

Ms Jenny Burgess  
Acting Executive Officer

**SUBJECT:** 2015 Provider Audits Report

**PURPOSE:** To inform the Acting Executive Officer

**BACKGROUND:** Effective quality assurance is required to ensure the validity, integrity and reliability of qualifications issued by TASC in individual courses, and the TCE.

The Tasmanian Qualifications Authority (TQA) first used auditing as a quality assurance mechanism for the delivery and assessment of selected accredited senior secondary courses in 2008.<sup>1</sup> Typically auditing is used in cases where Level 1 and 2 courses do not require learners to create a cohesive body of work that might be tabled for consideration at a TASC quality assurance meeting of providers.

In 2015, 14 providers were audited. This compares with 15 in the previous year. Audits were undertaken in the period 29 July to 26 October 2015.

Providers were selected for audit using a risk-based approach that considered issues such as:

- period since last audit
- findings of last audit
- provider's history of experience in the senior secondary sector
- range/nature of courses on scope (e.g. contribution of courses to the TCE's standards).

Additionally, consideration was given to balancing the geographic spread of identified providers and the sector to which they belonged (government, Catholic and independent), and the scale/nature of the provider (large colleges, smaller high schools). **Attachment A** summarises the characteristics of the providers finally selected for 2015 audit.

All six schools taking part in the 2015 Years 11 and 12 Extension program were included in the audit schedule. The Office of TASC has worked in collaboration with Ms Janet Sims (Project Manager Years 11 and 12 Extension) in regard to these audits and associated matters. This relationship is mutually valued, as exemplified by Ms Sims' role as an audit observer on two occasions in 2015 (See **Attachment D.iv**).

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<sup>1</sup> For the historical context of this approach see, for example, TQA meetings of 7 October 2009 (Item 3.4) and 6 October 2010 (Item 3.3).

Audits in 2015 covered the delivery and assessment of 15 different accredited courses. These were selected based on:

- risk to the integrity of the TCE (e.g. SA awards used as evidence that a learner had met one or more 'everyday adult' standard skill sets)
- systemic issues regarding delivery and assessment in the past
- courses that have not traditionally been audited, but where an opportunity to do so arose (e.g. audit visit of high risk courses already determined and time available)
- strategic selection of Work Readiness and Mathematics Methods – Foundation.

Across the 14 providers and 15 courses, a total of 54 individual course audits took place in 2015. Details regarding the accredited courses subjected to audit are given in **Attachment B**.

In addition to auditing the delivery and assessment of individual courses, the TASC auditing team also undertook an audit of required provider-level standards: the Academic Integrity Standard; and Standard for Within-provider Within-course Comparability of Internal Assessment. Requirement findings regarding these standards totalled 9 (See **Attachment C**).

TASC audits are 'quality audits': they focus on the systems, processes and procedures used by providers for the delivery and assessment of accredited senior secondary courses.

The audit approach used is a dual one. While *compliance* to the requirements for the delivery and assessment of courses is the primary focus, audits are viewed by TASC and providers as valuable inputs to *continuous improvement* practices and, in some cases, capacity building.

#### CURRENT SITUATION:

At the time of writing Requirement findings have been cleared by 9 of the 14 providers audited. The other providers have cleared some of their Requirement findings, with some not yet due for clearance or some not yet cleared due to explained circumstances. In four cases final clearance is not due until the 2016 registration period in order to allow for the development of policies and procedures by providers visited late in 2015.

#### ISSUES:

1) The 2015 audit schedule did not start until 29 July and ended on 26 October 2015. The development of a 2015 Audit Schedule, TASC documentation (such as letter templates, and Audit Meeting Records and Audit Report templates), information documents for providers regarding the audit process and associated filing mechanisms also needed to be completed prior to the first TASC audit.

The late start to the 2015 audit schedule:

- placed considerable pressure on audited providers, especially those audited late in the year as the time period they had to clear urgent Requirements was very limited in some cases. Where possible specific interim measures were required to address pressing issues and allow time for the development of longer term solutions (5 cases)
- meant that providers' continuous improvements made in response to Requirement and Recommendation findings had reduced impact during the 2015 academic year.

