



Provider Reference Group

Terms of Reference

Purpose

The Provider Reference Group (PRG) is ASQA's primary forum for operational engagement and consultation with providers on VET regulatory reform, design and education. PRG members will collectively bring their whole of sector perspective to work collaboratively with ASQA, in recognition of our shared stewardship for 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, our 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 engagement with key VET stakeholders is essential. Direct collaboration with providers is essential for ASQA to achieve its strategic objectives and work collaboratively to support the quality and protect the integrity of the VET sector.

The PRG provides a forum for engagement with ASQA on how it interacts with and supports providers, in pursuing regulatory outcomes through its regulatory operating model and regulatory risk framework. This includes environmental scanning to identify provider and systemic risk, regulatory education frameworks and approaches to building provider capability and supporting continuous improvement. PRG members will contribute and provide feedback including on the matters outlined above and ASQA's interactions with regulated entities more broadly.

In advancing these objectives, ASQA will facilitate feedback loops between the PRG and the peak provider associations that comprise the VET Sector Strategic Forum, ASQA's primary forum for strategic engagement and consultation with the VET and ELICOS sectors on regulatory design and reform.

Membership

The PRG will comprise representatives from:

- Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA)
- providers that are broadly representative of the diversity of ASQA's regulated community, including the following cohorts:
 - at least two (2) TAFE providers delivering training to domestic students – this may include a dual-sector institution
 - two (2) community education providers
 - two (2) enterprise RTOs
 - one (1) school that is an RTO
 - up to seven (7) private RTOs – this may include a provider registered on CRICOS to deliver ELICOS training.

PRG membership will be open to ASQA regulated VET providers only and will be established via an Expression of Interest (EOI) process. Eligible providers must nominate a senior representative, preferably at Director, CEO or senior management level who have a high level of operational authority in their respective organisations.

Individuals working as consultants are not eligible for membership of the PRG.

Membership will be formally reviewed every 2 years.

Existing and prospective members will be able to submit an EOI at the end of each 2-year period to express interest in membership for the following 2-year membership period.

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

The Chair may consider and agree to a replacement in the event that a member resigns mid-term.

Members who at any point no longer remain as ASQA regulated VET providers, may need to resign their membership on PRG.

Roles and responsibilities

Chair

The PRG will be chaired by the Executive Director, Policy and Engagement. The responsibilities of the Chair are to:

- provide appropriate leadership and ensure the PRG 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 PRG in a way that:

- promotes full participation by all members
- fosters collaboration; and
- focuses the discussion and deliberations of members on key issues and desired outcomes.

Members

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

- provide sector expertise and insights
- identify and discuss current and emerging provider and systemic risks to quality VET outcomes
- assist in co-designing and shaping education strategies and improved regulatory approaches, informed by a shared understanding of 'quality outcomes' and stewardship
- identify opportunities for collaborative engagement with the sector.

Members are expected to:

- attend PRG meetings
- actively participate in discussions and activities and 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
- provide insights into systemic provider and sector issues
- advocate and promote compliance, including through the provision of information, to support and assist the VET sector.

The PRG is not a decision-making body. It is an engagement forum for information sharing and advice and does not operate on a consensus basis.

Operation of the PRG

Meetings

The PRG will meet at least twice each 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 PRG consider matters out-of-session.

Secretariat

The PRG will be supported by a Secretariat from ASQA.

Agenda and meeting papers

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

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

Working Groups

The Chair may establish working groups to assist the PRG to focus on specific issues in greater detail than is possible during meetings.

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 Director, Sector Education and Engagement will act as Chair.

Communique

A communiqué will be released on ASQA's website after each formal meeting.

Member Code of Conduct

PRG members agree to:

- participate in good faith to contribute sector insights, information and experience to support the objectives of the PRG
- behave honestly and with integrity in connection with their role on the PRG
- 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 PRG meetings unless prior permission is obtained from the Chair, via the ASQA Director, Sector Education and Engagement.
- not engage with the media in relation to matters discussed by the PRG 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 PRG
- disclose material changes to business operations, including adverse decisions by ASQA or other government agencies that have (real or apparent) impact on their role on the PRG
- not improperly use inside information obtained through membership of the PRG 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 PRG member details
- Acknowledge that the PRG is an engagement forum for information that is advisory in nature and 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 PRG.

I understand that where an individual member breaches this Code of Conduct, the Chair may withdraw that individual's membership of the RRG.

Name

Position title

Organisation name

Signature

Date/...../.....

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

Terms of Reference were agreed: Date/...../.....