



Overview

Quality Assurance System
in Higher Education

AUSTRALIA

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I. Basic information on the country

Name of country	Commonwealth of Australia							
Capital	Canberra							
Official language	English							
Population*	20,630,000 (as of April, 2006)							
Nominal GDP*	814,854,810,000 USD (FY 2007-2008)							
Nominal GDP per capita*	38,418 USD (FY 2007-2008)							
Public spending on education as a percentage of the total government spending**	The total expenses predicted for 2008-09 is expected to be 210,570,000 USD. The estimated spend for education (all levels) for 2008-09 is approximately 1,350,820,360 USD.							
Public spending on education as a percentage of GDP***	All levels of education 4.8% HE level 1.1% (OECD average 5.4%) (OECD average 1.3%) (2005)							
Spending per student at higher education level***	14,579 USD (OECD average 11,512 USD) (2005)							
Public spending on higher education per student***	7,114 USD (OECD average 8,110 USD) (2005)							
Tertiary education participation rates	<p>The percentage of the Australian population attending university in 2007 for ages 17-19 is as follows:</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Age 17</td> <td>3.9%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Age 18</td> <td>23.0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Age 19</td> <td>28.3%</td> </tr> </table> <p>Source: DEEWR on request</p>		Age 17	3.9%	Age 18	23.0%	Age 19	28.3%
Age 17	3.9%							
Age 18	23.0%							
Age 19	28.3%							
Organization of education system	See II-3. Diagram of the Australian education system.							
Language of instruction	English							
Cycle of academic year	In the higher education sector, most universities operate over two semesters, and the academic year begins in February and ends in November. Some universities have three academic semesters and some non-university institutions run programs year round.							

Source:

* The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan website, *Overview of Australia*:
<http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/australia/data.html>

** Australian Government website, *Budget 2008-09*:
http://www.budget.gov.au/2008-09/content/overview/html/overview_01.htm

*** Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (2009), *International Comparative Education Statistics 2009-2010*, p.42, 48, 49

II. The higher education system

1. Historical overview

The first universities in Australia were established in four of the original British colonies - the University of Sydney in 1850 in New South Wales, the University of Melbourne in 1853 in Victoria, the University of Adelaide in 1874 in South Australia and the University of Tasmania in 1890. Following the creation of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901, the University of Queensland was established in 1909 and the University of Western Australia in 1911.

Between the two World Wars, two university colleges were established - Canberra University College in 1930 in the Australian Capital Territory which later joined the Australian National University in the 1960s and the New England University College in 1938 in northern New South Wales which became the University of New England in 1954. The post war period saw the establishment of the Australian National University in 1946 and several more new universities until the number of universities had risen to nineteen by the late 1970s.

The 1960s saw the development of a binary system of higher education, consisting of the universities and a large group of advanced education institutions. Eventually there were about 70 institutions or colleges of advanced education (CAEs) which included many long established institutions such as the large central institutes of technology, regional colleges, colleges specializing in teacher education and a number of small colleges specializing in fields such as agriculture. The advanced education institutions initially offered sub-degree level awards and later offered awards mainly at the pass Bachelor degree level, but did not offer Bachelor Honours degrees. With a few exceptions, they were not funded for research and did not offer post graduate awards. As part of a major reform process in 1987 the binary divide between universities and other higher education institutions, such as CAEs, was abolished. This resulted in a major program of amalgamations and rationalizations, resulting in significantly fewer higher education institutions.

The expansion of Australia's higher education system over the past fifty years has been accompanied by substantial structural and funding changes. During World War II and in the following years the Australian Federal Government began to play a more prominent role in public higher education funding and policy, assuming full funding responsibility for higher education in 1974 and abolishing tuition fees in the same year.

The major reorganization of the higher education sector was undertaken by the Federal Government in the 1980s against a background of significant policy reforms aimed at engaging Australia with the global economy and the huge increase in participation rates in the final year of schooling. During this period the Federal Government introduced student contributions through the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS), designed to provide a more equitable arrangement for funding of the higher education sector.

From 1986 universities were able to charge full fees for overseas students. Universities were quick to take up the opportunity to generate additional income flowing from this initiative and to market themselves as high quality education providers.

The deregulation of higher education gained momentum in the 1990s. Fee-paying post graduate courses for Australian students were introduced and growth in domestic fee-paying students dominated growth in post-graduate studies in the 1990s.

From 1998, universities were given the flexibility to offer fee-paying places to Australian undergraduate students which has led to greater numbers of domestic fee-payers and greater flexibility in the setting of fees by universities.

More recently, the previous Government introduced the “Our Universities: Backing Australia’s Future” reforms, designed to establish a partially deregulated higher education system. New arrangements for student financing are now in place under the Higher Education Loan Scheme (HELP), which replaces HECS. Under the HELP scheme, students are not prevented from participating in higher education by an inability to pay their student contribution or tuition fee up-front. Generally, Australian citizens and permanent humanitarian visa holders are eligible for HELP loans.

Source: AEI (2006), *Country Education Profiles Australia 2006*, p.72-73

2. Characteristics of Australian Higher Education

Higher education in Australia generally refers to university and non-university higher education institutions which award degree or sub-degree qualifications. The three main cycles of higher education are Bachelor, Master and Doctoral studies.

The Australian Federal Government provides significant funding to higher education institutions. Grants from the Federal Government accounts for approximately 42 % of the entire higher education sector revenue in 2006 whereas financial assistance from the state and territory governments makes up only 4 % of the total.

As a condition of funding, institutions must meet a range of quality and accountability requirements that are set out in the Higher Education Support Act 2003. The legislation requires that an institution must operate at an appropriate level of quality, comply with an authorized accreditation authority listed on the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Register (the AQF Register is a list of recognised education institutions and authorised accreditation authorities in Australia), and be authorized by an independent quality agency.

Source: AEI website: <https://aei.gov.au/AEI/CEP/Australia/EducationSystem/HigherEd/AccredQA/default.htm>

2-1. Types and size of higher education institutions

Types of institutions

Australian higher education provider is either a self-accrediting institutions: SAIs (universities and non-university type institutions) or non-self-accrediting institutions: NSAIs.

Number of HE institutions

SAIs	University	Public universities	37
		Private universities	2
	College		3
NSAIs	TAFE (Technical and Further Education) and Private colleges etc.		approx. 150

A *self-accrediting higher education provider (SAI)* is an institution authorized by state and territory government to accredit its higher education courses and its own awards and is responsible for its academic standards. It must have appropriate quality assurance processes in place, including peer assessment processes, external examination of higher degrees and the involvement of professional bodies in the accreditation of particular courses. The following describes the two types of self-accrediting higher education providers:

University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An Australian university is an institution which meets nationally agreed criteria (<i>National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes</i>, Protocols A and D) and is established as a university under state, territory or Commonwealth legislation. Universities receive the vast majority of their public funding from the Federal Government, through the Higher Education Support Act 2003. They are listed on the AQF Register. Universities are multi-disciplinary institutions that are self-governing and are responsible for their own management structure, budgets, resource allocation, staff, student enrolments, accreditation of qualifications, quality assurance and curriculum.
Other SAIs (e.g. colleges)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A body, other than a university, whose name is included in the AQF Register as the name of a higher education institution empowered to issue its own qualifications. These institutions are not permitted to use the term 'university' in their title. Their self-accrediting authority may be limited to only some of the fields of study and/or levels of qualifications they offer.

A *non-self-accrediting provider (NSAI)* is recognized under the relevant state or territory legislation, and included in the list of Non-Self-Accrediting Higher Education Institutions in the AQF Register. There are approximately 150 non-self-accrediting providers in Australia including private colleges and TAFE institutions. These institutions offer courses approved by state and territory

government accreditation authorities in a range of areas including theological studies, business and information technology, arts and health, and more than half of these institutions offer vocational training education as Registered Training Organizations (RTOs). The number of NSAI especially that of private colleges, has increased by 35 % from 2005 to 2007.

Source: *going to uni website*: <http://www.goingtouni.gov.au/Home.htm>

AQF website: <http://www.aqf.edu.au/aboutaqf.htm>

AEI (2008), Country Education Profiles Australia 2008, p.15

Higher education enrolments, by type of attendance (2007)

	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Rate of Part-time
Public universities (1)	664,381	312,405	976,786	32.0%
Private providers of HE (2)	35,626	17,434	53,060	32.9%
(1)+(2)	700,007	329,839	1,029,846	32.0%

Source: *DEEWR website, Students, Selected Higher Education Statistics:*

http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher_education/publications_resources/profiles/students_2007_full_year_.htm

Higher education enrolments, by citizenship (2007)

	Number	Rate of total
Australian	720,185	69.9%
New Zealand	6,510	0.6%
Permanent resident	28,654	2.8%
Humanitarian visa	1,398	0.1%
<i>Total Domestic</i>	<i>756,747</i>	<i>73.5%</i>
Overseas	273,099	26.5%
Total	1,029,846	100.0%

Source: *DEEWR website, Students, Selected Higher Education Statistics:*

http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher_education/publications_resources/profiles/students_2007_full_year_.htm

Higher education enrolments, by broad field of education (all higher education providers, 2007)

Field of education	Number	Rate of total
Natural and physical sciences	77,195	7.5%
Information technology	50,733	4.9%
Engineering and related technologies	69,642	6.8%
Architecture and building	22,676	2.2%
Agriculture, environment & related studies	16,080	1.6%
Health	131,077	12.7%
Education	101,816	9.9%
Management and commerce	304,443	29.6%
Society and culture	222,925	21.6%
Creative arts	68,178	6.6%
Food, hospitality and personal services	570	0.1%
Mixed field programs	3,019	0.3%
Non-award	22,589	2.2%
Total*	1,029,846	100.0%

*The data takes into account the coding of Combined Courses to two fields of education. As a consequence, counting both fields of education for Combined Courses means that the totals may be less than the sum of all broad fields of education.