Now that TASC auditing operational processes and systems are in place, and a 2016 Audit Schedule is due for approval before the end of March 2016, 2016 audits can commence earlier in the year and be more evenly spread across Terms (and avoid Term 4 if at all possible).

2) TQA provider audits in 2013 resulted in 23 Requirement findings, and 20 in 2014. The 2015 TASC audits resulted in 52 Requirement findings (including 5 interim requirements).

The overall increase in the number of Requirement findings in 2015 and the relatively high number of findings for some providers (5+) is explained in part by: capacity building in the 2015 Years 11 and 12 Extension program providers; and the use of interim requirement findings due to the late start of the 2015 audit process.

Number of Requirement findings per provider:

| Number of Requirements | Number of Providers |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| 1                      | 3                   |
| 2                      | 2                   |
| 3                      | 4                   |
| 4                      | 0                   |
| 5                      | 3                   |
| 6                      | 1                   |
| 7                      | 1                   |

**Attachment C** provides a detailed breakdown of all audit findings, highlighting common issues.

Given the commonality of several Requirement and Recommendation findings there is value in exploring methods to ensure that all providers are aware of issues related to these findings, their significance, and how they might be addressed rather than dealing with such matters as they arise with individual providers at the time of audit.

3) TASC auditors understand that the prospect of representing a provider during audit can be a daunting one for some staff, especially those who have not encountered the process before. There is also a possibility that findings may be viewed as censures rather than constructive criticism and positive suggestions to inform continuous improvement systems. TASC audit processes are designed to reduce apprehension, create a non-confrontational audit environment, and stress the positive nature of the audit experience. Communications – oral, email and formal letters and reports – similarly stress this approach. That the 2015 TASC auditing team enacted the Office approach to the audit process is evidenced by formal responses (in emails, formal letters and Audit Evaluation Questionnaires received to date) by providers and provider representatives, and audit observers. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. A summary of responses is given at **Attachment D**.

In one instance a provider representative requested a finding changed during a Closing Meeting. This has been officially reported to the Executive Officer via an Incident Report (16 November 2015).

4) As noted at Issue #1 above considerable work has been undertaken to create TASC operational processes, systems and documentation for provider audit processes. The documentation of all TASC audit procedures is not yet completed, but will be actioned as soon as capacity allows.

Procedures are already in place for continuous improvement of TASC auditing, including a formal 'Issues and Opportunities' register for the recording of issues arising from the audit process and actions to resolve them.

An over-arching policy position on quality assurance will be developed as a matter of priority.

**PROPOSED  
COMMUNICATION  
STRATEGY:**

That this Briefing Note be published on the TASC website and a link to it be made on the webpage concerning Provider Audits, and providers be informed via an email to TASC Liaison Officers.

**VIEWS OF OTHER  
STAKEHOLDERS:**

It is to be expected that all stakeholders require confidence in the reliability, validity and integrity of qualifications issued by TASC. Robust quality assurance systems – including auditing – are required to maintain such confidence.

The views of audited providers, provider representatives and audit observers are given in **Attachment D**.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Acting Executive Officer:

- 1) notes this report
- 2) approves the proposed communications strategy
- 3) (noting that the Office of TASC has developed some guidelines and associated materials to assist providers in their work to meet common Requirement findings and deepen understanding of common Recommendations), that TASC works in a collaborative partnership with the Department of Education's Curriculum Services to further refine these documents, publish them, communicate their availability, and discuss these issues as part of professional learning meetings in relevant learning areas
- 4) (noting the collaborative relationship between the Office and the Project Manager Years 11 and 12 Extension, and that several 2015 Extension schools expressed a desire that TASC Officers re-visit them in 2016), that all 2016 Extension schools:
  - and those that have invited TASC to re-visit - are provided with an opportunity in early 2016 to discuss TASC quality assurance and related matters as they effect providers
  - are included in the 2016 Audit Scheduleand that the Office of TASC continues to work in close collaboration with the Project Manager Years 11 and 12 Extension in regard to these matters
- 5) noting that the 2015 audit process found some issues regarding current Flexible Learning materials and other associated assessment tools (See **Attachment B**) it is recommended that TASC informs the Department of Education's Curriculum Services on these matters so as to inform their current work.

