



Foundation Program Standards 2021

Information for providers and students on the new Standards for Foundation Programs

Reason for Introduction

In consultation with the sector, the department has developed the *Foundation Program Standards 2021* (the Standards). The Standards repealed and replaced the *Foundation Program Standards (19/06/2011)* (the former Standards) on 16 September 2021.

What has changed

The requirements set by the Standards are substantially the same as the former Standards. There are some changes and providers should read the new Standards to ensure compliance. The key changes are outlined below.

Minimum hours of study

The Standards specify all courses must be delivered on a full-time basis of 20 hours per teaching week. This change clarifies what constitutes a full-time basis, previously only referenced in the explanatory guide.

Requirements for younger students

A new Standard (Standard 10) has been introduced to ensure the protection and welfare of students under 18 years old. Providers must follow requirements to ensure their operations are appropriate for the age, maturity, and English language proficiency of the students. This includes compliance with Standard 5 of the *National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018* (the National Code) and with all applicable state, territory and Commonwealth child protection legislation and child safety requirements.

Assessment requirements

Providers must have formal measures in place to ensure that assessment outcomes for English language subjects in Foundation Programs are comparable to other criteria used for admission to the available higher education pathways, or for admission to other similar courses of study. This requirement mirrors Standard P4.1(c)(ii) of the *ELICOS Standards 2018* and ensures both students and providers can be satisfied that all pathway programs sufficiently prepare students for higher education.

Providers must also ensure that programs teach students the skills and knowledge to successfully commence higher education study. Written agreements between Foundation Program providers and higher education providers must give assurance that students who successfully complete the program demonstrate overall higher education readiness. Where students are at risk of not demonstrating overall higher education readiness by completion of the course, providers must give additional support or advice on alternate pathways.

Professional development

Providers are required to implement an **annual** program of professional training and development for teaching staff. Providers retain the flexibility to tailor the teaching program to best meet the needs of their specific programs, teachers and student cohorts.

Other minor amendments

- References to online study have been added to clarify expectations where Foundation Programs are delivered online. This does not change the allowable amounts of online study set by the National Code, or affect the Tertiary Education and Quality Standards Agency's (TEQSA) flexibility to allow online study during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Included a requirement for providers to make reports available to students in an online format.
- Included a requirement for providers to include at least two assessment processes per subject, while retaining flexibility of types and weightings for assessments.
- Specified that only programs which comply with the Standards may use the word 'Foundation' in the title of the program.
- Changes made to clarify and simplify include:
 - defining key terms;
 - specifying that minimum English language subject requirements are 28 per cent of total scheduled course contact hours for extended programs; and
 - clarifying entry requirements and course durations for standard and extended programs.
- Included the substance of the Standards in the legislative instrument.

Implementation

The Standards commenced on 16 September 2021. Where an application for registration, renewal or changes to a registration has been lodged before commencement, TEQSA will assess compliance against the former Standards. Applications or renewals lodged after the commencement date are expected to meet the new Standards.

While the Standards are already in place and applicable, TEQSA understands that a reasonable adjustment period may be required in some cases and will expect providers to be fully compliant by 1 April 2022, if not immediately.

Regulation

TEQSA is the ESOS Agency for all Foundation Programs. Providers can contact TEQSA at enquiries@teqsa.gov.au or by phoning 1300 739 585.

Q&As

Why is there no explanatory guide?

Any requirements previously included in the explanatory guide that remain relevant have been incorporated into the legislative instrument to make it simpler for providers to understand their obligations. The Explanatory Statement available on legislation.gov.au provides further information on each standard, including examples as appropriate.

What is the requirement for assessing students' English?

Providers are required put in place formal measures to ensure that assessment outcomes for the English language subjects are comparable to other criteria used for admission to the available higher education pathways, or for admission to other similar courses of study. For example, explicit external benchmarking of assessment inputs and outputs, benchmarking to validated language proficiency frameworks, tracer studies of student cohorts or sample cohort external testing. TEQSA has published a [guidance note](#) for ELICOS direct entry, which may also be useful for providers of Foundation Programs.

I'm a student – what does this mean for me?

Students aren't required to do anything as a result of the new Standards. Your provider will let you know if there are any changes to your course. Changes may include assessment types, or scheduled hours, however any changes are likely to be minor.

If a program is delivered in a school, who is the ESOS Agency?

Since 1 July 2016, TEQSA is the ESOS Agency for ALL Foundation Programs, including where they are delivered in a school. Prior to this, Designated State Authorities and the Department of Education had regulatory roles in Foundation Programs delivered by schools.

Where can I find the former Standards?

The [National Standards for Foundation Programs](#) are available on the department's website. They will no longer apply from 16 September 2021.

Why has the style of the Standards changed?

The former Standards incorporated the *National Standards for Foundation Programs*, which existed outside the instrument. The substance of the Standards has now been brought into the instrument itself. This required some changes to formatting, terminology and the inclusion of additional sections. Other changes were made to improve the reading flow and appropriately group related requirements.