



INDEPENDENT
HIGHER EDUCATION
AUSTRALIA

IHEA SUBMISSION

CONSULTATION ON TERTIARY EDUCATION QUALITY AND STANDARDS AGENCY'S (TEQSA) REVISED SERVICE CHARTER

18 May 2024

IHEA Submission

Consultation on a Revised Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency's (TEQSA) Service Charter

Independent Higher Education Australia appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on TEQSA's revised Service Charter and consultation paper, for which submissions are due by 5pm (AEST) 20 May 2024.

As part of IHEA's feedback, we would like to draw your attention to the letter of 1 November 2023 from the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of IHEA, the Hon. Dr Peter Hendy to acting CEO of TEQSA, Dr Mary Russell, regarding the Service Charter and TEQSA fees. The letter is attached and will also be drawn upon throughout this submission.

1. Are expectations for all key stakeholder groups captured within the Service Charter? If not, which ones are missing and what kind of information would you like to see included for them in this Service Charter?

As per the response to question three, IHEA believes that the Service Charter should reflect the fact that higher education providers are not homogeneous, but are diverse institutions that have different business models, are of differing sizes and have varying resources.

2. What, in your opinion, would constitute a 'successful' service delivery from TEQSA? Is this reflected in the Service Charter? If not, how do you suggest it be reflected?

Successful service delivery from TEQSA involves the development, implementation and review of a comprehensive Service Charter that focuses on their customers' needs. IHEA acknowledges the revised Service Charter developed by TEQSA and has identified some further opportunities to enhance the charter, which are outlined in this submission. In summary the Service Charter should:

- Include service offerings and timeframes to cover all of its interactions with higher education providers. There is scope for the list of issues to be expanded to include, for example, provider category changes.
- The Service Charter should be reviewed annually and seek to enhance the benchmarks to improve TEQSA's service.
- TEQSA'S performance against the Service Charter should be published, including details of the mean time to respond to a request/make a decision, not just whether the overarching benchmark has been met.
- TEQSA's Service Charter should be considered alongside its Stakeholder Engagement Strategy to ensure consistency, learnings and improvements across both strategies.
- TEQSA's performance and service offerings must keep pace with any fee increases. It is not sustainable for providers to absorb the impact of year-on-year fee increases without a commensurate increase in TEQSA's service.

Some specific issues are discussed in more detail below.

TEQSA's Statutory Timeframes

In the letter of 1 November 2023, IHEA proposed including in the Service Charter TEQSA's legislative timeframes for regulatory decisions about applications for registration and course accreditation. IHEA welcomes this inclusion at Appendix B of the Service Charter, which will provide confidence to stakeholders, including independent providers, that statutory requirements regarding decisions undertaken by TEQSA are paramount to its effective and transparent operations. These timeframes should also explicitly identify re-registration of a provider and re-accreditation of a course.

However, we do retain concerns over some of the statutory timeframes and seek that they be reviewed as part of TEQSA's review of its service and the Service Charter.

Need for timeframes for all activities

IHEA believes the Service Charter should include timeframes for all scenarios and categories in which TEQSA is responding to requests from, interactions with and decisions impacting higher education providers. This is currently not the case.

For example, there is currently no timeframe in which TEQSA needs to respond to a provider with respect to provider category change requests. Further, we understand that responses to provider category changes are not included within the provider registration/reregistration category. As such, and consistent with TEQSA's commitment to continuous improvement, it is recommended that TEQSA develop timeframes for responding to these requests. In the absence of a timeframe such requests have the potential to go on for many years. We recommend that a 9 month timeframe, with capacity for a 9 month extension should apply to provider category requests to provide certainty to the applicant. This means that the timeframes associated with registration/re-registration of a provider should also specifically apply to provider category changes. This should also be reflected in the Service Charter.

Further, there may be circumstances where TEQSA and a provider may agree to an arrangement under a possible Voluntary Undertaking that providers may perform from time to time. This will be associated with Voluntary Undertaking monitoring, for which the provider pays a fee to TEQSA. However, there is no timeframe in place for responses to requests regarding this specific issue. We believe TEQSA's Service Charter should also capture this in its service standards and it is recommended that 3 months be designated as the timeframe so that there is clarity and transparency.