PREPARED BY:

Dr Mike Jenkins  
Quality Assurance and Audit Officer

Date: 30 November 2015

APPROVED BY:

  
Ms Jenny Burgess  
Acting Executive Officer

Date: 18/12/15

Instructions/Comment:

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**Attachment/s:**

- A - Characteristics of providers selected for 2015 audit
- B - Courses Audited 2015
- C - Audit Findings Summary
- D - Summary of formal responses to 2015 audits

### Attachment A: Characteristics of providers selected for 2015 audit

#### A.1: - Sector

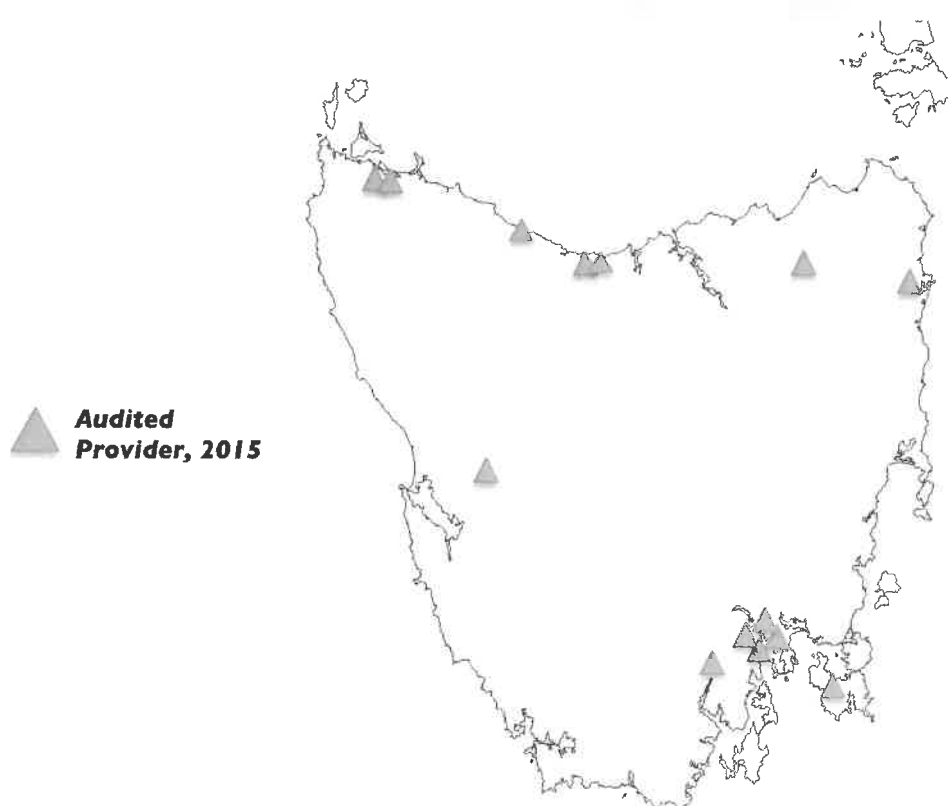
| Sector                  | Number Audited |
|-------------------------|----------------|
| Department of Education | 10             |
| Independent             | 3              |
| Catholic                | 1              |

#### A.2: - Type

| Type  | Number Audited |
|---|----------------|
| Department of Education, Year 11 – 12 Extension | 6              |
| Department of Education, College                | 1              |
| Department of Education, High School            | 2              |
| Department of Education, 7 – 12                 | 1              |
| Independent, K – 12                             | 3              |
| Catholic, High School                           | 1              |

