

OFFICE OF THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

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Department of Education and Training
Via email to: PCSReview@education.gov.au

Re: Submission to the Review of the Higher Education Provider Category Standards

The University of Southern Queensland (USQ) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the national discourse on the review of the Higher Education Provider Category Standards (PCS Review).

As a foundation member of the Regional Universities Network (RUN), USQ gives its full support to the RUN submission to this review. This response should be considered in conjunction with the response submission made by RUN.

There are a number of points which USQ wishes to emphasise. These are summarised below.

1. Overarchingly, it is our view that the PCS are fit for purpose. We see no need to change the definitions of "university" nor "higher education provider" in the PCS.
2. Regional universities are an integral part of (and at least partly a product of) the local communities in which they are based. Cognisant of the diversity which exists within local communities and Higher Education Providers, it is important to have a unified understanding of the definition of "university". It is also important that the PCS do not serve, by extension, to discourage diversity in the Australian higher education sector but rather, continue to support a healthy degree of institutional diversity in the Australian university sector.
3. PCS should not be used to differentiate between Higher Education Providers. Such an approach, were it to be adopted, would run the risk of PCS being used for comparative purposes.
4. Research undertaken in recent years in the areas of Remote Access Laboratories and Problem-Based Learning in Virtual Space, has led to significant improvements in teaching practice and an enhanced student experience. For example, USQ ePrints reports a paper 'Skills audit and competency assessment for engineering problem solving courses'¹ was downloaded over 3,819 times with 15 citations reported. A related Problem-Based Learning paper has been cited 37 times according to Google Scholar. This demonstrably supports the teaching-research nexus.

¹ Gibbings, P. & Brodie, L. (2006). Skills Audit and Competency Assessment for Engineering Problem Solving Courses, University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba: https://eprints.usq.edu.au/2252/1/Skills_Audit_and_Comptenency_Assessment_for_PBL.pdf

5. It is our view that aligning learning and teaching efforts with research strengths to promote excellence and to create pathways into Higher Degree by Research (HDR) programs, is integral. It is therefore important that universities in the regions should deliver both undergraduate and postgraduate research degrees that are aligned with research and particularly with areas of research excellence in regional universities like USQ.
6. We believe the current system, in which specialised research institutes can link with a registered university to ensure quality, is adequate.
7. The quality assurance processes and governance structures are the same irrespective of what activities are undertaken at different geographical locations. Any notion of PCS taking account of varying activity within a single provider, for example, having teaching only or research only institutions, doesn't reflect the university as a whole.
8. It is not clear how any of the proposed changes would have substantial impact.

If required, I would be pleased to elaborate on the matters raised in this submission.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "K Nelson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'K'.

Professor Karen Nelson
Acting Vice-Chancellor