

Research translation and the Higher Education Standards Framework

6 May 2022

The Australian Technology Network of Universities (ATN) welcomes the opportunity to provide a response to the Higher Education Standards Panel's Research translation and the Higher Education Standards Framework consultation paper.

ATN is the peak body representing Australia's six most innovative and enterprising universities: Curtin University, Deakin University, RMIT University, The University of Newcastle, University of South Australia, and University of Technology Sydney.

We encourage the acknowledgement of industry-engaged research and its translation into impact and of support measures that reflect that university research cannot simply be understood in terms of publications and citations. This is important not only in the light of the Government and universities' focus on the commercialisation and translation of university research, but also as a long-standing and valued part of our university system that is essential for economic and social progress.

To create a higher education system that encourages and enables industry-engaged research, commercialisation and social impact, then these priorities must be reflected in what it means to be a university. This is not to say that every university will have the same focus or depth or breadth of activity in these areas – only that it is important to all universities in some form.

Research translation must be understood as one of the potential outcomes of research, as part of a much broader vision for research in the Australian higher education sector.

Recommendation

ATN recommends that if research translation is to be recognised in the Standards Framework, it is done in the context of the broader missions, purposes and outcomes of universities and research.

The Standards Framework states that the “undertaking of research that leads to new knowledge and original creative endeavour and research training are fundamental” to universities, but it does not elaborate further.

It is more appropriate to amend Section 4 of the Standards to outline the broader purposes of research within the Australian higher education sector.

This definition could be:

Research leads to new knowledge and is an original creative endeavour that can strengthen Australia's knowledge base, and contribute to national economic development, international competitiveness and the attainment of social goals.

This contribution requires translation of research into those economic, social, environmental, cultural and other impacts, particularly in partnership with communities and industry.

info@atn.edu.au
www.atn.edu.au
Follow us @ATNunis

However if research translation is incorporated into the Standards Framework, ATN recommends the following key points be noted.

- It is understood that the nature and intensity of the systematic support and opportunities for research translation can vary between universities and between fields of research at a single university, depending on institutional strategic priorities.
- As autonomous institutions, universities should decide how best to provide systematic support and opportunities for research translation and measure their impact with a range of quantitative and qualitative evidence.
- Where possible, extant data sources and other such information should be used to minimise any reporting and compliance burden.
- Focusing on the systematic support and opportunities created, rather than measures of volume or capacity, encourages fit-for-purpose and fit-for-scale governance and operational structures at each university. This will engender creativity and innovation in translation practice, rather than compliance and uniformity.

ATN supports the goal of research translation and our universities already have in place the systematic support and identification of opportunities for translation of research findings as part of their broader commitments to research and their communities.

Further enquiries should be addressed to:

Executive Director

Australian Technology Network of Universities

info@atn.edu.au