

Australian Business Deans Council

Response to the Higher Education Standards Panel Recommendations

27 April 2018

The Australian Business Deans Council members graduate one-third of all university students and one-half of international university students studying in Australia.

Our mission is to make Australia's business schools better.

As the peak body, ABDC fosters the national and global impact of Australian business education and research.

ABDC does this by:

- Being the collective and collegial voice of our member university business schools
- Providing opportunities for members to share knowledge and best practice
- Creating and maintaining strong, collaborative relationships with affiliated national and international peak industry, higher education, professional and government bodies
- Engaging in strategic initiatives and activities that further ABDC's mission.

Higher Education Standards Panel Recommendations:

1. The Government consider a legislated code of practice that limits professional accreditation bodies to matters that are profession-specific, rather than issues already assured by TEQSA
2. TEQSA work with accrediting bodies to build their capacity to work more effectively and efficiently – by establishing formal guidance, participating in workshops, encouraging a focus on outcomes-based quality assurance, and promoting best practice regulation
3. A stakeholder forum be held to discuss the future of professional work and ways to further streamline accreditation.

The Government has accepted the Panel's advice in principle. The department is seeking stakeholder views on the advice and its implementation. Comments to HigherEd@education.gov.au by **30 April 2018**.

ABDC Key Points

The Australian Business Deans Council agrees with Recommendations Two and Three but is concerned about the potential for the Recommendation One to create negative unintended consequences.

These include:

1. **Potential to interfere with the external international accreditation of Australia's business schools** with, for example, the [Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business](#) (AACSB) and [EFMD Quality Improvement System](#) (EQUIS) accreditation. These independent accreditations of Australian Business schools emphasise the quality of education and research on offer, which are vital to the high global standing of our business schools. For many universities, international accreditation underpins marketing to potential students in the intensely-competitive international education environment. This is particularly significant to business schools, which graduate more than half of the international tertiary students in Australia, who bring in billions of dollars of annual education export income.
2. **Inhibiting the ability of business schools and professional bodies to collaboratively develop, improve and streamline current accreditation practices.** Greater regulation could shift the focus to one of more compliance, rather than co-operation and collaboration, in the development and continuous improvement of areas like recognition of prior learning, work-integrated experience and the inclusion of professional accreditation in the design of business school courses.

3. **The potential to undermine the ability of professional bodies to raise standards.**
There is a danger of over-focusing on process and costs to the detriment of quality outcomes. This is particularly important given the current questioning of standards and enforcement of standards globally and domestically, as evidenced by the [Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry](#).
4. **The potential for the proposed actions to add an additional burden by not taking into account the impact of new regulatory requirements already affecting business schools** in areas like financial planning.
5. **The impact on business schools if the proposed private sector compliance with TEQSA standards leads to them establishing courses** in competition to business schools.
6. **Confusion due to a lack of clarity about which organisations will be responsible for accreditation issues** and where current associations with non-university providers sit in the ecosystem.

Role and Resourcing of TEQSA

The ABDC is concerned about the resources required by TESQA to carry out Recommendations Two and Three, given the limited resources it has to meet existing challenges. However, ABDC assumes that sufficient additional resources will be allocated to cover the work.

ABDC applauds TESQA's ongoing establishment of co-operative agreements with professional accreditation bodies to share information and make accreditation more efficient. ABDC advocates continuation of these efforts, with additional investment to improve processes, transparency and achieve optimal outcomes for our graduates and their future professions.

Conclusion

The ABDC welcomes recommendations for TEQSA to build capacity and work more effectively and efficiently with accrediting bodies, and also the recommendation for the holding of a stakeholder forum. However, the ABDC is concerned that the costs of increased regulation, to government and universities, could potentially outweigh the stated benefits.

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