Australian Government
Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency

# Transnational education toolkit

November 2026



TEQSA

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# Foreword

As Australia's higher education regulator, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) is responsible for protecting and enhancing the quality, integrity and reputation of Australian higher education, including safeguarding student interests.

In support of this work, TEQSA is pleased to provide the second edition of the *Transnational Education Toolkit*. This edition has been updated in response to changes in the market and the corresponding approaches adopted by Australia's higher education providers.

In recent years, Australian institutions have diversified their offerings and delivery models, expanded into new markets and increased the presence of Australian higher education overseas. While this has improved opportunities for Australia's higher education providers to engage overseas markets and strengthened the sector's global standing, it has also introduced evolving risks and challenges that require careful consideration. TEQSA recognises that these risks and challenges may continue to evolve rapidly across the transnational education landscape.

This updated edition aims to provide practical support for Australian higher education institutions to understand, assess and mitigate the evolving risks and complexities associated with third-party offshore arrangements, and is structured around the transnational education lifecycle. The toolkit:

- includes updated guidance and advice, with illustrative examples, which reflect the changing landscape and evolving risks of offshore delivery
- identifies areas of interest and common challenges when establishing and maintaining offshore course delivery, particularly through third-party arrangements
- offers information on policy and legislative requirements, benchmarking tools and links to relevant legislative frameworks and policies
- contains resources to help institutions identify and manage risks to the quality of offshore delivery.

I commend and thank Dr Samantha Young, Senior Program Director, Office of the Vice-Chancellor at Monash University for generously sharing her extensive knowledge and experience in the governance and quality assurance of transnational education, through both the previous and current editions of this toolkit.

The revised edition is shared to support providers in complying with the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021* and the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011* (TEQSA Act), while also assuring the quality of the Australian educational experience.

**Professor Kerri-Lee Krause**

Chief Commissioner
Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency
November 2026

# Preface to the second version

The second version of the *Transnational Education Toolkit* has retained its focus on the 'transnational education lifecycle', which serves to guide the effective management of transnational education arrangements from establishment through to cyclical review, whether an institution is new to offshore activity or managing long-standing partnerships. By aligning with these phases, providers can better navigate the complexities of offshore operations while meeting their legislative obligations under the TEQSA regulatory framework.

Sector feedback on the first *Transnational Education Toolkit* has been incredibly positive, and it has been utilised by both public and private institutions across Australia and in offshore partner markets. The timing of this revision is particularly significant. Recent Australian Government policy regarding onshore international student numbers, combined with a strategic focus on high-quality delivery, is prompting a renewed focus on transnational education among Australian providers. As institutions enter new markets and onboard new partners, it is essential to have a structured framework that safeguards the integrity of Australian higher education awards and ensures a consistent student experience across all jurisdictions.

In this revised version, two new sections offer practical, evidence-based insights into transnational education governance and operational oversight. The sections provide two implementation guides that were developed to address prevalent and emerging risks, providing a model for how governance mechanisms can be used to resolve complex operational challenges, and support partnership arrangements. The implementation guides reinforce the principle that the awarding institution remains fully accountable for the quality and integrity of its awards, regardless of the delivery model.

# Acknowledgements

TEQSA thanks the author of this publication, Dr Samantha Young (Monash University), for her work in developing this resource and sharing her knowledge and expertise.

# Introduction

This *Transnational Education Toolkit* (Toolkit) has been designed to support Australian higher education institutions in understanding, assessing and mitigating the risks associated with delivering Australian awards offshore. The focus is on commonly used modes of transnational education (TNE) and third-party arrangements, ensuring institutions meet their obligations to deliver a high-quality education and student experience, regardless of location.

The information in the Toolkit is presented through the 'transnational education lifecycle' that sets out the key phases of activity for both quality delivery of courses of study via TNE and maintaining effective third-party arrangements. The Toolkit offers guidance to enhance institutions' understanding of the complexity of operating TNE offshore and the inherent, increased risk of delivering programs via third-party arrangements.

Advice and guidance in the Toolkit is general in nature and the examples are intended to provide conceptual direction to support both new and mature TNE providers. The Toolkit does not endorse or promote any of the models suggested in this guidance.

# Transnational education

The expression 'transnational education' (or 'TNE') is used in different ways in the higher education sector in Australia and overseas. In its broadest sense, TNE refers to education where learners are located in a different country to where the awarding institution is based. According to UNESCO's and the Council of Europe's 2025 *Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education*, TNE may include:

> A subset of cross-border education where study programmes, or sets of courses, or educational services borrow or transfer elements of one country's higher education system (or non-country specific education systems) from or to another country. It may involve the movement of faculty, learners, knowledge, programmes, providers and curricula across jurisdictional borders. It may encompass a wide range of mode of delivery (including distance and blended learning) and may or may not require learners' mobility. The programme(s) and qualification(s) awarded may belong to the domestic education system of reference of the providing institution, to the education system of a State different from the State in which the providing institution operates, or may be independent of any national education system.

This Toolkit aims to provide information relevant to TNE arrangements that would be regulated by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) under the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Act 2011* (TEQSA Act) and the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021* (Threshold Standards). Some of the most common types of TNE arrangements that may fall under TEQSA's regulatory remit include (but are not limited to):

- wholly owned and managed offshore campuses
- partner-managed offshore campuses
- joint-venture partnerships at single or multiple offshore locations
- third-party overseas arrangements
- three-party overseas arrangements between a registered Australian higher education provider, an offshore delivery provider and a private investment partner.

Within these, further distinctions may occur. For example, offshore delivery of Australian higher education awards was traditionally undertaken in face-to-face modes with limited hybrid study at an institution-managed branch campus or via a third-party arrangement. In the post-COVID market, institutions have increased their opportunities to reach new and additional cohorts by diversifying course offerings and embracing hybrid delivery models. Similarly, third-party arrangements, which encompass those between a provider and another entity (in Australia or overseas) for the delivery of a course of study or parts of it, can include dual awards, partnerships with foreign higher education providers and/or private equity firms, and joint-venture branch campuses, among others. Further details concerning some common TNE types (in the most general sense of 'TNE') are provided in *Appendix 1: Common types of transnational education* on page 44.

# Legislative frameworks

The *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021* provides for quality assurance of the delivery of all higher education awards, including those offered through third-party arrangements. Importantly, registered providers remain responsible for meeting the Threshold Standards, regardless of whether courses are being provided offshore or by third parties. While the application of specific Threshold Standards may depend on the nature of the arrangement, they should be considered at all points in the TNE lifecycle, including at the point of formalising an agreement, with terms and expectations clarified in the contract. For further guidance, refer to TEQSA's *Guidance Note: Delivery with other parties* along with *Appendix 2: What does compliance look like?* on page 46.

Australian higher education providers need to be aware of all applicable legislative provisions when managing offshore, third-party arrangements. In addition to the Threshold Standards, other key legislative frameworks and guidelines include:

- *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011* (TEQSA Act)
- *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* (ESOS Act)
- *National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018*
- *Australia's Foreign Relations (State and Territory Arrangements) Act 2020*
- *Guidelines to Counter Foreign Interference in the Australian University Sector (2021)*

Providers are also encouraged to review information provided by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) at the earliest stage of contemplating a new TNE partnership. Public universities are required to report any active proposal to enter an arrangement with a foreign government or a foreign university that does not have 'institutional autonomy', in the sense specified in the *Australia's Foreign Relations (State and Territory Arrangements) Act 2020*. DFAT also encourages private universities to report any active proposals and to contact them for advice, if required.

An institution's operations (recruitment, student administration and learning management systems) will need to be flexible to respond to future government policy changes and expectations; TNE arrangements may be impacted by changing government policy such as constraints on international student numbers and visa processing times. For example, if a dual award or articulation arrangement includes a student moving onshore to complete their studies in Australia, responding to government policy will be necessary.

Under amendments to the TEQSA Act passed in 2025, registered higher education providers are required to:

- receive authorisation from TEQSA to offer or confer an Australian higher education award for an offshore provided Australian course of study
- give TEQSA notice in writing of any new or changed offshore delivery arrangements as soon as the provider is aware of the event or change, and within 90 days of the event or change
- provide an annual report to TEQSA (due on 31 October each year) detailing their offshore delivery arrangements.

Providers should consult the TEQSA website for further guidance concerning applications for authorisation to deliver Australian courses of study offshore, notifications of changes to arrangements, and TEQSA's expectations around a provider's ability to assure itself of ongoing compliance with the Threshold Standards (as they apply to TNE arrangements). TEQSA specifies the information that must be included in the required annual report, and the manner in which it must be provided, through a legislative instrument. TEQSA may, from time to time, adapt the information required through the instrument in accordance with regulatory risk.

# Key risk areas and challenges

Key risk areas for offshore delivery include, but are not limited to:

- corporate governance
- financial viability and sustainability
- student admission, induction and support
- student safety and wellbeing
- student attainment, including equivalence of delivery, learning outcomes and award recognition
- workforce capability, including teacher quality, ongoing professional development and scholarship.

Key challenges for offshore delivery include, but are not limited to:

- having appropriate and timely governance oversight and accountability, including risk management and mitigation measures
- maintaining rigorous and transparent policies and procedures in admissions practices and recognition of prior learning (RPL)
- ensuring student support and ongoing pastoral care is appropriately tailored
- having effective response mechanisms to student critical incidents of safety or wellbeing
- assuring standards around assessment invigilation, academic integrity and learner authentication
- managing offshore student data and other potential cyber security risks in accord with Australian privacy laws
- managing institutional and research relationships in accordance with Australian guidelines on foreign interference
- navigating and regularly reviewing the intersection of Australian and offshore laws as they apply to contractual arrangements outside Australia.

# Toolkit: Transnational education lifecycle of activity

The *Transnational Education Toolkit* introduces a 'transnational education lifecycle' to provide details on the governance and management of quality offshore delivery. The lifecycle does not need to be applied in the order presented here and can be referred to at the point most relevant to an institution's existing TNE arrangements, noting the importance of appropriate strategy, timing, resourcing, planning and implementation.

This Toolkit is designed to guide institutions both new and familiar to TNE through this lifecycle, to build their awareness of key risks and considerations that will enable them to successfully manage the various stages of a contract or the delivery of a course with a third-party.

