TEQSA revised service charter

TEQSA consultation paper, April 2024

The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) is committed to continuous improvement and ensuring quality standards of service are delivered for the Australian public.

Our service charter sets out how TEQSA expects it will provide its service to the Australian public.

## Why we’re seeking your feedback

As part of our ongoing efforts to provide a quality service, we commenced the first phase of updating our service charter in August 2023 with a survey circulated to TEQSA stakeholders.

This feedback has helped to inform the development of the second phase of our update – a revised service charter (see below on page 4) that we are sharing for further consultation.

TEQSA will consider all views when developing the updated version of the charter to be adopted later this year. Feedback gathered from this current consultation may also assist us in our continuous monitoring and review to enhance our service into the future.

In parallel to this consultation, TEQSA has opened a consultation process for a draft stakeholder engagement strategy. You can find out more about the stakeholder engagement strategy, and provide your feedback during the consultation period, at [teqsa.gov.au/consultation](https://www.teqsa.gov.au/About-us/engagement/consultation).

## Feedback received during phase 1 consultation

We received survey feedback from 46 stakeholders representing peak bodies, registered providers, professional and academic staff, students and an overseas higher education regulator/quality assurance agency.

The feedback helped to inform proposed changes in the revised service charter, including:

* Relevant legislated deadlines, to provide transparency of TEQSA’s obligations
* Clarification of expectations for different stakeholder groups
* Greater details about reasonable response timeframes for various interactions
* More focus on communicating to stakeholders via established TEQSA channels

A summary of participants’ survey feedback is published at [teqsa.gov.au/ServiceCharterReview](https://www.teqsa.gov.au/ServiceCharterReview).

## Feedback being sought during phase 2 consultation

In considering the revised service charter (see below on page 4), we ask for your feedback on the following:

1. Are expectations for all key stakeholder groups captured within the service charter? If not, which ones are missing and what kind of information would you like to see included for them in this service charter?
2. What, in your opinion, would constitute a 'successful' service delivery from TEQSA? Is this reflected in the service charter? If not, how do you suggest it be reflected?
3. Are there specific needs or considerations related to diversity that should be addressed in the service charter that are currently not?
4. Under the heading ‘What we expect from you’, what other information, if any, should be included about stakeholder responsibilities when engaging with our service?

## Consultation timelines

**Consultation on the revised service charter closes at 5pm (AEST) on Monday 20 May 2024.**

You can make a submission before the due date by emailing standards@teqsa.gov.au.

## After feedback closes

TEQSA will consider all submissions when feedback closes and develop a final service charter for adoption. We will also welcome ongoing sector feedback to inform our future service levels.

We will publish the updated service charter on our website and directly inform all stakeholders of this updated version through TEQSA’s communication channels including the monthly e-News and our social media platforms.

## Questions?

Our webpage [teqsa.gov.au/ServiceCharterReview](https://www.teqsa.gov.au/ServiceCharterReview) contains information about this consultation.

If you have any further questions, you can email us at standards@teqsa.gov.au.

TEQSA service charter

### **CONSULTATION DRAFT – UPDATED 4 APRIL 2024**The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) is Australia’s independent, national regulatory and quality assurance agency for higher education.

### Our work protects and enhances the integrity, quality and reputation of Australian higher education to provide public confidence in the excellence of Australia’s higher education sector.

## Who is this service charter for?

This service charter sets out our commitment to everyone who deals with us.
This includes:

* higher education providers and their staff (current, prospective and past),
* students at Australian higher education providers (current, prospective and past),
* members of the public, employers, Commonwealth and state/territory government agencies,
* peak bodies which advocate on behalf of members in the sector we regulate, and
* professional accreditation bodies.

Please refer to our [Stakeholder Engagement Strategy](https://www.teqsa.gov.au/About-us/engagement) and [Compliance and Enforcement Policy](https://www.teqsa.gov.au/publication/corporate-publications/compliance-and-enforcement-policy) for information about our approach to stakeholder management and how we conduct our compliance activities.

## What you can expect from us

Whenever you contact us, you can expect that we will respond to you in a courteous, respectful and timely way. Our main aim is to help you with your enquiry. We will take all reasonable steps to provide you with a good quality service.