#### A.3: - Region

| Region         | Number Audited |
|----------------|----------------|
| Far North West | 2              |
| North West     | 3              |
| North East     | 2              |
| South          | 5              |
| West           | 1              |
| South East     | 1              |



**Attachment B – Courses Audited 2015**

| <b>Course</b>                                    | <b>TCE<br/>'everyday<br/>adult'<br/>standard?</b> | <b>Number of<br/>Providers Audited<br/>2015</b> | <b>Notations</b>   |
|--|---|---|--|
| PPP205113 Personal Pathway Planning              | N   | 7   | Some findings made related to Work Requirements, but generally few issues noted.   |
| WRK210112 Work Readiness                         | ✓✓✓   | 5   | Very sound evidence for delivery and assessment as per course document in all but one case (where scope and sequence, and assessment record system needed further refinement).<br>Common findings related to archive of borderline bodies of student work (Requirement), and use of Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF), and Appendix 3 of the TCE course document to inform design of assessment tasks and final assessment judgements in border-line cases (Recommendation). |
| MTN210114 Essential Skills – Maths               | ✓   | 5   | Common findings related to archive of borderline bodies of student work (Requirement), and use of ACSF to inform design of assessment tasks and final assessment judgements in borderline cases (Recommendation).<br>Issues found related to use of FL materials.  |
| ERW210114 Essential Skills – Reading and Writing | ✓   | 4   | Common findings related to archive of borderline bodies of student work (Requirement), and use of ACSF to inform design of assessment tasks and final assessment judgements in border-line cases (Recommendation).   |



| <b>Course</b>   | <b>TCE<br/>'everyday<br/>adult'<br/>standard?</b> | <b>Number of<br/>Providers Audited<br/>2015</b> | <b>Notations</b>  |
|---|---|---|---|
| ESC205114 Essential Skills –<br>Using computers and the<br>Internet | ✓   | <b>4</b>  | Common findings related to archive of borderline bodies of student work (Requirement), and use of Appendix 3 of the TCE course document to inform design of assessment tasks and final assessment judgements in borderline cases (Recommendation).  |
| ICT205114 Computer<br>Applications                                  | ✓   | <b>3</b>  | Common findings related to archive of borderline bodies of student work (Requirement), and use of Appendix 3 of the TCE course document to inform design of assessment tasks and final assessment judgements in borderline cases (Recommendation).  |
| MTW215114 Workplace Maths   | ✓   | <b>6</b>  | Common findings related to archive of borderline bodies of student work (Requirement), and use of ACSF to inform design of assessment tasks and final assessment judgements in border-line cases (Recommendation). Issues found related to use of FL materials. Some support materials being used related to the previous (expired) course and incorrect criteria numbering was used. |
| DAP215114 Design and<br>Production                                  | N   | <b>4</b>  | No common issues.   |
| FDN215113 Food, Cooking and<br>Nutrition                            | N   | <b>1</b>  | No issues noted.  |
| MTM215114 Mathematics<br>Methods – Foundation                       | ✓   | <b>3</b>  | Sound evidence for delivery and assessment as per course document, and use of TASC tests.<br>Common findings related to archive of borderline bodies of student work (Requirement), and use of ACSF to inform design of assessment tasks and final assessment judgements in borderline cases (Recommendation).  |

| <b>Course</b>                                | <b>TCE<br/>'everyday<br/>adult'<br/>standard?</b> | <b>Number of<br/>Providers Audited<br/>2015</b> | <b>Notations</b>  |
|--|---|---|---|
| PRJ205113 Project Implementation             | N   | 3   | No course-specific issues noted. Match of TASC-approved project proposals to evidence of delivery and assessment sound. A Commendation finding made regarding best practice of one provider.  |
| WTE110114 Workshop Techniques – Introduction | N   | 1   | No issues noted.  |
| EXP215113 Outdoor Education                  | N   | 1   | A Commendation finding made regarding the scope and richness of experiences offered.  |
| REC110113 Physical Recreation                | N   | 1   | No course-specific issues noted.  |
| MTG215114 General Mathematics – Foundation   | ✓   | 6   | Sound evidence for delivery and assessment as per course document.<br>Common findings related to archive of borderline bodies of student work (Requirement), and use of ACSF to inform design of assessment tasks and final assessment judgements in borderline cases (Recommendation). |

## Attachment C – Audit Findings Summary

**Affirmation** – One (1) finding regarding provider’s plans to develop provider-based assessment tasks tailored to individual learner needs/interests.