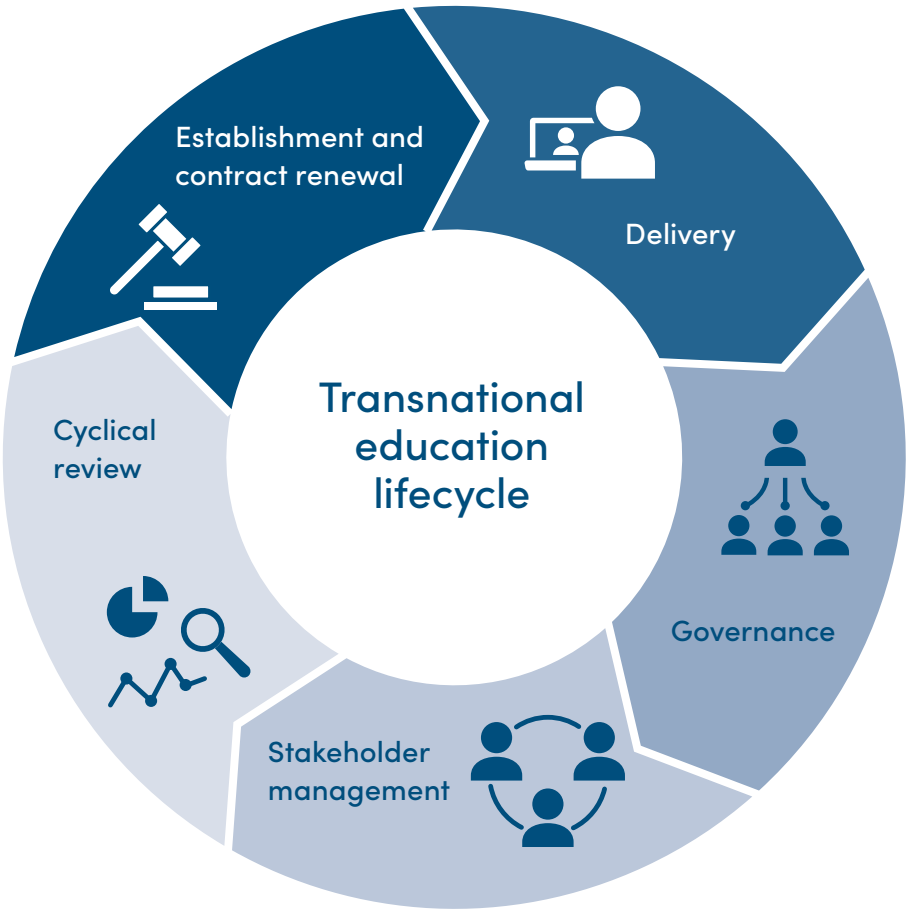
The Toolkit includes two icons to guide readers:

**Key tips and considerations**

**Lead indicators of risk**

### Diagram 1: Transnational education cycle

There are five key phases of (potentially overlapping) activity for delivering courses of study via TNE and agreements (contracts) supporting third-party arrangements.



PHASE 1:

# Establishment and contract renewal

- ☐ Due diligence and risk assessment
- ☐ Understanding of operating context
- ☐ Awareness of legal obligations

## Successful third-party arrangements are supported by a clear and specific business case that sets out the rationale for the type and scope of TNE to be offered, alongside consideration of the academic model of the arrangement.

***Phase 1: Establishment and contract renewal*** **should be read in conjunction with** ***Phase 3: Governance arrangements.***

## Key risks and challenges

TNE arrangements that do not align with a provider's strategic plan and operating capability, or which are not supported by a risk assessment framework agreed to by all parties and monitored on a regular basis, may be lead indicators of a range of risks.

Due diligence is a standard exercise to be undertaken before entering into a contract to ensure that a prospective partner can meet the expectations of the TNE delivery. Effective, targeted and clear-eyed due diligence processes are crucial. Examples of due diligence activities, and risk assessment and risk management practices, are included in 'Table 1: Activities in the contract and renewal phase' and are provided in detail in *Implementation guidance - Part A* on page 13.

Due diligence will address the complex and dynamic nature of TNE and will assess a potential partner alongside pertinent, in-country characteristics such as:

- how the in-country government regards the delivery of higher education, with specific consideration of the mode of delivery (for example, face-to-face and online); what is the in-country government's position on foreign investment?
- the applicable regulatory and course accreditation or recognition models
- any issues regarding recognition of an overseas qualification (in this case an Australian award)
- any foreign interference considerations
- close consideration of the in-country legislative environment including tax laws, local hiring mandates and labour laws, zoning laws, and health and safety requirements.

Due diligence activities that do not consider applicable workplace laws and staff entitlements may indicate a risk of failing to ensure the Australian institution can meet their workplace compliance obligations.

The contract will reflect the business case and academic rationale, and have specific and achievable goals and responsibilities for each party including key performance indicators (KPIs). The Australian registered institution must ensure the contract:

- is enforceable in the jurisdiction
- takes into consideration the relevant legislative requirements within countries, noting that some laws will be different to those in Australia.

Due diligence and the contractual approach should consider the perspectives of staff across an institution's academic and operational portfolios (agents, recruitment, marketing, course delivery, support services) to ensure contract obligations are appropriate for each operational area that will work with a partner when the contract commences.

Risk in and of itself should not be prohibitive. Any identified risk needs to be considered and appropriately addressed, including allowing risks to be identified and accepted iteratively as part of effective corporate governance and risk management arrangements.

The establishment phase should also include the requirement for the institution to advise TEQSA of the delivery of offshore awards via a TNE notification. Notification to the respective in-country government(s) may also be required. 'Table 1: Activities in the contract and renewal phase' outlines the key activities to consider in the establishment and contract renewal phase (see also *Implementation guidance – Part A* on page 13).

Table 1: Activities in the contract and renewal phase

| Activity | Considerations during development |
|---|---|
| Business case | • Alignment with the institution's strategic plan.<br>• Market analysis to support the proposal.<br>• Assessment of an institution's capacity to meet the obligations outlined in the proposed arrangement, including all necessary resourcing and oversight of any third-party involved.<br>• Risk appetite for the specific market and risk profile of the proposed arrangement, including consideration of any 'opportunity risk'.<br>• Any obligations that must be met, such as a minimum number of students or other conditions preceding a contract's commencement to ensure viability of the business case.<br>• Intended Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). |
| Academic case | • Evaluate the academic model that the TNE will have including:<br>> articulation or credit to or from an institution's award<br>> delivery mode<br>> changes to program delivery structure or sequence<br>> provision of learner support, and teaching and learning resources<br>> mechanisms for moderation across delivery sites; and to support and supervise offshore student placements/work-integrated learning.<br>• Identify pathway for approval of course delivery, according to institution delegation arrangements (for example, Academic Board approval). |
| Partner due diligence | • Risk assessment for the proposed model of delivery, risk management /mitigation plans prepared, including potential conflicts of interest and ability to meet workplace compliance obligations.<br>• Assessment of proposed partner's operations and history, including:<br>> financial viability and track record of probity<br>> standing of its management and governing body (including fit and proper person review)<br>> reputation in market<br>> existing TNE arrangements.<br>• Contingency plans across the proposed delivery model, including termination of contract and teach-out arrangements.<br>• Partner staff capability and capacity, with evidence of skills to support delivery of award programs. |

Table 1: Activities in the contract and renewal phase *(continued)*

| Activity | Considerations during development |
|---|---|
| Location or in-country due diligence | • Environmental scans of political instability or sensitivities.<br>• Regulatory and accreditation requirements, including those additional to the Threshold Standards. For example:<br>> in-country governments may impose their own approval criteria, such as the Malaysian Qualifications Agency accreditation requirements<br>> recognition of an Australian higher education award may not be automatically granted by the in-country government<br>> regulatory models may be unclear or even emerging, such as that of the Indonesian and Indian higher education sectors<br>> professional accreditation may need to be obtained in-country in addition to that authorised in Australia<br>> different international student visa regimes may require tailored or new student administration systems.<br>• Legislative scanning to understand the scope of all relevant in-country laws (such as privacy and data protection, labour laws, fraud, anti-bribery), including compliance requirements:<br>> this scan should be assessed against an institution's own strategy, policy and obligations under Australian law to ensure any conflict is identified ahead of the contract establishment.<br>• Market analysis is part of the due diligence process and should be performed regularly, with an eye to considering emerging markets and competitors. |
| Partnership establishment (contractual arrangements) (Refer to Table 2) | • The contract meeting the institution's expectations and responsibilities, as a registered higher education institution in Australia, is critical.<br>• Introduce a roles and responsibilities matrix that clearly sets out each party's activities across the student lifecycle – from marketing and recruitment through to graduations and award conferral:<br>> this matrix should consider each applicable standard within the Threshold Standards; the Threshold Standards are useful for guiding partners to understand what's expected in the delivery of Australian awards.<br>• If a contract is time-limited or if a contract is to be terminated, ensure responsibilities for teach-out of awards are maintained at the conclusion of the arrangement.<br>• Consider due diligence and obligations around sub-contractors:<br>> define what, if any, subcontracting is allowable under the contract<br>> put adequate control measures in place to meet the relevant Threshold Standards, including reporting any sub-contracts to the institution.<br>• Don't underestimate the importance of checking in, clarifying roles, asking questions, setting expectations and ensuring a shared understanding of the intent of the contract requirements (for example, the application of institutional policy, reporting cycle and timelines). |

Table 1: Activities in the contract and renewal phase *(continued)*

| Activity | Considerations during development |
|---|---|
| Partnership or contract renewal | • Assess activity and outputs across the five phases of the 'transnational education lifecycle'.<br>• Reviews of key activities performed on an agreed cycle should be genuinely collaborative and supportive, with the results shared openly with the partner and reported to the appropriate institutional governance committees. Review activities may include:<br>> accuracy and consistency of admissions processes and decision-making<br>> student progress analysis<br>> performance of any appointed subcontractors.<br>• Return to original due diligence to ensure the assessment is still pertinent to the activity to be delivered under the contract. Circumstances of a partner or delivery location may have changed since the initial due diligence was undertaken. |

## Roles and responsibilities

A roles and responsibilities table that reflects the agreed arrangements for the TNE delivery can be appended to a contract to clearly set out the functions of each party. This table formalises the agreed roles and responsibilities to support arrangements across the delivery of an award, from marketing and recruitment, through to graduation and award conferral.