Source: DEEWR website, *Students, Selected Higher Education Statistics*:

http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher_education/publications_resources/profiles/students_2007_full_year.htm

Number of higher education staff (2001 and 2006)

Staff classification		2001	2006
Academic staff	Above senior lecturer	7,100	9,200
	Senior lecturer	8,400	9,600
	Lecturer	11,600	13,300
	Below lecturer	6,400	8,000
	<i>Total</i>	<i>33,500</i>	<i>40,200</i>
Non-academic staff		44,800	51,800
All staff		78,200	92,000

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics website:

<http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/d3310114.nsf/Home/Home?OpenDocument>

2-2. Cross-border education

Australia is primarily an exporter rather than an importer of education services, and during the last decade international students have become a very important part of the Australian higher education scene. Students coming from outside Australia to study at Australian institutions are usually referred to as overseas students, and there were 273,099 overseas students enrolled in Australian universities in 2007, most of them paying full tuition fees. Overseas students represent around 27 per cent of all enrolments.

Higher education institutions are also strengthening their international presence by making some programs available offshore. Australian providers now deliver courses ranging from Certificate III to doctorates in Singapore, China, Mauritius, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and beyond. Many of the nation's higher education institutions continue to develop campuses overseas, either individually or in partnership with local providers. The number of international students studying at offshore Australian institutions has increased considerably in recent years, with over 100,000 students currently enrolled.

Source: APARNET (2007), *Country Report Australia*, p.3

DEEWR (2008), *Media release, 22 August 2008, The Hon Julia Gillard MP:*

http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Releases/Pages/Article_081027_113458.aspx

2-3. Courses and qualifications

Australian higher education institutions offer two types of higher education programs: academic; and professional - programs leading to degree level qualifications that allow for practice in a specific profession or occupational field.

Programs can be taken either full-time or part-time. Distance and online education has grown rapidly in recent years. In many cases, programs may be provided outside Australia (known as offshore education).

Undergraduate courses and qualifications

Diploma

Diploma is a para-professional qualification. Diplomas require one or two years of full-time study. It is a dual-sector qualification, offered in both the higher education and vocational education and training sectors.

In the higher education sector, Diplomas are based on an academic program with an applied focus, providing general or specialised training for employment at the para-professional level. Diplomas can articulate to Advanced Diploma programs. Diplomas can also provide advanced standing or credit transfer (usually one year) into a Bachelor Degree program.

Advanced Diploma

Advanced Diploma is a professional-level qualification. Most Advanced Diplomas require two years of full-time study. It is a dual-sector qualification, offered in both the higher education and vocational education and training sectors.

In the higher education sector, an Advanced Diploma has units from a Bachelor Degree program, providing an early exit point with a stand-alone qualification but with the option of continuing to the Bachelor Degree. Entry is usually based on normal university entry requirements. Advanced Diplomas can provide advanced standing or credit transfer (usually two years) into a Bachelor Degree program.

Associate Degree

Associate Degree programs require two years of full-time study. Associate Degrees emphasise the introductory research-based knowledge of one or more academic disciplines and the development of generic employment skills. Associate Degrees can provide advanced standing or credit transfer (usually two years) into a Bachelor Degree program in the same field.

The Associate Degree and the Advanced Diploma are at the same level on the AQF. The difference is in the focus of the programs. Associate Degrees are more academically oriented, whereas Advanced Diplomas emphasis vocational or professional studies.

Bachelor Degree

Australian Bachelor Degrees are diverse. There are several types of Bachelor Degrees including three-year degrees, four-year degrees, professional degrees, combined degrees and honours degrees. All Bachelor Degree programs must lead to the same educational outcomes as indicated on the AQF regardless of length or specific program requirements (See III-2. Types of the current Australian higher education quality assurance frameworks, for details of Bachelor Degree's outcomes set out on the AQF).

The Bachelor Degree is the first degree in the arts, sciences and most professional fields. Programs are designed to introduce students to a discipline and develop analytical skills. Bachelor Degree programs aim to prepare students to assimilate and interpret new information and ideas and continue to apply and extend such techniques after graduation.

A Bachelor Degree program normally includes a significant amount of specialisation, with a major subject or subject area studied in depth. There is little in the way of general education components, which are covered at the secondary level. All Bachelor Degree programs involve a progressive development of knowledge, analytical skills and problem-solving techniques to an advanced level which provides a basis for postgraduate study.

The AQF Bachelor Degree is a generic grouping that encompasses all of the types of Bachelor Degrees.

Postgraduate courses and qualifications

Graduate Certificate

Programs leading to the Graduate Certificate are designed to develop skills in a specialised area. Graduate Certificate programs are coursework-based and normally require one semester of full-time study, or part-time equivalent.

Graduate Diploma

Like the Graduate Certificate, the Graduate Diploma is a specialised, often vocationally-orientated award. Graduate Diplomas either develop new professional or vocational skills for graduates or extend the knowledge and skills gained in the first degree. Graduate Diplomas normally require one year of full-time study, or part-time equivalent.

A Graduate Certificate or Graduate Diploma may be awarded if a student completes postgraduate preparatory work such as a Master Degree qualifying year, but does not proceed to the degree course.

Master's Degree

There are three types of Master Degree programs: coursework, research and professional. Most Master Degrees require two years of full-time study after a three-year Bachelor Degree or one year of full-time study after a Bachelor Honours Degree or four-year (or longer) Bachelor Degree.

Doctoral Degree

There are three types of Doctoral Degree programs: Research Doctorate, Professional Doctorate, and Higher Doctorate.

A typical program requires three to four years of full-time study. Students are expected to make a substantial original contribution to knowledge in the form of new knowledge or significant and original adaptation, application and interpretation of existing knowledge.

	Types of qualifications	Nominal duration	Enrolment age
Undergraduate	Diploma	1-2 years	18-
	Advanced Diploma	2 years	18-
	Associate Degree	2 years	18-
	Bachelor Degree	minimum 3 years	18-
	Bachelor Honours Degree	one-year study after Bachelor Degree course	-
Postgraduate	Graduate Certificate	6 months	22-
	Graduate Diploma	12 months	22-
	Master's Degree	12-24 months	22-
	Doctoral Degree	3-4 years after Master's Degree course	24-

Source: AEI (2008), *Country Education Profiles Australia 2008*, p.5-11

Study in Australia website: <http://www.study.australia.or.jp/university.html>

AEI (2005), *Australian Qualifications and the Australian Qualifications Framework*, p.4-5

2-4. Australian Qualifications Framework

The Australian Qualifications Framework (commonly known as the AQF) is a unified system of national qualifications in schools, vocational education and training (VET)* and the higher education sector (mainly universities). The Framework links together all these qualifications and is a highly visible, quality-assured national system of educational recognition which promotes lifelong learning and a seamless and diverse education and training system. All higher education providers must be listed on the AQF Register of Recognised Institutions and Authorised Accreditation Authorities.

* Vocational education and training (VET): Vocational education and training provides skills and knowledge for work through a national system of public and private training providers. A wide range of qualifications are available, including certificates, diplomas and some graduate courses. A registered training organisation owned and operated by the state government is often called a TAFE (Technical and Further Education) institution. TAFE institutes are responsible for delivering the majority of publicly funded training.

AQF Qualifications by sector of accreditation

<i>School Sector</i>	<i>Vocational Education and Training (VET) Sector</i>	<i>Higher Education Sector</i>
		Doctoral Degree
		Master's Degree
	Vocational Graduate Diploma	Graduate Diploma
	Vocational Graduate Certificate	Graduate Certificate
		Bachelor Degree
	Advanced Diploma	Associate Degree Advanced Diploma
	Diploma	Diploma
Senior Secondary Certificate of Education	Certificate IV	
	Certificate III	
	Certificate II	
	Certificate I	

As for the details of the AQF, see III-2. Types of the current Australian higher education quality assurance frameworks.

Source: AQF website: <http://www.aqf.edu.au/aqfqual.htm>

AQF (2007), *Implementation Handbook 2007*, p.2: <http://www.aqf.edu.au/pdf/handbook07.pdf>

2-5. Recent developments

The current Australian Labour Government was elected in November 2007 on a broad platform that included an Education Revolution policy. This included a commitment to delivering high quality and accessible early childhood education, quality schooling, training and retraining the workforce, as well as world class higher education and research. The Federal Government has developed an agenda for reform which is designed to begin addressing the challenges facing higher education as part of the Education Revolution. Specifically, these improvements aim to improve productivity and social inclusion and increase access and affordability for students, improve student services, enhance the diversity and flexibility of the higher education sector, and address skills needs in a range of professions and industries.

The 2009-2010 Federal Budget included several initiatives as part of the Rudd Government's package of higher education reforms - *Transforming Australia's Higher Education System*. This package has ten key priority areas relating to higher education:

- **Real action for real participation - attainment, access and engagement**
This initiative involves transforming access to higher education through a major package designed to radically improve the participation of students from low socio-economic backgrounds in higher education and enhance their learning experience.
- **A growing higher education sector**
This will promote greater diversity and quality within the tertiary education sector by phasing in a new system to allocate funding on the basis of student demand, support to encourage more students to choose teaching and nursing and to study overseas, and support for the renewal of student services and amenities.
- **Sustainable tertiary education sector**
This initiative aims to provide funding certainty and create a more sustainable higher education sector through higher indexation of teaching and learning grants.
- **Sustainable investment for research**
In an effort to put an end to cross-subsidisation, there will be an increase in funding for the full cost of university research, and enabling universities to strive for research excellence in areas of strength.
- **Transforming Australia's tertiary education infrastructure**
This priority area commits to a massive upgrade of university and TAFE infrastructure to meet the teaching and learning requirements of students, teachers and researchers now and into the future.
- **A New era of quality in Australian tertiary education**
Under this initiative Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), a new national body for regulation and quality assurance, will be established and will provide the foundation for enhancements of quality and accreditation in higher education.
- **Income support for students**
These will represent landmark reforms to income support for students which will redirect

assistance so that it reaches the students most in need in order to boost their higher education participation and attainment.

