



## Guidance Note: *Scholarship*

### What does scholarship encompass?

In the context of the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015* (HES Framework), 'scholarship' means those activities concerned with gaining new or improved understanding, appreciation and insights into a field of knowledge, and engaging with and keeping up to date with advances in the field. This includes advances in ways of teaching and learning in the field and advances in professional practice, as well as advances in disciplinary knowledge through original research.

Engagement in scholarship can be viewed at:

- 4 the level of individual activity (e.g. as part of an individual's personal professional development, teaching, research or professional practice), or
- 4 across a provider as a whole (e.g. policy frameworks, resource allocation, cultural expectations, staff development).

As detailed below, the concept of scholarship arises in several sections of the HES Framework with varying emphases.

Various aspects of scholarship are relevant to higher education, but at its core are making a contribution to and maintaining knowledge of current and emerging developments in a field, and transmission of this knowledge through effective, contemporary approaches to teaching and learning, and research training if applicable. A broad range of activities is included within the general scope of professional development, and scholarship is a sub-set of these activities concerned with advances in knowledge. Research is in turn a sub-set of the various types of scholarship that is limited to generating new knowledge.

The Boyer Model of Scholarship (Boyer, 1990) offers a framework for higher education providers to consider scholarship, using four discrete yet interdependent themes or elements:

- 4 **discovery** – building new knowledge through traditional research that contributes to the stock of human knowledge and also to the intellectual climate of a higher education provider
- 4 **integration** – interpreting the use of knowledge across disciplines and connecting research so that it is useful beyond discipline boundaries and can be integrated into a larger body of knowledge
- 4 **application** – using knowledge to aid individuals, society and the professions in solving problems and connecting scholarship with practice, and
- 4 **teaching** – a central element of scholarship involving well-informed and knowledgeable teachers, teaching that promotes active and critical learning in students, and recognition that teachers are also learners.

Boyer's framework has been expanded subsequently (by Rice, 1992, cited in Robinson and Hougaz, 2013, p.17) by incorporating the additional theme of:

- 4 **learning** – the impact of teaching on the student's learning experience and scholarly inquiry into how students make meaning from what the teacher says and does.

These elements collectively illustrate the importance of the distillation and integration of knowledge into teaching, through both curriculum content and teaching practices/processes. They also illustrate the scholarly role of research at the foundation of the scholarly continuum.

## Relevant Standards in the HES Framework

The Standards that are primarily concerned with scholarship are, in Part A (Standards for Higher Education):

- 4 3.1.2 (scholarship informs course design; the content and learning activities of a course of study engage with advanced knowledge and inquiry)
- 4 3.2.3 (teaching staff maintain knowledge of their field of teaching through continuing scholarship; teaching and assessment principles are contemporary and relevant to the discipline)
- 4 4.2.2 (scholarship characterises the environment of research training)

and in Part B (Criteria for Higher Education Providers):

- 4 Part B1 (scholarship that informs teaching is an essential characteristic of higher education providers, as is engagement with advanced knowledge and inquiry) and
- 4 Part B2 (requirements for seeking self-accrediting authority).

The requirement for providing relevant up-to-date learning resources in Standard 3.3.1 also implies that the selection and use of learning resources is informed by on-going engagement with new developments in disciplines and fields of education, as is the selection of learning outcomes (1.4.2). The learning outcomes for research training (1.4.5) specifically require a detailed understanding of a specific topic of research, within a broad understanding of the field of research.

## Intent of the Standards

The intent of the Standards in relation to scholarship is manifold. The Standards also encompass both the process of scholarship (e.g. academic staff are engaged in continuing scholarship) and its outcomes (e.g. course design is informed by current scholarship).

