



Provider Roundtable Communiqué

March 2021

The ASQA Provider Roundtable held its first meeting for 2021 on 9 March.

ASQA update

The Provider Roundtable discussed the following updates:

Reform of organisational governance and structure

Since the Roundtable last met in November 2020, ASQA has continued to enhance its governance arrangements and organisational structure to deliver on the [Ministerial Statement of Expectations](#). This includes developing four-year strategic deliverables in support of ASQA's strategic objective, the publication of a [Risk Management Policy Statement](#), and the establishment of internal governance committees to provide strategic oversight of ASQA's work program.

Changes coming into effect on 6 April 2021

On 6 April 2021, ASQA will be undergoing a significant restructuring of its operational teams – with the Regulatory Operations teams splitting into separate Quality Assessment and Compliance teams. The ASQA audit function will become a performance assessment function that will employ a more extensive range of regulatory strategies to assess performance. A separate compliance function will be established to determine the appropriate response to any areas of non-compliance.


Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) performance audit

The ANAO commenced a performance audit of ASQA in January 2021. ASQA welcomes this independent assessment, and is working closely with the ANAO to support the audit. The final report of the audit is scheduled to be tabled in the winter sittings of Parliament.

ASQA's regulatory reforms

Members were briefed on the key components of ASQA's revised regulatory approach commencing on 6 April 2021. Reforms include changes to the assessment methodology, the introduction of new measures in responding to non-compliance (agreements to rectify), and the provision of earlier opportunities to resolve disputes through the internal review of decisions. To support and communicate the change to its operations, ASQA has developed an integrated suite of documents that detail its regulatory approach, namely:

- Regulatory Risk Framework
- Regulatory Operating Model

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- Approach to assessing performance
 - Compliance Policy
 - Internal Review Policy

The Roundtable discussed ASQA's revised regulatory approach and members were invited to provide further feedback to ASQA.

ASQA also briefed the Roundtable on its commitment to undertake a post-implementation evaluation of the regulatory reforms. Members welcomed the opportunity for further involvement in the development of the evaluation framework. ASQA also advised that it welcomes real-time feedback from members as the reforms are implemented over the coming months.

Education and Guidance program

Feedback provided by Roundtable members in late 2020 and early 2021 has been used to assist in the development of ASQA's Education and Guidance program of work for 2021. The program focuses on supporting sector-wide compliance and quality by continuing work focused on building an understanding of provider self-assurance, continuous improvement and excellence through more comprehensive learning opportunities.

Members discussed the planned Education and Guidance program of work for 2021, which will include two streams of external guidance information relating to essential compliance and quality information to support providers. The proposed development over a forward program of an online platform that will further enhance provider access to these products was also discussed, and members noted that further consultation would be undertaken on this project.

Strategic Projects

Members were updated on the progress ASQA is making on two pieces of work arising from its Regulatory Strategy 2020–2022.

ASQA's VET delivered to secondary school students (VETDSSS) scoping study is nearing completion, with the findings due to be confirmed by the end of March 2021.

ASQA's [strategic review of online learning in the VET sector](#) was launched in December 2020, and has included a [webinar discussion](#) led by a panel comprising ASQA and industry representatives, which focused on building e-learning capability and the new TAE digital skill set. A follow-up [webinar discussion](#) was also held to further explore questions and issues raised as part of the first webinar discussion.

A survey (which closes on 19 March 2021) has been sent to all regulated providers to gain their insights into the sector's use, experience and perceptions of online learning, and ASQA encourages providers to engage with the survey and contribute their insights to the strategic review, which is scheduled for completion in August 2021.

ASQA Stakeholder Engagement Strategy – Provider Roundtable Terms of Reference

ASQA is developing a comprehensive Stakeholder Engagement Strategy to organise and articulate its priorities for engaging stakeholders over the next four years. The strategy will give effect to ASQA's strategic deliverable: *As the national regulator, we engage and partner with stakeholders constructively and with mutual respect.* Further consultation will occur with Roundtable members to develop the strategy.

The Roundtable, which was established in 2012, is recognised as ASQA's primary consultative forum with the VET and English language sectors through the peak provider associations. Members discussed the results of a recent survey undertaken to review the Roundtable and develop formal Terms of Reference.

ASQA thanked members for their feedback in developing the proposed Terms of Reference, which will formally articulate the Provider Roundtable's purpose, background, objectives, membership and meeting administration.

Members endorsed the proposed Terms of Reference (appended to this Communiqué), and agreed to their publication on the ASQA website.

Members also agreed to the publication of a Communiqué in the week following each meeting, as a high-level record of the agenda items discussed and actions arising.