- **A fair deal for regional Australia**

Under this priority, support for regional tertiary education provision will see a review of regional loading, encouragement to explore new models of delivery and access to new structural adjustment funding for the sector.

- **Improving tertiary pathways**

There will be stronger connectivity between the higher education sector and the vocational education and training sector.

- **A new relationship between the Federal Government and educators**

An underpinning principle for the Government's higher education reform agenda will see a relationship between Government and higher education providers built on respect, trust and agreed funding compacts.

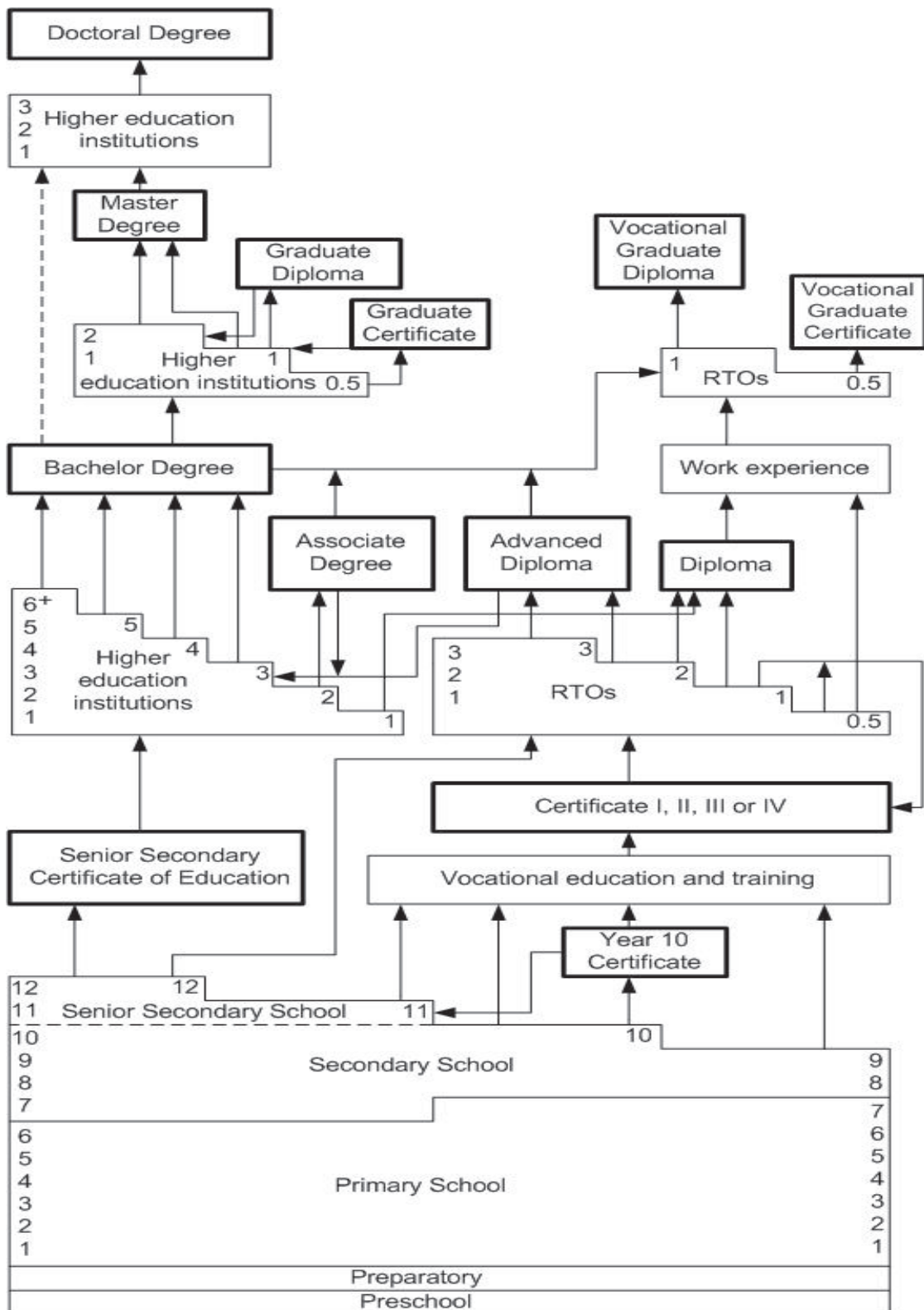
Source: AEI (2008), *Country Education Profiles Australia 2008*, p.2

Prime Minister of Australia, Australian Government website: <http://www.pm.gov.au/>

DEEWR (2009), Commonwealth of Australia Budget Papers 2009; Transforming Australia's Higher Education System:

<http://www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Pages/TransformingAustraliasHESystem.aspx>

3. Diagram of the Australian education system



RTOs stand for Registered Training Organizations.

Source: AEI (2008), *Country Education Profiles Australia 2008*, p.4

4. Admission requirements

Requirements for admission to all programmes are set out by individual universities.

Undergraduate admission

Undergraduate admission is usually based on a score, rank or index determined by the tertiary entrance system in a student's state or territory.

Associate Degree

Entry to the Associate Degree normally requires an Australian Year 12 Certificate, the Senior Secondary Certificate of Education, or equivalent with an appropriate tertiary entrance score or an appropriate vocational qualification (Certificate III or IV).

Bachelor Degree

Entry to a Bachelor Degree program is normally based on completion of secondary school (Year 12). Entry to specific programs is determined by a tertiary entrance score, rank or index. State and territory tertiary admissions centres coordinate admission. Students can use their tertiary entrance rank, score or index from their home state or territory to apply for admission elsewhere in Australia.

In some cases, entry may be based on additional requirements such as an interview, portfolio of work, prerequisite courses, and/or a demonstrated interest or aptitude for the study program.

Most institutions have different entry requirements for mature-age students (usually over 25 years). Such students may be admitted without completion of Year 12, on the basis of work experience in the area they wish to study, an entrance examination, or a demonstrated aptitude for study.

Admission to Bachelor Honours Degrees is on the basis of student results during the Bachelor Degree program.

Postgraduate admission

Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma

Entry is normally based on a Bachelor Degree. Exceptions may be made for those with appropriate work experience, depending on the institution and field of study.

Master's Degree

Entry requirements depend on the type of Master's Degree undertaken:

- Master's Degree by Coursework - entry is normally based on a Bachelor Degree, Bachelor Honours Degree or Graduate Diploma;
- Master's Degree by Research - entry is normally based on a Bachelor Honours Degree, Master preliminary year, a research-based Graduate Diploma or equivalent research experience. Master's program can also be a combination of coursework and research; and
- Professional Master's Degree - entry is normally based on a Bachelor Degree. Professional experience may also be required. Entry may also be based on articulation from a Graduate

Certificate or Graduate Diploma program.

Doctoral Degree

- Research Doctorate - entry is by a research or part-research Master's Degree or a Bachelor Honours Degree (First or Second Class, Upper Division).
- Professional Doctorate - entry is by a combined research and coursework Master's Degree, a Bachelor Honours Degree (First or Second Class, Upper Division) or equivalent.

Alternative pathways

Credit transfer

Credit transfer refers to the recognition of previous formal learning so that study does not have to be repeated. Credit transfer is available in both undergraduate and postgraduate programs, at the discretion of the institution. The ways in which credit may be awarded are complex, and depend on the formal study for which recognition is sought. Decisions about credit transfer are made separately from admission decisions, and students must have an offer of a course place before any formal consideration of credit occurs.

There are different processes which apply to seeking credit, including those for:

- study previously undertaken at the same Australian higher education institution;
- study previously undertaken at an Australian university with reciprocal credit arrangements;
- study previously undertaken with an institution (Australian or overseas) with which an Australian higher education institution has a partnership agreement that includes recognition of formal study for credit in certain programs of study; and
- study previously undertaken in courses for which there are some structured credit arrangements.

Cross sector qualification linkages

Most higher education institutions allow some credit transfer from vocational education and training (VET) sector accredited courses of Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), depending on the level of the VET course and its relevance to the proposed higher education studies. Australia also has a small number of dual-sector universities which offer both VET and higher education programs. Private higher education institutions may also be RTOs and structure their courses to allow for credit transfer across the sectors.

Source: AEI (2008), *Country Education Profiles Australia 2008*, p.12-14

5. Completion requirements and student assessment

5-1. Completion requirements

Bachelor Degree program requirements

The main stage of university education leads to the Bachelor Degree. Bachelor Degree program structures and requirements depend on the major subject area, the department and/or faculty and the institution concerned.

Programs usually include mandatory core subjects, specialisation subjects and elective subjects. Requirements vary between universities, and sometimes between faculties within universities. Some programs are described in terms of courses, normally between nine and twelve, which correspond to subjects requiring one year of study. Other universities use points or credits, but there is no uniformity: requirements may be based on 20 to 24 points, 68 to 72 points, 100 to 144 points, 240 points, 300 points or 1,080 points or credits for a Bachelor Degree.

Professional programs such as medicine normally have many compulsory core subjects, with few choices for specialisation or electives. In law, students have more opportunities for professional specialisation. In engineering, students specialise in a branch of engineering at an early stage in their undergraduate courses. Bachelor Degrees in commerce and business normally require completion of a range of core courses, with students having the option of specialising in a subject or subject area, particularly at third year level.

Bachelor Degrees in arts and science vary considerably in structure, but are generally more flexible. Universities normally require completion of at least one major specialisation which is studied over three years. Many students undertake two or even three majors over three or more years. Most universities have regulations concerning the minimum and maximum numbers of subjects to be completed at first-, second- and third-year levels.