TEQSA's Service Standards

The Service Charter also articulates the targets in which TEQSA will respond to enquiries and complaints, as outlined below:

- 80 per cent of general email enquiries responded to in five business days.
- 80 per cent of enquiries through the website are responded to in five business days, with 90 per cent in ten business days.
- 70 per cent of telephone calls answered on the spot (this has been reduced from 80 per cent).
- A response within two business days acknowledging receipt of a complaint against TEQSA (including advice about a substantive response). 90 per cent of complaints are provided a substantive response within 90 days

To support TEQSA in its stated ambition to continuously improve and to achieve best practice service standards, we would recommend that these targets be updated so that greater than 95 per cent of all communication or enquiries, whether received through the web, email or telephone, are responded to within five business days. We are concerned that the service standard for answering of telephone calls on the spot has been reduced from 80 per cent to 70 per cent. It is extremely disappointing that this has been reduced. TEQSA should be improving and enhancing its service standards and the increased fees independent higher education providers are paying should translate into more efficient and timely interactions with TEQSA. Additionally, we recommend that 100 per cent of complaints to TEQSA should be substantively resolved within 90 days from the date the complaint is received.

Continuous Improvement and Best Practice

We have previously communicated our concern about the frequency and extent of cost recovery fee increases, which give the appearance of an efficiency dividend for Government, rather than increases to ensure improved and streamlined processes and outcomes. If in fact it is an efficiency dividend, we would welcome that being translated into improved timeframes for making decisions and updating customer service standards for enquiries

and complaints. These targets, in the context of increased fees will ensure that TEQSA is providing the necessary assurances that it will provide a commensurate level of service, thereby enhancing trust and credibility in the sector. This should occur as part of an annual review of the Service Charter.

While we understand that the statutory timeframes are upper limits, they do appear to lack nuance and flexibility to be able to account for the different levels of effort that the processes may require. We note that, as articulated in the TEQSA Annual Report 2022–23, which was tabled in Parliament on 20 October 2023, the median processing time in 2022–23 for provider registration dropped by 5.67 per cent, re–registration dropped by 34.58 per cent and course accreditation (all providers) dropped by 11.6 per cent and course re–accreditation dropped by 28.7 per cent. The Annual Report also states that 100 per cent of decisions on course accreditation applications were made within legislative deadlines (9 months).

It is worth noting that the statutory timeframes for registration of a provider or for accreditation of a course, and their respective renewals, are exactly the same. It is surprising and concerning that these timeframes are identical, and that, for example, TEQSA has up to 9 months to make a decision on the registration of a provider and the accreditation of a single, potentially short course, to be delivered by a registered provider. This seems anomalous and requires further understanding and transparency about each of the processes.

It is important for TEQSA to identify the actual processing times and to distinguish between the different types of applications or courses. On page 9 of the ‘Cost Recovery Implementation Statement (CRIS): Cost recovery for quality and regulation of higher education, September 2022’, CRIS, it states that the substantive assessment (after the successful preliminary assessment process) of the first course in a new area of study for a registered provider, or for a replacement for a course previously accredited, involves 21.5 days of effort. While this is after the preliminary assessment, it is significantly less than the statutory limit of 9 months in which TEQSA must make a decision from the date of receipt of an application for a course of study to be accredited [Section 49(2a) of TEQSA Act].

We believe that TEQSA needs to distinguish between the actual time it takes to assess and notify applicants of decisions for different categories versus upper, statutory timeframes. This would be an important measure of its service performance to independent providers and show that TEQSA is committed to delivering its best service standards, and not just relying on meeting potentially lengthy and broadly categorised statutory timelines. As such, we strongly recommend that TEQSA commit to publishing this information.

What you can expect from us

In this section, we believe in addition to the information provided, it should also reflect that TEQSA will be:

- Responsive in resolving issues that are raised.
- Not only meet its legal and customer service obligations and requirements but aim to resolve them as expeditiously as possible.
- Minimise the impost and regulatory burden on higher education providers.

These are key values and approaches that will be critical in engaging with independent higher education providers.

Evaluation of the Service Charter

TEQSA's performance against the Service Charter should be assessed annually and made public, including on TEQSA's website and in its annual report. In addition to outlining the extent to which TEQSA meets its legislative requirements and service standards, it should also outline the mean time it takes for TEQSA to respond to a request/make a decision.

3. Are there specific needs or considerations related to diversity that should be addressed in the Service Charter that are currently not?

The Service Charter should reflect that in engaging with higher education providers it will give appropriate consideration to the diversity of providers, their business models and the resources at their disposal.

In doing so, TEQSA not only demonstrates their support for a diverse higher education sector and that it is not a regulator that takes a "one size fits all" approach. This is particularly important for small to medium sized operations and to mitigate the regulatory burden and impost that can take away from their efforts to deliver high quality education.

