Australian Government

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency

TEQSA Corporate Plan

2022–26

Public confidence in the excellence of Australian higher education

TEQSA

Acknowledgement of Country

TEQSA acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to their Cultures, Country and Elders past, present and emerging.

TEQSA Corporate Plan 2022–26

Contacts

More information about the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency, including electronic versions of this corporate plan, is available at teqsa.gov.au/about-us/publications

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Introduction

As the accountable authority of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), we are pleased to present the TEQSA Corporate Plan 2022–26 which covers the four reporting periods from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2026, as required under paragraph 35(1) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act) and s160(1) of the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011* (TEQSA Act). The Corporate Plan is prepared in accordance with the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014.*

Emeritus Professor Peter Coaldrake AO
Chief Commissioner

Emeritus Professor Joan Cooper
Commissioner

Ms Adrienne Nieuwenhuis
Commissioner

Mr Stephen Somogyi
Commissioner

Message from the Commissioners

We are pleased to present the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) Corporate Plan (the Plan) for the period 2022-23 to 2025-26.

This Plan outlines TEQSA's priorities in a time of rapid change and uncertainty for the Australian higher education sector. The volatile environment poses challenges to the quality of higher education, the student experience and the financial viability of providers. There are also integrity threats to the sector, in particular from the nature and scale of academic cheating.
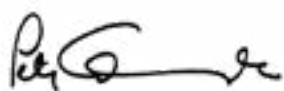
At the same time we are seeing innovation and entrepreneurship, particularly in modes of delivery, as the sector responds to the challenge of the uncertain operating environment and new and emerging opportunities. This confluence of factors poses new challenges for TEQSA's regulatory and quality assurance functions.

Consequently, TEQSA's priorities during the period include ensuring our regulatory and quality assurance model and practice is sustainable and fit for purpose; responding to emerging integrity risks; evolving TEQSA's risk and compliance monitoring capacity; and improving TEQSA's timeliness and responsiveness in fulfilling our legislated functions.

The Plan also highlights TEQSA's ongoing work to strengthen our business processes and information management. These investments are designed to improve agency operations while also supporting the commencement of cost recovery arrangements for TEQSA's regulatory activities.

Underpinning the work detailed in this Plan is a commitment to quality assurance that genuinely reflects risk, is proportionate and necessary, and supports diversity, innovation and excellence. In our view, this is the best means of protecting student interests and the reputation of Australia's higher education sector.

TEQSA has welcomed several new Commissioners and executive leaders in the past year. A steady focus on rebuilding the organisation, drawing on the dedication and diversity of experience and skills of our staff, will position TEQSA to deliver on the Plan.

Emeritus Professor Peter Coaldrake AO
Chief Commissioner

Emeritus Professor Joan Cooper
Commissioner

Ms Adrienne Nieuwenhuis
Commissioner

Mr Stephen Somogyi
Commissioner

Section 1: Overview

Vision

TEQSA's vision is public confidence in the excellence of Australian higher education.

Purpose

Our purpose is to deliver quality assurance that protects the interests of students and the reputation and standing of Australian higher education.

As an independent quality assurance and regulatory agency, TEQSA adopts a risk-based approach that is guided by principles of necessity, risk and proportionality, and that supports quality, diversity, innovation, and excellence in tertiary education.

Values

Our values are trust, respect, accountability and collaboration. The values guide how we work and give us confidence that we are exercising our authority and conducting ourselves ethically, honestly and in a manner that can be held accountable to the Parliament.

Our values are underpinned by a statement of behaviours developed by TEQSA staff in 2021. These documents provide clarity and focus about our expectations of each other and to help measure and recognise our performance and achievements.

Role and functions

TEQSA was established as a Commonwealth Statutory Agency under the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011* (TEQSA Act). The TEQSA Act outlines TEQSA's responsibilities for the regulation and quality assurance of all providers offering higher education courses.

TEQSA also has responsibilities under the *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* (ESOS Act) for higher education providers offering courses to overseas students, Foundation Programs and English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS).

TEQSA's core legislated role is to register all providers offering higher education qualifications in, or from, Australia, and to accredit their courses of study (except those providers, mostly universities, that have an authority to accredit courses in their own right).

TEQSA conducts risk, compliance and other assessments of individual providers and the sector more generally, against the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021*.

TEQSA provides advice and recommendations to the Australian Government Minister for Education, and collects, analyses, interprets and disseminates information relating to trends, risks and opportunities in quality assurance of higher education.

Governance

TEQSA's Commissioners are appointed by the Minister for Education and are responsible for making regulatory decisions, setting strategic directions, monitoring risk in the sector and deciding on matters relating to the development of the Agency's quality assurance and regulatory framework. The Commissioners are also collectively the accountable authority for TEQSA under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act).

Commissioners, in their capacity as the accountable authority, are responsible for the governance of TEQSA including the corporate plan, budget estimates, annual reporting (including the annual financial and performance statements), financial management, risk oversight and management, and security oversight.

