



# Guidelines for applications to use the word 'university' in a business name

## Introduction

1. Ensuring that the word 'university' is used appropriately in business names is one element of Australia's higher education quality arrangements. Restricting use of the word 'university' in line with these Guidelines will ensure that any business with the word 'university' in its name is not using the name in a way that might mislead prospective students, higher education providers (providers), or other stakeholders.

*Note: Where these Guidelines refer to the use of the word 'university' in a business name, the reference to 'university' also includes words or expressions with the same or a similar meaning as the word 'university'.*

2. Pursuant to the *Business Names Registration Act 2011* (the Act) and sub items 10(1) and 10(2), and item 204 of Part 2 of Schedule 2 of the *Business Names Registration (Availability of Names) Determination 2012* (the Determination), a business cannot register a business name containing the word 'university' with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) unless the application for registration is accompanied by written consent from the Minister for Education (the Minister).
3. The Minister has authorised the following Department of Education (the department) officers to assess applications to use the word 'university' in a business name:
  - i Secretary
  - ii Deputy Secretary, Higher Education, Research and International Group
  - iii First Assistant Secretary, Higher Education Division
  - iv an Assistant Secretary within Higher Education Division.
4. The Guidelines set out the procedures and criteria that will normally apply when considering applications for consent to use the word 'university' in a business name. Each application will be considered on its merits, having regard to the individual circumstances of each application.

## Background

5. The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) is Australia's independent national quality assurance and regulatory agency for higher education. TEQSA's primary functions are to register and re-register higher education providers and accredit and re-accredit courses for those providers without self-accrediting authority (almost all the non-university providers).
6. TEQSA regulates higher education providers against the *Higher Education Standards Framework (the Threshold Standards) 2021*. The Threshold Standards set out the criteria that higher education providers must meet to be registered by TEQSA, including registration in a category that permits the use of the word 'university'.

### ***Business Names Registration Act 2011 and the Business Names Registration (Availability of Names Determination 2012)***

7. The Act and sub-items 10(1) and 10(2), and item 204 of Schedule 2 of the Determination operate to restrict the use of the word 'university' in business names. Specifically, sub-items 10(1) and 10(2) operate such that an application for registration, reservation or a change of name which includes the word 'university' must be accompanied by the written consent of the Minister, or a person authorised by the Minister.

## Criteria for granting consent

Consent to use the word 'university' in a business name will normally be granted in the following circumstances:

8. Where the applicant:
  - a. is a provider as defined in the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011 (the TEQSA Act)*, and is or proposes to become registered by TEQSA in a category that permits the use of the word 'university', or
  - b. is not a provider as defined in the TEQSA Act, but is an overseas business or body approved to operate as a university in its home country by that country's registration or accreditation authority, or
  - c. is controlled entirely by another business or body that is a provider (as defined in the TEQSA Act) which is registered by TEQSA in a category that permits the use of the word 'university', and
    - i. the application is supported in writing by the university concerned, and
    - ii. the proposed name accurately reflects the purpose for which the business in question is being formed, or



- d. is an Australian Government-funded Regional University Centre, and the proposed name accurately reflects the activities of that university centre.
9. Where the applicant does not intend to provide education services or information about education services, issue higher education awards, or intend in any other respect to operate, or purport to operate, as a university:
    - a. the proposed name accurately reflects the purpose for which the business is being formed and is not likely to mislead people dealing with the business about the nature of its activities, or its connection to any university, and
    - b. if the proposed name implies a connection with an existing university (for example, Sydney University Cricket Club), the application must be supported in writing by the university concerned.
  10. Assessments use a broad interpretation of 'education services', including workshops, tutoring, information sessions, advisory and support services. Applications for a business name that includes the term 'uni' should also explain the meaning of the term in the context of the proposed business name, to avoid any implied association with a university.

## How to apply

11. Applicants should specifically address the above criteria and include all required supporting documentation, listed below in paragraph 11. Submit all applications to:

Assistant Secretary  
Funding and Workforce Policy  
Higher Education Division  
Department of Education  
GPO Box 9880  
Canberra ACT 2601

Or by email at:

[HEstandards@education.gov.au](mailto:HEstandards@education.gov.au).

## Supporting documentation

12. All applications must include the following supporting documentation:
  - the proposed business name(s)
  - a description of the applicant's intended business, the nature of its activity and the relevant criterion in paragraphs [8] and [9] above under which it is seeking consent



- a statement on whether the applicant intends to provide education services or information about education services, issue higher education awards, or intends in any other respect to operate, or purport to operate, as a university
- if the business is not registered by TEQSA, but has authority to operate as a university as outlined in criterion 8(b), evidence of the applicant’s authority to operate as a university from:
  - the relevant Australian State or Territory authority, and
  - for an overseas business or body, the applicant’s home country registration or accreditation authority
- if the business name has a connection with any existing university and the activities of the applicant will be controlled completely by the relevant university, as outlined in criterion 8(c), written confirmation is required from a senior delegate of the relevant university, stating that:
  - the activities of the applicant will be controlled completely by the relevant university
  - the application is supported by the relevant university
  - the applicant's proposed name accurately reflects the purpose for which the business was/will be formed, or
- if the proposed name implies a connection with any existing university, as outlined in criterion 9(b), written support from a senior delegate from the relevant university for the proposed name.

## Processing of applications

13. The decision-maker may seek additional information to determine an application. The applicant will receive a written notice requesting additional information with a date by which the additional information must be provided. If an applicant fails to comply with such a request for further information, the decision maker will consider the application based on the available information, which may result in a refusal.
14. Applications will be managed by the department in accordance with the provisions of the *Privacy Act 1988*. Information contained in applications will only be used for the purposes of determining whether consent will be granted for the use of the word ‘university’ in a business name. Applications may be disclosed to other Australian Government departments or agencies including TEQSA and ASIC, and State or Territory governments, where required, for determining the outcome of the application. Applications will not be disclosed for any other purpose unless required or authorised by law. Outcomes of applications may also be disclosed to other Commonwealth agencies, including TEQSA and ASIC or State or Territory governments.
15. Generally, the outcome of an application will be provided to the applicant in writing within two months of receipt. Additional time may be required where the application raises complex issues or additional information is required from the applicant. Applicants will be informed in writing if additional time is required.



## Revocation of consent

16. Consent is granted on the basis that the applicant will continue to use the word 'university' in its business name, in the manner described in its application. Where the applicant's circumstances change, particularly circumstances that relate to the criteria set out in paragraphs [8] and [9], consent may be revoked or varied.
17. In addition, consent to use the word 'university' in a business name may be granted subject to conditions. If any such conditions are breached, consent may be revoked. If consent for use of the word 'university' is revoked, ASIC may then cancel the registration of the business name under section 46 of the Act.

## Review

18. If an application to use the word 'university' in a business name is refused, the applicant may submit a revised application to the department along with new supporting material, or apply for a different business name that meets the criteria set out in paragraphs [8] and [9].
19. An applicant may also seek judicial review of decisions under the *Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act 1977* or the common law and should seek their own advice in relation to any such review.

## Further enquiries

20. All enquiries relating to applications for use of the word 'university' in a business name or these Guidelines should be directed to the department via email to [HEstandards@education.gov.au](mailto:HEstandards@education.gov.au).

## Criminal Code

21. In respect of information of any kind submitted to the Minister or the Commonwealth, the *Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth)* provides that giving false or misleading information is a serious offence.