Within the roles and responsibilities table, it is recommended that each activity points to an institution's applicable policy or procedure to ensure expectations and instructions are clear for partner staff. The example provided in *Table 2: Governance oversight example roles and responsibilities* below shows select activities only and a finalised matrix would run to several pages.

## Contract renewal

A well-functioning partnership will include regular communication between the parties at different contact points across the two organisations. Effective communication allows rectifications to be made throughout the contract period and may also support a straightforward contract renewal process.

Nevertheless, the same approach to establishment should be taken for any contract renewal. Each party would benefit from introducing a 'no surprises principle' that formalises clear communication pathways to promptly raise any issues during the life of a partnership rather than waiting for the next meeting of a senior committee.



Long-standing partnerships benefit from consistent oversight. Regularly applying end-to-end activity checks can ensure that even the most mature and efficiently run arrangements continue to deliver optimal results.

Table 2: Governance oversight example roles and responsibilities *(select activities only)*

| Activity | Institution | Partner | Institutional documentation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Marketing | • Approves all marketing material. | • Prepares promotional material for in-country markets.<br>• Executes marketing campaigns. | Direct link to institutional policies and procedures to support compliance for nominated activities. |
| Academic case | • Sets admission standards and entry criteria; ensures policies and procedures are current.<br>• Maintains accurate information on entry criteria and advises partner of any changes.<br>• Performs cyclical audits. | • Ensures partner staff apply relevant institutional policies.<br>• Ensures all offers meet the set entry requirements for an award. | |
| Staff qualifications | • Sets minimum qualification standards for academic staff members, supported by institutional policies.<br>• Approves all academic staff appointments; and confirms teaching staff at the unit level, at the commencement of each teaching period. | • Ensures all staff members meet the minimum qualification requirements.<br>• Provides a list of prospective academic staff for approval, at the point of appointment and commencement of each teaching period. | |
| Student complaint mechanisms | • Establishes and monitors a complaints management and resolution process.<br>• Monitors reporting of complaints to identify any signs of risk or recurrent issues. | • Implements the institution's complaint management and resolution process, including informing students of the process.<br>• Makes reports to the institution on the number and nature of student complaints. | |

# Implementation guidance – Part A

## From developing a business case to partnership establishment

There are two foundational parts to establishing a TNE arrangement:

1. the business case, incorporating the academic case
2. partner selection.

Some providers will have a partner in mind when developing a business case, while others may seek partners following a decision to establish a TNE arrangement in a specific region or market. The following guidance supports either approach.

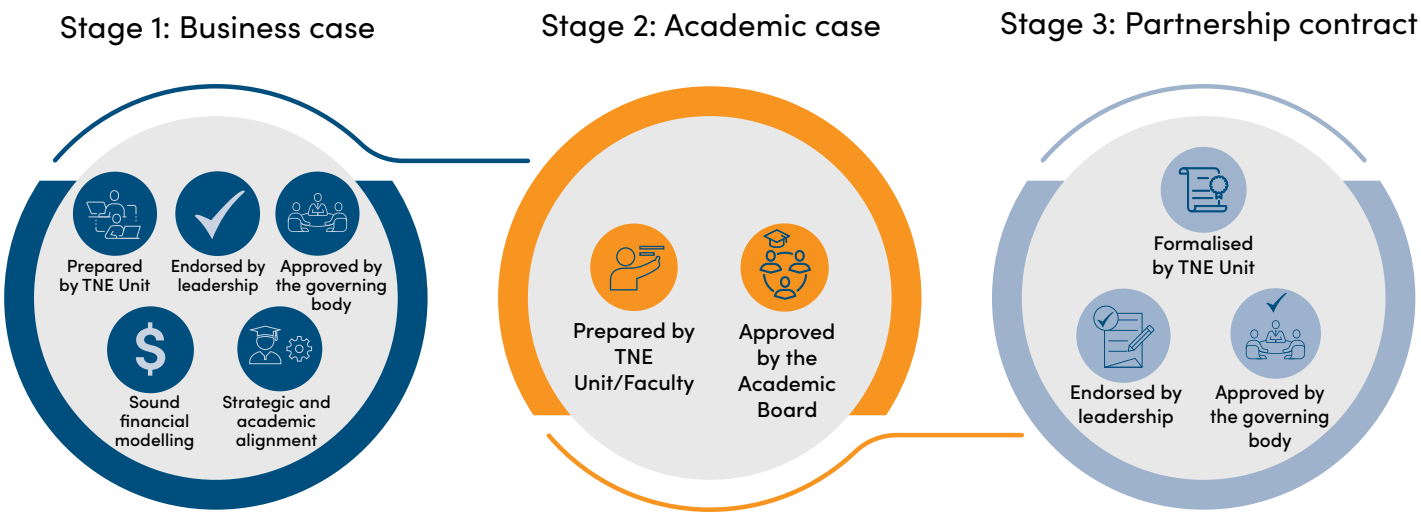
## Part 1: Business case

The business case will illustrate the proposed arrangement by demonstrating its strategic alignment with institutional goals and confirming overall viability of the arrangement. The business case will include the ***academic rationale*** – establishing the program's relevance in the target market and its alignment with institutional expertise – alongside a sound ***financial model*** detailing projected costs, revenue, resource needs, sustainability and potential return on investment.

## Part 2: Partner selection

Partner selection requires rigorous due diligence and risk assessment - assessing a prospective partner's capabilities, operational suitability, financial stability, reputation and a clear commitment to maintaining the awarding institution's quality standards. Partner selection will also be determined by the identified region and/or market where the arrangement will be delivered.

### Diagram 2: Partnership establishment overview




The 3 stages need to be revisited under the provider's set review cycle

## Proposed business case activities: Establishment of TNE partnership (internal)[1]

1. **Strategy.** The business case must be developed from a strategic perspective, clearly outlining the key drivers for the TNE activity. Consider and identify:
   - how the TNE initiative will align with and support the success of the institution's overall strategic goals and objectives
   - the reasons why the institution is engaging in TNE. For example, to expand international reach, support in-country education objectives, enhance reputation or diversify revenue streams.
2. **Clarity of purpose.** The business case, with a clear and specific rationale, should support TNE activity.



The business case should:

- explain why the institution is pursuing a particular TNE arrangement and what it hopes to achieve in alignment with the institutional strategy
- articulate the benefits for both the institution and its partner(s), as well as the benefit for students.

A clear-eyed appreciation of what the TNE will involve (for example, risk management activities, regulatory environment, jurisdiction legal requirements, in-country award recognition) can avoid problems throughout delivery.

3. **Early-stage thinking.** Key questions should be addressed in the early stages of planning to test and validate opportunities, including:
   - an assessment of the market demand for the TNE program(s), a critical evaluation of the institution's own capacity to deliver the program(s) effectively, and identifying potential risks and challenges (such as changes to Australian government policy or the in-county regulatory environment)
   - consideration of the institution's risk appetite and determining whether the TNE activity aligns with its values and priorities.
4. **Financial considerations.** TNE should not be seen as an income-generating activity. TNE is costly and can disrupt an institution's operations if not approached strategically:
   - institutions must carefully analyse the anticipated and actual costs associated with TNE, including course development, course delivery, quality assurance activities, and ongoing support for students and the partner(s)
   - institutions should also develop realistic revenue projections and consider the potential financial risks and market changes involved.
5. **Due diligence.** A business case should be supported by initial due diligence (as outlined in *Phase 1: Establishment and contract renewal* on page 7), including:
   - conducting thorough research and analysis to gather information about the TNE opportunity, potential partners and the host country's regulatory and cultural environment
   - assessing the risk management required, financial stability, academic quality and track record of potential partners.

1. Organisational unit terms are generic (TNE Working Group, TNE Operations Group, senior management, Risk Committee, Faculty, Board) and identify the function or team roles best placed to execute a task. The Toolkit does not set an expectation that an institution has this specific role or function in place.

6. **Contract.** The contract should reflect the business case and academic case, including but not limited to:
    - the roles and responsibilities of each party, the terms and conditions of the TNE arrangement and the expected outcomes
    - key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure the success of the TNE activity
    - clear lines of accountability for each party (refer to *Table 3: Example roles and responsibilities*)
    - arrangements for ending an arrangement/teaching-out existing student cohorts.
7. **Delegations matrix.** A delegations matrix should be proportionate and reflect the provider's existing governance arrangement organisational structure. At the institution level, the matrix should be introduced to clearly and specifically set out the delegated responsibilities for staff activities as they relate to the TNE or third-party arrangement. For example:
    - who has approval to sign a contract
    - who has accountability for ensuring pay compliance is maintained
    - which faculty or senior staff member has overarching responsibility for ***each course***
    - who can approve course or policy amendments specific to the third-party arrangement/partnership (if applicable)
    - any limitations on existing delegations, such as assessment modifications.

## Proposed business case activities: Contract preparation

1. **Corporate governance approval**
    - Proposed arrangement presented to senior leadership for consideration, including for alignment with institutional strategy.
    - Due diligence findings and risk assessment, undertaken in the stages above, to be reviewed by the relevant committees, such as the TNE working group and presented to the Risk Committee.
    - Financial model and contract assessed and endorsed by relevant teams (for example, finance, legal), reported to senior leadership.
    - Final proposal, including risk awareness/mitigation strategies and financial projections, submitted to senior leadership for endorsement and then to the governing body for ultimate approval, demonstrating strategic fit and acceptable risk level.
    - ***Reporting example:*** **Risk register update presented to Risk Committee; Business case and risk register presented to the Board for consideration.**

## Following formal endorsement of the business case

2. **Operational (management activity)**
    - TNE working group conduct initial market scan and partner identification (potential partners narrowed to 2 or 3 options).
    - Detailed due diligence on potential partners, including: financial viability checks, legal standing in the planned TNE country, assessment of facilities and resources, review of the potential partner's quality assurance processes, and reputation checks.

- Institution academic staff, along with relevant TNE staff, conduct academic due diligence, including: assessing the potential partner's staff qualifications, reviewing potential curriculum contextualisation needs, evaluating library and IT resources for students.
- ***Reporting example:*** **Preparation of an academic due diligence report, to be included in the final business/academic case submitted for approval.**
- Detailed risk assessment developed covering: academic, financial, legal, reputational, in-country and operational risks (including appropriate modelling of academic staff pay scales). Risk assessments should also allow for iterative risk management and any opportunity risks.
- Comprehensive legal agreement negotiated covering: roles, responsibilities, milestone reporting, finances, quality assurance, intellectual property, exit clauses, etc.
- Formal TNE proposal document prepared and endorsed for approval.

