EAL/D TQA 2 and 3 Courses: Notes on General Comment Drafts

What?  General comments invited on draft course documents as part of course development process

Why?  To inform refinement of courses prior to accreditation process

When?  Comments by 28 October 2013

How?  Email to: mike.jenkins@tqa.tas.gov.au

As part of the development stage for replacement courses in English as an Additional Language or Dialect TQA levels 2 and 3 drafts are now available for general comment. The draft documents can be downloaded from the TQA website page: http://www.tqa.tas.gov.au/2467

Course construction
The courses have been constructed using:

• ACARA-developed Australian Curriculum materials (Units 1 and 2 for the TQA 2 course, and Units 3 and 4 for the TQA 3 course) – material used include: Rationale, Aims, Curriculum Content (Unit Description, Learning Outcomes, Content Description), Achievement Standards, Glossary and Sample Text List
• material from the ESL courses with accreditation expiring at the end of 2013
• comments received from providers, teachers and the Curriculum Teacher Leader – English/ESL (made in response to an earlier draft for general comment and at meetings with TQA officers)
• some standard elements from the new language courses (as they related to criteria such as oral communication, and can be used to measure student performance in areas such as pronunciation, tone, stress, fluency and self-correction).

Construction of the courses has taken account of a series of Authority decisions.

Authority decisions
At its meeting of 6 June 2012 (Item 2.3.1) the Authority decided to, "draw on ACARA-developed content and achievement standards in relevant … courses [including ESL / EAL/D] required for 2014".  

At its meeting of 6 February 2013 (Item 2.3.3, Attachment A) the Authority noted that the TQA 3 course in this area would make appropriate use of ACARA-developed Australian Curriculum materials and ensure that the standards and external assessment met tertiary entrance expectations.

At its meeting of 3 April 2013 (Item 2.3.4) the Authority made a set of decisions regarding these courses. These decisions included:

• approving the continued reworking of ESL courses making appropriate use of ACARA content statements and aligning the standards for the TQA level 3 course with the standards expected for those who intend to continue to university studies
• determining that the TQA level 3 course should not include an element of personal and critical response to literary or other texts [This was in response to the issue that, “The current TQA 3 course also includes an aesthetic strand where students are required to respond critically and creatively to texts. The value of this element to the central purpose of the course (providing English language skills for learners of English as an additional language) is not clear.”] 

The Authority also noted, “Feedback from users of the TQA 3 awards, particularly the University of Tasmania, indicates that students with the minimum SA award do not have adequate English language skills to operate in an undergraduate environment.”  http://www.tqa.tas.gov.au/13782

An initial draft TQA level 3 course was produced and circulated for general comment. Comments received raised some significant issues, and these were reported to the Authority.

At its meeting of 7 August 2013 (Item 2.3) the Authority noted that, “Feedback from respondents to a draft version of the English as an Additional Language/Dialect (EAL/D) TQA 3 course document distributed for general comment has raised two issues:
• the Office sought expert advice from EAL/D teachers at a meeting on 30 May. A smaller group then met on 6 June to give further advice. A draft course was created for further discussion using their input. Some respondents’ comments indicate misunderstandings:
  o the document was distributed for general comment and has not entered the accreditation process
  o the nature of the ‘review group’ is to give expert advice, not to ‘write the course’.

• Respondents variously commented that the ‘Expectations Defined by National Standards’ section of the draft document - which includes material from ACARA-developed documents in the area which is used to define expectations for the meaning (nature, scope and level of demand) of relevant aspects of the course document are “beyond our cohort’s capabilities and more appropriate for Australian students in mainstream English classes”. Examples include
  o “managing collaborative discussions ... for example, seminars”
  o “analysing how culturally-based representations of concepts such as knowledge or authority are conveyed”

These comments suggest that Tasmanian EAL/D students at TQA level 3 should continue to study course content and be assessed at a level below that identified in the ACARA-developed material in EAL/D Units 3 and 4. This issue will have implications for not only this course, but also those at TQA levels 2 and 1.

