



# **Universal Business School Sydney**

## **Submission to TEQSA**

### **Scholarship Discussion Paper**

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## **UBSS Response to TEQSA Discussion Paper: Making and assessing claims of scholarship and scholarly activity**

### **Introduction**

Universal Business Sydney School (UBSS) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the TEQSA Scholarship Paper. As noted by TEQSA in the Scholarship Discussion Paper “TEQSA acknowledges that those requirements may manifest in a variety of different practices according to context” (page 2). UBSS would fall into the category of a “more focussed teaching-only provider” (page 3). That is a smaller, teaching only higher education provider, focussing on business studies at an undergraduate and post graduate level.

UBSS is a dynamic and innovative organisation at the forefront of education and technology. Results from QILT evidence the UBSS commitment to learning and teaching. It is pleasing that TEQSA is actively engaging with the sector for opinion and clarity regarding scholarship.

At UBSS there is a scholarship focus of teaching and learning and frameworks in place to foster a culture of scholarship. Also, scholarship of the practical application in business and development of business acumen to ensure the future success of UBSS students.

The traditional approach to scholarship focuses only on research. Publicly funded universities receive funding based on research outputs, in particular the volume of peer reviewed publications. The same cannot be said for independent providers, yet independent providers are at a disadvantage as they do not employ research-based academics. Instead, the common viewpoint as exemplified at UBSS is that teaching is more important than research.

The discussion paper notes that various sections of the Threshold Standards refer to scholarship in terms of learning outcomes (1.4.2 a-d), research training outcomes (1.4.7), course design (3.1.2 a-c), staffing (3.2.3 a-b) and the research training environment (4.2.2). As a teaching only provider, research and research training are not undertaken at UBSS. For this reason, section 4.1 on Research and section 4.2 on Research Training do not relate to UBSS and are not addressed in this response.

TEQSA’s guidance note describes scholarship as: “activities concerned with gaining new or improved understanding, appreciation and insights into a field of knowledge, and engaging with and keeping up to date with advances in the field. This includes advances in ways of teaching and learning in the field and advances in professional practice, as well as advances in disciplinary knowledge through original research.” Reference is made by TEQSA to the Boyer Model of Scholarship. UBSS endorses the application of the Boyer Model to scholarship.

In summary, UBSS provides the following responses to the 6 questions from TEQSA.

*Discussion Question 1: Is the above approach to classification of activities as scholarship appropriate? If not, why not and what amendments would you propose?*

UBSS supports the use of the Boyer model as a typology for the gathering of scholarly evidence as a foundation across the four broad areas of discovery, integration, application and teaching. This should be broadened to a fifth component to include scholarship of academic leadership.

*Discussion Question 2: Is the proposed approach of linking scholarly activity to intended outputs and/or outcomes relevant to the HES Framework reasonable? If not, why not and what amendments would you propose?*

UBSS finds that scholarly activity that is limited to only intended outputs and/or outcomes does not allow for the full breadth of scholarship. As the question refers to the final stage of the classical systems model of input, process, output it is limited in scope. Scholarship also may relate to inputs and process. As teaching and learning becomes a more complex dynamic system of collaboration, rather than the traditional didactic scholar/student relationship, the impact of environment is also worthy of scholarship. UBSS does not agree with the narrow scope of what constitutes scholarly activity. This is addressed further in response to discussion Question 3.

*Discussion Question 3: Is it appropriate to distinguish various forms of external engagement from 'scholarship' as identified under Principles 1 and 2? If not, why not and what amendments would you propose?*

UBSS partially agrees professional development and professional engagement should meet Principles 1 and 2. Professional development and engagement of itself is not scholarship. However, the application to the learning inputs, process, outcomes, environment and the wide forms of evidence this has occurred, does constitute scholarship.

*Discussion Question 4: Is it workable for providers to be able to demonstrate their planning, monitoring and involvement in scholarship in the aggregate as proposed? If not, why not and what amendments would you propose?*

UBSS agrees with this Principle 4 and that there should be an institution wide approach embodied in a culture of scholarship, with planning, monitoring and involvement in scholarship in the aggregate. UBSS currently implements this practice.

*Discussion Question 5: Are there any potential issues you foresee with the application of Principle 5 by TEQSA?*

UBSS has contributed to the IHEA Scholarship Paper and the HEPP-QN Scholarship Workshop documents and supports a wider use of evidence of scholarly activities, that reflect the nature of the provider.