**Commendation** – 13 findings:

| <b>Commendation Finding Regarding:</b>   | <b>Number of providers</b> |
|--|----------------------------|
| Documentation and follow-up of absenteeism, and methods for rewarding attendance.  | 1                          |
| Systematic approach to the documentation, organisation and storage of teaching and learning materials related to the delivery and assessment of TASC-accredited courses.   | 2                          |
| The richness of materials available to staff and learners via intranet system, including archives of notated moderation tasks.   | 1                          |
| Provision of lunchtime classes for learners unable to undertake various Essential Skills courses as part of their regular timetable load.  | 1                          |
| The richness and depth of evidence available to the auditing team.   | 2                          |
| Considered approach to the inclusion of appropriate senior secondary courses into provider’s Yr 10 curriculum offerings, ensuring adequate delivery and assessment time is available, and its use of professional networking and support structures. | 1                          |
| The use of learner self-assessment rubrics as a learning tool and a source of dialogue between the student and teacher.  | 1                          |
| The variety of back-up processes and systems used to protect assessment records.   | 1                          |
| Exemplary nature of its delivery and assessment of the course Project Implementation.  | 1                          |
| The breadth and richness of activities offered within its delivery of Outdoor Education.   | 1                          |
| The use of student contracts and clear expectations about use of study lines and ‘catching up’ on class work missed due to VET and other commitments, and the accessibility of staff to assist learners to do so.                                    | 1                          |

**Recommendation – 71 findings:**

| <b>Recommendation Finding Regarding:</b>   | <b>Number of Findings</b> |
|--|---------------------------|
| Refine scope and sequence documentation in regard to issues such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• addition of indication of specific assessment tasks</li> <li>• explicit mapping to Learning Outcomes / course topics/sub-topics</li> <li>• check of currency of document</li> <li>• addition of date indicator to assessment sequence.</li> </ul>  | 21                        |
| Use of Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) and/or Appendix 3 of the TCE course document to inform design of assessment tasks and final assessment judgements in borderline cases in courses where their use is recommended.  | 17                        |
| The implementation of sound assessment practice principles in the development of the assessment tasks such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identifying the criterion/ia (and specific standard elements where appropriate) that will be assessed by a task</li> <li>• identifying the relative weighting/significance of the task to the overall assessment of the criterion/ia</li> <li>• including performance indicators to guide learners about the required characteristics of work to meet standards/ratings.</li> </ul>          | 17                        |
| Refine assessment records/systems in regard to issues such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• addition of date of assessment to records</li> <li>• mechanisms for back-up of paper-based records</li> <li>• addition of keys when symbols/colours are used to denote type or relative weight of assessments</li> <li>• recording final assessment rubric within the assessment record</li> <li>• identification of any compulsory assessment tasks</li> <li>• inappropriateness of using awards (such as SA) as 'grades/marks'.</li> </ul> | 9                         |
| Other (course/provider specific).  | 7                         |