The accountable authority is also responsible for ensuring the annual report includes a performance report consistent with the principles of regulator best practice as per the Australian Government Regulator Performance Guide (RPG).

Section 2: Our environment: impacts, challenges and priorities

Impacts of COVID-19

As with other sectors of the Australian economy, higher education has been disrupted significantly by the COVID-19 pandemic. Changes in the nature and quality of products and offerings have been greatly accelerated, with accompanying risks and opportunities. The financial viability of many providers has been challenged, with impacts yet to be fully realised.

Business models for international education have been fundamentally challenged. Modelling commissioned by TEQSA in 2021 predicts international enrolments will fall 25 per cent on 2020 numbers by 2025[1]. During early stages of the pandemic, many providers responded by transitioning course offerings to online. A large proportion of overseas students are remaining offshore and studying online.

The rapid transition away from face-to-face learning has adversely impacted students, disrupting campus, causing isolation from academic staff and other students, delivering variable online teaching and assessment and a mixed quality of support services. The capacity of providers to meet these challenges with limited resources has been uneven. At the same time, unsurprisingly, student wellbeing has emerged as a key concern.

The pandemic, with associated pressures, has also exacerbated integrity threats to the sector. The nature and scale of commercial academic (or contract) cheating services, the need for significant investments in cyber security and calls upon the sector to recognise and respond to foreign interference, represent significant challenges. There are also a range of other integrity challenges posed by, for example, the widening admissions practices and the outsourcing of academic and business services to third parties.

The evolving nature of the pandemic will continue to require flexible and innovative responses from higher education providers. While initial restrictions and border closures have ended, emerging variants pose threats, including, staff and student absences due to illness, the effects of long-COVID, concerns about face-to-face engagement and the impacts of pandemic workplace restrictions on work integrated learning. TEQSA will continue to monitor the impacts of the pandemic and emerging higher education models and practices. We will apply our regulatory principles and flexibility, while looking to providers to show evidence of strong assurance processes in terms of the quality of education and the student experience.

Australia's 190 providers of higher education offer a wide range of courses to more than 1.5 million students. Public universities continue to enrol the highest proportion of students. But significant growth is anticipated in private providers in the next decade, with new offerings and modes of delivery, backed by new and emerging business models.

In the next 10 years, it is anticipated there will be a greater diversity of providers offering education in specialised fields or in new markets that have traditionally been underserviced by larger institutions. Online, offshore and third party offerings may increasingly challenge more

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1. Wells Advisory (2021) *Forward impact of COVID-19 on Australian higher education*, (ARIMA model forecasting using Austrade MIP and DESE National dataset).

traditional face-to-face, on campus learning, teaching and research and support services. These will provide challenges and opportunities in assuring the quality of offerings and the student experience for providers and TEQSA.

Resultant challenges

As Australia's higher education sector continues to evolve its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the broad challenge for TEQSA will be in monitoring change, anticipating risks, and ensuring our regulatory focus and methodology remain fit for purpose. An important priority for the agency is to support innovation in the sector, while also ensuring that quality is maintained and enhanced and the interests of students are protected.

TEQSA's regulatory model will need to evolve to ensure it remains responsive, not just to developments in regulatory practice, but also dynamic changes in the sector. This will require TEQSA to continuously improve regulatory practice and performance, be genuinely risk-based, develop capacity to use real time data to inform our work, respond to the sector's challenges and maintain trust with stakeholders. We need to do this in the face of significant resource challenges, particularly for TEQSA's workforce, which has experienced high levels of attrition and changes in organisational leadership and culture.

Priorities

TEQSA has identified seven priority activities to address the opportunities and challenges:

1. Reviewing and adapting TEQSA's regulatory model and practice, in keeping with established principles of regulatory best practice and reform, in close consultation with stakeholders.

2. Maintaining a risk assessment focus on the financial viability of providers, particularly in relation to providers heavily reliant on overseas students.

3. Further developing the capacity of TEQSA's Higher Education Integrity Unit in relation to risk in areas such as commercial academic cheating, cyber security and foreign interference.

4. Further developing TEQSA's risk and compliance focus in relation to student wellbeing, such as the issues of sexual assault and sexual harassment and mental health.

5. Working closely with the Department of Education and the Higher Education Standards Panel on priority projects such as modes of delivery, admissions transparency and research quality.

6. Investing in our workforce and enabling systems, to build and maintain a sustainable basis to TEQSA's regulatory practice and organisational capacity.

7. Implementing strategies to improve the timeliness and responsiveness of regulatory assessments and decisions.

The following sections provide further detail on how TEQSA will monitor performance against each of these seven priority areas, to achieve the organisation's strategic objectives.

Section 3: Performance

TEQSA's role and function, as expressed in the Education Portfolio Budget Statement Outcome 1, is to:

> ❭❭ Contribute to a high-quality higher education sector through streamlined and nationally consistent higher education regulatory arrangements; registration of higher education providers; accreditation of higher education courses; and investigation, quality assurance and dissemination of higher education standards and performance.

