Australian Government

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency

Application guide for renewal of registration

Version 3.1
Effective from 6 August 2024

TEQSA

Contents

Background

Purpose

This guide reflects TEQSA's current process for all registered higher education providers to follow when applying for renewal of registration.

We are undertaking a review of our regulatory risk framework that will inform the evolution of TEQSA's regulatory approach. This will ensure regulatory efforts are aligned with the most critical risks that require regulatory intervention, allowing TEQSA to most effectively prioritise our resources and regulatory activities. We will engage in wider consultation with the sector about a revised regulatory risk framework in 2024.

The best way to stay informed about consultation opportunities and updates about our approach to regulatory risk is to sign up to our monthly TEQSA e-News update.

This guide will be updated as we further align our regulatory processes and operations to a revised regulatory risk framework.

Overview

Stage 1

Prepare your application

TEQSA will publish the evidence requirements for all renewal of registration applications on its website. Providers are encouraged to review the resources published guides and guidance notes in preparing their application.

Stage 2

Submit your application

The application must be in the approved form and accompanied by the required evidence and the relevant application fee.

Stage 3

Application is assessed by TEQSA

TEQSA's assessment team assesses the application and documents their findings. This stage may involve TEQSA making additional requests for information.

Stage 4

Findings and recommendations

The assessment team makes recommendations to the TEQSA Commission. Where TEQSA is not satisfied that a provider meets all requirements of the Threshold Standards, draft findings will be sent to the applicant for response.

Stage 5

Application is decided by the TEQSA Commission

TEQSA notifies the applicant of the outcome.

Stage 6

Decision is published on the National Register

Application process

Stage 1 Prepare your application

In preparing your application, TEQSA highly recommends that you closely review the requirements of the _Tertiary Educations Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011_ (TEQSA Act) and the _Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021_ to understand your obligations. Your application should demonstrate how you meet, and continue to meet, each of these obligations.

TEQSA has recently revised its approach to the evidence it requires for renewal of registration applications. Our intention is to reduce the required volume and scope of evidence, such that a detailed and comprehensive self-assurance report, together with detailed and comprehensive independent governance reviews, and key documents relating to institutional risk management, will be sufficient to demonstrate compliance with the Threshold Standards.

Applications for renewal of registration should include the following evidence:

- a written submission outlining how the provider's governing body assures itself of the quality of its higher education operations and that it is continuing to meet the Threshold Standards (_self-assurance report_) and an index listing any supporting evidence referenced throughout the report (_index_)

- reports of the most recent independent reviews of the effectiveness of the provider's governing body and its academic governance processes, as well as planned and completed actions arising from these reviews (_governance reviews_)

- evidence of risk identification, management, and mitigation, including a risk register, and any relevant plans, policies, procedures, and frameworks (_risk management_)

In addition, providers registered in the **Australian University** category should submit the following evidence:

- a written submission describing how the governing body assures itself it is meeting, and will continue to meet, the standards of research for Australian Universities (_research requirements_)

Lastly, any provider with a **high risk to financial position**, as determined by TEQSA's most recent Provider Risk Assessment, should submit the following evidence:

- financial projections, statements, and supporting evidence demonstrating financial viability and sustainability (_financial evidence_)

We ask that providers only submit the documents requested above, and that any additional supporting evidence is listed in the index and made available to TEQSA only if requested.

Self-assurance report

The self-assurance report is a written submission of no more than 10 pages. It focuses on the function of a provider's governing bodies, noting their fundamental importance to the provider's operations, including their accountability for the quality of education delivered, their compliance with the Threshold Standards and other legislative requirements.

We appreciate the nature of risk and the institutional responses to manage risk may vary for each provider, according to the context in which it is operating.

