



Australian Government

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency

HE Standards & Management of 3rd Party Arrangements

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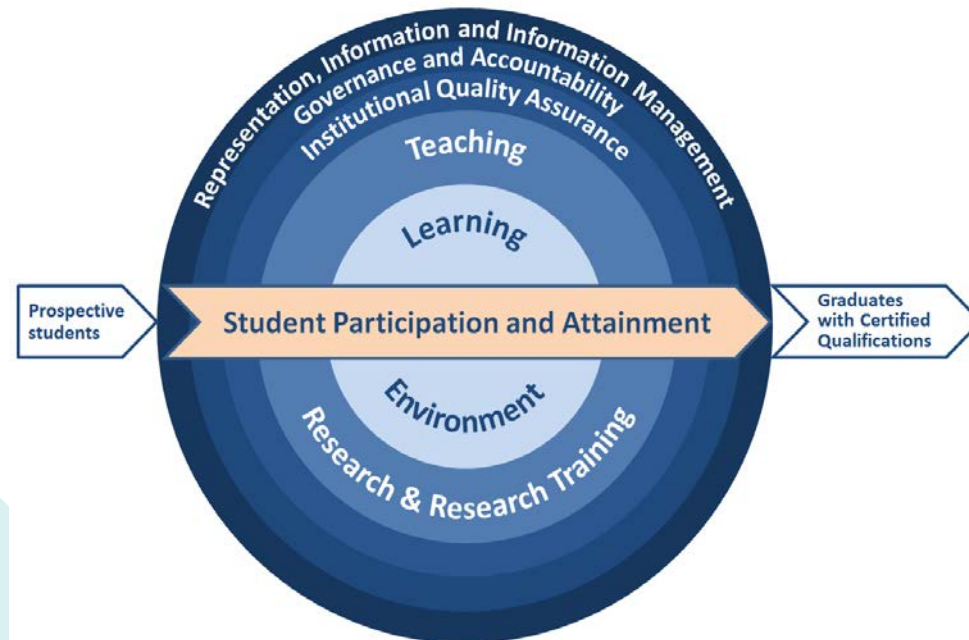
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Higher Education Standards Framework 2015

Of the seven domains, the Standards for corporate governance the highest and most overarching level of the Standards in the HES Framework



Higher Education Standards Framework 2015

Key features of HESF 2015 overall

- Grounded in core characteristics of provider operations, i.e, reflective of practice of a responsible provider
- Based on principles, not structures or ways and means
- Different approach to governance and academic governance
 - Roles and responsibilities of the governing bodies
- Student experience at the centre
- But learning environment shaped by governance & IQA

HE Standards

5.4.2 Delivery with Other Parties

Part of IQA Domain

When a course of study, any parts of a course of study, or research training are delivered through arrangements with another party(ies), whether in Australia or overseas, the registered higher education provider remains accountable for the course of study and verifies continuing compliance of the course of study with the standards in the Higher Education Standards Framework that relate to the specific arrangement.

3rd Party Value Chain

Intent of the Standards

- The intent of the Standards is that, irrespective of the role of the third party, the primary provider (i.e. the registered provider that offers and confers the award):
 - is fully accountable for the quality of education and any services delivered by another party on behalf of the primary provider
 - monitors and quality assures any TPA it establishes confirms that the TPA meets and continues to meet the requirements of the HES Framework
 - is able to demonstrate that the requirements of the HES Framework are met.
- In the event that the third party is also a registered provider with TEQSA in its own right, the primary provider with whom the accreditation of the course of study resides still remains fully accountable for quality assurance of the course delivered by the third party.
- Where an arrangement is for the delivery of a course that is also delivered directly by the primary provider, the outcomes of the course are expected to be substantially the same, irrespective of where the course is undertaken (i.e. with the primary provider or the third party).
- The expectation is for the third party to further enrich the learning experience.

Highlights of TEQSA's Guidance Notes

Risks to Quality

- There are many examples of successful TPAs. They are however vulnerable to a variety of risks, including the following:
 - unreasonable or impracticable expectations such as insufficient or inaccessible library resources
 - confusion of critical responsibilities among providers, e.g. statutory responsibilities for international students studying in Australia under the ESOS Act
 - students being unclear or confused about who is responsible for issues of concern to them, i.e. the primary provider or the third party
 - students or staff being, or feeling, isolated from and unsupported by the primary provider, including high turnover of teaching staff
 - irreconcilable conflicts between the educational, academic and commercial goals of the TPA
 - unexpected major changes to the operations of a third party
 - insufficient oversight of a TPA by the primary provider
 - asymmetric rather than a collaborative partnership
 - lack of sufficient quality controls or monitoring.