Such an approach should also be considered and reflected when reviewing the fees that TEQSA charges providers.

4. Under the heading 'What we expect from you', what other information, if any, should be included about stakeholder responsibilities when engaging with our service?

The expectations outlined in 'what we expect from you' are comprehensive and IHEA has nothing further to add at this time. We would note that expectations on stakeholders and expectations on TEQSA should be considered alongside each other.

Who We Are

Independent Higher Education Australia Ltd. (IHEA) is a peak body established in 2001 to represent Australian independent (private sector) higher education institutions. Our membership spans independent universities, university colleges and other institutes of higher education, all of which are registered higher education providers accredited by the national higher education regulator, TEQSA or associate members seeking registration.

Our Vision is that: students, domestic and international, have open and equitable access to world class independent higher education in Australia, built on the foundations of equity, choice, and diversity.

Our Mission is to represent independent higher education and promote recognition and respect of independent providers as they contribute to Australian education, the Australian economy, and to society in general. We achieve this by promoting continuous improvement of academic and quality standards within member institutions, by advocating equity for their staff and students, and by delivering services that further strengthen independent providers' reputations as innovative, sustainable, and responsive to the needs of industry and other relevant stakeholders in both higher education and vocational education and training. IHEA's commitment is to excellence, productivity and growth in independent higher education being delivered through a trusted Australian education system underpinned by equity, choice, and diversity.

IHEA members have different missions, scales, and course offerings across the full AQF range (Diplomas to Doctorates). Members comprise:

- Four private universities (Bond University, Torrens University, University of Divinity, Avondale University).
- Five University Colleges (Alphacrucis University College, Moore Theological College, Australian College of Theology, Sydney College of Divinity and SAE Institute).
- Seventy four not-for-profit and for-profit institutions of Higher Education; and related corporate entities.

IHEA members teach approximately 74 percent of the students in the independent sector (i.e., more than 130,000 students) and educate students in a range of disciplines, including law, agricultural science, architecture, business, accounting, tourism and hospitality, education, health sciences, theology, creative arts, information technology, and social sciences.

IHEA holds a unique position in higher education as a representative peak body of higher education providers. Membership in IHEA is only open to providers registered with the Australian regulator –TEQSA. However, some IHEA members are dual and multi-sector providers who also deliver VET and/or English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) courses.

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ATTACHMENT TO IHEA SUBMISSION



Dr Mary Russell
Acting Chief Executive Officer
Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency
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(mary.russell@teqsa.gov.au)

Dear Dr Russell

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the recent survey to better understand stakeholders' expectations of the service that the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) provides. I note that TEQSA will use the insights gained to review and update its Service Charter.

On behalf of Independent Higher Education Australia (IHEA), I am providing feedback to support this review.

Cost Recovery of Fees

First and foremost, the independent education sector has concerns about the significant fee increases proposed by TEQSA for a range of its functions from 1 January 2024. As per the 'TEQSA fees and charges consultation, August 2023', while we note that some fees are being reduced, many fees that are to be increased are in key categories that will impact independent providers. These include Initial Registration (preliminary and substantive assessment) and Registration Renewal (excluding self-accreditation), as well as all of the substantive categories that relate to Course Accreditation and Renewal of Course Accreditation. We are concerned about the deleterious impact this may have on the operations of independent providers whose mission is to deliver quality higher education courses.

We note that TEQSA's justification for increasing the fees is to make an adjustment to reflect the actual cost to deliver its regulatory activity following TEQSA's review of the 2022 version of the Cost Recovery Implementation Statement (CRIS).

As part of TEQSA's argument, the CRIS ('Cost Recovery Implementation Statement: Cost recovery for quality and regulation of higher education, September 2022') steps out the actual days it takes TEQSA from receipt of an application until decision and Commission hearings/preparation for notification/notification for a number of these processes, specifically:

- Provider Registration Renewal Process – Core Assessment (fee increasing by \$2,400 from existing fee of \$62,400) 43 days
- Provider Registration Renewal Process – Core Plus Assessment (fee increasing by \$4,600 from existing fee of 106,700) 64 days

- Course Accreditation – Substantive – First Course (increasing by \$1000 from existing fee of \$18,000 for a registered provider and \$2,700 from \$42,200 for a proposed provider) 21.5 days

This raises an important issue for independent providers with respect to timeframes, including reconciling the days of actual assessment and decision making against TEQSA's statutory timeframes and an imperative for any fee increases to be accompanied by a commensurate increase in TEQSA's performance with respect to timeframes.

