Why is TASC's Quality Assurance Important?

TASC's quality assurance of senior secondary course providers ensures:

- that Tasmanian senior secondary learners receive fair, reasonable, comparable and equitable educational experiences and outcomes
- the validity, reliability and integrity of the qualifications issued by TASC, including the Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE)
- that the Tasmanian public's confidence in TASC-issued qualifications is maintained and enhanced.

Legislative Framework and the Provider Standards:

Under Sections 11, 31, 33, 56, 57 and 64 of *The Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification Act 2003*, TASC is given legislative powers and responsibilities to undertake a variety of quality assurance activities.

Section 33 (1) gives TASC powers to, "set or adopt standards for the provision and assessment of accredited senior secondary courses". There are ten (10) Standards that schools and colleges registered to provide accredited Tasmanian senior secondary courses must meet (the Provider Standards). As part of the annual registration process, principals – on behalf of their school communities – confirm that their school meets the Standards.

TASC's Approach to Quality Assurance:

TASC's quality assurance mechanisms are designed to ensure that schools comply with the requirements of the Provider Standards. While TASC's Quality Assurance Team uses tools and methods to monitor, evaluate and report on compliance, this is always balanced by a continuous improvement approach: an identified non-compliance is an opportunity for improvement. TASC works with providers to address any issues that are identified by quality assurance activities.

In addition to the identification of opportunities for improvement, TASC seeks to give positive feedback to schools, commending and affirming their documentation, systems and processes whenever it is appropriate to do so.

TASC's quality assurance activities:

- place emphasis on explaining why requirements and expectations of course providers are significant within the context of ensuring the best outcomes for students
- empower schools to meet the Provider Standards through methods such as:
  - distributing self-evaluation tools and information sheets
  - providing models and exemplars
  - clearly articulating the required characteristics of school-based policy and procedural documentation
  - responding in a timely, supportive manner to requests for assistance or guidance.

Stakeholder Views:

Just as TASC uses a continuous improvement approach when undertaking quality assurance activities involving schools, TASC also actively seeks to refine and improve its quality assurance methods. In addition to individual comments and messages, all quality assurance participants are asked to complete evaluation sheets. TASC collates and publishes these, using them to inform continuous improvement.

Issues on which feedback is sought include:

- logistical arrangements
- clarity of communications (including reporting templates)
- the timing, nature, scope and scale of the quality assurance activity
- the professional value of the activity for teachers.

TASC strives to engage with course providers in a dialogue of mutual improvement.

Quality Assurance Methods:

TASC employs a variety of quality assurance methods to achieve specific outcomes. The major methods are described in the following table. TASC uses a hybrid model of quality assurance, placing emphasis on both self-evaluation and external monitoring. This approach is very similar to that used by countries ranked by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) as having amongst the highest quality educational outcomes.[1] Additionally, TASC's Quality Assurance Meeting model uses peer review whereby assessment judgements made by individual schools are examined within the context of those made by groups of teachers from other schools.

In each quality assurance method TASC ensures that its activities are:

- systematic
- outcomes focused
- evidence based
- flexible
- focused on continuous improvement
- fair, open and transparent.

TAKE THE STAND
Actioning the Standards for Providers of TASC Courses

Take The Stand is a section of the TASC Update newsletter dedicated to empowering course providers. It helps them to understand and meet the Standards. Article topics are linked to the quality assurance activities being undertaken at given points in the academic year.

1) See https://www.oecd.org/pisa/ and Beyond-Ofsted-Report.pdf (beyondofsted.org.uk) pp.43-51, & 62.