The Authority has previously identified its expectation that the TQA level 3 course in EAL/D will be at a standard appropriate for entry to university, noting that this is an increase on the current standard.

Having considered these issues the Authority, “confirmed its expectation that the TQA level 3 EAL/D course will be at a standard appropriate for university entrance.” [http://www.tqa.tas.gov.au/18494]

University entrance
Within the context of the Authority decision noted above, it is useful to consider that UTAS’s English language requirement into degrees is UTASAccess Level 7 (See: [http://www.utas.edu.au/english-language-centre/direct-entry-academic-program](http://www.utas.edu.au/english-language-centre/direct-entry-academic-program)). UTASAccess Level 7 has been mapped by UTAS to the International English Language Testing System’s (IELTS) 9-band scale as “IELTS Academic 6.5 (no band less than 6)” See: [http://www.utas.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/382635/UTASAccess-English-Programs-Entry-Requirements.pdf](http://www.utas.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/382635/UTASAccess-English-Programs-Entry-Requirements.pdf)

IELTS Band 6 is defined as, “Competent user: has generally effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings. Can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situations.” [http://www.ielts.org/default.aspx](http://www.ielts.org/default.aspx)

Work requirements in course documents
The draft course documents for general discussion include work requirements. These are designed to reinforce that the range and scope of texts learners will read/view/listen to, and create – as stated in the course content – are addressed.

In the TQA 3 course a negotiated task is also included. This is based in part on the Research Folio of the current course. The work requirement is also intended to address issues raised by the Curriculum Teacher Leader – English/ESL: “... the need [for students of the course] to comprehend and apply academic language and register, and [to develop] understanding and apply principles of academic integrity when sourcing and acknowledging the work of others.”

The draft course documents state that this task will form a significant source of evidence for the assessment of criteria 7 and 8. The task is designed to allow learners to:

• develop and demonstrate negotiation, planning and time management skills (C8)
• undertake a sustained study of a topic/issue of interest using a wide variety of sources (fiction and non-fiction, texts of differing types and modes etc) and supporting course content (such as Strand C learning elements ‘dot points’) 5, 6, 7, 9 & 12
• develop and demonstrate SAE writing skills via a sustained piece of writing (about 4 pages)
• develop and demonstrate research skills (as they relate to C7 and course content such as Strand D learning elements 11 – 17)
• develop and demonstrate understanding of academic integrity and associated skills.

In regard to the last point above, it will be noted that the draft TQA 3 course document requires that academic integrity be explicitly taught and assessed (using the 3rd, 4th and 5th standard elements of C7). Within the context of the Authority decision noted above regarding preparation for university entrance, it is useful to consider both UTAS statements on academic integrity [http://www.utas.edu.au/academic-](http://www.utas.edu.au/academic-)

Invitation for comments
Comments and suggestions on the draft documents are invited. Please note that this invitation for general comments is part of the course development process.

Once comments have been received and analysed the draft documents will be refined and then published as exposure drafts as part of the accreditation process. In the accreditation process comments need to address one or more of the following specific questions:

- are there any significant impediments to organisations delivering this course?
- if organisations were to deliver this course, are there any special transition arrangements needed for students in existing courses?
- is there any significant item of learning that should be removed from/added to the course?
- are there any reasons the Authority should consider sufficient grounds for refusing to accredit this course?

The exposure draft part of the accreditation process is designed to identify any major issues that would directly impact on a decision to accredit a course. It is not designed or intended to be an opportunity to raise issues such as refinements to criteria, standards or course content. The opportunity to raise these kinds of issues is provided by the current, ‘draft for general comment’ phase of the course development process.

During this general comment phase we will also be seeking specific suggestions and advice from the UTAS English Language Centre and Student Learning and Academic Development team.

Comments and suggests should be sent to me via return email by 28 October 2013.

With thanks

Dr Mike Jenkins
Liaison and Development Officer
TQA
Monday 14 October 2013