

REPORT ON TEQSA FOCUS GROUP
TEQSA AND THE NEW QUALITY AND REGULATORY ARRANGEMENTS
FOR AUSTRALIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

25 February 2010

Craig Sherrin, Southbank Institute, and Anne Jones, Victoria University, are representing the TDA on this *focus group* which will provide feedback during the development of the TEQSA arrangements and therefore will operate as a de facto reference group for the project.

The group provided feedback on the proposed structure and function of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency, National Register and Higher Education Standards Framework, summarised in the attached diagram. Overall the models are very Go8 focused and we expect that TDA members would prefer to see more non traditional higher education input, particularly into the Higher Education Standards Framework.

The TEQSA itself will be a Commonwealth statutory authority led by a CEO who will be responsible for both setting and regulating standards – a potential conflict identified by focus group participants. DEEWR staff informed us that the TEQSA will take a ‘risk-based and proportionate approach’ to regulation.

The AQF will be the foundation for registration of qualifications and non-AQF qualifications will not be registrable. The current Higher Education Protocols will form the basis of the new provider standards. The provider standards alone will be legislated and so subject to disallowance by the Senate. All of the other changes will be administrative and can be mandated. The Commonwealth is able to mandate the TEQSA because universities come under the Corporations Act and therefore Federal power. This is not the case for most (any?) TAFE institutions which are not covered by the Corporations Act.

The Australian Learning and Teaching Commission is setting the Teaching and Learning standards (www.ALTC.edu.au). This group is entirely university focused though it claims that it is involving industry in setting standards. I think that both TDA members and private higher education providers would be interested in seeing wider input into teaching and learning standards.

Universities are concerned that the new regulator will be more intrusive and compliance based than is the case currently with AUQA. It was raised that universities are still subject to State legislation and their existence will still require State agreement and legislation.

DEEWR staff informed us that the plan is still to establish a national VET regulator, that mirrors the TEQSA structure and function, which that merges with the TEQSA in 2013. However there was not a lot of focus on this objective and the TEQSA project does not appear to be explicitly referencing the VET project.

