



Guidance Note: *Workforce Planning*

Version 1.1 (3 April 2019)

Providers should note that Guidance Notes are intended to provide guidance only. They are not definitive or binding documents. Nor are they prescriptive. The definitive instruments for regulatory purposes remain the TEQSA Act and the Higher Education Standards Framework as amended from time to time.

What does Workforce Planning Encompass?

'Workforce Planning' is a term used for the collective processes that are used by an organisation to plan, establish, develop, maintain and optimise its staffing profile to achieve its objectives. 'Human resource planning' and 'staffing' are sometimes used as synonyms. In the case of a higher education provider, the upshot of successful workforce planning is a staffing profile that will not only fulfil the provider's higher education mission but also ensure that the provider meets, and continues to meet, the requirements of the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015* (HES Framework) and operates as an efficient organisation, both academically and corporately.

TEQSA sees workforce planning as encompassing all types of staffing¹ and all stages of a provider's development, including:

- establishment of a new provider
- offering a new course, especially in a new field
- staged development of a new provider
- maintenance or optimisation of an established provider's ongoing workforce needs
- a change of mission or other new development that alters workforce needs.

Relevant Standards in the HES Framework

The HES Framework does not address workforce planning *per se*. Rather, it specifies the outcomes that must be met through a provider's staffing arrangements (which, in turn, flow from the provider's workforce planning processes).

The HES Framework addresses and/or affects workforce requirements through a number of Standards, both directly and indirectly. The provider's governing body is accountable for

¹ For the purposes of the HES Framework, 'staff' includes personnel who are engaged in work for the provider even if they are not formally employed by the provider (e.g. honorary teachers, researchers or supervisors). Where such work is necessary or critical to the mission of the provider it needs to be encompassed by workforce planning. The term 'staff' includes both academic (teaching and research) and professional staff and encompasses the critical role of service delivery staff in the student experience in particular.



setting and monitoring corporate directions and targets (Standard 6.2.1b), seeing that sufficient resources are available to maintain and sustain the provider's business model while meeting the requirements of the HES Framework (Standard 6.2.1c) and for identification and management of risks (Standard 6.2.1e). An appreciation of the provider's capacity to deliver on its mission through its workforce is thus a central role of corporate governance. Academic matters must also operate according to an academic governance framework established by the governing body (Standard 6.2.1f). These governance requirements necessarily encompass oversight of workforce needs and capabilities. They also extend to any delivery arrangements with other parties (Standards 5.4.1, 5.4.2).

The staffing complement of each course of study must be sufficient to meet the educational, academic support and administrative needs of student cohorts (Standard 3.2.1) in an environment that fosters wellbeing and safety (Section 2.3). The overall academic staffing profile must be sufficient to provide academic oversight and leadership consistent with the nature and level of expected learning outcomes (Standard 3.2.2). The attributes of teaching staff are specified (Standards 3.2.3, 3.2.4) and include keeping up to date with contemporary developments (Standard 3.2.3a). Teaching staff are expected to be accessible to students for individual assistance (Standard 3.2.5). Research staff are required to be equipped for their role (Standard 4.1.2). The research training Standards require that research training be provided in a scholarly environment (Standard 4.2.2) under specified supervisory requirements (Standard 4.2.3). Teachers and supervisors are expected to have access to feedback on their performance and to be supported in enhancing these activities (Standard 5.3.6). The facilities and infrastructure (2.1.1 – 2.1.3) and learning resources (3.3.1 – 3.3.4) of the provider need to be fit for purpose, sufficient for the students who use them and accessible when needed, all of which require appropriate administrative and management staffing, typically by professional staff.

The HES Framework requires institutional mechanisms for governance oversight (Section 6.3) and quality assurance (Sections 5.1-5.4) of academic activities, which have implications for staffing of these processes. Numerous Standards specify or imply the availability of staff with particular skills and expertise such as academic skills, detailed technical expertise (e.g. application of admissions policies, recognition of prior learning), and awareness of institutional policy and/or statutory requirements (e.g. for international students under the ESOS Act), all of which have implications for the recruitment and continuing development of staff, whether professional or academic.

Intent of Workforce Planning

Ideally, effective workforce planning should ensure that a provider has the right people, with the right skills, in the right positions, at the right time, to achieve its mission and to continue to meet the requirements of the HES Framework. In essence workforce planning needs to encompass both the sufficiency of staffing and the capability of individual staff and teams. For the purposes of this note, 'capability' is taken broadly to include cross cultural competence and diversity, as well as technical and management capabilities.

The nature and extent of workforce planning will vary with a provider's circumstances, stage of development and scale. It will be particularly important when a provider is commencing operations as a higher education provider or is undertaking a new initiative such as establishing a new course of study or introducing a new field of education or AQF level. For existing providers, periodic workforce planning will most likely be more concerned with ensuring that the staffing profile is developed, refined and sustained, or adapted to changing circumstances and emerging opportunities.