When dealing with TEQSA, you can expect we will:

* identify the person or team you are engaging with,
* offer prompt, honest and helpful service,
* do the best we can to help resolve your issue, or refer you to an organisation that can,
* provide you with an inclusive and accessible service, recognising different people will have different needs when engaging with us,
* issue correspondence with contact details,
* as appropriate, provide relevant information, rather than advice, to ensure our impartiality,
* we will explain, when we make a request for information or make a regulatory decision, why we have asked for the information or made the decision,
* understand that if you are raising a concern or complaint with TEQSA, that the concern or complaint may personally impact on you,
* meet our legal obligations to protect your personal information (for information about our approach to privacy, see our [Privacy page](https://www.teqsa.gov.au/about-us/reporting-and-accountability/privacy)),
* apologise to you if we fall short of the standards in this service charter.

We expect your interaction with our staff will provide you with a greater understanding of TEQSA’s work and approaches to regulation and quality assurance. We outline more detail about registered and prospective providers, students and people lodging a complaint or concern about a registered provider in Appendix A on page 6.

## What we expect from you

To help us provide you with a high level of service we ask that you:

* treat our staff with courtesy and respect,
* allow us sufficient time to respond to your requests,
* give us accurate and complete information,
* contact us if you believe we have made an error or acted inappropriately, and you wish to make a complaint.

In addition to the above, when contacting TEQSA as a registered provider we ask that you:

* fulfil your regulatory, financial and other obligations to TEQSA within stipulated timeframes,
* make good quality applications to TEQSA and are responsive to our requests for information. Poor quality applications or a lack of responsiveness impacts the time it takes to complete our regulatory activities,
* lodge applications to remove a condition of registration or accreditation by 30 September each year. This is to enable TEQSA enough time to assess your request before the condition carries over to the following year and potentially impacts your annual provider charge
* have your documentation or reference numbers ready when you contact us.

## Our values and behaviours

Our values describe who we are as a regulator, guiding how we conduct ourselves and work with our stakeholders to enact our regulatory authority.

Along with other guiding statements such as our regulatory principles, policies and guidance notes, our values enable our stakeholders to understand what they can expect when interacting with us.

Our values reflect the [Australian Public Sector (APS) Values and Code of Conduct](https://www.apsc.gov.au/working-aps/integrity/integrity-resources/aps-values-code-conduct-and-employment-principles) and, in practice, create a positive culture in which we can perform efficiently and effectively as the national higher education regulatory and quality assurance agency for the benefit of all Australians.

These values provide a foundation for best practice and support us in striving to continuously improve, to ensure we are well-positioned to serve students, providers and the wider community.

Our TEQSA values are:

* **Trust:** We have confidence in each other to do our best. We encourage open and honest conversations that focus on the issue not the person. We promote a supportive and safe workplace environment.
* **Respect:** We approach every situation with kindness, compassion and an open mindset. We value people, the range of views and experience they bring and the work they undertake.
* **Accountability:** We hold ourselves and each other accountable for our actions, how we work together and the quality of what we deliver. We gather feedback, reflect and act on opportunities for improvement.
* **Collaboration:** We draw on our collective strength by encouraging each other to contribute to the achievement of shared objectives. We provide context and information to help others succeed.

Our service standards

Our service standards have been developed in partnership with stakeholders and apply from 1 July 2024. These standards set out our targets in providing you a response in a courteous, respectful and timely way.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Contact or activity** | **Target** |
| Contact via our website contact form | 100% have receipt acknowledged within one business day  80% responded to in 5 business days  90% responded to in 10 business days     |
| Telephone calls to enquiries line   | 70% answered on the spot  90% of missed calls that leave a message and contact number are called back within 2 business days  |
| Complaints about TEQSA  | Acknowledge the complaint and inform you about a substantive response within 2 business days  90% of complaints are provided a substantive response within 90 days |
| Enquiries to TEQSA’s online enquiry form, 1300 739 585 phone number or the enquiries@teqsa.gov.au email address | 80% are responded to within 5 business days   |
| Compliance assessments and investigations | Where a compliance assessment or investigation is underway, we will inform the provider at least once every 90 days on the progress of the assessment or investigation |
| Conditions of registrations or accreditation | TEQSA will annually review conditions of registration or accreditation to determine whether they should be retained or removed |

Because regulatory assessments are complex and often require nuanced approaches in different situations, we have not set targets beyond the timeframes specified by legislation for these assessments. We will, however, set out indicative assessment times which we will report on our website. Where we are likely to exceed our median assessment times, we will inform you and explain why.