Objectives

TEQSA has identified three broad strategic objectives in delivering outcomes to its role and functions:

1. **Promote and support good practice and effective self-assurance across the sector**
2. **Identify, analyse and respond to risks in the sector**
3. **Ensure compliance with applicable legislation through effective and efficient regulation.**

The activities undertaken by TEQSA in pursuit of its objectives reflect the impacts, challenges and priorities identified in this Plan, and are underpinned by performance measures and qualitative and quantitative targets. These help us to monitor our progress and determine whether we are effective in delivering on our purpose.

TEQSA aligns its performance measures against the Australian Government Regulator Performance Guide of July 2021, which requires regulators to assess and report their performance against best practice principles, including continuous improvement and building trust, risk-based and data driven, and collaboration and engagement.

The following sections set out key activities, performance measures and targets for the next year and over the course of this Plan.

Objective 1

Promote and support good practice and effective self-assurance across the sector

TEQSA offers education and guidance to assist providers in meeting their obligations and to promote quality enhancement. These include:

- application guides
- guidance notes
- good practice notes
- seminars
- workshops
- digital and other tools.

TEQSA's annual conference brings these different strands together in an open and robust engagement with the sector. The agenda varies in response to identified needs. TEQSA uses feedback from a range of sources such as providers, the Higher Education Standards Panel, peak bodies and students. We also use observations from cyclical and compliance assessments and the annual risk cycle, to establish the areas and forms of support to be developed. TEQSA also provides advice and makes recommendations to the Minister responsible for higher education on matters relating to the quality and regulation of higher education providers.

Of the impacts, challenges and priorities identified in Section 2 of this Plan, the following priority activity is relevant to promoting and supporting good practice and effective self-assurance across the sector:

Work closely with the Department of Education and the Higher Education Standards Panel on joint projects such as modes of delivery, admissions transparency and research quality *(see Key Activity 1.3 in the table below).*

Key activities	Performance measure	Target 2022 – 2023	Target to 2026
1.1 Develop and publish education and guidance materials, in consultation with the sector, to support good practice and provider self-assurance[2]	Number of website visits to TEQSA developed resources	10 per cent increase in website visits to TEQSA developed education and guidance materials compared to previous years	10 per cent increase in website visits to TEQSA developed education and guidance materials compared to previous years
	Website-based guidance is current and relevant to providers	Publication of 3–4 sector guidance notes or resource packs annually	Publication of 3–4 sector guidance notes or resource packs annually
		50 per cent of the website pages visited most frequently (top 30 per cent visits) reviewed and refreshed within the last 12 months	100 per cent of the website pages visited most frequently (top 30 per cent visits) have been reviewed and (if required) updated within the last 12 months
	Extent of stakeholder satisfaction with TEQSA-developed resources	Majority of providers are satisfied with TEQSA good practice materials and guidance	Peak bodies and providers report substantive contribution to TEQSA's good practice materials and guidance
1.2 Engage with higher education peak bodies, registered providers and students, to uphold student interests and support effective regulation and quality assurance[3]	Extent of satisfaction with TEQSA's engagement with peak bodies and providers, including in relation to:	Most peak bodies report constructive and effective engagement with TEQSA	Peak bodies and providers generally report constructive and effective engagement with TEQSA
	i. sector trends, risks and challenges	Peak bodies and providers understand and accept TEQSA's published priorities	Peak bodies and providers report substantive contribution to TEQSA's identification and response of sector trends and risks
	ii. applications for registration and accreditation	Peak bodies and providers understand TEQSA's regulatory model and practice review process	Peak bodies and providers report substantive contribution to reformed TEQSA regulatory model and practice
	iii. implementation of cost recovery	Peak bodies representing majority of providers participate in an online discussion or submit written feedback during consultation on the amended cost recovery model	Peak bodies register satisfaction with engagement on, and further development of the cost recovery model

2. RPG Principle of regulator best practice – 3. Collaboration and engagement.
3. RPG Principle of regulator best practice – 1. Continuous improvement and building trust, 2. Risk-based and data driven.

Key activities *(continued)*	Performance measure	Target 2022 – 2023	Target to 2026
	iv. the annual conference and other events	80 per cent of stakeholders are satisfied as per Conference Survey, Webinar feedback and Provider Survey results	80 per cent of stakeholders are satisfied as per Conference Survey, Webinar feedback and Provider Survey results
		Increase of student attendance at the conference compared to previous years	Increase of student attendance at the conference compared to previous years
	Engage high risk providers in free online events to promote and support good practice	Commence and determine a baseline in 2023	10 per cent year on year increase in participation of high-risk providers in online provider information events
		40 per cent of high-risk providers participate in at least 1 free online event that promotes and supports good practice	
	Number of visits to the *Students* section of TEQSA's website	50 per cent of providers include information and links to TEQSA's students' webpages on their website	10 per cent year on year increase of website visits to the *Students* section of the TEQSA website compared to previous years
1.3 Work closely with the Department of Education and the Higher Education Standards Panel on joint projects regarding the HESF 2021[4]	Participation and substantive contribution to joint projects	TEQSA participates in project teams and provides written advice on at least 3 projects across the Department and HESP each year	TEQSA annually participates and substantively contributes to at least three joint projects aligned with the HESF 2021
1.4 Advise and make recommendations to the Minister on matters relating to the quality and regulation of higher education providers[4]	Provide advice to the Minister regarding key trends, risks and issues across the sector and high-risk providers	3-4 briefs provided to the Minister on key trends, risks and issues across the sector and regarding high-risk providers	Provide advice and recommendations to 4-5 policy initiatives relevant to on key trends, risks and issues across the sector per annum