The Criteria for Classification of Higher Education Provider Categories (Part B1 – Section1) invoke scholarship as a fundamental element of Australian higher education. For example, the following criteria must be met by all registered higher education providers:

*B1.1.3 The higher education provider delivers teaching and learning that engage with advanced knowledge and inquiry.*

*B1.1.4 The higher education provider's academic staff are active in scholarship that informs their teaching, and are active in research when engaged in research student supervision.*

The Criteria for registration as an Australian University build on these requirements:

*B1.2.3 The higher education provider undertakes research that leads to the creation of new knowledge and original creative endeavour at least in those broad fields of study in which Masters Degrees (Research) and Doctoral Degrees (Research) are offered.*

*B1.2.4 The higher education provider demonstrates the commitment of teachers, researchers, course designers and assessors to the systematic advancement and dissemination of knowledge.*

*B1.2.5 The higher education provider demonstrates sustained scholarship that informs teaching and learning in all fields in which courses of study are offered.*

*B1.2.6 The higher education provider identifies and implements good practices in student teaching and learning, including those that have the potential for wider dissemination nationally.*

A depth of scholarship is also a requirement for seeking authority for self-accreditation of all of a provider's courses of study:

*B2.3.d sufficient breadth and depth of academic leadership, scholarship and expertise in relevant disciplines to guide entry into and sustain new levels and broad fields of higher education.*

The effect of these criteria is to require the creation of an institutional climate of scholarship, which is both a characteristic and a means of categorisation of providers according to the pervasiveness and scope of scholarship in the provider (including the scholarship of research). The intent of these criteria is that, as a minimum, all teaching and learning in higher education are engaged with advanced knowledge and inquiry, that all academic staff are active in scholarship that informs their teaching, and that supervisors of research students are active in research.

Within the broad requirements for scholarship at the institutional level as required by Part B of the HES Framework, the Standards in Part A address more specific points as discussed below, particularly in relation to scholarship informing teaching and learning.

The Standards for staffing (Section 3.2) specify requirements for teachers to be engaged with scholarship concerning their field of study and to be skilled in teaching, learning and assessment practices appropriate to their discipline. The intent of this Section is that teaching staff:

- 4 are engaged in scholarship (which may include research) that is directly relevant to informing both the content and methods of their teaching
- 4 keep up to date with developments in the field of education or discipline in which they teach, and
- 4 have an informed and advanced understanding of the field and/or how it is taught, learned and applied in practice.

The Standards also intend for scholarship to pervade the research training environment by requiring supervisors to be actively engaged in research in a relevant field (Standard 4.2.3a) and for research training to engender a broad understanding of a field of study beyond the primary research topic (Standard 1.4.5a).

The essence of the Standards discussed in the preceding paragraph is that the scholarship they contemplate is directly relevant to the discipline of the teaching and learning or research training being undertaken. It is not unusual for academic staff to be engaged in disciplinary scholarship or research that is somewhat or even quite remote from the field, discipline or subject they are teaching. While such scholarship may fulfil the requirements of Part B of the HES Framework (see above) by contributing broadly to institutional research and be laudable in its own right, it may be difficult or impossible to demonstrate a direct linkage to teaching or supervision as

required by Section 3.2. In the absence of demonstrable and tenable links, this form of scholarship is not sufficient to meet the requirements of the Standards in relation to scholarship informing teaching. The intent of the Standards is that scholarship that is claimed to inform teaching (or supervision) must have a demonstrable relevance to the course being taught, including scholarship relating to the process of teaching and learning in itself.

Aside from the practical benefits that up-to-date content and teaching methods offer to students and to the reputation of Australian higher education, it has been argued that fostering scholarship has an impact on the very nature of higher education. For example, Clement and Grant (2010, cited in Robinson and Hougaz, 2013, p.16) contend that scholarship contributes to *'intellectual curiosity, rigorous argument, judicious use of evidence, a depth of understanding gained through serious engagement with the work of others'* – for academics and students alike. In a similar vein, *'engagement with advanced knowledge and inquiry'* (Standard 3.1.2), as enabled by scholarship, is seen as a fundamental characteristic of higher education, and is a requirement for registration as a higher education provider (Part B1).

## Risks to Quality

A culture of continuing scholarship is a fundamental characteristic of higher education. Failure to undertake scholarship, both by individual staff and across a provider's fields of education, has a number of predictable and unacceptable consequences. Individual teaching staff not engaged in scholarship related to their teaching will:

- 4 become progressively less up-to-date with developments in the discipline they teach,
- 4 be less able to lead students in intellectual inquiry about developing concepts in their field, and
- 4 be less equipped to identify and adopt contemporary evidence-based advances in approaches to teaching in their field.