The self-assurance report should:

- describe reporting and review activities and outputs that are part of regular, internal governance and quality assurance cycles for the provider, including the boards' systems for delegating authority and for reviewing those delegations

- demonstrate how the provider is operating effectively and sustainably (as set out in Standard 6.2.1)

- show the provider's corporate governing body is sufficiently well-informed to identify and address material risks to its viability, sustainability and educational offerings (Standard 6.1.3–4)

- describe the provider's institutional framework and processes for academic governance (Standard 6.3) and provide evidence of how its peak body assures itself of the effectiveness of its processes for course approval (Standard 5.1.2) and its ongoing monitoring, review and improvement activities that ensure the quality of education being delivered (Standard 5.3.7)

- synthesise and refer to supporting evidence that demonstrates the claims put forward

- be accompanied by an index listing the supporting evidence that the applicant would be able to provide to TEQSA on request.

The report should demonstrate the effectiveness of a provider's self-assurance processes as an integral part of their day-to-day operations. In preparing the report, providers should consider the key sector-wide issues that pose significant institutional risk. We encourage all providers to review the [key considerations for providers preparing a self-assurance report (renewal of registration)](#).

Governance reviews

The Threshold Standards require all providers to undertake periodic independent reviews of the effectiveness of both the governing body and its academic governance processes. The scope of the governance review should include the extent to which the governing bodies fulfil the range of responsibilities outlined in Standards 6.1.3, 6.2 and 6.3.

> TEQSA encourages providers undertaking governance reviews to view them primarily as an opportunity to have an independent person or persons of significant expertise evaluate the effectiveness of their own governance and mechanisms for self-assurance, and to support the continuous improvement of their organisation.

A review of this nature will provide much better institutional value than a review that is commissioned and conducted for more narrow purposes, such as to produce a report to be submitted with a TEQSA application.

An external review of governance is an important exercise in testing both the operation of governance mechanisms and the consideration of previous perspectives that may have been sought by a provider. In this regard TEQSA expects careful reflection on the scope of the reviews and the qualifications and experience of those undertaking the reviews. We particularly emphasise the value of seeking diverse perspectives from a range of external reviewers.

TEQSA recommends the independent reviews are undertaken in the second half of a provider's registration period. This ensures the reviews can be relied upon to provide a contemporary evaluation of the effectiveness of governance processes when submitted as evidence for renewal of registration. We encourage providers to consider TEQSA's guidance to providers about engaging an independent expert to undertake a review.

> Planning reviews to occur well in advance of the re-registration application will enable you to provide evidence demonstrating the implementation of actions and improvements in response to the review.

TEQSA expects the evidence submitted with the renewal of registration application will also include the provider's consideration and response to the findings and recommendations of the reviews. This typically takes the form of a detailed action plan that sets out actions, timeframes and accountabilities.

In considering governance reviews in the context of a re-registration assessment, we look for the following characteristics:

- reviewers:
  - have an independent perspective
  - are competent to undertake the review including having relevant qualifications, experience and expertise.
- reports:
  - make findings against the governance standards (Domain 6) of the Threshold Standards
  - are based on sufficient scope and quality of evidence
  - take an evaluative approach, addressing strengths, opportunities for improvement and key risks
  - where practicable, provide an opinion on the provider's improvement plans, capacity and progress.
- action plans:
  - respond to recommendations made by the review
  - include a timeline for implementation, with clear accountabilities
  - include mechanisms for monitoring the progress and effectiveness of any actions taken.

Wherever the governance review report(s) cover the full scope of the Threshold Standards requirements for corporate governance, corporate monitoring and accountability and academic governance, TEQSA will not need to seek additional evidence on these areas. Conversely, if some of these areas are not covered in the external reviewer's report, we may need to seek additional information and evidence.

Risk management

Providers should be able to demonstrate how its corporate governing body assures itself that risks to higher education operations have been identified and material risks are being managed and mitigated effectively. As part of your submission, TEQSA seeks evidence of how risk is identified and monitored, the measures that are implemented to manage and mitigate key risks, and how oversight of risk is maintained at an institutional level by the governing body.