*Discussion Question 6: Are there specific types of scholarship inputs and outputs within each provider type that should be considered as integral requirements to ensure that the reputation of the sector is upheld?*

Set out in the previous responses are how UBSS is able to achieve this through developing a scholarly culture, planning, measuring and monitoring for continuous improvement. This paper argues a broadening of the recognised scholarship inputs and outputs, as well as fostering of conducive environment to the field of business, entrepreneurship and accounting should be considered by TEQSA.

**Question 1 Is the above approach to classification of activities as scholarship appropriate? If not, why not and what amendments would you propose?**

**Meaning the scholarly activity will need to fall into a category of either discovery, integration, application or teaching, or be a peer-reviewed adaption of the Boyer Framework, or be consistent with some other credible typology of scholarship.**

TEQSA states that it recognises diversity and the need to support innovation in the higher education sector. Consequently, TEQSA acknowledges that scholarship is practiced differently and is different in nature and form across different providers. The importance of scholarship to effective teaching and learning is widely agreed and a range of strategies have been identified in the literature and in evidence presented to TEQSA to develop, support and sustain scholarship both at an institutional level and at the individual staff level.

The approach suggested by Boyer (1990) to scholarship has become a benchmark for those institutions which plan to be teaching-intensive higher education providers in which scholarly activity informs teaching. Traditionally academic practice was based on the notion of teaching, research and service. Yet teaching is very rarely treated with equal merit.

The use of the Boyer model enables a constant framework for the guidance, measurement and gathering of evidence across an institution. UBSS has an institution wide approach to scholarship as outlined in the annual report produced by the Office of the Dean. A clear framework of scholarship to support a culture of scholarship is outlined. This includes methodologies, scope of evidence, monitoring and review practices. This provides systemic and institutional wide focus on scholarship in the business, accounting and entrepreneurship disciplines, as well as scholarship of teaching and learning.

The scholarship framework is referenced in the Workforce Plan 2021-2023 - <https://www.ubss.edu.au/media/1182/ubss-workforce-plan-2021-2023.pdf> and the Teaching and Learning Plan 2021-2023 - <https://www.ubss.edu.au/media/1953/teaching-and-learning-plan-2021-2023-ib.pdf> These plans fit within and support the overall UBSS Strategic Plan 2020-2022 - <https://www.ubss.edu.au/media/1746/strategic-plan-v9.pdf>

Evidence of scholarship from staff is collected on an ongoing basis, using the Boyer Model, with the annual report providing a summary of the scholarly activity of all staff. The current Version 4 released in April 2020, provides details of the scholarly activity from 2019 - <https://www.ubss.edu.au/media/1184/capturing-scholarship-at-ubss-002.pdf> This is supported by the UBSS Professional Development Policy v13 - <https://www.ubss.edu.au/media/1459/professional-development-policy.pdf>

It is pleasing to see that TEQSA embraces the Boyer model as it provides a highly integrated model of scholarship. The UBSS approach is to move beyond teaching versus research debate and embrace a broader and more encompassing view of scholarship. Scholarship at UBSS means engaging in inquiry to reveal connections, building bridges between theory and practice and disseminating knowledge to students.

The Boyer model is broken into four components:

- **Discovery:** this is traditional based research. Whereby the intrinsic worth of acquiring knowledge for its own sake. There are no outcomes as such linked to teaching;
- **Integration:** the activity of giving meaning to facts. This can be seen as contextualisation of the knowledge itself or basic research;
- **Application:** concerns with making academic scholarship relevant to the wider social context. Which is the synthesis of information across disciplines, across topics within a discipline or across time;
- **Teaching:** which involves the systematic study of teaching and learning processes and application. This differs from scholarly teaching which requires that the work be made public and available for peer review and critique.

UBSS believes the Boyer Model should be extended to include Academic Management and Leadership. A culture of scholarship needs to be present within a higher education provider, with an institutional scholarship plan that has mechanisms in place to monitor, review and ensure continuous improvement Standard 5.3). At the corporate and academic governance level a provider will have oversight of academic activities which includes the impact of scholarship (Standards 6.2 f and 6.3).

The significance of the culture of scholarship is recognised in the academic literature (Kennedy, Gubbins, Luer, Reddy, Light, 2003). The culture of scholarship at an institution goes beyond the individually scholarly activities of academics. It is “an environment of creativity and productivity that extends from active investigations designed to create, advance, or transform new knowledge” (Kennedy et.al, 2003). Scholarship culture requires the active support of the institutions management and administration “as reflected in a dynamic infrastructure, a well-defined method of evaluation, and a system of rewards that adheres to the established evaluation criteria” (Kennedy et.al, 2003).

