



**Australian Government**

**Department of Education, Science and Training**

**Building University Diversity:**  
Future approval and accreditation processes for Australian higher education

# Issues Paper

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## MINISTER'S FOREWORD

The Australian Government's ambition for higher education is that of a confident, strong, high quality sector that plays a vital role in our economic, cultural and social development. The kind of Australia inherited by our children will be driven largely by the research, teaching and scholarship undertaken by Australian universities.

Changes to the roles of universities to deliver this ambition more effectively are being driven by the growth of higher education, a revolution in telecommunications and the need for lifelong learning. Australian universities face global horizons with international quality benchmarks increasingly bearing down on them.

The package of higher education reforms announced in 2003 as *Our Universities: Backing Australia's Future* and now being implemented provides Australian higher education institutions with additional resources to equip them to face our global future confidently. Underpinning the reforms are the four principles of sustainability, quality, equity and diversity.

In announcing the reforms I spoke of the need for a diverse range of higher education institutions servicing different communities and varied requirements. It is neither necessary nor desirable for all universities to be the same.

A more diverse system can be achieved in many ways, including by institutions forging distinct missions within the overall system and through greater collaboration between individual universities and other education providers, industry, business, regions and communities.

However, it will not be achieved through the 'one size fits all' model for a university that we currently have in place in our higher education approval processes and which no longer reflects even the existing diversity of our sector. In particular, it is worth debating the requirement for all universities to undertake research as well as teaching.

It is both timely and important to have a national debate on the requirements and processes for institutions seeking to become universities and other higher education providers as set out in National Protocols that were agreed between the Australian, State and Territory Education Ministers at the Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) in 2000.

This paper is a first step in consultation on our future higher education accreditation and approval arrangements. The results will inform discussion of possible changes to the Protocols through MCEETYA.

Should universities be defined more by function and quality and less by form and structure? While I expect that the views surrounding these issues will be rich and varied, it is important that we have a debate to ensure that the future of higher education is shaped by the best possible options to deliver what our nation requires from higher education in the future.

The Hon Dr Brendan Nelson MP  
Minister for Education, Science and Training

# 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Purpose

- 1.1 This issues paper has been prepared to stimulate an informed debate about the future diversity of Australian universities and higher education and the best regulatory framework for them in an environment of rapid change.
- 1.2 Higher education and the bodies that can offer higher education awards are currently regulated through the National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes, which were formally agreed by the Australian Government and all State and Territory Governments at the Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) in 2000. A review of these Protocols in 2004 by former Vice-Chancellor Professor Gus Guthrie called for a national discussion of the agreed understanding of what is a university and what is higher education more generally. The Australian Government and the States and Territories all agree that there is a need to have a national debate on these issues.
- 1.3 In releasing the Guthrie Review the Minister for Education, Science and Training, The Hon Dr Brendan Nelson, announced that this issues paper would be released in early 2005 to initiate a national consultation process as a prelude to consideration of changes to the Protocols by MCEETYA.

## Changed environment

- 1.4 Since the Protocols were adopted in 2000, national and international demands for more flexible and adaptable forms of higher education provision have led governments to review the criteria which regulate and define universities and other providers of higher education.
- 1.5 Australia's future global competitiveness may depend on greater diversity in the types and nomenclature of institutions which constitute our higher education system. Higher education systems in other countries accommodate a broader range of types of institutions than are seen in Australia. In other systems, universities are not necessarily required to have a comprehensive teaching and research profile in all disciplines. A wider diversity of institutional types promotes growth and a greater range of choice for students, and also provides flexible entry points for institutions seeking to deliver higher education.
- 1.6 Any revision of our accreditation and approval processes will need to ensure that our capacity to compete globally and facilitate movement between systems (by students, academics and researchers) is not diminished. Recent international trends are relevant. For example, the United Kingdom Government has recently decided to expand the range of institutions permitted to access the title university. The Bologna Process, initiated by 40 European countries, seeks to harmonise higher education regulatory regimes across nation states through uniform degree structures, the adoption of a common credit transfer system and aligning their national quality assurance arrangements.
- 1.7 A review of the Protocols must take account of changes in the extent and nature of public and private provision of higher education. It is increasingly likely that private institutions, including those

from overseas, will seek to establish higher education operations in Australia, with some providers seeking a marketing edge through access to the title “university” on terms comparable to our existing universities. The requirement under the Protocols for a university to undertake research and to teach across a breadth of areas of study place considerable cost and other barriers to the emergence of new private universities. While some providers argue that these requirements constrain diversity and should be revised, others consider that they are set within an appropriately defined range which acts to protect the high quality of the Australian higher education sector.

- 1.8 Finally, changes in technology and employer and student expectations all lead to universities having to adapt rapidly to external change. Whether the existing range of types of higher education institutions provides sufficient diversity and flexibility to meet student and employer expectations and to deliver the research and teaching outcomes that we need in a knowledge-based economy is an issue for consideration in the review of the Protocols.

## Issues for the Protocols

- 1.9 This paper explores the different combinations of teaching, scholarship and research which could define a university and canvasses the desirability of greater diversity in combining these elements to form an Australian university. It looks at the arguments for and against there being a requirement for both teaching and research in a university.
- 1.10 A debate is proposed on whether there is a role for teaching-intensive and research-intensive universities in the Protocols as well as those which encompass both teaching and research. A key question for consideration is whether these additions to the Protocols would enhance student choice and raise the status of teaching; and contribute more effectively to innovation and Australia’s production of high quality research.
- 1.11 A specific issue discussed is the extent of support for ‘specialist’ institutions covering a narrow field of study in-depth in addition to those institutions which cover a wide range of disciplines. High quality international examples include Rockefeller University in the USA, which is a private research university that evolved from a medical research institute to offer graduate education and broadened its research mandate to include biochemistry, physics and mathematical biology.
- 1.12 There is a global trend towards a changed mix of public and private provision of higher education. The Guthrie Report observed that in other countries, governance arrangements for for-profit higher education providers are different from the arrangements thought appropriate for not-for-profit higher education providers. The implications of this for the Protocols are canvassed. The paper suggests there may be a need for all institutions regulated by the Protocols to have similar levels of consumer protection and guarantees of free enquiry and academic freedom. It also asks whether in the case of for-profit institutions, there needs to be a measure of financial independence to operate the educational enterprise free from undue influence by the owners and shareholders.
- 1.13 The paper considers whether the enduring capacity of a provider or an institution to accredit their own courses (be ‘self-accrediting’) should be on offer to providers other than universities and how it should be assessed. A number of higher education institutions have been operating successfully for

many decades and have had their courses re-accredited by governments on several occasions. Some of these aspire to be authorised by government to accredit their own courses, with or without use of the title university.

- 1.14 Finally, if a more diverse sector is considered desirable, assuring quality and retaining Australia's reputation as a high quality provider of education services will be paramount. Perceptions of quality will need to be informed by freely accessible information about performance and outcomes for each institution. The paper asks what criterion in the Protocols should assure quality and considers the merits and risks to quality associated with change.

## Responsibility for the Protocols

- 1.15 A review of Commonwealth and State responsibilities for higher education is also underway (<http://www.dest.gov.au/highered/pubs/papers/responsibility/>) and some issues related to responsibility for the National Protocols may arise in that context. However, the need to examine the Protocols is independent of issues of responsibility for them, since Australia will continue to require a national regulatory framework that maintains our high quality system.
- 1.16 The remainder of this paper is in three sections. Section 2 *Background* describes the current accreditation arrangements in Australia and summarises the Guthrie Review. Section 3 *Changed Environment* examines drivers of change in higher education including changes to higher education accreditation arrangements in other countries and the expansion of private provision. Section 4 *Issues for the Protocols* sets out arguments and issues related to changing the Protocols and invites comment upon them.

## Process

- 1.17 In releasing the Guthrie report, the Hon. Dr Brendan Nelson announced that the Australian Government would be undertaking further work on the issues and recommendations in the Guthrie Report involving:
  - issuing this discussion paper and inviting stakeholders to respond to it;
  - initiating a national consultation process on the discussion paper during 2005 involving the States and Territories, higher education and other stakeholders; and
  - conducting a national seminar under the auspices of MCEETYA.
- 1.18 The results of the above process will inform subsequent discussion of issues and possible policy responses by MCEETYA. Under current arrangements, changes to the Protocols would need to be discussed and formally agreed between the Australian Government and all State and Territory Governments and then implemented through a significant programme of legislative change in all jurisdictions.

## How to make a submission

- 1.19 Submissions and responses to the issues set out in this paper are due by 22 April 2005. A series of questions related to the issues raised appear in Section 5. You need not confine your responses to these questions if you think there are other issues to be addressed. Submissions should be emailed to [quality@dest.gov.au](mailto:quality@dest.gov.au) Alternatively you may write to:

Director  
Quality Improvement Unit  
Location Code 133  
Higher Education Group  
Department of Education, Science and Training  
GPO Box 9880  
Canberra ACT 2601

- 1.20 Unless you request that your submission be treated confidentially, submissions will be made publicly available on the DEST website as part of the consultation process. In addition, you may wish to note that because DEST may be required to release your submission by the operation of law, judicial or Parliamentary body or government agency, the Department can give no undertakings that your submission will never be made publicly available.

