Australian Government
Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency

# Guidance note:
# Learning resources and educational support

Version 1.0 (11 June 2025)



TEQSA

TEQSA's guidance notes are concise documents designed to provide high-level, principles-based guidance on interpretation and application of specific standards of the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021*. They also draw attention to other interrelated standards and highlight potential risks to compliance. They do not introduce prescriptive obligations.

The definitive instruments that set out providers' obligations in delivering higher education remain the Threshold Standards (as amended on advice from the Higher Education Standards Panel to the Minister for Education from time to time) and the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011*.

In early 2024, TEQSA consulted stakeholders with a draft version of the guidance note about learning resources and education support, and considered all feedback.

This guidance note was finalised on 11 June 2025.

The purpose and intent of the guidance note about learning resources and education support is to support providers to assure themselves that their learning resources are appropriately accessible to all students and related to learning outcomes, and that learning support services meet the needs of student cohorts.

For the full list of guidance notes and resources, please see the TEQSA website.

# 1. What do learning resources and educational support encompass?

In the context of the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021* (Threshold Standards), learning resources and educational support refer to the academic resources made available for a course of study and the support a provider offers students to develop students' capacity for independent learning and inquiry.

The primary obligations related to learning resources and educational support are found in section 3.3 of the Threshold Standards.

Facilities and resources of a more general nature that do not form part of a particular course of study are covered in other parts of the Threshold Standards:

- Facilities and infrastructure (section 2.1)
- Wellbeing and safety (section 2.3)
- Staffing (section 3.2).

Learning resources and educational support relating to research and research training fall within section 4.2 of the Threshold Standards and are not considered as part of this guidance note (See Guidance note: Research and research training).

## Learning resources

The Threshold Standards require a provider to ensure students:

- have access to up-to-date learning resources, which are directly relevant to their course of study
- receive timely training and support to access and use student learning management systems (more information about obligations regarding student learning management systems is available in the Facilities and Infrastructure Guidance note)
- are not subjected to unexpected barriers, such as the cost of technological requirements to access required resources.

When assessing learning resources, TEQSA will consider:

- the educational materials
- their availability
- their accessibility
- their quality.

The Threshold Standards do not dictate or specify a required form for learning resources. Examples of learning resources include physical books, journals, videos, websites, podcasts, or online databases. Regardless of the form a learning resource takes, a provider must ensure the resources are:

- available in forms that are accessible to all students, including those with disability, regardless of the mode of study (e.g. online only)
- appropriate for the level of qualification under the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)
- relevant and up to date.

The Threshold Standards do not explicitly state a provider needs to have a physical library and physical learning materials. However, there is an expectation on providers to ensure students can readily access materials and resources referred to in their course of study.[1] TEQSA will not accept a model where a provider makes no learning resources available and refers its students to a public library, or similar.

When assessing the quality of learning resources, TEQSA may engage the assistance of an external subject matter expert. Information regarding learning resources will need to be sufficiently detailed for the expert to form a view on their quality and appropriateness for the course of study.

If a provider elects for its learning resources to be managed by an external third party, it must be able to demonstrate:[2]

- the arrangement with the other party is part of a formal agreement
- delivering the resources in this way is practical for students and does not create unreasonable barriers to access.

## Educational support

In general, TEQSA will expect providers to give students the educational support necessary to allow them to develop their capacity for independent learning and inquiry.

TEQSA will expect providers to:

- have educational support services available to its students consistent with their course of study
- have qualified staff that can help students locate the information they need
- give training to students on how to locate and use resources relevant to their course of study
- provide timely feedback regarding student assessment
- have support services for students who are at risk (or potentially at risk) of not making progress with their studies
- regularly communicate with students about how to access resources and support services.

Under Standard 3.3.4 of the Threshold Standards, providers are also required to provide students with more general support services to:

- develop study skills
- develop English language proficiency
- assist in their transition to living in Australia.

1. This is separate to supplemental material such as suggested reading, which a student may decide to acquire on their own initiative.
2. See also, Guidance note: Delivery with other parties.