4. RPG Principle of regulator best practice – 1. Continuous improvement and building trust.

Objective 2

Identify, analyse and respond to risks to the sector

TEQSA collects, analyses, interprets and disseminates information relating to quality assurance practice and quality improvement in higher education.

TEQSA undertakes an annual cycle of risk assessment for all registered higher education providers as a fundamental regulatory tool that informs our policy work and regulatory operations. We use the outcomes to engage the sector and in certain instances individual providers as well as other stakeholders, in particular the Australian Government, on key trends and risks.

Over the last three years, TEQSA has worked with sector stakeholders to respond to sector risks such as academic integrity, transparency of admission processes, English language proficiency, and sexual assault and sexual harassment. TEQSA's Higher Education Integrity Unit (HEIU) makes a leading contribution to identifying and supporting responses to threats to integrity in the sector. The annual compliance program and regulatory assessments also bring focus to identified areas of risk. TEQSA also engages with international quality assurance agencies on issues of common interest.

TEQSA publishes an annual compliance report that sets out compliance priorities – based on a compliance monitoring framework that identifies particular trends and risks across the sector. TEQSA's 2022–2023 priorities include ensuring academic quality, upholding wellbeing and safety, protecting sector integrity, maintaining information security and monitoring the financial standing of providers.

Delays in the implementation of a new national collection system for provider data will limit TEQSA's 2022–23 sector and provider risk assessments. A modified risk assessment process will be implemented, but the nature of the assessments and timing of the report will reflect this known limitation.

Of the impacts, challenges and priorities identified in this Plan, the following activities are most relevant to identifying, analysing and responding to risks in the sector:

Maintaining a risk assessment focus on the financial viability of providers, particularly in relation to providers heavily reliant on overseas students *(see Key Activity 2.2 in the table below).*

Further developing TEQSA's risk and compliance focus in relation to student wellbeing, such as mental health and the issues raised by sexual assault and sexual harassment *(see Key Activity 2.3 in the table below).*

Further developing the activity of the TEQSA Higher Education Integrity Unit in relation to issues such as commercial academic cheating, cyber security and foreign interference *(see Key Activity 2.4 in the table below).*

Key activities	Performance measure	Target 2022 – 2023	Target to 2026
2.1 Monitor the performance of registered providers, identify risks, assess provider responses and where necessary, take regulatory or other action[5]	Complete and report on the annual risk assessment of providers and share key themes with the sector	Publish of TEQSA's annual (CY) Compliance Report by 30 March, and Annual Report by 15 October	Publish TEQSA's annual (CY) Compliance Report by 30 March, and Annual Report by 30 September
	TEQSA's sector risk monitoring activity contributes to the setting of its risk priorities and is shared with the sector – emphasising opportunities for improvement	Complete 1 sector risk monitoring or compliance activity in 2022–23	Complete 2 Compliance Annual Plan sector risk monitoring or compliance activities
		Findings of sector risk monitoring activities are shared with the sector in written and seminar format by September 2023	Findings of the annual sector risk monitoring activities are shared with the sector in written and seminar format by end of FY
2.2 Maintain a risk assessment focus on the financial viability of providers, particularly in relation to providers heavily reliant on overseas students[6]	Assess provider financial risk as part of the annual risk assessments	A modified risk assessment will be undertaken in 2022–23, due to delays in receipt of provider data	Financial risk assessment will be completed for providers who have been in operation for >3 years, as part of annual risk assessment
2.3 Develop TEQSA's risk and compliance focus in relation to student wellbeing, such as mental health and the issues raised by sexual assault and sexual harassment[6]	Sector compliance activity involving student wellbeing	Annual Compliance Plan will include at least one activity focused on student wellbeing	Annual Compliance Plan will be modified each year to target relevant priority issues

5. RPG Principle of regulator best practice – 2. Risk–based and data driven, 3. Collaboration and engagement.
6. RPG Principle of regulator best practice – 2. Risk–based and data driven.

