Australian Government
Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency

TEQSA 2023 PROVIDER SURVEY FINDINGS RESPONSE

Findings	TEQSA response
Overall performance **TEQSA's overall performance rating has declined in 2023** While TEQSA's overall performance remains generally well-regarded, the result this year represents an end to a multi-year period of consistency in overall performance ratings. While the decline is not statistically significant (at the 95% confidence interval), the 10-percentage point drop from 2022 means that TEQSA's overall performance rating is at a low point. Perceptions of TEQSA's performance is often linked to experiences with individual case managers. **Performance on most individual KPIs are either stable of have declined** • *'Regulatory actions undertaken by TEQSA are proportionate to the risks being managed'* – 52% rate the performance on this metric as either 'excellent' or 'good' – down from a series high of 64% in 2022. • *'TEQSA is open, transparent and consistent in its dealings with your organisation'* – 57% rate TEQSA performance on this metric as either 'excellent' or 'good' – down from 65% in 2022. • *'Upholding quality standards with a proportionate approach to managing risks and supporting the sector to comply and improve'* (Impact A) – 61% down from 70% in 2022 **Continuous improvement is the exception this year** • *'Continued improvement in regulatory framework in consultation with your organisation'* – 51%, up from 46% in 2022.	TEQSA welcomes and values the feedback from the 2023 provider survey, acknowledging the operating environment and challenges faced by the higher education sector. While we're pleased that TEQSA's overall performance remains generally well-regarded, the agency notes the sector's feedback in relation to areas for improvement. This feedback is useful to us, for benchmarking our performance and supporting future planning and work that is already underway. For example, TEQSA is presently working on projects to evolve TEQSA's risk framework and regulatory processes and invest in a new provider information management system. These projects aim to address provider concerns about regulatory processes and timeliness, as well as support the agency to improve feedback to providers. It is expected that engagement with sector stakeholders in relation to these important initiatives will take place throughout 2024. Further, in 2024 TEQSA will engage in consultation with the sector about its Service Charter to ensure we can convey and better meet expectations of stakeholders in our engagement with them.

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## Communication **Communication and information provision remain areas where TEQSA performs best** - On all communication measures, over two thirds of providers rate TEQSA's performance as either 'excellent' or 'good'. TEQSA continues to be well-regarded in guidance and good practice notes. - The usefulness of **TEQSA-facilitated workshops and webinars to discuss regulatory requirements and quality issues** is a particular standout this year. However, there remains appetite for more opportunities for in-person roundtables or forums where providers and TEQSA can share knowledge and discuss regulatory requirements and quality issues. - **TEQSA's 2022 Conference** received the highest portion of 'excellent' ratings (28%) compared to all other communication items and improved on the previous conferences positive ratings by 6 percentage points (rising to 67%).	TEQSA is pleased with the positive feedback it has achieved regarding communication, facilitated workshops and webinars to discuss regulatory requirements and quality issues. In 2023, we responded to requests for in-person events that addressed key issues facing the sector with Australia-wide masterclasses on *Contract cheating detection and deterrence,* webinars on *sexual harm* and *the impact of artificial intelligence on academic integrity*. Further to the success of TEQSA's 2022 conference, the agency is busy preparing for the 2023 conference, which will explore current issues for regulation in higher education. TEQSA has plans underway to deliver both in-person and online events in 2023-24 that keeps higher education providers across key regulatory requirements and quality issues.
## Timeliness **TEQSA continues to rate lowest on timeliness** Of all metrics evaluated, TEQSA's most poorly rated measures continue to relate to timeliness. The lowest rated metrics (below) show no signs of improvement and have remained at that level since tracking began in 2016. - **'Minimising the time taken between submitting an application and first receiving a regulatory decision'** (40%). - **'Providing timely feedback on whether your organisation is meeting expected standards'** (42%). However, there are some improvements observed in other areas of timelines. For both TEQSA and CRICOS applications, perceptions of timeliness of feedback from TEQSA about applications have improved by around 10 percentage points year-on-year.	TEQSA has been working to implement measures to minimise the time taken between providers submitting an application and receiving a regulatory decision. This work has been taking place against a backdrop of an unprecedented number of assessments for registration and course accreditation in 2022, which was anticipated to impact processing times into 2023. Significant work has been completed in aligning TEQSA's processes to a revised risk framework. Progress in this area will be shared with providers in the first half of 2024. This work and IT systems improvement will go some way in addressing timeliness and shorten processing times however will take time to be fully realised.

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Consultation • 72% of providers rate TEQSA as either 'excellent' or 'good' on providing them with the opportunity to give feedback on the annual risk assessment process. This is an improvement of 14 percentage points since 2022 and the top-rated consultation measure this year. • While a majority of providers consider TEQSA's performance on most feedback opportunities and processes as 'excellent' or 'good', there remains high proportions of 'not applicable' ratings on many consultation items. Some providers claim their feedback is not sought on the measures being evaluated. • Performance on **'listening to your organisation's views on ways to reduce regulatory administrative burden'** remains the lowest rated consultation metric. Less than half of providers offer 'excellent' or 'good' ratings (44%). Many say they are not seeing enough evidence of the regulatory burden reducing. • Two- thirds (66%) of providers consider the usefulness of the information on changes to TEQSA's fees and charges as either 'excellent' or 'good'. • Less than half give an 'excellent' or 'good' rating on the usefulness of advice and support relating to the introduction of increased cost recovery (49%) and when using updated forms within the Provider Portal (44%).	TEQSA is pleased by the positive provider rating on the opportunity to give feedback on the annual risk assessment process. However, notes the high proportion of 'not applicable' ratings on many consultation items. TEQSA will continue to improve its feedback and consultation processes to ensure measures being evaluated align with feedback sought. The agency acknowledges the low performance rating on 'ways to reduce the regulatory administrative burden'. As mentioned above, TEQSA is currently working on a revised risk framework which will inform process design and reduce the administrative burden where provider risk is lower. We plan to consult with providers on a refined risk framework by mid-2024.

