AUQA paves way for national regulator

13 Dec 10 by Susan Woodward | Print this story | Send this story to a friend

It is recommended TEQSA exercise rigor, transparency and open judgment.

A review of higher education state regulators, released by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA), includes recommendations to pave the way for the agency’s replacement – the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA).

The review, released last week, is the work of collaborative panels comprising representatives of AUQA, the Joint Committee on Higher Education and state government regulators.

Unlike typical AUQA audits, it provides a consolidated perspective on the progress regulators have made towards bettering higher education approval processes.

AUQA notes it is satisfied recommendations the agency made have been addressed.

Additionally, AUQA acting executive director Mark Hay said that since the duties of state regulators will eventually become part of TEQSA, the document was intentionally forward looking.

"It's about finding ways to strengthen the overall sector and regulation of NSAIs [non-self-accrediting institutions] and to bring greater alignment and consistency," Hay said.

"How do we take what has worked well and is good practice and how would TEQSA address some of the previous limitations?"

The report takes the opportunity to outline three recommendations for TEQSA, which is expected to take over regulation and quality assurance of higher education some time between late 2011 and 2012.

AUQA's primary recommendation is that TEQSA maintain a system of risk-based regulation and management of institutions.

The agency says high thresholds should be set for new education providers, yet also recommends streamlining the processes for re-registrations and re-accreditations.

Its second recommendation relates to the ethos and culture of TEQSA.

AUQA suggests emphasising "rigorous operations, transparency and open judgment, and the addition of value"; ensuring assessment consistency across panels; communicating a vision that promotes quality across the sector; and the allocation of sufficient resources, among other things.

Further, the AUQA review predicts that as technologies emerge TEQSA will be required to develop new education regulations and guidelines.

Also indispensable will be a national electronic database for managing provider registration, course accreditation and audit processes, as well as one for managing auditors and assessors.

AUQA’s final recommendation for its successor is that it continue to consult widely with higher education institutions and peak bodies.

"It’s really over to TEQSA to decide what they want to do with the findings of the report as they consider the functions of TEQSA," Hay said.

The value of the document to TEQSA and related peak bodies could not be determined at the time Campus Review went to print.