Australian Government

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency

Application guide for course accreditation (registered providers)

Version 1.0
Effective from 15 July 2025

TEQSA

Contents

Background

This guide reflects TEQSA's current process for registered higher education providers to follow when applying for course accreditation under s46 of the _Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011_ (TEQSA Act).

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 and quality assurance framework in 2025.

The best way to stay informed about consultation opportunities and updates about TEQSA's approach to risk-based regulation 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 and quality assurance framework.

Assessment scope

To deliver a higher education course, registered higher education providers without self-accrediting authority must apply to TEQSA to accredit the course of study.

TEQSA's assessment of an application to accredit a new course covers the following standards of the _Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021_ (Threshold Standards):

Section	Standards
Admission	1.1.1
Learning Outcomes and Assessment	1.4.1, 1.4.2, 1.4.3, 1.4.4
Qualification and Certification	1.5.3
Course Design	3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.1.3, 3.1.4 and 3.1.5 (if applicable)
Staffing	3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.2.3, 3.2.4 (if applicable) and 3.2.5
Learning Resources and Educational Support	3.3.1
Course Approval and Accreditation	5.1.2, 5.1.3
Delivery with Other Parties (if applicable)	5.4.1, 5.4.2
Research (if applicable)	1.4.5, 1.4.6, 1.4.7, 4.2.2, 4.2.3, 4.2.4, 4.2.5 Where a provider is seeking to deliver its first research course the following additional standards will also be in scope: 4.1.1, 4.1.2, 4.1.3, 5.2.1, 5.2.2, 5.2.3, 5.2.4, 6.2.1c, 6.2.1e, 6.2.1f, 6.2.1i, 6.3.1a, 7.2.1, 7.2.2

If we identify unmitigated risks to course quality during our assessment that affect standards beyond the specified assessment scope, our regulatory response and assessment will be proportionate to those risks and tailored to the specific circumstances.

We will contact you if we need more information, or if the scope of our assessment needs to change, giving you the chance to provide additional details and address our concerns before we reach a decision on the application.

Please refer to our website for more information about [how we regulate](#).

Procedural fairness

TEQSA is committed to affording procedural fairness to applicants before deciding on an application that adversely and directly affects their rights and interests. These include:

- giving an applicant notice of each prejudicial matter that may be considered against them

- giving an applicant a reasonable opportunity to be heard on those matters before an adverse decision is made

- the adverse decision will be soundly based on the facts and issues that were raised during the application process, and this will be apparent in the records of the decision.

The precise requirements for procedural fairness can vary from one situation to another. The required procedural steps may vary according to the nature of the matter being dealt with and the facts and issues in dispute. The steps TEQSA will take in each situation will be tailored to ensure that they are consistent with procedural fairness requirements that apply to the situation.

Overview

Stage 1

Prepare your application

The evidence requirements for all course accreditation applications are specified in this guide and published on TEQSA's website. You are encouraged to review relevant resources, published guides and guidance notes in preparing your application.

Stage 2

Submit your application

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

Stage 3

Preliminary assessment

TEQSA's assessment team undertakes a preliminary assessment of your application. This stage may involve TEQSA making requests for missing or additional information.

Stage 4

Substantive assessment

The assessment team undertakes a substantive assessment of your application upon receipt of the substantive application fee. This stage may involve TEQSA making additional requests for information, or an expansion of the assessment scope consistent with identified risks.

Stage 5

Findings and recommendations

The assessment team makes recommendations to the TEQSA decision maker.

Stage 6

Decision

Decision on the application is made by the TEQSA decision maker. TEQSA notifies the applicant of the outcome(s), and the reasons for the decision.

Stage 7

Publication

TEQSA publishes the decision, and the reasons for the decision, on the National Register.

Application process

Stage 1 Prepare your application

At least 6 months before the proposed application submission date, providers are to email TEQSA (assessments@teqsa.gov.au) confirming their intent to apply. This notification should include details of the proposed course, including qualification title, AQF level, Broad Field of Education and the intended submission date.

Please also advise whether:

- the course(s) will be part of a nested arrangement (e.g. Masters, with nested Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate)

- any specialisations will appear in the title of the award.

A separate application must be submitted to TEQSA for each course of study for which accreditation is sought, except where the courses form a nested arrangement. If you seek accreditation of nested courses of study, you may include these courses in the same application.

Please refer to our website for guidance on nested courses of study.