	PURPOSE / AIMS	METHODOLOGY	WHO, WHEN, WHERE, WHY?	NOTATIONS
Regional Workshops	• Explain the Provider Standards with particular focus on *why* they are significant and *how* they improve student outcomes. • Explore ways to ensure Standards are met (models, examples, required characteristics). • Develop and implement a school-specific Quality Assurance Improvement Plan (QAIP) that celebrates strengths, identifies opportunities for improvement and plans actions.	Provider representatives undertake guided self-evaluation of their documentation and processes related to each Provider Standard. There are opportunities for discussion and sharing with other schools. Drafting starts on a QAIP. The QAIP is taken back to the school community for further discussion, refinement, and official endorsement. It is lodged with TASC within 3 months of a workshop. TASC gives supportive feedback to the school. The plan is implemented by the school and used as a point of reference in future quality assurance interactions with TASC.	Workshops run for a full day and are held in each region (S, N, NW) in Term 1. Attendees are members of the Leadership Team of the school (including the TLO). Typically, between 7 and 10 schools in each region are required to attend, and additional schools may be invited. Required schools are selected based on factors such as: • last attendance at a workshop (involvement every 3-4 years is the goal) • major changes in senior staff • major changes to previous scopes • schools new to senior secondary education. Schools are invited to attend if they request the activity as a form of professional learning.	This activity has a focus on empowerment – supporting schools to understand TASC's requirements and expectations, and *why* the Standards are important. The self-evaluation method is non-threatening, and encourages open, frank discussion, and sharing with others. Further information: https://www.tasc.tas.gov.au/providers/quality-assurance/regional-workshops/ Developed by TASC and used since 2017, the method has strong parallels with that advocated by the UK's *Beyond Ofsted – an inquiry into the future of school inspection* inquiry (2023) as TASC works with schools in the role of an 'improvement partner.' See: https://beyondofsted.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Beyond-Ofsted-Report.pdf
Desktop Audits	• Monitor school plans and processes for the delivery and assessment of TASC courses. • Monitor selected school-based policies and procedures required by Standards 5, 6, 7 & 8. • Monitor compliance with course Access Requirements. • Identify opportunities for continuous improvement of course delivery and assessment.	Providers supply TASC with required documentation (such as learning designs, scope and sequence/ assessment plans, examples of assessment tasks and records, and attendance records). The nature of the documentation required depends on the specific course/s being audited. Desktop auditing of documentation related to specific Standards is typically linked to activities in the academic year (e.g., auditing Standard 8 prior to external folio due dates). After analysing the documentation using auditing tools, TASC formally reports findings to the school. TASC monitors the school's progress and supports them to address any required actions.	Some courses have annual desktop audits. All providers of these courses are required to send materials to TASC for analysis. This typically occurs during the first part of Term 1. Essential Skills courses are also audited by this method. Providers of these courses are selected using a risk-based approach. Additionally, courses with access requirements are audited by this method to ensure students are enrolled in correct courses. Each year a small number of other courses are selected for desktop audit. Selection of such courses is made using a risk-based methodology. Examples include: new courses (where auditing gives insights to the effectiveness of plans for delivery/assessment); courses with atypical delivery (such as off-site learning); and Level 3/4 courses with content or requirements not directly evidenced in external assessment. School-based policies and procedural documentation are regularly audited throughout the academic year.	All documents requested for desktop audit are available as part of regular school activities (such as attendance and assessment records, delivery plans etc). This means no additional burden is placed on schools. The desktop-auditing method allows providers to simply send documents to TASC via TRACS with minimal disruption to other school activities. While TASC feedback supports schools in their continuous improvement, desktop-auditing techniques do not allow for the personal nature of discussion and interactions characteristic of on-site visits. Further information: https://www.tasc.tas.gov.au/providers/quality-assurance/school-audits/desktop-audits/

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	PURPOSE / AIMS	METHODOLOGY	WHO, WHEN, WHERE, WHY?	NOTATIONS
On-site Audits: Focused	• Monitor school plans and processes for the delivery and assessment of a TASC course. • Identify opportunities for the continuous improvement of course delivery and assessment (by schools and/or refinement of course documents).	TASC Officers visit a provider and audit one or two courses. A formal audit report is provided. The report celebrates strengths and identifies any opportunities for improvement. TASC monitors school's progress and supports them to address any required actions. TASC passes any identified opportunities to refine course documents to DECYP's Senior Secondary Provision for their consideration regarding course amendments.	The number and scope of focused audits varies each year. Typically, one or two courses are selected because of a course-specific risk (e.g., significant off-site learning and associated potential risks to students, reports/complaints suggesting that course requirements are not being met). Between 6 and 10 providers are visited annually. Once a course is identified, providers are selected based on issues such as: time since last audit and its outcomes; newness to delivering the course; and the size of the student cohort. TASC auditors' sensitivity to the needs of individual teachers representing their schools in on-site audit situations are noted below (On-site Audits: Provider-level).	Because of the limited scope of these audits (around 2-3 hours) an audit team can undertake two in a day. This has advantages regarding logistics and the use of human resources. The on-site audit method allows face-to-face interactions between TASC Officers and course providers, facilitating communication, open discussion, networking, and relationship building. Further information: https://www.tasc.tas.gov.au/providers/quality-assurance/school-audits/site-visit-audits/
'Tools for Teachers': Self-evaluation	• Provide schools with user-friendly tools that allow teachers to undertake analysis of their own systems, processes and documentation. • Provide advice and guidance for both school and teacher initiated continuous improvement.	Providers are notified of the availability of 'Tools for Teachers' in the QA section of the TASC website, and encouraged to use them. 'Take The Stand' is a regular section of the TASC Update newsletter dedicated to quality assurance issues. 'Take the Stand' gives directions and suggestions to assist schools to meet TASC requirements.	Tools are typically developed in response to requests from stakeholders (e.g., from formal feedback, and discussions at meetings), or other issues (such as understanding and actioning TASC's requirements in the final ratings verification process). Where possible, tools reflect the features and methods used in TASC audits so that stakeholders become familiar with basic auditing practices and processes in a self-paced, non-threatening manner.	'Tools for Teachers' allow individual teachers to reflect on their own documentation (such as assessment tasks), and can also be used in more formal, whole-of-school or learning area professional learning or review sessions. Further information: https://www.tasc.tas.gov.au/providers/quality-assurance/tools-for-teachers/
Quality Assurance Meetings	• Provide schools with peer review advice about their interpretation and application of courses' standards when assessing examples of authentic student work. • Monitor the impact of such advice on final reported internal ratings.	For a selected course, providers assess four bodies of their students' work. At meetings, small groups of teachers from other schools assess the same work samples. Providers are sent data sets showing their assessments, and those made by other teachers of the same course. TASC undertakes a formal review of the final reported ratings and the meeting data sets. Anomalies suggesting advice from the peer review process was not actioned are discussed with the provider.	This method focuses on size value 15, Level 2 courses where an SA or higher is used as an indicator that a student has met a TCE 'everyday adult' skill set standard. All providers of such courses are required to attend a September meeting. These are typically held regionally (S, N, NW). Some are held on-line. In 2023, for example, there were 18 meetings involving 12 courses. 69 schools and 215 participants took part. This method of quality assurance: • is based on professional peer review methodologies • has a special focus on the PA/SA borderline and associated risk to the integrity of the TCE • gives TASC direct insight into the validity of assessment judgements in Level 2 courses.	Participants consistently report that the meetings offer meaningful and highly valued professional learning opportunities. They also provide opportunities for networking and the sharing of resources between teachers of the same course. This method allows TASC to monitor the actioning of peer review advice by schools, and the impact of this on assessment judgements. Further information: https://www.tasc.tas.gov.au/providers/quality-assurance/quality-assurance-meetings-2/

