



ASQA Stakeholder Liaison Group Communiqué

October 2020

The ASQA Stakeholder Liaison Group (SLG) held its second meeting on 12 October 2020 via national videoconference.

Update from the Chair

ASQA Regulatory Report

Members were provided with an overview of ASQA's Regulatory Report, which outlined its application processing and audit activities, and its performance against service standards, as reflected in ASQA's Annual Report 2019–20.

ASQA reform agenda

Members were updated on the progress of the ['Working together for better regulation'](#) program, which will improve how ASQA manages risk, engages with the sector, and promotes provider culture and systems to support self-assurance, continuous improvement and sustained focus on quality.

The Chair noted recent outcomes including the first stage of an organisational restructure, delivery of the first tranche of changes to audit practices, commencement of a consultation process regarding provider self-assurance and the establishment of the SLG itself.

Responding to the impact of COVID-19

Members discussed the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on providers, including on their ongoing financial viability during the pandemic. The Chair noted ASQA's adoption of a flexible regulatory approach to support providers in responding to the impact of COVID-19, and that while financial viability remains important, there may be some limitations to the Financial Viability Risk Assessment tool in the circumstances.

The Chair also noted that providers remain responsible for self-assuring their financial viability, and that there are a range of measures that providers can take in response to their changing operating environment. It is important that providers ensure that students are protected and that they document any self-assessment undertaken and measures put in place. ASQA can consider those assessments and adaptive arrangements when assessing financial viability on a case-by-case basis.

Members discussed the [Mandatory Work Placement Principles during COVID-19](#), which were developed by the COVID-19 Emergency Response Sub-committee of the Australian Industry and Skills Committee, in response to the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on work placements. The Sub-committee consulted with industry, employer associations, provider associations and ASQA in developing these principles.

ASQA advised that further work is underway by the Sub-committee to identify and consider the top training products affected, and noted that ASQA will continue to regulate against the training package requirements. Members noted there will be ongoing impacts for a range of student cohorts, including senior secondary students who may not be able to access work placements required to complete Year 12 studies (particularly in Victoria).



Other sector-related announcements

The Chair noted key VET announcements in the Commonwealth Budget 2020–21. ASQA is working with other agencies to ensure the regulatory aspects of implementation of announced measures is supported by a co-ordinated approach between VET regulators and state and territory authorities.

Provider self-assurance project

Members discussed ASQA's increasing focus on provider self-assurance, specifically in relation to providers managing their operations and business risks to ensure a focus on quality, continuous improvement, ongoing compliance and excellence in student outcomes.

Members discussed ASQA's ongoing consultations with the sector, which began in August 2020 with the release of a [consultation paper](#) and a webinar presentation.

Members expressed strong support for the role of self-assurance in advancing the sector, and welcomed the opportunity to be involved in the next stages of the project.

ASQA will be providing feedback to the sector on the results of the first consultation phase, which members noted will be among several inputs considered as part of ASQA's revision of the Annual Declaration on Compliance by early 2021.

ASQA's education and guidance forward agenda

Members discussed a number of opportunities, topics and channels for ASQA's education and guidance forward agenda, focused on both supporting providers and engaging ASQA staff. Members agreed to provide detailed feedback to ASQA out of session on its education and guidance agenda.

Regarding training package development, it was suggested that Industry Reference Committees would benefit from ASQA's regulatory perspectives on specific skill sets and assessments. Members supported this suggestion, noting that strengthening strategic engagement to establish feedback loops regarding broader VET reform was recommended in the [ASQA Rapid Review](#).

The Chair encouraged members to provide suggestions on how best to capture their ideas and feedback on a more regular and structured basis.

SLG governance

Members endorsed the creation of three SLG Subgroups aligned to key ASQA reform projects: self-assurance; audit practice; and online learning. It was also noted that the first Subgroup workshop on self-assurance is being held in October, to be facilitated by VET consultant Claire Field. Subgroup outcomes will be brought back to the full SLG for feedback and discussion.

Members agreed to endorse a Disclosure Policy, proposed at the inaugural meeting in July 2020, regarding the disclosure to the Chair of material changes to business operations, on a confidential basis.

Next meeting

This year the SLG will meet again on 23 November.