In preparing your course accreditation application, TEQSA highly recommends that you closely review the requirements of the TEQSA Act and the Threshold Standards to understand your obligations. The outcomes of your institutional governance and quality assurance processes should demonstrate how you meet, and will continue to meet, each of these obligations.

Evidence requirements

TEQSA has recently revised its approach to the evidence it requires for course accreditation applications. TEQSA will no longer issue a Confirmed Evidence Table (CET) and will instead publish the evidence requirements in this application guide and on TEQSA's website.

Our intention is to reduce the required volume of evidence, such that a detailed and comprehensive self-assurance report, together with a course proposal, copies of independent external reviewer reports and the provider's response (if applicable) and documented internal approval of the course by the peak academic governing body will typically be sufficient to demonstrate compliance with the Threshold Standards.

Where TEQSA establishes that robust mechanisms for course development, design and approval provide assurance that the course meets the Threshold Standards, it should not be necessary to seek further evidence.

Applications for course accreditation should include the following evidence:

- a written submission of no more than 10 pages outlining how the provider's academic governing body has assured itself of the quality of the course and that it will meet the Threshold Standards (**self-assurance report**). In this context the self-assurance report should:

  > describe the outcomes of course development, design and approval activities undertaken in relation to the course

> demonstrate how the outcomes of course development and approval processes were used to identify, prioritise and mitigate risks to course quality and guide iterative course improvements prior to approval

> describe how the peak academic governing body assured itself of the effectiveness of its course development, design and approval processes, and relatedly assured itself that the course of study meets the Threshold Standards

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

For additional guidance on self-assurance reports, see the next section and the [key considerations for providers preparing a self-assurance report (course accreditation for registered providers)](#).

- an index listing any supporting evidence referenced throughout the self-assurance report (***index***)

- a course proposal submitted for review and approval to the academic governing body (***course proposal***)

- academic governing body meeting minutes considering and giving final internal approval of the course (***minutes***)

- where an independent external reviewer has been engaged to provide discipline input into course design, copies of any reports generated (if applicable) (***reports***)

- the provider response to any external review reports (if applicable) (***provider response***).

Where an accreditation application includes nested courses of study, only one self-assurance report is required. In such instances, TEQSA will expect that the self-assurance report and application demonstrate consideration and management of risks to each course for which accreditation is sought.

TEQSA will hold similar expectations that the course proposal and evidence of the course approval process demonstrate consideration of each course of study within the nested arrangement.

In completing your application in the provider portal, you are asked to submit only those documents requested above. Any additional supporting evidence should be listed in the self-assurance report index and made available to TEQSA if requested.

Self-assurance report

TEQSA acknowledges that the nature of risk and the institutional responses to manage risk will vary for each provider, according to the context in which it is operating.

Provider category, modes of delivery, provider size and scale, fields of education being delivered, and transnational or third-party delivery are examples of relevant factors that may inform a provider's approach to self-assurance and the management of different types of regulatory risk.

Self-assurance reports will inform TEQSA's understanding of how a provider's self-assurance mechanisms address key regulatory risks and support the achievement of outcomes in delivering higher education. This will support TEQSA in determining compliance with the Threshold Standards and arriving at a decision in its regulatory assessments.

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 risks relevant to the course, including individual provider and sector risks to academic quality and integrity. We encourage all providers to review the [key considerations for providers preparing a self-assurance report (course accreditation for registered providers)](#).

Course proposal

Course proposals, as presented to the academic governing body for review and approval, should evidence the conceptual underpinning of the course and specify the key elements of the course design including:

- rationale (including expected graduate employment outcomes)

- qualifications to be awarded on completion

- admissions criteria, including entry requirements and pathways

- course learning outcomes, methods of assessment and indicative student workload, and national/international comparators

  > rationale for relationship between course learning outcomes, AQF level specifications, unit learning outcomes and unit assessment and summary table mapping this alignment

  > learning outcomes should include both discipline-related and generic outcomes

- structure, duration and modes of delivery

- list of units of study (indicating whether compulsory or elective, and any pre- and co-requisites)

- site(s) of delivery, including any third-party delivery arrangements

- overview of the workforce plan, including academic leadership and supervisory roles

- compulsory requirements for completion

- exit pathways, articulation arrangements and pathways to further learning

- specialist resources or facilities (if applicable)

- special arrangements to facilitate course delivery in a language other than English (if applicable)

- research content (applicable for Bachelor Honours, Masters by Research or Doctoral qualifications)

- professional accreditation (and any other inherent) requirements for graduates to be eligible to practise, including details of the accreditation body (if applicable)

- requirements for recognition by an industry body or association (if applicable).

