

ON-SITE AUDITS OF TASC-ACCREDITED SENIOR SECONDARY COURSES

RESPONSES TO SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

INTRODUCTION: AUDITS AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The audit process and the formal reports issued after an audit are powerful tools that inform learning communities' continuous improvement processes. They assist schools and colleges in their efforts to improve teaching and learning, and the assessment of learning outcomes against defined standards by:

- acknowledging best practice and planned improvements
- identifying areas where improvements might be made
- identifying and supporting providers in taking any specific actions required to ensure community confidence in the reliability, integrity, and validity of reported learner achievement.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

“DOES BEING AUDITED MEAN THAT THERE IS SOMETHING WRONG?”

Audits are a normal part of the quality assurance processes used by many organisations and institutions. Audits enable TASC to have confidence in the validity, reliability and integrity of results recommended by providers. There are many reasons why TASC may schedule an audit. These may include: the period of time since a provider was last audited; the relative risk of some courses to the integrity of the TCE; the number of learners/courses provided; results of previous audits; patterns of reported student learning outcomes; complaints; major changes in delivery arrangements; and – in the case of Level 3 and 4 courses – systemic differences between internal and external ratings.

“WILL WE KNOW WHEN AN AUDIT IS HAPPENING OR DOES TASC JUST TURN UP ONE DAY?”

Providers are notified in advance of an audit. TASC aims to give as much notice as possible. Details such as the audit agenda are negotiated with the course provider when multiple courses are audited.

“WHY AM I BEING AUDITED?”

Course providers (schools/colleges) are audited, *not* individual teachers. A teacher of a course being audited may be asked by their principal to supply documents and attend part of the audit meeting. Individuals are not audited: it is the provider's processes and systems for the delivery and assessment of courses that are the subject of an audit.

“WHO REPRESENTED THE SCHOOLS AT AN AUDIT?”

The audit process involves several phases. At the Opening and Closing Meeting the provider is typically represented by senior staff members (such as the principal/principal's delegate, TLO, and/or Learning Area Co-ordinators). During course-specific parts of the audit classroom teacher/s of the course are usually involved as they are best situated to table and discuss the documents and materials that are the focus of this part of the process. We recommend that classroom teachers are supported in their involvement by other staff members (such as the TLO and/or Learning Area Co-ordinator). TASC is very open to the concept of schools requesting that other staff observe the audit process so as to develop their understand of the process.

“WHICH STANDARDS ARE APPLIED AT AUDIT?”

Depending on the nature of the audit, one or more of the following *Standards For The Provision Of TASC-Accredited Senior Secondary Courses* will apply. Specific information about which Standards – and the required evidence – will be given as part of the audit notification communication from TASC.

- Standard 1:** Course providers will ensure that all the knowledge, skills and experiences that comprise a course are delivered to students, and that all stated course requirements are met
- Standard 2:** Course providers will ensure that individual students are exposed to the learning required by a course
- Standard 3:** Course providers will ensure that assessment tools meet the requirements of the course and are valid, fair, and equitable
- Standard 4:** Course providers will ensure that accurate assessment records are maintained
- Standard 5:** Course providers will have effective and documented procedures to ensure comparability of the interpretation and application of course standards to the evidence of student work
- Standard 6:** Course providers will have policies and procedures to ensure that any disputes regarding internal assessments are resolved prior to final reporting to TASC
- Standard 7:** Course providers will ensure that students are given explicit learning regarding academic integrity
- Standard 8:** Course providers will have policies and procedures to ensure that any disputes regarding a school's refusal to endorse the academic integrity of externally assessed folios are resolved

For further details see the [Provider Standards](#).

“WILL ALL THE COURSES WE PROVIDE BE AUDITED?”

No. TASC will nominate which course or courses will form the scope of the audit.

“WHAT DO AUDITORS LOOK AT?”

This will vary depending on the quality assurance requirements of individual courses and the scope of the audit. Examples of typical documented sources of evidence that interest auditors are given below. Auditors may also wish to view specialist equipment and/or learning areas (if required in the delivery of a course), and examples of student project work and similar tasks.

“DO I NEED TO PRODUCE SAMPLES OF LEARNER WORK?”