Separately, for information about the legislated timeframes we must meet in undertaking our regulatory activities please see Appendix B on page 8

Our commitment to continuous improvement

We are committed to monitoring, evaluating and year-on-year improving our performance against this charter, service standards and legislated timeframes.

In the context of an increased volume of applications over recent years, TEQSA is implementing digital enhancements and changes to our regulatory service model. This will further support TEQSA’s regulatory operations to meet service standards by reducing manual processing and streamlining our interactions with regulated providers through the redesign of internal systems. It is our expectation that this service charter and our service standards will be further reviewed in 2026 once these changes take effect.

Alongside, and in support of, these investments in our systems and people, we will seek to optimise our assessment timeframes while maintaining quality. This is in recognition of the sensitivity of the higher education market and the impact delays in regulatory assessments may have on providers, as well as the importance of TEQSA providing an effective and efficient service.

We report on our performance against our service standards on our website.

## How to provide feedback

We value feedback on the quality of our service and seek this in a number of ways, including:

• asking those who engage with us about their experience,

• having open communication channels,

• reviewing and analysing information from surveys and complaints.

We use the feedback we receive to continuously improve and publish information on how we are performing; to demonstrate our commitment to transparent management, accountability for results, and efficient and effective regulation which is best practice and supported by our cost recovery model.

Our service standards and charter have been developed in partnership with key stakeholders. We welcome your feedback on the effectiveness of this charter and the service we provide.

If you would like to offer us feedback on our service (positive, negative or otherwise) please:

* contact us via [our online enquiry form](https://www.teqsa.gov.au/about-us/contact-us)
* call us on 1300 739 585 between 9:00am and 5:00pm AEST, Monday-Friday (excluding public holidays).

For more information, visit our [Contact us page](https://www.teqsa.gov.au/about-us/contact-us).

[Further information about complaints about TEQSA can be found on our website.](https://www.teqsa.gov.au/about-us/contact-us/complaints-about-teqsa)

Appendix A

What you can expect from us as a:

Current higher education, ELICOS or Foundation Program providers

Your institution may have applications for registration, re-registration and course accreditation and re-accreditation assessed by TEQSA.

Applicants TEQSA approved for registration, may be registered to deliver:

* higher education under the [*Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Act 2011*](https://www.legislation.gov.au/Series/C2011A00073) (TEQSA Act), and/or
* courses to overseas students under the [*Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000*](https://www.legislation.gov.au/Series/C2004A00757) (ESOS Act) including English language (ELICOS) and Foundation Programs.

If your institution is registered to deliver higher education, it will be listed on the [National Register of Higher Education Providers](https://www.teqsa.gov.au/national-register) as required under the TEQSA Act.

If your institution is registered to deliver courses of study to overseas students, it will be registered on the [Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students](https://cricos.education.gov.au/) (CRICOS) under the ESOS Act.

As part of your relationship with TEQSA, it is likely that you will discuss matters regarding regulatory requirements with us, including:

* the assessment of your institution’s application for renewal of registration under the TEQSA or ESOS Acts,
* the assessment of applications for course accreditation and renewal of course accreditation,
* material change notifications of matters that may impact on your institution’s capacity to continue to comply with the [*Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021*](https://www.legislation.gov.au/Series/F2021L00488),
* requests for information for regulatory compliance and quality assessment purposes,
* your institution’s ongoing compliance with both the TEQSA and/or ESOS Acts.

All registered higher education providers are provided with information about a contact point for questions about regulatory matters. Any regulatory queries should be directed to the contact point unless you have been informed otherwise.

If you are uncertain about the details of your contact point, you can [complete our online enquiry form](https://www.teqsa.gov.au/about-us/contact-us) for it to be directed to the relevant team.

In order to answer your query accurately and fully, we may need to discuss our timeframe for responding to you. In doing this, we will always seek to be fair and reasonable.

You can expect that in addition to our general principles of good service, officers responding to you will seek to resolve your issues as quickly as possible or explain why this may take more time.

To assist us in providing you with a timely service, we ask that you:

* have your documentation or reference numbers ready when you contact us,
* fulfil your regulatory, financial, and other obligations to TEQSA within stipulated timeframes.

Prospective higher education, ELICOS or Foundation Program providers

If your institution is seeking to become a higher education provider, offer ELICOS or Foundation Program courses to overseas students, please view the [Application forms and support page](https://www.teqsa.gov.au/provider-registration/support-and-resources) for more information about the registration and accreditation processes.

