



14 July 2010

## To: Stakeholders with an interest in the Quality Audit Factors (QAFs)

**Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) funded project to review the Quality Audit Factors (QAFs) applicable to quality audits of non-self accrediting higher education providers (NSA HEPs)**

### Introduction

In 2003, the Australian Government introduced the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* (HESA) which allows students in non self-accrediting higher education institutions (NSAIs) to receive financial assistance for their tuition fees through the FEE-HELP program. NSAIs approved under the HESA for this purpose may be referred to as NSA HEPs. The HESA requires that NSA HEPs whose students may receive FEE-HELP funds meet a range of quality and accountability requirements, including regular audit by a quality auditing body named in the Higher Education Provider Guidelines. This body is currently the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA).

NSA HEP audits, under HESA, consider institutional actions and performance in relation to, firstly, the institution's objectives, and secondly, a group of criteria collectively known as 'Quality Audit Factors' (QAFs). The QAFs can be found at: <http://www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Programs/Quality/HEPS/Documents/AuditHandbook.pdf>

### Review

The QAFs have been in operation for a number of years now and are yet to be subject to a review. Feedback from stakeholders indicates that while they are an important developmental tool for NSA HEPs, there are ways in which the QAFs could be improved, for example through reordering, refocusing and removing duplication. DEEWR has commissioned AUQA to manage a project to revise the QAFs to enhance their value in providing guidance in audits of NSA HEPs.

AUQA, with the assistance of a Steering Committee that has experience of non-self accrediting higher education providers (NSA HEPs), will:

- evaluate the appropriateness and effectiveness of the current QAFs for assisting institutions in structuring their self-review to demonstrate the achievement of their educational objectives and institutional alignment with the MCEETYA *National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes*
- identify strengths and weaknesses of the QAFs, and options to address the latter
- revise the current QAFs taking account of the evaluation undertaken.

AUQA will aim to revise the QAFs in a manner that ensures their continuing utility in the context of the developing Provider Standards.

AUQA has analysed the first 20 NSAI audit reports and an executive summary is at [http://www.auqa.edu.au/qualityenhancement/nsai/executive\\_summary\\_of\\_first\\_twenty\\_n\\_sai\\_audit\\_reports.pdf](http://www.auqa.edu.au/qualityenhancement/nsai/executive_summary_of_first_twenty_n_sai_audit_reports.pdf). This has provided some detailed issues which will be addressed during this review.

### Consultation Process

The review of the QAFs will involve a two-stage consultation process.

#### *Stage 1*

Survey sent to stakeholders to identify issues with existing QAFs and possible areas for improvement.

#### *Stage 2*

A follow-up consultation will be held with those who have registered their interest following the release of a draft set of revised QAFs.

### Survey

We would appreciate it if you would take the time to complete the following survey to assist with the development of the revised QAFs. Your response is confidential.

The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete and closes **6pm on 28 July 2010**.

Should you wish to participate, please click on the following link: [https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/QAF\\_Review](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/QAF_Review).

For further information please contact me by email: [j.burgess@auqa.edu.au](mailto:j.burgess@auqa.edu.au) or telephone (03) 9664 1045.

Yours sincerely



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