

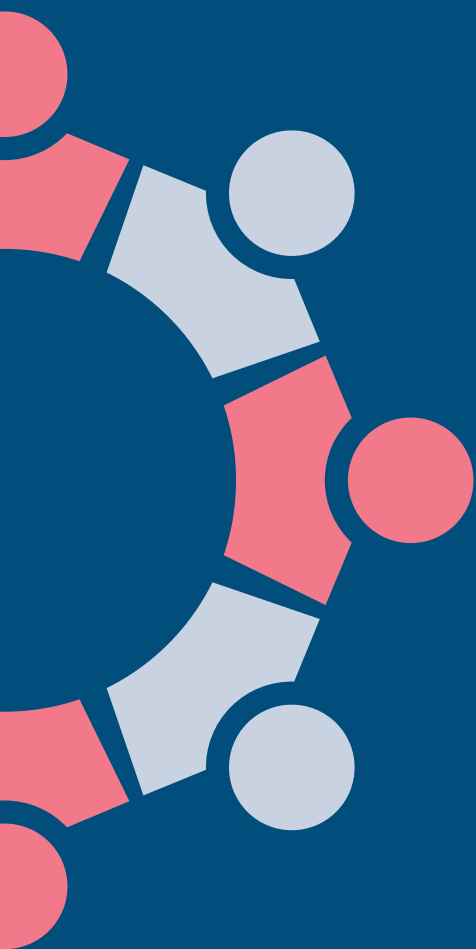


Australian Government

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency

# TEQSA Student Advisory Panel Terms of Reference

February 2026



**TEQSA**

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# STUDENT ADVISORY PANEL

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## Context

The quality and reputation of Australia's higher education system is underpinned by the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021*. The higher education sector is subject to enduring and emerging sector risks to meeting the Threshold Standards, including:

- inconsistent governance practices, such as workforce planning and change management processes
- social and political unrest which may in turn threaten academic freedom and free speech on campus
- risks to campus social cohesion from social factors such as gender-based violence, racism and other forms of harassment and discrimination
- inconsistent approaches to supporting students with diverse needs
- predatory business practices targeting students (such as contract cheating)
- risks to academic integrity from emerging technology (such as generative AI)
- insufficient resourcing for teaching and learning, leading to reduced educational quality and student engagement.

TEQSA is expanding its regulatory intelligence collection and analysis for sector-wide risks. A key objective for TEQSA is to engage with the lived experience of higher education students as a vital source of intelligence about the sector.

Students are key stakeholders in higher education. They have unique lived experience of higher education providers' offerings and operations, meaning they can provide valuable information regarding enduring and emerging systemic risks to student experience and higher education quality. The lived experience of students will support TEQSA to identify and respond to sector-wide risks.

By establishing the TEQSA Student Advisory Panel (SAP), TEQSA seeks to partner with students to better understand emerging and enduring sector risks. We're expanding the voices we already engage, beyond elected student representatives. The panel will utilise student lived experience as an important source of risk intelligence. The panel will also provide advice, feedback and suggestions on some of the educative materials produced by TEQSA in response to sector-wide risks that aim to encourage continuous improvement in the sector. The panel complements TEQSA's longstanding engagement with student representative bodies and groups. Members of the Student Advisory Panel are not expected to represent the views of a specific group or cohort of students, or to undertake independent consultation to inform their contribution to the panel.

# Objectives

The Student Advisory Panel will deliver advice, feedback and suggestions to TEQSA in relation to:

- identifying emerging or enduring sector-wide risks to the Threshold Standards
- educative materials for the sector and key stakeholders that respond to enduring or emerging sector-wide risks.

The Student Advisory Panel will be an advisory body and will not be involved in regulatory operations or decision making.