## 2 BACKGROUND

### Higher Education Accreditation Arrangements

- 2.1 In Australia the States and Territories have the primary legislative responsibility for the establishment and oversight of higher education institutions, including the maintenance of standards through controls on the use of terms such as 'university' and 'degree'.
- 2.2 The approval of higher education providers and courses takes place within the framework known as the National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes. These were established by the Australian Government and all State and Territory Governments at the Ministerial Council for Education, Employment Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) in 2000.
- 2.3 The main function of the Protocols is to act as a 'gatekeeper' to the higher education sector providing a level of confidence to students and other stakeholders that higher education meets consistent criteria and standards across Australia. This includes in areas such as the recognition of new universities, the operation of overseas higher education institutions in Australia, and the accreditation of higher education courses to be offered by non self-accrediting providers.
- 2.4 The Australian States and mainland Territories have responsibility for managing these higher education accreditation and approval processes within their jurisdictions, with the Australian Government responsible for the External Territories.
- 2.5 There are five Protocols:
  - **Protocol 1** specifies the criteria and processes for recognition of Australian universities which, once approved, are not subject to re-accreditation, but are subject to audit by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA). Universities are authorised by governments to accredit their own courses. They are required to award higher education qualifications across a range of fields and to set standards for those qualifications which are equivalent to Australian and international standards. Other key requirements relate to scholarship, research and the systematic advancement of knowledge as well as governance and finances (see Table 1 for the full list);
  - **Protocol 2** specifies the criteria which overseas higher education institutions must meet to operate in Australia. These include accreditation in the provider's country of origin, comparability to similar courses in Australian institutions as well as appropriate delivery and financial arrangements;
  - **Protocol 3** specifies the criteria which cover the accreditation of higher education courses to be offered by non self-accrediting providers, i.e. those which do not have the authority of a university to accredit its own courses. Every course is individually approved and re-approved on a five year basis by a State government accreditation authority and the provider is also approved to deliver the course;
  - **Protocol 4** specifies the requirements that a higher education provider that accredits its own courses must meet when entering into delivery arrangements involving other organisations;

- **Protocol 5** outlines the responsibility for and criteria required for endorsement of courses for overseas students

2.6 Protocols 1, 2 and 3 are the ones most relevant to the issues discussed in this paper and are outlined in detail in Table 1. The full text of the protocols is available from [http://www.dest.gov.au/highered/mceetya\\_cop.htm](http://www.dest.gov.au/highered/mceetya_cop.htm)

Table 1: Criteria for Accreditation of Higher Education in Australia

Australian Universities (Protocol 1)	Overseas higher education institutions (Protocol 2)	Courses Offered by Non Self-Accrediting Institutions] (Protocol 3)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Authorisation by law to award higher education qualifications across a range of fields and to set standards for those qualifications which are equivalent to Australian and international standards.</li> <li>■ Teaching and learning that engage with advanced knowledge and inquiry.</li> <li>■ A culture of sustained scholarship extending from that which informs inquiry and basic teaching and learning, to the creation of new knowledge through research, and original creative endeavour.</li> <li>■ Commitment of teachers, researchers, course designers and assessors to free inquiry and the systematic advancement of knowledge.</li> <li>■ Governance, procedural rules, organisation, admission policies, financial arrangements and quality assurance processes, which are underpinned by the values and goals outlined above, and which are sufficient to ensure the integrity of the institution's academic programs.</li> <li>■ Sufficient financial and other resources to enable the institution's program to be delivered and sustained into the future.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ It is a bona fide institution, legally established in its country of origin.</li> <li>■ The courses to be offered have been properly accredited in the provider's country of origin by an authority that, in the opinion of the Australian jurisdiction's decision-maker, is the appropriate authority.</li> <li>■ Where the standing of the institution's accreditation status is not acceptable to the decision-maker, the decision-maker may require the proposed courses to be subject to a full accreditation process.</li> <li>■ The course or courses are comparable in requirements and learning outcomes to a course at the same level in a similar field in Australia.</li> <li>■ The delivery arrangements, including the arrangements for academic oversight and quality assurance proposed by the overseas institution are comparable to those offered by accredited Australian providers.</li> <li>■ Appropriate financial and other arrangements exist to permit the successful delivery of the course in the Australian jurisdiction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The course design and content should satisfy the requirements set in the AQF for the award level.</li> <li>■ The course should be comparable in requirements and learning outcomes to a course at the same level in a similar field at Australian universities.</li> <li>■ The delivery arrangements, including matters of institutional governance, facilities, staffing, and student services are appropriate to higher education and enable successful delivery of the course at the level proposed.</li> <li>■ The provider has appropriate financial and other arrangements to permit the successful delivery of the course, and is a fit and proper person to accept responsibility for the course.</li> </ul>

Source: DETYA (2000).

- 2.7 The Protocols currently recognise two distinct types of Australian higher education institutions – universities and non self-accrediting institutions. Universities are authorised by governments to accredit their own courses and teach and award higher education qualifications across a wide range of fields of study. They also conduct or aim to conduct research across a broad range of fields, while specialising more in some than others. Non self-accrediting institutions have their courses accredited and periodically re-approved by government accreditation authorities and generally provide teaching only courses within a limited range of fields of study. This paper uses the terms ‘higher education institution’ and ‘higher education provider’ to denote all higher education institutions including universities.
- 2.8 Higher education in Australia is currently provided by:
- Thirty six universities and higher education institutions in Australia established by State or Territory legislation.
  - Three other institutions – the Australian National University (ANU) and Australian Maritime College (AMC), both established under Commonwealth legislation and the Australian Catholic University (ACU), a public company limited by guarantee of the Catholic Church. The ACU has been given statutory recognition as a university in New South Wales and Victoria.
  - Three private universities (Bond University, University of Notre Dame Australia and Melbourne University Private) which have been recognised through State Acts.
  - In addition, there are private higher education institutions which include theological colleges and providers with specialised interest in particular vocational or artistic fields. Mostly, these providers are companies established under the Corporations Act (eg. Sydney College of Divinity, Australian Institute of Public Safety) or incorporated associations (eg. Tabor College Incorporated) established under relevant State or Territory legislation.
- 2.9 Higher education institutions have a diversity of missions at present. This diversity is expressed in revenues, size, student load and composition (e.g. international and external), regional location, research focus, links with other education and training institutions as well as business and in different institutional forms (e.g. dual sector). The formation of groupings of universities such as the Innovative Research Universities, the Australian Technology Network, the New Generation Universities and the Group of Eight reflects this self-identified differentiation. It is a matter for debate whether this differentiation is sufficiently reflected in the current definition of a university in the Protocols.
- 2.10 Since the introduction of the Protocols, three applications have been considered for university status of which one (Melbourne University Private) has been approved. No formal approval has been granted for an overseas higher education institution to operate in Australia, although a number have expressed interest. In 2004, the South Australian Government announced that Carnegie-Mellon University, based in the USA, was interested in operating in South Australia and that it was examining the feasibility of this proposal. Over 100 non-university providers, such as Avondale College and the National Institute of Dramatic Arts, have been authorised or reauthorised to deliver a variety of higher education awards.

## The Guthrie Review

- 2.11 In 2003, consultations between the Australian Government and State and Territory government officials in the Joint Committee for Higher Education (JCHE) led to the development of a project brief for the review of the National Protocols. It was agreed that the purpose of the review was to develop further the Protocols in the context of recent developments in the higher education sector which impact on the Australian Government and State and Territory governments. A high level steering committee composed of representatives from the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST), the JCHE, State and Territory accreditation authorities, the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) and the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (AVCC) was established to provide strategic direction to the review.
- 2.12 In February 2004 the steering committee commissioned Professor Gus Guthrie, former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Technology, Sydney to undertake a review of the Protocols. He was assisted by Professor Sue Johnston, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) at the University of Tasmania and Professor Roger King, Visiting Research Fellow at the Association of Commonwealth Universities and Visiting Research Professor at the Open University's Centre for Higher Education Research and Information.
- 2.13 The purpose of the project was to review the National Protocols in terms of national and international best practice to ensure ongoing relevance. The review involved:
- an analysis of issues related to the Protocols arising from national and international trends in higher education and the use of the Protocols in Australia;
  - a review of the structure and content of the Protocols, including recommendations on any changes felt appropriate;
  - a comparative review of international practice in the approval of new and overseas universities;
  - exploration of developing a consistent, and nationally agreed, definition of the term 'operate' in the protocols; and
  - clarification of how the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) interacts with the protocols.
- 2.14 In accordance with the project brief, Professor Guthrie's team interviewed representatives of each State and Territory Higher Education Accreditation Agency, the AVCC, the AUQA, private higher education providers that have been assessed against National Protocol One, the Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET), the Council of Private Higher Education (COPHE), the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), assessment panels for proposed universities, business groups, the National Tertiary Industry Education Union (NTEU) and DEST. A workshop was also held at the Australian Universities Quality Forum in July 2004.
- 2.15 The findings of the Guthrie review were released by the Hon. Dr Brendan Nelson, Minister for Education, Science and Training on 18 November 2004. A full copy of the review can be found at [http://dest.gov.au/highered/pubs/nat\\_protocols\\_approval/higher\\_education.htm](http://dest.gov.au/highered/pubs/nat_protocols_approval/higher_education.htm) The report included 27 recommendations (listed at Appendix A), which fall into two groups:

- recommendations which propose a debate on Australia's current definition of a university and the characteristics of Australian universities and the higher education sector as a whole into the future. These recommendations deal with issues such as how much and what types of scholarship and research should be undertaken in order for an institution to be approved as a university. They canvass whether the National Protocols should allow for the creation of 'specialist' institutions covering only a narrow field of study rather than a wide range of disciplines. The role of private for-profit institutions in the future and to what extent regulation of them should be different to regulation of public or not-for-profit institutions is discussed. These issues, along with the pressures for change, are canvassed in the following two sections; and
- recommendations intended to achieve greater clarity and consistency within the current framework of the Protocols. These cover improving accreditation authority processes, enhancing the assessment and approval process for new universities, rationalising the structure and coverage of the protocols and clarifying the meaning of "operating in Australia". These are discussed at Appendix B of this paper.