**Requirement – 52 findings:**

| <b>Requirement Finding Regarding:</b>   | <b>Number of Findings</b> |
|---|---------------------------|
| Develop and implement a procedure to address QA requirement regarding the collection, storage and future use of archived bodies of student work at the PA/SA border-line in courses where this is required. | 12                        |
| Develop and implement procedures requiring the articulation and documentation – at the individual course/class level – of the final assessment rubrics.   | 10                        |
| Develop and implement procedures required to address the Standard for Within-provider Within-course Comparability of Internal Assessment.   | 6                         |
| Addition of essential features to scope and sequence documentation.   | 5                         |
| Develop and implement procedures that address the access requirements of Essential Skills – Reading and Writing and/or Essential Skills – Maths.  | 5                         |
| Cross-check of scope and sequence documentation to course document and completion of remedial action to address any identified gaps in delivery/assessment.   | 4                         |
| Develop and implement procedures required to address the Academic Integrity Standard.   | 3                         |
| Assessment records in regard to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing a centralised record</li> <li>• addition of criterion/ia.</li> </ul>   | 2                         |
| Other: interim requirements to effect short-term addressing of pressing issues while longer term procedures are developed and implemented.  | 5                         |

## Attachment D – Summary of formal responses to 2015 audits

### D.i - Written Feedback

Provider feedback:

- “I personally found the audit to be highly positive ... everyone found the process fair, positive and highly valuable.” (Acting Assistant Principal)
- “...staff involved in the audit process found it to be an invaluable experience and we thank the TASC Officers ... for their constructive help.” (Principal)
- “The opportunity to up-skill my staff in the level of documentation required and increase confidence [were of most value].”

Provider representative feedback:

- “It allowed me to reflect upon my teaching and how best to give feedback to my students and improve record keeping.”
- “Feedback and support from the auditors – constructive rather than punitive process [were of most value].”
- “Feedback was very constructive and clearly outlined the demands of the course.”
- “[Auditors’] communication styles [were valued]... very detailed and good suggestions.”
- “[There was] clear guidance as to how to better match course requirements.”

### D.ii - Responses to selected questions on Audit Evaluation Questionnaire

- *The audit experience added value to my learning community*  
(possible responses ranging from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’)  
  
90% in the ‘strongly agree’ / ‘agree’ range, 10% ‘undecided’.
- *Overall, how satisfied were you with the audit?*  
(possible responses ranging from ‘very satisfied’ to ‘very dissatisfied’)  
  
100% in the ‘very satisfied’ / ‘satisfied’ range.
- *The audit report provided useful feedback on our delivery of senior secondary courses*  
(possible responses ranging from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’)  
  
100% in the ‘strongly agree’ / ‘agree’ range.

### D.iii - Responses to questions regarding the audit team from Audit Evaluation Questionnaire

The audit team were *(Tick the box in each row that most closely reflects your experience)*

|                 | Strongly agree | Agree | Undecided | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|-----------------|----------------|-------|-----------|----------|-------------------|
| Objective       | 66.6%          | 33.3% | 0%        | 0%       | 0%                |
| Knowledgeable   | 55.5%          | 44.4% | 0%        | 0%       | 0%                |
| Well organised  | 66.6%          | 33.3% | 0%        | 0%       | 0%                |
| Informative     | 77.7%          | 22.2% | 0%        | 0%       | 0%                |
| Constructive    | 77.7%          | 22.2% | 0%        | 0%       | 0%                |
| Non-threatening | 66.6%          | 33.3% | 0%        | 0%       | 0%                |

### D.iv - Feedback from Audit Observers

“VERY affirming and your emphasis on using this [the audit process] to ‘develop and grow capacity’ and to educate was fantastic to see in action... Whilst I expected to see much of what we saw, the ‘mutual respect’ shown both ways was pleasing to see and the eagerness to ‘grow and learn’ shown by the teachers and the admin of the school was refreshing to see. A very positive and an affirming experience!” (Curriculum Teacher Leader)

“The TASC audit process was undertaken in a very professional manner with a positive approach. Explanations were provided for why processes and procedures need to be in place. Recommendations and requirements were described in detail with assistance on how to go about tasks and negotiation on deadlines. The audit was a great professional learning opportunity for teachers in our Year 11/12 Extension Schools.

The audits were comprehensive and provide reassurance that we can maintain quality and standards as the number of Year 11/12 providers increase.” Janet Sims (Project Manager Years 11 and 12 Extension)