# Scope

The work of the Student Advisory Panel will be through collaborative discussions amongst panel members sharing and analysing their lived experience of higher education in Australia. The panel will undertake the following activities:

- consider and advise TEQSA on sector-wide risk profiles that are in development by the regulator
- work collectively to analyse the lived experience of panel members to identify risks they believe may emerge in relation to the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021*
- develop and present advice and suggestions to TEQSA regarding which systemic risks may require further research and analysis by the regulator
- consider and advise TEQSA on its approach to educative and engagement activities in response to some sector-wide risks.

The following items are out of scope for the Student Advisory Panel:

- discussion of specific regulatory operational matters and contributing to regulatory decisions
- addressing complaints members have that are specific to an individual student and/or provider, where members raise individual issues they will be directed to the appropriate reporting avenues
- providing intelligence or advice in relation to individual higher education providers and their operations
- accessing information about individual providers held by TEQSA.

# Meetings

The Student Advisory Panel will meet 4 times per year, for 6 hours per meeting.

# Membership

The Student Advisory Panel will be made up of 8 to 10 students, including a co-chair, with lived experience of Australian higher education. In determining the final membership, TEQSA will balance a range of factors to support representation from different ages, genders, demographics, and communities across Australia. At least one member of the panel will be an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student.

Members are responsible for providing advice, feedback and suggestions to support the work of TEQSA.

TEQSA will approve SAP membership and any proposed changes to the membership.

Members will be appointed for a one-year term and invited to express interest in extending their term for a second year at the conclusion of the first year.

Once appointed as a member of the Student Advisory Panel, TEQSA expects all members to:

- act in accordance with the panel's code of conduct
- declare and follow any agreed actions to manage any identified conflicts of interest
- review the induction materials provided by TEQSA prior to the first meeting of the panel
- review and consider all circulated papers before discussion at a meeting of the panel
- participate actively in the panel's meetings and working groups
- let the secretariat know if they are unable to attend a meeting.

Members will escalate any concerns with the panel's work through one of the co-chairs out-of-session or directly with TEQSA where the issue is with one of the co-chairs.

Members will be paid in accordance with the TEQSA's Community Stakeholder Paid Participation Policy.

# Governance

The Student Advisory Panel will be chaired by 2 co-chairs. The co-chairs are appointed by TEQSA. The co-chairs will be:

- a postgraduate student with lived experience of higher education in Australia who has:
  - > a minimum of 9 months' experience of postgraduate study in Australia at the time of application
  - > the expectation of being enrolled in postgraduate study for the duration of their term as co-chair
- a staff member from TEQSA of Assistant Director level or above.

Responsibilities of the co-chairs include:

- supporting the Student Advisory Panel to undertake its work, including finalising a code of conduct for the panel
- chairing meetings
- working collaboratively with the panel and TEQSA staff to set priorities for the panel
- taking advice from members of the panel

- supporting the development of advice and suggestions regarding emerging or enduring sector-wide risks by the panel
- arranging workshops or convening working groups within the panel as needed
- overseeing the production of the panel's deliverables.

The Student Advisory Panel will report to the TEQSA Executive Leadership Team and the TEQSA Commission.

## Resources

The Student Advisory Panel will be provided with secretariat support by the Policy and Research team within TEQSA.

Panel members will be provided with training and orientation in relation to:

- the Threshold Standards
- risk-based regulation
- lived experience principles.

The Student Advisory Panel can submit requests for consultation with experts in higher education or risk identification methodologies to TEQSA. Where appropriate and where budget allows, TEQSA will support the panel's engagement with experts.

## Deliverables

The Student Advisory Panel will deliver 3-4 risk profiles and feedback on materials presented by TEQSA.

- Feedback to TEQSA on a range of materials such as compliance priorities and educative materials.
- 3 or 4 sector-wide risk profiles that provide:
  - > a description of the selected risks and their source
  - > forecasted harms to student experience, safety and wellbeing or quality of higher education in Australia posed by the risks
  - > suggestions for guidance TEQSA could give to higher education to mitigate the harm to students posed by the risks.

The risk profiles produced by the SAP will be reviewed by TEQSA. TEQSA may also choose to share risk intelligence developed by the Student Advisory Panel directly with the sector.

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