

INQAAHE

April 2011

A NEW APPROACH TO QUALITY

ASSURANCE IN AUSTRALIA:

ESTABLISHING TEQSA

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# INTRODUCTION

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- 2008 Australian Government Review of Higher Education
- Major reform agenda with the aim to transform the scale, potential and quality of the nation's universities
- Two attainment targets:
  - by 2020 20% of higher education enrolments at the undergraduate level be of people from a low SES background
  - by 2025 40% of all 25 to 34 year olds will hold a qualification at bachelor level or above

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## REFORMS

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- Move to a more competitive market based system in 2012 – universities can enrol as many students as they wish and government funding will follow
- This will enable the sector to grow in response to demand from students and the needs of the community for more graduates
- It is anticipated that this will lead to:
  - an additional 50,000 students to commence university by 2013
  - produce an estimated 217,000 additional graduates by 2025

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## QUALITY ASSURANCE IN AN EXPANDING HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

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TEQSA

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- Risks to quality in a growing higher education system:
  - new providers
  - competition by providers for students
  - need for increased consumer protection
  - teaching and learning demands of a larger and more diverse body of students
- New quality and regulatory arrangements are being introduced to ensure student protection and to ensure Australia's reputation as a quality provider of tertiary education

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## A NEW APPROACH TO REGULATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

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TEQSA

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- It is in this context that the Australian Government is establishing the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA)
- TEQSA will be an independent body with powers to:
  - register providers
  - accredit courses of study
  - carry out evaluations of standards and performance
  - protect and assure the quality of international education
- Decision-making within the agency will be the responsibility of a five member Commission, including a Chief Commissioner who will also act as CEO of the agency

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# NATIONAL CONSISTENCY

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TEQSA



- TEQSA will build on the strong foundations of AUQA and State and Territory GAAs to bring together regulation and quality assurance in one agency
- It will reduce the number of regulatory bodies from nine to one
- Providers who had to deal with many regulatory agencies across jurisdictions will only have to deal with a single regulator
- As a national regulator TEQSA will have the ability to ensure consistency across all states and territories in Australia

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## MOVING TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

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TEQSA

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### CURRENT

- 9 Agencies and jurisdictions
- Mutual Recognition
- 5 year cycle
- Process can take up to 12 months
- Panel based review
- ESOS, GAA and AUQA process separate

### NEW

- 1 national regulatory agency
- Up to 7 year risk based cycle
- Average 4-6 month assessment
- Professional and peer review
- Process integrated regulatory process
- Whole-of-provider focus

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# A RISK BASED AND PROPORTIONATE APPROACH

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- TEQSA will adopt a *risk-based* and *proportionate* approach to regulation
- *Risk based*
  - Institutions will be assessed against a risk framework
  - Instead of a time-based auditing cycle, the timetable for re-registration or quality evaluation will be based on a risk assessment of the institution
- *Proportionate*
  - ‘Proportionate’ regulation means that institutions can expect that any action that will be taken in relation to a provider, or accreditation of a course of study, will be related to the level of risk that the matter poses
- This approach will allow TEQSA to focus its activities on new entrants to the system and higher risk providers, while ensuring that high quality providers will not be unnecessarily burdened



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# THREE PRINCIPLES FOR REGULATION

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TEQSA



- *Principle of regulatory necessity*
  - TEQSA must not burden the higher education provider any more than is reasonably necessary
- *Principle of reflecting risk*
  - In exercising its powers, TEQSA must have regard to a range of factors, including the provider's history of scholarship, teaching and research, its students' experiences, its financial status and capacity, and its history of compliance
- *Principle of proportionate regulation*
  - TEQSA must exercise its powers in proportion to any non-compliance, or the risk of future non-compliance, by the provider

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# THEMATIC REVIEWS

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- TEQSA will be able to focus on a specific area of risk within:
  - the sector
  - an institution
  - across a cohort of providers or courses
  - explore areas of concern
- The reviews will identify best practice and diagnose weaknesses
- They will be customised depending on the area of review
- The focus of the reviews will be on prevention and will provide guidance to TEQSA's regulatory work

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# HIGHER EDUCATION STANDARDS FRAMEWORK

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TEQSA

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- The need for clear, strong standards was raised in the Bradley Review and consultations with the sector
- Focus on outcomes and standards to ensure that students and the community can be confident about the quality of Australian qualifications
- Oversight of the Framework will be the responsibility of a Higher Education Standards Panel

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# HIGHER EDUCATION STANDARDS FRAMEWORK

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TEQSA

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TEQSA will register and evaluate the performance of higher education providers against a new **Higher Education Standards Framework** comprising:

- Provider Standards
  - Qualifications Standards
  - Information Standards
  - Teaching and Learning Standards
  - Research Standards
- } *Threshold Standards*

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## COMPLIANCE WITH THE HIGHER EDUCATION STANDARDS FRAMEWORK

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- TEQSA's approach will recognise and encourage the diversity of providers' missions, curriculum and approach to delivery
- Compliance with the standards will not compromise academic freedom nor reduce diversity in the delivery of higher education
- The standards will set out the expectations that the public, including students, government and academics, have of higher education providers and courses

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## POWERS TO ACT

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- TEQSA signals a shift from a quality assurance body that has ‘powers of persuasion’ to one that has ‘powers to take action’
- TEQSA will have legislated powers to intervene with an escalating set of actions where a lapse in quality is identified
- TEQSA will have the power to:
  - impose conditions on a provider’s registration
  - impose sanctions
  - de-register a higher education provider

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# TRANSPARENCY

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- TEQSA's audit reports and the Register of Higher Education Providers will be publicly available on TEQSA's website
- Register will be a database that contains information on providers such as their:
  - provider category
  - due date for a re-registration including any conditions
  - courses on offer
  - whether a provider has self-accrediting status
- *MyUniversity* website, targeted at current and potential students, will provide information on courses, campuses, facilities, support services, and the quality of teaching and learning outcomes

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**AN INTEGRATED TERTIARY EDUCATION SECTOR  
AND A GLOBALLY CONNECTED AGENCY**

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TEQSA

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- The establishment of TEQSA coincides with the creation of the National VET Regulator
- The agencies are being established in parallel to work towards an integrated tertiary education system and with a view to a potential merger from 2013
- TEQSA will engage and share best practice with its international counterparts and establish links with international quality and accreditation agencies



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# PRESENT AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

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- Ensuring enough flexibility in the regulatory approach, risk assessment model, and application of the standards-based framework so that innovation is not stifled
- TEQSA's powers to intervene
- Development of quality standards in teaching and learning, research and information
- How the standards will be applied
- Development of guides to TEQSA's regulatory approaches
- Transition from AUQA and State and Territory GAAs
- Adequate data collection