Evidence of course approval

The Threshold Standards require that there is a rigorous process for scrutinising course proposals that is applied consistently, is at arm's length from those who design and deliver the course of study, and is capable of competent relevant academic judgement appropriate to the level of study.

This should involve external discipline advice and input from industry and/or professional bodies where relevant, for example, through a course advisory committee or similar.

The academic governing body meeting minutes that consider and give final internal approval of the course of study act as evidence of the course approval process and should demonstrate that the decision to approve the course was suitably informed by independent academic scrutiny of the design, delivery and assessment of the course.

The evidence of course approval should further demonstrate that the peak academic governance body has assured itself that the proposed course of study meets the requirements of the Threshold Standards and that sufficient resources are, or will be available, to deliver the course.

Please refer to our website for [guidance on academic quality assurance](.).

External discipline advice

External discipline reviews can be a credible method of applying independent academic scrutiny to the course of study. TEQSA strongly encourages providers to consider the use of independent external discipline reviews in support of self-assurance and continuous improvement activities, including course design and development, and course reviews.

Please refer to our website for [guidance on planning and conducting an independent external review](#).

Where an independent external reviewer has been engaged to provide discipline input into course design and development, providers are asked to submit copies of the external reviewer's reports, evidence of the actions taken by the provider in response to the advice, and any final review of the provider's actions by the external reviewer.

Stage 2 Submit your application

Submitting your application

Section 46 of the [TEQSA Act](#) outlines the process for applying for accreditation of a course of study.

It specifies that applications for accreditation are to be:

- **In the approved form.** The course accreditation 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](#).
- **Accompanied by any information, documents and assistance that TEQSA requests.** The information and documentation that we request is documented above, unless otherwise specified.
- **Accompanied by the preliminary assessment fee.** Fees are determined under s158 of the TEQSA Act. Please visit our website for more information on our [application fees](#).

> The application will only be considered received by TEQSA once **the approved form, requested evidence and the preliminary assessment fee payment** have all been received.

TEQSA expects that most of the evidence you are referencing in your application and self-assurance report will be existing documents that have been produced and used for internal purposes. We encourage providers to use URLs and hyperlinks where possible for information that TEQSA can easily download from your website. We ask that you do not use URLs or hyperlinks for any internal systems, for example, SharePoint or to other document management solutions.

If you are referencing documents that have already been submitted to TEQSA, please identify in the index 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 the 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 preliminary assessment fee

For applications for course accreditation, there are 2 separate fees payable to TEQSA: the preliminary assessment fee and substantive assessment fee. Application fees do not attract GST.

The first fee is the preliminary assessment fee. An invoice for the preliminary assessment fee and a request for payment will be raised in the provider portal once your application is

complete but *not* submitted. This invoice is payable upon submission of the application form and supporting evidence.

TEQSA does not have an online payment facility. TEQSA's ABN is 50 658 250 012.

Initial application check

Once submitted, TEQSA will review the application to determine whether it meets the requirements of s46(2) of the TEQSA Act.

Valid applications

If the application meets the requirements of s46(2) of the TEQSA Act, the application will be determined as 'valid' and proceed to the preliminary assessment stage.

Invalid applications

If the application does not meet the requirements of s46(2) of the TEQSA Act, the application will be determined as 'invalid' and will not proceed to the preliminary assessment stage.

If the application is invalid, TEQSA will:

- notify you that the application has been determined as invalid in the form of an invalid application notification
- request that you take the steps needed to satisfy the requirements of s46(2) of the TEQSA Act.

You will have 28 days (or longer by negotiation) to provide the requested information, documents or assistance to TEQSA.

Upon receiving your response, TEQSA will undertake a further review to determine whether the application now meets the requirements of s46(2) of the TEQSA Act.

If the application does now meet the requirement of s46(2) of the TEQSA Act, the application will be determined as 'valid' and proceed to the preliminary assessment stage.

The timelines for application processing do not commence, and any fees paid will be refundable, until a valid application is made.

Stage 3 Preliminary assessment

Section 47 of the [TEQSA Act](#) details the timelines and requirements for the preliminary assessment of course accreditation applications by TEQSA.

If you decide to withdraw your application at this stage, the preliminary assessment fee is not refundable.

For applications that have been determined valid under s46(2) of the TEQSA Act, TEQSA must, within 30 days of the application being received:

- advise you whether the application is accompanied by sufficient information, documents and assistance, and,
- if it is not, request that you provide further information, documents or assistance.