2.16 The JCHE had a preliminary discussion of the Review's findings at its November 2004 meeting and there was agreement to consult further. Minister Nelson wrote to his State and Territory counterparts in December 2004 to invite their comments on the Report. In relation to the first group of recommendations the JCHE agreed to comment on these recommendations through a national debate. This paper informs that debate. In relation to the second group, discussions are continuing to identify particular recommendations around which there is agreement so that implementation can be pursued through MCEETYA.

## Next steps

- 2.17 In releasing the Guthrie report, Minister Nelson announced that the Australian Government would be undertaking further work on the issues and recommendations in the Guthrie Report involving:
- issuing this discussion paper and inviting stakeholders to respond to it;
  - initiating a national consultation process on the discussion paper during 2005 involving the States and Territories, higher education and other stakeholders; and
  - conducting a national seminar under the auspices of MCEETYA.
- 2.18 The results of the consultation process will inform subsequent discussion of issues and possible policy responses by MCEETYA. Under current arrangements, changes to the Protocols would need to be agreed formally between the Australian Government and all State and Territory Governments and then implemented through a significant programme of legislative change in all jurisdictions.

### 3 CHANGED ENVIRONMENT

- 3.1 There is a changed environment in which higher education is operating, which challenges the relevancy of the Protocols and the way they govern the types of possible provision of higher education. The changes include:
- new higher education frameworks in other countries which impact on growth and diversity;
  - the growth of private higher education provision, including through globalisation and internet delivery; and
  - the demands of a knowledge based economy.
- 3.2 This section of the paper provides further information about these changes, before examining possible revisions to the Protocols in further depth in the next Chapter.

#### Changes in overseas higher education frameworks

##### Moves to greater diversity

- 3.3 Other countries have higher education regulatory frameworks that accommodate a broader range of types of higher education institutions than are seen in Australia. In these systems universities are not necessarily expected to have a comprehensive research and teaching profile, with some more teaching intensive and others more research intensive and some combining both research and teaching but only in specialised areas. This wider diversity of institutional types also provides more pathways for those institutions seeking to change their status and greater choice for students. Key features of higher education arrangements in the USA, UK, Netherlands, Sweden and New Zealand are summarised at Appendix C.
- 3.4 In the United States, for example, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching identifies the following main categories of institutions (percentages are as cited in Davis 2004, p.2):
- Doctorate Granting Institutions, which are (mainly) universities offering a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate programs up to the Doctorate level. These accounted for 28% of all enrolments in US colleges in 2000;
  - Master Colleges and Universities, which offer a range of Baccalaureate or undergraduate programs and graduate education up to the Masters level (22% of enrolments);
  - Baccalaureate Colleges, which are primarily undergraduate colleges offering Baccalaureate degrees (5% of enrolments);
  - Baccalaureate/Associate Colleges, where the majority of conferrals are below the Baccalaureate level (1% of enrolments);
  - Associate Colleges, which do not award Baccalaureate degrees, but associate degrees and certificate programs (39% of enrolments); and
  - Specialised Institutions, which offer degrees ranging from the Bachelors to the Doctorate in a particular field.

- 3.5 This diversity reflects the historical development of US universities, market based competition, a well established private sector, the size and diversity of the student population and the highly decentralised regulation under which the States rather than the Federal Government have primary responsibility for higher education approval processes. The USA has a system of institutional accreditation by national regional accreditation entities as well as professional bodies (Edwards 2004:39-42). One key difference from Australia is that there is no national control over the title 'university' and, while some US States have tight controls, others do not. Another difference is that in the USA, the title university may not be awarded in perpetuity, but may be subject to reaccreditation requirements.
- 3.6 A number of other countries are changing their arrangements to allow more diversity. The Guthrie report noted that bodies such as the World Bank have called for greater institutional variety in higher education provision to promote growth and diversity. Guthrie also refers to "a broad, but not uniform, world-wide move away from formal binary systems based on distinct missions between universities and other higher education institutions" (2004: 32).
- 3.7 In the United Kingdom, the link between university title and research has recently been broken – the UK Government has decided that institutions will be eligible for university designation regardless of whether they award research degrees. Degree-awarding powers remain a requirement for university title, as do a minimum number of students (4000 equivalent full-time students, of whom at least 3000 must be studying degree level courses including Foundation degrees of two years in length). Staff will be required 'to keep up' with research and scholarship in the subject they are teaching. In addition, the UK government has repealed the requirement that institutions seeking university status should be active in a range of disciplines (Guthrie 2004: 35).
- 3.8 In terms of quality assurance, the UK government has now made degree-awarding powers and thus university title renewable in the non publicly-funded higher education sector (around every six years or so, institutions will be subject to a satisfactory external quality audit in order to continue their use of the title university). Previously, as in Australia, universities in the UK were awarded the title in perpetuity unless some specific action by government was taken to remove it.

## Movement to harmonise

- 3.9 There is a trend which may run counter to the creation of more diversity within higher education frameworks and that is the movement to harmonise higher education systems across nation states. The Bologna Process initiated by 40 European countries is the best known example of this. It aims to create an integrated higher education precinct with common features in the areas of degree structures; a credit and recognition system that allows for easy transfer and articulation; and development of comparable criteria and methodologies in quality assurance processes. If we are to maintain our capacity to compete globally and facilitate movement between systems (by students, academics and researchers), it is appropriate to examine how well Australian higher education approval and accreditation processes fit with international practices.

## Implications for Australia of international trends

- 3.10 The above changes make it timely for Australia to review whether our approval processes allow sufficient flexibility in the types of institutions which students can attend. Higher education providers in Australia need to be able to compete with higher education providers in other countries to attract and retain students. Australia's higher education export industry contributed some \$1.1 billion to Gross Domestic Product in 2002, with overseas student enrolments growing by 286% from 1994 to 2003.
- 3.11 In addition the Australian Government is committed to free trade internationally and has recently concluded a number of free trade agreements with the United States, Singapore and Thailand. These agreements, while they make limited commitments in relation to public higher education, permit universities and higher education institutions based in other countries to operate in Australia as long as they meet appropriate standards of quality.
- 3.12 There is general agreement that we must ensure that our higher education system remains globally competitive. However, how similar or distinctive this system should be from other countries in the changed environment described above remains to be considered. In an environment of greater global competition to deliver higher education, would a greater diversity of institutional type better serve both our domestic and international interests? If so, what is required to effectively protect the reputation and standards of higher education in Australia?

## Growth of private higher education

- 3.13 Historically, private higher education providers in Australia have occupied small-scale niche education markets within the regulatory framework. While government funding policies have traditionally directed public funding to the public sector, private providers have shared in the growth in the international and domestic student market. The establishment of Bond University in 1987, Notre Dame in 1990 and Melbourne University Private in 1998 have been the only applications approved to set up private universities in competition with public institutions.
- 3.14 Recent Australian Government reforms which aim to create a more responsive higher education system have initiated change by offering deferred Commonwealth supported loans (FEE-HELP) to students attending eligible private institutions as well as some National Priority places in fields of study such as teaching and nursing. For students at private higher education institutions to have access to FEE-HELP, the institution must be listed as a higher education institution on the Australian Qualifications Framework Register; be subject to audit by the Australian Universities Quality Agency; and meet additional quality assurance and reporting requirements under the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* (HESA). A growing number of private institutions have applied to be recognised as higher education providers under HESA, with 30 approved (subject to Parliamentary disallowance) by mid February 2005.
- 3.15 New private providers are seeking a marketing edge through access to the title "university". The research and breadth of study criteria for universities under the Protocols place considerable cost and other barriers to the emergence of new private universities. Some argue that the conjunction of teaching and research is unduly restrictive on the emergence of new forms of provision. Others argue that it is central to the role of the university in a quality higher education system.

## The boundary between public and private is becoming blurred

- 3.16 Moreover, the boundary between public and private institutions is blurring as financial challenges drive some public universities to behave in a more entrepreneurial way characteristic of the private sector. Professor Glyn Davis (2004: 5-6) comments that there has been considerable expansion in recent years in teaching focussed sites within the university sector, driven by a search for additional income streams for universities in the face of constraints on public funding. He characterises these sites as teaching students in a small range of business and IT courses, employing few if any academic staff and having small libraries and no research infrastructure. Examples he provides include the Sydney Education Centre of the University of Southern Queensland and the Brisbane campus of Victoria's La Trobe University. Entrepreneurial behaviour is also seen in the offshore teaching of overseas students, where enrolments grew by 134% between 2000 and 2003.
- 3.17 A second boundary which has increasingly blurred in recent years is the overlap in the delivery of Vocational Education and Training (VET) and higher education by some providers. Australia has a number of dual sector universities delivering both VET and higher education awards, and there are also both public and private VET providers which provide a small portion of Australia's higher education market in addition to delivering VET awards as their core business. One predicted area of growth in higher education delivery is public TAFE providers which may seek to teach higher education courses at degree level. These TAFE providers are currently regarded as having the same status as other private providers for the purpose of their higher education delivery under the HESA.

## Overseas private institutions in Australia

- 3.18 It is increasingly likely that other private institutions from overseas will seek to establish operations in Australia, in addition to Carnegie Mellon as noted in Section 2. Flexible institutions such as the University of Phoenix in the USA may have more appeal to people in employment seeking to acquire or upgrade qualifications in vocational fields such as administration, management, business, technology, accounting, criminal justice, education and counselling. The university offers intensive courses taught in the evenings or on weekends at varied locations, including shopping centres. Students can complete their degree in 2 to 3 years. Such providers "eschew many of the features usually associated with non-profit and publicly funded education", specifically those of research, community service and a comprehensive curriculum (Cunningham et al 2000).