Workforce planning will involve different levels of the provider, in many different ways (e.g. corporate oversight by the governing body, business unit budgeting, optimising the academic staffing profile for a course of study, succession planning for critical positions, matching the academic or support needs of particular cohorts of students).

Risks to Quality

Failure to engage in effective workforce planning can result in numerous types of risks depending on where or how the staffing arrangements are inadequate, particularly in the case of providers with an overall medium or high risk rating. These might include:

- unrealistic projections of staffing requirements with unsustainable financial and/or educational outcomes
- a staffing mix that is collectively unable to provide sufficient academic leadership and oversight at a level appropriate to the education offered staff numbers and capabilities not rising in line with rising student numbers as operations scale up, with attendant risks to educational delivery, student experiences and provider reputation
- teaching staff who are unable to lead intellectual inquiry at the level required
- a learning environment that does not foster scholarship or (where applicable) research training
- an insufficient or inappropriate skills base to provide academic or personal support for student cohorts
- insufficient recognition of staff development needs
- inconsistency in staffing practices
- poor organisational capacity to adapt to changing circumstances
- insufficient capacity to anticipate and respond to contingencies and uncertainties
- inadequate service delivery
- failure to properly consider the practical workforce implications of academic and/or corporate developments.

What TEQSA will look for

This part of the guidance note covers the full extent of the Standards, and corresponding evidence that TEQSA may require, related to staffing and workforce planning.

For new applicants seeking initial registration and course accreditation, TEQSA will require evidence to be provided in relation to all relevant Standards.

For existing providers, the scope of Standards to be assessed and the evidence required for particular applications may vary. This is consistent with the regulatory principles in the TEQSA Act, under which TEQSA has discretion to vary the scope of its assessments and the related evidence required. In exercising this discretion, TEQSA will be guided by the provider's regulatory history, its risk profile and its track record in delivering high quality higher education.



TEQSA's case managers will discuss with providers the scope of assessments and evidence required well ahead of the due date for submitting an application.

The evidence required for particular types of application is available from the Application Guides on the TEQSA website.

Providers are required to comply with the Standards at all times, not just at the time of application, and TEQSA may seek evidence of compliance at other times if a risk of non-compliance is identified.

In the first instance TEQSA will need to take account of the stage of development of the provider (e.g. new, developing or established) and whether the provider is in a relatively stable phase of staffing or is proposing new initiatives that require significant new workforce planning, such as:

- introducing a new field of education or course of study
- developing a new campus or mode of delivery
- a proposed change of provider category
- marked changes in service delivery
- marked changes in the scale of operations.

In the case of new providers and new developments, TEQSA will need to be satisfied that the provider will meet the staffing requirements of the HES Framework for the initial establishment phase and then continue to meet the requirements through subsequent phases. They will need to show how they will scale up their workforce progressively as student numbers are projected to increase.

TEQSA acknowledges that workforce planning can be undertaken in various ways according to the circumstances, scale and stage of development of the provider. In so doing TEQSA does not seek to prescribe *how* workforce planning is done or the form a workforce plan might take. Some providers may prefer to incorporate workforce plans in another planning framework (e.g. strategic plan, business plan), or to have a stand-alone workforce plan. Irrespective of the approach taken by particular providers, TEQSA will expect to see key elements of a workforce planning process encompassing planning, target setting, monitoring and improvement and that these elements give rise to informed views at senior executive and governing body level. **Note:** Some notes on accepted elements of good practice are in Appendix A of this document for information.

TEQSA's prime focus will be on the *outcomes* of workforce planning and the likelihood that the relevant Standards of the HES Framework that relate to staffing will be met and continue to be met on the basis of the planning. TEQSA will expect to see the following:

- *Governance mechanisms that provide oversight of a provider's staffing arrangements.* These arrangements will need to show that the provider and the corporate governing body meet oversight requirements relevant to staffing (Standards 6.2.1b, 6.2.1c, 6.2.1e) and that the corporate governing body ensures that there is a policy framework in place that provides leadership and governance of academic activities (Standard 6.2.1f). The policy framework will need to cover selection and development of staff (including underperforming staff) and address the requirements of the Standards for academic staffing (Standards 3.2.1-3.2.5), including research staffing and research training if applicable to the provider (Standards 4.1.2, 4.2.2, 4.2.3). The governing body will also need to satisfy itself that administrative, management and service delivery staffing are consistent with the provider's mission and sustainability.



