Australian Government
Australian Skills Quality Authority

ASQA

Working with Consultants

Guide

Consultants can be useful if you are new to the sector or feel you would benefit from independent help to improve your quality and compliance. Recognising the value and quality consultants can offer, we've co-designed this guide with our Stakeholder Liaison Group (SLG). This guide aims to help you in engaging a consultant.

The value of external advice

Managing your registration obligations in addition to running a business can be complex. External advice can help you improve and grow while maintaining compliance.

For new entrants to the training sector, a consultant can help navigate the application process and build systems and processes which support you to meet your compliance obligations and commitment to quality. For existing providers, a consultant can identify opportunities for improvement, growth, sustained compliance and increased quality.

You might choose to use a consultant if you lack compliance expertise in your organisation. Engaging and working regularly with a consultant who specialises in compliance can help your business avoid, detect and address non-compliance, quality issues and poor practice. Bringing in fresh eyes to review your systems and processes can save time, resources, and expenses in the long run.

If you're considering expanding delivery to a new student cohort, area of industry focus or training model, engaging a consultant with relevant experience and expertise can help you avoid risks and make your transition more successful.

Whatever reason you might choose to look for external assistance, it's important to understand that you're always responsible for compliance.

Compliance: it's your responsibility

Be aware that engaging a consultant is not without risk. Consultants in the VET and ESOS sector are not regulated and you should undertake due diligence before acting on the advice of a consultant.

We see risk where providers rely on poor quality advice leading to poor quality student outcomes and non-compliant practices. A common example is over-reliance on templated

resources and tools provided by consultants. If resources haven't been tailored to reflect a provider's circumstances, they are unlikely to meet learner needs.

Maintaining compliant practice.

A consultant may set up a path to compliance, but it is up to you to meet your obligations on an ongoing basis. Ensure that any advice or resources are right for your organisation.

- **Tailored advice** – ensure advice is relevant and customised to the needs of your business. Is the advice adequate to your business model or is it too much or too little?
- **Tailored tools** – ensure templated resources and compliance tools are relevant and customised to accurately reflect your circumstances and practices.

We have **guides and resources** available on our website to support you in maintaining ongoing compliance.

What to consider when engaging a consultant

You should ask colleagues, peers, or your peak body for recommendations, or consider other public information to help choose a reputable consultant. Some things to keep in mind are:

- **Honesty** – look for a consultant who isn't afraid to give you an honest and accurate appraisal of your business.
- **Reputation** – are testimonials and references available? Look at who is in their network (e.g. review their online profiles and connections).
- **Expertise** – pick the right consultant for the job based on qualifications and experience.
- **Membership of a professional association** – is the consultant a member of a professional association.
- **Certification** – does the consultant hold any verifiable certification (e.g. Certified Internal Auditor, Certified Compliance professional, Certified Risk professional).
- **Price** –the amount a consultant charges isn't always an indication of the quality of service they provide.
- **Professional indemnity insurance –** does the consultant have professional indemnity insurance and does this cover the services they are offering?

Ensure you and your consultant are clear on the key services to be provided – price, time-line, deliverables etc. should all be set out in a written agreement.

By considering the above points and conducting the relevant checks, you can set your organisation up for success when working with a consultant.