Australia

Overview of Higher Education System
The Australian Government has significant financial and policy responsibility for higher education. State and territory governments retain major legislative responsibility. At a federal level, higher education policies and programmes are administered by the Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIICCSRTE).

In total there are 43 universities in Australia (37 public, four private, and two foreign universities). Universities are established or recognised under state and territory or Commonwealth legislation. The three main cycles of higher education lead to Bachelor, Master and Doctoral Degrees, but there are also non-degree undergraduate qualifications and postgraduate qualifications. Australia’s universities are self-governing and have autonomy to operate within the legislative requirements associated with their Australian Government funding (this autonomy extends to admission decisions). They are responsible for their own management structure, budgets, staffing, enrolments, course accreditation, quality assurance and curricula development.

In addition to the universities, there are around 150 higher education institutions (HEIs) in Australia registered by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) to offer particular higher education courses in a wide range of fields at all levels of higher education.

Quality Assurance
Quality assurance in Australia’s higher education sector is based on a strong partnership between the Australian Government, state and territory governments and the sector. The Higher Education Standards Framework is the benchmark against which TEQSA registers and evaluates HEIs. Universities and other self-accrediting HEIs accredit their own programs instead of seeking accreditation from TEQSA. These institutions must be registered by TEQSA and meet the requirements to be a self-accrediting institution.

TEQSA also monitors the provision of education and training services to international students in Australia through the Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000.

Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications
Recognition bodies that recognise foreign qualifications for study, employment and migration purposes (such as universities, professional assessing authorities, registration/licensing boards, state and territory governments) use the Australian Education International - National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition’s (AEI-NOOSR) advice and information. They take a range of factors into consideration when making recognition decisions, of which the comparability of an applicant’s overseas qualification is only one. Additional factors can include qualification content, occupational or research competencies/skills and work experience.

AEI-NOOSR’s assessment methodology is based on in-depth research and analysis of a range of quantitative and qualitative factors. Through the UNESCO recognition conventions, the Australian Government has committed to recognition at ‘face value’ unless substantial difference can be demonstrated.
AEI-NOOSR’s assessment methodology is flexible and considers many indicators to inform the decision of whether or not there are substantial differences between an overseas qualification and the educational level of an AQF qualification.

Issues and Challenges Concerning Foreign Qualifications Recognition

The Australian Government’s Australia in the Asian Century White Paper, released in October 2012, recognises the importance of improving Australia’s capabilities to engage with the Asian region. This includes encouraging more Australian students to study in Asia as part of their degree or qualification. The increasing emphasis on outbound mobility for Australian students requires renewed efforts to ensure that Australian qualifications are recognised in countries that Australian students wish to study in.

Resolving recognition and mobility barriers with countries that are yet to establish a National Information Centre has been challenging. A dedicated network for information-sharing will assist Australia in keeping up-to-date on education and recognition developments in the region, which is an on-going challenge for qualifications recognition.

Progress toward ratification of the Asia-Pacific Regional Convention

Australia tabled the Asia-Pacific Regional Convention in its Parliament on 14 May 2013. Ratification is expected to occur in early 2014.

Commitment to Information Sharing Mechanisms

Australia has a comprehensive entry on the UNESCO Portal to Recognised Higher Education Institutions and is willing to contribute relevant information to APARNET.

Support Services Offered by AEI-NOOSR

CEP Online
An online recognition tool and database of overseas education systems, institutions and qualifications. Also includes the recommended comparability of these qualifications. Used by decision-making bodies to understand the level of overseas qualifications.

Advisory service
An online service that provides assessment outcomes for complex qualifications that are not covered by CEP Online.

Professional development training
Assists recognition bodies in developing assessment policies and qualifications recognition skills.

Australia Country Education Profile (PDF) Provides full information on the Australian education system.

Educational assessments
Individuals with overseas qualifications seeking recognition for general purposes can apply to AEI-NOOSR for a formal educational assessment.

Australia’s National Information Centre

AEI-NOOSR

- Provides official information and advice on the comparability of overseas qualifications with Australian qualifications, using the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) as its benchmark.
- Provides information and advice to students and recognition bodies about the Australian higher education system as well as overseas education systems.
- Cooperates with overseas governments and decision-making organisations to resolve recognition issues facing Australian qualifications.

Focal Point Contact

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