We will send a notification confirming the preliminary assessment outcome, including a request for further information, documents or assistance if required, along with an invoice for the substantive assessment fee.

You will then need to decide whether to continue with your application by providing any further information, documents and assistance that TEQSA requests and paying the substantive assessment fee.

Stage 4   Substantive assessment

Section 48 of the TEQSA Act outlines how applications for course accreditation may proceed to substantive assessment.

TEQSA will only commence the substantive assessment once you have paid the substantive assessment fee. If you decide to withdraw your application, the substantive assessment fee is not refundable.

If further information, documents or assistance have been requested at the preliminary assessment stage, please provide these by the deadline specified by TEQSA.

In the substantive assessment TEQSA will assess whether the application and outcomes described in the supporting evidence confirm that the proposed course meets, or will meet, the Threshold Standards.

TEQSA's assessment focuses on the effectiveness of the provider's course development, design and approval activities in ensuring risks to the course and quality of education are effectively identified and managed.

Requests for further information

TEQSA may request further information, documents or assistance from you throughout the assessment process. For example, you may be asked to provide evidence from your index, address apparent gaps or clarify aspects of your evidence, or explain how certain policies and procedures are implemented in practice. We will ask you to respond to requests for further information via the provider portal.

Should TEQSA request documents that are written in a language other than English, TEQSA will require these to be translated by an authorised translator accredited as a 'Professional Translator' for the source language into English by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI).

External advice

In some circumstances, TEQSA may choose to obtain external discipline or governance advice to assist with our analysis of specific parts of the application. External advice may inform TEQSA's understanding and assessment of application material but does not form the basis for regulatory decisions made by TEQSA.

Wherever external advice is sought as part of the assessment process, you will be given an opportunity to state whether you consider there to be a potential or real conflict of interest with any of the proposed suppliers in relation to your application. TEQSA will take this into account before deciding which supplier to engage.

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

Subsection 49(2)(a) of the TEQSA Act confirms that TEQSA must make a decision on a course accreditation application within 9 months of receiving it (the date payment of the substantive assessment fee is received).

The time taken to finalise an assessment may be affected by a range of factors 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 (including the use of and engagement with external discipline advice)

- 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

- whether TEQSA has sought external discipline advice

- whether an adverse outcome is being considered.

Enquiries about your application

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 course accreditation applications, please contact the Assessment Manager handling your application, or the Courses team at assessments@teqsa.gov.au.

Stage 5   Findings and recommendations

If the assessment team finds that the requirements of the Threshold Standards for accreditation are met, it will recommend the TEQSA decision maker approve the application.

If the assessment team finds that the requirements of the Threshold Standards are not met, it will recommend the TEQSA decision maker reject the application.

Stage 6 Decision

The TEQSA decision maker will consider the recommendations made by the assessment team and reach a decision. In reaching a decision, the decision maker 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 decision maker may decide to:

- approve the application for the maximum accreditation period
- approve the application for a shortened period and/or impose conditions on the course accreditation

or

- reject the application.

When considering whether to approve a shortened period of accreditation, to impose conditions on the course, or to reject the application, the decision maker will consider any representations made by you in response to the reasons set out by TEQSA.

Notifying you of the decision

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

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 the course as an outcome of the course accreditation assessment, we will provide you with reasons for the decision and details of any relevant review rights.

Our obligations with respect to notifying providers of our decisions about course accreditation and conditions of accreditation are set out in s50 and s54 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](#).

Cost recovery

From 1 January 2023 TEQSA is required to fully recover costs for most regulatory activities in accordance with the Australian Government Cost Recovery Policy. The relevant charges for various compliance activities undertaken by TEQSA, including the charges for monitoring compliance with a condition or voluntary undertaking imposed on course accreditation, are set out on the part of TEQSA's website concerning the [registered higher education provider charge (RHEP charge)](#).

Stage 7 Publication

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 the name of the applicant to which the decision relates, the decision that has been made and the main reasons for the decision, and the legislative provision(s) which were the subject of the findings that informed the decision. If your application is rejected or conditions are imposed on the course, TEQSA will consider any feedback you may have given on the draft public report before this is published on the National Register.

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 course accreditation has been approved, or where review rights have expired following a decision to reject an application to accredit or to impose conditions, an entry will be created on the National Register. Where conditions are imposed on a course as an outcome of a course accreditation assessment, details of those conditions will also be published.

Please refer to our website to access the National Register.

Document information

Version #	Date	Key changes
1.0	15 July 2025	