Key activities *(continued)*	Performance measure	Target 2022 – 2023	Target to 2026
2.4 Further develop the activity of the TEQSA Higher Education Integrity Unit in relation to commercial academic cheating, cyber security and foreign interference[7]	Demonstrated improvements in sector awareness, identification, analysis and response to integrity risks	First successful proceedings under section 114A or 114B of the TEQSA Act	Additional prosecutions under Section 114 of the TEQSA Act
		100 websites that advertise or offer commercial academic cheating websites blocked	90 per cent of websites advertising or offering commercial academic cheating services blocked
		500 posts and accounts removed from social media platforms for offering or advertising cheating services	Ongoing program of work to remove posts and accounts from social media, with a target of at least 500 removals per financial year
		Online course for deterring and detecting commercial academic cheating launched	80 per cent of providers have had at least one staff member complete the master class in deterring and detecting commercial academic cheating
		Half day workshops to enhance cyber security awareness in Institutes of Higher Education delivered	
		Resources to enhance cyber security maturity at Institutes of Higher Education in development	Comprehensive suite of resources delivered to Institutes of Higher Education to support enhanced cyber security awareness and maturity

7. RPG Principle of regulator best practice – 2. Risk-based and data driven.

Objective 3

Ensure compliance with applicable legislation through effective and efficient regulation

TEQSA's core functions are to register all providers that offer higher education qualifications in or from Australia and to accredit their course, except for courses offered by universities and select providers that have partial or full authority to accredit their own courses of study.

TEQSA's core regulatory work includes:

- registering and re-registering providers delivering higher education courses, Foundation programs, and ELICOS to overseas students
- accrediting and re-accrediting courses offered by higher education providers, for those providers without self-accrediting authority
- compliance monitoring and assessments, including in response to material change notifications received by, and complaints about, higher education providers
- assessing providers for partial or full self-accrediting authority
- ensuring that regulated academic awards are not offered by unregistered providers.

TEQSA continues to aim to reduce the administrative burden of regulation for higher education providers whilst focusing on monitoring providers' compliance.

Of the impacts, challenges and priorities identified in this Plan, the following activities are most relevant to ensuring compliance with applicable legislation through effective and efficient regulation:

Reviewing and adapting TEQSA's regulatory model and practice, in keeping with established principles of regulatory best practice and reform, in close consultation with stakeholders *(see Key Activity 3.1 in the table below)*.

Implementing strategies to improve the timeliness and responsiveness of regulatory assessments and decisions *(see Key Activity 3.3 in the table below)*.

Investing in our workforce and enabling systems to rebuild and then maintain a sustainable basis to TEQSA's regulatory practice and organisational capacity *(see Key Activity 3.5 in the table below)*.

The performance measures and targets for objective 3 also include organisational capacity initiatives and strategic projects (see 3.5 below), which it should be noted also apply across TEQSA's other objectives and priorities.

Key activities	Performance measure	Target 2022 – 2023	Target to 2026
3.1 Review and adapt TEQSA's regulatory model and practice, in keeping with established principles of regulatory best practice and reform, in close consultation with stakeholders[8]	Stakeholder acceptance of process and outcomes for regulatory reform	Initial review and streamlining of existing processes complete Completion of supervisory risk statement for sector	Revised regulatory model and practice accepted by range of stakeholders as effective and reflective of modern regulatory practice, in particular by encouraging and facilitating sector innovation
3.2 Align risk and compliance approach with legislated requirements and principles of regulatory necessity, risk and proportionality[9]	Proportion of compliance assessments undertaken to address non-compliance and restore compliance (registered and non-registered) providers	Establishing baseline in 2022–23 Proportion of compliance assessments that conclude with provider compliance (by regulatory action, provider education, court or tribunal order)	90 per cent of compliance assessments conclude with provider compliance (by regulatory action, provider education, court or tribunal order)
	TEQSA reviews cases in which its decisions are externally reviewed, identifies any opportunities for improvement in TEQSA's regulatory approach, and implements improvements	TEQSA's annual report includes details of improvement opportunities and the steps taken by TEQSA to implement identified improvements	TEQSA's annual report includes details of improvement opportunities and the steps taken by TEQSA to implement identified improvements
	Extent to which TEQSA meets relevant legislated and/or statutory freedom of information, privacy or information security obligations	100 per cent compliance with relevant obligations, requirements or requests	100 per cent compliance and no adverse findings with respect to relevant obligations, requirements or requests
3.3 Ensure regulatory assessments are streamlined and coordinated to ensure regulatory activity is undertaken efficiently[9]	Yearly trend in processing times	Median assessment times within legislative deadline in TEQSA Act	Median assessment times within legislative deadline in TEQSA Act
	Percentage of providers satisfied TEQSA is reducing administrative burden	In 2022-23 implement outcomes of regulatory process improvement project	In 2024, a 30 per cent increase in positive ratings from providers for 'regulation by TEQSA does not necessarily impede efficient operation of higher education providers' in the stakeholder survey

8. RPG Principle of regulator best practice – 2. Risk-based and data driven, 3. Collaboration and engagement.
9. RPG Principle of regulator best practice – 1. Continuous improvement and building trust, 2. Risk-based and data driven.

