

REPORT

Australian Skills Quality Authority Self-Assessment Report against the Regulator Performance Framework 2018




Australian Government

Australian Skills Quality Authority

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Introduction

As part of its commitment to reduce the cost of unnecessary or inefficient regulation imposed on individuals, business and community organisations, the Government released the Regulator Performance Framework (RPF) in October 2014.

The RPF comprises six outcomes-based key performance indicators (KPIs):

1. Regulators do not unnecessarily impede the efficient operation of regulated entities.
2. Communication with regulated entities is clear, targeted and effective.
3. Actions undertaken by regulators are proportionate to the regulatory risks being managed.
4. Compliance and monitoring approaches are streamlined and coordinated.
5. Regulators are open and transparent in their dealings with regulated entities.
6. Regulators actively contribute to the continuous improvement of regulatory frameworks.

All regulators covered by the RPF have in place measures to assess their performance against these six KPIs.

A key purpose of the RPF is to increase the transparency and accountability of Commonwealth regulators. Regulators must self-assess their performance against their measures once every 12 months and have these self-assessments externally validated by their key stakeholders.

This report is ASQA's third self-assessment against the RPF. It is for the period 1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018 and following the external validation process must be provided to the Minister and then published on the Authority's website by 28 February 2019.

I certify this report as ASQA's accountable authority under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*.



Mr Mark Paterson AO
Chief Commissioner and Chief Executive Officer
Australian Skills Quality Authority

KPI 1: Regulators do not unnecessarily impede the efficient operation of regulated entities

ASQA performance metrics

1. Detail the mechanisms for regulated entities and stakeholders to provide feedback and input to ASQA on policies and practices to identify emerging issues.
2. ASQA's work program to reduce compliance costs for regulated entities.
3. Proportion of the regulated community reporting high satisfaction with their engagement with ASQA.
4. Summarise ASQA's annual environmental scanning activities and the outcomes of Strategic Reviews.

Results against performance metrics

Metric 1— Detail the mechanisms for regulated entities and stakeholders to provide feedback and input to ASQA on policies and practices to identify emerging issues

➤ Self-Assessment Measure — Mechanisms deployed

ASQA has established a number of mechanisms through which regulated entities and stakeholders can provide feedback. In 2017–18, these included:

- **Provider Roundtable Meetings** — ASQA held four 'provider roundtable' meetings during 2017–18. These meetings provided opportunities for peak bodies to engage with ASQA and to discuss the Authority's regulatory approach, as well as high-priority emerging issues. The provider roundtables are a valuable forum that allows ASQA to participate in structured dialogue with provider organisations, and allows the provider organisations to bring the concerns of their members to ASQA's attention.
- **Industry Engagement** — Members of ASQA's Industry and Risk Intelligence Team are a central contact point for industry stakeholders. The ASQA Info line refers inquiries from industry stakeholders to this team for response. Active engagement with industry stakeholders in priority industry areas (identified through ASQA's annual environmental scan) is undertaken by the Industry and Risk Intelligence Team to enable ASQA to fully understand and mitigate risks in those areas. ASQA's Regulatory Operations Managers, also engage with industry stakeholders at the state and territory level to ensure ASQA is obtaining localised feedback and intelligence. Information collected from ASQA's industry stakeholders is used to inform ASQA's regulatory activity.
- **Communication Protocols** — ASQA has in place communication protocols with each State / Territory. The protocols seek to support the effective and efficient regulation of RTOs by ASQA as well as the effective and efficient management of VET within each State / Territory. A key component of each protocol is a commitment for regular meetings between ASQA senior officials and their State / Territory counterparts (e.g. Departmental Heads / relevant Ministers).

- **Cost Recovery Implementation Statement (CRIS) Consultation** — ASQA undertook public consultation in August and September 2017 on a new fees and charges structure. The proposed structure aimed to incentivise provider compliance, and received a strong positive response from providers and stakeholders. More than 80 per cent of responses received during the consultation period indicated support for the proposed fees and charges structure. Following the consultation, ASQA reviewed the feedback and made adjustments to the proposed structure. The new fees and charges were implemented on 6 July 2018.

