



Guidance Note: *Research and Research Training*

Version 2.0 (September 2022)

Providers should note that Guidance Notes are intended to provide guidance. The definitive instruments for regulatory purposes remain the TEQSA Act and the Higher Education Standards Framework as amended from time to time.

1. What does research and research training encompass?

For the purposes of the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021* (HES Framework), research is defined as ‘the creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way by a higher education provider so as to generate new concepts, methodologies, inventions and understandings’. Research can be carried out in and between all fields and may involve a range of tools and media.

Undertaking research can be considered:

- at the level of individual activity (e.g. part of an individual’s personal research or professional practice), or
- across a provider (e.g. policy frameworks, resource allocation, institutional expectations, staff development).

Various aspects are relevant to higher education, but at a minimum, research:

- leads to and/or transmits new knowledge or advances in creative or professional practice in a field
- is a planned, purposive intellectual inquiry
- produces outputs that are subject to external, independent scrutiny.

For the purposes of the HES Framework, ‘research training’ is a formal course of graduate study leading to the acquisition of advanced skills, techniques, and knowledge in the conduct of research. Research training also builds towards the production of a contribution to the field of research or creative or professional practice. Research training is a key characteristic of the Masters Degree (Research) and *all* Doctoral Degrees at AQF 10 (sometimes referred to as higher degrees by research) ([Australian Qualifications Framework](#)). In the case of Doctoral Degrees, the HES Framework requires a significant original contribution to the field of research or creative or professional practice.

Bachelor Honours degrees may include a significant research component and be a pathway to further research training. However, TEQSA will not assess coursework degrees (including Bachelor Honours Degrees) against the research standards.



2. What TEQSA will look for

Given the investment and resources necessary to successfully offer and support postgraduate research degrees, TEQSA expects to see well developed and mature course design, research supervision, review, and quality assurance processes. The HES Framework requires TEQSA to consider a provider's research and research training at several levels. These include:

Part A	Key considerations
1.3.3 Orientation and Progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research candidate's program progression is monitored and feedback provided.
1.4.5-7: Learning Outcomes and Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research candidates acquire the relevant skills, their major assessable research outputs are assessed by suitably qualified external assessor(s) and contribute to the development of the field.
2.1: Facilities and Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilities and infrastructure are fit for purpose and can accommodate the research needs of the course, research candidates and staff.
4.1: Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a research policy framework and research is conducted consistent with this policy framework. Research is conducted and overseen by suitably qualified staff. Research outputs of staff and research candidates are recorded and records are current.
4.2: Research Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is an institutional research training policy framework. An appropriate environment, induction, supervisory arrangements and resources that support research training are in place. Coursework components meet the governance and quality requirements for coursework set by a provider.
5.2: Academic and Research Integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies and procedures uphold research integrity, mitigate risks, ensure guidance is provided, and integrity maintained in third party arrangements. Promotion and fostering of a culture of research integrity and institutions meeting their responsibilities with respect to the provision of ongoing research integrity training and education for relevant staff and students.
5.4: Delivery with Other Parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The provider quality assures placements and internships (where applicable) and ensures that research training delivered by third parties (such as industry and higher education partners) is consistent with the HES Framework.
6.1.3c: Corporate Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The governing body ensures that research and research training are governed by institutional policies.
6.3.1 and 6.3.2: Academic Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic governance processes and structures maintain academic oversight of research and research training.



Part A	Key considerations
7.3.1j Information Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Information about arrangements with other parties delivering research training is publicly available.

TEQSA may further consider:

- referencing of policies to external requirements, particularly regarding research ethics
- how any allegations of research misconduct have been investigated and resolved, and whether improvements were made to policies or procedures to prevent recurrence of breaches
- data management and the adequacy of a provider's arrangements for recording research outputs.

3. Identified issues

Research

Within the context of the HES Framework, TEQSA has identified a range of issues which are indicative of risks to the integrity and quality of research. These include, but are not limited to:

- lack of appropriate engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples where relevant (2.2.2, 4.1.1a,b,d, 6.2g)
- physical or psychological harm to people or animals, as subjects of the research, to associated communities, to the persons conducting the research and to the environment (Standard 4.1.1a)
- breaches of Australia's laws on intellectual property protection, as well as disputes over ownership of, or effective control over, intellectual property (Standard 4.1.1b)
- breaches of the Australian Code for Responsible Conduct of Research (Standard 4.1.1)
- improper or inaccurate attribution of authorship to research outputs, not reflective of the personnel (staff or research candidate) who conducted the work (Standard 4.1.1a, d)

Research training

Within the context of the HES Framework, TEQSA has identified a range of issues which are indicative of risks to the integrity and quality of research training. These include, but are not limited to:

- Policies, procedures, resourcing and environment
 - inadequate policies and procedures for addressing research candidate grievances (Standard 4.2.1g and Section 2.4)
 - providers having insufficiently strong research cultures surrounding research candidates, including working with other research candidates and having peer support (Standard 4.2.2)



- a lack of awareness of safety protocols for laboratories or of the dangers in particular environments (Standard 4.2.4)
- inadequate resourcing for research candidates' projects, including inadequate on-campus facilities and a less than stimulating intellectual environment (Standard 4.2.2).
- Delivery by third parties
 - lack of oversight of issues in third party relationships involved in delivering Higher Degrees by Research (Standard 5.4.2).
- Examination of theses
 - poor choice of examiners or the dispatch of a thesis for examination that is under-prepared (Standard 4.2.1c-e).
- Supervision of research
 - providers not sufficiently guiding the research candidate in the development of the project concept and expected outcomes (Standards 4.2.1a and 4.2.3)
 - providers not paying adequate attention to ensuring sufficient progress is maintained by research candidates. Any lack of progress should be identified early by supervisors and fresh targets established with the candidate (Standard 4.2.1c)
 - inadequate supervision, whether due to selection of the supervisor (internal or external to provider), insufficient training and preparation of supervisors, policies supporting supervision not being fit for purpose, and/or weak support for the supervisory relationship (Standards 4.2.1a-b and 4.2.3)
 - lack of explicitly and mutually agreed expectations between the research candidate and supervisor. This prevents research candidates from determining whether the supervisory service is reasonable or not. Such requirements would cover, for example, timeliness of work required by both candidate and supervisor and expectations around tasks such as review of chapters or whole thesis at given points (Standard 4.2.1a).
 - making frequent or repeated change of supervisor(s), especially if a new supervisor has less interest in the candidate's research or lacks appropriate experience or qualifications than the original supervisor (Standard 4.2.3)
 - The principal supervisor not being suitably qualified and experienced in research in the relevant field, such as having little or low quality published research output in that field (Standard 4.2.3a).

Related resources

- Guidance note: Research requirements for Australian Universities (add when uploaded)
- Australian Council of Graduate Research: [Australian Graduate Research Good Practice Principles](#)



- National Health and Medical Research Council: [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#)

Version #	Date	Key changes
1.0	21 October 2016	Made available as beta version for consultation.
1.1	30 August 2017	Revised in response to consultation feedback.
1.2	11 October 2017	Minor amendment to 'What will TEQSA look for?' text box.
1.3	5 July 2018	Updates to Resources and References section for new publications and changed hyperlinks.
2.0	12 September 2022	Major revision