1. Tabling a few marked samples of current learner work can be helpful. It shows auditors that assessment tasks and marking guides are actually used.
2. Some courses have work requirements such as learners keeping a logbook/journal or creating a folio. Providers may be asked to table current samples of such learner work as evidence that the course requirements are being met. It is understood that – depending on the timing of the audit – these may be works in progress.
3. Some courses have quality assurance requiring the retention of copies of ‘borderline’ samples of learner work. Appendix I of the Standards for the Provision of TASC-accredited Senior Secondary Courses document has more details about this requirement. In selecting samples for retention, providers should consider:
 - a. that the samples need to be substantial enough that they reflect the borderline between awards not ratings (e.g. Satisfactory Award not ‘C’ rating on a particular criterion)
 - b. the borderline in question is between ‘PA’ and ‘SA’ not those between higher awards (e.g. CA/HA or HA/EA)
 - c. the number of samples will depend on how many borderline cases have arisen in the time that the course has been provided.

“WHAT HAPPENS AFTER AN AUDIT?”

TASC Officers will write a formal report about their audit findings. This will be sent to the principal, and a copy is kept on TASC files. The audit report provides valuable feedback to schools and colleges. These reports may include:

- affirmations (confirmation of ideas, plans and future actions)
- commendations (praise for best practice)
- recommendations (identification of areas that could be improved)
- requirements (identification of areas where specific action is required).

Providers will be given time to address any requirements and TASC will work with providers to address these. Providers will be asked to supply evidence when any required actions have been taken. This may involve a follow-up audit or supplying documented evidence to TASC.

“DO AUDITORS WANT TO INTERVIEW LEARNERS? WHY?”

Providers will be informed at the time of notification of audit if interviews with past and present learners will form part of the audit’s process.

Interviews with past and present learners of a course can provide a source of evidence that actual course delivery and assessment matches the documentation tabled at the audit. For example, learners talking about their experiences of excursions or keeping journals (where such activities are required by a course) may provide a source of evidence that these have occurred. No learner is forced to undertake an interview and providers are usually asked to provide some willing learners. Auditors are not concerned with learners’ opinions regarding individual teachers.

TYPICAL SOURCES OF EVIDENCE CONSIDERED BY TASC AUDITORS

Source	Examples	Evidence for...
Attendance records	Class attendance record book, sheets or spreadsheets indicating learner attendance/absence.	Standard 2 (learners have undertaken/participated in a course).
Course delivery plans	Scope and sequence, and assessment matrix documents that map when units of course content will be delivered, when work requirements are undertaken and when formative and summative assessments will take place. These are not necessarily individual lesson plans – they could be arranged weekly, monthly, by terms or for the whole course.	Standard 1 (the course content is being delivered and assessed (or that this is planned). Do not be concerned if the plans are annotated or updated: this indicates that they are being used and reflected upon).
Records of assessment	Record sheets, mark books or spreadsheets recording individual/class assessments. Such records note: the date of assessment; the task; the learning outcomes assessed (criteria/standard elements); the marks/grades achieved and/or comments made; and final assessment rubrics.	Standard 4 (assessments have taken place and are formally recorded).
Assessment instruments	Assessment task such as: tests/exams; task sheets; questionnaires; worksheets; and essay/project topics. These typically indicate: the task; what learning outcomes will be assessed; what format the response should take; the due date; and the relative significance/weighting of the task to the final assessment outcome.	Standard 3 (assessment has taken place (or that this is planned), that learning outcomes are being assessed based on the evidence of learner work, and assessment tools are valid, fair and equitable).
Marking guides	Marking guides articulate the features of a learner's work that are required in order to meet standards (e.g. correct answers to a fact test, characteristics of a unit of work or task that are required for a particular rating). Marking guides will have a strong relationship with the course's standards, but may contextualise the stated standards by reference to the specific features assessed in a given task.	Standard 3 (assessment has taken place (or that this is planned), and that assessment judgements are based on the evidence of learner work and course standards).
Assessment judgement 'rules'	These articulated 'rules' describe how assessment judgements are made. A simple rule might be '6/10 correct to get a 'C' on this test'. A final assessment rubric describes the relationship between the marks/grades given for individual assessment tasks and the final rating reported to TASC (i.e. the relative weighting given to specific tasks in the overall assessment judgement).	Standard 3 and 4 (assessment judgements – especially summative and final ones – are based on logical relationships between the evidence of learners' work and course standards).