Key activities *(continued)*	Performance measure	Target 2022 – 2023	Target to 2026
	Percentage of assessments completed within legislative deadlines as required under the TEQSA Act	80 per cent of registration and courses assessments are concluded within legislated timeframes, and 20 per cent concluded within extension period where this relates to issues outside TEQSA's control	90 per cent of registration and courses assessments are concluded within legislated timeframes, and 10 per cent concluded within extension period where this relates to issues outside TEQSA's control
3.4 Recover regulatory costs consistent with CRIS and relevant framework or guidelines[10]	Recovery consistent with approved CRIS and with support of providers	Increased cost recovery by TEQSA commences on the 1 January 2023

Provider resources including guides and FAQs are available on the website before implementation date

TEQSA staff adequately supported through systems and change management | Full implementation of CRIS, as amended through annual consultation framework

70 per cent provider ratings in annual survey rate the process as transparent and information or consultation as good.

TEQSA systems mature and efficient |
| 3.5 Implement key strategic projects in relation to organisational capability[10] | Strategic projects progressively implemented, on time and on budget | Provider management solution (PMS) vendors selected and project substantially implemented

Records management project completed, and integrated with PMS

Student records project substantially implemented

Human Resource Management Information Systems (HRMIS), including payroll, substantially implemented

Website redevelopment complete

Organisational culture plan and initiatives serve as 'living' documents to inform improvements through 2022-23 | PMS fully implemented and mature, with full consideration of further updates

Records management fully digitised and consistent with archival and other requirements

Student records for provider closures complete and available on demand

HRMIS effectively utilised and further modules considered and implemented

TEQSA's external facing communications tools reflect best practice, including in accessibility

TEQSA employees report strong and positive organisational culture reflecting APS best-practice |

10. RPG Principle of regulatory best practice – 1. Continuous improvement and building trust.

Section 4: Organisational capability

TEQSA faces a number of challenges – some heightened by the pandemic and its impacts – in ensuring organisational sustainability. This applies as much to investments in people and enabling systems as it does to TEQSA's regulatory model and practice.

As a result of external decisions, TEQSA went through major structural and resourcing amendments during its first 10 years. Investments in enabling systems, such as case and records management and strategic human resources, have been uneven. Similarly, investment in our people has tended to be dominated by fixed remuneration costs, with insufficient allowance for investments in organisational culture, professional development, and attraction and retention strategies. Additionally, capacity and appetite for change, agility and responsiveness in the face of disruption, has not been sufficiently developed.

Moreover, while TEQSA has gone some way in applying its stated principles of proportionality, necessity and risk, it has further work to do in developing a genuinely risk-based quality assurance basis for its regulatory model. The risk of not doing so, given that an increase in TEQSA's appropriation is unlikely, is that TEQSA's practice becomes unsustainable. TEQSA will draw down on unspent appropriations from previous years to invest in restoring capacity, addressing performance and building long-term organisational sustainability.

Over the next four years, TEQSA will implement strategies and plans to ensure it has the required capability and processes to undertake its key activities.

People and capability

TEQSA is fortunate in having a core workforce that is skilled, dedicated and passionate about our purpose. Our employees are required to have a wide range of knowledge and expertise in higher education, quality assurance, regulation, risk assessment and public sector administration. TEQSA seeks to be an employer of choice, offering employees diverse and challenging work that embraces innovation, variety and agility.

Our workforce consists of staff in specialist regulatory operations and enabling service functions, including policy and sector analysis, legal advice, risk analysis, information management, communications, stakeholder liaison, governance, information and communication technology, human resources, project management and finance.

In 2020–21, TEQSA developed and implemented an agency culture plan to build an organisational culture that reflects our core values and engenders a workplace that is rewarding, stimulating and engaging. Our focus on implementing and reinforcing the culture plan will continue.

TEQSA is based in Victoria, where unemployment is historically low and there is significant workforce mobility and a highly competitive job market. In common with many other agencies, TEQSA has experienced high levels of attrition and faces significant challenges recruiting and retaining staff.

A priority for 2022–23 is an organisational Workforce Plan setting out actions and strategies for:

- attracting, retaining and effectively managing a required level of suitably qualified, skilled and experienced staff
- equipping staff with transferable skills through development and renewal opportunities
- supporting staff health, wellbeing and psychological safety
- ensuring an inclusive workplace that recognises and values the diversity of its employees, including through flexible work arrangements
- working collaboratively within the APS and the higher education sector.

Regulatory process and approach

TEQSA's current risk framework has been in use for some years. Consistent with best–practice regulatory principles, TEQSA will review and further mature its regulatory practice and processes, with a focus on:

1. Reviewing and updating the overall risk framework, as it applies to sector–wide and individual provider risk.
2. Revising the requirements and processes for re-registering higher education providers, with increased emphasis on provider self-assurance, and introducing tiered evidence requirements according to provider risk.
3. Concurrently considering suitability for self-accrediting authority with re-registration. This will reduce regulatory burden and is expected to increase the number of low–risk providers with (limited or full) self-accrediting authority. In turn, this will reduce the volume of course accreditation and re-accreditation work.
4. Revising assessment processes for course accreditation and re-accreditation to better align with the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021*, targeting the intensity of assessment according to risk and reducing evidence requirements for lower-risk providers.
5. Building on relationships with Australian and international regulatory bodies, and with providers, peak bodies, students, and other stakeholders, to ensure that TEQSA keeps abreast of key developments in regulation and in the sector.
6. Continuing to review and improve its business processes to enhance clarity and efficiency and to better target key risks.

