

**Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace
Relations**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2011-2012**

Outcome 3 - Tertiary, Skills, International and Indigenous Strategy

DEEWR Question No. EW0594_12

Senator Mason provided in writing.

Question

Consultancy Higher Education Standards Framework

"With respect to the following components of the Higher Education Standards Framework, will the Minister please advise what is the timeframe for the development of each of these standards, including any proposals to release the components in draft form: (a) Provider Standards; (b) Qualification Standards; (c) Teaching and Learning Standards; (d) Information Standards; and (e) Research Standards. "

Answer

Consultancy Higher Education Standards Framework

Development and public release of Provider Standards

An extensive consultation process was conducted with the education sector on the development of the draft Provider Standards. Consultation commenced at the beginning of 2010 and the third and final public consultation process ended on 2 June 2011.

The provider standards are a translation of the *National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes*.

Development and public release of Qualification Standards

The Qualification Standards have been based on the new Australian Qualifications Framework which has been endorsed by MCTEE.

The revised AQF which was endorsed by MCTEE in May 2011 reflects a 20 month long consultative process undertaken by the AQFC. Given this extensive consultation, the intent of the draft Qualification Standards public release was to seek feedback on the development of the Standards as an enforceable regulatory instrument and to ensure it reflects the intent of the AQF.

Work on the development of the Standards commenced in May and included several meetings with the AQFC that resulted in their approval of the final draft Qualification Standards.

The Department released the draft Qualification Standards for public consultation on Thursday 1 September 2011 on its website.

Making the first Threshold Standards

The first set of Threshold Standards is to be made by the Minister. This balances the need to provide regulatory certainty for providers by establishing standards based on current requirements (such as the AQF and the National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes) and to provide for TEQSA to commence its regulatory functions on 30 January 2012.

Before making the first set of Standards the Minister must consult with the Council consisting of Ministers for the Commonwealth and each state and territory responsible for higher education, the Minister for Research, TEQSA, and other stakeholders, having regard to any representations received from them. The Minister has commenced consultation with those noted and has requested feedback by 25 November, 2011.

The Minister has registered the Standards with the Federal Register for Legislative Instruments (FRLI) on 4 January 2012.

The Standards Panel must commence a review of the Threshold Standards within the first year of the Panel's operation.

Development and public release of the Teaching and Learning, Information and Research Standards.

Membership of the Higher Education Standards Panel was announced on 9 November 2011. Once the work of the Panel commences they will develop a way forward on these non Threshold Standards, drawing on preliminary work already undertaken by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. It is anticipated that appropriate consultation on the development of these standards will be undertaken with the sector in due course.