Metric 2 — ASQA’s work program to reduce compliance costs for regulated entities

➤ Self-Assessment Measure — Work program delivered

ASQA has successfully delivered the work program introduced in 2014 as part of ASQA’s comprehensive vocational education and training (VET) regulatory reform strategy to support the Australian Government’s policy to boost productivity and reduce regulation. The seven reforms included in the work program were:

- Equivalent training package scope updates
- Removal of financial viability from renewal of registration
- Delegations for amending scope of registration
- Provision of enhanced guidance and information
- Implementation of the new standards
- Changes in risk model and regulatory approach
- Adjustments to ASQA’s organisation structure.

ASQA continues to seek ways to reduce compliance costs for regulated entities (whilst also meeting its own cost recovery obligations) through the risk-based regulatory approach the Authority applies to regulate the VET sector. This ensures that ASQA minimises regulatory burden for proven high-performing providers with a history of compliance and increases regulatory scrutiny for those considered higher risk. More information about ASQA’s risk-based approach is available in the *ASQA Regulatory Risk Framework*. As this measure has now been fully met, ASQA expects this metric to change for the next reporting period.

Metric 3 — Proportion of the regulated community reporting high satisfaction with their engagement with ASQA

➤ Self-Assessment Measure — Percentage reporting high satisfaction with ASQA engagement

In 2017–18, 67.8 per cent of providers indicated their perception of ASQA’s engagement with the regulated community as ‘excellent’ or ‘good’. A further 19.2 per cent considered ASQA’s engagement ‘fair’.

Provider satisfaction with ASQA's engagement with the regulated community, 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018 (ASQA Survey of RTOs and Stakeholders 2018*)

Satisfaction level (%) Target = 70

Providers

67.8

* ASQA's survey was undertaken using a questionnaire to gather feedback from the two target audiences: RTOs and stakeholders. Most items surveyed were answered using a five point performance rating scale of excellent, good, fair, poor and very poor. Results were analysed to produce percent positive scores (the sum of *excellent* and *good* proportional responses to a question) and frequency distributions.

Metric 4 — Summarise ASQA's annual environmental scanning activities and the outcomes of strategic reviews

➤ Self-Assessment Measure — Summary and outcomes reported

Annual environmental scanning activities

In managing systemic risk, ASQA undertakes an annual environmental scan drawing on the views of key stakeholders, internal regulatory data, and other external data to understand risks in the VET sector.

ASQA's [2017-18 Regulatory Strategy](#) was informed by an environmental scan completed in April 2017.

Strategic reviews

To regulate Australia's vocational education sector, ASQA continually assesses risks presented by providers, courses, qualifications and the VET system. Where systemic risks are identified, ASQA seeks to prevent damage to the VET sector by undertaking strategic reviews of these training areas and issues.

In 2017–18 ASQA commenced the International Education Strategic Review, a strategic review of international VET and English language education services delivered by ASQA-regulated providers.

International Education Strategic Review

The purpose of the International Education Strategic Review is to ensure that the quality of Australia's international VET and English language education services delivered by ASQA-regulated providers remains at a high standard, students are safeguarded and Australia's reputation as a destination of choice for international students is enhanced. In 2017–18, ASQA undertook preliminary planning and research including:

- establishing an International Education Strategic Review reference committee comprising key stakeholders
- holding the first reference committee meeting in June 2018, at which the committee agreed the three streams of work for further analysis:
 - data and information management
 - policy and regulatory framework integration
 - recognising and rewarding quality.

- releasing the terms of reference for the review
- commencing audits of a number of CRICOS providers of interest.

Self-assessment of results against performance metrics

ASQA's results against each of the four metrics against this KPI were good. ASQA has established several mechanisms for regulated entities and stakeholders to provide feedback and input into ASQA's policies and procedures, and a majority of providers were satisfied with ASQA's engagement with the regulated community. The Authority has completed a program of work aimed at reducing compliance costs, and ASQA's annual e-scan and strategic reviews form a core component of the Authority's risk based regulatory approach.