Undergraduate study may involve lectures, tutorials, seminars, laboratory work, fieldwork or supervised practical work. The number of class contact hours per week varies according to the nature of the program of study.

Assessment usually involves examinations, performance in tutorials, seminars and laboratory work, completion of assignments, field or practical work, and individual or group research work. Bachelor Honours Degrees usually require a thesis.

Master's Degree program requirements

There are three types of Master's Degree programs: coursework, research and professional. Most Master's Degrees require two years of full-time study after a three-year Bachelor Degree or one year of full-time study after a Bachelor Honours Degree or four-year (or longer) Bachelor Degree.

A Master's Degree may be undertaken by coursework, project work and research in varying combinations. Coursework Master's Degrees are often structured in a three to four semester

articulation arrangement, with the Graduate Certificate (one semester), Graduate Diploma (a further semester) and Master's Degree (a further two semesters). Master's Degrees with a major coursework component often have a professional or vocational orientation, but some are academic in orientation.

The research Master's Degree program is at least two-thirds research with a substantial thesis, which is externally examined. It normally requires a minimum of one year of full-time study. The research Master's Degree often leads to a Doctoral program.

The professional Master's Degree program may involve a work-based project and coursework. Professional coursework Master's Degrees are often undertaken on a part-time basis.

Doctoral Degree program requirements

There are three types of Doctoral Degree programs: Research Doctorate, Professional Doctorate, and Higher Doctorate. A typical program requires three to four years of full-time study. Students are expected to make a substantial original contribution to knowledge in the form of new knowledge or significant and original adaptation, application and interpretation of existing knowledge.

Research Doctorates are by supervised research and an original thesis. The thesis is usually examined by two or three expert academics, at least two of which must be external.

Professional Doctorates require significant professional practice either prior to or as part of the program. Students undertake a program consisting of both coursework and research.

Some universities award Professional Doctorates for programs with an orientation towards advanced professional practice, typically in fields such as education (DEd), business administration (DBA), psychology (DPsych), and law where the degree is often a Doctor of Juridical Science (SJD) to distinguish it from the higher Doctor of Laws (LLD).

Most universities in Australia award Higher Doctorates such as the Doctor of Letters (DLitt), Doctor of Science (DSc), Doctor of Laws (LLD), Doctor of Medicine (MD). Regulations for the award vary between institutions, and in many universities the award is restricted to scholars with a substantial connection with the institution.

In most disciplines, Higher Doctorates are awarded on the basis of published or unpublished work considered constituting a significant original contribution to the field of study. However, Higher Doctorates may be awarded on the basis of a thesis, especially in medicine, dentistry and law. Few Higher Doctorates are awarded in Australia, with the Doctor of Medicine the most common.

Source: AEI (2008), *Country Education Profiles Australia 2008*, p.6-11

5-2. Student assessment

National tests

There are three national outcome assessment tests for Australian university students/graduates: *Graduate Skills Assessment (GSA)*, *Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ)*, and *Graduate Destination Survey (GDS)*. The development of all of these tests is initiated and sponsored by the Department of Education, Employment, and Workplace Relations (DEEWR).

Graduate Skills Assessment (GSA)

Graduate Skills Assessment test has been designed to assess generic skills of students when they begin at university and just before they graduate. In 1999, the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST), the former DEEWR, commissioned the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) to develop a new test to assess the skills of university graduate. The test was implemented in 2000. The four areas included in the test are critical thinking, problem solving, interpersonal understandings, and written communication.

Many universities have identified these skills as important and they are included in their graduate attributes or capabilities statements. The test consists of a multiple-choice test and two writing tasks. The multiple-choice test is two hours long and the writing test is sixty minutes long.

Universities may use the test to compare differences in student profiles between fields of study and are likely to be interested in changes between entry and exit points for students in different courses.

At entry level, universities may also use the test diagnostically to identify, for example, those who write poorly or have trouble dealing with text-based critical thinking items or quantitative problem solving items. Such students may be followed up and offered assistance. At exit level, results of the test may be used as an additional criterion for entry into post-graduate courses or as an indication of generic skills to an employer. Other uses of the test are possible and could evolve over time.

Graduate Skills Assessment (GSA), 2000-

Type of outcomes assessed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generic skills: Critical thinking, problem solving, written communication • Domain-specific knowledge and skills • Non-cognitive outcomes: Interpersonal understanding.
Initiator/sponsor of test development	DEEWR
Responsibility for test design and analysis	Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER)
Administration of assessment	Administered on HEI campus, supervised by faculty
Frequency of assessment	Twice a year, once for entry and once for exit examinations
Reporting of assessment results	Personalised reports for students, containing total score on each component and relative achievement compared to all other participants of the same year. HEIs receive data on individual student performance and aggregated institutional reports.
Target population	Students at entry level and students at graduation level
Focus of assessment	Institutions
Type of results yielded	General education results of entry-level students and graduation-level students
Use of assessment results	<p>HEIs: At entry level: identify poorly performing students to follow up and offer assistance.</p> <p>At graduation level: use results as an additional criterion for entry into graduate-level courses. Benchmark and analyse trends, document/demonstrate program effectiveness and improvement over time, compare students' achievement levels with national user norms, develop and improve curricula, determine student eligibility for upper-division studies.</p> <p>Government: Collect information on the quality of learning outcomes across HEIs for national and potentially international benchmarking of graduate skills.</p> <p>Employers: The Government promotes the test to employers and supports its use as a standard recruitment tool.</p>

The Graduate Destination Survey (GDS) and the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ)

The Graduate Destination Survey (GDS), with the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) is sent to all new Australian university graduates every year. The aim of GDS is to collect information about the activities of graduates after the completion of their degrees. The intention of CEQ is to gather data about graduates' perceptions of their higher education experience.

Every year, the GDS form is administered to all new university graduates about four months after they complete requirements for a degree. The form for bachelor degree graduates or coursework

postgraduates is coupled with the CEQ.

The survey is managed within each institution by a Survey Manager who is responsible for the administration of the survey and in most cases, the co-ordination of the distribution of the results and data.

The GDS has been conducted nationally every year since 1972 and the CEQ was added in 1993. The original aim of the GDS was to gather data to inform students about graduate labor market conditions and employment options and this remains a key focus of the survey.

The GDS form asks respondents about the course they have just completed, their labor market status, details of any employment they are in, and information about any further study being undertaken. The responses to these surveys provide valuable feedback to universities, and their staff and current students. They also provide information for prospective students to assist them in making informed course and career decisions, and careers advisers can integrate the survey results into their counselling practices.

Graduate Destination Survey (GDS), 1972-

Type of outcomes assessed	<p>Occupational competencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment outcomes approximately 4 months after graduation: availability for employment, sectors of employment, average annual salaries, graduates' job search activities • Further study activities, such as mode of study (full/part-time), levels of study, fields of education, and institution
Initiator/sponsor of test development	DEEWR
Responsibility for test design and analysis	Graduate Careers Council of Australia (GCCA), Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER), University of Melbourne's Information Technology Service (ITS)
Administration of assessment	Questionnaires are supplied by GCCA and sent out to students by HEIs
Frequency of assessment	Annually
Reporting of assessment results	Data for each HEI is reported to the DEEWR. HEIs receive institutional summary reports. Results are made public in a variety of aggregations and levels of detail by universities, GCCA, ACER and the government. A national file, national tables, a media release and GradStats (a four-page summary of results) are publicly available.
Target population	All graduates who completed requirements for any higher education qualification in the previous calendar year

Focus of assessment	Programs, institutions
Type of results yielded	Information on employment and further study
Use of assessment results	<p>HEIs: Benchmarking, trend analysis, evaluation of programmes, curriculum development and improvement to optimize labour market and further study outcomes. Provide national accountability data.</p> <p>Government: Ensure quality and performance management within HEIs. Inform student choice. Assess and plan for the needs of the HE sector. Since 2005, results from the GDS are used for performance-based incentive funding through the "Learning and Teaching Performance Fund (LTPF)". (LTPF has been discontinued. The 2009 LTPF, with final payments made in July 2009, is the final funding round of this system.)</p>

Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ), part of the Graduate Destination Survey, 1993-

Type of outcomes assessed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generic skills: Problem solving, analytic skills, written communication skills • Non-cognitive outcomes: Teamwork skills, student satisfaction with the following: teaching, goals and standards, workload, assessment • General competencies: Confidence in tackling unfamiliar situations, ability to plan work
Initiator/sponsor of test development	DEEWR
Responsibility for test design and analysis	Graduate Careers Council of Australia (GCCA); Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER)
Administration of assessment	Questionnaires are supplied by GCCA and sent out to students by HEIs
Frequency of assessment	Annually
Reporting of assessment results	Data for each HEI is reported to the DEEWR. HEIs receive institutional summary reports. Results are made public in a variety of aggregations and levels of detail by universities, GCA, ACER and the government. The press and a commercial publication ("The Good Universities Guide") draw on results to establish rankings for public consumption.
Target population	Graduates who completed requirements for any higher education qualification in the previous calendar year
Focus of assessment	Programs, institutions

Type of results yielded	Graduate satisfaction with teaching and learning. Self-reported gains in academic skills related to the HEI experience.
Use of assessment results	HEIs: Benchmarking, trend analysis, evaluation of programs, curriculum development and improvement. Provide national accountability data. Government: Ensure quality and performance management within HEIs. Inform student choice. Assess and plan for the needs of the HE sector. Since 2005, results from the CEQ are used for performance-based incentive funding through the national "Learning and Teaching Performance Fund (LTPF)". (LTPF has been discontinued. The 2009 LTPF, with final payments made in July 2009, is the final funding round of this system.)

