

What are Threshold Standards and why are they important

Greg Whateley

September 2024



The Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) was refreshed in 2021 with very few minor changes in fact. The standards articulate the requirements that must be met for both registration and accreditation as a Higher Education Provider - <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/how-we-regulate/higher-education-standards-framework-2021>

There are 7 domains in all – student participation; learning environment; teaching; research and research training; institutional quality assurance; governance and accountability; representation, informational and informational management.

Student participation and attainment

The framework aims at ensuring student participation and attainment. The fundamental being providing students (both domestic and international) with a safe, well-tuned and supportive environment where they can achieve an appropriate certified qualification. And at the same time feel safe and supported in their endeavours.

Each domain is segmented so that the Standard can be viewed in considerable detail. The sub setting/sections are useful guides to what is *needed* to meet the standards and provide a useful framework to provide the necessary evidence and supporting documentation. The standards are designed to be useful to providers in the process of internally assuring what is best practice.

The importance of regular auditing

It is essential to be cognisant of the requirements of the various standards and regularly review the institution against the standards by way of ongoing Threshold Standards Audits. *This needs to be done regularly and consistently.*

Further the issue of *risk* is of great importance and a similar process should be followed using regular reviews (audits) of a formal *Risk Register* that overviews risk at the institution and provides the Board of Directors with a clear understanding of the prevailing issues and what kind of mitigation is in place – as needed.

Combined, the two sets of regular audits – standards and risk - provide a high level of sureness for the organisation and at the same time highlight issues or domains that need more attention or focus.

Ongoing audit against external standards is essential to maintain the health of the institution. Augmenting this with regular external auditing (this includes external membership of audit committees and independent reviews) also proves extremely useful and makes the process of registration and accreditation much more efficient and focussed.

Emeritus Professor Greg Whateley recently retired from the positions of Deputy Vice Chancellor (UBSS) and Chief Executive Officer (GCA). He is currently an independent consultant with AGE.