3. **Academic governance**
   - Academic due diligence report presented by relevant academic staff to the Education Committee (equivalent) and TNE Committee.
   - Review of proposed curriculum delivery model, assessment strategy (including assessment moderation plans), and student support mechanisms by the Education Committee and TNE Committee.
   - ***Reporting example:*** **Recommendation regarding academic viability and equivalence obtained and reported to the Academic Board for consideration.**
   - Formal proposal submitted to the Academic Board (or equivalent) for final approval of the academic case, ensuring alignment with the relevant Threshold Standards (particularly Domains 1, 3, 5).
   - ***Reporting example:*** **Academic due diligence report presented to the TNE Committee; Equivalence mapping document presented to the Academic Board for approval.**

PHASE 2:

# Course delivery



- ☐ Course design
- ☐ Assessment and moderation
- ☐ Staff qualifications
- ☐ Learning management system
- ☐ Infrastructure and facilities
- ☐ Student support and wellbeing

## Activities required for the end-to-end delivery of a course need to be agreed upon before delivery commences.

## Onboarding program

The institution will oversee a rigorous onboarding program, covering all aspects of training and delivery to support successful TNE program outcomes. For example:

- Ensuring the partner understands what product is being promoted in-market, and that partner staff understand admission standards and how to apply them.
- Agreeing on course delivery arrangements including teaching delivery, research supervision duties and roles (if any), marking of assessments, student support and moderation of assessments, results across teaching locations or modes of delivery, and the appointment of partner staff in collaboration with the institution. Also ensuring risks associated with generative artificial intelligence (gen AI) are addressed.
- Ensuring students studying through the partner have access to appropriate academic and non-academic support.
- Agreeing upon any adaptation to marketing and recruitment material, or customisation of course curriculum, including assessment tasks, to suit the offshore context.
- Agreeing on an applicable schedule of academic staff development and integration into the scholarly and research community of the institution.
- Considering time zone differences in the scheduling of exams and support services, and meeting schedules. This is particularly pertinent during assessment/exam periods and other periods of peak activity such as student orientation and enrolment.
- Ensuring partner staff have been made aware of all applicable policies and procedures, including providing adequate training to all staff on how these policies and procedures need to be implemented. Legislative requirements may differ across delivery sites, so this training should include detail of such differences (for example, privacy laws may impact the way student data is managed and/or transferred).

Don't underestimate the work required in managing a TNE arrangement. Until a partner becomes established and demonstrates that it can meet expected standards, there will need to be a lot of touchpoints and regular contact.

## Course delivery

Activities across the complete course delivery cycle should not deviate from what has been agreed in the contract (refer to *Table 2: Governance oversight example roles and responsibilities* on page 12). Activities in the course delivery phase include:

- Review the qualifications of all partner academic staff at the start of each teaching period to ensure compliance with the Threshold Standards and institutional policy, even for returning staff.
- Align staff resourcing and training with the expectations of the institution's Academic Board (or equivalent), including that partner staff are able to detect, manage and routinely report academic integrity breaches, such as contract cheating and unauthorised use of gen AI.
- Ensure current and up to date knowledge of evolving expectations, policies and practices, such as those relating to gen AI and other emerging risks.
- Ensure partner academic and general support staff are available to students across the course delivery and are inducted into the institution's expected support standards, including:
  - orientation and transition support
  - institutional academic policy requirements (for example, academic integrity, moderation and assessment)
  - academic skills development and learner support, including English language support where required
  - accessible channels for students to submit complaints and evaluations regarding their experience and support needs, including that students understand the complaints resolution mechanisms of the institution
  - student safety and wellbeing.
- Specify support and supervision responsibilities for student placements/work-integrated learning.
- Confirm reporting mechanisms for any student conduct breaches (including sexual assault and sexual harassment), as specified in the contract.

Be mindful that partner staff may teach awards at a different Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) level, and an assessment of their qualifications will be required.

Introduce a database to streamline the assessment of partner staff qualifications to reduce the administrative burden on both parties.

## Quality assurance and benchmarking

- Implement the same quality assurance cycle to ensure student evaluations, student complaints and completion data, are analysed regularly to monitor cohort performance, and compare these with Australian-based cohorts to uphold quality student experience (refer to *Phase 5: Cyclical review* on page 39 for further information).
- An institution's established quality assurance cycle will need to be maintained across each partnership but will benefit from responding to any in-country considerations that may impact on reporting matters relating to course delivery.



Embed the academic governance arrangements for the partnership into the institution's existing arrangements, such as the Boards of Examiners (or equivalent), course reviews, distribution, compilation and comparison of student surveys.

## Learning systems and data governance

- Ensure partner teaching staff have access to the institution's learning management system (LMS) and administrative tools (such as the gradebook and scheduling systems).
- Verify staff have the expected level of experience to use these systems, deliver and adjust onboarding and mentoring to meet these expectations.
- Specify student administration and data management protocols in the contract, detailing system integration between both parties.
- Implement appropriate mitigations to address any identified cross-border differences in information management legislation (for example, data protection, privacy and geo-blocking).
- Address local regulatory reporting requirements, including student enrolments, pass rates and teaching staff data.

Table 3 provides an example table of roles and responsibilities for key activities across the course delivery lifecycle. The policies and procedures supporting these activities will directly relate to the governance arrangements shown in *Table 1: Activities in the contract renewal phase* on page 9.

### Table 3: Course delivery example roles and responsibilities

| Course delivery activity | Institution | Partner |
|---|---|---|
| Academic and support staff | • Establish staff ratios for both academic and support staff.<br>• Provide initial and ongoing staff training modules for all student learning support staff. | • Ensure staff ratios are met for teaching and face-to-face support staff (as required).<br>• Ensure all staff complete training modules.<br>• Provide reports to the relevant partnership committees on training activities. |

Table 3: Course delivery example roles and responsibilities *(continued)*

| Course delivery activity | Institution | Partner |
|---|---|---|
| Student wellbeing and support | • Provide ongoing training modules to both staff and students.<br>• Provide clear information and guidelines on points of contact and reporting channels.<br>• Provide clear roles and responsibilities for managing student conduct matters and any critical incidents. | • Ensure all staff complete training modules.<br>• Provide information on available supports to students.<br>• Provide reports to relevant partnership committees, where appropriate.<br>• Ensure the physical learning environment and facilities are appropriate. |
| Course design and accreditation | • Accredit course(s) with the delivery mode, structure and assessments in mind to ensure the course meets the needs of the offshore cohort.<br>• Implement any adapted assessments with partner staff. | • Collaborate with institutional staff in the customisation of assessment tasks.<br>• Report any issues with course design elements through the partnership committees. |
| Assessment and moderation | • Ensure clear and comprehensive policies are in place.<br>• Ensure clear rubrics or other standardisation guides are provided to all teaching staff across locations to support consistency.<br>• Sample partner staff marking of assessments, against the same course on campus to ensure consistency and quality.<br>• Administer Boards of Examiners (or equivalent) process at the end of each teaching period.<br>• Conduct pathway analysis of partner cohorts to monitor progress and quality standards. | • Ensure staff are aware of obligations under relevant assessment and moderation policies.<br>• Ensure staff have received sufficient information and guides to support consistent assessment.<br>• Report any issues with assessment tasks or other teaching matters through the institution's course lead/ specified contact. |

Table 3: Course delivery example roles and responsibilities *(continued)*

| Course delivery activity | Institution | Partner |
|---|---|---|
| Academic integrity and, as applicable, research integrity | • Provide staff and student academic integrity training modules.<br>• Provide clear and easily accessible staff and student academic integrity policies and procedures. | • Ensure staff and students complete training.<br>• Monitor academic conduct across all assessment tasks.<br>• Report any breaches as they occur, in line with institutional policy. |
| Cyber security | • Provide staff and student training modules on cyber security.<br>• Have clear policies and procedures on security, managing student data and privacy protections. | • Ensure staff and students complete training.<br>• Report any breaches as they occur, in line with institutional policy. |
| Changes to institutional policy or procedure | • Advise partner staff of any material changes to existing policies or procedures and allow appropriate time for their implementation.<br>• Consult with partner organisation on relevant new or revised policies and procedures. | • Ensure any policy or procedure changes are disseminated across relevant teams, and changes are reflected in day-to-day operations. |

PHASE 3:

# Governance arrangements



- ☐ Governing body oversight
- ☐ Risk management
- ☐ Academic governance arrangements
- ☐ Alignment with provider strategy

## Governance of third-party arrangements must address all activities related to the partnership, for both operational and academic matters. The institution's governing body must approve arrangements for the delivery of an award with a third-party *before* a new arrangement is established.

Governance arrangements will already be in place within an institution, and a separate, additional arrangement will be established with the partner. These partner-specific governance arrangements will be scaled to suit the nature of the partnership and delivery model but will always include corporate governance and academic governance activities and responsibilities. The partner-specific arrangements will be established and maintained in a partner governance and management framework.

Throughout the TNE lifecycle, distinct but interconnected governance arrangements and reporting pathways ensure that strategic, financial and operational risks are managed (corporate governance) while academic standards, learning outcomes and the student experience are rigorously maintained and assured (academic governance). This dual focus supports ongoing compliance with the Threshold Standards and, ultimately, safeguards the quality of the student experience and the reputation of an institution's awards delivered offshore. These arrangements should be in place for the complete duration of an agreement with a partner or the self-managed TNE delivery, as applicable.



Governance arrangements for wholly-owned TNE (for example, branch campuses) should be integrated with the arrangement of the home campus, with appropriate representation from the branch campus on institutional bodies such as the Academic Board.

## Key risks and challenges

High-level considerations of governance risks and challenges for offshore third-party delivery include, but are not limited to:

- having clear structures and systems in place for governing bodies to oversight and assure operations
- ensuring contractual arrangements explicitly define roles, responsibilities and key performance indicators
- verifying that the governing body and senior management possess the skills and experience necessary to oversee all aspects of the TNE arrangement
- maintaining a dedicated risk register to mitigate high-risk matters throughout the partnership, such as cyber security and academic integrity
- establishing clear delegations for core academic functions to support rigorous oversight by the institution's Academic Board (or equivalent)
- conducting ongoing, systematic cohort analysis and benchmarking of offshore performance against Australian outcomes to ensure quality equivalence
- identifying and responding to lead indicators of risk, such as high partner staff turnover or declining student satisfaction.