Overseas providers interested in delivering higher education in Australia can find more information from [our FAQs page](https://www.teqsa.gov.au/about-us/teqsa-overview/faqs).

As part of your relationship with TEQSA, it is likely that you will discuss matters regarding regulatory requirements with us, including:

* the assessment of your institution’s application for registration under the TEQSA or ESOS Acts,
* the assessment of applications for course accreditation.

Students

If you have a general enquiry about the regulation or quality assurance of Australian higher education, you may find the information you need on our website. Our website has information about TEQSA and the legislation that we administer. It also has a specific section for students, which has information about how our work protects students undertaking, or proposing to undertake, Australian higher education. Find out more from the [Students section of our website](https://www.teqsa.gov.au/students).

If you cannot find the information you need on our website, you can [complete our online enquiry form](https://www.teqsa.gov.au/about-us/contact-us).

We may need to discuss our response date with you depending on the complexity of your query. In doing this, we will always seek to be fair and reasonable.

Concerns about higher education, ELICOS or Foundation Program providers

We accept concerns about Australian higher education providers and other entities we regulate (providers of Foundation Programs, ELICOS providers and ESOS registered providers). We accept concerns to gather information that assists us in the regulation and quality assurance of the sector.

However, we can only accept certain types of concerns. Further details on the types of concerns we can accept is available from the [Concerns section of our website](https://www.teqsa.gov.au/about-us/contact-us/raising-complaint-or-concern/you-raise-concern).

Appendix B

## Timeframes for regulatory decisions

The [*Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011* (TEQSA Act)](https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2011A00073/latest/downloads) sets out requirements for the time that we take to make, and inform parties of, regulatory decisions about applications for registration and course accreditation. Timeframes applying to our work in making regulatory decisions are summarised below.

| **TEQSA’s activity**  | **TEQSA Act timeframe to complete activity** |
| --- | --- |
| Preliminary assessment of an application for initial registration  | TEQSA must inform the applicant within 30 days of an application being made for registration in a particular category whether the application is appropriate for that category and, if not, what category would be appropriate.  |
| Deciding the outcome of an application for initial registration  | TEQSA must decide on the application within 9 months of receiving payment of the substantive assessment application fee. If, consistent with the TEQSA Act, TEQSA is satisfied that, for reasons beyond its control, a decision on the application cannot be made within 9 months, a longer period that does not exceed a further 9 months, may be determined by TEQSA. The decision to extend the timeframe must be made by no later than 6 weeks before the end of the initial 9-month period.   |
| Using a longer period to decide on an application for registration  | TEQSA, within 7 days of deciding a longer period is needed to decide on an application for registration, must inform the applicant in writing.  |
| Notifying an applicant for registration or re-registration of TEQSA’s decision on the application  | TEQSA, within 30 days of making its decision to grant or reject the application, must inform the applicant in writing.   |
| Preliminary assessment of an application for course accreditation  | TEQSA must inform the applicant within 30 days of an application being made whether the application for a course of study to be accredited contains sufficient information and, if not, if further information is required.   |
| Deciding the outcome of an application for course accreditation   | TEQSA must decide on the application within 9 months of receiving payment of the substantive assessment application fee.If, consistent with the TEQSA Act, TEQSA is satisfied that, for reasons beyond its control, a decision on the application cannot be made within 9 months, a longer period that does not exceed a further 9 months, may be determined by TEQSA. The decision to extend the timeframe must be made by no later than 6 weeks before the end of the initial 9-month period.  |
| Using a longer period to decide on an application for course accreditation  | TEQSA, within 7 days of deciding a longer period is needed to decide on an application for course accreditation, must inform the applicant in writing.  |
| Notifying an applicant for course accreditation or re-accreditation of TEQSA’s decision on the application  | TEQSA must inform the applicant of its decision to grant or reject an application for course accreditation or course re-accreditation within 30 days of its decision.  |
| Notifying providers about a decision to impose, vary or revoke a condition on a course accreditation or provider registration  | TEQSA, within 30 days of making a decision to impose, vary or revoke a condition on a provider’s registration or course accreditation, must inform the provider.  |
| Complete internal review of decisions  | TEQSA, within 90 days after receiving an application for review and payment of any applicable substantive fees, must make its decision on review of a reviewable decision. |