



VET Sector Strategic Forum

Terms of Reference

Purpose

The VET Sector Strategic Forum (VSSF) is ASQA's primary forum for strategic engagement and consultation with VET and ELICOS peak bodies, industry and student voices, on key matters including VET reform and regulatory design. VSSF members will collectively bring their whole of sector perspective to work collaboratively with ASQA in recognition of our shared stewardship of quality and integrity in the sector.

Background

ASQA's purpose is to ensure quality vocational education and training so that students, industry, governments and the community have confidence in the integrity of national qualifications issued by training providers. ASQA is instrumental in ensuring that Australians can experience the economic benefits that quality VET provides, by regulating the VET sector and partnering with stakeholders to continuously improve regulatory outcomes, consistent with government expectations of ASQA as a best-practice regulator.

ASQA's work supports the Australian Government's goal to boost the nation's skills – for improved productivity, wage growth and economic development, as well as to support more equitable outcomes in employment opportunities for those who may be disadvantaged. VET contributes significantly to Australia's economic, employment and social outcomes. Workers qualified through VET pathways play a key role in supplying applied learning and practical skills for roles that continue to be in demand and are in persistent shortage across Australia. As the national regulator of the VET sector, ASQA's work is critical to ensure that VET standards are met and that providers are capable of and committed to, meeting their obligations.

Objectives and scope

ASQA recognises that effective stakeholder engagement with key stakeholders, including peak provider associations is essential for ASQA to achieve its strategic objectives and successfully deliver on the outcomes outlined above.

The VSSF will provide a forum for strategic engagement on regulatory reform and design, current and emerging regulatory risks, and opportunities for sector stewardship to inform and support ASQA's role as the National VET Regulator.

Membership

The VSSF will be comprised of senior representatives from:

- Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA)
- Adult Learning Australia (ALA)
- Community Colleges Australia (CCA)
- English Australia
- Enterprise Registered Training Organisation Association (ERTO)
- Independent Higher Education Australia (IHEA)
- Independent Tertiary Education Council Australia (ITECA)
- TAFE Directors Australia (TDA)

Organisations will be invited to attend items where matters under consideration are related to their roles and accountabilities. Likely invitees include, but are not limited to:

- National Centre for Vocational Education Research
- Commonwealth Ombudsman
- Jobs and Skills Councils

Membership will be formally reviewed every two years.

The Chair reserves the right to accept expressions of interest for potential new members at any time.

Representatives from other government agencies or stakeholders may be invited by the Chair to address the VSSF and/or attend meetings or matters as observers. Members may also make suggestions to the Chair.

Roles and responsibilities

Chair

The VSSF will be chaired by the CEO of ASQA. The principal responsibilities of the Chair are to:

- provide appropriate leadership and ensure the VSSF fulfils its obligations under the Terms of Reference; and
- approve agenda items and ensure adequate time is available for their discussion.

The Chair will lead meetings and guide the VSSF in a way that:

- promotes full participation by all members
- fosters collaboration; and
- focuses the discussion and deliberations of members on strategic matters and outcomes.

Members

The principal responsibilities of VSSF members are to attend and participate in VSSF meetings to:

1. Provide sector insight and context to ASQA's strategic priorities, opportunities and challenges, including to support quality VET outcomes and improved approaches to regulation.
2. Assist in shaping sector-wide reform and development of a forward-looking, long-term sector strategy, informed by a shared understanding of 'quality outcomes' and stewardship.
3. Identify and discuss current and emerging risks to the quality of VET outcomes and identify opportunities for collaborative engagement with key stakeholders and the sector.

Members are expected to:

- demonstrate a willingness to contribute to joint discussions and problem solving

- foster collaboration whilst demonstrating mutual respect and trust amongst members
- approach discussions with a constructive, interest-based approach which recognises competing or different interests
- share and provide relevant information, data and insights that inform the group's understanding of issues being discussed (with appropriate safeguards in place, where required); and
- provide insights and strategic, workable solutions to systemic VET sector issues. Advocate and promote compliance and self-assurance, including through the provision of information, to their members and the VET sector more broadly.

The VSSF is not a decision-making body. It has an advisory role and does not operate on a consensus basis.

Operation of the Forum

Meetings

The VSSF will meet at least three (3) times per year, unless otherwise agreed. Meetings may be held in person, by telephone or by video conference.

The Chair may call additional meetings or request the VSSF to consider matters out-of-session.

Secretariat

The VSSF will be supported by a secretariat from ASQA.

Agenda and meeting papers

The Chair will set the agenda. VSSF members may submit agenda items to the Chair for approval.

A meeting agenda and supporting papers will be sent to members and invitees five (5) calendar days prior to the meeting.

Working Groups

The Chair may establish working groups to assist the VSSF to focus on specific issues in greater detail than is possible for the Forum. Working groups will report to the Chair.

Proxy

Where a member is unable to attend a meeting, a suitable proxy of senior standing within the organisation may be nominated for approval to the Chair, with notification to the Secretariat no less than 24 hours prior to the scheduled meeting.

If the Chair is unable to attend a meeting, the Deputy CEO, ASQA will act as Chair.

Communique

A high-level communiqué will be released on ASQA's website after each meeting.

Member conduct

VSSF members agree to:

- participate in good faith to contribute sector insights, information and experience to support the objectives of the VSSF
- behave honestly and with integrity in connection with their role on the VSSF

- respect the views of others and treat members with respect and courtesy
- maintain strict confidentiality regarding the discussions and sensitive information shared during meetings and not disclose or distribute information that is discussed at VSSF meetings unless prior permission is obtained from the Chair
- not engage with the media in relation to matters discussed by the VSSF unless prior permission is obtained from the Chair
- take reasonable steps to avoid and/or manage any conflict of interest (real or apparent) and disclose to the Chair details of any personal interest in connection with the VSSF
- disclose material changes to business operations
- not improperly use inside information obtained through membership of the VSSF to gain, or seek to gain, a benefit or an advantage, or to cause, or to seek to cause, detriment to ASQA
- attend meetings and provide apologies with sufficient notice where attendance is not possible
- ASQA publishing VSSF member details
- the VSSF is advisory in nature and is not an ASQA governance or decision-making committee and
- should an individual member breach these conduct requirements, the Chair may withdraw that organisations' membership of the VSSF.

The Terms of Reference may be amended, varied or modified in writing after consultation with, and agreement by, VSSF members and endorsement by the Chair.

Terms of Reference were agreed: 10/04/2025.