## Online providers

- 3.19 The revolution in communication technologies means that some higher education institutions are operating in a borderless world, outside traditional national regulatory frameworks. The Guthrie report notes that the international regulation of electronic higher education across borders does not yet exist and that the effective regulation of such providers by nation states is difficult. King (2004: 59) comments that "the growth of commercial, online and 'virtual' universities will undoubtedly continue, although its pace is hard to predict", even though its effect so far has been largely incremental, legitimising and building on established forms of distance education.

## Demands of the knowledge-based economy

- 3.20 Australia's transition to a knowledge-based economy is changing the demands placed on the higher education system in relation to both teaching and research.

### The role of universities in research

- 3.21 Research, whether basic or applied, is a key aspect of any knowledge based economy. The Australian Government is making a major investment in research, science and innovation through the *Backing Australia's Ability* package of measures announced in 2001 (*An Innovation Action Plan for the Future*) and 2004 (*Building Our Future Through Science and Innovation*). In parallel to this, there has been a greater focus on the efficiency and effectiveness of Australia's research effort by building critical mass and excellence through:

- greater collaboration among universities and between universities and other publicly funded research agencies;
- developing National Research Priorities to enhance the quality and impact of our research and promote collaboration between research organisations and industry;
- improving the transfer and dissemination of knowledge into economic, social and environmental benefits; and
- strengthening research training so that post-graduates acquire higher order knowledge creation skills that facilitate the transfer and application of research.

- 3.22 Universities will continue to play a vital role in Australia's innovation system. An issue for discussion is whether our current requirements for every university both to teach and research maximises our ability to meet world class research benchmarks.

### Corporate universities

- 3.23 The corporate sector is increasingly seeking education and training more specifically customised to its needs. In overseas markets this has manifested in the establishment of corporate universities such as Motorola University and Toyota University. While such entities have not yet developed in Australia, there is a growing trend for Australian universities to develop partnerships with corporate entities. For example, DeakinPrime, the corporate arm of Deakin University, has formed a partnership with the Coles Myer Institute, and UNE Partnerships Pty Ltd is a registered training organisation of the University of New England that provides professional training tailored to the needs of the corporate sector. The impact on the Protocols needs to be determined.

### The importance of teaching and learning

- 3.24 The recent *Backing Australia's Future* package of higher education reforms included a number of incentives to ensure that excellence in learning and teaching is placed alongside research excellence as a valued contribution to Australia's knowledge systems.
- 3.25 The transformation of higher education from an elite to a mass system over the past few decades has included increased demand for skilled and professional workers. This demand is likely to continue

in the future. This means that the student population in higher education will become yet more diverse as people with a wider range of backgrounds, abilities and needs seek to upgrade their skills. In addition, as a result of increased participation rates in those undertaking work and study simultaneously, students are now under greater pressure to learn and absorb knowledge in the quickest possible way. Facing the need to put a premium on effective teaching and learning, universities have responded in various ways including changes in teaching practices and increased services to assist student learning.

- 3.26 Nevertheless there are still concerns about the perceived status of teaching within universities. This is far from being unique to Australia. King (2004: 121) refers to the “vertical stratification of standing and prestige among higher education institutions” which perpetuates “the second class status of university teaching in contrast with that of research”. As part of its higher education reforms, the Australian Government has announced a number of initiatives to support and enhance the quality of teaching and learning including a new Learning and Teaching Performance Fund to reward institutions that best demonstrate excellence in learning and teaching as well as a National Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (the Carrick Institute) to provide a national focus for the enhancement of learning and teaching in Australian higher education institutions.
- 3.27 More diversity in the types of higher education institutions permitted in the Protocols might be one way of doing more to encourage a greater focus on teaching that would meet these emerging needs.

## 4 ISSUES FOR THE PROTOCOLS

- 4.1 The central issue for discussion in this paper is whether the existing models for higher education embodied in the National Protocols provide the range of diversity needed to address the challenges faced by our higher education system as it evolves. In particular, consideration will need to be given to the criteria which define an Australian university in the modern world.
- 4.2 As noted in the previous section, other countries demonstrate a wider diversity of institutional types than Australia and this diversity provides greater choice for students and more pathways for those institutions seeking to deliver higher education to them. Overseas universities are not necessarily premised on a comprehensive research and teaching profile, and include some more teaching intensive and others more research intensive and some combining both research and teaching in a specialised area.
- 4.3 The changes in higher education described in the previous section and the recommendations of the Guthrie Report provide a starting point for a debate around ways in which Australia's accreditation arrangements could be broadened. The issues to be canvassed include:
- the specific combinations of teaching, scholarship and research which should define universities and other types of higher education institutions;
  - whether there should be provision for 'specialist' institutions covering a narrow field of study in-depth rather than a wide range of disciplines;
  - the role of private and for-profit institutions in the future and to what extent regulation of them should be different to regulation of public or not-for profit institutions;
  - the scope to create pathways for non self-accrediting institutions to progress to self-accrediting or university status over time if desired; and
  - the potential impacts of changing the current framework.
- 4.4 It is acknowledged that there is a very wide range of views about the issues set out here, whether there is a real need for change and what sort of change would be appropriate. These issues have been discussed previously in both the "Crossroads Review" of higher education in 2002 and more recently in the Guthrie Review, but have yet to receive the detailed consideration they deserve if Australia is to remain at the forefront of higher education provision.
- 4.5 Some have argued that the status quo already provides for sufficient diversity in the types of universities:
- The paper Varieties of Excellence argues for increasing the level of diversity and specialisation in the Australian higher education sector away from what is seen as a single prevailing model – the comprehensive and research intensive university. In mounting this argument, the paper fails to acknowledge the level of diversity and specialisation already evident within the system as a result of the efforts of individual institutions to build on their strengths and to respond to the needs of their students and their communities. The University of Tasmania argues that diversity in the sector and specialisation of institutions are best driven by encouraging interaction between universities and their communities, rather than by regulation and imposition. (University of Tasmania, Submission 98, p.1)*

- 4.6 On the other hand, Guthrie's review of the Protocols in 2004 found that some held the view that the current regulatory framework encourages only a single model for Australian higher education:

*A second broad opinion forcefully presented by a minority of those interviewed was that the Protocols are inherently conservative and constrain innovation and diversity to the detriment of higher education within Australia. The argument was that the Protocols represent a form of gate-keeping controlled by those already within the sector to keep out new and different entrants. (Guthrie, 2004, p.11)*

- 4.7 The Guthrie Report observed that while "there is little, if any, support for truly 'teaching-only' universities there is support for universities with different emphases on the nature and amount of research undertaken, as already exists across the higher education sector" (Guthrie, 2004, p.13). Guthrie proposes that the scholarship and research requirement for a university which is outlined in Protocol 1 be revised so that there must be scholarship and learning across all fields of study within a university but a full range of research activities only in fields of research strength.
- 4.8 It is important to find a way forward among the different views so that our current regulatory framework remains capable of meeting Australia's future needs.

## How critical is research?

- 4.9 Currently, our universities aim to combine teaching, scholarship and research to achieve:
- the education of persons, enabling them to take a leadership role in the intellectual, cultural, economic and social development of their communities;
  - the creation and advancement of knowledge; and
  - the application of knowledge and discoveries to the betterment of communities in Australia and internationally.
- 4.10 While there are significant differences between universities in their missions, teaching programmes and research strengths, this difference occurs within the model of the "standard Australian university of 2004 – large, multi-campus, funded within a common framework, offering a mix of undergraduate degrees and professional qualifications, aspiring to research greatness" (Davis 2004: p 1-2). This model of a comprehensive teaching and research university was, in part, a consequence of the major programme of amalgamations and rationalisations initiated by the reforms of the late 1980s which resulted in significantly fewer but larger higher education institutions, with university status granted to non-university merged institutions if they met minimum requirements relating to matters including research and staff qualifications.
- 4.11 The Crossroads Review noted both the significant diversity in the stated missions of universities and their limited diversity in their types and structures "with almost all institutions aspiring to and conforming to the norm of a comprehensive, research-intensive, campus-based university" (DEST 2002a: ix). The Review canvassed the model of some institutions focussing on teaching in undergraduate and/or specialised postgraduate areas along the lines of baccalaureate and liberal arts colleges in the US higher education system where about half of all students are enrolled in institutions which do not award doctoral degrees. It also canvassed the need for one or more institutions focussed on world class research.

- 4.12 While the majority response to the Higher Education at the Crossroads was to argue that the nexus between teaching and research remains one of the traditional core values of an Australian university, there were mixed views about the nature and spread of research that should be required. The University of Technology, Sydney, stated that:

*Universities should be encouraged to differentiate themselves on the basis of whether they want to concentrate on basic, strategic basic, partnerships, collaborative research or community-need focused research (Submission no.250 pp 2-3)*

- 4.13 Professor Peter Karmel wrote:

*The convergence of the past 15 years, which in my view is undesirable, relates not so much to course offerings, but rather to the aspirations of all universities to offer advanced studies and research training and to undertake research across all disciplines in which they are involved. (Submission no.8, p.2)*

## The link between teaching and research

- 4.14 Many argue that there is indeed a strong link between teaching and research and that each enriches the other to the benefit of teachers and students. The idea that there is a nexus between research and teaching originated in Humboldt's idea of a university developed in the nineteenth century. At the time, this was a new idea, as universities were primarily places for teaching and scholarship, with research being done independently, by private scholars or in separate research institutes.
- 4.15 Henkel (2004) and Kogan (2004) identify a number of arguments for a nexus between teaching and research to the benefit of both:
- teaching ensures researchers keep in touch with their wider subject area and builds on their ability to communicate and clarify their thinking;
  - being at the cutting edge of the field enables academics to bring elements of excitement and enthusiasm to their teaching and to transmit a deeper grasp of their subject area;
  - research contributes to shaping of the climate of ideas in which a course is run;
  - the nexus opens opportunities for future researchers to be taught by academics who themselves are researchers;
  - research informs academic's teaching;
  - students benefit from being part of an academic culture that includes both teaching and research, including the opportunity to achieve critical and sophisticated levels of knowledge which will enhance their ability to cope with a changing knowledge environment; and
  - students are able to acquire an understanding of the processes through which knowledge is acquired and thereby how to contribute to the knowledge base of their subject area.
- 4.16 Henkel notes a number of studies showing that most academics and many students identified strongly with teaching underpinned by research, but acknowledged that substantial empirical research has found "no clear statistical correlation between academic performance in research and teaching". Differences in perceptions of the teaching-research nexus were observed across disciplines and levels of study. There is general agreement that it is an essential component of postgraduate teaching, and

some posit that this is where the nexus should find its place. Moses (1987) argues it is only since the building of postgraduate programmes in the 1950s that an expectation that all academics engage in teaching and research emerged.

