



MEDIA RELEASE

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TEQSA study highlights common characteristics linked to attrition

For the first time in Australia, attrition rates for 130 higher education providers have been analysed in a Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) study.

The study's findings have been reported in, *Characteristics of Australian higher education providers and their relation to first-year student attrition*, which also provides details on the unique methods used to carry out the study.

TEQSA's study differs from previous research by focusing on institutional characteristics that may be linked to higher levels of attrition, rather than characteristics of individual students – consistent with the agency's regulatory approach which assesses each provider.

Based on 2014 data, the study grouped together similar providers and sought out common institutional characteristics that could be linked to higher levels of attrition. These included:

- a lower proportion of senior academic staff
- a lower proportion of postgraduate students
- a lower proportion of full-time academic staff, and
- a higher proportion of students admitted on the basis of VET qualifications.

TEQSA Commissioner and author Dr Lin Martin, issued caution in the interpretation of the study's findings, highlighting the fact that the study was based on one year's data and should be repeated to see if the findings are consistent.

"While the study identified possible relationships between institutional characteristics and attrition rates, it did not indicate whether the relationships were causal or whether other factors lead to the prominence of certain characteristics," Dr Martin said.

TEQSA chief executive Anthony McClaran said the study is not intended to be a 'road map' to lowering attrition rates; it aims to allow open discussion between the sector and the agency on ways to improve student retention outcomes.

"TEQSA is planning to engage with the sector on the report's findings, with a panel discussion event in the pipeline," he said.

The report is available at:

<http://www.teqsa.gov.au/media-publications/characteristics-australian-higher-education-providers-and-their-relation-first>