ASQA notes however that it needs to improve performance in relation to its engagement if it is to meet its target of 70% provider satisfaction (i.e. providers rating ASQA's engagement as 'excellent' or 'good') in the 2018-19 financial years. ASQA will continue to increase its engagement with the regulated community through a broad range of information channels, including face-to-face events, webinars, presentations at industry events, and online (including through its website and social media).

KPI 2: Communication with regulated entities is clear, targeted and effective

ASQA performance metrics

1. Proportion of providers reporting that ASQA's information systems and service channels are accurate, helpful and timely
2. Assessment of ASQA's response times against its targets (proportion of initial registration applications/renewals/registration applications completed within targeted timeframe)
3. Satisfaction with:
 - > knowledge of staff answering calls and emails
 - > completeness of answers provided
4. Detail the outcomes of the audit moderation process to demonstrate consistency in decision- making

Results against performance metrics

Metric 1 — Proportion of providers reporting that ASQA's information systems and service channels are accurate, helpful and timely

- Self-Assessment Measure — 70 per cent or more reported that ASQA's information systems and service channels are accurate, helpful and timely

Providers continue to indicate high levels of satisfaction with ASQA's website – the Authority's primary information system - as shown in the table below.

As part of continuous improvement work, ASQA commenced a review of www.asqa.gov.au aimed at improving the website's user focus. The 'research' and 'discovery' phases of this project, as required under the Australian Government's mandatory Digital Service Standard, were completed during the reporting year. The results of this work, as well as additional user testing, will inform the delivery of a revised website during 2018–19.

Provider satisfaction with ASQA website (ASQA Survey of RTOs and Stakeholders 2018*)

Criteria	Satisfaction level (%) target = 70
Navigation	83.5
Search function	77.1
Information / Content	88.7

Clarity of information	83.4
Accuracy of information	90.8
Currency of information	89.2

* ASQA's survey was undertaken using a questionnaire to gather feedback from the two target audiences: RTOs and stakeholders. Most items surveyed were answered using a five point performance rating scale of excellent, good, fair, poor and very poor. Results were analysed to produce percent positive scores (the sum of *excellent* and *good* proportional responses to a question) and frequency distributions.

In 2017-18, ASQA also held 27 training provider briefing sessions from May to June 2018, including 23 face-to-face sessions at 13 metropolitan and regional locations across Australia, and four webinars. Consistent with previous years, providers continued to respond positively to these sessions.

Provider satisfaction with ASQA training provider briefing sessions 2018 (ASQA Survey of RTOs and Stakeholders 2018*)

Criteria	Satisfaction level (%) target = 70
Range of topics covered/discussed	82.1
Timeliness of information	83.6
Helpfulness of information	77.5
Accuracy of information	86.9
Clarity of information	82.6
Knowledge of presenters	85.4

* ASQA's survey was undertaken using a questionnaire to gather feedback from the two target audiences: RTOs and stakeholders. Most items surveyed were answered using a five point performance rating scale of excellent, good, fair, poor and very poor. Results were analysed to produce percent positive scores (the sum of *excellent* and *good* proportional responses to a question) and frequency distributions.

Metric 2 — Assessment of ASQA's response times against its targets

➤ **Self-Assessment Measure — Percentage of applications completed within timeframes described in ASQA's Performance Standards**

ASQA provides guidance to providers on the expected timeframes for completion of application processes through its published service standards. ASQA undertakes a risk assessment of all applications for initial registration, to renew registration, and to add courses to a provider's registration ('change of scope' applications).

Performance in relation to renewal and change applications (without audit) was very good with 95.4% of renewal applications and 79.8% of change applications (without audit) completed in the time periods specified in ASQA's Performance Standards (i.e. six months and one month respectively).

However, performance in relation to initial and change applications (with audit) was lacking with 58.9% of initial applications and 47.9% of change applications (with audit) completed within the time period specified in its Performance Standards (i.e. within six months).