Source: Graduate Careers Australia website: <http://www.graduatecareers.com.au/content/view/full/868>

Australian Council for Educational Research website: <http://www.acer.edu.au/gsa-uni/>

OECD (2008), ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A COMPARATIVE REVIEW OF SELECTED PRACTICES (OECD Education Working Paper No. 15):

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/13/25/40256023.pdf>

Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes

The Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO) conducted by the OECD/IMHE will potentially be the largest, most comprehensive assessment of higher education institutions yet devised. The aim is to measure various types of learning outcomes and to examine as wide a range as possible of criteria to assess their influence on those outcomes. The central emphasis of AHELO is on the improvement of teaching and learning and in providing tertiary education leaders with tools to empower them and foster positive change and enhanced learning.

But before that, a feasibility study of AHELO has been launched to determine how far such an assessment can be taken. Indeed, although there exist a number of methodologies to assess learning outcomes, they will need to be adapted to assess whether valid and reliable comparison can be made across diverse countries, languages and institutional types. The AHELO feasibility study is composed of four 'strands' of work: three assessments to measure generic skills, discipline-related skills in economics and in engineering, and a fourth research-based value-added strand.

Australian higher education and dual sector (HE and VET) institutions will participate in the engineering stream of the assessment of discipline specific skills. It is anticipated that Australia's involvement could also include the development of instruments to capture contextual measures of education quality in engineering disciplines at institutional level, e.g. the student experience, equipment and facilities and teaching contact.

In 2009, DEEWR will be seeking to secure commitments from institutions to participate in the project actively by providing suitable samples of students for testing, administering the test, ensuring data security and transmission, and providing contextual information where necessary.

Source: *AHELO Update, December Higher Education Newsletter (material provided by DEEWR on request)*

OECD, AHELO Newsletter, No. 1, July 2009: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/0/34/43307671.pdf>

OECD, IMHE INFO, July 2009: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/58/11/43177175.pdf>

6. Responsible authorities

There are two levels of government relating to Australian higher education: state and territory governments and the Federal Government. State and territory governments have major legislative responsibilities in terms of governance issues, and Federal Government has significant financial and policy responsibility. Higher education policies and programs are administered by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR).

Federal Government departments

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR)

<http://www.deewr.gov.au>

The Department covers the Australian Federal Government's contribution to early childhood, school education, vocational education and training, and training services, higher education, indigenous Australian Education, and international education.

Federal Government responsibilities for higher education are to provide the bulk of public funding to universities, to ensure providers meet quality and accountability requirements, including financial viability requirements, quality requirements, fairness requirements, compliance requirements, and contribution and fee requirements. These apply to Australian universities, overseas universities operating in Australia and other higher education providers that receive Federal Government funding under the Higher Education Support Act 2003.

Australian Education International (AEI) <http://aei.gov.au/Aei/Default.aspx>

The AEI is part of DEEWR. Its role is to integrate the development of international government relations with support for the international activities of Australia's education community. The Australian Federal Government, through AEI, also has responsibility for consumer protection for international students.

Source: *AEI (2008), Country Education Profiles Australia 2008, p.66*

Australian Research Council (ARC) <http://www.arc.gov.au>

The ARC is a statutory authority within the Australian Federal Government's Innovation, Industry, Science and Research (IISR) portfolio. Its mission is to deliver policy and programs that advance Australian research and innovation globally and benefit the community.

Source: *Australian Research Council website: <http://www.arc.gov.au/>*

State and territory governments' education departments

New South Wales

NSW Department of Education and Training

<https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/communityed/higheredu/>

Victoria

Department of Education and Early Childhood Department <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/>

Queensland

Department of Education, Training and the Arts <http://education.qld.gov.au/>

Western Australia

Department of Education Services <http://www.des.wa.gov.au/pages/index.php>

South Australia

Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology

<http://www.dfeest.sa.gov.au/>

Tasmania

Tasmanian Qualifications Authority <http://www.tqa.tas.gov.au/>

Northern Territory

Department of Education and Training <http://www.det.nt.gov.au/>

Australian Capital Territory

Department of Education and Training <http://www.det.act.gov.au/>

Source: AEI (2008), *Country Education Profiles Australia 2008*, p.90-97

As areas of responsibility in education traditionally differ between the Federal Government and state and territory governments, however, recent years have seen some inter-governmental works relating to higher education. These bilateral relations are represented in the establishment of MCEETYA (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs) in June 1993 (MCEETYA is now MCEECDYA: Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs from 1 July 2009 following agreement of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to a realignment of the roles and responsibilities of MCEETYA).

The primary responsibility of MCEETYA is to consult between the Federal Government and state and territory governments at Ministerial level regarding pre-primary education, primary and secondary education, vocational education and training, higher education, employment, and linkages between employment/labour market programs and education and training, adult and community education, youth policy programs and cross-sectoral matters. MCEETYA has also involved in the introduction of AQF in 1995 and the establishment National Protocols in 2000.

As for AQF and the National Protocols, see III-2. Types of the current Australian higher education quality assurance frameworks.

Source: MCEECDYA website: <http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/mceecdya/>

7. Other higher education related bodies

Curriculum Corporation <http://www.curriculum.edu.au>

Curriculum Corporation is a partnership of all Australian Education Ministers. It undertakes activities that are in the national interest and that support and augment the work of the states and territories in providing educational experiences for all students. The Curriculum Corporation team of curriculum development, e-learning, assessment and publishing specialists provides services and creates resources for all learning needs. Its curriculum products and services are dedicated to improving student learning and meeting the needs of the key stakeholders in education.

Australian Qualifications Framework Council (AQFC) <http://www.aqf.edu.au/>

The AQF Council is responsible for the provision of Education and Training Ministers with strategic and authoritative advice on the AQF to ensure it is nationally and internationally robust and supports flexible cross-sectoral linkages and pathways.

Universities Australia (formerly the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee)

<http://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/>

Universities Australia is the industry peak body representing the university sector. Universities Australia represents 38 of Australia's universities in the public interest, both nationally and internationally.

Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) <http://www.auqa.edu.au/>

AUQA is established to be the principal national quality assurance agency in higher education, with responsibility for quality audits of higher education institutions and accreditation authorities, reporting on performance and outcomes, assisting in quality enhancement, advising on quality assurance, and liaising internationally with quality agencies in other jurisdictions, for the benefit of Australian higher education.

8. Student organizations

All Australian universities have student unions, also known as student associations or student guilds. The range of activities undertaken by student unions differs between universities but generally includes representation and advocacy, sport and physical recreation, clubs and societies, childcare, counselling, legal services, housing services, employment services, student newspapers/media, personal accident insurance, support for overseas students and so on.

There are three main national student bodies in Australia:

- The National Union of Students: <http://www.unistudent.com.au>
- The National Liaison Committee for International Students in Australia:
<http://www.nlc.edu.au>
- The Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations: <http://www.capa.edu.au>

Source: *DEEWR comment on request*

9. Tuition fees and financial support for students

9-1. Student tuition-fee system

Higher education students in Australia are subject to a range of fees and charges. There are several funding options available to students. Australian students can undertake higher education studies at an approved Australian higher education provider as either a Commonwealth-supported student or a fee-paying student. Both of these options require students to pay for their education, but the amount differs significantly. Public universities can provide subsidized places (Commonwealth-supported places) and fee-paying places, and private universities and approved private providers generally have only fee-paying places (a few also offer Commonwealth-supported places in areas of 'National Priority' - mostly education and nursing). Universities must fill their Commonwealth-supported places before offering fee-paying places to domestic students.

The Federal Government intends to phase out domestic fee-paying undergraduate places at public universities from 2009. The Budget 2008-09 provided 180 million USD for up to 11,000 new Commonwealth-supported places to replace full fee-paying places for undergraduate students. This will ensure students gain access to higher education on merit and not on their ability to pay. Fee-paying students who begin their courses before then will be able to continue on a fee-paying basis.

Types of student places

Types of places	
Commonwealth-supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subsidized by the Federal Government • Students contribute to the cost of the course ('student contribution') unless the provider sets a zero contribution • Federal Government sets maximum amount providers can charge • Eligible students have access to a HECS-HELP loan or a 20% discount if they choose to pay some (approx. 360 USD or more) or all of their student contribution up-front • Mainly in undergraduate degrees
Fee-paying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not subsidized by the Federal Government • Students pay cost of the course set by the provider • Federal Government sets minimum amounts for tuition fees but no maximum • Eligible students have access to a FEE-HELP loan for their tuition fees • Most postgraduate courses are fee-paying (except research degrees)

Cost of the course ('student contribution') for 2008 of full-time study

Student contribution band	2008 ranges
Band 3 (law, dentistry, medicine, veterinary science, accounting, administration, economics, commerce)	0 - 6,118 USD
Band 2 (agriculture, science, statistics, mathematics, computing, built environment, engineering, surveying, allied health, other health)	0 - 5,226 USD
Band 1 (humanities, social studies, behavioural science, foreign languages, clinical psychology, visual and performing arts)	0 - 3,668 USD
National Priorities (education, nursing)	0 - 2,935 USD

9-2. Student loan programmes

Higher Education Loan Program (HELP)

HELP gives eligible students access to a loan from the Australian Federal Government to pay their student contribution or tuition fee. There are two types of loan program provided by the Government.

HECS-HELP - for Commonwealth-supported students

The student contribution can be paid directly to the higher education institution or an eligible student can take out a HECS-HELP loan. Students with a HECS-HELP loan incur HELP debt and are not required to repay their loan until their personal income exceeds the minimum threshold for compulsory repayment. After exceeding the personal income threshold, the loan is repaid gradually through the taxation system.

FEE-HELP - for fee-paying students

FEE-HELP is a loan program to assist students studying in a domestic fee-paying place. Australian citizens and permanent humanitarian visa holders may be eligible for FEE-HELP assistance. Students are only required to begin repaying their loan when their income reaches the minimum repayment threshold.