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Regulatory processes and activities • Perceptions of TEQSA's regulatory processes and activities on most metrics have declined in the past year, with the exception of minimising the time taken between applying and first receiving a regulatory decision. • TEQSA's regulatory approach metrics are at a low point with performance trending downwards over time (down from 60% in 2019). The exception to this trend is **strengthening your organisation's capacity to protect students** up 3 percentage points in the last 12 months. • 78% of providers gave TEQSA a rating of 'excellent' or 'good' in treating providers with politeness and respect. This is 11 percentage points lower than in 2022 (down from 89%). • Evaluated for the first time this year, three quarters of providers agree (75%) that TEQSA staff reflect TEQSA's values of trust, respect, accountability and collaboration.	TEQSA is pleased that most providers agree TEQSA staff reflect the values of trust, respect, accountability and collaboration, as the agency reviewed its culture plan in April 2023. TEQSA's work to reduce regulatory burden is focusing increasingly on the importance of providers demonstrating strong programs of self-assurance and academic governance. This approach will support innovation, placing greater emphasis on evidence of effective assurance and governance as part of innovation and developing practice. We look forward to engaging with providers as we develop this approach in 2024.
Monitoring quality • 45% of providers gave an 'excellent' or 'good' rating on TEQSA's performance to **provide quality feedback on whether their organisation is meeting expected standards**. Perceptions on TEQSA's performance have continued to trend downward on this metric with a nine percentage points decline (54%) from 2022. • Provider perceptions of TEQSA providing *timely* feedback on whether an organisation is meeting expected standards have remained steady. Only 42% of providers rating TEQSA's performance as either 'excellent' or 'good' over the last year. • TEQSA's performance ratings on listening to providers' views on **improving quality assurance and on better ways to protect student interests** have **improved for two consecutive years**. 'Excellent' and 'good' ratings on these metrics are both at their highest points in four years. **Note:** There's a perception that TEQSA is under-resourced.	TEQSA acknowledges the importance of ongoing work to improve timeliness of our processes. TEQSA is also managing an unprecedented number of regulatory assessments. A combination of short term and more substantive measures are being put in place to manage this demand and ensure processing is as timely as possible. We will advise individual providers about how this will impact their assessments and update the sector on the progress of this work.

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Case management • Most providers (61%) have not experienced any changes to their case manager in the past 12 months. This compares to 53% in 2022. Despite the positive trend, some providers are unsure if they have a current case manager assigned. While others say they have not heard from their case manager in over a year. • For the 39% that did experience a change in their case manager – a great deal of frustration is expressed at the implications that result from these changes. • Ratings for TEQSA's responsiveness to their organisation's needs and tailoring an application to meet their needs as either 'excellent' or 'good' has rebounded from a dip in 2022. Ratings for TEQSA's responsiveness went up nine percentage points in the last 12 months (to 69%) and ratings for their ability to tailor an application went up 11 percentage points (to 59%).	TEQSA recognises providers appreciate having a single point of contact through their assigned case manager. We also appreciate frustration may arise if case mangers change and new staff are developing their capabilities. TEQSA, like many organisations, experienced significant staff movement post-COVID and has been hiring and onboarding new staff over the last 12 months. Staffing levels have started to stabilise. TEQSA endeavours a continued level of service and minimise disruption to those providers experiencing staff changes. As mentioned above, in 2024 TEQSA will be consulting the sector about its Service Charter to ensure we can convey and better meet expectations of responsiveness.

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Sector risks **Cyber security remains the greatest perceived threat to the sector:** • More than three quarters of providers (78%) rate cyber security as a 'high threat' – an increase from (66%) since last year **Artificial intelligence and impact on academic integrity a risk to the sector:** • Evaluated for the first time this year, two thirds of providers consider AI and its impact on academic integrity a 'high threat' to the sector (66%). • This sentiment is reinforced by commentary from providers in open-ended responses. That said, there is a great sense of appreciation for TEQSA's approach to tackling this issue to date, and support for a continuation of this approach moving forward. **Threat of regulation impeding innovation and student safety and wellbeing declining:** • After trending upwards in recent years, the perceived threat level of these risks to the sector has dropped significantly. The proportion of providers who consider each to be a 'high threat' to the sector is at a low point.	TEQSA acknowledges the challenges faced by the sector as it grapples with the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI). The agency is pleased the sector continues to value the work of the Higher Education Integrity Unit and its efforts to develop measures to tackle the impact of AI on academic integrity. Initiatives to respond to sector risks continue to be developed, and this year's TEQSA Conference will feature a seminar specifically developed to address assessment reform in the age of AI, together with a panel discussion on current issues for regulation in the sector more broadly. TEQSA's continuous improvement efforts to reduce regulatory burden remains focused on the importance of providers demonstrating strong programs of self-assurance and academic governance. This approach will support innovation, placing greater emphasis on evidence of effective assurance and governance as part of innovation and developing practice.