



A NATIONAL QUALITY AND STANDARDS AGENCY

The Rudd Government will allocate \$57 million over four years to establish a new national body for regulation and quality assurance.

The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) will oversee the development of strengthened quality assurance arrangements and protect the overall quality of the Australian higher education system. It will accredit providers, evaluate the performance of institutions and programs, encourage best practice, de-clutter current regulatory arrangements and provide greater national consistency.

In a period of expansion, when higher education institutions are attracting students who have not traditionally considered going to university and student choices are linked to funding, institutions will be required to demonstrate that their graduates have the capabilities that are required for successful engagement in today's complex world.

The current regulatory environment for higher education is complex and fractured, with different states and territories all implementing arrangements in varying ways. This creates inefficiencies and risks leading to under-performance.

A national approach to regulation and quality assurance will mean Australia's knowledge and skills needs can be met in a more efficient and transparent way, enabling higher education providers to focus on what they do best — providing quality higher education.

Benefits

The new agency will balance the move towards a more student-centred funding model, ensuring that increased participation will be accompanied by improvements in the quality of university teaching and learning.

- Domestic and international students will benefit from improved information about the performance of higher education providers, helping them make informed decisions about what and where they will study.
- Higher education providers will benefit from being able to more clearly demonstrate students' academic performance and document what students learn, know and can do. Providers will also benefit from being able to operate in a more streamlined regulatory environment.
- Employers will have greater confidence that graduates are well prepared for the global knowledge economy.
- Taxpayers will be able to see that value for money is being delivered and the national interest is well served.

Australia will have a new quality and regulatory agency with real powers to work with the tertiary education sector to lift standards and address underperformance.

TEQSA will be established in 2010. From 2011, TEQSA will build on the strong foundation established by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) and operate with an extended brief. Higher education providers will be evaluated every five years or whenever an evaluation is considered necessary to address an unacceptably high level of risk to quality or viability.

A range of sanctions, proportionate to identified deficiencies, will be available for higher education providers that do not measure up against standards.

As well as institution-specific audits, the new agency will carry out audits that focus on particular areas of risk for the higher education system, such as providers operating in a particular geographic region or offering a particular program of study.

TEQSA will build its capacity over the medium term with the aim of expanding to cover the entire tertiary sector from 2013.

Next steps

The Government will work closely with states, territories and the higher education sector in relation to the development of the new agency and the new quality assurance framework. These discussions will take place during 2009 and beyond.

Responsibility for quality assurance in higher education is currently shared between the Commonwealth Government, States and Territories, and the new arrangements will require the involvement of the newly created Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment (MCTEE).

The agency will be established under its own legislation and the Government expects to introduce legislation in the 2010 autumn sittings of parliament.

The Government will facilitate consultation with the academic community and other key stakeholders to develop the new quality assurance framework, including the development of academic standards.