Percentage of applications finalised within the timeframes set in ASQA's Performance Standards 2017-18

Application Type	Target	% Completed within Target
Initial registration	Finalised* within 6 months	58.9%
Renew registration	Finalised within 6 months	95.4%
Change of scope—with audit	Finalised within 6 months	47.9%
Change of scope—without audit	Finalised within 1 month	79.8%

* 'Finalised' means that ASQA has made a decision and advised the applicant (not that any review process has been completed).

Metric 3 — Satisfaction with the knowledge of staff answering calls and emails and the completeness of answers provided

- Self-Assessment Measure — 70 per cent or more report satisfaction levels as 'excellent' or 'good'

During 2017–18, the ASQA Info Line met or significantly exceeded the 70 per cent satisfaction target for three of four indicators relating to both email and telephone enquiries, with the exception being the 'completeness of answers' criterion.

Performance against this criterion can be partially attributed to the complexity of matters for which providers use the Info Line service. Providers increasingly use ASQA's website and education resources to self-serve for less complex enquiries. The Info Line frequently handles complex and unique matters that can require ongoing engagement with the individual or organisation involved.

Provider satisfaction with ASQA Info Line service, 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018

Criteria	Satisfaction level (%)	
	Telephone Target = 70	Email target = 70
Speed of answering	83.6	70.9
Completeness of answers	68.6	67.8

Knowledge of staff answering	71.8	76.3
Courtesy of staff answering	89.3	87.9

Metric 4 — Detail the outcomes of the audit moderation process to demonstrate consistency in decision-making

➤ Self-Assessment Measure — Outcomes reported

ASQA constantly seeks to ensure consistency among its auditors and employs several formal processes to minimise the potential for audit variation, including:

- Auditor moderation workshops: These are focused on moderating issues that may lead to inconsistency in audit outcomes, and on sharing approaches to overcome these issues.
- Auditor moderation log: A dynamic record of ASQA's agreed position on compliance issues. Auditors refer to this log when making compliance recommendations.
- Lead auditor reference group: This group identifies improvements to audit process and matters that need moderation, which contribute to improving consistency in audit process and outcomes.

The General Manager, Regulatory Operations and all managers from the Regulatory Operations branch of ASQA meet on a six weekly basis to ensure consistency of approach, operational effectiveness and business improvement across compliance operations.

Self-assessment of results against performance metrics

ASQA's results against metric one, three and four were satisfactory; the Authority exceeded its target of 70 per cent for respondents rating its information systems (website and provider briefings) as accurate, helpful and timely, and also performed solidly in relation to its Info Line. ASQA also has in place a number of formal processes to minimise the potential for audit variation.


ASQA is working to address timeliness issues it has experienced in relation to finalising initial registration applications and change-of-scope applications (with audit) within six months. A number of factors affected timeframes in relation to this metric during the reporting period:

- Initial registration — enhancing processes for application handling

During the 2017–18 financial year, ASQA enhanced its processes for handling these applications. These applicants require a greater level of regulatory scrutiny than established providers — for example, ASQA is required to review detailed financial data and projections as well as the suitability of persons associated with the applicant.

ASQA expects that as new internal processes are embedded to reflect these changed application requirements, ASQA's performance against this measure will improve.

- Change of scope application (with audit) — targeting of systemic issue



The Authority's response to an identified key systemic risk contributed to delays in ASQA's audit timeframes in relation to change of scope applications in 2017–18. The risk was the identified concern with products from the Training and Education (TAE) Training Package. Following on from a project that commenced in 2016, ASQA audited any applications relating to the TAE Training Package. This resulted in ASQA completing a very high number (75) of audit activities related to TAE applications during the reporting year.

Audits associated with TAE applications are inherently complex and have required significant resourcing from ASQA.

As the indicator for this measure was not designed to take into account high volumes of complex systemic risk based audits, ASQA's performance results have been impacted.

ASQA expects that as new internal processes are embedded, performance against this measure will improve.

KPI 3: Actions undertaken by regulators are proportionate to the regulatory risk being managed

ASQA performance metrics

1. Demonstrate how the compliance record of regulated entities is considered as part of the risk assessment process, including description of ASQA's processes for reviewing its risk model
2. Total number of providers that take up an offer of a delegation
3. Discuss how the evolution of ASQA's risk model has led to a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of provider risk.