- 4.17 Nonetheless, there are grounds for questioning the strength of the teaching/research link in contemporary universities. The previous section referred to the considerable expansion in recent years of sites or campuses within the university sector, both onshore and offshore, which are teaching focussed. A study by Ramsden (1998) found that “the reality of research productivity is that a small proportion of staff produce most of the work”. It is clear that not all academic staff in universities are research active although there could be a range of reasons for this in a particular year, e.g. teaching responsibilities, part time work and limited opportunities in some disciplines.
- 4.18 Some have gone further to argue that there is an inherent tension between teaching and research as evidenced by the generally poorer performance of the research intensive Group of Eight universities in the Course Experience Questionnaire compared to other universities (Norton 2002: 141). A survey of time use by academics in 1993 and 1999 found that a 1.1 hours increase in the average amount of time spent on research was achieved at the expense of a 1.3 hours drop in teaching related activity (McInnis 1999). While the proportion of academics who thought their promotion prospects were improved by effective teaching rose from 27% in 1993 to 44% in 1999, this was still a long way behind research/scholarly activity cited as important by 91%.
- 4.19 In the last section, the advent of private higher education providers and universities whose core missions involved delivering both VET and higher education awards was mentioned. The extent to which both types of body see the teaching/research link as central to their core activities needs to be explored during any debate about the definition of our universities. The national protocols are currently silent on this question.
- 4.20 The selective liberal arts colleges in the USA include examples of internationally prestigious teaching intensive institutions. Colleges such as Amherst, Swarthmore and Vassar are generally small with between 1,500 and 2,500 students and accounting for about 3% of student enrolments in the US. Most students study science, humanities or social sciences. Student-staff ratios are low and staff are highly qualified. Some argue that it is the larger size of the US higher education system that has allowed this teaching focus to develop. The strong growth in Australian higher education over the last few decades suggests that our capacity to encompass such institutions in Australia should now be commensurately larger.

## Combining teaching, scholarship and research

- 4.21 International experience suggests that there is scope for greater institutional diversity than currently exists in the National Protocols, without re-creating the previous binary divide between universities and Colleges of Advanced Education (CAEs). In this divide universities were expected to teach and research while CAEs were engaged in teaching vocationally oriented courses with a practical emphasis.

- 4.22 The definition and role of scholarship in achieving greater diversity is often neglected in the concentration on teaching and research. The latest United Kingdom Research Assessment Exercise defined scholarship as “the creation, development and maintenance of the intellectual infrastructure of subjects and disciplines, in forms such as dictionaries, scholarly and critical editions, catalogues and contributions to major research databases”. Kogan (2004) argues that disciplined inquiry can take several forms including scholarship, which covers “the reworking and redefinition of existing knowledge and concepts”.
- 4.23 In the Crossroads Review it was argued that “truly scholarly teaching involves tapping into the resources of those involved in discovery, understanding and synthesising these resources and communicating their import” and that this is “no less intellectually rigorous than research” and places teachers in universities on par with researchers (DEST 2003: 117). Boyer identified four interlocking activities of scholarship: discovery (basic research in a discipline); integration (linking disciplines); application (of knowledge); and teaching. He considered these various aspects of academic work to be of equal significance.
- 4.24 The Guthrie Report recommended revising the extent of research required by a university under the National Protocols to reflect the reality that there is already concentration of research effort in institutions and that government policies support a focus on national research priorities. Guthrie recommended that:
- university research should cover the full range defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (pure/basic research, strategic basic research, applied research and experimental development). However, a greater mix of these research types and requiring research only in areas of research strength should be permitted; and that
  - for a new university the research performance at the initial five year review should be at least within the bottom quartile for similar performance of all Australian universities on the standard range of research input and outcome indicators including research higher degree load and completions, publications per staff member and research funding within the standard categories (Recommendation 6).
- 4.25 While this would indeed lead to some greater diversity, it could be argued that this is very much within the framework of the existing Protocols and that the requirement to match the lowest quartile of university research performance would not stimulate high quality research.
- 4.26 An alternative approach may be to allow greater flexibility in combining the elements of teaching, scholarship and research provided the applicant institution meets more appropriate criteria of quality and outcomes, possibly through national or international benchmarking. For example, an institution might focus on teaching and scholarship provided it is able to achieve a very high standard of teaching. Similarly, a research intensive institution with little or no undergraduate load could be approved provided its research was of a very high standard on international benchmarks.
- 4.27 This would create opportunities for a wider variety of more specialised institutions to emerge while providing a clear signal that this would not diminish the quality of higher education overall. Institutions able to meet two criteria out of teaching, scholarship and research could be approved as one type of

institution, with capacity to progress if the third criterion was met over time. Accreditation for these new forms of institutions could be for a limited time period and/or contingent on meeting certain benchmarks. Types of institutions that could develop are:

- teaching intensive universities with a focus on undergraduate teaching excellence across a wide range of fields and a high level of scholarship, e.g. the US liberal arts colleges;
- universities with a primary focus on undergraduate and postgraduate coursework teaching but with some ability to conduct research;
- research intensive universities with a focus on postgraduate training, but little or no undergraduate teaching, e.g. Rockefeller University and ANU in the years 1946 – 1960.

4.28 More recently Professor Glyn Davis (2004) has suggested that in the future, Australia's higher education system might contain three broad tiers of institutions:

- colleges offering diplomas and Associated Degrees in vocational fields, with a variety of public, private and community forms;
- teaching only institutions across a variety of disciplines, industries and faith communities, operating as a single campus within a region or delivering courses nationally using advanced teaching technologies. Again there would be a mix of public and private ownership with all meeting national accreditation and quality standards; and
- research universities, both public and private, meeting standards for teaching and research excellence and the only institutions awarding research degrees at Masters and PhD level.

4.29 An important underlying issue is the challenge of reaping the benefits for students from improved choice arising from greater flexibility and diversity in Australia's higher education system, without reducing the quality of our system. A spectrum of universities that included appropriately quality assured teaching intensive universities and research intensive universities could contribute to fostering diversity and raise the prominence of teaching and of research. This would be in keeping with the higher education reform agenda that has placed excellence in learning and teaching alongside the delivery of research excellence. It would be important in a more diverse sector that perceptions of quality are informed by freely accessible information about performance and outcomes for each institution.

## Specialist institutions

4.30 Protocol 1 requires that an Australian university has "authorisation by law to award higher education qualifications across a range of fields and to set standards for those qualifications which are equivalent to Australian and international standards". The Protocols do not quantify the range of fields required, but a JCHE recommendation to MCEETYA in 2003 was that there should be a minimum of three fields of study to qualify for the title university and that these fields of study should be represented by a depth of study and student load at the bachelor level, with study to the masters and doctoral level in fields of research strength. Under the Australian Standard Classification of Education, there are 12 broad fields of study (examples include health, education and natural and physical sciences).

4.31 Guthrie recommended that the field of education requirements for a university be formalised in the Protocols (Recommendation 7). He separately raised the question of whether the Protocols should allow for more specialised institutions, which teach and research only in more limited fields than described above.

4.32 Some sector support for specialist universities was evident in the Crossroads Review:

*Individual universities should determine their own best balance between specialisation and diversity within their institutions. Decisions to specialise and focus should be made according to the university's mission, its recognised strengths and capabilities, its competitors in the field – international, national and local - and the local environment in which it operates. For this to produce results universities need more freedom to invest in areas of specialisation and to set fees that reflect the quality of and demand for their specialist courses as well as for the other courses that they offer. (Murdoch University, Submission 156, p.1)*

4.33 Nevertheless, concern has been raised that “specialisation must not be used to create institutions of very differential status and prestige” (University of Tasmania, submission 98, p.5). The Guthrie Report summarised sector views of specialist institutions:

*Opinions on whether the Australian system should contain such ‘specialist universities’ are varied but there is some support for the notion provided they are the type of high-quality, specialised institution found in some other countries. (Guthrie, p 15).*

4.34 There are universities in other countries with international reputations combining teaching and research in specialised areas, for example:

- the Rockefeller University in the US is a private, specialised research university, which evolved from a medical research institute established in 1901 to offer graduate education and broaden its research mandate to include biochemistry, physics and mathematical biology;
- the IT University of Copenhagen was established in 1999 and is a post-graduate teaching and research-based university that focuses on both theoretical and applied research. While the university teaches a part time Diploma level course aimed at students who participate in the workforce and also makes single subject courses available if courses are not fully enrolled, there is no undergraduate teaching; and
- the University of the Arts London has been formed recently from an amalgamation of five well regarded colleges concerned with the arts, design, fashion, and communication. The university has over 24,000 students and offers undergraduate, postgraduate and research degrees.