TEQSA's Statutory Timeframes

As such, we would like to draw your attention to Section 3 of the recent survey, which focuses on updating the Service Charter. TEQSA's Service Charter denotes its commitment under the TEQSA Act 2011 to its statutory timeframes in which TEQSA must review or respond to an application upon its receipt.

However, currently, these legislated deadlines are not specified in the Service Charter. We would strongly recommend that these timeframes are specified in the Service Charter, which will make it easier and simpler for stakeholders to understand. In doing so, TEQSA will also be able to demonstrate its transparency and commitment to independent providers about meeting its service obligations.

There are a number of statutory timeframes in the TEQSA Act which stipulate the upper time limits for TEQSA to make decisions and notify providers.

Below are specific timeframes in relation to applications from a higher education institution to seek registration and re-registration of a provider, which are summarised from the TEQSA Act:

- TEQSA must advise the applicant within 30 days of an application being made for registration in a particular category contains sufficient information and, if not, if further information is required [Section 19].
- TEQSA must make a decision on the application within 9 months of receiving it [Section 21(2)(a)].
- If TEQSA determines a longer period for decision, it cannot exceed a further 9 months [Section 21(3)].
- TEQSA must determine a longer period for decision not later than 6 weeks before the end of the initial 9 months [Section 21(4)].
- TEQSA must notify the applicant in writing of the determination of a longer period within 7 days of making the determination [Section 21(5)].
- The period for which the applicant is registered must not exceed 7 years [Section 21(6)].
- If a decision is not made within the applicable period, TEQSA is taken to have rejected the application [Section 21(7)].
- TEQSA must notify the applicant of its decision to grant or reject an application for registration within 30 days of its decision [Section 22].
- An applicant's registration commences on the day specified in the notice given under section 22 and ends at the end of the period specified in the most recent notice given under section 22 or 37 [Section 23(1)].
- TEQSA must notify a provider of a decision to impose, vary or revoke a condition within 30 days of making a decision under subsection 53(1), (2) or (3) [Section 54]

Also of interest to independent higher education providers are the following statutory timeframes in which TEQSA is required to make decisions and notify providers on course accreditation and renewal (which are also summarised from the TEQSA Act):

- TEQSA must advise the applicant within 30 days of an application being made whether the application for a course of study to be accredited contains sufficient information and, if not, if further information is required [Section 47(1)].
- TEQSA must make a decision on an application within 9 months of receiving it [Section 49(2a)].
- If TEQSA determines a longer period for decision, it cannot exceed a further 9 months [Section 49(3)].
- TEQSA must determine a longer period for decision not later than 6 weeks before the end of the initial 9 months [Section 49(4)].
- TEQSA must notify the applicant in writing of the determination of a longer period within 7 days of making the determination [Section 49(5)].
- The period for which the course of study is accredited to a registered higher education provider must not exceed 7 years [Section 49(6)].
- TEQSA must notify the applicant of its decision to grant or reject an application for registration within 30 days of its decision [Section 50].
- Accreditation of a course of study commences on the first day of the period in the notice given under section 50 and ends at the end of the period specified in the most recent notice given under section 50 or 57 [Section 51].

Best Practice

We have drawn these statutory timeframes to your attention because it is apparent that they are the exactly the same whether for registration of a provider OR for accreditation of a course, and their respective renewals. It is surprising and concerning that these timeframes are identical, and that, for example, TEQSA has up to 9 months to make a decision on the registration of a provider and the accreditation of a single, potentially short course, to be delivered by a registered provider.

While we understand that these timeframes are upper limits, they do appear to lack nuance and flexibility to be able to account for the different levels of effort that the processes may require. We note that, as articulated in the TEQSA Annual Report 2022–23, which was tabled in Parliament on 20 October 2023, the median processing time in 2022–23 for provider registration dropped by 5.67 per cent, re–registration dropped by 34.58 per cent and course accreditation (all providers) dropped by 11.6 per cent and course re–accreditation dropped by 28.7 per cent. The Annual Report also states that 100 per cent of decisions on course accreditation applications were made within legislative deadlines (9 months).

While these statistics are positive statistics, they do not identify the actual processing times nor do they necessarily distinguish between the different types of applications or course – it is clear that course accreditation encompasses all providers. Further, on page 9 of the CRIS, it states that the substantive assessment (after the successful preliminary assessment process) of the first course in a new area of study for a registered provider, or for a replacement for a course previously accredited, involves 21.5 days of effort. While this is after the preliminary assessment, it is significantly less than the statutory limit of 9 months in which TEQSA must make a decision from the date of receipt of an application for a course of study to be accredited [Section 49(2a) of TEQSA Act]. We think that TEQSA need to distinguish the actual time it takes to assess and notify applicants of decisions for different categories versus upper, statutory timeframes. This would be an important measure of its service performance to independent providers and show that TEQSA is committed to delivering its best service

standards, and not just relying on meeting potentially lengthy and broadly categorised statutory timelines. As such, we strongly recommend that TEQSA commit to publishing this information.

