



A Snapshot of TEQSA

The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) is Australia's independent national regulator of the higher education sector.

It is responsible for the registration of higher education providers (up to seven years); the accreditation of higher education courses; as well as quality assurance and promoting the sector's adherence to national standards of quality. (More information can be found at: www.teqsa.gov.au).

TEQSA's role

The Agency was established in late 2011 to contribute to a high quality Australian higher education sector through effective and independent regulation and quality assurance. TEQSA's objects are set out in the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011* (TEQSA Act).

These are:

- ▶ To provide for national consistency in the regulation of higher education
- ▶ To regulate higher education using a standards-based quality framework and principles relating to regulatory necessity, risk and proportionality
- ▶ To protect and enhance Australia's reputation for and international competitiveness in higher education, as well as excellence, diversity and innovation in higher education in Australia
- ▶ To encourage and promote a higher education system that is appropriate to meet Australia's social and economic needs for a highly educated and skilled population
- ▶ To protect students undertaking, or proposing to undertake higher education by requiring the provision of quality higher education; and
- ▶ To ensure that students have access to information relating to higher education in Australia.

TEQSA's approach to regulation

TEQSA has a standards and risk-based approach to regulation.

Standards

TEQSA interprets and implements a national set of standards of quality in higher education. These standards are determined by the federal Minister for Tertiary Education on advice from a separate, independent body, known as the Higher Education Standards Panel.

TEQSA's approach to regulation respects the diversity of the sector, both in terms of academic vision and teaching practice. TEQSA encourages higher education providers to explore innovative approaches to the delivery of higher education, particularly where these lead to increased access by students and do not compromise the quality of their experience.

Regulatory principles

When exercising its regulatory powers, TEQSA complies with three important principles:

- 1. Regulatory necessity:** TEQSA only intervenes when necessary to uphold standards, taking into account potential impacts.
- 2. Reflecting risk:** TEQSA's regulatory effort is directed to areas of higher risk based on validated, quality evidence about a provider.
- 3. Proportionate regulation:** TEQSA assesses a provider's compliance with a standard in a way that balances the interests of students with the potential impact of TEQSA's actions on the provider and the reputation of the sector. TEQSA has a graduated scale of regulatory actions available to it, ranging from monitoring, enquiring and investigating, to imposing conditions or taking enforcement actions.

Risk

As part of its targeted approach to regulation TEQSA makes careful judgements about levels of provider risk relating to: risk to students; risk of provider collapse; and risk to sector reputation. TEQSA analyses quantitative and qualitative information relevant to a provider's current and future ability to deliver quality higher education. This may include such a provider's history of scholarship, teaching and research; its students' experiences; its financial status and capacity; and its history of compliance with the TEQSA Act. It applies expert judgement to develop a holistic risk profile of each provider. These profiles support TEQSA's core regulatory functions and inform its registration and course accreditation activities. In aggregate, risk profiles allow a baseline understanding to be developed about the relative 'health' of the higher education sector.

Quality Assessments

As well as assessing a provider's compliance with national standards, TEQSA also has a responsibility to explore the relative quality of higher education being delivered, over and above minimum requirements for registration. TEQSA undertakes quality assessments to establish whether any systemic issues relating to a particular course of study or higher education award exist and to identify and disseminate best practice approaches within the sector.

The Australian Higher Education Sector

The Australian higher education sector encompasses both public and private universities, a wide variety of other private and public higher education providers, and Australian branches of overseas universities. There are currently 170 higher education providers registered with TEQSA. The National Register, managed by TEQSA, is the authoritative source of information for domestic and international students on the status of registered higher education providers in Australia (<http://www.teqsa.gov.au/national-register>). A provider's registration by TEQSA signals to the public that the provider is compliant with national standards of quality higher education.

TEQSA in an international context

Higher education is part of Australia's fourth largest export trade sector and is Australia's largest services export. Australia welcomes international students and also encourages Australian students to broaden their skills and life experience through education abroad.

TEQSA's regulatory activity demonstrates to prospective students that the quality of a higher education award received through the Australian higher education system has been assured by a robust regulatory regime. This is the case whether the qualification has been obtained within Australia or through an Australian institution's overseas operations.

TEQSA is also responsible for applying the *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* which sets out the regulatory requirements for education and training institutions offering courses to international students in Australia on a student visa. The ESOS Act is supported by the National Code, a set of nationally consistent standards that governs the protection of overseas students and delivery of courses to those students by providers registered on the Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS). The Register can be found at <http://cricos.deewr.gov.au/>.

TEQSA has an international strategy aimed at ensuring Australia's approach to regulation and quality assurance is informed by international best practice. The strategy has three main objectives: i) fostering cooperative relations with overseas regulatory and quality assurance agencies; ii) extending TEQSA's capacity to conduct regulatory activities overseas where Australian institutions are active; and iii) building confidence in Australia's higher education sector. TEQSA's international strategy is available at <http://www.teqsa.gov.au/sites/default/files/TEQSAInternationalStrategy.pdf>.