4.35 In considering whether specialist institutions should be permitted to operate within the framework of the Protocols, the appropriate title for such institutions and the criteria which would pertain to their operations would need to be determined.

## Private and for-profit institutions

4.36 The Guthrie report observed that additional governance arrangements may be required for for-profit higher education providers. In particular, the report suggested that for-profit institutions may need

to guarantee free enquiry and academic freedom in their governance, and provide a measure of independence to operate the educational enterprise without undue influence from the owners and shareholders. While Australia has had no experience to date of a functioning 'for-profit' university, world-wide trends suggest there may soon be the growth here that is already being seen overseas.

- 4.37 Protocol 1 includes a commitment to free enquiry as a criterion, and some examination of the governance and finances of private institutions (for profit and not for profit) occurs in most States and Territories under National Protocol 3. A comprehensive coverage of requirements for private and for-profit bodies remains to be developed.
- 4.38 For example, there is currently no requirement for privately established providers of higher education, other than those seeking access to Commonwealth support, to have in place either internal or external complaint handling mechanisms. This may be an issue of concern because, unlike publicly established bodies, private institutions are not subject to scrutiny by State Ombudsmen or through Freedom of Information legislation and other forms of administrative review to which public entities are subject. The US accreditation system takes quality assurance to greater lengths to ensure that the rights of consumers and other stakeholders are protected within private institutions.
- 4.39 Similar levels of consumer protection appear desirable across the public and private sectors. In any debate about a greater diversity of institutional type, consideration needs to be given to whether criteria additional to private and/or for-profit providers need to be put in place across all the Protocols.

## Authorisation by government to accredit own courses

- 4.40 A number of higher education institutions have been operating successfully for many decades and have had their courses re-accredited by governments on several occasions. Some of these aspire to be authorised by government to accredit their own courses, with a smaller number seeking university status in the longer term.
- 4.41 There are 4 non-university institutions already in Australia that are authorised by government to accredit their own courses (i.e. self-accrediting). These are the Australian Maritime College, the Australian Film Television and Radio School, Melbourne College of Divinity and Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education. The Guthrie report notes that these are "regarded as an historic anomaly rather than as a designation to which an institution can aspire" (p.15). A new Protocol might be developed that allows experienced non self-accrediting higher education providers to apply to become self-accrediting.

*A provider could begin as a non self-accrediting higher education entity, with each course requiring approval, then after establishing a track record of quality operation, such a provider could be granted self-accrediting status if certain specified criteria were met. The final stage would then be approval to operate as a university or a specialist university-level institution. Whilst some providers might use this as a pathway towards higher status, others would choose different final points depending on their scope of operation and their aspirations. Each stage would be subject to its own approval processes and criteria. (Guthrie p.28)*

- 4.42 A key issue for consideration here is how the enduring capacity of a provider or institution to accredit their own courses can be assessed. The strength of an institution's quality assurance systems would be critical, including academic structures, benchmarking and resource bases to maintain academic standards. Appropriate external audit similar to that applied to universities may be needed to ensure these efforts continue over time.
- 4.43 Guthrie suggests that such a status would permit an entity to describe itself as 'a self-accrediting institution' but not use the university title (Recommendation 25). An alternative approach is that jurisdictions should consider streamlined accreditation procedures for such higher education providers.
- 4.44 The terminology of "self-accrediting and non self-accrediting institutions" is confusing to people outside Australian higher education including many from overseas who are not clear whether the terms refer to an institution or the courses within the institution or both. Acceptance of a more diverse system with clearer nomenclature would be useful in portraying our system overseas and for our own students and parents to understand their options.

## Impacts of diversification

- 4.45 Expansion of enrolments, the greater role of private providers, changes to the resource base for higher education, global trends and the push towards a market based system are all changing the basic assumptions about and definitions of universities and higher education embodied in the National Protocols. Discussion of how governments and stakeholders should respond raises issues about the potential impacts of changing the current framework as well as retaining it.

## The benefits of change

- 4.46 King (2004: 119) summarises the general benefits of institutional diversity in a higher education system as that it:
- "increases the range of choices available to learners;
  - makes higher education available to virtually everyone, despite differences among individuals;
  - matches education to the needs, goals, learning styles, speed and ability of individual students;
  - enables institutions to select their own missions and to confine their activities to those consistent with their location, resources, levels of instruction and clientele;
  - responds to the pressures of a society that is itself characterised by great complexity and diversity; and
  - becomes a precondition of college and university freedom and autonomy because the greater the differences among institutions, the more difficult it is for a central authority to convert them into instruments of indoctrination rather than of education".
- 4.47 A number of these benefits can be related to the general theme of enhanced institutional effectiveness through greater differentiation. This differentiation may be in teaching (in particular fields or levels of study) or in research or scholarship. Allowing a greater variety of institutions might provide the opportunity to further strengthen the importance of teaching and research, both in new types of institutions as well as in existing ones which face increased competition.

4.48 A further benefit may relate to our international position. Compared to developments overseas, Australia appears to have a less diverse higher education system than in other countries with comparable systems. Allowing and encouraging increased diversity in institutional type and mission would represent an adaptation to changes in the rest of the world that would underpin our share of the international education export market as well as enable us to adjust as the forms of international higher education provision evolve. Not to take these opportunities now may have long term consequences for our ability to compete internationally.

## Managing diversification effectively

4.49 A number of risks need to be carefully managed if Australia decides to proceed with greater diversification in the Protocols. For example, amending the Protocols to allow for a greater diversity of institutions might not achieve its intended outcome if the existing relative status of teaching and research remains unchanged.

4.50 In considering the factors that have brought about convergence in the types of universities in the UK, King argues for a perspective he calls “competitive realism”:

*Although universities vary in status, capabilities and attraction, functionally they are very similar. The resultant structure generated by the actions of individual universities rewards those that adapt most closely to what is required to succeed. And that is research based status and strong market appeal to the best performing students. In market systems universities do not become more specialised and expert at their particular niche... Rather they converge and try to become alike – mainly through the process of the newer, less prestigious universities seeking to emulate their so-called betters (King 2004: 138).*

4.51 King notes that the hierarchies of status around teaching and learning are highly resistant to change. He also cautions that the pursuit of diversity “is a chimera that may be best put away in favour of regulatory and market incentives for innovative risk taking” (King 2004: 41). Guthrie proposes that an open market public policy is the most likely way that institutional diversity may be significantly enhanced (Guthrie 2004:33), but acknowledges that the form of such policy is matter for careful deliberation.

4.52 In an open market, it would be a decision for the existing institutions in the sector whether or not to pursue opportunities to diversify under the new arrangements. It is acknowledged that it is not easy for complex organisations like universities to suddenly specialise by changing their mission and structure, given the costs of capital investment, changes in the policy environment and well settled internal and external views of what a university should be doing (King 2004:136). However, limiting change to new providers would be unfair to existing institutions and ensure that change would be slow to have an impact on the sector as a whole.

4.53 A related issue to be managed is student expectations of pathways between institutions, especially in relation to credit transfer between higher education institutions and from VET to higher education. King (2004: 40) notes the well-established credit transfer system in the US that helps underpin greater institutional diversity in that country, especially for transfer between multi-level systems such as that

in California. Australian higher education already faces considerable challenges in improving credit transfer and articulation and consideration would need to be given to how any adverse impacts could be minimised.

## Conclusion

- 4.54 This section has explored the potential role of revised National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes in supporting further innovation and diversity within Australian higher education. The world trend for more flexibility in the combinations of teaching and research which define a university has been discussed in some depth.
- 4.55 Several forms of institutional diversity have been proposed, including consideration of the specific combinations of teaching, scholarship and research which should define universities and other types of higher education institutions in Australia; and whether there should be 'specialist' institutions covering a narrow field of study in-depth rather than a wide range of disciplines. The desirable regulatory requirements which should pertain to for-profit institutions and the scope to create pathways for non self-accrediting institutions to progress to self-accrediting or university status over time have also been canvassed.
- 4.56 Various potential benefits and risks of changing the current framework have been noted, the most significant being how to maintain our global competitiveness and assure that the quality of our system is maintained.
- 4.57 The information presented sets the scene for further discussion by stakeholders of how governments should respond to the challenge of a changed global environment for higher education.

## 5 QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Given the changed environment for higher education in Australia and globally, is there a need to accommodate a broader range of institutions in the National Protocols?
  - What should the range of institutions be and what should they be called?
  - Would specifically providing for teaching or research intensive institutions lead to greater diversity?
  - If so, what criteria should be set so that the quality of outcomes is appropriate in whatever institutions are approved?
  - Are further criteria required in the Protocols to better assure the quality of the higher education system?
- Should the National Protocols accommodate specialised institutions?
  - Should such institutions be called universities or should they have another title?
  - What criteria should be set related to their breadth and depth of teaching, scholarship and research?
- Should the National Protocols provide for different ways of regulating private and for-profit higher education institutions and, if so, on what basis?
  - What additional criteria should private and for-profit universities and other providers be required to meet in relation to governance, academic freedom, financial independence, consumer protection and other issues?
- Should a higher education institution that has demonstrated over time its capacity to achieve re-accreditation of its courses be able to seek authorisation to accredit its own courses?
  - What criteria should they be required to meet to demonstrate this capacity?
  - What title should such an institution have?
- What nomenclature would be appropriate to designate the different types of institutions within a restructured National Protocols?
  - If the Protocols were restructured to provide for greater diversity of institutional types, how should existing institutions be treated?
- Are there any issues raised in Appendix B that you wish to address?
- Are there any other issues that should be taken into account apart from the above?

