

AUSTRALIAN SKILLS QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY (ASQA)

Home Page - <http://www.asqa.gov.au/>

What is ASQA?

ASQA is a national body, established to regulate the vocational education and training (VET) system, replacing the previous State based system, e.g. the Tasmanian Qualification Authority (TQA).

ASQA's vision is that students, employers and governments have full confidence in the quality of VET delivered by Australian registered training organisations (RTOs).

ASQA's functions include:

- registering training providers as 'registered training organisations' (RTOs)
- registering organisations as CRICOS providers—providers that can enrol international students
- accrediting vocational education and training (VET) courses
- ensuring that organisations comply with the conditions and standards for registration (there are new national Standards for RTOs), including carrying out compliance audits.

ASQA may also collect, analyse and publish information on the VET sector and VET providers.

Why do we need to have an ASQA?

There are currently around 5000 RTOs in Australia – which gives room for great variability of delivery of training and assessment!

ASQA's main focus then is to ensure that training providers and training courses meet national standards, hopefully resulting in more consistency in the delivery of training and assessment.

Being registered by ASQA means an RTO must act in students/employers best interests and meet the *Standards for NVR Registered Training Organisations*.

To assist employers and students, ASQA has developed a document, *Choosing a training or education provider*. Go to www.asqa.gov.au/media-and-publications/publications.html.

If a service, or a student, is not happy with the standard of delivery of training or the assessment of competence by an RTO, that service or student has the option of contacting ASQA.

How do we know if an RTO is registered with ASQA?

A complete list of RTOs is maintained at www.training.gov.au, the national register of the VET sector.

NB: If an RTO is delivering training in Tasmania, that RTO should be registered with ASQA.

If a service is not sure about the registration status of an RTO, please go to www.training.gov.au.

(There is a search facility on the home page which links to registration details, details of courses on the RTO's scope, etc.)

What is the relationship between ASQA State and National offices?

State Offices carry out compliance **audits**; **National Office** deals with **complaints** and the majority of the other functions. Contact with State Office is via the national website www.asqa.gov.au – follow the ‘Contact Us’ link.

What is the process to register and regulate RTOs?

This is a 5 year cycle:

Initial Registration – an audit against the national Standards for RTOs; initial registration can take 6 months

At 1 Year – a monitoring audit

2 – 5 Years – Risk assessment i.e. ASQA carries out an audit

IF there is a complaint (ASQA has capacity to carry out ‘no notice’ or ‘short notice’ audits)

OR the RTO applies for new scope

OR the RTO transits to a new system.

How does ASQA conduct an audit?

Either by a site audit or by a ‘desk audit’.

ASQA generally will refer students back to the RTO 1st to resolve issues at ‘local’ level where possible.

ASQA works with State Regulatory Authorities, e.g. ASQA will take an Regulatory Authority (RA) person to an onsite audit.

NB: The focus of the ASQA audits is NOT the delivery of training but whether assessment outcomes are met (evidence/authentic/valid, etc) i.e. does an RTO’s assessment reflect a graduate’s capacity to do the job in workplace?

This applies also to delivery of training on-line, i.e. how the RTO is gathering the evidence in order to assess the student.

How can an ECEC/SAC service lodge a complaint?

<http://www.asqa.gov.au/complaints/making-a-complaint.html>

Anyone can lodge a complaint: students, training organisation personnel, employers, parents, industry personnel, or any other member of the community, via mechanism of an On-line complaint form.

NB: There **must** be a breach of Standards in order for ASQA to investigate a complaint. This is outlined on the ‘Complaints’ link.

The www.training.gov.au entry for your VET provider will show (under the ‘Registration’ tab) the ‘Registration manager’. If this is the ASQA, you can submit your complaint to ASQA.

If the registration manager is listed as an organisation other than ASQA, ASQA does not have jurisdiction to investigate your complaint, and you should contact the organisation listed.