Research requirements for universities

TEQSA requires all universities to provide a written submission of no more than 5 pages evidencing their governing body's oversight of research quality, having regard to the standard of research set out in Criteria B1.3.16–19 of the Threshold Standards. Where relevant, this may involve a university addressing its preparedness to meet research standards in the future, noting the transitional arrangements for research requirements for providers registered in this category that are set out in Criteria B1.3.16–19 and in B3.2. We provide further guidance on this topic on our website: Research requirements for universities.

Financial evidence for providers with high risk to financial position

Each year, TEQSA conducts a risk assessment of each provider, assessing risks to students and to the provider's financial position. If TEQSA has rated the risk to financial position as high in its most recent Provider Risk Assessment, TEQSA requires additional evidence from providers applying for renewal of registration. This evidence should demonstrate how the provider monitors, manages, and reports on financial performance, including setting performance targets and taking corrective action to address underperformance. Please submit:

- overview of governance and accountability framework, including organisational charts of corporate structure (in the case of subsidiaries of corporate groups) and governance structure
- financial projections for the next 5 years, including:
  - a completed financial forecast with data for the next 5 years, completed as per the instructions in the template
  - marketing plan, strategic and business plans (with Year 1 as the first year of the renewed registration), supported by detailed assumptions, and evidence of approval of the plans by the governing body.
- financial results, including:
  - audited financial statements for the three most recent financial years (or all available years if the institute has been operating for less than three financial years). If the

most recent financial statement is more than six months old, then board approved management accounts for the last six months must be attached

- actual versus budget reports for income statement, balance sheet, cash flow statement and EFTSL projections for the three most recent financial years

- all funding arrangement currently in place, or to be pursued in the future (e.g. banking overdrafts, contingency funding, shareholder funding or changes to the corporate structure, letter of support, loan agreements)

- last 12 months of bank statements for each account held

- if there is a parent entity: Audited financial statements for the three most recent financial years / all years available if applicant has been operating for less than three financial years

- budget for the financial year when the re-registration application is submitted, and the board approved management accounts for the financial year to date (showing actual to budget for profit and loss, balance sheet and cash flow)

- the plan to address financial management, viability and sustainability issues, as presented to, and approved by, the governing body

- a description of the processes to ensure maintenance of prudent financial control, and detection and prevention of any fraud and mismanagement within its higher education operations.

Provider Financial Forecast template

Concurrent assessments

If you are considering applying for self-accrediting authority (SAA) or to change provider category, we highly encourage submitting these concurrently with your application to renew provider registration, where this is practicable. Significant parts of the evidence provided in a renewal of registration application, particularly those parts relating to academic governance and quality assurance processes, are relevant to the criteria for both SAA and provider categories. As such, submitting these applications concurrently involves a reduced application fee compared to making these applications separately. It may also reduce the time spent preparing these applications.

We strongly encourage providers to contact the reregistration team at reregistration. enquiries@teqsa.gov.au as early as possible to discuss the best way of packaging applications for concurrent assessment.

Our application guide for self-accrediting authority sets out the process for applying for SAA and provides contextual information about TEQSA's assessment of these applications.

Stage 2 Submit your application

Submitting your application

Section 35 of the TEQSA Act requires that an application for renewal of registration is to be made in the approved format, including any information, documents and assistance that TEQSA requests, and be accompanied by the relevant fee.

The TEQSA Act also requires that the application be submitted to TEQSA at least 180 calendar days before the current registration period is due to end. If you cannot apply by this date, you should contact TEQSA as early as possible at reregistration.enquiries@teqsa.gov.au. Any decision to approve a submission after this date is made at TEQSA's discretion.

The re-registration application form is in the provider portal. Please visit our website for more information about accessing and submitting an application using the TEQSA provider portal.

We expect that most of the evidence you are referencing will be existing documents that have been produced and used for internal purposes. We encourage you to use URLs and hyperlinks for information that TEQSA can access from your website. If you are referencing documents that you have already submitted to TEQSA, please identify where this is the case. It will generally be unnecessary to submit these documents again. Please use the naming conventions described in TEQSA's guide on naming conventions for evidence.

When your application is ready, submit it to TEQSA via the provider portal. Be sure to include:

- all required information and evidence
- a signed declaration.