Rather than the scholarship plan and governance structure standing apart from the academic pursuits of a provider, a culture of scholarship should permeate the whole institution. This would require a culture of scholarship and scholarly activity to be evident in an independent provider from the Board level down, with all levels of management also involved in scholarship. Not just the teachers. This may be scholarship in the related field or discipline, scholarship of teaching and learning, but also the scholarship of academic leadership.

There are many typologies of scholarship and others that broaden the Boyer model. Probert (2014) sets out an additional fifth category to Boyer. That is 'management and leadership' which "reflects a widespread move in Australian universities to more formally acknowledge the importance of leadership, including distributed leadership, in contributions to teaching and learning (Probert, 2014, p2). This fifth category provides the wider context to capture the reflection and scholarship of academic management and leadership required to provide a culture of scholarship and meet the standards.

This is the case at UBSS, where four of the six Board of Directors' members are actively involved in scholarship. UBSS has recently appointed a Senior Research Fellow to provide academic leadership and guide staff scholarship at UBSS. Senior managers who are not involved in teaching such as the Dean, Deputy Dean of Student Experience, Compliance Director and Program Directors are all involved in publicly published scholarship. This is captured in the UBSS scholarship annual report providing a summary of the scholarly activity.

*UBSS supports the use of the Boyer model as model for the gathering of scholarly evidence. Furthermore, UBSS believes the Boyer Model should be extended to include Academic Management and Leadership.*

**Question 2 Is the proposed approach of linking scholarly activity to intended outputs and/or outcomes relevant to the HES Framework reasonable? If not, why not and what amendments would you propose?**

The proposed approach of linking scholarly activity to the intended outputs and/or outcomes is limiting and does not consider the scholarship of other impacts on discipline field, teaching and learning or academic leadership.

The application of the classical systems approach of input process output (IPO) allows for the understanding and analysis of various forms of scholarship. Johnston (1994) outlines the IPO model to quality of teaching. He identifies the processes of quality assessment of teaching, exploring whether quality is dependent on 'fitness for purpose' or if it is 'quality of standard'.

Scholarly activity that evaluates the inputs, process and environment that impacts on quality of teaching or the discipline is also valid scholarship and allows for the contextualisation of scholarship to a fitness for purpose approach.

Furthermore, only focusing on outputs in relation to course development disproportionately impacts on non-self-accrediting providers. For instance, if an independent provider encourages its staff to be dynamic and innovative with respect to course design it may create a new course which no one else in the market has considered.

Yet when the provider applies for a course accreditation (or re-accreditation) it will be reviewed by competitors in the market who would probably reject the course (as there is no acceptable benchmarking) and then some months later a university may develop and approve such a course.

Another point to consider is where a large percentage of the teaching is delivered by sessional staff. The question of measuring output becomes complex where teaching academics lecture across multiple institutions. This means then that they undertake scholarship activities not only at UBSS but also with other providers. The impact of their scholarship activities would benefit all the providers where the academic teaches. This would be captured as scholarly evidence if the inputs, process and environment were also included as scholarship.

UBSS also notes that the proposed approach of linking scholarly activity does not take into account professional development. **Professional development precedes professional application** to teaching and learning, and thus scholarship. Of itself professional development is not scholarship, however professional development is one of the inputs in the initial stages of professional engagement and application.

UBSS finds that scholarly activity that is limited to only intended outputs and/or outcomes does not allow for the full breadth of scholarship. As the question refers to the final stage of

the classical systems model of input, process, output it is limited in scope. Scholarship also may relate to inputs and process, as well as the environment. As teaching and learning becomes a more complex dynamic system of collaboration, rather than the traditional didactic scholar/student relationship, the impact of environment is also worthy of scholarship.

*UBSS does not agree with the narrow scope of what constitutes scholarly activity. This is addressed further in response to discussion question 3.*

**Question 3 Is it appropriate to distinguish various forms of external engagement from scholarship as identified under Principles 1 and 2? If not, why not and what amendments would you propose?**

UBSS disagrees with Principle 3 and the question posed. This suggests a traditional mode of thinking of scholarship (i.e that this research based) and produces papers. While TEQSA believes that professional development is of merit, it does not equate to scholarship. This view of scholarship is limited and very traditional in its approach. For example, professional development encompasses a variety of activities such as latest discussions on ethics and case law in relation to human rights. This would enhance a student's learning experience if their lecturer can quote the latest in case law and discussions as to the future of the workforce yet using the above definition would not equate to scholarship as it is not actually quantifiable.

