Australian Government

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency

TEQSA

Summary Report of the Consultation Process

TEQSA's 'Core +' Model for course (Re) accreditation

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

All higher education courses offered by registered providers without self-accrediting authority require accreditation and cyclical renewal of accreditation by TEQSA under provisions of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011 (TEQSA Act).

TEQSA is proposing to further develop the risk-based model for course accreditation for existing providers. The objectives of this improved model are to:

- build upon the 'Core +' Model that was successfully implemented for renewal of registration processes (and partially for course accreditation) following TEQSA's sector wide consultation in October 2013; and
- substantially reduce evidence requirements and application assessment times for low risk providers.

In the previous round of changes, TEQSA reduced evidence requirements for course accreditation applications from providers with a generally low risk profile.

The revised approach to course accreditation is intended for application against the current Higher Education Standards Framework (2011). TEQSA has also mapped the proposed new Higher Education Standards Framework onto the 'Core +' course accreditation model for future application.

1.2 Planned reforms of course accreditation

TEQSA intends to introduce a full 'Core +' Model of course accreditation in which applicants will address a sub-set of standards and provide a minimum core of evidence relating to these standards. Any extension beyond the core set of standards will be based on risk. The following principles will apply:

- **reducing the scope of assessment** for most providers based on TEQSA's risk assessment of the provider (including course level risk), regulatory history and history of higher education delivery
- **reducing the amount of evidence required** for most providers by tailoring assessment processes and application requirements, and drawing on TEQSA's accumulated information about a provider gained from TEQSA's assessment activities and national data collections
- **providing clearer guidance about the amount and nature of information required** to reduce the overall amount of information submitted, while maintaining an emphasis on provider choice as to the evidence considered most useful to submit to TEQSA; and
- **building upon the strengths of TEQSA's case management model** by supporting dialogue between providers and Case Managers in order to facilitate streamlining and tailoring of requirements.

Under the improved 'Core +' Model for course accreditation, providers with a sound history of higher education delivery and no significant compliance or risk concerns will benefit from a reduced scope of assessment (requiring less evidence and information at time of application) compared to those with a limited track record of higher education delivery or with compliance or risk concerns.

1.3 Consultation

On 23 March 2015, TEQSA released a Consultation Paper to seek feedback from the higher education sector on TEQSA's proposed 'Core +' Model for course (re)accreditation. The Consultation Paper proposes to further reduce evidence requirements for course accreditation and re-accreditation by restricting core requirements to a sub-set of particular Standards and by assessing risk using indicators more closely related to an individual course as well as an organisation.

The paper posed 2 questions seeking feedback on TEQSA's proposed approach and whether the proposed core standards and evidence requirements are considered appropriate.

- **Question A1:** Do you agree with TEQSA's proposed approach for the introduction of a 'Core +' Model for course accreditation and renewal of course accreditation? If not, why, and what would you propose instead?
- **Question A2:** Are the proposed core standards (Tables 1 and 2) and evidence requirements as listed at Attachment B appropriate? If not, why, and what would you propose instead?

Information about the Consultation Paper was made available on the TEQSA website and sent to:

- each registered Higher Education Provider, and
- eight sector peak representative bodies: Universities Australia (UA), Council of Private Higher Education (COPHE), Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET); TAFE Directors Australia (TDA); National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU); National Union of Students (NUS); Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations Incorporated (CAPA); and Council of International Students Australia (CISA).

2. Purpose

This report provides an overview of key views expressed through the consultation process and TEQSA's response to the feedback received.

This report does not attempt to detail all feedback received by TEQSA during the consultation but, rather, highlights feedback commonly raised and how this feedback will be reflected in TEQSA's approach to its 'Core +' Model for course accreditation. TEQSA would like to acknowledge the time and effort spent as well as the very constructive feedback provided through this process, and to thank all the providers and individuals involved for their contributions.

3. Overview

3.1 Proposed Approach

All respondents supported TEQSA's proposed approach to introduce a 'Core +' standards model for course accreditation and renewal of course accreditation. Respondents welcomed the streamlined nature of the approach, highlighting improved efficiency while reducing regulatory burden for the provider, and in particular reduction of costs, time and resources. Respondents also highlighted their appreciation of the emphasis placed by the proposed model on dialogue between the Case Manager and the provider.

3.2 Sector Response to the Proposed Core Standards and Evidence Requirements

TEQSA received a total of twenty-one formal responses to the two questions posed in the consultation paper.

Summary of Responses to Question A1:

Do you agree with TEQSA's proposed approach for the introduction of a 'Core +' Model for course accreditation and renewal of course accreditation? If not, why, and what would you propose instead?

- All twenty-one respondents supported the proposal to apply the proposed 'Core +' Model to course accreditation and renewal of course accreditation.
- Some additional suggestions were proposed by respondents including:
  - clear timeframes for supplying, and responding to, information would help ensure the benefits of the model are maximized.
  - it would be extremely helpful for providers to meet with their case managers at least six months prior to the application due date to finalise the assessment scope.
  - the 'Core +' Model which builds on the communication between Case Manager and provider will be a good way forward to reduce the regulatory burden for providers.
  - the proposed new reforms will facilitate a shorter timeframes.

Summary of Responses to Question A2:

Are the proposed core standards (Tables 1 and 2) and evidence requirements as listed at **Attachment B** appropriate? If not, why, and what would you propose instead?

- The twenty-one respondents generally supported the proposed core standards and evidence requirements for both accreditation and renewal of accreditation.
- Some additional suggestions were proposed by respondents including:
  - requests for further explanation of terms such as: professional equivalency; benchmarking; unit outline; and scholarship etc.
  - A request for the online forms available via the portal to be revised to align with the 'Core +' Model.