NB: Industry feedback about RTOs of concern is most important, because ASQA can audit these RTOs more often.

Many organisations have concerns rather than a complaint – it is very important to forward these concerns to ASQA, as this helps to build the ‘picture’ of an RTO, which can then be the basis for a monitoring audit (this must be Commissioner’s decision).

The more contacts from concerned services, the better the picture that ASQA can build up of an RTO.

How long does it take ASQA to investigate a complaint?

Each auditor can conduct 2 – 3 audits per month.

Note – there are 78 Training Packages, and 3,500 qualifications, almost 5000 RTOs.... And only 100 auditors!

So, ASQA really needs to engage with our sector, as sector feedback is very useful to ASQA in prioritising which RTOs will be audited.

If a complaint is substantiated, what sanctions can be applied to an RTO?

The RTO gets 20 days to rectify the issue; if not, then sanctions applied, i.e. RTO’s registration can be suspended or cancelled.

Natural justice process? Yes, the RTO can go to Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT), and get a ‘stay’, eg if problem has been resolved, AAT can lift the sanction because AAT decision is based on ‘that point in time’.

NB: ASQA advises ACECQA of results of investigations.

Also information regarding the current status of Registered Training Organisations is available on www.training.gov.au – it may pay to check this out before signing up with an RTO.

What about the students in the event that their RTO has received a sanction?

The RTO must show how they will transition the students to another provider.

What about credit transfer arrangements for those students?

A student who shifts from an RTO whose registration is suspended or cancelled to another RTO will receive credit transfer for competencies approved by the first RTO, i.e. employers need to be careful when analysing the graduate’s Statement of Competence.

NB: there are lots of reasons for credit transfer – we can’t automatically assume it is because the RTO has breached standards. However, it is good to check things out carefully.

What is happening now on the ECEC and SAC sector?

Michele Dawkins, Manager, Industry Engagement** advised the Skills Plan Roundtable on 20 February 2013 that a Strategic Review of Children’s Services will occur soon; parallel to the review currently underway in Aged Care (because of immigration issues, etc).

A Strategic Review is cross agency, e.g. ASQA will work closely with CSHISC. It will involve an audit.

Why a Strategic Review? Because ASQA suspects that there may be a higher than average rate of non-compliance in ECEC, as there is in Aged Care. ASQA currently is looking at all RTO websites.

** Michele's contact – IndustryEngagement@asqa.gov.au.

The Industry Engagement section works with industry, e.g. get feedback re what are the greatest risks in a particular industry; and this then will be area that the auditors will focus on, e.g., in ECEC, it could be around the number of accidents.

Relevant feedback around that issue could include:

- Inability to supervise adequately, especially of a group of children
- Issues around \$\$ being linked to completion of training e.g. RPL process is sometimes used ineffectively/quickly

How can Tasmanian ECEC and SAC services work constructively with RTOs that deliver relevant qualifications in Tasmania?

Given that 1 ECEC service can have up to 4 RTOs involved at any one time, life can be very confusing! So, what can we do?

- (1) **The Skills Plan Roundtable** is a great forum – the morning session provides an opportunity for services to raise issues, and the afternoon session the opportunity to discuss these with RTOs.

We encourage you to participate!

- (2) **A comprehensive guide to training and assessment for Tasmanian ECEC and SAC services** MECAC's has approved that funds remaining from the Recognition Project be used to develop a resource, which will promote the importance of quality training to increase the sector's professionalism, assist services to select a quality RTO, as well as to guide services and educators on the recognition process.

The project will be overseen by a small group of MECAC and ECA representatives, which will report to MECAC on a regular basis. A working group of sector stakeholders, including some of the coaches who completed the TAA and TAE training through the original Recognition Project, will assist on the scoping and reviewing of the draft resource.

- (3) Develop an agreed 'grievance process', which would be perhaps lead to faster resolution of issues at local level than working through ASQA.