## APPENDIX A: RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GUTHRIE REVIEW

Recommendation 1. That MCEETYA (through the JCHE) develop as soon as possible nationally agreed processes, criteria and guidelines that will enable a revised set of the National Protocols to be implemented in a consistent way across all jurisdictions.

Recommendation 2. That at an appropriate time, JCHE commission an independent audit to look concurrently at Accreditation Agencies in all jurisdictions to report on the level of national consistency in the implementation of the Protocols.

Recommendation 3. That MCEETYA (through the JCHE) should organise a national workshop/conference in 2005 to discuss the Australian definitions of 'university' and 'higher education', and to discuss the desired profile and characteristics of Australian universities and HE into the future.

Recommendation 4.

- (a) That a National Register of assessment panel members for Protocol 1 be established and hosted by a body such as AUQA, who could provide training for such panels;
- (b) that membership of such panels include persons from the commercial sector and that consideration be given to include members from overseas.

Recommendation 5. That the existing criterion for research in Protocol 1 be re-written as follows:

*a culture of sustained scholarship and research, extending from that which informs inquiry and teaching and learning, to the creation of new knowledge and original creative endeavour.*

Recommendation 6. That the criterion for research in Protocol 1 be added to as follows:

- (a) that scholarship of learning and teaching is required across all fields of study offered, and that research representing the full range (as defined by ABS) is required within the institution, including research doctoral programs in areas of research strength;
- (b) that for a new university the research performance at the initial five year review, including performance in postgraduate research awards, should be at least within the lower quartile for similar performance of all Australian universities.

Recommendation 7. That the criterion for Protocol 1 on 'breadth of study' be amended as follows:

*that a new university is required to have at least three fields of study (as defined by ASCED) at commencement, all with bachelors programs and with masters and doctoral programs in at least one of those fields. Growth plans for the university should include further developments within the initial three fields of study and/or development in additional fields of study.*

Recommendation 8. That an additional criterion for Protocol 1 be added as follows:

- (a) that the governance structure of a university shall fall within the National Governance Protocols for Higher Education Providers (2004);

- (b) that the governing body of a university, not-for-profit or for-profit, must operate as an independent policy-making body, and is required to have a majority of members who are without any contractual, employment or ownership interests in the university.

Recommendation 9. That an additional criterion be added to Protocol 1 as follows:

*that the constitution and/or policies of a private university should contain procedures for staff and student grievances no less in scope than those practised in Australian public universities*

Recommendation 10. That additional guidelines concerning academic staff be added to Protocol 1, as follows:

- (a) that the proportion of academic staff with higher degrees in a new university should be at least within the lower quartile for Australian universities;
- (b) that the appointment of staff in the establishment phase of a new university should take account of the necessary advanced planning and preparation that has to be done.

Recommendation 11. That additional guidelines concerning financial matters be added to Protocol 1, as follows:

- (a) that the initial monies available for the establishment phase of a new university must be demonstrably adequate to sustain it for its initial growth phase, and that, if relevant, there is an appropriate level of underwriting available;
- (b) that the financial plans for a new university must contain detailed sensitivity analyses and a full risk assessment as a part of the financial model.

Recommendation 12. That an additional criterion be added to Protocol 1, as follows:

*a new private university must have in place before enrolling any students, a legally binding agreement with one or more equivalent institutions, such that should the university cease to operate for whatever reason, its enrolled students may complete their current year of study at one of the equivalent institutions, and be guaranteed re-enrolment in subsequent years of their award programs at the same institution by payment of the appropriate fees and charges. The new private university must ensure that students in the current year of study pay no further fees and charges, either by making this part of the legally binding agreement with the equivalent institution(s), or by obtaining separately an appropriate tuition assurance guarantee.*

Recommendation 13. That clause 1.19 in Protocol 1 be amended as follows:

*for proposed new universities where the assessment is based on a plan, rather than on an existing institution, approval shall be given to operate on a provisional basis for a period of a maximum of five years from commencement of operation, where the review panel and the responsible accrediting authority believe there is a high probability of the criteria being fully satisfied. The accrediting body may establish particular conditions for the operation of the university during this period. An audit by AUQA shall be held in the penultimate year of the provisional period prior to the jurisdictional consideration of re-accreditation.*

Recommendation 14. That clause 1.20 in Protocol 1 be replaced as follows:

*that a new university should demonstrate external input to provide academic, administrative and quality assurance guidance; such input could be provided by more than one experienced university(ies) and/or organisation(s).*

Recommendation 15. That Protocol 1 is amended to cover the case of an overseas university or other overseas HE institution that wishes to be recognised as a university in Australia.

Recommendation 16. That Protocol 3 is amended to cover the case of an overseas university or other overseas HE institution that wishes to offer recognised Australian awards, but only to be recognised in Australia as a non self-accrediting HE provider.

Recommendation 17. That Protocol 2 be re-written to cover applications by an overseas university or other overseas HE institution wishing to offer its own awards in Australia, when such awards are not recognised in Australia, nor itself wishing to be recognised as an Australian university. The terms of the (new) Protocol 2 should require that all overseas providers have their local delivery arrangements scrutinised before approval to operate is given. If the overseas university or other higher education institution is accredited in its own jurisdiction by a recognised accrediting agency then it should have access to a streamlined process.

Recommendation 18. That additional criteria be added to Protocol 3, as follows:

- (a) that academic staff active in the delivery of undergraduate and postgraduate coursework awards are required to be involved in scholarship related to their discipline in particular, and to teaching and learning in general;
- (b) that academic staff active in the delivery of postgraduate research awards are required to be involved in scholarship and research related to their discipline;
- (c) that the institution be required to provide evidence on a regular basis of its support for its academic staff in their scholarly and/or research activities.

Recommendation 19. That all States and Territories should have, if not already in place, distinct and separate processes for the accreditation of HE and VET awards.

Recommendation 20. That all States and Territories implement, as a matter of priority, the outcomes of the JCHE study on concurrent accreditation. The aim among States and Territories should be for mutual recognition of courses already approved in another jurisdiction within Australia and for streamlined processes for approval of local delivery arrangements for institutions and courses already approved in another State or Territory.

Recommendation 21. That Protocol 4 should be re-written as suggested in the text of this report to clarify its scope and intent, to emphasise the principle that an institution is responsible for the quality assurance of its own awards, to include partnership arrangements made by both universities and other self-accrediting institutions, and to include the full range of offshore and within Australia partnerships.

Recommendation 22. That under Protocol 4 there should be an additional criterion as follows:

*that for an award badged by a university, but offered and taught through a partner, the criteria recommended for research/scholarship of academic staff under Protocol 3 (see Rec. 18 above) should be the minimum applied to the academic staff employed by the partner.*

Recommendation 23. That a Preamble to the National Protocols should define whether a university or an HE institution is 'operating in Australia'. The conduct of one or more of the following activities is considered to be 'operating in Australia':

- the registered office of the entity in Australia
- a business name registered in Australia
- having 'Australia', or 'Australian', or the name of a State or Territory in its business name, or by other words purporting to be Australian
- owning, leasing or renting physical premises or equipment in Australia
- conducting face-to-face classes or instructional delivery in Australia
- having an ".au" web site
- having an Australian contact address or phone number or renting a PO Box (or similar) in Australia
- employing (academic and/or administrative) staff in Australia
- possessing Australian assets (leased or owned)
- operating an Australian bank account for the purposes of collecting fees and or charges from students

but, that conducting none of the above activities, and only advertising in Australia, does not constitute 'operating', subject to limitations imposed by the Trade Practices Act and other mechanisms for consumer protection.

Recommendation 24. That MCEETYA (through the JCHE) should organise a workshop/conference for discussion of whether or not the Australian HE system should have added diversity by allowing for the creation of institutions that are 'specialist university-level institutions', with titles such as 'university college', 'university institute' or similar. The criteria for creation of such an institution could be of a form that defines it as one which fulfills all the criteria for 'a university', such as offering awards at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, including research doctorates, and conducting scholarship and research as required under Protocol 1, except that it cannot be called 'a university' because of its limited breadth of fields of study. This workshop/conference should be a part of that proposed in Recommendation 3.

Recommendation 25. That MCEETYA (through the JCHE) should consult with interested parties on whether a new Protocol might be developed that allows experienced non self-accrediting HE providers to apply to become self-accrediting; that such a status would allow no name change, but permit an entity to describe itself as 'a self-accrediting institution'.

Recommendation 26. That the title 'university college', 'university institute' (or similar) be considered for a new university for the initial provisional approval period. This should be one of the issues canvassed within the workshop/conference proposed in Recommendation 3.

Recommendation 27. That the National Protocols, including their implementation and effectiveness, be reviewed not later than during 2010.

## APPENDIX B: CONSISTENCY AND CLARITY IN THE CURRENT FRAMEWORK OF THE PROTOCOLS

The major issues arising from the Guthrie report for discussion under this heading are the scope for:

- improved accreditation authority processes;
- enhanced assessment and approval process for new universities;
- a rationalised structure and coverage of the protocols; and
- greater clarity regarding the meaning of “operating in Australia”.

Stakeholders may wish to address any of these recommendations.

### Improved accreditation authority processes

The Guthrie report made a number of recommendations to improve the process of accreditation. The major one related to the States and Territories implementing, as a matter of priority, the outcomes of the JCHE study on concurrent accreditation (Recommendation 20). The report also recommended that the aim should be for mutual recognition of courses already approved in another jurisdiction within Australia.

The report recommended that all States and Territories should have in place distinct and separate processes for the accreditation of higher education and VET awards (Recommendation 19). Accreditation agencies in some jurisdictions face resource constraints in developing and maintaining the required level of higher education expertise. One approach would be to explore the scope for increased collaboration between jurisdictions to improve the availability of expert advice when it is required.