4. TEQSA reponse

- The proposed timing (demonstrated in the process diagram – Appendix 1) anticipates that providers will be provided with a clear list of evidence requirements approximately six months prior to the application submission date.
- The proposed model, will build upon TEQSA's existing Case Management model.

- TEQSA will develop revised online forms to reflect the requirements of the 'Core +' Model which will be made available through provider portals.
- In relation to requests for explanation of terms. TEQSA is committed to further development of its Guidance Notes. TEQSA Guidance Notes have been developed in relation to a range of frequently used terminology such as: such as: professional equivalency; benchmarking; course approval, design and delivery; scholarship etc. TEQSA Guidance Notes are available to providers on the TEQSA website: http://www.teqsa.gov.au/for-providers/provider-resources
- In response to feedback received, TEQSA proposes to incorporate a standard request for evidence relating to English language requirements for the purpose of Admission. A revised list of proposed standards and evidence requirements has been included at Appendix 2.

5. Next steps

Following consideration of the positive feedback received on the Consultation Paper, TEQSA proceeded to trial the proposed new process with a small group of providers.

The TEQSA 'Core +' Project Team will gather feedback from the trial participants (both participating providers and case managers) with a view to assessing the effectiveness of the proposed new process (see Appendix 1).

Pending a successful outcome to the trial, TEQSA proposes to implement the new 'Core +' Model for course accreditations and re accreditations against the current Higher Education Standards Framework (2011) for all existing (non SAA) providers in September 2015.

Further amendments to guides and forms will also be undertaken once the proposed new Higher Education Standards have been approved.

Appendix 1:

Overview of (re) accreditation process and primary responsibility for each stage

Stage 1: Clarify application requirements with your case manager

Renewal of Course Accreditation (6 months prior to application due date) or Course Accreditation (upon notification by provider of intention to submit application)

Core Requirements if:

No significant provider or course-related risks; no recent or outstanding compliance issues; history of successful course applications to TEQSA in relevant field at relevant AQF level

Extra Requirements if:

Identified provider or course-related risks; recent or outstanding compliance issues; limited or poor history of course applications to TEQSA in relevant field at relevant AQF level; course in new field, higher level.

Stage 2: Letter of confirmation from TEQSA

Within two weeks of Stage One, TEQSA writes to the provider notifying the provider of the scope of assessment and evidence requirements for the planned application.

Stage 3: Provider submits application to TEQSA

The application is submitted via the TEQSA Provider Portal by the due date.

Stage 4: Application Assessment by TEQSA

TEQSA assesses the application then notifies the provider of the outcome of the assessment.

Stage 5: TEQSA updates the National Register

Appendix 2:

Core Standards: Course Accreditation Existing Provider (Table 1)

CORE STANDARDS	MINIMUM EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS (ATTACHMENTS)

1. COURSE DESIGN
 	
(PCAS: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7)
	- Course proposal as provided to the academic governance body
	  ○ including rationale, pathways, duration & course structure
	- Table showing the alignment of course and unit learning outcomes and assessment against the AQF specifications
	- Unit outlines (unit overview, unit learning outcomes, assessment tasks, student workload and references)
	- Course advisory committee meeting minutes and academic governing body minutes showing final approval
	  ○ external expert reports if any
	- Course rules for progression including any pre-requisites

2. COURSE RESOURCING (PCAS: 2.1, 2.4)	- List of specific resource requirements and specialist resources (if any) - Information for prospective students that includes course design, course structure, delivery sites, application date, credit arrangements, pathways to employment or further study
3. ADMISSION CRITERIA (PCAS: 3.1, 3.2, 3.3)	- Course admission criteria (including articulation, RPL and credit arrangements and English language requirements) - Admission procedures for applications that do not meet admission requirements (if applicable)
4. TEACHING AND LEARNING (PCAS: 4.1, 4.2)	- Workforce plan - Staff professional equivalency policy - Evidence of (existing and prospective) staff scholarship
5. ASSESSMENT AND OUTCOMES (PCAS: 5.1, 5.5)	- Plans for external moderation/benchmarking of student assessment - Reports of professional accreditation body (if any) and provider response
6. COURSE MONITORING AND REVIEW No core standards specified	No core evidence specified

Core Standards: Renewal of Accreditation (Table 2)

CORE STANDARDS	MINIMUM EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS (ATTACHMENTS)
1. COURSE DESIGN (PCAS: 1.1, 1.2, 1.6, 1.7)	- Summary of material changes to the course since the last accreditation - Table showing the alignment of course and unit learning outcomes and assessment against the AQF specifications - Course proposal including course review report as provided to the academic governance body - Unit outlines (for reference) - Rationale, duration & course structure (if not included in course review report)
2. COURSE RESOURCING (PCAS: 2.1, 2.4)	- A list of academic staff (including academic leaders) and their qualifications - List of specific resource requirements and specialist resources (if any) - Information for prospective students that includes course design, course structure, delivery sites, application date, credit arrangements, pathways to employment or further study
3. ADMISSION CRITERIA (PCAS: 3.2)	- English language requirements (may be included in other documents)
4. TEACHING AND LEARNING No core standards specified	No core evidence specified
5. ASSESSMENT AND OUTCOMES (PCAS: 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4)	- Sample course performance reports (including the data specified in PCAS 5.4) and evidence of response (e.g. minutes of meetings) - Minutes or other records of moderation meetings
6. COURSE MONITORING AND REVIEW (PCAS: 5.5, 5.6, 6.1)	- Course advisory committee meeting minutes and academic governance body minutes showing final approval - Reports of any professional accreditation body, individual external academic expert reports, other internal and external course review reports (if applicable and if available) and provider response