



Title Name
Position
Organisation
Address (email or postal)

Dear Title Family-Name,

Subject: Ensuring student safety and wellbeing at universities

With the academic year commencing and universities preparing to welcome thousands of new and returning students, we want to reiterate the importance of ensuring safety and wellbeing at Australia's universities.

As you know, last year we witnessed a disturbing increase in incidents of antisemitism, islamophobia, and racism more broadly within the Australian community. Despite the current ceasefire in the Middle East, we continue to see heightened tensions and violence. Australia's higher education sector is not immune to these tensions.

TEQSA wants to remind universities of their obligations under the [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#) to uphold student and staff safety.

At a minimum, we expect that universities are closely watching developments, both nationally and within their own communities, and ensuring that they have appropriate arrangements in place to respond to any sudden escalation of protests or outbreaks of violence. This includes, but is not limited to, reviewing settings and permissions for events that may escalate tensions, ensuring appropriate security arrangements, maintaining effective critical incident management structures and continuing to engage with law enforcement.

TEQSA also expects universities will ensure new and returning students are informed about codes of conduct, support services and any other relevant institutional policies or procedures, including misconduct policies and penalties for engaging in or displaying racist behaviour (such as antisemitism and islamophobia).

Consideration should be given to the needs of at-risk students and staff (including Jewish people, Muslim people and people from Palestinian backgrounds) to ensure they have a safe learning and working environment. Institutions should also consider how governing bodies are kept informed about the adequacy and effectiveness of institutional policies, as well as whether those policies are being appropriately enforced.

We strongly recommend universities consider the points raised in our [Interim sector update: Regulatory expectations of providers to assure safety and wellbeing on campus in relation to student protests](#), including:

- institutional policies and processes
- academic support and adjustment
- ensuring a safe campus, including teaching and learning spaces
- ensuring complaint and support mechanisms are accessible
- taking appropriate action in response to misconduct
- upholding freedom of speech and academic freedom.

Development of additional TEQSA guidance

As you would be aware, TEQSA is hosting another roundtable meeting with the Minister for Education and Vice-Chancellors on 25 February, and we thank Vice-Chancellors for prioritising attendance at this meeting. As we did last year, TEQSA is also inviting the Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism in Australia, the Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia in Australia, the Race Discrimination Commissioner, the National Student Ombudsman and the CEO of Universities Australia.

At this roundtable, we will be providing an update on our work to develop a statement of regulatory expectations in relation to student grievance and complaint mechanisms and interim guidance on outside actors. Following this meeting we will engage in consultation with the aim of having this new guidance in place by April 2025.

TEQSA will continue to update and develop guidance during the year, as other projects such as the Australian Human Rights Commission's study into racism in universities concludes.

Kind regards,

Ms Adrienne Nieuwenhuis
Acting Chief Commissioner
12 February 2025

Dr Mary Russell
CEO