

Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education Portfolio
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearing 2012-13
17 October 2012

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: TERTIARY EDUCATION QUALITY AND STANDARDS
AGENCY (TEQSA)

TOPIC: Reporting and Regulatory requirements

REFERENCE: Written Question –Senator Mason

QUESTION No.: SI-56

Senator MASON – How many representations from the stakeholders have you received regarding TEQSA's policies and practices relating to reporting and regulatory requirements? In how many instances these representations resulted in the change of TEQSA's policies and practices (please provide a list)? In how many instances TEQSA rejected the stakeholders' representations and decided to continue its policies and practices (please provide a list, including the reasons for each decision)?

ANSWER

Given the nature of TEQSA's ongoing consultations with stakeholders, it is not possible to identify distinct formal representations that were not linked to communications about active processes. TEQSA has actively and openly engaged with the higher education sector about its policies and processes through a wide range of formal and informal consultations, briefings, correspondence, presentations and meetings. All feedback provided to TEQSA is carefully considered. This ongoing dialogue ensures that TEQSA is continually reviewing, streamlining and improving its processes.

TEQSA has received feedback on a number of major processes to date and TEQSA's responses are outlined below.

Provider Information Request

On 8 May 2012, TEQSA released a Consultation Paper on a data collection proposal. There were 73 submissions received, out of 180 invitations to submit a response. TEQSA also held meetings with three peak bodies: Universities Australia, Australian Council for Private Education & Training and the Council of Private Higher Education.

TEQSA subsequently made significant changes to scale back the scope of the data collection request, including the decision that TEQSA would not seek information from providers that has already been supplied to the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education via the Higher Education Information Management System (HEIMS).

Specifically, the 2012 Provider Information Request no longer requires:

- New identifiers
- Casual staff records from universities
- Salary banding where award classification available
- Historical /forward finance projection template.

Further, the 2012 Provider Information Request now incorporates:

- Existing internal reports (if available) of the outcomes and process of student surveys (instead of extensive survey data)
- One year student load summary table (reduced from three years)
- One year staff data (reduced from two years)
- Less data (fewer components, e.g. the field of qualification and field of teaching for staff will not be included in 2012).

Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS)

In August 2012, TEQSA received correspondence from Professor Frederick Hilmer, Chair of the Group of Eight Universities, about TEQSA's approach to data collection (discussed above) and the need to minimise the administrative burden on universities. In this letter, Professor Hilmer requested that the CRICOS process be simplified and approval times reduced.

In response, TEQSA advised that it had revised and simplified the process for self-accrediting institutions to apply to add a course of study on CRICOS. Further, in an attempt to ensure that dual-sector providers were not over-burdened by having two regulators, ASQA and TEQSA introduced streamlined administrative processes for dealing with CRICOS applications for dual-sector providers. A 'clearing house' model has been implemented by ASQA and TEQSA for the management of CRICOS regulatory matters to ensure that providers are only required to deal with one regulator (TEQSA), with both regulators exercising their regulatory responsibilities for their respective sectors behind the scenes.

On 2 October 2012, Universities Australia made representations to TEQSA that all courses and specialisation titles should not need to be registered separately on CRICOS on the basis that this is an administrative burden. TEQSA is currently considering this issue.

TEQSA, the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIISRTE) and the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) are collaboratively reviewing all CRICOS processes with a view to further streamlining regulatory processes where appropriate.

National ELT (English Language Teaching) Accreditation Scheme (NEAS)

Representatives from the National ELT Accreditation Scheme met with TEQSA on 13 August 2012 to discuss NEAS' role in relation to TEQSA. NEAS also indicated that there were a significant number of providers that were unclear about the role of NEAS in relation to registration on CRICOS. TEQSA responded by publishing a statement on the TEQSA website, clarifying that providers are not required to have NEAS accreditation in order to be registered by TEQSA on CRICOS. TEQSA will, however, have regard to NEAS accreditation of a provider when assessing a provider's registration.

Course materials required for course accreditation

On 17 September 2012, Holmesglenn Institute (a provider of vocational and higher education in Victoria) wrote to TEQSA expressing concern that the curriculum materials required for course accreditation are unclear and onerous. TEQSA has responded that consideration of a sample of curriculum materials is necessary for TEQSA to assess the quality of a course of study and be assured the provider has the necessary expertise to develop such materials. TEQSA is currently considering options to address concerns that the requirements are onerous.