Key initiatives are planned for 2022–23 to progress the review of the regulatory risk approach and improve regulatory processes.

Cost recovery

TEQSA will commence recovering up to 90 per cent of its costs in fees and charges from the higher education sector from 1 January 2023. The fees and charges will include:

- full recovery of the costs of registering and re-registering providers
- up to 70 per cent recovery of the costs of accrediting courses of study offered by providers
- phased recovery of the costs of 'non application based' activity, including, risk monitoring and publication of guidance to the sector.

Cost recovery brings with it significant change management challenges, both internally and for higher education providers. It also brings opportunities for ensuring the efficiency and effectiveness of regulatory activity, in a manner that minimises regulatory burden and encourages innovation.

Information and communications technology and information management

TEQSA's key ICT initiatives include scalable, efficient, cost-effective, and contemporary solutions in provider, human resource, records and student records management.

The desired future state of TEQSA is to be a data and intelligence led regulator. This includes data analytics capabilities; maximising the value of information; and providing timely access and appropriate use of data for managing sector risks, quality assurance and regulatory activity.

TEQSA will focus on implementing a centralised solution for data analytics to enable internal information sharing, the streamlining of data processing, and proactive risk analysis.

TEQSA is committed to delivering secure and reliable digital services. This includes continually reducing TEQSA's cyber risk exposure and protecting TEQSA's systems and data. We will continue to build capabilities to prevent and respond to cyber threats together with providing confidence in the integrity and reliability of our systems, processes and frameworks.

Infrastructure capability

During 2022–23, TEQSA will move to a new location in Melbourne's CBD. The new premises will be shared with the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), Australia's national regulator for vocational education and training. The new office will deliver an enhanced workplace environment that is intended to support flexibility, collaboration and productivity.

Section 5: Risk oversight and management

TEQSA's enterprise risk management framework comprises:

- A Risk Management Policy, which is aligned to the Commonwealth Risk Management Policy and provides a framework for consistently identifying, assessing, and managing corporate risk across TEQSA. It also establishes expectations for how risk should be managed within the agency.

- An enterprise risk register, which categorises key risks and is summarised below.

- Quarterly reports to TEQSA's accountable authority and Audit and Risk Committee from risk managers responsible for each enterprise risk.

- A risk appetite and tolerance statement, which contains a general statement of TEQSA's risk appetite as well as statements describing TEQSA's risk tolerance for specific categories of risk.

- A roadmap for ongoing improvement of TEQSA's risk management approach, including training for TEQSA staff on the Australian Government Risk Management Policy, and regular reviews of the appropriateness and effectiveness of controls and treatments in TEQSA's enterprise risk register.

TEQSA's Audit and Risk Committee provides independent assurance to the accountable authority on TEQSA's financial and non-financial performance reporting responsibilities, risk oversight and systems of internal control. This includes overseeing the internal audit program to ensure alignment with TEQSA's risk profile.

Key risks and their management

The following table outlines our key enterprise risks and the strategies we use to manage them.

Enterprise risks	How we will manage these risks
Failure to deliver on TEQSA's regulatory objectives	• Review and update the regulatory risk framework, as it applies to sector wide and individual provider risk. • Revise the requirements and processes for re-registering higher education providers, with increased emphasis on reviewing provider self-assurance. • Work to increase the number of low-risk providers with (limited or full) Self Accrediting Authority. • Build on relationships with Australian and international regulatory bodies, and with providers, peak bodies, students, and other stakeholders. • Continuously improve business processes to enhance clarity and efficiency, and to better target key risks.
Significant loss of support from one or more key stakeholders	• Structured engagement with providers and students to collect feedback about our approach and communicate with those stakeholders about key issues and risks involving the higher education sector. • Regular communication and structured relationships with stakeholders such as the Minister's Office, Higher Education Standards Panel, and Department of Education. • Promotion of increased visibility of TEQSA's regulatory activities and outcomes through publications, focus groups, workshops and a refreshed TEQSA website.
Failure to meet governance and accountability standards and obligations	• Implement an Agency culture plan that identifies expected values and behaviours, action plans, and measurability indicators. • Establish charters and terms of reference for the Accountable Authority, Audit and Risk Committee, Executive Leadership Team, regular scheduled reviews of policies, procedures, and progress against compliance and performance requirements. • Compulsory compliance training covering key areas of obligations relevant to TEQSA officials.
Inability to attract and retain suitably qualified, skilled, and experienced staff	• Develop strategic workforce planning that delivers efficient and effective recruitment, induction, retention, and ongoing learning opportunities for permanent and temporary staff. • Review and update of TEQSA's recruitment practices (policies and procedures) to align with the APS. • Actively implement our culture plan to build a positive, rewarding and meaningful workplace.
Inadequate arrangements to meet TEQSA's ICT and information security requirements	• Develop and implement new systems for provider, people, records and student records management. • Implement the revised 'Essential 8' strategies to mitigate cyber security incidents and the recommendations of the Independent Registered Assessors Program assessment of TEQSA's ICT systems. • Invest in our cyber security and ICT expertise through recruitment and staff development.