We are also consulting within our membership about these timeframes and will provide further advice and feedback to TEQSA, in due course.

Customer Service Standards

Notwithstanding, and as a critical first step in the interests of transparency and accountability, we strongly advocate the inclusion of TEQSA's legislated timeframes within the revised Service Charter. This will instil confidence that legislative requirements regarding decisions undertaken by TEQSA are paramount to its effective and transparent operations and to provide some certainty for independent providers.

Further, the current Service Charter also includes targets in which TEQSA will respond to enquiries and complaints, as outlined below:

- 80 percent of telephone calls answered on the spot.
- 80 percent of web enquiries responded to in five business days.
- A response within two business days acknowledging receipt of a complaint against TEQSA (including advice about a substantive response).

We would recommend that these targets be updated so that greater than 95 per cent of all communication/enquiries, whether received through the web, email or telephone, are responded to within five business days. Additionally, we recommend that complaints to TEQSA should be substantively resolved within 90 days from the date the complaint is received.

We would re-iterate our concern about the cost recovery fee increases and their appearance as an efficiency dividend for Government, rather than increases to ensure improved and streamlined processes and outcomes. If in fact it is an efficiency dividend, we would welcome that being translated into TEQSA's timeframes for making decisions and updating customer service standards for enquiries and complaints. These targets, in the context of increased fees, will ensure that TEQSA is providing the necessary assurances that it will provide a commensurate level of service, thereby enhancing trust and credibility in the sector.

If you would like to discuss further, please contact Dr James Hart, Policy and Research Manager, on 0418 694 680 or by email james.hart@ihea.edu.au.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide this important feedback.

Yours sincerely,



The Hon. Dr Peter Hendy
Chief Executive Officer
Independent Higher Education Australia

1 November 2023

APPENDIX TO IHEA SUBMISSION



Australian Government

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency

TEQSA revised Service Charter

TEQSA consultation paper, April 2024

TEQSA

The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) is committed to continuous improvement and ensuring quality standards of service are delivered for the Australian public.

Our Service Charter sets out how TEQSA expects it will provide its service to the Australian public.

Why we're seeking your feedback

As part of our ongoing efforts to provide a quality service, we commenced the first phase of updating our Service Charter in August 2023 with a survey circulated to TEQSA stakeholders.

This feedback has helped to inform the development of the second phase of our update – a revised Service Charter (see below on page 4) that we are sharing for further consultation.

TEQSA will consider all views when developing the updated version of the charter to be adopted later this year. Feedback gathered from this current consultation may also assist us in our continuous monitoring and review to enhance our service into the future.

In parallel to this consultation, TEQSA has opened a consultation process for a draft stakeholder engagement strategy. You can find out more about the stakeholder engagement strategy, and provide your feedback during the consultation period, at teqsa.gov.au/consultation.

Feedback received during phase 1 consultation

We received survey feedback from 46 stakeholders representing peak bodies, registered providers, professional and academic staff, students and an overseas higher education regulator/quality assurance agency.

The feedback helped to inform proposed changes in the revised Service Charter, including:

- Relevant legislated deadlines, to provide transparency of TEQSA's obligations
- Clarification of expectations for different stakeholder groups
- Greater details about reasonable response timeframes for various interactions
- More focus on communicating to stakeholders via established TEQSA channels

A summary of participants' survey feedback is published at teqsa.gov.au/ServiceCharterReview.

Feedback being sought during phase 2 consultation

In considering the revised Service Charter (see below on page 4), we ask for your feedback on the following:

1. Are expectations for all key stakeholder groups captured within the Service Charter? If not, which ones are missing and what kind of information would you like to see included for them in this Service Charter?
2. What, in your opinion, would constitute a 'successful' service delivery from TEQSA? Is this reflected in the Service Charter? If not, how do you suggest it be reflected?
3. Are there specific needs or considerations related to diversity that should be addressed in the Service Charter that are currently not?
4. Under the heading 'What we expect from you', what other information, if any, should be included about stakeholder responsibilities when engaging with our service?