Member updates

Members provided operational and strategic updates, including:

- co-ordination of reform activities across Australian Government agencies and state and territory governments
- engagement with the work of the [National Skills Commission](#) on skills forecasting and benchmarking of provider performance
- consideration of the implications for the VET sector of the recommendations of the report of the [Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety](#)
- the [Inquiry](#) by the Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training into adult literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills in Australia
- the impact of the declining numbers of overseas students on providers of English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students as a result of the ongoing closure of Australia's international borders.

Next meeting

The next meeting of the Provider Roundtable will be held on 6 July 2021.



Provider Roundtable Terms of Reference

Purpose

The purpose of the ASQA Provider Roundtable is to engage and consult with the peak VET and English language provider associations on matters of strategic importance, and to discuss and seek feedback on the impact of ASQA's regulatory approach and future activity.

Background

As the national VET regulator, ASQA's purpose is to ensure quality vocational education and training and English language education so that students, employers, the community and governments can have confidence in the integrity of national qualifications issued by providers.

ASQA's strategic objective is to achieve its purpose over the next four years through its regulation and partnership with others. ASQA recognises that the membership-based peak provider associations play a crucial role in meeting this strategic objective by providing feedback on ASQA's regulatory strategy and approach, and working collaboratively to protect the quality of the VET and English language sectors.

The Provider Roundtable is instrumental to one of ASQA's strategic deliverables: *As the national regulator, we engage and partner with stakeholders constructively and with mutual respect.* ASQA is committed to these values underpinning its engagement through the Provider Roundtable.

Provider Roundtable members are committed to working collaboratively in recognition of our shared responsibility for the quality of VET and English language education. The Provider Roundtable provides an opportunity for members to engage with ASQA on its regulatory approach and the impact of its activities.

Based on the principle of our shared responsibility for the reputation and quality of the VET sector, key goals under the Terms of Reference are:

- the development of collaborative strategies that support quality VET outcomes and improved approaches to regulation
- the provision of continuous feedback on the implementation of reform strategies
- enhanced confidence and trust in the work of the national VET regulator
- recognition of quality outcomes and strengthened provider self-assurance and continuous improvement.

Objectives

The objective of the Provider Roundtable is to provide a forum for constructive engagement and collaboration through which the members:

- support providers to meet standards through an enhanced focus on self-assurance and continuous improvement through a regulatory approach that prioritises greater education and guidance support
- contribute to broader reforms by developing a shared understanding of quality outcomes, and how these should be reflected in provider performance as assessed by ASQA
- engage on regulatory approaches that support self-assurance, the proportionate application of regulatory action where non-compliance is identified, and provider confidence in ASQA's assessment process and outcomes
- discuss key risks to the quality of VET outcomes to inform timely and effective responses
- build a common understanding of ASQA's role and regulatory approach, what stakeholders can and cannot expect of ASQA, and areas of shared stakeholder responsibility
- identify opportunities to improve regulation in a way that does not diminish the intended outcomes expected of ASQA's regulatory activity
- provide feedback to ASQA on its performance, feedback from providers and the opportunities to build confidence in ASQA's work
- engage on strategies to ensure meaningful reporting on provider performance, and enhance the information ASQA publishes in respect of regulatory decisions to improve the transparency of decision-making
- engage on matters relating to risk-based and routine monitoring to support public confidence in the regulation of the sector.

Membership

The Provider Roundtable is chaired by the CEO of ASQA and comprised of senior representatives from:

- Adult Learning Australia
- Community Colleges Australia
- English Australia
- Enterprise Registered Training Organisation Association
- Independent Higher Education Australia
- Independent Tertiary Education Council Australia
- TAFE Directors Australia.

Meetings

Scheduled meetings

- The Provider Roundtable meets formally three times a year with meetings set well in advance.
- Four weeks ahead of each meeting, members are invited to submit meeting agenda items (some of which may be handled bilaterally out-of-session as appropriate).
- ASQA commits to providing an ASQA Regulatory Report in support of a standing agenda item.

Out-of-session activities

- Additional meetings may be scheduled as required.
- Information may also be circulated by the Secretariat out-of-session, and members can request follow-up briefing meetings.

Meeting communiqué

- An agreed communiqué will be released on ASQA's website within a week of each meeting.
- The draft communiqué will be provided within two working days of each meeting and members will be given two working days to provide feedback.

Meeting minutes

- Draft minutes will be circulated within two weeks of each meeting for members' feedback.
- The draft minutes will be revised to incorporate members' feedback, and will be confirmed at the subsequent meeting.
- The minutes are a confidential record of the meeting.

Secretariat

- ASQA will provide Secretariat services to the Provider Roundtable.
- The Secretariat can be contacted at engage@asqa.gov.au.