

**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET  
SOCIAL SCIENCE/ HUMANITIES RESEARCH**

**The AgLTAS Project: A consensus approach to defining standards for learning outcomes and informing curricula design for Agriculture**

**Invitation**

You are invited to participate in a research study that aims to define standards for learning outcomes for Agriculture in Australian universities. The study is being conducted by:

The University of Tasmania:	Dr Tina Acuna, Professor Holger Meinke, Dr Richard Doyle, Dr Jo-Anne Kelder, Mrs Phoebe Bobbi
The University of Adelaide:	A/Prof Amanda Able, A/Prof Glenn McDonald
Charles Sturt University:	Dr Yann Guisard
The University of Western Sydney:	Professor Bill Bellotti, A/Prof Paul Wormell

**1. What is the purpose of the study?**

The purpose of the Ag-LTAS project is to develop a National Academic Standards Statement for Agriculture, aligned with the Science Standards Statement, which will encompass: 1) the nature and extent of the Agriculture discipline; 2) Threshold Learning Outcomes for Agriculture. National consensus will be achieved through consultation with academics, students and industry stakeholders and piloted across four Australian universities.

**2. Why have I been invited to participate in the study?**

You have been invited to participate in this study because of your capacity to offer insights into the process of developing and/or commenting upon academic standards in the Agriculture discipline in higher education in Australia.

**3. What does the study involve?**

Several Australian discipline groups have published Standards Statements, contributing to the national regulation and quality assurance framework currently being developed in the higher education sector. The Standards Statement for Science included a statement describing the nature and extent of science, a set of Threshold Learning Outcomes (TLOs) and explanatory notes on the interpretation of the TLOs. TLO statements represent threshold or minimum levels of achievement that are expected of a bachelor level graduate. The Ag-LTAS project aims to adapt the nationally agreed TLOs for Science to the specialist, Agriculture discipline. To develop Agriculture-specific TLOs we will consult with industry stakeholders as well as academics, students and the Australian Council of Deans of Agriculture. The resulting Standards Statement for Agriculture will be trialed to benchmark academic standards achieved in four universities that teach Agriculture and related disciplines, which will be disseminated as case-studies that will form the basis for the development of future Good Practice Guides.

**4. What will I have to do?**

We would like you to participate in a focus group discussion which will take between one to two hours and afterwards, handing in your written comments.

**It is important to understand that you participating in the workshop does not depend on you agreeing to provide your comments at the conclusion of the workshop and that you may withdraw your permission to have those**

**materials used at any time without any effect, and if you so wish, may request that any identifiable data you have supplied to date be withdrawn from the research.**

Participants will be non-identifiable if they choose not to record their name and contact details on the workshop materials they hand in at the conclusion of the workshop. Participants will have the option of including their contact details (and therefore be identifiable) on the workshop materials if they are willing to be contacted with follow-up questions to clarify the data for the project collected at the workshop or would like to be placed on a mailing list.

The researchers will be unable to link consent forms with workshop materials unless a name is provided on the workshop materials that are handed in. Participants will only be able to withdraw data after the workshops if they have provided their name on the materials that are handed in.

All information will be treated in a confidential manner, and your name will not be used in any publication arising out of the research. All of the research will be kept in a locked cabinet in the Project Office at the University of Tasmania. The data will be destroyed via secure disposal five years after the last publication from the research

#### **5. Are there any possible benefits from participating in this study?**

The intended outcomes from this study are: 1) Nationally-agreed Ag-LTAS statement (including the nature and extent of Agriculture and Agriculture TLO statements) to enable alignment of academic standards across universities; 2) Confidence among students that their degree reaches minimum standards, while each university can clearly promote what is unique about their degree offering as delivered; 3) A holistic appreciation amongst academics and industry of the agriculture curriculum taught at university with opportunity to improve: linkages between units/courses; learning pathways through the degree levels; provision of graduate training by industry; 4) A network of practice between universities and industry through shared engagement in the development of the Ag-LTAS statement.

#### **6. Are there any possible risks from participating in this study?**

There are no specific risks anticipated with participation in this study.

#### **7. What if I have questions about this research?**

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this study please feel free to contact the Project Leader, Dr Tina Acuna at [tina.acuna@utas.edu.au](mailto:tina.acuna@utas.edu.au) or Phone (03) 6226 7507. She will be happy to discuss any aspect of the research with you. Participants will be able to obtain a summary of the results of the research by contacting Tina Acuna after the completion of the project (towards mid 2015).

This study has been approved by the Tasmanian Social Science Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have concerns or complaints about the conduct of this study you should contact the Executive Officer of the HREC (Tasmania) Network on (03) 6226 7479 or email [human.ethics@utas.edu.au](mailto:human.ethics@utas.edu.au). The Executive Officer is the person nominated to receive complaints from research participants. You will need to quote [HREC H13526].

**Thank you for taking the time to consider this study.**

**If you wish to take part in it, please sign the attached consent form.**

**This information sheet is for you to keep.**