Consultation timelines



After feedback closes

TEQSA will consider all submissions when feedback closes and develop a final Service Charter for adoption. We will also welcome ongoing sector feedback to inform our future service levels.

We will publish the updated Service Charter on our website and directly inform all stakeholders of this updated version through TEQSA's communication channels including the monthly e-News and our social media platforms.

Questions?

Our webpage teqsa.gov.au/ServiceCharterReview contains information about this consultation.

If you have any further questions, you can email us at standards@teqsa.gov.au.

TEQSA Service Charter

CONSULTATION DRAFT – UPDATED 4 APRIL 2024

The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) is Australia's independent, national regulatory and quality assurance agency for higher education.

Our work protects and enhances the integrity, quality and reputation of Australian higher education to provide public confidence in the excellence of Australia's higher education sector.

Who is this Service Charter for?

This Service Charter sets out our commitment to everyone who deals with us.

This includes:

- higher education providers and their staff (current, prospective and past),
- students at Australian higher education providers (current, prospective and past),
- members of the public, employers, Commonwealth and state/territory government agencies,
- peak bodies which advocate on behalf of members in the sector we regulate, and
- professional accreditation bodies.

Please refer to our [Stakeholder Engagement Strategy](#) and [Compliance and Enforcement Policy](#) for information about our approach to stakeholder management and how we conduct our compliance activities.

What you can expect from us

Whenever you contact us, you can expect that we will respond to you in a courteous, respectful and timely way. Our main aim is to help you with your enquiry. We will take all reasonable steps to provide you with a good quality service.

When dealing with TEQSA, you can expect we will:

- identify the person or team you are engaging with,
- offer prompt, honest and helpful service,
- do the best we can to help resolve your issue, or refer you to an organisation that can,

- provide you with an inclusive and accessible service, recognising different people will have different needs when engaging with us,
- issue correspondence with contact details,
- as appropriate, provide relevant information, rather than advice, to ensure our impartiality,
- we will explain, when we make a request for information or make a regulatory decision, why we have asked for the information or made the decision,
- understand that if you are raising a concern or complaint with TEQSA, that the concern or complaint may personally impact on you,
- meet our legal obligations to protect your personal information (for information about our approach to privacy, see our [Privacy page](#)),
- apologise to you if we fall short of the standards in this Service Charter.

We expect your interaction with our staff will provide you with a greater understanding of TEQSA's work and approaches to regulation and quality assurance. We outline more detail about registered and prospective providers, students and people lodging a complaint or concern about a registered provider in Appendix A on page 6.

What we expect from you

To help us provide you with a high level of service we ask that you:

- treat our staff with courtesy and respect,
- allow us sufficient time to respond to your requests,
- give us accurate and complete information,
- contact us if you believe we have made an error or acted inappropriately, and you wish to make a complaint.

In addition to the above, when contacting TEQSA as a registered provider we ask that you:

- fulfil your regulatory, financial and other obligations to TEQSA within stipulated timeframes,
- make good quality applications to TEQSA and are responsive to our requests for information. Poor quality applications or a lack of responsiveness impacts the time it takes to complete our regulatory activities,
- lodge applications to remove a condition of registration or accreditation by 30 September each year. This is to enable TEQSA enough time to assess your request before the condition carries over to the following year and potentially impacts your annual provider charge
- have your documentation or reference numbers ready when you contact us.

Our values and behaviours

Our values describe who we are as a regulator, guiding how we conduct ourselves and work with our stakeholders to enact our regulatory authority.

Along with other guiding statements such as our regulatory principles, policies and guidance notes, our values enable our stakeholders to understand what they can expect when interacting with us.

Our values reflect the [Australian Public Sector \(APS\) Values and Code of Conduct](#) and, in practice, create a positive culture in which we can perform efficiently and effectively as the national higher education regulatory and quality assurance agency for the benefit of all Australians.

These values provide a foundation for best practice and support us in striving to continuously improve, to ensure we are well-positioned to serve students, providers and the wider community.

Our TEQSA values are:

- **Trust:** We have confidence in each other to do our best. We encourage open and honest conversations that focus on the issue not the person. We promote a supportive and safe workplace environment.
- **Respect:** We approach every situation with kindness, compassion and an open mindset. We value people, the range of views and experience they bring and the work they undertake.
- **Accountability:** We hold ourselves and each other accountable for our actions, how we work together and the quality of what we deliver. We gather feedback, reflect and act on opportunities for improvement.
- **Collaboration:** We draw on our collective strength by encouraging each other to contribute to the achievement of shared objectives. We provide context and information to help others succeed.



