



Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee:  
Higher Education Legislation Amendment (Provider Category  
Standards and Other Measures) Bill 2020

Bond University Submission

Bond University

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***Re: Higher Education Legislation Amendment  
(Provider Category Standards and Other Measures) Bill 2020***

Bond University was established 31 years ago as Australia's first private, non-profit university. The University remains committed to providing an independent alternative to the large and relatively homogenous public universities that dominate higher education in this country, to providing our students with a broad and transformative educational experience, and to the pursuit of high-quality research that delivers practical outcomes and benefits our national prosperity.

Bond University welcomes the *Higher Education Legislation Amendment (Provider Category Standards and Other Measures) Bill 2020 (the bill)* which incorporate the recommendations of the *Review of the Higher Education Provider Category Standards (the Coaldrake Report)*.

Professor Coaldrake has astutely recognised the established reputation and cachet of universities in Australia and the importance of our reputation for quality in the international context. The proposed requirements under the criteria for the revised 'Australian University' category will safeguard standards of quality by setting appropriate performance benchmarks which, coupled with Australia's strong regulatory framework, will help to maintain our international position. This is particularly relevant at the moment given the turbulence in our sector created by the global pandemic and consequent travel restrictions.

The amendments to the Provider Category Standards also provide a clearer path for institutions to move between categories, which will drive more diversity of providers in higher education and, as such, be a positive force for the sector.

There has been extensive debate accompanying the definitions surrounding the quality and quantity of research required to be categorised as an 'Australian University'. We note that the proposed Bill provides TEQSA with a broad scope to determine what matters it takes into consideration when determining the quality of research when considering institutional eligibility for the Australian University category.

In a complex area such as research quality, it is appropriate that the regulator is not unduly limited in the evidence it is able to consider. Bond supports the clear intent of the Coaldrake Report that metrics that are easy to measure not be given undue weight for the simple reason that they are readily available. Further, that the aggregate assessment of an institution should not be influenced by an arbitrary classification standard, for example, where an institution's areas of strength do not align neatly with the Australian Standard Research or Education Classification schema.

The Coaldrake Report proposes that, while the ERA will provide a useful data source, the regulator should also consider each institution's disciplinary focus and development trajectory. Bond University supports this approach.

The final shape of the research quality benchmarks is outside of the scope of the Bill in front of this Committee. However, in determining matters relating to the quality of research under section 59A

of the Bill, Bond University urges the Government to ensure that TEQSA be guided by the intent of the Coaldrake Report set out above.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the Provider Category Standards Bill.