Professional development provides currency to the knowledge of the academic and contributes to the learning outcomes and graduate outcomes of the student, as outlined in TEQSA's Principles 1 and 2. It is by bringing this current knowledge and experience into the learning environment, that contributes richness and current application for the student. UBSS acknowledges that Professional Development of itself is not scholarship. However, when this is applied in the learning environment impacting on the learning outcomes, then this is scholarship.

The TEQSA definition of scholarship is "activities concerned with gaining new or improved understanding, appreciation and insights into a field of knowledge, and engaging with and keeping up to date with advances in the field. This includes advances in ways of teaching and learning in the field and advances in professional practice." **Professional development precedes professional practice**, which when applied to achieve advances in the learning environment becomes scholarship.

In addition, independent providers, unlike public universities, are not funded to produce research. Part of the attraction of independent providers is that they offer lecturers who are also practitioners, with more of a focus on the practical application of business and entrepreneurship. Usually, such lecturers do not produce research-based papers. Instead, they maintain currency of the subject matter via professional development and maintenance of industry certification such as CPA and the Law Society of NSW. UBSS supports the view that scholarship is the application of discipline knowledge, teaching and learning to improve the learning outcomes of the student.

Another area of external engagement which this narrow view of scholarship would exclude is the community of practice. This is highly beneficial in the field of business studies which traverses and impacts a range of disciplines. The scholarship of teaching and learning community of practice is also of major benefit where ideas may cross pollinate across disciplines.

Peterson et al (2015) highlighted the benefits of a community of practice at RMIT. This involved staff in formal academic leadership roles for teaching and learning to take an integrated scholarship approach of collaborative learning through practice, research, reflection and discovery. They found that “interdisciplinary thinking is integral to making creative connections for collaborative knowledge building, in exploring the scholarship of learning and teaching across disciplines (Peterson, Chester, Attiwill, Bateman, 2015).

The two independent provider industry groups of HEPP-QN and IHEA provide this community of practice through the forums, benchmarking projects, conferences and networking between IHEPS. All constituting scholarship. UBSS is a member of both of these groups.

As recognised in the response to question one, Boyer’s model requires that the scholarly work be made public and available for peer review and critique. The literature provides a range of formats this public and peer review may take. Southwell, Gannaway, Orrell, Chalmers and Abraham (2010) acknowledge that for effective dissemination of teaching and learning projects this may take the form of journal articles and scholarly publications. However, they also give equal weight to sponsored workshops, seminars and courses, technology infrastructure, resource websites, recognition through ‘teaching excellence’ awards and showcases of good practice.

A further question would then be what is the appropriate evidence of this application of professional development to be considered scholarship? UBSS proposes this evidence and that of other scholarship be in a wide range of written forms of text and oral presentations.

Written texts may include written reflections, blog posts, the various forms of academic papers, media and lesson plans, summary notes for students, benchmarking projects final reports, case studies, assessment questions and answer, curriculum notes, technology infrastructure to capture multimedia such as videos of best teaching practice, communities of practice written reflections and occasional papers.

Oral presentations may include presentations, conferences, benchmark project forums, communities of practice meetings, staff seminars and courses, sponsored workshops, resource websites, recognition through ‘teaching excellence’ awards and showcases of good practice.

*UBSS partially agrees professional development and professional engagement should meet Principles 1 and 2. Professional development and engagement of itself is not scholarship. The application to the learning inputs, process, outcomes, environment and the wide forms of evidence in which this has occurred, does constitute scholarship.*

**Question 4 Is it workable for providers to be able to demonstrate their planning, monitoring and involvement in scholarship in the aggregate as proposed? If not, why not and what amendments would you propose?**

UBSS agrees that a provider should be able to demonstrate adequate planning, monitoring and involvement in scholarship in the aggregate. This is already being done by UBSS as demonstrated by the reports published online.

The scholarship plan is guided by the Strategic Plan and the Teaching and Learning Plan. These plans are developed at the macro level by the GCA Board of Directors and then disseminated throughout the organisation. Scholarship is also discussed at the UBSS Academic Senate level.

The GCA Board of Directors (owner of UBSS) takes a strong interest in scholarship activities at UBSS. Furthermore, the GCA Board of Directors participates actively in scholarship. A summary of scholarly activity is captured in the Scholarship Annual Report.