Our service standards

Our service standards have been developed in partnership with stakeholders and apply from 1 July 2024. These standards set out our targets in providing you a response in a courteous, respectful and timely way.

Contact or activity	Target
Contact via our website contact form	100% have receipt acknowledged within one business day 80% responded to in 5 business days 90% responded to in 10 business days
Telephone calls to enquiries line	70% answered on the spot 90% of missed calls that leave a message and contact number are called back within 2 business days
Complaints about TEQSA	Acknowledge the complaint and inform you about a substantive response within 2 business days
	90% of complaints are provided a substantive response within 90 days
Enquiries to TEQSA's online enquiry form, 1300 739 585 phone number or the enquiries@teqsa.gov.au email address	80% are responded to within 5 business days
Compliance assessments and investigations	Where a compliance assessment or investigation is underway, we will inform the provider at least once every 90 days on the progress of the assessment or investigation
Conditions of registrations or accreditation	TEQSA will annually review conditions of registration or accreditation to determine whether they should be retained or removed

Because regulatory assessments are complex and often require nuanced approaches in different situations, we have not set targets beyond the timeframes specified by legislation for these assessments. We will, however, set out indicative assessment times which we will report on our website. Where we are likely to exceed our median assessment times, we will inform you and explain why.

Separately, for information about the legislated timeframes we must meet in undertaking our regulatory activities please see Appendix B on page 8

Our commitment to continuous improvement

We are committed to monitoring, evaluating and year-on-year improving our performance against this charter, service standards and legislated timeframes.

In the context of an increased volume of applications over recent years, TEQSA is implementing digital enhancements and changes to our regulatory service model. This will further support TEQSA's regulatory operations to meet service standards by reducing manual processing and streamlining our interactions with regulated providers through the redesign of internal systems. It is our expectation that this Service Charter and our service standards will be further reviewed in 2026 once these changes take effect.

Alongside, and in support of, these investments in our systems and people, we will seek to optimise our assessment timeframes while maintaining quality. This is in recognition of the sensitivity of the higher education market and the impact delays in regulatory assessments may have on providers, as well as the importance of TEQSA providing an effective and efficient service.

We report on our performance against our service standards on our website.

How to provide feedback

We value feedback on the quality of our service and seek this in a number of ways, including:

- asking those who engage with us about their experience,
- having open communication channels,
- reviewing and analysing information from surveys and complaints.

We use the feedback we receive to continuously improve and publish information on how we are performing; to demonstrate our commitment to transparent management, accountability for results, and efficient and effective regulation which is best practice and supported by our cost recovery model.

Our service standards and charter have been developed in partnership with key stakeholders. We welcome your feedback on the effectiveness of this charter and the service we provide.

If you would like to offer us feedback on our service (positive, negative or otherwise) please:

- contact us via [our online enquiry form](#)
- call us on 1300 739 585 between 9:00am and 5:00pm AEST, Monday-Friday (excluding public holidays).

For more information, visit our [Contact us page](#).

[Further information about complaints about TEQSA can be found on our website.](#)

Appendix A

What you can expect from us as a:

Current higher education, ELICOS or Foundation Program providers

Your institution may have applications for registration, re-registration and course accreditation and re-accreditation assessed by TEQSA.

Applicants TEQSA approved for registration, may be registered to deliver:

- higher education under the [Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Act 2011](#) (TEQSA Act), and/or
- courses to overseas students under the [Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000](#) (ESOS Act) including English language (ELICOS) and Foundation Programs.

If your institution is registered to deliver higher education, it will be listed on the [National Register of Higher Education Providers](#) as required under the TEQSA Act.

If your institution is registered to deliver courses of study to overseas students, it will be registered on the [Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students](#) (CRICOS) under the ESOS Act.

As part of your relationship with TEQSA, it is likely that you will discuss matters regarding regulatory requirements with us, including:

- the assessment of your institution's application for renewal of registration under the TEQSA or ESOS Acts,
- the assessment of applications for course accreditation and renewal of course accreditation,
- material change notifications of matters that may impact on your institution's capacity to continue to comply with the [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#),
- requests for information for regulatory compliance and quality assessment purposes,
- your institution's ongoing compliance with both the TEQSA and/or ESOS Acts.

All registered higher education providers are provided with information about a contact point for questions about regulatory matters. Any regulatory queries should be directed to the contact point unless you have been informed otherwise.

If you are uncertain about the details of your contact point, you can [complete our online enquiry form](#) for it to be directed to the relevant team.

In order to answer your query accurately and fully, we may need to discuss our timeframe for responding to you. In doing this, we will always seek to be fair and reasonable.

