of research supervision, and what sorts of things can be tailored The research environment

* Excellence in Research for Australia – a great indicator of research performance, at the discipline level, within an institution
* But what about:
  + Maintaining currency amid rapid change
  + Research environments that change for the better (or worse)
  + Pockets of excellence below the ERA threshold
  + Emerging disciplines
* We might benefit from other indicators to fill out the picture
* We could encourage partnerships so that an institution can “get over the line”

**Consultation question 5**

…Should an institution be able to provide alternative evidence of a quality research environment when positive ERA results are absent (for example in an emerging area of research).  If so what alternative evidence should be provided?

**THINK ABOUT:** In the new Excellence in Research for Australia world, how we accommodate different aspects and stages of excellence

**Consultation question 6**

If an institution is unable to provide robust evidence of a quality research environment, should it be able to submit evidence of arrangements, such as partnering arrangements with another institution?

**THINK ABOUT:** Arrangements between institutions offering research training in similar fields, and how to make these arrangements work

**The research training program**

* Research training – designed to impart highly specialised knowledge and expertise
* But problems (and solutions) cross subject borders
* New knowledge hits the road at the intersection of many disciplines

**Consultation question 7**

Should government do more to enable research training in multidisciplinary environments? What barriers are there and how might they be overcome?

**THINK ABOUT:** How research training has to adapt to meet the challenges of the 21st century

**Broader skills**

* Over half of all HDR graduates will be employed outside academia
* We know that “buyers” of research training value generic skills in addition to deep, subject-specific knowledge
* What’s crucial?
  + Problem solving
  + Communication
  + Self-management
  + Initiative and enterprise
  + Teamwork
* Institutions are taking up the challenge via innovative degree models

**Consultation question 8**

Should Australian higher degrees by research include broader skills training? If so, should this be through compulsory coursework or through some other mechanism?

**THINK ABOUT**: Preparing research students for different careers – whose job is it? And how should it work?

**Other quality considerations: the APA**

* Australian Postgraduate Award scheme – a stipend for research students
* APA capped at 3.5 years; RTS ends after 4 years – should they align? (at 4 years)
* Restrictions on other income earned while on an APA – remove?
* Part time research students
  + Part time HDR enrolments grew by 10% last year
  + Do we need to do a better job of support?

**Consultation question 9**

Should the rules associated with Australian Postgraduate Award scholarships be amended or increased in flexibility? If so, in what ways?

**THINK ABOUT:** Whether the APA can be made more flexible within current budget constraints; how to better accommodate part time students

**Other quality considerations – Research Masters**

Masters degrees by research are declining: what’s behind that?

**Consultation question 10**

What is the role of the research masters degree in the Australian research training system? Is its decline a cause for concern?

**THINK ABOUT:** The decline of the research masters is a message, but what does it say? And how should we respond?

**Other quality considerations – student selection and admission**

This is about maintaining high standards

* Selection and admission is a matter for institutions
* National standards could improve consistency and quality
* But at the expense of flexibility:
  + In different pathways to research
  + In different requirements by discipline

**Consultation question 11**

Given the trend towards more diverse entry pathways for higher degree by research, how prescriptive should overlying principles be? How should institutional arrangements for student selection and admission be measured?

**THINK ABOUT:** Attracting, selecting and retaining students that are well-suited to a career in research

**A final word**

* The Research Training Scheme is 10 years old
* The market for higher degrees by research is changing
* Ideas about what research training should comprise are evolving
* The policy environment is adapting, too
* What will the next decade bring?
* And how do we position ourselves?