# 2. What TEQSA will look for

TEQSA considers relevant standards from the Threshold Standards in the context of learning resources and educational support, among which most notably are:

| Part A: Standards for HE providers | Key considerations |
|---|---|
| 1.3.1 and 1.3.4: Orientation and Progression | • orientation is provided to all students, with nuanced and specific consideration for cohort needs, e.g. international students adjusting to living and studying in Australia<br>• institutions must understand of how resources and educational support impact on student progress, pass rates, retention and completion. |
| 2.2.3: Diversity and Equity | • participation, progress, and completion are monitored to determine teaching and learning strategies to support identified 'at risk' student cohorts (e.g. regional and remote students, low socioeconomic status, indigenous students). |
| 3.2.5: Staffing | • teaching staff are accessible to students seeking individual assistance with their studies<br>• teaching staff have the requisite knowledge, skills and time to provide adequate support to students. |
| 3.3.1-4: Resources up to date and accessible | • learning resources are up to date and accessible<br>• access to online learning management systems is timely and training is available to use the systems<br>• access to learning resources do not present any unexpected barriers costs or technology requirements<br>• student access to educational support services is consistent with their course requirements, mode of study and learning needs<br>• clear communication from providers to students and staff about how to access academic and non-academic resources and support services, including for students with special needs who study off campus. |
| 5.3.7: Monitoring, Review and Improvement | • the results of provider monitoring and review processes are used to mitigate future risks to the quality of the education provided. The results also inform approaches to course design, teaching and learning resources and educational support services. |

## Obligations applying to providers of education to overseas students

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).

Sections of the National Code relevant to learning resources and educational support are:

**2.1.5** – before accepting a prospective student for enrolment, a provider must make information about campus locations, facilities and learning resources available in plain English

**6.1** – a provider must support overseas students adjusting to study and life in Australia by providing information and culturally appropriate orientation on:

- **6.1.2** – English language and study assistance programs
- **6.1.5** – its facilities and resources
- **6.1.8** – support services available to assist students with general or personal circumstances adversely affecting their education in Australia

**6.3** – a provider must give reasonable support to overseas students to enable them to achieve expected learning outcomes regardless of place or mode of study, at no additional cost to the student

**6.4** – a provider must facilitate access to learning support services consistent with the requirements of the course, mode of study and learning needs of the student

**8.22** – a provider must take all reasonable steps to support overseas students who may be disadvantaged while engaging in distance or online learning.

## Obligations applying to providers receiving financial support from the Commonwealth

Providers subject to the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* (HESA) may have additional obligations regarding learning resources and educational support.

The HESA sets out, amongst other things, the parameters of what a provider can charge students for the services it provides. Providers subject to the HESA must not charge students for learning resources and educational support, where doing so would be contrary to the HESA.

As an example, section 36-45 of the HESA places limits on the amount a provider can request a student to contribute.

From 1 January 2024, providers are required to comply with the *Higher Education Support Amendment (Response to the Australian Universities Accord Interim Report) Act 2023*. The Department of Education is responsible for compliance with these requirements.

- Under the requirements, providers will be expected to document, publish and implement a support for students policy. The policy requirements apply to providers approved under HESA.

# 3. Identified issues

TEQSA has identified several issues which may indicate risks to students and non-compliance with obligations related to learning resources and educational support. These include, but are not limited to:

## Communicating key information

- students not being made aware of the cost of resources required for a course before accepting an offer
- students not being made aware of how to access information and resources relevant to their course of study
- students not being made aware of inherent requirements or special requirements relevant to their course of study prior to accepting an offer and enrolling, resulting in a student not achieving learning outcomes
- students missing orientation and not receiving the information from orientation later, for example PhD students who often commence their courses at irregular times.

## Quality of learning resources and support

- using poor quality resources in a course of study (e.g. irrelevant, obsolete, non-authoritative material) including outdated versions of textbooks in its library
- students not receiving timely and/or sufficient feedback on assessments. This may lead to students being unaware they are at academic risk until too late in the study period to take corrective action
- inadequate monitoring of at-risk student cohorts, leading to a failure to identify opportunities to provide educational support
- failure to identify opportunities for the continuing improvement of learning resources and educational support services.

## Accessing resources

- students facing barriers to accessing resources such as:
  - being required to use uncommon or unreasonably costly software
  - having limited access to science or computer labs that are only open during regular working hours
  - limited access to teaching staff
  - access to online resources requires impractically high internet speeds
  - online students being unable to access resources that are only available onsite
  - students with a disability being unable to access learning materials because they are not in an accessible form.

# Related resources

- Guidance note: Facilities and infrastructure
- Guidance note: Wellbeing and safety
- Guidance note: Diversity and equity
- Guidance note: Research and research training
- Higher Education Support Act 2003
- Requirements to support students (Department of Education, Australian Government)
- Higher education administrative information for providers (Department of Education, Australian Government)

# Document information

| Version # | Date | Key changes |
|---|---|---|
| 1.0 | 11 June 2025 | Major revision. This guidance note and *Staffing* replaces *Staffing, learning resources and educational support.* |

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