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	PURPOSE / AIMS	METHODOLOGY	WHO, WHEN, WHERE, WHY?	NOTATIONS
On-site Audits: Provider-level	• Analyse school-level policies and procedures designed to address TASC's Provider Standards. • Monitor school plans and processes for the delivery and assessment of a set of selected TASC courses. • Provide schools with formal feedback celebrating strengths, identifying opportunities for improvement, and negotiating action plans to address any identified issues.	TASC Officers visit a provider and audit several courses, and school-level policies and procedures. Provider-level audits comprise: • Opening Meeting (discussion of scope and methods of audit, and feedback on reviewed policy documentation) • Analysis of each course (evidence is presented to TASC auditors by school representatives) • Auditors' Meeting (to confirm finds) • Closing Meeting (to verbally present findings to school leaders). Formal, written audit reports are provided. Schools are given positive feedback via audit commendations and affirmations. Any requirements are clearly identified, and the school is invited to work with TASC to resolve the matter/s in a timely manner to ensure students gain maximum benefit.	These audits usually occur during Terms 2 and 3. Between 7 and 10 providers are selected annually using a risk-based approach that considers factors such as: • time since last audit • results from prior audits and other quality assurance activities • major changes in school leadership • number of learners • number of courses on scope / number of courses new to the school's offerings • complaints. In some cases, providers request an audit to inform their continuous improvement. TASC audits systems, policies, processes, and procedures of a school, *not* individual teachers. TASC auditors are very sensitive to the possibility that teachers representing their schools in audit situations may feel anxious. An Audit Information Kit is sent to schools prior to audit to explain the process. At the start of each audit session with teacher representatives, auditors discuss the process, invite questions, and give reassurance.	As the methodology includes examination of the delivery and assessment of various courses - and overarching policies and related documentation – patterns can become apparent. School-wide issues may emerge that can be addressed in an holistic manner. The advantages of on-site visits for relationship building are noted above (On-site Audits: Focused). Further information: https://www.tasc.tas.gov.au/providers/quality-assurance/school-audits/site-visit-audits/ https://www.tasc.tas.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Audit-Model-Information-Kit.pdf
Course-specific Workshops	• Address a specific issue or concern that has been identified involving a course or group of similar courses.	TASC's response to an identified issue is tailored to address the specifics of each case. It may involve support and guidance for teachers, and the development of guidelines and/or information sheets on the issue.	Such workshops are held on an *ad hoc* basis. All providers of an identified course are invited to attend regional meetings to discuss the issue/concern. TASC provides guidance/instructions to reduce the risk of future occurrences of the issue. Depending on the specific nature of the issue under discussion, meetings may also address more general quality assurance issues (such as assessment task design) and provide opportunities for networking between teachers of the same course.	These workshops are used to address course-specific concerns identified by TASC (e.g., via external assessment or stakeholder feedback). Examples include: • school-based approval of inappropriate folio topics by various providers • potential overlap between folios required in Level 2 and 3 courses • course-specific academic integrity issues.

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