



Australian Government

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency

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Thursday 25 November 2021

#TEQSA21

TEQSA 2021
5th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Hard Lessons, Valuable Learnings
Heightened Expectations

State of the Sector

Hard lessons

- Campuses empty of students
- Diminished student satisfaction and engagement. There is mixed success in providers' ability (and capability of staff) to move to online/hybrid modes, with impacts on quality and student progress in their courses
- Australia has been exceedingly reliant overall on an on-campus, onshore model of international education excessively dependent on a single source country
- Major declines in international student income
- Pressures on the 'bottom line' and familiar operating models
- Losses of many jobs, mainly professional and junior/casual academic levels
- Reported high levels of stress and angst amongst staff affected by sudden changes.
- Harder circumstances for new and less established players

State of the Sector

Valuable learnings

- An inherently cautious sector and many providers within it have shown a willingness and capacity to respond nimbly to profoundly difficult and urgent challenges. Providers (and the regulator) will need to continue to adapt and reshape as the environment changes and the sector evolves.
- COVID has been both a disruptor of current practice and accelerator of mostly necessary change. There can be no ‘snap back’.
- The need for more diverse models of delivery and student engagement in order to cater to the expectations of an increasingly diverse domestic student population as well as to meet the needs of a changing international student market.
- Not only do we need new models, we need to think very seriously about how we re-engage current students disenfranchised by their COVID experience

State of the Sector

Valuable learnings (continued)

- The shifts toward online, blended and hybrid learning environments have potentially profound implications for campus planning. This is because our traditional notions of time, place and space are being upended.
- We need also to come to fully understand the risks for system quality and integrity around these trends. These include industrial-scale cheating, entry standards, threats to research quality, growth of third party arrangements and use of agents (especially those overseas).
- The loss of staff has been largely in junior academic and professional staff roles. This may prove challenging in a number of ways, including in learning-teaching where the roles of academic and professional staff naturally overlap or complement. The loss of staff also will have downstream impacts in terms of other capability, succession and progression.
- Significant corporate knowledge has exited some institutions and the sector in 'engine room' functions and this will be hard and costly to replace.

Implications for TEQSA's regulatory approach

- TEQSA's regulatory approach must be guided by our two roles: to uphold the quality and integrity of our higher education system, and to protect the interests of students.
- Given the rapidly changing operating environment, TEQSA also needs to both adapt and rethink its own regulatory approach, and to do so with some urgency. We need to balance our provider-based focus with a recognition that many of the challenges we face are sector-wide, and our traditional understandings of risk are being confounded.
- Students see themselves not only as consumers (and expect their experience to match the 'sticker price') but also, increasingly, as partners in learning. As a regulator we have to seek to understand the authentic student voice.
- As a regulator we have a responsibility to look forward, to be prescient, as well as reflect back. And as we expect of others, we have a responsibility to engage openly and early with all providers and the sector regarding the changes we are contemplating, and to refine them along the way.

Introduction of George Megalogenis, Keynote Speaker

'State of Australia'

- Author, journalist, economic and political commentator
- 'Exit Strategy: Politics after the Pandemic', Quarterly Essay, QE 82,2021
- 'The Australian Moment', Penguin, 2012,
- 'The Football Solution', Penguin, 2018