Providing false or misleading information in an application is a serious offence under the TEQSA Act.

Payment of assessment fees

After you submit your application, you will receive an invoice as final confirmation of your application and request for payment. TEQSA does not have an online payment facility.

The application fee for a renewal of registration is set out on TEQSA's website. Please note, if TEQSA identifies significant risks that have not been adequately addressed in a provider's application, TEQSA may elect to commence a compliance assessment. In line with TEQSA's Cost Recovery Implementation Statement, this would be at a cost to the provider and reflects the additional work effort required by TEQSA.

Your application is considered valid when you have used the approved application form and paid the application fee specified on the invoice. TEQSA will only commence assessing your application after it has been submitted and the fee has been paid.

Application fees do not attract GST. TEQSA's ABN is 50 658 250 012.

Once a provider makes a valid application to renew its registration, its registration continues until TEQSA decides whether to renew the provider's registration, as provided by Section 36(3) of the TEQSA Act. The provider's registration status on the National Register will state 'ongoing, pending renewal' until such time TEQSA makes its decision on the application.

Stage 3 — Application is assessed by TEQSA

Applications for renewal of registration are considered under Part 3, Division 3 of the TEQSA Act. TEQSA may renew a provider's registration if we are satisfied the provider continues to meet the Threshold Standards.

Enquiries and requests for further information

TEQSA assesses whether the application and supporting evidence submitted confirms the provider continues to meet the Threshold Standards. We may request further information as questions arise. For example, you may be asked to provide evidence from your index, address apparent gaps in your evidence, or clarify aspects of your evidence, or explain how certain policies and procedures are implemented in practice. TEQSA will ask you to respond to requests for information online, through a request created in the provider portal which is referenced as an 'REQ'.

TEQSA has specialist contact teams across the agency that are best placed to assist you in a timely and efficient manner when you have a specific enquiry about one of our functions. For enquiries relating to renewal of registration applications, please contact us at reregistration.enquiries@teqsa.gov.au. For other assistance, please access our key contacts at TEQSA webpage to help direct your enquiry to the most appropriate TEQSA team contacts.

Site visits

TEQSA may visit one or more of your delivery sites or headquarters if required. We may conduct these virtually or in-person. At this visit, TEQSA may, for example, inspect facilities, equipment and resources, or clarify how relevant procedures, policies and operations are implemented through interviews with key personnel.

Site visits are another way of collecting evidence, and we will use observations and discussions held during a site visit in our assessment and decision-making to supplement or validate your written evidence. At the provider visit, TEQSA may interview various groups including students, staff, and members of corporate and academic boards.

Assessment timeframes

TEQSA's assessment timeframes are subject to a range of factors that can affect the time taken to make our assessments, including:

- the regulatory history of an existing provider, including the outcomes of previous assessments relevant to the application

- the strength and relevance of evidence presented by the applicant

- the risk of non-compliance with the Threshold Standards and the ability of the provider to demonstrate it has mitigated those risks

- the time taken by the provider to respond effectively to requests for information

- the level of resourcing available to TEQSA.

Stage 4 Findings and recommendations

If TEQSA's re-registration assessment team is satisfied that a provider meets the registration requirements, it will recommend that TEQSA's Commission approve the application. In cases where TEQSA has significant concerns about a provider, these will be set out to the provider who will be afforded the opportunity to respond.

In rare instances, the re-registration assessment team will recommend the TEQSA Commission reject an application. In these instances, TEQSA will advise the applicant of the proposed decision and specify the reasons. Our obligations in this regard are set out in s36(5) of the TEQSA Act. The applicant will be afforded an opportunity to comment and provide further information with respect to the proposed decision. TEQSA will set out our concerns and the reasons why rejection would confirm with the basic principles for regulation. We may also send you any evidence that is relevant to the proposed decision that you may not have previously seen, such as reports from external experts used by TEQSA.

> TEQSA's approach to this stage of the process will vary according to the nature of the issues identified.