- *The actual, or projected, staffing complement for each course of study (including support functions and services).* The data (or projections) will need to demonstrate that the level of staffing and attributes (e.g. numbers, levels, fields, skills and experience) of staff involved in both academic and support roles meet the requirements of the relevant Standards. In particular, a provider will need to demonstrate that staffing arrangements reflect the needs of student cohorts (e.g. Standards 2.3.3, 3.2.1) and are capable of achieving the expected learning outcomes for the course of study (Standard 3.2.2). In the case of a new provider or new development, staffing projections will need to be accompanied by a credible analysis of the projections and a plan for how they are expected to be achieved (see related *TEQSA Guidance Note - Staffing, Learning Resources and Educational Support*).
- *A risk analysis for projected developments.* The provider will need to demonstrate that the risks associated with projected developments (including those relating to the ability to meet staffing requirements) have been identified and that these can be managed and mitigated (Standard 6.2.1e).
- *An outline of the actual or projected governance and quality assurance systems for academic activities (including boards and committees) and provision for staff to operate and support them.* The outline will need to demonstrate that the requirements of the relevant Standards (Sections 5.1-5.3, 6.3, and 5.4 if third party arrangements are involved) are met or will be met.



Related Guidance Notes

Available from teqsa.gov.au/guidance-notes:

- Staffing, Learning Resources and Educational Support
- Determining Professional Equivalence
- Scholarship

Resources and references

Australian Qualifications Framework Council (2013), *Australian Qualifications Framework Second Edition January 2013*, <<http://www.aqf.edu.au/>>.

Coates, H., et al, 2009, *The attractiveness of the Australian academic profession: A comparative analysis*, ACER Research Briefing, retrieved 5 June 2014 from <http://research.acer.edu.au/higher_education/11/>.

Hugo, G. and Morriss, A., 2010, *Investigating the Ageing Academic Workforce: Stocktake*, report commissioned by Universities Australia from The National Centre for Social Applications of Geographic Information Systems, retrieved 5 June 2014 from <[https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/ArticleDocuments/210/Investigating the Ageing Academic Workforce.pdf.aspx](https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/ArticleDocuments/210/Investigating_the_Ageing_Academic_Workforce.pdf.aspx)>.

Standards Australia, HB 299-2008 Workforce Planning, <infostore.saiglobal.com>.

Workforce planning guide, Australian Public Service Commission, <<http://www.apsc.gov.au/publications-and-media/current-publications/workforce-planning-guide>>.

TEQSA (2016), *Explanations of terms in Part A of the HES Framework 2015*, <teqsa.gov.au/glossary-terms-part-higher-education-standards-framework-2015>.

TEQSA welcomes the diversity of educational delivery across the sector and acknowledges that its Guidance Notes may not encompass all of the circumstances seen in the sector. TEQSA also recognises that the requirements of the HESF can be met in different ways according to the circumstances of the provider. Provided the requirements of the HESF are met, TEQSA will not prescribe how they are met. If in doubt, please consult your TEQSA case manager.

Version #	Date	Key changes
1.0	21 December 2017	Made available as beta version for consultation.
1.1	3 April 2019	Amended in response to consultation feedback.



Appendix A

Notes on Good Practice in Workforce Planning

Desirable features of a workforce planning process

Some of the features of a workforce planning process that TEQSA recognises as good practice include:

- systematic analysis of a staff profile (numbers, levels, skills and experience, fields) needed to meet a provider's higher education objectives and achieve expected student learning outcomes, and of gaps compared to current staffing
- consideration of both external factors (such as availability of skills, competition, changes in government policy) and internal factors (such as the age of the workforce, budget, current and proposed higher education courses of study, fields of education and research areas)
- formulation of strategies and objectives into a plan, including targets
- alignment of the plan with the organisational strategic plan and budgets
- a consultative and deliberative approval process that ensures the plan is considered and authorised by the appropriate managers and governance bodies
- implementation of the plan through effective policies and procedures e.g. for staff selection and appointments
- a cyclical process of periodic revision to ensure that the plan remains adapted to future needs.

Desirable elements of a workforce plan

TEQSA recognises that approaches to workforce planning are likely to vary over the diverse range and scale of higher education providers.

A fully developed workforce plan will typically encompass the following elements:

- *Outline of the strategic context*
 - including the provider's overall strategic objectives
- *Analysis of the current and future staff profile*
 - especially qualifications and experience and numbers of staff at all levels and in the various fields of education currently taught and planned
- *Identification of gaps between current and future staff profile*
- *Identification of strategies and/or initiatives to fill the gaps and build the profile, such as:*
 - recruit new staff members
 - develop and promote existing staff members
 - manage the performance of underperforming staff members.



- *Designation of managers responsible for carrying out the strategies*
- *Identification of performance indicators and targets that will assist in determining whether the objectives are being met.*

Of these, the most important elements to be codified in a plan are identification of strategies and initiatives to achieve human resources objectives, and how the achievement of these objectives will be assessed or measured.

Once a plan has been finalised, it then needs to be implemented, and periodically the provider needs to monitor whether the objectives of the plan are being achieved.