An example of TNE corporate and academic governance arrangements is below.

### Corporate governing body

The governing body of each institution will have a different size and shape, and the composition and structure need to reflect the operations of that institution. The Board of a small, private provider will be necessarily different to that of a large university that delivers a comprehensive suite of courses on and offshore.

Responsibility for the institution's ongoing compliance with the Threshold Standards lies with the governing body, so whatever the nature of the TNE arrangement, governing body members must have the appropriate skills for the Board to assure itself that it is operating effectively and sustainably. This includes a provider having appropriate governance arrangements in place to be confident that they are proactively identifying and mitigating risks, monitoring financial viability and sustainability, maintaining accountability for the quality of education delivered and being compliant with the Threshold Standards.

To respond to any new or additional TNE arrangements, a skills assessment or skills matrix should be developed for the governing body to ensure that members/directors have the requisite skills to appropriately govern TNE arrangements. Training and support should be provided to supplement these skills if the skills assessment determines adequate TNE experience does not exist. Undertaking this work will support the governing body in diverse TNE environments.



Undertaking a skills matrix assessment of governing body members on a regular cycle is recommended.

Utilising existing delegated authority to relevant academic members of the institution's staff, is a useful way to align TNE responsibilities with those of existing 'business as usual' matters. Common examples are the delegation for academic governance arrangements to an Academic Board (see below), or for risk management to an Audit and Risk Management Committee.

In the specific context of TNE delivery, governance activities and responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Approval and oversight of the partnership contract and any supporting arrangement, including any relevant delegations (also refer to *Implementation guidance - Part B* on page 28).
- Risk management and due diligence, including seeking assurance that any high-risk matters (for example, cyber security and academic integrity matters) are effectively mitigated and managed via a risk register introduced by the institution and monitored over the duration of the contract.
- Reporting key risks and the ongoing monitoring of the risk register, which should be undertaken at each meeting of the governing body.
- Receiving cyclical reports from senior management, including reviews of any education agents engaged by the institution.
- Ensuring ongoing compliance with the Threshold Standards and any relevant in-country legislation.
- Evaluating all financial matters, including revenue targets and, in instances where these targets are not being met, assessing the viability of the partnership. Where a contract is dissolved, teach-out arrangements must be implemented (it is likely that a material change notification to TEQSA will be required at this point).

## Academic Board

The core responsibility of an Academic Board, or equivalent, is to oversee and ensure the quality and integrity of an institution's academic activities. While the specific functions and powers of an Academic Board will vary, key delegated academic governance powers, as they relate to TNE and third-party delivery, must include rigorous oversight ***of the partner and the arrangement itself***, ensuring that any teaching, learning or assessment conducted by a third-party meets the same standards expected for an award delivered by the institution directly.

- As demand for TNE grows, it is critical that institutions only delegate to a third-party appropriately and where necessary so that institutional oversight and accountability is maintained. This is critical for key activities such as student recruitment, admissions and ongoing student support, wellbeing and safety. Institutions must remain actively involved in these processes and cannot absent their responsibilities.
- TEQSA's relationship and regulatory activity and engagement is with the registered institution.

Academic Board governance activities and responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Approval of applicable course accreditation requirements, and policies and procedures pertaining to TNE and third-party arrangements.
- Evaluation of whether TNE students are meeting the expected academic standards. Academic oversight is needed to address whether the teaching model is meeting its objectives.

- Implementation of the quality assurance cycle and consideration of data reporting on:
  - the annual moderation or comparison cycle associated with finalising grades in a given academic period, as well as a cyclical performance review and annual 'health check' of units
  - student performance, including trend data and comparison of outcomes across cohorts (onshore and offshore)
  - students' evaluation of teaching
  - student complaints reports, including their resolution.
- Consideration of course reviews and associated review action plans. These should be tailored to the partner's delivery but also linked to the relevant cycles and activities at the home campus.
- The Boards of Examiners' (or equivalent) consideration and assessment of student performance across all teaching locations and modes of delivery.
- Oversight of academic Integrity detection and reporting, and educative programs. This includes tailoring the academic integrity approach (including education and prevention activities) to the market and institution.

## Partnership governance and management framework

A partnership governance and management framework is a model of partnership and contract management that is devolved across an institution and is responsible for the general oversight of the partnership and the course(s) being delivered. A partnership governance and management framework should explicitly define stakeholder contact points, identifying specific roles (for example, course coordinators or contract managers) and primary contacts for issues, such as academic standards and student welfare, or operational matters, such as systems support.

These contact points enhance efficient information sharing, speed up problem resolution and support other governance activities, including risk management and compliance with the Threshold Standards and in-country regulations. The framework also provides an excellent opportunity for fostering a strong working relationship with a partner and may be used to establish operational meetings and ways of working between groups, and can provide clear processes for joint problem-solving (refer to *Implementation guidance - Part B* on page 28).



Established partnership governance and management arrangements will reinforce the institution's ultimate accountability for its awards.

A robust governance and management framework can contribute to:

- high-quality program delivery that meets the expectations of both a registered Australian institution and the Threshold Standards
- effective management of risks, including academic integrity and student support
- strong communication and collaboration between partner staff
- positive student outcomes and satisfaction
- enhanced reputation for both institutions
- sustainable and successful TNE partnerships.

Clearly defining roles and responsibilities for specific functions in the contract is necessary to establish accountability, ensure key risks are identified and managed, and make clear which party is responsible for taking action to anticipate, manage and/or mitigate those risks. It is critical that these roles and responsibilities make clear who holds ultimate responsibility for decisions made under the contract, and for the structure of any Board and/or committees introduced to support the TNE delivery. The agreement should include an escalation pathway setting out a resolution pathway for unresolved operational issues.

Select examples are provided in *Table 4: Governance structure example roles and responsibilities* below, using the example governance structure presented in *Implementation guidance - Part B* on page 28. A table such as this would need to be tailored and expanded to suit the particular partnership and the governance arrangements in place.

### Table 4: Governance structure example roles and responsibilities

| Risk activity | Institution | Partner |
|---|---|---|
| Contract not fit-for-purpose | Chair, Joint Management Committee (JMC) | Senior Management amend contract and provide to each party for consideration and approval. Only staff with agreed authority can make and approve changes to an existing contract. |
| Failure to comply with in-country legislative requirements | Chair, JMC | Seek legal advice and present detailed explanation of legislative compliance to JMC, along with agreed remediation activities for both parties. |
| Poor student experience evidenced through student complaints | Service delivery group<br>Operational committee | Ensure clear lines of communication are established between academic groups and student support groups at each location.<br>Introduce an agreed action plan to address poor student experiences. |
| Poor quality or inconsistent course delivery | Peak academic governance committee for institution | Ensure compliance with relevant academic governance policies and procedures through review of appropriate data and reporting.<br>Introduce an agreed action plan to address poor student experience. |



The partnership governance and management framework should itself be reviewed to ensure it functions as intended. If the Joint Management Committee (or equivalent) does not meet as regularly as specified in the contract, efforts should be made to re-establish regular oversight between the parties.

PHASE 3

# Implementation guidance – Part B

## Applied governance arrangements

'Implementation guidance - Part B' demonstrates how a well-designed and implemented governance framework can help institutions effectively manage the complexities of TNE partnerships and ensure the delivery of high-quality education. Institutions should be mindful that the more complex the TNE arrangement (for example, multiple partners and/or delivery locations across borders), the more detailed and considered the governance arrangements will need to be.

'Implementation guidance - Part B' presents working examples of how operational arrangements align with both corporate and academic governance reporting across the lifecycle of a TNE arrangement. Two scenarios demonstrate how established governance mechanisms can be used to guide course delivery and stakeholder interactions, and how they can be utilised to solve problems that may occur. Providers are encouraged to apply their own arrangements to these scenarios as a model for developing best-practice TNE delivery.

Additionally, 3 figures highlight joint governance arrangements that support visibility, accountability and clear lines of communication between partners (Figure 1), and how operational and governance arrangements may embed between a provider and a third-party partner delivering courses (Figure 2a) or between a provider and a private-investment partner who contracts a third-party delivery service (Figure 2b).

### Scenario 1

A generic example of a single registered provider delivering a suite of courses via a third-party TNE arrangement. Note: this model can be utilised to support multiple partners managed by a single registered provider.

### Example

- *AusHE* is in partnership with *GlobalHE* to deliver a suite of undergraduate programs using the curriculum supplied by *AusHE*.
- *GlobalHE* undertakes marketing and recruitment services in-country, and provides the infrastructure, facilities and all staff, per the contract with *AusHE*.
- The contract specifies that a partner governance framework will be established.