Section 6: TEQSA's stakeholders

TEQSA engages with a range of stakeholders across the domestic and international higher education sector, government and professions to achieve its purpose.

Higher education providers

TEQSA will continue to work with and regulate higher education providers across the Australian higher education sector including public and private universities, Australian branches of overseas universities and other higher education providers.

Students

TEQSA will continue to develop its Student Expert Advisory Group (SEAG) to discuss risks to student interests and to receive feedback on TEQSA's activity and initiatives. In addition, TEQSA will review its approach to engaging with students to ensure a broader and more representative student voice.

Parliament and Executive

TEQSA is accountable, through the Australian Government, to the Parliament and to the Senate Estimates Committee scrutiny processes, as well as to other standing committees and committees of inquiry. While an independent statutory body, TEQSA has obligations in reporting to the Minister of Education, and in liaising closely with the Department of Education and its constituent portfolio entities, such as the Higher Education Standards Panel.

Higher Education Standards Panel

The responsibilities of the Higher Education Standards Panel (HESP) include monitoring the operation of, and recommending changes to, the Higher Education Standards Framework. The HESP advises and provides recommendations to TEQSA regarding its performance, including approaches to deregulation, strategic objectives, the corporate plan, streamlining of activities, and resourcing requirements.

Department of Education

TEQSA will continue to work closely with the Department on policy-related matters, and on data held by the Department (such as student information), which can be used to deliver more timely inputs for TEQSA's risk assessments. TEQSA will also continue to provide advice

to the Department regarding admissions transparency, international engagements and the role of professional accreditation bodies.

Australian Skills Quality Authority

TEQSA will continue to collaborate regularly with the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), particularly in relation to 'dual-sector' providers and including in developing best-practice regulatory approaches and methods.

Education Regulators and Immigration Committee

TEQSA will continue to contribute to the multi-agency Education Regulators and Immigration Committee (ERIC), to help safeguard the integrity and sustainability of the international education sector. TEQSA's focus will be on identifying and mitigating risks and influencing whole-of-government operational settings.

Provider peak bodies

TEQSA will work closely with provider peak bodies as part of its partnership approach with the sector, particularly in relation to the regulatory framework and TEQSA's performance. Peak bodies are an important source of information about a provider's experience of working with TEQSA, while also detecting emerging risks for the sector.

Industry professional bodies

TEQSA and industry professional accreditation bodies with links to the higher education sector have a mutual interest in maintaining and improving quality of the provision of Australian higher education. TEQSA's agreements with industry bodies facilitate the sharing of information and seek to reduce regulatory burden on higher education providers through joint and streamlined approaches to assessment, as well as highlighting emerging risks.

Other stakeholders

TEQSA seeks to engage with its stakeholders at all levels through open, two-way communication; to reflect on feedback and take action where appropriate. Our stakeholder engagement activities allow us to gain a greater understanding of the key issues in the higher education sector and help to build stakeholder capacity to meet regulatory requirements.

In 2022–23, TEQSA will review its external engagement strategy to ensure our engagement with all stakeholders is purpose-driven and delivers a mutual exchange of value.

Appendix A

Summary of changes

TEQSA's overall vision, purpose and objectives remain unchanged. Our quality assurance role and functions, however, need to adapt to developments in regulatory practice and a higher education sector dealing with great change and uncertainty.

TEQSA needs to review and adapt its regulatory model and practice, in part to build and maintain a focus on sector risks, including those that have arisen because of the COVID-19 pandemic. These include the financial viability of providers, integrity threats and student wellbeing.

TEQSA also needs to be both a data driven and sustainable regulator, with appropriate investments in our people, systems and processes that ensure providers and broader public confidence. This will be especially important as TEQSA commences to recover the cost of its activity from providers.

A particular focus of this updated Corporate Plan has been to review and refine our performance measures and targets, so that we can better assess our effectiveness and accountability:

- Under Objective 1, new performance measures and targets have been added in relation to currency and relevance of materials available for stakeholders; engagement with stakeholders, including high-risk providers; work with the Department of Education and Higher Education Standards Panel; and provision of advice and recommendations to the Minister for Education.

- Under Objective 2, metrics have been expanded to focus on risks to student wellbeing and safety, as well those arising from foreign interference and the financial viability of providers. An emphasis has been placed on sharing findings relating to risk priorities with the sector.

- Under Objective 3, improvements to the measurability of performance have been made through new metrics relating to completion of assessments, continuous improvement and information security. Further new activities, performance measures and targets have been developed in relation to cost recovery and strategic projects to improve organisational capability.

TEQSA recognises that the introduction of a more comprehensive set of metrics will require additional monitoring work, however the changes will facilitate easier measurement of our performance.

TEQSA will continue to review its performance metrics annually to ensure they remain relevant and to improve the 'line of sight' between the Portfolio Budget Statement, Corporate Plan and Annual Report.