The Federal Government has several other programs which provide financial assistance to students. These include:

- Research Training Scheme - for eligible students undertaking research-based Master's and Doctoral Degrees;
- Australian Postgraduate Awards - for eligible students undertaking research-based Master's and Doctoral Degrees;
- Commonwealth Learning Scholarships - for eligible students from low socio-economic

backgrounds to assist with either educational costs or accommodation costs.

Source: AEI (2008), *Country Education Profiles Australia 2008*, p.19-20

going to uni website: <http://www.goingtouni.gov.au/>

DEEWR (2008), *Higher Education Newsletter Issue 02, May 2008*, p.2

10. Legislation

- **National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes** (Approved in 2000, revised in 2007)

These Protocols are an agreement between the Federal and state and territory governments, which establish a common standard and process for the recognition of SAIs (universities and colleges), NSAIs (TAFEs and private colleges etc.), and overseas universities wishing to operate across Australia.

- **Higher Education Support Act 2003**

An Act relating to the funding of higher education and for other purposes

- **University establishment Acts and higher education Acts in each state and territory**

Each State and Territory has legislation to establish universities and regulate their name.

Source: IAU, *World Higher Education Database (WHED)*, Australia – Education system:

<http://www.unesco.org/iau/online/databases/index.html>

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III. The quality assurance system

1. History of Australian higher education quality assurance system

Since the late 1970's the Australian Federal Government has encouraged universities to critically monitor their own performance. Throughout the 1980's this focus has been sharpened to include the improvement of efficiency and effectiveness, and an increased awareness of public accountability.

The Federal Government funded major discipline reviews during the mid 1980's to determine standards and to improve quality and efficiency in universities. While the reviews revealed the importance of quality assurance within institutions and across the sector, there was no way to ensure that institutions acted upon review recommendations.

The Federal Government was concerned to maintain and further enhance the quality of Australian higher education during a time of large-scale structural reorganisation in the late 1980's and rapid growth in higher education participation from the early 1990's.

In 1991 the Federal Government moved from the discipline review approach to a whole of institution approach to quality assurance. It announced a comprehensive set of measures to enhance the quality of higher education teaching and research. Those universities able to demonstrate a high level of quality assurance in the context of their missions and goals were provided with extra funding.

The Federal Government established the Committee for Quality Assurance in Higher Education in 1992 to provide advice on quality assurance issues, conduct independent audits of institutional quality assurance policies and procedures and, make recommendations about the allocation of annual quality-related funds.

The Committee conducted three rounds of independent whole of institution audits from 1993 to 1995. The voluntary self-assessment undertaken by institutions under this program triggered considerable change at the institutional level as gaps were identified and outcomes measured.

Since 1998, all publicly funded institutions have been required to submit an Institutional Quality Assurance and Improvement Plan to the Federal Government as part of the educational profiles process. This annual process includes institutions providing a number of documents and plans to the Government and visits to universities may be arranged, in some cases, to obtain further information.

The plans outline the university's goals and aims in the key areas of teaching and learning, research, management and community service. Each institution is required to provide detail of the strategies that have been adopted to achieve their goals and the performance indicators used to assess their success.

The plans are expected to include the outcomes data from two national surveys; the Course

Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) that assess graduate perceptions of the teaching they received at university, and the Graduate Destination Survey (GDS) that assesses the employment success of recent graduates.

The plans have enabled the Federal Government to report to the wider community on the quality and quality assurance processes of Australian universities. More importantly they are a means of public accountability in the area of quality assurance for Australia's publicly funded universities, and enable students to make more informed choices about the institution that best suits their particular needs.

In 1995, the Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) endorsed the establishment of Australian Qualifications Framework: AQF which works as national registers of Australian higher education providers and award descriptions.

In March 2000, MCEETYA endorsed two new initiatives to enhance and strengthen the quality assurance framework for higher education in Australia:

- An independent audit body, the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA); and
- The National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes.

The present quality assurance framework for higher education in Australia encompasses the roles of universities, the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), state and territory governments, the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) and the Federal Government.

Universities, as autonomous bodies, are responsible for their own academic standards; AQF works as national registers of Australian higher education providers and award descriptions; state and territory governments carry out accreditations based on the National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes; AUQA, as an independent audit body, is in charge of quality audit of universities; the Australian Federal Government is responsible for making policy and funding.

Source: DEEWR website: <http://www.dest.gov.au/>

2. Types of the current Australian higher education quality assurance frameworks

	Types of arrangements	Responsible bodies
1	Qualifications framework: <i>the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)</i>	Australian Qualifications Framework Council (AQFC)
2	Accreditation and approval based on <i>the National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes</i>	State and territory governments
3	Institutional self-regulation	Universities and other higher education institutions
4	External monitoring	State and territory, and the Federal Government
5	Independent quality audit	Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA)
6	Quality assurance for international education	State and territory, and the Federal Government

2-1. Qualifications framework

The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)

AQF is key national policy mechanism bringing together all Australia's post-compulsory qualifications into one comprehensive framework. It was introduced in 1995 and fully implemented by the end of 1999, replacing earlier qualifications frameworks. The single framework includes all national qualifications in senior secondary school (general education; prepares students for work, VET, higher education), vocational education and training (industry competency standards; applying skills for work), and higher education (academic study for professions). One of the most important features of AQF is linkages between three sectors (school sector, VET sector, and the higher education sector).

The rapid development of the higher education sector in the late 1960s emphasised differences between the different states and territories and necessitated some standardisation of programs and award nomenclature.

The Australian Council on Awards in Advanced Education (ACAAE) was formally established in December 1971, with several key functions such as promoting consistency of nomenclature in the advanced education sector, establishing consistent relationships between programs and awards, maintaining a national register of awards, and promoting understanding and appreciation of the award system in Australia and overseas. The ACAAE was the national registration authority and the registration represented the final step in the approval/accreditation process.

In January 1985, the Australian Council on Tertiary Awards (ACTA) replaced the ACAAE. Its functions were similar, but the award structure and nomenclature differed, particularly with the introduction in 1987 of a national award system in the Technical and Further Education (TAFE)

sector. Previously, individual states and territories had their own award systems for their technical schools and TAFE colleges, and similar nomenclature had different meanings in different states and territories.

Under ACTA, the nomenclature of TAFE awards was tied to a system of program classification by stream as described in Register of Australian Tertiary Education (RATE). RATE was established in 1990 by the Australian Education Council of the Ministers responsible for education in the Australian, state and territory governments. RATE took over ACTA's functions in providing a framework, but did not register awards as ACTA and ACAAE had done. RATE award nomenclature was similar to that of ACTA, and continued the classification of TAFE programs by stream. The RATE system was phased out from 1995 and replaced by the Australian Qualifications Framework.

AQF is managed and maintained by the AQF Council. The Council, established on 1 May 2008, is a committee of Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA). Its roles are to provide policy advice to MCEETYA, continuously improve AQF, and promote, monitor, maintain AQF, and support users. AQF Council comprises a Chair, 9 members of experts from higher education, VET, senior secondary schools, industry, and the Federal Government sector, and a New Zealand observer.

Legal basis for AQF is responsibility of state and territory governments through their legislation (similar in each). All AQF qualifications must be accredited by government authorised accrediting authority. Only government accredited providers can deliver and assess AQF qualifications. Providers must meet minimum standards to be accredited and to retain accreditation. Accrediting authorities monitor providers to ensure quality of qualifications issued. All government accredited providers and qualifications they are approved to deliver are listed in the AQF Register. The Register, which is available on AQF website, facilitates verification of all qualifications accredited by government (including the self-accrediting institutions).

AQF features comprehensive guidelines for each qualification which define the qualification and its relationship with other qualifications. Each qualification descriptor includes:

- Characteristics of its learning outcomes;
- Pathways into, through and from qualification; and
- Responsibilities for its standards, assessment, issuance and certification.

Contents of AQF Guidelines for each qualification

Purpose	The aim of the Guideline
Context	Why the Guideline is necessary
Learning outcomes:	
Authority	The ultimate determinants of the qualification
Characteristics	A descriptor of learning outcomes or competencies to be achieved for the particular qualification
Distinguishing features	The features that distinguish adjacent qualifications
Responsibility for assessment	Who is ultimately responsible for assessment
Pathways to qualification	How the qualification can be achieved
Authority to issue qualification	Who issues the qualification
Certification issued	When the qualification is issued and what is issued

Characteristics of learning outcomes (examples)

Associate Degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The acquisition of the foundational underpinnings of one or more disciplines, including understanding and interpretation of key concepts and theories and how they are evolving within the relevant scientific, technical, social and cultural contexts • Development of the academic skills and attributes necessary to access, comprehend and evaluate information from a range of sources • Development of generic employment related skills relevant to a range of employment contexts • A capacity for self-directed and lifelong learning
Bachelor Degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The acquisition of a systematic and coherent body of knowledge, the underlying principles and concepts, and the associated communication and problem-solving skills • Development of the academic skills and attributes necessary to undertake research, comprehend and evaluate new information, concepts and evidence from a range of sources • Development of the ability to review, consolidate, extend and apply the knowledge and techniques learnt, including in a professional context • A foundation for self-directed and lifelong learning • Interpersonal and teamwork skills appropriate to employment and/or further study <p>A course leading to this qualification also usually involves major studies in which significant literature is available. Course content is taken to a significant depth and progressively developed to a high level which provides a basis for postgraduate study and professional careers.</p>

