



Australian Government  
Department of Education and Training

Acting Deputy Secretary  
Jessie Borthwick

Mr Jason McNamara  
Executive Director  
Office of Best Practice Regulation  
PO Box 6500  
Barton ACT 2600

Dear Mr McNamara

**Revised Higher Education Standards Framework: Certification of the Independent Review**

Please find attached the report of the independent review of the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2011* legislative instrument that was undertaken by the Higher Education Standards Panel (the Panel) between 2012 and 2014.

Section 29(3) of the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) (Consequential Amendments and Transitional Provisions) Act 2011*, required that the Panel commence a review of the initial *Higher Education Standards Framework* within a year of the Panel's creation. The review commenced in early 2012 and the Panel provided advice on the outcomes of its review to the Minister for Education and Training in December 2014.

As part of its initial assessment, the Panel considered a range of options including no change, minor amendments to the initial standards framework and a comprehensive rewrite. The Panel recommended that a revised standards framework be introduced that more neatly aligns to the academic, operational and administrative life cycles of higher education providers. TEQSA agrees with the Panel's view that this will enable a reduction in evidentiary requirements and regulatory burden to demonstrate compliance.

The revised standards are the product of extensive consultation with stakeholders including universities, non-university higher education providers, sector peak bodies such as Universities Australia, state and territory officials and the Department of Education and Training. The Panel responded positively to the significant feedback it received through three separate consultation rounds, modifying draft text and incorporating many of the changes suggested by stakeholders.

The Panel's report on the review canvasses all of these issues and includes specific responses to the seven questions required to be addressed in a Regulation Impact Statement. While these particular statements are brief I am satisfied that, overall, the report provides strong evidence of a process and analysis equivalent to a RIS.

As a consequence, I hereby certify that the independent review of the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2011* has followed a similar process to that required for a RIS and has adequately addressed all seven RIS questions.

*Implementation*

Supported by the strength of the Panel's process and conclusions, the Government has agreed in principle to accept the Panel's advice and implement a revised standards framework from 1 January 2017.

Finalisation of a draft legislative instrument is subject to the conclusion of formal consultation with the COAG Education Council and TEQSA, as required by Section 58(3) of the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011*; and agreement with the Office of Best Practice Regulation to the impact of the change on regulatory burden for the higher education sector.

*Regulatory cost impact*

The impact on regulatory burden of implementing the revised Higher Education Standards Framework proposed by the Panel has been assessed by the Department of Education and Training. A costing has been submitted to your office for agreement.

*Making new higher education standards*

Subject to the agreement of regulatory costs and conclusion of the consultations outlined above, it is expected that the Minister for Education and Training will make the revised standards instrument later in the year. Staff from this department will advise the OBPR when the new legislative instrument is made to enable this letter and the Panel's report to be published on the OBPR website.

Yours sincerely



Jessie Borthwick

Encl.