CAUL
COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIANS

Review of the Higher Education Provider Category Standards

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Overview

The Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL) is the peak leadership organisation for university libraries in Australia. CAUL members are the University Librarians or equivalent of the 39 institutions that have representation on Universities Australia. University libraries are diverse institutions, which intersect core university business.

CAUL's vision is that society is transformed through the power of research, teaching and learning. University libraries are essential knowledge and information infrastructures that enable student achievement and research excellence. CAUL makes a significant contribution to higher education strategy, policy and outcomes through a commitment to a shared purpose:

> **To transform how people experience knowledge – how it can be discovered, used and shared.**

University libraries and library organisations broadly play a leading role in enabling fair, affordable and open access to knowledge. They are also instrumental in building society's capacity for digital dexterity – fluency in the use of digital technology, skills and essential literacies.

CAUL is grateful for this opportunity to provide a response to the Review of the Higher Education Provider Category Standards. Our response shall comment on questions 1 from the consultation paper.

What characteristics should define a 'higher education provider' and a 'university' in the PCS?

CAUL believes that the characteristics which define a 'higher education provider', 'university' or any other provider as defined under the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015 must include at a minimum that the provider is able to identify an associated academic library.

An academic library is a library that provides all of the following[1]:

- An organized collection of printed or other materials or a combination thereof;

- A staff trained to provide and interpret such materials as required to meet the informational, cultural, recreational, or educational needs of clientele;

- An established schedule in which services of the staff are available to clientele; and

- The physical facilities necessary to support such a collection, staff, and schedule.

The quality of an associated academic library provides differentiation and distinction among providers thus supporting the intention that the Provider Category Standards (PCS) act as a market signal for provider activity and quality.

In the interest of assessing quality CAUL has developed and maintains the Principles and Guidelines for Australian Higher Education Libraries, 2016 which provide a framework for describing and assessing the role and functioning of contemporary university libraries.

Within the framework an important indicator of quality is a provider's library and information resources. The Threshold Standards (2015) Staffing, Learning Resources and Educational Support

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[1] http://www.ala.org/tools/research/librarystats/academic

guidance note[2] links quality to a provider's ability to make appropriate library and information resources sufficiently accessible.

"Library and information resources" refers to all physical and digital materials, including:

- educational resources that provide information relevant to curricula and research, and

- infrastructure such as electronic databases that are made available by a provider to support the higher education objectives of its operations.

The Threshold Standards (2011) Information Resources guidance note (no longer in use)[3] provided specific criteria by which the quality of library and information resources can be assessed. Particularly it pointed out that advocating the use of public or community libraries as a primary information resource to support the higher education operations of a provider does not demonstrate an appropriate approach to the provision of information resources for higher education.

An association with a public or community library is no substitute for an academic library, which provides resources specific to the needs of a higher education provider.

Recommendation:

- That the Provider Category Standards include academic libraries as a criteria and requirement when assessing providers.

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[2] https://www.teqsa.gov.au/latest-news/publications/guidance-note-staffing-learning-resources-and-educational-support

[3] https://www.teqsa.gov.au/latest-news/publications/teqsa-guidance-note-information-resources