

COMMUNIQUE

TEQSA TAKES UP FULL REGULATORY FUNCTIONS

The Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA) assumed its full regulatory functions on 29 January 2012 and is now the national regulator of Australia's higher education sector. TEQSA's objects are:

- To provide national consistency in the regulation of higher education;
- To regulate using a standards-based quality framework and applying three regulatory principles;
- To protect and enhance Australia's reputation for and competitiveness in the provision of quality higher education and training services as well as excellence, diversity and innovation in higher education;
- To encourage and promote a higher education system that is appropriate to meet Australia's social and economic needs;
- To protect students undertaking higher education; and
- To ensure that students have access to information relating to higher education.

The TEQSA website is the main portal for accessing information about TEQSA's activities, particularly in relation to new guidelines and processes. It will be a key platform for communicating TEQSA's processes, as well as general information about our direction and priorities. Guides and forms currently available on the website are: Guide and application form to seek registration as a higher education provider; Guide and application form to seek accreditation of a course of study; and Guide and template for notifying TEQSA of a material change. Information relating to processes for the renewal of registration and renewal of accreditation of TEQSA accredited courses will be available from 1 July 2012.

TEQSA's immediate priorities

TEQSA's main focus over the next two months will be to finalise regulatory matters that State and Territory Government Accreditation Agencies were unable to finish prior to the transition date.

National Register of Providers

TEQSA is responsible for establishing and maintaining a National Register of Higher Education Providers. The first version of the National Register is now available on the TEQSA website. It provides a list of the names of the legal entities registered from 29 January 2012 as higher education providers in Australia. Further detail will be added to the National Register, when it has been validated. The National Register will be an important means of providing assurance to the sector's key stakeholders within Australia and abroad about the integrity of the sector and the appropriate regulation of its services.

Threshold Standards

TEQSA will regulate against the Threshold Standards, which comprise the Provider Standards and the Qualification Standards. They were made as legislative instruments by the Hon Greg Combet, Minister for Industry and Innovation for the Hon Chris Evans, Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Science and Research on 22 December 2011 and registered on 4 January 2012.

Notification of material changes

All registered higher education providers, including universities and providers with self-accrediting authority, are required under Section 29 of the *Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency Act 2011* ('the Act') to notify TEQSA of any event that happens or is likely to happen that will significantly affect the provider's ability to meet the Threshold Standards; or that will require the National Register to be updated.

Regulatory Risk Framework

TEQSA is developing a Regulatory Risk Framework as a tool to identify and assess risk to quality higher education provision, with reference to the Threshold Standards. The framework will enable TEQSA to

apply principles reflecting risk in taking regulatory action, as required under the Act. TEQSA has consulted with peak bodies in the higher education sector in developing its approach. TEQSA will undertake a preliminary risk scan of all regulated providers in coming months, with formal risk assessments for all providers to occur toward the end of this year.

TEQSA's approach to regulatory risk and information aims to avoid unnecessary reporting requirements for providers. It will draw on existing information and other sources to the extent possible to avoid duplication of effort in the collection of information. The details of additional information requirements will be issued in April 2012. TEQSA is also working with the Australian Skills Quality Agency (ASQA) with the aim of streamlining regulatory processes for dual sector providers.

Higher education services for overseas students

TEQSA is now the designated authority for Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) and the Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS) for providers registered under the TEQSA Act. This includes making recommendations to the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education about the registration of providers on CRICOS and approving applications from providers for changes to CRICOS registration. Guides and forms about these specific processes will be available from the TEQSA website from mid-February 2012.

Fee Schedule

Following consultation with the sector, TEQSA's fee schedule is now published on our website. These fees will be reviewed in 2013, having regard to collected data on the costs of performing TEQSA's functions.

Contact with TEQSA

Each registered provider of higher education services is supported by a TEQSA case manager and is asked to provide the name and details of the person nominated as the contact officer for communication with TEQSA by 10 February 2012 at enquiries@teqsa.gov.au.

TEQSA will also be inviting providers to a full day briefing on 27 March 2012 in Melbourne. Further information about this event will be available on the TEQSA website shortly.

Further information about TEQSA's activities can be found on the TEQSA website and specific queries can be directed to the central enquiries line at enquiries@teqsa.gov.au.