Learning outcomes will be compromised and, in the extreme, course accreditation may be jeopardised.

These undesirable consequences and their impact on students will be made worse if a lack of engagement in scholarship at an individual level is compounded by a lack of engagement at an institutional level e.g. by those with leadership responsibilities for designing and monitoring units and courses of study, or for setting academic policy or allocation of scholarly resources. Scholarship must be part of the institutional environment and culture. For example, if institutional policies do not create expectations for scholarship, it is less likely to occur. Similarly, if allocation of resources to scholarly resources (e.g. library collections and other information resources, conference participation, academic development opportunities) does not support scholarship sufficiently, participation will be impeded even if staff are willing. Such a culture will have an adverse impact on leadership by example (e.g. Standard 3.2.2) and may impede a culture of collective intellectual inquiry (e.g. Standard 6.1.4). In these circumstances, registration as a higher education provider may be jeopardised.

All of these possibilities, or any one of them, will also have an unacceptable adverse impact on the reputation and expectations of Australian higher education overall.



## What TEQSA will look for

This part of the guidance note covers the full extent of the Standards, and corresponding evidence that TEQSA may require, in relation to scholarship.

For new applicants seeking initial registration and course accreditation, TEQSA will require evidence to be provided in relation to all relevant Standards.

For existing providers, the scope of Standards to be assessed and the evidence required may vary. This is consistent with the regulatory principles in the TEQSA Act, under which TEQSA has discretion to vary the scope of its assessments and the related evidence required. In exercising this discretion, TEQSA will be guided by the provider's regulatory history, its risk profile and its track record in delivering high quality higher education.

TEQSA's case managers will discuss with providers the scope of assessments and evidence required well ahead of the due date for submitting an application.

The evidence required for particular types of application is available from the Application Guides on the TEQSA website.

The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011 (TEQSA Act) and the HES Framework require TEQSA to consider a provider's engagement with scholarship at several levels. These include:

- 4 scholarship directly associated with informing teaching and learning, including disciplinary scholarship
- 4 scholarship associated with the design and delivery of particular courses of study
- 4 scholarship associated with research and research training, if applicable to the provider
- 4 institutional encouragement and support for scholarship across all courses of study, and
- 4 requirements related to categorisation of the provider and authority for self-accrediting courses of study.

TEQSA acknowledges that scholarship may take many different forms within and between different providers. TEQSA also recognises that diverse strategies to develop, support and sustain scholarship, both at the institutional level and at the level of individual staff, have been identified in the literature and in evidence presented to TEQSA previously. In an environment of scholarly activity, TEQSA would expect to see evidence of a range of staff involvement in, for example:

- 4 scholarly publication/communication such as literature reviews and conference presentations
- 4 evidence-based course reviews or improvements based on scholarship
- 4 original research in a discipline or on teaching and learning practices
- 4 advanced professional development activities (either through participation in or leading these activities)

- 4 professional bodies or communities of practice in advancing knowledge and practice
- 4 involvement in relevant activities of scholarly academic societies, editorial roles or peer review (i.e. those concerned with advances in practice or knowledge)
- 4 undertaking higher level qualifications or broader qualifications
- 4 individual or collaborative activities, e.g. 'journal clubs', to remain abreast of developments in a field, combined with reflective practice, and/or
- 4 undertaking advanced specialised practice or scholarly secondments.

An issue that sometimes arises is the extent to which performance or creation of creative works (such as music, drama, art and design) can constitute scholarship. TEQSA's view is that routine performance or production would not in itself constitute scholarship. The staff member would need to demonstrate the scholarly dimension through a cogently articulated rationale that contextualises the project within the field, clarifies the significance of the intended outcomes and forms the basis for communicating relevant insights to students. Some form of peer review should be undertaken.

TEQSA will need to view these activities in the light of whether they are evidence of a scholarly environment more generally, or evidence of scholarship informing individual teaching or supervision, where individual teachers will need to be participating in scholarship that is *relevant to their teaching roles and informs their teaching* as required by the Standards.