Figure 1: Partnership governance framework

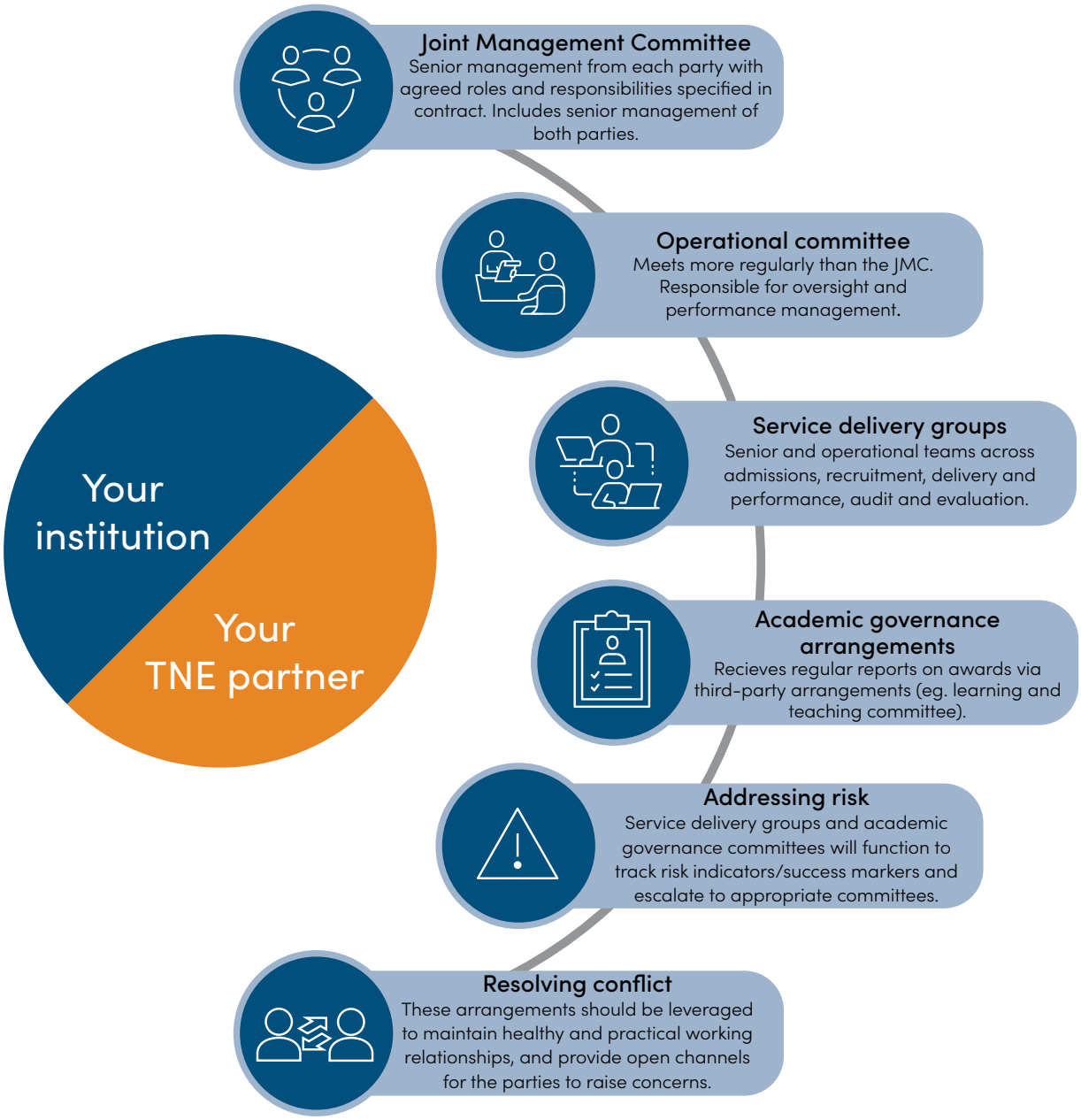
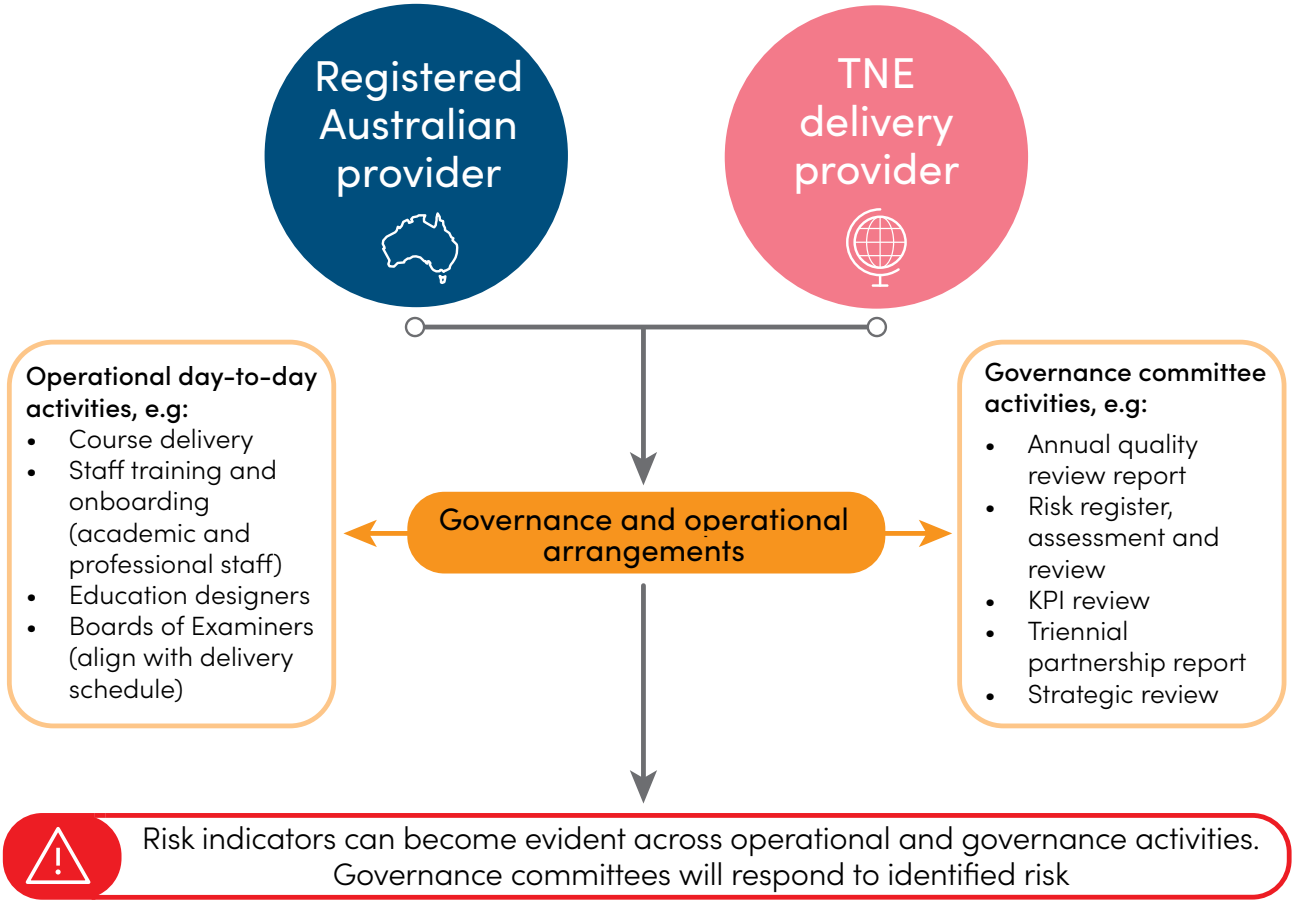


Figure 2a

Partner governance arrangements - worked example



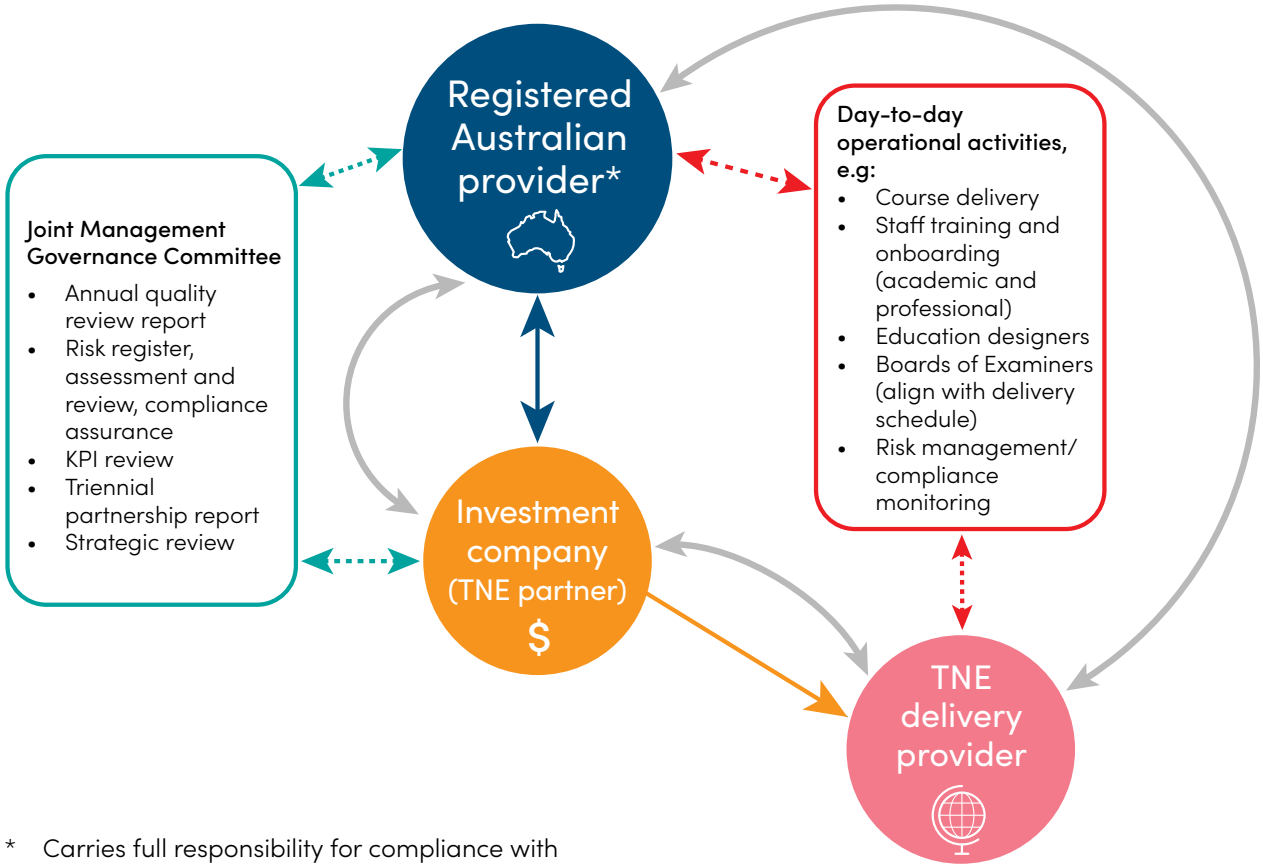

## Scenario 2

A three-party arrangement where a registered Australian higher education provider, an offshore provider and a private investment partner are delivering a suite of courses offshore.

### Example

- The registered provider *AusHE* is in partnership with *ConsortiaX*. The partnership will deliver a suite of undergraduate programs via the third-party delivery service provider, *TPAGlobal*, contracted by *ConsortiaX* and using the curriculum supplied by *AusHE*. The outcome of the arrangement is an award conferred by *AusHE*.
- *TPAGlobal* undertakes marketing and recruitment services in-county, and provides the infrastructure, facilities and all staff, per its contract with *ConsortiaX*. The governing body of *AusHE* has approved the arrangements.