Results against performance metrics

Metric 1 — The compliance record of regulated entities is considered as part of the risk assessment process, including a description of ASQA's processes for reviewing its risk model

➤ **Self-Assessment Measure — Documented processes**

Processes for considering the compliance record of regulated entities

ASQA fulfils its responsibility to manage risks to the quality of VET outcomes for students, employers and the community by managing risk on two levels: strategic (systemic risk) and operational (provider risk).

Provider Profiling

Each ASQA-registered provider has a nuanced and dynamic 'provider profile', reflecting a range of data sources. Provider profiles draw on a variety of information and data sources to allow ASQA to make informed judgements about the risk posed by a provider at any time.

Processes for reviewing ASQA's risk model

ASQA actively monitors the environment for new and emerging risks through ongoing scanning activities. When new systemic risks are identified, ASQA reviews the annual *Regulatory strategy* and reprioritises regulatory effort to ensure the most significant risks are treated in order of priority and as the environment shifts.

Metric 2 — Total number of providers that take up the offer of a delegation

➤ **Self-Assessment Measure — Number of delegates**

ASQA provides high-performing RTOs with the ability to manage their own scope of registration. This means that these RTOs are able to add new training products to their scope of registration without applying to ASQA and paying an application fee.

As at 30 July 2018 there were 176 RTO ASQA Delegates. The delegation program is current under review.

Metric 3 — Discuss how the evolution of ASQA’s risk model has led to a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of provider risk

➤ Self-Assessment Measure — Documented understanding of provider risk

In managing provider risk, ASQA seeks to effectively target its audit activity to those providers that are most likely to demonstrate non-compliance with the conditions of registration, by conducting compliance audits. These are audits that are triggered by concerns about the risk associated with a provider, rather than by the submission of an application.

During 2017-18 ASQA has continued to refine the information it uses to assess a providers behaviour. Provider profiles now includes more information from external sources. This data is sourced from information shared by other agencies and increases ASQA’s visibility of provider operations. The provider profile has been strengthened by the inclusion of a provider dashboard. This dashboard provides an ‘at-a-glance’ view of a provider against known risk indicators.

During the reporting year, 57.1 per cent of ASQA audit activities were non-application-based, significantly exceeding the target of 50 per cent.

Self-assessment of results against performance metrics

ASQA’s results against the three metrics in place to assess ASQA’s performance against this KPI were strong. Notably, the implementation of provider profiling has enabled ASQA to review provider performance through a centralised report, significantly contributing to the evolution of ASQA’s risk model.

KPI 4: Compliance and monitoring approaches are streamlined and coordinated

ASQA performance metrics

1. Description of ASQA's formal agreements with other regulators and how they are used to minimise the burden on regulated entities
2. ASQA uses a range of appropriate enforcement tools, proportionate to the seriousness of breaches:
 - > Number of written directions made
 - > Number of written enforceable undertakings agreed with providers
 - > Number of suspensions
 - > Number of cancellations
3. The proportion of audits that are not part of an application assessment, and the proportion of these that are non-compliant
4. Demonstration of how ASQA seeks to minimise and tailor information requests of regulated entities.

Results against performance metrics

Metric 1 — Description of ASQA's formal agreements with other regulators and how they are used to minimise the burden on regulated entities

➤ Self-Assessment Measure — Executed Agreements

As the national agency responsible for the regulation of the vocational education and training (VET) and English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) sectors, ASQA maintains a range of information sharing agreements with government, industry and peak bodies to ensure information is available to investigate and address risks to the quality and reputation of VET. This includes arrangements with:

- Australian Government departments and regulatory agencies
- state and territory government departments and regulatory agencies
- national and state industry regulators and representative peak bodies

ASQA has specific agreements with other education regulators which focus on minimising regulatory burden, including:

- The **Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA)** — this agreement aims to streamline regulatory processes for multi-sector providers (e.g. providers that deliver both vocational and higher education).
- The **Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA)** and the **Western Australia Training and Accreditation Council (TAC)** — these agreements aim to ensure efficient and effective regulation across all jurisdictions, by sharing information and coordinating the transfer of providers between the regulators.

