



Guidance note: *Orientation and progression*

(August 2025)

Providers should note that Guidance Notes are intended to provide guidance only. The definitive instruments for regulatory purposes remain the TEQSA Act and the Higher Education Standards Framework as amended from time to time.

1. What do orientation and progression encompass?

The [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#) (Threshold Standards) set out provisions for higher education providers (providers) to help students transition into courses of study, monitor student progress, and support students to successfully complete their studies.

The primary part of the Threshold Standards that sets out providers' obligations around orientation and progression is Section 1.3. The Threshold Standards aim to ensure that providers:

- offer students targeted advice, support and feedback that is tailored to their needs
- offer methods of assessment that are valid and effective in determining student achievement and progress
- have in place processes to identify students at risk of unsatisfactory progress and that appropriate academic and student support mechanisms are in place across all courses of study
- provide students with equal opportunities to enter and succeed in their studies regardless of their educational, social, or cultural background.

Orientation programs and processes to monitor student progress should aim to be as comprehensive as possible. Providers should seek to develop programs grounded in the provider's policies that monitor, assess and respond to the needs of students:

- as early as possible
- at both an individual and cohort level, including at the level of various identified groups within cohorts (e.g. international students)
- both within individual units of study and across courses of study
- both within coursework environments and within research training settings
- across different modes of study and within work-integrated learning.

To sustain and deepen a provider's support for its students, the policies that ground the provider's orientation and progression programs should be informed by monitoring, review and improvement processes that inform the continuous improvement of the provider's services.



2. What TEQSA will look for

TEQSA considers the Threshold Standards in the context of orientation and progression, among which most notably are:

Part A: Standards for HE Providers	Key considerations
1.3.1–1.3.6: Orientation and Progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students and student cohorts are orientated into courses of study through programs that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – assess their needs and preparedness – provide early feedback on academic progress – identify needs for support – provide timely and tailored advice and support – provide awareness of relevant provider policies, procedures, and codes (e.g. policies concerning academic misconduct). monitoring of student progress: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – occurs both within and between units of study, and within research training – allows for early identification of students at risk of unsatisfactory progress and provides them with appropriate support – informs any reasonable adjustments or moderation of methods of assessment. there are equal opportunities for students to enter and progress through courses of study regardless of differences in educational background, entry pathways, and mode or place of study consideration is given to the successful transition of international students living, working, and studying in Australia.
2.2.1–2.2.3: Diversity and Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> progression by identified student groups is monitored and the findings are used to inform admissions policies and improve teaching, learning, and support for those groups specific consideration is given to the admission, participation and completion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
2.3.1–2.3.2, 2.3.4: Wellbeing and Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students are advised of personal support services available to them and what they can do to enhance safety and security on campus and online.
2.4.1: Student Grievances and Complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students have access to mechanisms capable of resolving grievances about any aspects of their experience with the provider, including its agents, or related parties.
4.2.1b–4.2.1c, 4.2.4: Research Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> research students and supervisors receive induction and orientation to their roles in accordance with an institutional research training policy research students receive an induction that addresses all matters necessary to conduct



	their research and the progress of their research is monitored.
5.3.3, 5.3.4a, 5.3.7: Monitoring, Review and Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> progression trends are monitored and used to improve retention, progression, and completion rates among student cohorts, including for identified student groups, and to inform periodic and comprehensive reviews of the provider's operations.
6.1.3b: Corporate Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the governing body delegates roles as needed to address issues arising from academic monitoring or orientation and progression programs.
6.2.1b, 6.2.1i: Corporate Monitoring and Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> there are plans to mitigate any disadvantage for students unable to progress in their studies due to changes in the provider's operations.
6.3.2a, 6.3.2e–6.3.2h: Academic Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> academic governance policies regarding orientation and progression programs are developed, their implementation and effectiveness monitored, which informs program revision as required academic oversight assures the effectiveness of institutional monitoring, review and improvement of orientation and progression policies academic governing processes report to the governing body regarding orientation and progression as appropriate.
7.2.1–7.2.3: Information for Prospective and Current Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> accurate, non-misleading, and easily understood advice about orientation, induction and support programs is available to all students prior to acceptance of an offer.
7.3.3a: Information Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> secure and confidential records are kept of student progression.

In assessing how well a provider's policies and procedures concerning orientation and progression meet the Threshold Standards, TEQSA will consider whether a provider is able to demonstrate that:

- the needs and preparedness of students transitioning into courses of study are assessed, student progress is monitored, and students are provided with appropriate academic feedback and support
- orientation programs are sensitive to the needs of cohorts of students, including catering to those:
 - enrolled in different modes of study
 - living with a disability
 - who provide care for others
 - identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
 - identifying as part of the LGBTQIA+ community
 - coming to Australia from overseas
 - who speak English as a second language
 - from low socio-economic backgrounds



- from rural, remote, or isolated areas
- who are the first in their family to participate in higher education.
- assessment policies and procedures:
 - are valid, reliable and consistent
 - promote student engagement and support student learning
 - enable effective monitoring of student progress
 - outline responses to lack of student progress.
- academic governance includes oversight of and involvement in periodic reporting of rates of retention, progression and completion for all student cohorts over time, including analysis of factors that might explain variations
- monitoring and reporting are deployed to improve admissions policies, support services, teaching, supervision, learning, and course design, including through regular external referencing or benchmarking against comparable courses of study.