Figure 2b




* Carries full responsibility for compliance with Threshold Standards

An overview of activities undertaken in the partnership is outlined below. The activities presented are generic guidance and can be applied to the size/scale of a TNE arrangement.

Table 5: Scenario 1 and 2 – operational and governance activity and reporting overview

| Implementation and initial delivery (approximately 3–6 months prior to first intake) | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Category** | **Activity** | **Reporting example** |
| **Corporate governance** | • TNE Operations Unit reports to the senior leadership of the registered higher education provider on implementation progress against timelines and budget.<br>• Risk assessment and risk mitigation activities finalised.<br>• Initial enrolment numbers against projections monitored.<br>• Contract management processes activated (refer *Table 1: Activities in the contract and renewal phase*). | Implementation milestone report presented to governing body and senior leadership, outlining operational activity performance. |
| **Academic governance** | • Faculty Board approves any minor, necessary curriculum contextualisation.<br>• Institution academic staff contacts, for the specific courses/programs, appointed and briefed.<br>• Joint Quality Committee (institution/partner academic staff) established.<br>• First cycle of assessment moderation processes initiated.<br>• Initial student orientation and feedback collection mechanisms prepared. | Record of staff training completed; Assessment moderation plan provided to TNE Committee. |
| **Operational** | • IT system integrations (e.g. student records, learning management system access etc.) finalised.<br>• All staff recruitment activities finalised, ensuring that staff have appropriate qualifications and that pay compliance obligations can be met.<br>• Joint development and approval of marketing materials (ensuring compliance with the Threshold Standards Domain 7).<br>• Partner staff trained on institution curriculum, assessment policies, academic integrity requirements, and student support and wellbeing practices.<br>• Joint admissions processes established and aligned with institutional standards.<br>• Local student support contacts established, along with referral pathways back to the registered higher education provider's services, where appropriate. | First cohort commencement and initial delivery monitored. |

Table 5: Scenario 1 and 2 – operational and governance activity and reporting overview *(continued)*

| Ongoing delivery (approximately 12 months following the first intake) | | |
|---|---|---|
| Category | Activity | Reporting example |
| **Corporate governance** | • Annual performance summary and risk assessment report presented to the Risk Committee and included in institutional reporting to the provider's governing body.<br>• Contract compliance and performance reviews checked against contractual key performance indicators (KPIs). | Annual TNE Partnership Performance Report provided to senior leadership/Risk Committee. |
| **Academic governance** | • Joint Quality Committee meetings assess, discuss and take any necessary action, based on student feedback, assessment moderation outcomes and operational academic issues.<br>• Relevant academic teams provide regular reports on teaching quality, academic and assessment integrity, and student engagement.<br>• Annual course 'health checks' explicitly incorporate input from partner staff and analysis of TNE cohort data, feedback and moderation outcomes, reporting findings to the institution's Faculty Board.<br>• Benchmarking reports, comparing TNE and onshore student outcomes, are presented to the Faculty Board and TNE Committee. | Annual course 'health checks' report (TNE section) provided to Faculty Board; Assessment moderation outcomes reported to TNE Committee; Benchmarking analysis presented to Academic Board; Periodic (e.g. 5-yearly) comprehensive program reviews include the TNE delivery mode and are reported to the Academic Board. |
| **Operational** | • Regular meetings are held between the institution's TNE Operations Unit (or equivalent) and the partner's management.<br>• Annual site visits by the institution's staff (operational and academic) are conducted.<br>• Collection and analysis of student performance data (e.g. performance, progression, completion rates) are benchmarked against home campus cohorts, or other applicable benchmarks.<br>• Student satisfaction surveys (specific to the TNE experience) are administered.<br>• Student complaints/appeals are managed according to the institution's policy.<br>• Financial reconciliation and reporting, occurs annually.<br>• Respective in-country regulatory environment(s) are continuously monitored. | TNE Operations Unit provides regular (e.g. quarterly) performance reports to senior leadership covering enrolments, financials, key operational issues and risk updates.<br>*Note: as the partnership progresses, reporting frequency may be tailored to best suit the arrangement.* |

Checklist 1:

# Implementation guidance – Part B

## Monitoring performance and quality

Monitoring is achieved through a structured reporting cycle and the analysis of comparative data to ensure equivalence of standards.

☐ **Cyclical reporting**

The governing body receives regular reports from senior management on partnership performance, including reviews of education agents and financial viability.

☐ **Cohort benchmarking**

Student performance data, including progression, completion and attrition rates, is benchmarked against Australian-based cohorts to ensure offshore students meet expected academic standards.

☐ **Lead indicators of risk**

Governance bodies track specific indicators, such as partner staff turnover, student pass rates and satisfaction surveys, to identify systemic issues before they impact educational quality.

☐ **Academic integrity and complaints**

Regular audits of academic integrity detection and reporting, alongside detailed student complaint summaries, provide visibility into the health of the partnership.

## Mitigating identified risks

Mitigation strategies are embedded within the institutional risk framework and formalised through legal and operational controls.

☐ **Institutional risk register**

A dedicated risk register is introduced at the start of the contract to track and manage high-risk matters, including cyber security, academic integrity and in-country regulatory changes.

☐ **Targeted due diligence**

Rigorous due diligence is conducted prior to establishment to assess the partner's ability to meet the Threshold Standards and to develop contingency plans for contract failure or teach-out.

☐ **Enforceable contracts**

Legal agreements explicitly define the roles, responsibilities and expected key performance indicators (KPIs) for each party to ensure a shared understanding of obligations in foreign jurisdictions.

☐ **Validation and site visits**

Onsite visits and validation events are used to mature the partnership relationship and verify that admissions and delivery operate in practice, as specified in the contract.

PHASE 4:

# Stakeholder management

- ☐ Contract maintenance
- ☐ Entity management
- ☐ Maintaining local networks and stakeholders

## Stakeholder management is critical to the establishment and maintenance of TNE and other offshore programs, and to the successful maintenance of a partnership.

Strategic and coordinated stakeholder management of offshore TNE – either self-managed or delivered by a third-party – will be required by multiple teams across an institution's operations, such as student support and course functions. It is vitally important that partner staff and students identify with the institution and have a sense of belonging. Engagement between the institution and partner teams from across the organisation should be encouraged beyond the classroom (for example, IT infrastructure and cyber security, library and learning support).

The key to effective and efficient stakeholder management is to identify key stakeholders, agree to the engagement level and frequency that aligns with the priorities of the partnership, and provide for open dialogue to address any identified risk or issue. *Checklist 1: Activities to consider in the stakeholder management phase* provides a list of potential stakeholders and considerations to support each relationship.

Staff turnover is likely to occur regularly across all aspects of a partner's operations. Institutions should not assume partners will always induct and train new staff to the same standard that would have occurred at the start of the contract.

High or increased staff turnover should be investigated as it may be a lead indicator of problems in the partner organisation which may result in poor student experience.

Checklist 2:

# Activities to consider in the stakeholder management phase

## Stakeholder: Partner

☐ **Communication**

Regular and structured communication is critical across the different groups (academic and operational staff, technical and administrative support teams) involved in the delivery. Ad hoc communication to advise of important changes to policies, procedures and course delivery is also important and should be encouraged.

☐ **Time zone differences**

Plan for any time zone differences and ensure these are addressed in advance. Examples include ensuring adequate support staff are available during exam or assessment periods to respond to queries, providing sufficient lead time for partner staff to receive assessment or exam material and allowing time for any changes to be made.

☐ **Clear contact points for staff**

Partner staff should know who to contact to raise an issue directly with the awarding institution when they may be unable to resolve an issue through their 'primary' contact.

☐ **Clear contact points for students**

Ensure students feel part of the awarding academic community. Students should be aware of complaint mechanisms to raise concerns, and points of contact regarding academic support and wellbeing. Include students in the governance arrangements where possible (for example, as members of academic governance committees).

☐ **Professional accreditation**

When managing offshore TNE arrangements, make sure to meet the requirements of the relevant professional accreditation bodies.

☐ **Culture of engagement**

Partner communications and systems (for example, online orientation) should be constructed to support partner staff in their onboarding and as a means of relationship building. Promote engagement and communities of practice, staff in-country get-togethers and alumni events.

## Stakeholder: Partner *(continued)*

☐ **Liaisons**

Stakeholder management with in-country government via the institution Government Relations team (or equivalent).

☐ **Networks and connections**

Offshore activities by Australian institutions can often be much more than the TNE being delivered. Working with governments may also provide opportunities to expand on local networks and develop industry connections, or research and community partnerships.

☐ **Build relationships**

Building a close and ongoing relationship with government will help an institution understand what a regional government wants to gain from TNE in its market, and to stay ahead of any issues including legislative changes.

## Stakeholder: Networks and market analysis

☐ **Agent management**

Where applicable, closely oversee and regularly audit the management of agents with an eye on understanding lead risk indicators.

☐ **Ongoing market analysis**

Market analysis is part of the due diligence process and needs to be maintained to ensure any issues, new obligations or legislative changes are picked up early.



Trends in rates of retention, progression and completion of student cohorts through courses of study, that are below the expected level, may be a lead indicator of broader risks (such as admissions practices of the provider's agents and partners which may result in students struggling or failing in their studies). See also *Course Review* in Phase 5: Cyclical Review.

PHASE 5:

# Cyclical review



- ☐ Student performance
- ☐ Student experience
- ☐ Return on investment
- ☐ Changes in the region

## The cyclical review phase is a complement to the governance arrangements set out in Phase 3 and should be undertaken for both the partnership agreement and the course delivery.

Cyclical reviews are crucial components of an effective TNE partnership. The outcomes of review activities (for example, reports, audits and data) should be reported to institutional governance bodies on a regular cycle and be shared with the partner. Reviews should benefit both parties.

## Contract renewal

### Review of third-party arrangements

Any third-party arrangement should be reviewed on a regular and agreed cycle (for example, annually), to ensure it is functioning well and within the arrangements agreed in the contract. This may also present an opportunity for closer alignment of partnerships that have been established at different points in time.

### Strategic review

A separate, strategic review of the contract should be performed less frequently – perhaps every three years – to consider if benefit to both parties remains. This review would include consideration of the key performance indicators (KPIs) agreed to in the contract establishment phase, noting that adjustment may be needed to these KPIs as they change across the contract period.