Noting that applications for university status are infrequent, the report identified significant potential benefits in having some common membership of assessment panels to share previous experience and to increase the level of consistency of approach and interpretation over time and among States and Territories. A national register of assessment panel members for Protocol 1 would help build up an identified pool of expertise across the country (Recommendation 4).

The Guthrie report identified the need to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the Protocols through both an independent audit of the level of national consistency in their implementation across all jurisdictions in the short term (Recommendation 2), as well as a longer term review of their implementation and effectiveness not later than during 2010 (Recommendation 27).

### Enhanced assessment and approval processes for new universities

In discussing the requirements for applicants being assessed under Protocol 1 as new universities, the report made several recommendations. These included:

- specifying the information required to demonstrate financial sustainability in the initial growth phase, including a detailed sensitivity analysis and a full risk assessment (Recommendation 11);
- requiring a new private university to have in place before enrolling any students tuition assurance arrangements that protect students should the university cease to operate for whatever reason (Recommendation 12);

- where approval is granted on a provisional basis, requiring an audit by AUQA before re-accreditation is considered after 5 years (Recommendation 13); and
- making more specific the requirement that a new university should demonstrate external input to provide academic, administrative and quality assurance guidance (Recommendation 14).

## Rationalised structure and coverage of the protocols

The Guthrie report argues that National Protocol 2, which deals with overseas higher education institutions seeking to operate in Australia, does not adequately differentiate between the different ways in which overseas universities and higher education institutions might seek to operate here. These include operating as:

- an overseas institution or university offering its own overseas awards (such awards not being accredited in Australia) and not seeking recognition as an Australian university; or
- offering an award accredited in Australia, either as a recognised Australian university or as a recognised higher education provider.

To better accommodate this, the report made a number of recommendations which would have the effect of rationalising the scope of the individual Protocols including:

- an expanded coverage of Protocol 1 to refer explicitly to overseas universities or higher education institutions that wish to be recognised as a university in Australia (Recommendation 15);
- a revised Protocol 3 which refers to overseas universities or higher education institutions that wish to offer Australian awards by being recognised in Australia as a non self-accrediting higher education provider (Recommendation 16);
- the coverage of Protocol 2 to refer only to overseas universities or other higher education institutions that wish to offer their own awards in Australia, when such awards are not recognised through the above processes, with a streamlined process to apply if the overseas university or higher education institution is accredited in its own jurisdiction by a recognised accrediting agency (Recommendation 17); and
- Protocol 4 being rewritten to emphasise the principle that both universities and other self-accrediting institutions are responsible for the quality assurance of their own awards, including the full range of partnerships offshore and within Australia (Recommendation 21).

These changes would assist in ensuring that Australian and overseas providers seeking to operate in Australia were assessed through a similar process. This is especially applicable to private providers and would assist our compliance with free trade agreements with the USA and other countries which require non-discriminatory arrangements for private tertiary education.

## Greater clarity in the meaning of “operate in Australia”

The Guthrie report found that, although the term “to operate in Australia” is used extensively in the Protocols, there is no clear definition or common understanding of what this means. It also notes that the use of the internet as a delivery mechanism poses challenges for developing a workable definition.

The report recommends that a university or higher education institution should be considered to be ‘operating in Australia’ if it meets one or more of the following conditions (Recommendation 23):

- the registered office of the entity is in Australia;
- it has a business name registered in Australia;
- it has 'Australia', or 'Australian', or the name of a State or Territory in its business name, or by other words purports to be Australian;
- it owns, leases or rents physical premises or equipment in Australia;
- it conducts face-to-face classes or instructional delivery in Australia;
- it has an ".au" web site;
- it has an Australian contact address or phone number or rents a PO Box (or similar) in Australia;
- it employs (academic and/or administrative) staff in Australia;
- it possesses Australian assets (leased or owned); or
- it operates an Australian bank account for the purposes of collecting fees and or charges from students.

An important qualification to this proposed definition is that if the institution conducts none of the above activities and only advertises in Australia, then this should not constitute 'operating', subject to limitations imposed by the Trade Practices Act and other mechanisms for consumer protection.

## APPENDIX C: HIGHER EDUCATION FRAMEWORKS IN OTHER COUNTRIES

Higher education is delivered through a number of different models in overseas countries.

### The United States of America

The higher education sector in the United States is based on the Carnegie Classification and has a six tier structure. Under this classification system the Doctorate Granting institutions are mainly universities; Master Colleges and Universities offer courses up to Master's level but not doctorates; Baccalaureate and Associated Colleges offer Bachelor degrees; Community Colleges award Associate degrees and certificates; and specialised institutions such as theological schools, medical schools, art schools etc can offer a full range of awards but only in their area of expertise. Many of the institutions offering Bachelor awards and below are teaching only institutions.

The sector is diverse by student and institution and is highly decentralised in national terms. There are approximately 6,500 accredited degree granting and non-degree institutions. There is no consistent regulation of the title 'university' - some states have tight controls whilst others may not even make provision. State Governments, rather than the Federal Government, have primary responsibility for higher education and tend to more strictly control the title 'university' for publicly funded institutions than for private institutions not in receipt of funds provided by government.

Accreditation is carried out by private, non-profit organisations which are designed for this specific purpose. Overall, the title 'university' does not provide assurance of quality or accreditation. Most states do have some control over degree-awarding powers.

### The United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, the government has recently allowed teaching only universities (this only applies to England and Wales). The link between university title and research has been broken — institutions are now eligible for university designation regardless of whether they award research degrees or conduct research. 'Taught degree-awarding powers' remain a requirement for university title. Staff will be required 'to keep up' with research and scholarship in the subject they are teaching.

These recent decisions reduce the significance of research as a criterion for a university. It effectively breaks the nexus between teaching and research for university title. Additionally, the UK government has repealed the requirement that institutions seeking university status should be active in a range of disciplines.

In terms of accreditation, the UK government has now made degree-awarding powers and thus university title renewable for non-publicly funded institutions (renewal will occur approximately every six years or so and be subject to a satisfactory external quality audit). The criteria for a UK institution seeking to become a university are as follows:

- they must have been granted power to award 'taught degrees';

- there must normally be at least 4000 full equivalent higher education students with at least 3000 of these to be enrolled in degree level courses (including foundation degree programs); and
- the organisation must be able to demonstrate that it has regard to principles of good governance.

## Netherlands

The Netherlands operates a binary higher education system. This consists of 13 universities and approximately 54 Hogescholen (universities of professional education known as HBOs) which are government funded. Approximately 62 others do not receive any government funding. The Hogescholen are not allowed to refer to themselves as universities within the Netherlands. There are also a large number of private teaching institutes and organisations offering recognised certificates, diplomas and degrees. The majority of these are offered externally with little face to face teaching.

HBOs must have at least 700 students, except those which have teacher training as their sole activity, in which case a minimum of 250 students is required. Until 1990 academic staff in the HBO sector were involved in teaching only. In the early 1990s, some HBOs began contract research activities as a means of generating extra funding.

A National Accreditation Council was established on 1 January 2003 to ensure quality standards are satisfied. Accreditation is at the level of the individual study program rather than the institutional level. Accreditation is a precondition for government funding of a bachelor's or master's degree program. The National Accreditation Council is also required, by law, to accredit programs at institutions not funded by the government.

## Norway

The higher education sector in Norway is comprised of four public universities, six public specialised university institutions, twenty state university colleges and two national university colleges of the arts. All of these institutions conduct research and offer courses leading to academic degrees. There are also 26 private higher education institutions in Norway with recognised study programmes. The majority of students in Norway (about 90%) attend state institutions.

All institutions of higher education are subject to the authority of the Ministry of Education and Research. From 2003 the independent National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT) has responsibility for the accreditation and evaluation of higher education in Norway and is also responsible for assessing the quality of programmes and institutions.

Accreditation is divided into two specific areas, accreditation of the institution and accreditation of courses. Both private and state institutions are covered by the same standards for accreditation. Accredited institutions are the only bodies which have the right to call themselves accredited college, specialised university or university. Only courses which are accredited or recognised by NOKUT have recognition as higher education.

Universities and specialised universities can self-accredit their courses and do not need to apply to NOKUT for accreditation. University colleges can self-accredit courses up to Bachelor degree level. If they wish to establish or change Master or Doctoral level programs they must apply to NOKUT. Those institutions which are not in these three categories must apply to NOKUT each time they wish to establish new courses or makes substantial changes in their existing courses of higher education.

Most institutions which have been granted self-accrediting status are state institutions. From 1 January 2005 the Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology (a private institution) has been granted accreditation as a specialised university and so has self-accrediting powers.

## New Zealand

New Zealand has been undergoing reform to its higher education sector. On 17 September 2004 an Education Amendment Bill was tabled in the parliament which would give the Minister for Education the power to reject applications from institutions seeking to be established as a university, on the ground of 'national interest'. This means that the Minister must approve all applications for university title before any assessment of the application is made by the New Zealand Quality Agency.

The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) last year issued a discussion paper on the future role of tertiary education organisations which was seeking consultation on the various roles of different higher education providers. This discussion paper was, among other things, considering the effects following the deregulation of non-university degree awarding authority in 1990, and the growth to over 800 private training establishments and other tertiary education providers which include polytechnics and colleges.

The current criteria for establishment of higher education institutions in New Zealand can be found in Section 162 of the Education Act 1989. The characteristics that universities must have include: a primary concern with advanced learning with the principal aim being to develop intellectual independence; research and teaching that are closely interdependent with most teachers active in advancing knowledge; meeting international standards of research and teaching; being a repository of knowledge and expertise; and acting as both a critic and conscience of society. Universities are expected to provide a wide diversity of teaching and research particularly at a higher level.

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