Where TEQSA is proposing to reject an application where the applicant is registered in a university provider category, we are required to give opportunities to make representations to the provider and to the Minister for each relevant state and territory responsible for higher education.

The assessment team will then review any information provided by the applicant and any other relevant entities before presenting the report to the TEQSA Commission.

Stage 5 Application is decided by the TEQSA Commission

The TEQSA Commission considers the recommendations made by the re-registration assessment team. In reaching a decision, the TEQSA Commission will have regard to the 3 basic principles for regulation set out in Part 2 of the TEQSA Act. These are regulatory necessity, reflecting risk, and proportionate regulation.

The TEQSA Commission may decide to:

- approve the application for the maximum registration period
- approve the application for a shortened period and/or impose conditions on the renewal of registration

or

- reject the application.

When considering whether to approve a shortened period of registration, to impose conditions, or to reject the application, the TEQSA Commission will consider any representations made by the applicant in response to the proposed decision.

When it is considering a decision to reject an application made by an applicant registered in a university provider category, the TEQSA Commission must consider any representations made by relevant entities in response to the proposed decision.

Notifying you of the decision

TEQSA will send you a Notice of Decision within 30 calendar days of making a decision to grant or reject your application. The notice will include the details of any conditions placed on your renewal of registration.

In some cases, we may also request further information and/or may notify you of areas that may be explored further in future regulatory processes. TEQSA may also make observations or recommendations about areas for improvement to support quality enhancement.

If your application has been rejected, or if conditions have been imposed on your renewal of registration, the Notice of Decision will be accompanied by a statement of reasons.

Our obligations with respect to notifying providers of our decisions about renewal of registration are set out in s37 of the TEQSA Act.

Review of decisions

Certain decisions made by TEQSA are reviewable. Please refer to our website for more information about reviews of TEQSA decisions.

Stage 6 Decision is published on the National Register

Public report

TEQSA normally publishes reports of all decisions about provider registration and course accreditation to facilitate transparency of our processes, regulatory decisions and the reasons for those decisions.

A public report contains our decision and the reasons for the decision. This report is published on the National Register after TEQSA has considered any feedback you may have given on a draft version provided to you.

Refer to TEQSA's policy about public statements on TEQSA's regulatory decisions and processes for more information on our approach.

Updating the National Register

Where an application for renewal of registration has been approved, the relevant entry on the National Register will be updated. Where conditions are imposed on the renewal of registration of a provider, details of those conditions will also be published.

Confidentiality and accuracy of information

TEQSA has statutory obligations in relation to confidentiality however, we operate within a public accountability framework. Where a higher education provider considers that its information should be treated as confidential by TEQSA, the provider should contact us before providing the information. For more information, see our approach to confidential information.

Document information

Version #	Date	Key changes
1.0		
1.1	2 June 2014	
2.0	13 April 2016	Updated for the HESF 2015 and made available as beta version for consultation.
2.1	27 September 2016	Evidence table updated and feedback from consultation incorporated.
2.2	7 October 2016	Cross reference to Part B1 of the HES Framework added to the Notes of Appendix A.
2.3	3 November 2016	Appendix A updated.
2.4	20 January 2017	Wording updated to reflect HESF 2015 now in effect, references to the Confirmed Evidence Table for Renewal of Registration added, and minor clarifications made in relation to Guidance Note on Naming Conventions for Evidence.
2.5	18 April 2017	Extension to scope (Section 1.3) updated for situations where student teachers are being placed into schools or the provider has responsibility for students under the age of 18.
2.6	3 May 2017	Standard 7.1.4 updated in Table 1 to reflect that it is only if applicable.
2.7	29 August 2018	Update to Table 1 in Appendix A; Standards 2.3.1–5 are now included in the core assessment scope, and all of the indicative evidence requirements for Domain 2 – Learning Environment have been updated accordingly.
3.0	October 2023	Update reference to Threshold Standards. Updated to reflect changes to TEQSA's assessment processes.
3.1	6 August 2024	Updated to reflect changes to TEQSA's assessment processes.