

Landmark accreditation workshop highlights the challenges of addressing perceived overlap and duplication in practice

Melbourne, Victoria, 22 November, 2019: On 15 November 2019, representatives from the Australian Dental Council (ADC), the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), and dental education providers came together for a landmark workshop to discuss the perceived extent of overlap and duplication within the higher education sector.

Instigated by the ADC following the signing of a second Memorandum of Understanding with TEQSA in 2019, the workshop provided a forum for both organisations to develop a better understanding of each other's responsibilities, processes and principles in regards to decision making within the accreditation space.

Participants discussed how accreditation standards are applied in practice based on a mapping of the *Higher Education Standards Framework* applied by TEQSA against the *ADC/Dental Council (New Zealand) Accreditation Standards for dental practitioner programs*.

Participants found that although the wording may appear similar, the approach taken by each organisation and the processes by which the standards are used differ markedly. Furthermore, external factors, such as legislative requirements, including the different foci of these frameworks, made addressing the perceived instances of overlap and duplication a challenge for participants, explained ADC Chief Executive Officer, Narelle Mills.

"The Australian education sector is a complicated environment which is constantly evolving. It is important for us to work collectively with all groups within the sector, especially TEQSA, to ensure we are enabling these changes, rather than inhibiting them," said Ms Mills.

"What we found during the workshop is that the ADC and TEQSA have very distinct focus areas in regards to accreditation. For the ADC, our primary focus is on the assurance of public safety as per our responsibilities under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, while TEQSA is responsible for protecting student interests and the reputation of Australia's world-class higher education sector. When we apply this lens to the standards, we find accreditation to have a complementary focus."

"This landmark workshop is an encouraging starting point for both organisations to work together to foster an environment of understanding and information sharing. While we did not reach a definitive outcome at this time, these discussions form the foundations of a working relationship which will benefit the sector now and into the future," she said.

For TEQSA, this meeting has laid the foundation for the ongoing conversation in the challenging area of joint accreditation, to develop a shared understanding of future models of accreditation and refined approaches to working together.

Further information on the work of the ADC in relation to program accreditation can be found at adc.org.au/Program-Accreditation

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Media enquiries

TEQSA

Michelle Alexander, Assistant Director,
Communications

Ph: 0437 143 012

Email: michelle.alexander@teqsa.gov.au

ADC

Samara Williams, Manager, Communications

Ph: 0434 118 826

Email: samara.williams@adc.org.au

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About the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA)

TEQSA protects student interests and the reputation of the sector by assuring world-class quality in Australian higher education. We achieve this through a proportionate, risk-reflective approach to quality assurance, that supports diversity, innovation and excellence.

We were established by the Government as Australia's higher education regulation and quality assurance agency in the 2010-11 Budget, with a focus on ensuring that higher education providers meet minimum standards, promoting best practice, and improving the quality of the Australian higher education sector.

TEQSA has been collaborating with professional accreditation bodies since 2014, signing over 20 Memoranda of Understanding supporting collaboration, increasing efficiency and reducing duplication.

The [Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011](#) (TEQSA Act), which established us as an agency, calls for us to:

- register regulated entities as higher education providers, and accredit their courses of study
- conduct compliance and quality assessments
- conduct re-accreditation assessments of courses (developed by providers without self-accrediting authority)
- provide advice and make recommendations to the Commonwealth Minister for Education on matters relating to the quality and regulation of higher education providers
- cooperate with similar agencies in other countries
- collect, analyse, interpret and disseminate information relating to quality assurance practice and quality improvement in higher education.

About the Australian Dental Council

Formed in 1993, the Australian Dental Council (ADC) is an independent organisation appointed by the Dental Board of Australia (DBA) to conduct assessment and accreditation functions for the dental profession under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (NRAS).

The ADC is an independent not-for-profit company limited by guarantee under the Australian Securities and Investments Commission. It holds charity status under the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission and is funded by a grant from the DBA and fee for service activities.

The Council recognises the value of a diverse and skilled workforce and is committed to creating and maintaining a diverse and inclusive culture, which draws on the backgrounds, experiences and perspectives of its people to enhance its decision making.

Current members of the ADC include key professional bodies, academic bodies and other members of the Australian dental profession.