

**Senate Committee: Education and Employment**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE**

**Supplementary Budget Estimates 2015 - 2016**

**Outcome: Agency: TEQSA**

**Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ15-000789**

Senator Carr, Kim provided in writing

***TEQSA - Parapharm Pty Ltd***

**Question**

I note that TEQSA has decided not to renew the accreditation of Parapharm Pty Ltd's course in homeopathy. I understand that this decision has been taken by ParaPharm to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. Can you confirm that that was your decision?

Has TEQSA made a decision on the other homeopathy course – that offered by the Australian College of Natural Medicine Pty Ltd? What was that decision?

Can I confirm that, pending decisions in both cases the colleges are continuing to offer their homeopathy courses? Are students in those courses still eligible for FEE-HELP?

In answer to SQ15-000279, you provided a list of the academics who advised TEQSA on the reaccreditation of these two courses. Can I confirm that all of the seven academics listed work in disciplines in the alternative therapy field?

In addition to their advice, did TEQSA adduce other considerations or facts? What comment would you offer on the remarks, made at the Additional Estimates hearing last February, of former Acting CEO of TEQSA, Professor Nicholas Saunders? Professor Saunders said that the Higher Education Standards Framework did not require courses to be "scientifically based." However, he went on to say

"What we are asking is: does this course position homeopathy in the field such that students who are studying this understand that there is a controversy and that there is strong evidence that it is in fact not an effective clinical regime? We are expecting students to understand the criticisms of homeopathy, not just simply to study in a modular sort of way the tenets of homeopathy. We would use our judgement applying those standards to the accreditation of courses like this."

Was Professor Saunders accurately stating TEQSA's general approach to course accreditation?

Would the decision of TEQSA not to grant accreditation to a course mean that students in that course would not continue to be eligible for FEE-HELP?

**Answer**

The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) has provided the following response.

- Yes.
- Yes. The Australian College of Natural Medicine Pty Ltd (ACNM) withdrew its application for renewal of accreditation of the Bachelor of Health Science (Homeopathy), seeking to teach out the existing course. TEQSA extended the accreditation of the existing course until 30 June 2016 to allow ACNM to teach out its remaining four students, on the basis that ACNM has agreed not to enrol any new students in the course.
- This is a matter for the Department of Education and Training.

- No. While all experts were selected based on their expertise in relation to the field of education in which the courses are delivered, the experts currently work in a range of different fields. Information about their current employment is available in the public domain through an internet search including, for example, on the websites of their employers.
- Given that the decision in relation to ParaPharm Pty Ltd is before the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, it would not be appropriate to comment any further on that matter.

In relation to ACNM, TEQSA relied on the evidence provided by ACNM to support their application and the expert advice received from academics.

- The comments by Professor Saunders reflect the requirements of the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2011*, the standards against which all higher education courses are assessed, including the requirement that courses leading to Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) qualifications meet the specifications at the relevant level of the AQF.

The following Threshold Standards are relevant:

- Provider Registration Standard 4.1 – The higher education provider’s objectives for its higher education operations include the cultivation in students of critical and independent thought and the capacity for learning throughout life.
- Provider Course Accreditation Standard 1.3 - The content of the course of study is drawn from a substantial, coherent and current body of knowledge and scholarship in one or more academic disciplines and includes the study of relevant theoretical frameworks and research findings.
- Provider Course Accreditation Standard 1.7 - Course documentation shows that the course of study has an overall coherence and is designed to provide appropriate engagement by students in intellectual inquiry consistent with the nature and level of the units being taught and the expected learning outcomes of the course of study.

TEQSA’s approach to course accreditation and re-accreditation is set out in the Course accreditation and re-accreditation application guide for registered providers available at [http://www.teqsa.gov.au/sites/default/files/CourseAccredandReaccred\\_ProcessGuidev2.0.pdf](http://www.teqsa.gov.au/sites/default/files/CourseAccredandReaccred_ProcessGuidev2.0.pdf).

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