A higher education provider registered in any category must be able to satisfy TEQSA that its staff are active in scholarship of some kind that informs their teaching. Where necessary, TEQSA will review the background and activities of staff for evidence of the extent of staff involvement, the scope of the activities and the legitimacy of claims (as outlined above). This may involve a sampling strategy, selecting teachers in particular courses or organisational units or a combination of these, to be agreed with TEQSA, or in the case of smaller providers, a full listing of staff scholarly activities within the past five years.

A provider applying to change to one of the university categories must be able to demonstrate *sustained* scholarship that informs teaching and learning in all fields in which courses of study are offered over at least the preceding five years. TEQSA may consider the extent of institutional support for scholarship (as discussed below) as required.

In looking to institutional encouragement and support for disciplinary scholarship concerned with teaching and learning, TEQSA may consider or draw on:

- 4 any institutional policies that encourage or enable scholarship, and their operation in practice
- 4 the extent to which institutional course approval processes examine the contribution of continuing scholarship to the design of a course of study
- 4 whether staffing policies (e.g. recruitment, promotion, professional development) recognise and encourage scholarship
- 4 resource allocations to support scholarship in particular fields, e.g. to support journal access, scholarly library collections, and conference attendance, and
- 4 the extent of institutional activities to support scholarship, e.g. seminars, discussion fora.

In essence, TEQSA will need to be satisfied that evidence of scholarship concerned with informing individual teaching relates directly to keeping up-to-date and advancing personal or collective understanding of the content of a discipline/field of study being taught, or to advancing approaches to teaching and learning in that discipline/field. If a claim is made for scholarship through undertaking professional practice or related activities, those activities must meet a test of relevance to the discipline/field being taught and also be linked to advances in practice. Scholarly engagement must also be at a level consistent with the level of teaching and learning concerned and embrace advanced understanding at, or above, that level.

In making these interpretations about acceptable evidence of scholarship, TEQSA does not seek to limit diversity of approaches or to prescribe 'types' of scholarship (e.g. as proposed by Boyer, 1990), although these may provide useful frameworks. Provided the tests of relevance and level (outlined above) are met, TEQSA would not wish to form a view on whether any particular type of scholarship is to be preferred, but all providers should develop both disciplinary scholarship and the scholarship of teaching and learning.

In considering the role of scholarship in the design, staffing and delivery of courses of study, TEQSA will need to be satisfied that the requirements of the relevant Standards (Sections 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3) are met and are likely to continue to be met. TEQSA would expect to review this as part of a course accreditation or re-accreditation process for one or more courses of study. This may involve peer review by an expert in the field of study.

The extent of TEQSA's requirements would be agreed between the provider and the TEQSA case manager, consistent with the relevant application guidelines. TEQSA will need to be satisfied by examples that:

- 4 the course design has indeed been informed by relevant scholarship at an appropriate level
- 4 individual staff concerned with leadership and delivery of the course are involved in relevant continuing scholarship at a level consistent with the level of the course(s) involved, and
- 4 students are referred to, and engage with, relevant scholarship through the course.

In the case of scholarship related to research training, TEQSA will need to be satisfied that the training can be provided in a supervisory and study environment of research activity or other creative endeavour, creativity and scholarship, as required by Standard 4.2.2. In so doing, TEQSA will consider the specific research mission and scale of the provider and the maturity of its research activities. This is likely to be done in consultation with the provider's case manager. TEQSA has prepared separate Guidance Notes on Research and Research Training.

Within the context of the HES Framework, there are examples of activities that TEQSA would *not* accept as scholarship related to teaching and learning in a particular discipline/field of education. Examples of such claims include, but are not limited to, the following:

- 4 dated scholarly activity that has since been rendered obsolete or irrelevant to current teaching roles (e.g. content or methods that are no longer employed in the field)
- 4 research in disciplines or fields that are unrelated to either the discipline/field being taught or to new approaches to teaching and learning in that discipline/field
- 4 professional practice where the practice is basic or routine and does not engage with advances in practice, or is unrelated to the discipline/field being taught (e.g. an

accountant undertaking preparation of personal tax returns for individuals while teaching corporate finance, mergers and acquisitions, or training in software use)

- 4 involvement in professional/community groups or activities (e.g. attending conferences) whose purpose cannot be related to the content or teaching methods for the discipline/field being taught
- 4 cognate activities at a lower level (e.g. teaching in a related field at a lower level), or
- 4 personal or professional development activities that are not related to the teaching role e.g. learning an unrelated research technique or taking a course in an unrelated field, including general training.