Metric 2 — ASQA uses a range of appropriate enforcement tools, proportionate to the seriousness of breaches

➤ Self-Assessment Measure — Reported use of enforcement tools

ASQA uses and applies a range of regulatory tools. In 2017-18 ASQA increased its use of written directions as a regulatory tool for dealing with less serious or non-systemic non-compliance by providers.

Similarly, ASQA has applied the regulatory sanction 'amend scope of registration' in cases where a provider is able to demonstrate compliance in relation to some, but not all, training products on their scope of registration.

ASQA also sanctioned a large number of providers that failed to meet mandatory conditions of registration, including:

- submission of Total VET Activity Data to NCVER;
- submission of an annual declaration on compliance to ASQA; and
- payment of fees during the reporting period.

As a result, although the number of decisions to cancel registration (322) appears significant, providers have an opportunity to rectify the breaches that led to the cancellation decision through internal or external review processes.

Regulatory and other administrative sanctions 2017 -18

	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17	2017–18
Regulatory Sanctions					
Cancellations	25	27	69	125	322
Suspensions	49	54	15	56	40
Other administrative sanctions					
Written directions	11	15	24	98	159
Amend scope of registration	18	2	11	21	24
Investigation and enforcement					
Infringement notices, civil penalties, criminal prosecutions	NA	1	7	33	25

Metric 3 — the proportion of audits that were not part of application assessment and the proportion of those audits that are non-compliant

- Self-Assessment Measure — the percentage of audits that were not part of application assessment and the percentage of those audits that are non-compliant

The percentage of audits not part of an application are provided in the table below.

Number and proportion of application-based and non-application based audits finalised 2017 -18

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Number of application-based audits	1104	867	759	713	633
Number of non-application based audits	411	532	415	919 * †	845
Total number of audit activities	1515	1399	1174	1632	1478
Percentage of non-application based audit	27.1%	38.0%	35.3%	56.3%	57.1%

* Includes 274 'post-initial' audits, which do not determine the outcome of an application but must be completed within two years of a provider's initial registration.

† Includes 222 Complaint Evidence Analysis audits. A Complaint Evidence Analysis audit is a desk-based audit that is triggered by a complaint or complaints about a provider. ASQA commenced undertaking this type of audit activity in 2015 but did not report on these audits in the previous year).

ASQA completed 1478 audits in the 2017–18 financial year. In this period, 57.1 per cent of ASQA's completed audits were non application-related ('compliance audits'). 52.2% were non-compliant at audit finalisation.

ASQA is continuing to increase focus on audits triggered by an identified significant provider or systemic risk, which have a greater likelihood of complexity than application based audits.

Metric 4 — Demonstration of how ASQA seeks to minimise and tailor information requests of regulated entities

- Self-Assessment Measure — Demonstrated tailoring of requests

To reduce unnecessary time spent by providers on compliance and administration, ASQA seeks information from the regulated community as efficiently and effectively as possible. In 2017-18:

- ASQA undertook a full review of application forms and made updates to *asqanet* to improve self-service functions. This involved minimising change of scope applications

and CRICOS initial applications. ASQA also tailored initial applications to include additional information requests, targeted to this group of applicants.

