



SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT

University of Queensland (UQ) – response to admissions irregularities May 2012

Summary

1. On 10 May 2012 TEQSA advised UQ that after completing its enquiries in relation to admission irregularities at UQ, TEQSA was satisfied with the actions taken by UQ to revise its policies and procedures. TEQSA requested a copy of the results of UQ's review of the management and handling of official misconduct and complaints and a copy of the results of the culture survey once both are completed. TEQSA also suggested further clarifications of the admission rules to ensure a record of decisions is made in relation to each special admission.
2. TEQSA considered that given the substantial public interest in these issues, it was appropriate for TEQSA to make a public statement confirming that TEQSA was satisfied with the actions taken by the University to revise its special admissions policies and processes.

Background

3. TEQSA requested information from UQ about the nature and extent of the irregularities, the relevant policies and procedures in operation at the time the irregularities occurred and the actions taken by UQ in response to the admissions irregularities. UQ provided detailed and comprehensive responses which addressed each of these requests.
4. TEQSA's request for information and analysis of the available information was based on the following provisions of the Threshold Standards:
 - a. *Provider Registration Standard 3.1*: The higher education provider has a corporate governing body that has responsibility for oversight of all of the higher education provider's higher education operations, including conferral of its higher education awards, and to which management is accountable.

- b. *Provider Registration Standard 3.5:* The higher education provider's corporate governing body ensures that all delegations (including financial, academic and managerial) are appropriate, documented, observed and regularly reviewed.
- c. *Provider Registration Standard 3.8:* The higher education provider's corporate and academic governance arrangements demonstrate:
 - the effective development, implementation and review of policies for all aspects of the higher education provider's academic activities including delivery of the higher education provider's courses of study by other entities;
 - the maintenance of academic standards, with appropriate mechanisms for external input, in accordance with international conventions for good academic practice; and
 - effective quality assurance arrangements for all the higher education provider's higher education operations, encompassing systematic monitoring, review and improvement.
- d. *Provider Registration Standard 5.4:* The higher education provider's administrative systems, policies, procedures and practices ensure the effective management of its higher education operations.
- e. *Provider Course Accreditation Standard 3.4:* Decisions on the admission of students are made by appropriately qualified personnel under delegated authority.

Regulatory Issues

- 5. The key concerns which were identified from the available information were:
 - a. A lack of clarity over the circumstances in which special admissions for students who do not meet all of the requirements for automatic offers may be given a "forced offer" by the University (**Provider Registration Standard 3.5**) (**Provider Course Accreditation Standard 3.4**).
 - b. The rigor of governance and oversight arrangements for the making of forced offers, including scholarship offers and arrangements regarding consultation final approval and record-keeping requirements (**Provider Registration Standard 3.8**).

- c. The extent to which key staff were aware of, and operated within, the policies and processes for special admissions decisions across the University (**Provider Registration Standard 5.4**).

Evidence considered

6. TEQSA considered the following actions taken by UQ to address the concerns regarding the admission irregularities:
 - a. UQ initiated and has completed a **Review of Admissions Rules and Processes**. This review led to changes to UQ's admissions rules, in particular those relating to the following admission rules and processes.
 - *Admission Rule 4.5.1* (pre-2012) which was the rule intended to be the mechanism by which the President of the Academic Board was able to authorise offers to students who have successfully appealed an admission decision under Admissions Rule 4.6, has now been updated to make the application of the rule more transparent. It has been repositioned more logically under Admission Rule 4.6 – Admission Appeals.
 - *Admission Rule 4.5 - Special Admission* has been redrafted to focus on approved special admission schemes.
 - *Admission Rule 4.6 – Admissions Appeals* has further clarified the exceptional circumstances that might warrant the application of the rules 4.6 and 4.9.
 - *Admission Rule 4.9 - Power to Waive Compliance* was clarified to mandate that such a waiver by the Vice-Chancellor can be approved only following consultation with both the Executive Dean (not to be delegated) and the President of the Academic Board.

These rule changes were all approved by the UQ Senate for the 2012 admissions period. Further, UQ will undertake an annual review and report on all forced offers made under the Admissions Rules and administration of admissions. This annual report will include advice on special admission schemes; appeals upheld and waiver of compliance with rules and the approval authority.

- b. A **Special Admissions Sub-Committee** of the Committee of Academic Programs has been established to oversee and monitor the outcomes of all special admissions programs and non-standard admissions.

- c. A **Review of the Management and Handling of Official Misconduct and Complaints** has been established to review the management and handling of official misconduct and complaints across the University.
- d. A **University-Wide Culture Survey** is currently being conducted, the purpose of which is to inform the development of relevant leadership and capacity-building programs within the University.

Analysis

- 7. The measures outlined in a. and b. above address Provider Registration Standards 3.1, 3.5 and 3.8 and Provider Course Accreditation Standard 3.4. They provide clarity over the circumstances in which special admissions for students who do not meet all of the requirements for automatic offers may be given a “forced offer” by the University.
- 8. The rigor of governance and oversight arrangements for the making of forced offers is enhanced through the establishment of the Special Admissions Sub-Committee outlined in b. above, addressing Provider Registration Standards 3.1 and 3.5.
- 9. Concerns over Provider Registration Standards 3.8 and 4.8 are addressed by the Review of the Management and Handling of Official Misconduct and Complaints referred to in c.
- 10. The University Wide Cultural Survey addresses issues relating to Provider Registration Standard 3.8 and 5.4.

Conclusion

- 11. TEQSA considered the university’s response in light of the Threshold Standards and the regulatory principles of necessity, risk and proportionality in Part 2 of the TEQSA Act.
- 12. TEQSA considered there was a low risk of continued non-compliance as the university had already been impacted in terms of reputation and there was a high level of awareness of and responsiveness to the issues at University senior executive level. TEQSA was satisfied that UQ’s response to TEQSA’s request for information was prompt, thorough and detailed. TEQSA considered the decision that no further investigation or inquiry was necessary in the light of the university’s management of the consequent remedial actions being proportionate to the risk.