TEQSA considers that a provider that has implemented a successful culture of scholarship that is an integral part of, and supports, its teaching and learning activities, would be able to demonstrate that its staff are overall:

- 4 familiar with the latest ideas, debates and issues relating to the subject being taught and using this knowledge to shape teaching practice
- 4 informed by current ideas for teaching the subject/discipline, such as improved pedagogies, learning processes, curricula, academic policies and learning materials
- 4 engaged in evaluating and reflecting on teaching practice and student learning to challenge assumptions and consider alternative and/or different perspectives on teaching practices
- 4 engaged in communication, discussion or debate with other scholars in relevant fields of study
- 4 stimulating students and fostering their learning in a variety of ways, to engage with current ideas in the discipline area, and
- 4 exploring, testing, practising and communicating understanding of what practices are most effective in the context of the discipline (pedagogical content knowledge).

## Resources and references

Boyer, E. L. (1990), *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate*, Princeton, NJ: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, <<https://depts.washington.edu/g630/Spring/Boyer.pdf>>.

Clement, M., & Grant, B. (2010), *Scholarship in times of super complexity: Various accounts of what it can be and how we need each other to enact it*, *International Journal for Academic Development*, 15(2), pp.101-103.

Higher Education Academy (HEA)<sup>1</sup> Resources Page, <<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources>>.

Office for Learning and Teaching Resource Library<sup>2</sup>, <<http://www.olt.gov.au/resources/good-practice>>.

<sup>1</sup> The HEA in the UK has funded a large number of projects and subject centres to work with and provide support and resources for their discipline areas.



Resources about the scholarship of teaching and learning on International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching & Learning (ISSOTL) website, <<http://www.issotl.com/issotl15/node/20>>.

Rice, R. E. (1992), *Towards a broader conception of scholarship: The American context*, in T. Whiston & R. Geiger (Eds.), *Research and higher education: The United Kingdom and the United States*, Buckingham: SRE and Open University Press, pp.117-129.

Robinson, W. and Hougaz, L. (June 2013), *A culture of scholarship: Opportunities and challenges for the non-university Higher Education sector*, The ACPET Journal for Private Higher Education, (2)1, <<http://www.acpet.edu.au/article/6179/a-culture-of-scholarship-opportunities-and-challenges-for-the-non-university-higher-education-sector/>>.

TAFE NSW presentation by Professor Shirley Alexander to TEQSA Provider Briefing (October 2013), *Scholarship and its application in practice: 2 views from higher education*, <<http://www.teqsa.gov.au/sites/default/files/ScholarshipAndItsApplicationInPractice.pdf>>.

TEQSA (2016), *Explanations of terms in Part A of the HES Framework 2015*, <<http://www.teqsa.gov.au/explanations-hes-framework-terms>>.

THINK Education Group presentation by Linda Brown to TEQSA Provider Briefing (October 2013), *THINK Scholarship*, <<http://www.teqsa.gov.au/sites/default/files/Think%20Education%20Group%20Scholarship%20Oct%202013.pdf>>.

Williams, M., Goulding, F. & Seddon, T. (2013) *Towards a culture of scholarly practice in mixed-sector institutions*, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, <<https://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/publications/all-publications/towards-a-culture-of-scholarly-practice-in-mixed-sector-institutions>>.

Version #	Date	Key changes
1.0	26 May 2014	
2.0	19 August 2016	Updated for the HESF 2015 and made available as beta version for consultation.
2.1	20 October 2016	Additional resource added.
2.2	13 December 2016	Paragraph added relating to creative activity and scholarship.

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<sup>2</sup> This library contains a collection of higher education learning and teaching materials flowing from projects funded by the Commonwealth of Australia, including those from the Australian Learning and Teaching Council.