Graduate Certificate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Characteristics of learning outcomes at this level cover a wide range of specialized needs following an undergraduate program or relevant prior work, ranging from initial and ongoing professional development to preparation for further postgraduate study. • The learning outcomes reflect a standard appropriate to advanced study and primarily include the acquisition and application of knowledge and skills in a new discipline or professional area, which may also involve extending knowledge and skills gained in an undergraduate program or relevant prior work.
Graduate Diploma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The acquisition and critical application of knowledge and skills in a new discipline or professional area, which may also involve extending knowledge and skills already gained in an undergraduate program or relevant prior work. • Further specialization within a systematic and coherent body of knowledge
Master's Degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mastery or overview of the relevant field of study or area of professional practice and the emphasis may range from the acquisition or enhancement of specific professional or vocational skills and knowledge, usually undertaken in a combination of coursework and research, through to the acquisition of in-depth understanding in a specific area of knowledge which is usually undertaken through research. • Provide appropriate evidence of advanced knowledge about a specialist body of theoretical and applied topics • Demonstrate a high order of skill in analysis, critical evaluation and/or professional application through the planning and execution of project work or a piece of scholarship or research • Demonstrate creativity and flexibility in the application of knowledge and skills to new situations, to solve complex problems and to think rigorously and independently
Doctoral Degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A substantial original contribution to knowledge in the form of new knowledge or significant and original adaptation, application and interpretation of existing knowledge • A comprehensive and searching review of the literature, experimentation, creative work with exegesis or other systematic approach or an advanced, searching and expansive critical reflection on professional theory and practice • Undertake an original research project, or a project(s) addressing a matter of substance concerning practice in a profession at a high level of originality and quality • Presentation of a substantial and well-ordered dissertation, non-print thesis or portfolio, for submission to external examination against international standards

Source: AQF (2007), *Implementation Handbook 2007*, p.9-10: <http://www.aqf.edu.au/pdf/handbook07.pdf>

Besides the description and management of the qualifications, AQF links together qualifications in each sector to enable learners to move from one qualification to another as they develop their careers, enable workers to enter qualifications based on experience, and provide choice of qualifications for learners. Some examples of pathways are shown below:

- School to VET or higher education
- School to entry level job, entry level job to VET or higher education
- VET to career, career to higher education
- Career change to VET or higher education

Recent issues of Australian higher education qualifications

The Minister for Education, the Honourable Julia Gillard MP, announced on 4 September 2008 that an *Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement* will be introduced to ensure that Australian qualifications are recognised and renowned throughout the world. The Graduation Statement will describe a higher education qualification in an easily understandable way, relating it to the system within which it was issued and describing qualifications in a clear and consistent way to potential employers and other higher education institutions. The Graduation Statement will be presented to graduates at participating universities, in addition to degree certificates and academic transcripts, based on nationally agreed specifications.

Australians need high-level knowledge and skills to make Australia a more productive and prosperous nation in an increasingly competitive and complex international environment. Graduation Statements have the potential to make Australian awards better understood internationally, enhancing the international mobility of Australian graduates and Australia's competitiveness in the international higher education market.

The Australian Government has committed 2.7 million USD to assist publicly funded universities in implementing the Graduation Statement over the next three years. Australian universities are invited to apply for grants of 71,990 USD to assist in the implementation of the Graduation Statement.

The Graduation Statement is part of Australia's response to the Bologna Process in Europe and the result of extensive consultations with the university sector. The Bologna Process involves forty-six European countries undertaking a series of reforms in order to achieve greater consistency and portability across their higher education systems. The prospect of greater mobility for students and broader recognition of qualifications across Europe may have significant implications for Australia in relation to both domestic and international students.

Source: DEEWR website, Media Release 04 Sep, 2008, The Hon Julia Gillard MP:

http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Releases/Pages/Article_081009_120106.aspx

DEEWR website: http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/international_education/default2.htm

2-2. Accreditation and approval

The National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes

The National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes are a key element of the national quality assurance framework for Australian higher education. These Protocols are an agreement between the Federal and state and territory governments, and they establish a common standard and process for the recognition of SAIs (universities and colleges), NSAI (TAFEs and private colleges etc.), and overseas universities wishing to operate across Australia. They protect the standing of Australian higher education nationally and internationally by assuring students and the community that higher education institutions in Australia have met identified criteria and are subject to appropriate government regulation.

As a system of initial recognition, state and territory governments assess application for approval of establishment of self-accrediting institutions (SAI), registration of non-self-accrediting institutions (NSAI) and accreditation of their courses against National Protocols. Applications from all institutions seeking to operate in Australia will be assessed using the criteria and processes set out in these Protocols. The consistent standards set out in the National Protocols are expected to apply to all higher education functions of an institution, regardless of whether its higher education students are located in Australia or offshore and regardless of the delivery mode of its higher education courses.

The National Protocols also protect the use of the word ‘university’ in business and company names, with the states and territories responsible for business names and the Federal Government for company names.

Before the development of National Protocols in 2000, there were no nationally agreed protocols of common principles underpinning the management of these functions while there were many similarities in how states and territories manage the recognition of universities and the accreditation of courses offered by non-self-accrediting institutions.

In 1995, MCEETYA agreed to implement a common protocol for the accreditation of higher education courses to be offered simultaneously in two or more states or territories. This protocol was elaborated in operational guidelines for the use of state and territory officials in 1999, and has been used successfully since its adoption to process a number of applications.

National Protocols, which were originally agreed by the Federal and state and territory governments in 2000, were revised and approved in July 2007. The revised National Protocols include a number of new provisions, which will allow more diverse types of higher education institutions to develop in Australia, including specialist universities, self-accrediting institutions other than universities, university colleges, and overseas institutions. The revised National Protocols will apply to both new and existing institutions and compliance will be regularly assessed through the standard quality assurance processes including external quality audits.

It has been agreed that the National Protocols will next be reviewed no later than 2012.

Five protocols in the National Protocols

Protocols	Contents	Target institutions
Protocol A	Nationally agreed criteria and approval processes for all higher education institutions	All higher education institutions
Protocol B	Criteria and processes for the registration of NSAIs and the accreditation of their higher education course/s	NSAIs
Protocol C	Criteria and processes for awarding self-accrediting authority to higher education institutions other than universities	SAIs (non-universities)
Protocol D	Criteria and processes for establishing Australian universities	SAIs (universities)
Protocol E	Criteria and processes for overseas higher education institutions seeking to operate in Australia	Overseas higher education institutions

Source: DEEWR (2008), *Review of Australian Higher Education Discussion Paper June 2008*, p.71

DEEWR website: <http://www.dest.gov.au/default.htm>

MCEETYA (2007), *National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes*:

http://www.mceetya.edu.au/verve/_resources/NationalProtocolsOct2007_Complete.pdf

Overview of approval process for an Australian university

1. Application prepared and submitted with fees
2. Preliminary review undertaken
3. Applicant advised of and comments on proposed assessment panel
4. Assessment panel appointed
5. Assessment panel deliberations (site-visits and interviews with stakeholders)
6. Panel prepares report
7. Applicant comments on report
8. Report and comments forwarded to decision-maker
9. Decision made by responsible decision-maker (decision includes 'approved', 'approved with conditions', and 'not approved'. In the latter two cases, applicants can appeal regarding the decision.)

Source: MCEETYA (2007), *Guidelines for establishing Australian universities (relating to National Protocols A and*

D), P.5: http://www.mceetya.edu.au/verve/_resources/NationalGuidelinesOct2007_AandD.pdf

2-3. Institutional self-regulation

Universities and other self-accrediting institutions are responsible for their own academic standards and quality assurance processes and have adopted a variety of ways to monitor and review the quality of their courses, involving formal internal processes and external review.

The National Protocols require non-self-accrediting institutions to have academic governance and quality assurance arrangements that focus on continuous improvement to teaching and learning and quality outcomes for students, and academic standards comparable with Australian universities.

Source: DEEWR (2008), *Review of Australian Higher Education Discussion Paper June 2008*, p.71

2-4. External monitoring

Most universities are required to provide state and territory governments with audited annual financial reports and operational reports and are also subject to audit by state and territory auditors-general as part of their regular audits of public sector bodies (in addition to quality audit by AUQA, institutions have to go through these audits focusing on their financial situations.) Universities also provide annual financial reports to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) to discharge their obligation to report on overall financial viability and expenditure of funds received under the Higher Education Support Act 2003.

Universities are also required to participate in DEEWR statistical collections and annual Graduate Destination and Course Experience Questionnaire Surveys of students and graduates. The Federal Government uses performance indicators derived from these surveys and the departmental statistical collection for its Institution Assessment Framework, which produces an across-the-board assessment of institutional achievements based on quantitative and qualitative data from universities and external sources and forms the basis of strategic bilateral discussions between DEEWR and individual institutions, generally every two years.

Non-self-accrediting institutions are required to provide annual reports in most jurisdictions to the relevant state and territory accrediting authority. Some states and territories use these as a basis for formal risk assessments of institutions and targeted monitoring of compliance with approval conditions.

Source: DEEWR (2008), *Review of Australian Higher Education Discussion Paper June 2008*, p.71-72

2-5. Independent quality audit

Australian Universities Quality Agency

One of the major components of Australia's quality assurance system is an independent audit of higher education institutions and accreditation agencies to check that procedures are in place to assure the quality of higher education in Australia. Audits are currently carried out by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA).

AUQA was established in 2000 by MCEETYA as an independent not-for-profit body. AUQA receives about 50 % of its operational funding from the Federal Government, the other half from the state and territory governments. Auditees also pay a fee to AUQA associated with their audits.

AUQA is responsible for providing public assurance of the quality of Australian universities and other self-accrediting higher education institutions by auditing these institutions in Australia and offshore on an approximately five-year rolling cycle, and assisting in enhancing their academic quality. AUQA also audits the activities of state and territory higher education accreditation authorities and their compliance with the National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes.

After the trial audit in 2001, AUQA carried out the first cycle of audit (2002-2007) for self-accrediting institutions and accrediting agencies. Audits for non-self-accrediting institutions began in 2006.

For the first cycle of audits, audits of SAIs were whole-of-institution audits based on a self-assessment and a site-visit. AUQA investigated the extent to which the institutions are achieving their missions and objectives. Audits assessed the adequacy of the institution's quality assurance arrangements in the key areas of teaching and learning, research and management, including the institution's overseas activities. They also assessed the institution's success in maintaining standards consistent with university education in Australia.