- ASQA conducted surveys for providers audited to garner feedback on the audit process. In its last survey for the 2017-18 financial year (where ASQA invited 237 RTOs that had had a site audit finalised between 1 January and 30 June 2018 to provide feedback on the experience (99 RTOs responded)) results were:
 - Communication prior to the site visit
 - 99% of respondents reported it was clear:
 - why the audit was being conducted
 - which standards were to be audited
 - who the members of the audit team were, and
 - the duration and process of the audit.
 - The site visit
 - 98% of respondents reported that the audit purpose, scope and process were discussed at the opening meeting
 - 94% reported that their organisation:
 - had the opportunity to provide information about their organisation's operations
 - was given sufficient opportunity to provide evidence during the audit, and
 - was informed of compliance issues as they were identified.
 - 97% reported that, at the exit meeting, the auditor:
 - ❖ summarised the audit findings, and
 - ❖ outlined the next steps associated with finalising the audit, including the provision of an audit report and notification of compliance decisions.
 - 93% of respondents reported that, where a change to the audit plan occurred, they were kept informed of the change and the reason for the change.
 - Audit team competencies
 - 93% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the audit team was objective, knowledgeable about the regulatory framework(s) being audited, well-organised, professional, respectful and courteous and acted in an honest manner and with integrity.
 - The audit report
 - Of the respondents that indicated the audit report identified non-compliance, 92% reported the audit report was clear and sufficiently detailed to enable their organisation to understand any gaps and rectification requirements and it was clear when further evidence of compliance was due and how to provide it.
 - Transparency of the audit process

- 92% of respondents reported their organisation was 'Very Satisfied' or 'Satisfied' with the fairness and transparency of the audit process.
- ASQA and TEQSA continued to work together to ensure that regulatory processes are streamlined and efficient in relation to actions on dual/multi-sector providers.
- ASQA endeavoured to find solutions to minimise the administrative burden where inefficiencies are identified (e.g. ASQA and another government body/agency are collecting similar data from providers).

Self-assessments of results against performance metrics

ASQA's results against the four metrics in place to assess its performance against this KPI were strong. ASQA has a number of formal agreements with other regulators which work to minimise the burden on regulated entities. ASQA utilised a range of regulatory sanctions over the reporting period to ensure breaches were met with a proportionate response. The Authority has again undertaken more non-application than application based audits and has committed to seeking information from the regulated community as efficiently and effectively as possible through tailoring its requests.

KPI 5: Regulators are open and transparent in their dealings with regulated entities

ASQA performance metrics

1. Proportion of requests for information from regulated entities that ASQA has responded to within the specified timeframe, including calls to the Info Line and emails.
2. Proportion of complaints about ASQA that are responded to within targeted timeframe.
3. ASQA's implementation of the Regulatory Risk Framework is published and effectively communicated.

Results against performance metrics

Metric 1 — Proportion of requests for information from regulated entities that ASQA has responded to within the specified timeframe

➤ **Self-Assessment Measure — Percentage of responses on time**

In relation to telephone enquiries and email enquiries to the Info Line, ASQA's *Performance Standards* call for ASQA to provide a high level of customer service, including responding to enquiries within specified timeframes.

In the 2017-18 year:

- the Info Line answered all calls within 120 seconds.
- the Info Line resolved all simple email enquiries within two days.

Metric 2 — Proportion of complaints about ASQA that are responded to within targeted timeframe

➤ **Self-Assessment Measure — Percentage of complaints responded to within timeframes described in ASQA's performance standards**

ASQA's performance standards state that complaints about ASQA lodged in accordance with the procedure published on the Authority's website will be acknowledge in writing within five working days of the complaint being received.

In 2017-18 all complaints lodged in accordance with the procedure published on ASQA's website were acknowledged within five working days.

The performance standards also state that ASQA will act to investigate complaints as quickly as practicable. If ASQA considers more than 90 calendar days will be required to finalise a complaint, it will write to the complainant to explain the reasons why more than 90 calendar days is required.

In 2017-18 all providers were notified of the reasons why more than 90 calendar days would be required to finalise a complaint (where applicable).



Metric 3 — ASQA’s implementation of the Regulatory Risk Framework is published and effectively communicated

➤ **Self-Assessment Measure — published framework**

ASQA’s Regulatory Risk Framework was published in early 2016 and details how ASQA’s regulatory approach addresses ‘systemic risk’ and ‘provider risk.’

In 2017–18, ASQA ensured providers and other relevant stakeholders were aware of how the framework is being implemented by communicating information about key risk projects.

Self-assessment of results against performance metrics

ASQA’s results against the three metrics in place to assess ASQA’s performance against this KPI were strong. ASQA responded to all telephone and email enquiries, as well as all complaints about the Authority, within the specified timeframes. The Authority also provided its Regulatory Risk Framework on its website.

