



TEQSA UPDATE, FEBRUARY 2013

Welcome to the first TEQSA Update for 2013. The TEQSA Update provides information to providers in the higher education sector about TEQSA's regulatory framework, policies and requirements. It also contains news about recent activities and upcoming events.

TEQSA provider briefing – Melbourne, Thursday 14 March

The first provider briefing for 2013 will be held at the Melbourne Conference and Exhibition Centre, 1 Convention Centre Place, South Wharf.

These briefings have proven to be a valuable way for TEQSA to meet with higher education providers to outline TEQSA's objectives and operations.

The March briefing will include presentations on TEQSA's evidence-based approach to regulation, the risk assessment process, and quality assessments. A representative from the Higher Education Standards Panel will discuss its review of the Threshold Standards. There will be an opportunity to engage with Commissioners in a dedicated Q&A session, and there will be an allocated time to meet with your Case Manager.

Invitations have been sent by email to providers. Registration is required for attendance and providers have been invited to register up to three (3) representatives. Registration closes at 5.00pm EST on Tuesday, 5 March 2013.

If you need further information or help with registration, contact TEQSA on 1300 739 585 or email enquiries@teqsa.gov.au

Quality Assessment – third party arrangements

TEQSA has released the Terms of Reference for its first quality assessment, focusing on third party arrangements.

Quality assessments are an important part of TEQSA's mandate. Our aim is to identify and encourage good practice in providers' third party practices. The quality assessment process will also identify areas of systemic risk for the sector, and provide guidance and advice on how these can be addressed.

This is the first time a comprehensive assessment of third party arrangements has been undertaken across the Australian higher education sector. Third party arrangements exist in many areas in the higher education sector, and with this in mind, TEQSA has adopted a phased approach.

For phase one of its assessment, TEQSA will survey all higher education providers in three areas:

- ▶ Provision of student services;
- ▶ Course design development and approval; and
- ▶ Course delivery (teaching, learning and assessment), and management.

It is anticipated that the survey will be sent to providers in March 2013. More information about quality assessments and the Terms of Reference is available on the TEQSA website at <http://www.teqsa.gov.au/for-providers/quality-assessments>.

Provider Information Request 2013

TEQSA would like to thank providers for their responses to the 2012 Provider Information Request (PIR). We acknowledge the high level of cooperation and goodwill from providers throughout this process. If you have any comments or feedback on the 2012 PIR process, please send an email to collections@teqsa.gov.au.

Information regarding the 2013 PIR will be sent to providers by 31 July, with responses due by 31 October. The 2013 PIR is due a month earlier than the 2012 request, however, providers will still have three full months in which to submit their responses. Providers are reminded that the provision of data in response to the PIR is mandatory, and timeliness and accuracy in reporting are very important.

The 2013 PIR will not vary in any substantial way from the 2012 collection.

Risk Assessments

The first annual risk assessment cycle commenced in November 2012 and will continue to progress over the next few months. As the first step in the process, a 'Preliminary Risk Assessment' is sent to the provider for comment, before TEQSA finalises the provider's risk profile. Any follow-up actions are determined on a case-by-case basis.

TEQSA will be undertaking a review of the Regulatory Risk Framework in the second half of 2013, to capture learnings from its first cycle of implementation. It is envisaged that the review will provide the opportunity to fine tune the details of implementation, incorporating feedback from the sector.

Further information about TEQSA's Regulatory Risk Framework is available on our website at <http://www.teqsa.gov.au/regulatory-approach/regulatory-risk-framework>.

Multi-sector streamlining

A high level TEQSA-ASQA taskforce (established under a Memorandum of Understanding in late 2011) has been working to establish a co-ordinated 'whole of provider' approach to the regulation of providers that deliver both vocational education and training and higher education. The taskforce has made considerable progress in streamlining regulatory processes for multi-sector providers.

Since July 2012, multi-sector providers have had a single point of contact for applications to deliver education services to overseas students studying in Australia (ESOS). A joint TEQSA-ASQA team has been receiving and processing ESOS applications from multi-sector providers using a standard procedure to capture and maintain common data, and to designate regulator responsibility for CRICOS courses. Under this new arrangement, applications have continued to be assessed, and decisions made by the relevant regulator.

The taskforce has also initiated a project aimed at developing a consolidated approach to registering and renewing the registration of providers under the TEQSA and ESOS Acts.

Further opportunities to streamline regulatory approaches for multi-sector providers in the medium to longer-term are also being explored. TEQSA will provide regular updates on progress in this area.

TEQSA and the Australian Qualifications Framework

TEQSA has recently published a 'questions and answers' document outlining the Agency's relationship with the Australian Qualifications Framework Council.

The document explains how TEQSA applies the AQF in the context of the Threshold Standards and our regulatory principles, and addresses in detail a range of further questions raised by providers in various forums last year. It is available on the TEQSA website at <http://www.teqsa.gov.au/for-providers/frequently-asked-questions-providers>.

CRICOS registration of courses with specialisations

Accurate and transparent information on CRICOS, about courses available to overseas students, supports key objectives of the ESOS Act relating to the protection of consumer interests, the reputation of Australia's education sector, and student visa integrity.

TEQSA has worked with higher education providers with a view to allowing greater flexibility in the way these courses are registered on CRICOS while still meeting ESOS objectives.

Consistent with previous TEQSA advice, providers must continue to separately register specialist courses which have a distinct course structure and concentration of study and where the specialisation is included in both the award title and on the testamur.

TEQSA has now determined that specialisations can be registered as a single course of study on CRICOS, if all pathways through the course lead to the same award and share all of the characteristics required under ESOS. These characteristics are: qualification level, course duration, course location, any work-based components and an estimate of course costs (this may be an average of a cost range). The specialisation in this case is not included in the award title but may or may not be included on the testamur, for example, a Bachelor of Arts with specialisation options.

When applying to add a single course with more than one specialisation to CRICOS, providers will be required to demonstrate these characteristics (as part of course accreditation or by confirmation of internal processes for providers with self-accrediting authority).

It is important to note that CRICOS registration is a separate process to course accreditation under the TEQSA Act. For the purposes of accrediting awards with multiple specialisations, each specialisation will be assessed separately to ensure that each is a coherent course of study.

This is consistent with TEQSA's current regulatory approach to course accreditation and renewal of accreditation.

If you would like further information about specialisations, please contact your Case Manager.

New look TEQSA website

TEQSA has recently refreshed the www.teqsa.gov.au website. This redesign is intended to make it easier for providers to find information about the key steps in the registration and accreditation processes, and to provide a better experience for visitors looking for information about TEQSA.

The site features an RSS feed, for subscriptions to the latest TEQSA updates as news items, information about consultations, events and other activities are announced.

We welcome your feedback on the new look website – if you encounter a broken link or have difficulty locating information, please contact comms@teqsa.gov.au.

TEQSA is committed to working closely with all providers. If you have any particular questions or concerns you wish to discuss, please contact your Case Manager, or email enquiries@teqsa.gov.au.