AUQA uses as its primary starting point for audit each institution's own objectives and does not impose an externally set of standards upon auditees. Audits endeavour to minimise the additional workload for universities and pays particular attention to supporting the diversity of the higher education sector.

AUQA made use of panels of experts with substantial senior academic and administrative experience in higher education (in Australia and abroad) to undertake the audits. AUQA maintains a Register of Auditors who have been selected and trained by AUQA to serve on audit panels (Honorary Auditors). In 2008, approximately 130 people are registered as Honorary Auditors. Audit panel members are selected from AUQA's Register of Auditors keeping in mind the scope of the audit. A typical audit panel includes two members from within Australian universities or other SAIs, an Australian member with high-level experience and understanding of planning and quality assurance in industry and commerce, an overseas member (usually from within a university), and an AUQA academic staff member.

From 2008, it is conducting a second cycle of audits of SAIs, involving some changes to the scope and nature of the audits. One of the most distinctive characteristics of cycle two audits is that the audits will more explicitly address performance, standards and outcomes of the activities of institutions. More attention will be paid to auditees' benchmarking activities and their effect on standards and outcomes. AUQA will investigate how institution's academic standards are determined, applied, maintained, monitored and met. Clearer evidence of the relation between institutional quality assurance processes and outcomes will also be sought.

AUQA states as its policy avoidance of ranking systems in both cycle one and cycle two audits.

Audit schedule (2001-2010) (Unit: Institution)

year	SAIs		accreditation authorities	NSAIs
	universities	non-universities		
2010	4	0	9	17
2009	10	0	0	12
2008	9	0	0	4
2007	1	1	2	3
2006	7	1	1	1
2005	7	1	2	0
2004	8	0	1	0
2003	8	0	2	0
2002	8	1	1	0
2001 (trial audits)	2	0	1	0

Fees for audits of universities (2008)

Audit visit length	3 days	4 days	5 days
Fee (tax included)	58,600 USD	63,000 USD	67,310 USD

Audit scope

Audits encompass the auditee's quality assurance arrangements. AUQA pays particular attention to the academic activities carried out in the institution's name. The indicative scope of the audit includes:

- organisational leadership and governance; planning
- teaching and learning (all modes); processes for program approval and monitoring; comparability of academic standards in onshore and offshore programs
- research activities and outputs, including commercialisation
- community service activities
- internationalisation, including contracts with overseas partners
- support mechanisms for staff and students
- communication with internal and external stakeholders

- systematic internally initiated reviews, including the rigour and effectiveness of the review mechanisms employed
- administrative support and infrastructure

Audit process

Processes	
1. Self-review	Auditees prepare and submit a report of self-review (Performance Portfolio). Performance Portfolio outlines the auditee's quality system and an appreciation of its effectiveness with evidence.
2. Portfolio Meeting	Audit panel meet to discuss the Portfolio (Portfolio Meeting), followed by a request for any additional documentation required by the panel.
3. Preparatory visit	Visits to other sites where the auditee operates such as visits to offshore campuses occur here.
4. Site visit (main audit visit)	The length of audit visit varies, depending on the size and complexity of the auditee, from 2 to 5 days in the case of audits of universities.
5. Preparation and finalisation of audit report	Audit reports contain a summary of findings and more detailed comments in the body of the report. They all include commendations, affirmations and recommendations. For cycle two audits for SAIs, the audit report may specify that a complete or focused audit should be carried out sooner than the next cyclic date, for example to follow up an urgent recommendation. All AUQA audit reports are publicly available and published on the AUQA website.
6. Follow-up	Each auditee is required to provide a progress report against the recommendations and affirmations in the audit report, showing the action that has been taken in response approx. 18 to 24 months (in the first cycle) after publication of the audit report. The progress report must be made publicly available on the auditee's own website.

Action taken in response to audit reports is the responsibility of the governing body of the institution concerned or in the case of state and territory accreditation authorities, of the relevant Department and Minister. Failure to respond appropriately to reports could lead to funding sanctions by the Federal Government or regulatory action by the relevant state or territory government. The Commonwealth minister can require a higher education provider to comply with a recommendation by AUQA as part of the quality requirements of the Higher Education Support Act 2003.

Other quality improvement activities

- Compiling and publishing information on concepts and practices in quality assurance in higher education
- Identifying, recording, codifying and disseminating good practice in higher education through the AUQA Good Practice Database
- Providing advice and consultation
- Conducting and commissioning research into quality and standards and their achievement
- Identifying and investigating issues of current or likely national concern in relation to quality and standards
- Leading the organisation of the annual Australian Universities Quality Forum
- Running seminars and workshops
- Publishing papers and articles
- Making submissions to government and other agencies

Relations with other organisations

In carrying out its work, AUQA has developed and maintains links with an extensive network of national and international agencies and institutions. Within Australia these include: the Australian universities; other higher education institutions and accrediting agencies; and other bodies such as MCEETYA, DEEWR, state and territory government departments, Universities Australia, AQFC.

Major points of contact outside Australia include OECD/IMHE and UNESCO. AUQA is a full member of INQAAHE and is an active participant in the Network's activities. AUQA served as the secretariat for the Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN), a group of quality assurance agencies in the Asia-Pacific region until 2009.

For more information on AUQA and its activities, visit AUQA website: <http://www.auqa.edu.au/>

Source: DEEWR (2008), *Review of Australian Higher Education Discussion Paper June 2008*, p.72-73

AUQA website: <http://www.auqa.edu.au/qualityaudit/auditschedule/>

AUQA (2008), *Audit Manual version 5.0:*

http://www.auqa.edu.au/qualityaudit/auditmanuals/auditmanual_v5/audit_manual_v5.pdf

2-6. Quality assurance for international education

Education Services for Overseas Students

The Australian Federal Government has a number of regulation processes to ensure that overseas students receive a quality education and training experience. These processes are in addition to the quality assurance measures which apply within Australia.

The Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (ESOS Act) of the Commonwealth of Australia regulates all Australian education and training providers that enroll overseas students studying in Australia. It requires that a provider must be registered on the Commonwealth [Australian] Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS). CRICOS lists all institutions authorised to offer both higher education and VET courses for overseas students in Australia, and all courses approved for overseas students in Australia. In order to be listed on CRICOS, an institution must be registered by the state and territory registration authorities, who ensure that quality assurance standards are met, institutions comply with tuition and financial assurance requirements, and institutions monitor the compliance of overseas students with the conditions of their visas.

CRICOS and the ESOS Act are administered by DEEWR to ensure that overseas students studying in Australia receive high-quality education and training and receive the services for which they have paid.

Source: AEI (2008), *Country Education Profiles Australia 2008*, p.67-68

Transnational Quality Strategy

The Federal Government is also committed to ensuring the high quality and integrity of Australian education and training delivered offshore.

In November 2005, Australian Education and Training Ministers agreed to a *Transnational Quality Strategy (TQS)* framework that will protect and promote the quality of Australian education and training delivered in other countries. Ministers agreed the TQS is vital if Australia is to sustain its international reputation as a quality education and training provider which delivers education and training abroad equivalent to that delivered in Australia.

A key initiative of the TQS is *AusLIST*. It is an evolving online directory of Australian providers and the courses they deliver overseas. AusLIST is expected to expand progressively as institutions submit information to the directory for listing, enabling prospective students to identify locations and types of courses offered. Institutions that choose to be on AusLIST commit to provide education and training in other countries to a standard comparable to the courses they deliver in Australia. All Australian providers delivering education and training courses in other countries are encouraged to apply for inclusion on AusLIST.

Source: DEEWR website: <http://www.dest.gov.au/default.htm>

DEEWR website, Media release, 22 Aug 2008, The Hon Julia Gillard MP:

http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Releases/Pages/Article_081027_113458.aspx

3. Recent developments

As part of the higher education reforms articulated in the 2009-2010 Federal Budget, the Federal Government announced a central feature of a transformed Australian higher education system would be an increased and more rigorous focus on quality. To help facilitate this, the Federal Government will establish a new national body with responsibilities for regulation and quality assurance in tertiary education. *The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA)* will have responsibility for accrediting providers, evaluating the performance of institutions and their programs, encouraging best practice across the sector, will simplify current regulatory arrangements and provide greater national consistency. The TEQSA will be at the centre of a new standards-based quality assurance framework. The framework will establish minimum standards that higher education providers are required to meet in order to be registered and accredited, as well as academic standards.

As a peak organisation, TEQSA will take the lead in coordinating this work and establishing objective and comparative benchmarks of quality and performance in the sector. The agency will collect a rich pool of data and will monitor performance in areas including student selection, retention and exit standards, and graduate employment.

In addition, the TEQSA will evaluate the performance of universities and other higher education providers every five years, or whenever there is evidence that standards are not being met. In the event these standards are not being met, the TEQSA will have the capacity to recommend sanctions up to and including the withdrawal of the right to use the title "University". The new agency will build on the strong foundation established by AUQA, recognising the importance of AUQA's expertise and knowledge. As well as institution-specific audits, the new agency will also carry out audits that focus on particular areas of risk for the higher education system. For example, TEQSA might target providers operating in a geographic region, or offering a particular program of study.

The TEQSA will be established in 2010 and will focus initially on regulation and quality assurance in the higher education sector. The Federal Government has allocated approximately 41 million USD over four years for the establishment of the TEQSA.

Besides the establishment of TEQSA, the Federal Government-led higher education reforms are taking place in a number of areas, including:

- Review of Education Services for Overseas Students Act (the ESOS Act);
- VET reforms (regulation and improvement of VET sector, including its registration and audit);
- Strengthening of Australian Qualifications Framework; and
- Performance Funding.

Source: DEEWR comment on request

DEEWR website: <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx>

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