You can expect that in addition to our general principles of good service, officers responding to you will seek to resolve your issues as quickly as possible or explain why this may take more time.

To assist us in providing you with a timely service, we ask that you:

- have your documentation or reference numbers ready when you contact us,
- fulfil your regulatory, financial, and other obligations to TEQSA within stipulated timeframes.

Prospective higher education, ELICOS or Foundation Program providers

If your institution is seeking to become a higher education provider, offer ELICOS or Foundation Program courses to overseas students, please view the [Application forms and support page](#) for more information about the registration and accreditation processes.

Overseas providers interested in delivering higher education in Australia can find more information from [our FAQs page](#).

As part of your relationship with TEQSA, it is likely that you will discuss matters regarding regulatory requirements with us, including:

- the assessment of your institution's application for registration under the TEQSA or ESOS Acts,
- the assessment of applications for course accreditation.

Students

If you have a general enquiry about the regulation or quality assurance of Australian higher education, you may find the information you need on our website. Our website has information about TEQSA and the legislation that we administer. It also has a specific section for students, which has information about how our work protects students undertaking, or proposing to undertake, Australian higher education. Find out more from the [Students section of our website](#).

If you cannot find the information you need on our website, you can [complete our online enquiry form](#).

We may need to discuss our response date with you depending on the complexity of your query. In doing this, we will always seek to be fair and reasonable.

Concerns about higher education, ELICOS or Foundation Program providers

We accept concerns about Australian higher education providers and other entities we regulate (providers of Foundation Programs, ELICOS providers and ESOS registered providers). We accept concerns to gather information that assists us in the regulation and quality assurance of the sector.

However, we can only accept certain types of concerns. Further details on the types of concerns we can accept is available from the [Concerns section of our website](#).

Appendix B

Timeframes for regulatory decisions

The [Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011 \(TEQSA Act\)](#) sets out requirements for the time that we take to make, and inform parties of, regulatory decisions about applications for registration and course accreditation. Timeframes applying to our work in making regulatory decisions are summarised below.

TEQSA's activity	TEQSA Act timeframe to complete activity
Preliminary assessment of an application for initial registration	TEQSA must inform the applicant within 30 days of an application being made for registration in a particular category whether the application is appropriate for that category and, if not, what category would be appropriate.
Deciding the outcome of an application for initial registration	TEQSA must decide on the application within 9 months of receiving payment of the substantive assessment application fee. If, consistent with the TEQSA Act, TEQSA is satisfied that, for reasons beyond its control, a decision on the application cannot be made within 9 months, a longer period that does not exceed a further 9 months, may be determined by TEQSA. The decision to extend the timeframe must be made by no later than 6 weeks before the end of the initial 9-month period.
Using a longer period to decide on an application for registration	TEQSA, within 7 days of deciding a longer period is needed to decide on an application for registration, must inform the applicant in writing.
Notifying an applicant for registration or re-registration of TEQSA's decision on the application	TEQSA, within 30 days of making its decision to grant or reject the application, must inform the applicant in writing.
Preliminary assessment of an application for course accreditation	TEQSA must inform the applicant within 30 days of an application being made whether the application for a course of study to be accredited contains sufficient information and, if not, if further information is required.

Deciding the outcome of an application for course accreditation	<p>TEQSA must decide on the application within 9 months of receiving payment of the substantive assessment application fee.</p> <p>If, consistent with the TEQSA Act, TEQSA is satisfied that, for reasons beyond its control, a decision on the application cannot be made within 9 months, a longer period that does not exceed a further 9 months, may be determined by TEQSA. The decision to extend the timeframe must be made by no later than 6 weeks before the end of the initial 9-month period.</p>
TEQSA's activity	TEQSA Act timeframe to complete activity
Using a longer period to decide on an application for course accreditation	TEQSA, within 7 days of deciding a longer period is needed to decide on an application for course accreditation, must inform the applicant in writing.
Notifying an applicant for course accreditation or re-accreditation of TEQSA's decision on the application	TEQSA must inform the applicant of its decision to grant or reject an application for course accreditation or course reaccreditation within 30 days of its decision.
Notifying providers about a decision to impose, vary or revoke a condition on a course accreditation or provider registration	TEQSA, within 30 days of making a decision to impose, vary or revoke a condition on a provider's registration or course accreditation, must inform the provider.
Complete internal review of decisions	TEQSA, within 90 days after receiving an application for review and payment of any applicable substantive fees, must make its decision on review of a reviewable decision.