Prospective providers applying for registration should be able to demonstrate that they have made provision for monitoring and reporting to complement and improve their orientation and progression policies so that such activities become part of their regular operations of quality assurance.

Obligations applying to providers of education to overseas students in Australia

Where it applies to a provider, TEQSA considers the [*National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018*](#) (National Code), and the [*Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000*](#) (ESOS Act).

Standards of the National Code most relevant to orientation and progression include:

- 2.1 and 8.5** – providers should offer comprehensive plain English information to prospective and current international students covering course requirements, duration (including holiday breaks), delivery, fees, third-party arrangements, accommodation options and the cost of living.
- 2.2** – providers must have an implemented policy and process to assess whether a student's English language proficiency, educational qualifications or work experience is sufficient to enable them entry into the course.
- 3.1 and 3.3–3.5** – prior to or concurrently with accepting fees, providers must enter into a signed plain-English written agreement with an overseas student (or intending student) outlining details of enrolled courses, prerequisites (including English language requirements), enrolment conditions, fees, complaints and appeals processes, the student's responsibility to keep a record of the agreement, information relating to refunds, a requirement that the student notify the provider of their residential and emergency contact details (including any changes within 7 days), and the circumstances in which the student's personal information may be disclosed; the agreement should only use links for supplementary material.
- 5.2** – providers should offer international students under 18 years of age culturally-appropriate contact information in case of emergencies or incidents or allegations of abuse.
- 6.1** – at orientation, providers should offer international students access to a culturally-appropriate orientation program that includes living, study, work, legal and health support services.



6.3, 6.4 and 6.5 – providers should offer international students reasonable support services to help them succeed in their studies regardless of their place or mode of study, address the learning needs of students, and assign staff to serve as official contact officers for support services.

8.1, 8.3–8.4 and 8.7–8.8 – providers should monitor each international student's progression and attendance (where applicable), monitor whether the student will complete their course within the time specified by their Certificate of Enrolment, and monitor and provide help if students are at risk of unsatisfactory progress.

3. Identified issues

Within the context of the Threshold Standards, TEQSA has identified issues that may indicate risks to compliance regarding orientation and progression. These include, but are not limited to:

- inadequate policies and procedures for monitoring student progress and engagement
- insufficient evidence concerning how student progress and performance reports are used to monitor, test, and adjust policies
- lack of staff training on how to identify and monitor an unengaged or at-risk student
- failure to follow through on the implementation of intervention strategies for at-risk students
- lack of academic oversight or an absence of academic governance processes in grounding student support policies
- data is collected regarding student progress and performance, but the data is either not analysed, or the analysis of the data is not used to improve academic policies or frameworks
- lack of academic governance records, e.g. meeting minutes, demonstrating the monitoring, review and adoption of policies or frameworks for managing student orientation and progress.

Under the National Code, the following issues are also indicative of risks to compliance regarding orientation and progression:

- orientation materials for international students are not specific enough to be informative, for example:
 - average nation-wide cost of living figures are provided rather than for the city or area in which the student is likely to live or in which the campus is located
 - challenges in finding accommodation are not adequately conveyed
 - information regarding work rights refers only to maintaining visa status while omitting further critical information concerning the broader rights and work culture in Australia.
- a provider has a criterion for determining unsatisfactory progress – for example, 'attendance at less than X% of enrolled units in a study period' – but lacks an explicit and actionable way of determining whether the criterion has been met
- staff may be trained in detecting whether students are at risk of failing to progress, but are not placed in contact with students to perform monitoring and assessment
- lack of ESOS training for staff, particularly regarding how to adequately report on PRISMS



- lack of procedures to review the effectiveness of the programs designed to support students in orientation and progression
- failure to ensure that analysis of student cohort data is systematically used to trace poorly performing cohorts back to student entry pathways, admission policies, country or region of origin, or agent practices.

Related Resources

- Guidance note: Information for prospective and current students (under review)
- Guidance note: [Admissions](#)
- Guidance note: [Wellbeing and safety](#)
- Guidance note: [Diversity and equity](#)
- Guidance note: [Learning resources and educational support](#)
- Guidance note: [Research and research training](#)
- Guidance note: [Academic monitoring, review and improvement](#)
- Guide: [ELICOS direct entry](#)
- Good practice note: [Improving retention and completion of students in Australian higher education](#)
- TEQSA resource: [Characteristics of Australian higher education providers and their relation to first-year student attrition](#)
- [Higher Education Support Act \(2003\)](#)
- [Higher Education Support Amendment \(Response to the Australian Universities Accord Interim Report\) Act 2023](#)
- [Higher Education Provider Amendment \(Support for Students Policy\) Guidelines 2023](#)

Version #	Date	Key changes