KPI 6: Regulators actively contribute to the continuous improvement of regulatory frameworks

ASQA performance metrics

1. Description of ASQA's strategy to communicate with stakeholders.
2. Stakeholders express confidence in ASQA's regulatory work in contributing to the quality of Australia's VET and ELICOS providers
3. Summary of key interactions with the Minister, Council of Australian Governments and the Department in relation to improving ASQA's regulatory performance.

Results against performance metrics

Metric 1 — Description of ASQA's strategy to communicate with stakeholders

➤ Self-Assessment Measure — Communications strategy developed

ASQA has in place a detailed Stakeholder Engagement Plan that encompasses communications with current/prospective RTOs, Skills Service Organisations, training peak bodies, industry and employer peak bodies, students, other regulators, government agencies, industry associations and the media. The plan covers the following engagement activity and communication channels:

- **Seeking feedback through surveys and user groups** — ASQA engages with providers and stakeholders through quarterly audit surveys, through which providers can provide ASQA with feedback on their audit experience; stakeholder/provider annual surveys, through which ASQA seeks a broad range of feedback on its services and performance; annual accreditation surveys and specialist surveys aimed at seeking feedback from particular sub-groups of providers, for example, to inform strategic reviews. ASQA also seeks direct feedback on its engagement through its provider reference group.
- **Face-to-face stakeholder engagement** — ASQA Commissioners and senior management engage with stakeholders through a range of formal mechanisms, such as forums and roundtables. ASQA's Commissioners and senior management also regularly speak at VET sector and industry events.
- **Online engagement** — ASQA conducts a significant amount of its engagement with providers—and some of its student and stakeholder engagement — through online channels, including the ASQA website; ASQA Update newsletter and email alerts to the database; an online help centre, including a feedback form and a range of frequently asked questions; live webinars; recorded videos; and the publication of a broad range of resources online. ASQA also engages with providers, stakeholders and students through the email enquiries service.

Metric 2 — Stakeholders express confidence in ASQA’s regulatory work in contributing to the quality of Australia’s VET and ELICOS providers

- **Self-Assessment Measure — 70 per cent or more report satisfaction levels as ‘excellent’ or ‘good’**

In 2017–18, 73.2 per cent of providers indicated that they believed ASQA’s contribution to the quality of VET outcomes was ‘excellent’ or ‘good’. Some 60.9 percent of non-provider stakeholders indicated that they believed ASQA’s contribution to the quality of VET outcomes was ‘good’.

Metric 3 — Summary of key interactions with the Minister, Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and the Department in relation to improving ASQA’s regulatory performance

- **Self-Assessment Measure — reports prepared**

Over the reporting period ASQA had a number of key interactions with its Minister, COAG and the Department of Education and Training (DET) in relation to improving regulatory performance. These included:

- providing quarterly reports to the Minister covering regulatory activity, complaints and progress with regulatory reform initiatives.
- providing a report to the COAG Industry and Skills Council that details key developments in the approach ASQA takes in regulating the VET sector, including:
 - collaborating with DET to monitor VET Student Loans (VSL) providers
 - progressing recommendations regarding ‘unduly short training’
 - increasing scrutiny on new RTOs entering the VET market
 - embedding ASQA’s ‘student-centred audit approach’
 - recognising and supporting quality in the VET sector.
- providing input into the Government response to the review of the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011 undertaken by Professor Valerie Braithwaite.

Self-assessment of results against performance metrics

ASQA’s results against the three metrics in place to assess ASQA’s performance against this KPI were good. ASQA has effectively communicated with stakeholders through its Stakeholder Engagement Plan. Some 73.2 percent of providers and 60.9 per cent of stakeholders believed that ASQA’s contribution to the quality of VET outcome was ‘excellent’ or ‘good’. ASQA also had a number of key interactions with its Minister, COAG and DET in relation to improving the Authority’s regulatory performance.

ASQA does however recognise that there is a need to more effectively promote its work (particularly to non-provider stakeholders) in contributing to quality outcomes and has commenced work to update its stakeholder engagement strategy during 2018-19.