Highlights of TEQSA's Guidance Note

Due Diligence

- TEQSA would expect a provider to undertake a credible and rigorous due diligence process before reaching agreement with each third-party partner, in accordance with an approved policy and procedure and robust criteria for partner selection.
- The ability to select a reliable partner is a critical success factor that will reduce the risk of failures in quality.
- The due diligence process would be expected to be evidence-based and would consider a range of issues about the potential partner, such as its:
 - financial viability
 - ability to deliver on the responsibilities outlined in the TPA agreement
 - track-record in the provision of higher education, including regulatory status and history
 - ownership and governance structures
 - track-record of probity.
- A registered provider would be expected to reach a formal agreement with each third party before the arrangement commences.
- TEQSA will wish to see contingency plans that will be implemented in the event of a failure of a TPA (Standard 6.2.1i).

Topics for agreements with third parties

Rights & Responsibilities

The rights and responsibilities of each third party for matters such as:

- provision of and rights over intellectual property (especially if licensing courseware to the registered provider)
- best endeavours to maintain local registration or accreditation
- representation as appropriate on registered provider's academic bodies
- compliance with registered provider's specified policy and procedures, and provision of information to students about all applicable policies and procedures
- marketing and promotion of the course, and ensuring that marketing and pre-enrolment materials are:
 - current, accurate and compliant with HES Framework Section 7.2
 - approved by the registered provider
- student admission and enrolment requirements and processes (including English language requirements)
- delivery of the course at an equivalent level of quality of delivery to the registered provider including:
 - student and staff induction

Topics for agreement with third parties

Rights & Responsibilities

- local (i.e. provided by the third party) employment of teachers with the required qualifications and experience, approved by the registered provider
- provision of required property and facilities (for face-to-face or blended delivery)
- provision of local course materials
- provision of local tutorial services
- maintenance of accurate local student records and student administration
- provision and regulation of local assessment activities and marking, monitoring of student progress and feedback to students
- co-operative participation in moderation of assessment and periodic audits
- remittance and payment of fees
- provision of support services, including English language support where required
- student complaints, grievances and appeals
- periodic audit requirements
- management of work placements

What can go wrong?

- Lack of alignment between student expectations and course/graduate outcomes
- Public *perceptions* of soft admissions practices and soft marking
- Confusion regarding accountabilities
 - where there is not a clear framework for overseeing third parties there can be inconsistencies in approach, and a lack of clarity for staff
 - lack of clear ownership of teaching and learning and assessment
- Poor quality international applicants referred for admission by partner agents
 - in many cases partner use their own agents to recruit students, this can lead to students who don't have the skills and experience being recruited from high risk regions
 - lack of support services, counselling, independent learning, problem solving, learning in groups, careers advise and mentoring
- Poor course performance data and expectations of higher success and completion rates
- Poor quality staff, don't meet the Standards
- Tuition and course assurance in the case of default
 - A comparable course must be found for students

Some aspects of good practice

A proportion of the graduates will return to their home country and seek employment; many others will join the next generation of Australia's workforce....yours is a word of mouth business dependent of student's learning experience

- Agent management and recruitment practices that
 - ensures prospective students are better prepared to commence HE in Australia
 - detect and correct bad practices
- All teaching staff centrally approved, vetted against HES Framework requirements
- Support for staff scholarship & PD
- Orientation, induction and support services that build confidence
- Set and communicate to students expectations, rights and obligations early
- Provide students access to teaching staff, and facilitate timely quality feedback to students on their learning
- Strong academic leadership from university & locally, providing engaged learning
- Moderation/peer review of assessment, preferably external, to protect academic standards, align with broader academic community
- Rigorous assessment processes, independent of commercial pressures

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- Centralised student records to enable tracking of all students, including those at partner providers covering elements such as:
 - Assessment
 - Complaints
 - identify and manage student at risk
 - Manage RPL
- Centralised learning management system for teaching materials, interactive features
- Uniform & consistent operating procedures and system to ensure all staff are aware of them
- Cycle of audit and review, focussing on quality not profits!

University Category Criteria

- How does the higher education provider fulfil these criteria @ TP campuses:
 - demonstrates **sustained scholarship** that informs teaching and learning in all fields in which courses of study are offered
 - consistently high level of scholarship over time, scholarship-informed teaching
 - identifies and implements **good practices in student teaching and learning**, including those that have the potential for wider dissemination nationally
 - offers an **extensive range of student services**, including student academic and learning support, and extensive resources for student learning in all disciplines offered.
 - demonstrates **engagement with its local and regional communities** and demonstrates a commitment to social responsibility in its activities
 - has **systematic, well developed internal processes for quality assurance and the maintenance of academic standards and academic integrity**
 - TEQSA will expect QA processes not only to be in place on paper, but in practice
 - Well developed
 - Effective
 - Benchmark campuses against each other

Bottom Line

In short:

- How do you provide a university learning environment at third party campuses?
- Or are you providing at most a higher education provider-standard learning environment?
- Where is the added dimension?
- Is it evident to the outside observer?

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Q and A