## Course review

### Monitoring cohort performance

The outputs of the academic governance arrangements in Phase 3 are common indicators of performance and will inform the cyclical review of the delivery of a course of study. Evidence includes survey data, institutional benchmarking, audit reports and action plan recommendations. Data to monitor offshore cohort performance should be compared with Australian-based cohort data, where applicable.

Sophisticated data sets will include lead indicators of student outcomes, pathway analysis, monitoring login rates and other data determined by the institution. This is a best-practice consideration as an accompaniment to traditional, cyclical quality assurance reporting such as attrition/progression, assessment outcomes, student evaluation reports.

Wells Advisory, *Forward impact of COVID-19 on Australian higher education*, October 2021, p. 38

## Performance data

Performance data is an indicator of how successful a third-party arrangement is operating and can point to many areas of risk if analysed appropriately. For example, poor student satisfaction with teaching staff may point to staff turnover or an issue with staff onboarding and training; poor performance outcomes may suggest that admission requirements are not appropriately administered, or the English language proficiency standards need to be adjusted.

Ensure students are provided with clear information about how to make a complaint regarding any part of their student experience. The contract should include clear expectations for the partner to disclose all student complaints.

## Know your market

Ongoing review provides insight into how an arrangement is operating in practice and may reveal where tailoring specific activities would be beneficial to a particular student or staff cohort. For example, China and Vietnam are very different cohorts, with different stressors and in-country considerations, so specific modules on academic integrity may be needed for each of these different markets.

Validation events or onsite visits are an opportunity to develop and mature relationships between partners and should not be approached as an audit activity. Through validation events an institution can better understand how third-party delivery operates in practice, admissions are undertaken and governance committee meetings managed. Reporting on validation events or site visits should be made to the institution's course governance and contract lead committee as part of the contract performance (see also *Phase 1: Establishment and contract renewal*).

# Final considerations

### TNE – top 3 things to know

- Where an award is offered in collaboration with a partner, the institution registered with TEQSA remains accountable for compliance with the Threshold Standards and the quality of the award. Examples of Threshold Standards requirements include: selection and admission; granting of credit; curriculum and assessment of units; oversight by governing bodies; sign-off on partner academic staff appointments; and moderation and finalisation of grades.
- Don't underestimate how much work is required to manage a successful partnership. This includes all aspects of delivery such as ongoing staff professional development and customising assessment to a particular market.
- Always work and think in terms of being in partnership and use that in language and approach; stay in close contact and don't imagine the partner has everything under control. The further away the delivery from the home campus, the greater the potential for risks concerning the arrangement. Ongoing communication with your partner, supported by reporting to committees and a well-structured suite of policies and procedures will be crucial elements in supporting quality TNE (refer to *Diagram 3: Key elements supporting successful TNE arrangements*).

Diagram 3: Key elements supporting successful TNE arrangements



Checklist 3:

# Actions to ensure successful TNE arrangements

☐ **Due diligence**

It's critical that due diligence is undertaken across the arrangement's activities. Knowing what you're getting into (for example, regulatory environment and in-country award recognition, and agreed risk register) can assist in addressing risks throughout delivery.

☐ **Clarity of purpose**

Ensure both parties have clarity on purpose, strategy and risk appetite. Return to this regularly through agreed contract management arrangements.

☐ **Roles and responsibilities**

Clearly set out agreed roles and responsibilities of each party in the contract development stage and reflect these in the final signed agreements.

☐ **Partnership governance framework and risk management framework**

A partnership governance and risk management framework at the institution-level will support all aspects of the arrangement.

☐ **Communication protocols**

Agree to and document an effective communications protocol to provide clear, open and timely lines of communication across all levels of the partnership.

☐ **Cultural sensitivities**

Don't underestimate cultural sensitivities and how these may change with each partner or market (for example, the response to student complaints and academic integrity matters may differ across locations).

☐ **Time management and resourcing**

Allow time, energy and resources for a rigorous onboarding program for new partners and academic and operational staff.

☐ **Corporate governance and academic oversight**

Implement processes to ensure corporate governance and academic oversight is maintained.

- [ ] **Key operational activities**

  Undertake checks of key operational activities in the early stages of a new partnership; check in, clarify roles, ask questions and set expectations.

- [ ] **Performance benchmarks**

  Monitor and evaluate cohort performance against institutional and other benchmarks, looking for lead indicators of potential risk.

- [ ] **Validation events**

  Separate to a formal audit (benchmarks and key operations), validation events (also known as site visits) are incredibly useful in building positive relationships between parties.

# Appendix 1: Common types of transnational education

Australian institutions deliver transnational education across different delivery types, with partners across numerous countries and regions. For example, several public universities have established branch campuses in Southeast Asia and multiple third-party arrangements in other markets. TNE can also be undertaken in various delivery modes, including face-to-face, hybrid and fully online.

Some common types of TNE, in the broadest sense of the term 'TNE', include (but are not limited to):

## Articulation arrangements

Articulation arrangements are those between two institutions that allow students to undertake part of their studies in their home country (offshore) followed by a period of study in Australia to complete the requirements of a single award. Most commonly, articulation arrangements are delivered as 2 years at the home campus plus 2 years at the host campus in Australia (2+2), although some arrangements may be agreed to in a 3+1 or other duration.

Articulation arrangements may also involve credit transfer arrangements, where a student completes a part of their award in TNE and then transfers to an Australian institution (even at an offshore campus) to complete the remaining course components.

## Branch campuses

An offshore campus of an Australian higher education institution, with comparable disciplines, facilities and staffing arrangements as the home campus. Branch campuses may be wholly owned by the Australian institution, administered as a joint venture, or operated by a third-party.

## Dual awards

Dual awards are an arrangement where a student undertakes a course of study involving collaboration between an Australian registered institution and an offshore partner institution. Upon successful completion, the student receives two separate awards, with each institution conferring its own award. A testamur usually acknowledges the collaborative nature of the program. Dual awards differ from a 'joint award', where collaborating institutions confer a single award, often resulting in one co-badged testamur.

## Joint awards

Joint awards involve a single course of study arranged and delivered jointly by two or more institutions that leads to the award of a single qualification that is recognised within the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and is typically conferred jointly by the institutions involved.

## Mobility or student exchange (inbound and outbound)

Student exchange (mobility) involves a student travelling from an Australian higher education institution or to an Australian higher education institution to undertake a period of study at a partner institution offshore. Exchange programs offer students the opportunity to live and study in a new environment and receive credit toward their degree. Exchange is often non-award study, meaning a student does not receive a grade for the study undertaken at the host institution.

## Third-party arrangements

Where a higher education institution has, or intends to have, aspects of a course of study carried out by a partner, agent or third-party arrangement, these arrangements may include:

- partnerships with other institutions, higher education institutions or entities
- the formation of joint ventures or special purpose companies
- sub-contracting of services
- franchising arrangements.

# Appendix 2: What does compliance look like?

The priority of the Threshold Standards as they relate to both TNE delivery and third-party arrangements is the assurance of the quality delivery of higher education awards. For this reason, the applicable Threshold Standards may change depending on the nature of the TNE arrangement (for example, branch campus or third-party partner delivery) and must be considered at the point of formalising an agreement and clarifying terms and expectations.

Evidence of practice to support compliance with the Threshold Standards includes, but is not limited to:

## Governance and management

Accountability for ensuring that the requirements under the Threshold Standards are met will always rest with the institution's governing body. This extends to any sub-contracting allowed under a partnership agreement (see Threshold Standards 5.4.2, 6.1.3c and s26 of the TEQSA Act).

TEQSA will expect that the institution has in place clear and consistent operational arrangements to support the contract, as reflected in the 'TNE lifecycle' phases in 'Implementation guidance – Part B'. These activities should ensure that regular reports on the partnership are provided to senior management and to the governing body, as required. Monitoring material issues and risks should be embedded in this reporting cycle, in the institution's enterprise risk management framework (or equivalent) and be included in the minutes of the governing body and/or the academic governing body meetings (see Threshold Standards 5.3.7, 6.2.1k).

Student and staff wellbeing should also be fostered, particularly where students have limited contact with institution staff, or where cohorts are studying offshore and online (see Threshold Standards 2.3, 6.1.4).

## Due diligence and risk management

TEQSA will expect that a detailed and rigorous due diligence exercise and risk assessment is conducted ahead of reaching an agreement with any potential third-party. The due diligence should extend to the party's ability to meet the obligations of the Threshold Standards, including evidence of contingency plans and risk mitigations in the event of the failure or termination of a third-party arrangement (see Threshold Standards 5.3.7 and 6.2.1e).

## Performance monitoring and quality assurance

TEQSA will expect that regular and systematic monitoring and review of TNE delivery is occurring and that an institution's internal quality assurance mechanisms (for example, policies and procedures, student surveys, audits, and reviews of student complaints) are being applied in the same (or equivalent) way to arrangements at a home campus. Institutional processes for identifying any student at risk of unsatisfactory progress must be implemented in any course delivered by a third-party (see Threshold Standards 1.3.4).

An institution is responsible for monitoring the performance of students studying via a TNE arrangement and evaluating their performance against institutional and other benchmarks. Doing so will allow the institution to test the effectiveness of the TNE delivery and identify any risks in the delivery as they may occur. Any identified risks must be proactively managed, and performance and risk management arrangements should be responsive to any change in circumstances (see Threshold Standards 5.3.4).

## Information to students

An institution must ensure clear and accessible information is publicly available about all locations where it delivers higher education awards, including overseas (see Threshold Standards 7.3.1g), and where it has arrangements in place with other parties to deliver its awards, including research training (see Threshold Standards 7.3.1j). A practical way to meet this requirement is a page maintained on an institution's website detailing all third-party TNE arrangements. These and other Threshold Standards are in place to ensure students have the necessary information required to make an informed decision prior to accepting an offer of enrolment (also see Threshold Standards 7.2).

# References


- UNESCO / Council of Europe, *Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education*, Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee. Paris, 2025, pp.1–13.
- Wells Advisory, *Forward impact of COVID-19 on Australian higher education*, October 2021


# Useful links

- Australian Trade and Investment Commission
  - Education data and insights
- Australian Department of Education
  - International education data and research
  - Australian strategy for international education
  - Transnational education guidance note on due diligence
  - Guidelines to counter foreign interference in the Australian university sector
- Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
  - Foreign arrangements scheme
- Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching
- Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency
  - Transnational education providers
  - Guides and resources

TEQSA

teqsa.gov.au