The scholarship framework is referenced in the Workforce Plan 2021-2023 and the Teaching and Learning Plan 2021-2023. These plans fit within and support the overall UBSS Strategic Plan 2020-2022.

As outlined previously UBSS has an institution wide approach to scholarship as outlined in the annual report produced by the Office of the Dean. The most current 2019 annual report is published online at <https://www.ubss.edu.au/media/1184/capturing-scholarship-at-ubss-002.pdf>

This provides the data and analysis for UBSS to assess scholarship at an institution wide level, to then identify further scholarship in line with the Strategic Plan, Teaching and Learning Plan and Workforce Plan. It is through these living documents, policies and procedures that a culture of scholarship thrives at UBSS.

*Therefore, UBSS agrees with Principle 4 and that there should be an institution wide approach embodied in a culture of scholarship, with planning, monitoring and involvement in scholarship in the aggregate. UBSS currently implements this practice.*

## **Question 5 Are there any potential issues you foresee with the application of Principle 5 by TEQSA?**

Principle 5 outlines that TEQSA will accept different approaches to scholarship that reflect the nature of the provider. TEQSA acknowledges that different circumstances of different providers will lead to varied approaches to meeting the Standards in relation to scholarship. TEQSA will accept these different approaches as long as they are consistent with Principles 1 and 2 as above.

UBSS also submits that part of the learning environment provided offers a real-world experience for our students. This occurs through the Centre for Entrepreneurship to facilitate work integrated learning to UBSS students through a range of fora and texts. This includes presentations from entrepreneurs and business subject matter experts, simulation games, original case studies written by entrepreneurs, industry partnerships to provide industry-based problems and workshops. All of these require scholarship.

Therefore, UBSS is at a disadvantage when considering a traditional approach to 'scholarship' mainly research, as our staff are not research-intensive academics.

As a member of HEPP-QN, UBSS agrees with the broad range of examples of scholarship provided by Emeritus Professor Geoff Scott from the results of the Higher Education Private Provider Quality Network (HEPP-QN) scholarship workshop conducted on 29 October, 2019. There is a further submission from HEPP-QN that has been workshopped in 2020 and finalised at the recent HEPP-QN Annual Conference held on November 24-25, 2020. UBSS is a contributor to this scholarship workshop document and supports the HEPP-QN views.

As stated in the TEQSA discussion paper, TEQSA "continues to encourage the sector to delve into a diverse range of scholarship inputs to achieve meaningful and beneficial learning outcomes for students, which work to enhance the quality delivery of higher education and uphold the reputation of the sector." UBSS agrees with this approach and broadening the scope of scholarly evidence. The test of which is that the scholarship contributes to the learning outcomes of the student, whether that be discipline related, enhanced teaching and learning or academic leadership.

UBSS is a member of IHEA and has contributed to the IHEA scholarship paper. UBSS supports the notion of the sector working together and with TEQSA to determine what is meant by scholarship.

*UBSS has contributed to the IHEA Scholarship Paper and the HEPP-QN Scholarship Workshop documents and supports a wider use of evidence of scholarly activities, that reflect the nature of the provider.*

**Question 6 Are there specific types of scholarship inputs and outputs within each provider type that should be considered as integral requirements to ensure that the reputation of the sector is upheld?**

UBSS is pleased to see that TEQSA is working with providers to enhance and maintain the reputation of the sector. The sector is diverse and even within the independent sector there is great diversity.

Traditional business studies have focussed on models and theories to classify and aim to make sense of a dynamic and ever evolving field of study.

UBSS is a business focussed higher education provider, predominantly with international students, with a teaching focus to bring practical experience and learning to the students.

The UBSS approach is to build on the business models and theories to provide a real-world experiential learning environment. The development of business acumen is a learning outcome in most subjects, which is highly contextual. This requires pedagogies and integration of various forms of work integrated learning to the student experience.

*Set out in the previous responses are how UBSS is able to achieve this through developing a scholarly culture, planning, measuring and monitoring for continuous improvement. This paper argues a broadening of the recognised scholarship inputs and outputs, as well as fostering of conducive environment to the field of business, entrepreneurship and accounting should be considered by TEQSA.*

The ultimate aim for providers and TEQSA is to protect the reputation of the sector. UBSS submits that scholarship inputs, process, learning environment and outputs bolster the reputation of the sector in the community.

Through the applied culture of scholarship this will be achieved.

## REFERENCES

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