

Consultation paper on proposed revisions to the Accreditation Standards for Australian Law Courses

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Call for submissions

The Admissions Committee of the Legal Services Council (**Council**) and the Law Admissions Consultative Committee (**LACC**) invite public comment on proposed revisions to the Standards for the Accreditation of Australian Law Courses.

The Committees would be grateful for your feedback on the issues raised in this paper by **Friday 20 June 2025**. Feedback can be sent to submissions@legalservicescouncil.org.au.

Unless you advise us otherwise, your submission may be published on the Council's website and shared with the Council, Admissions Committee and the LACC, and may also be shared with other organisations that contribute to this consultation.

Introduction and background

About us

The Council is a statutory body that oversees the operation of the Legal Profession Uniform Law in New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia.

The Council's Admissions Committee develops the Legal Profession Uniform Admission Rules and provides advice to the Council about admissions matters.¹

The LACC is a national group that reports to the Council of Chief Justices of Australia and New Zealand. The LACC's main role is to forge consensus on admission and admission-related matters nationally, between the bodies represented by its members. The Council provides the LACC with secretariat support.²

The Admissions Committee and the LACC work closely together to facilitate national consistency in admissions matters.

About this consultation

LACC first published the Accreditation Standards for Australian Law Courses (**Standards**) in July 2018.³ The Standards set important minimum standards for the accreditation of law courses. The Standards also seek to give law schools greater certainty about the matters which an admitting authority will consider relevant when accrediting, monitoring or re-accrediting a law course.

In late 2023, the Committees became aware of some emerging issues in relation to the accreditation of law courses, partly arising as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Committees resolved to undertake an initial targeted consultation to explore how these issues might be addressed. Key issues under exploration included how the Standards might be enhanced to respond to the prevalence of virtual or online delivery and given the emergence of

¹ For more information about the Admissions Committee, see the Legal Services Council's [website](#).

² For more information about the LACC, see the Legal Services Council's [website](#).

³ The Standards are available on the Legal Services Council's [website](#).

new digital technologies. The initial consultation also explored other matters, such as the use of intensives or block delivery models.

Having considered the range of views expressed in initial consultation submissions in late 2024, the Committees have developed draft revised Standards (**Draft Revised Standards**) for public consultation. The Draft Revised Standards are attached (**Attachment A**).

This consultation does not include the accreditation standards for practical legal training providers⁴ which are being considered separately by the Committees.

Relevant overarching policy considerations

In developing the Draft Revised Standards, the Committees have given particular consideration to the desirability of minimum standards for the accreditation of law courses across Australia which are fit for purpose in the context of widespread online or blended delivery and other developments in contemporary Australian legal education, so as to further national consistency.⁵

Other policy considerations the Committees have taken into account include:

- the legislative objective of regulation which is efficient, effective, targeted and proportionate and the development of accreditation policies and procedures which are consistent, uniform and transparent across Australia⁶
- recognition of the broader national higher education regulatory landscape and higher education policy settings, including the role of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (**TEQSA**) and its regulatory and enforcement powers⁷
- the importance of innovation in the design and delivery of law courses to achieve enhanced student learning outcomes
- equity, accessibility, diversity and inclusion for students to be able to attain a legal qualification and enter the legal profession, and
- potential implementation impacts on law course providers.

Proposed revisions to the Standards

The Committees propose revisions to update, clarify and streamline the Standards in relation to the delivery of law courses, and support effective online learning with respect to teaching hours and the introduction of new requirements for active learning and invigilated assessments. The proposed revisions would also introduce additional guidance for intensives and block learning models and make other minor changes. The Committees propose a transitional period, as set out below.

⁴ Law Admissions Consultative Committee, [Uniform Standards for PLT Courses and Providers](#) (October 2017).

⁵ [Legal Profession Uniform Law](#), section 3(a), [LACC Charter](#), 2.2.

⁶ [Legal Profession Uniform Law](#), section 3(e), [LACC Charter](#), 2.2.

⁷ [Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011](#), sections 189 and 194, [Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency \(Information\) Guidelines 2017](#) (noting admitting authorities are identified in Schedule A (51 – 56) as professional bodies with whom TEQSA may share higher education information) and TEQSA [Engagement with professional bodies](#) (13 October 2022).

Online delivery of law courses

The Committees are aware of the growth in the number of law courses being delivered online and are concerned to ensure that the Standards support online delivery which is appropriate and effective in achieving student learning outcomes.

The proposed revisions to the Standards reflect the existing position that law courses may be delivered fully in-person, fully online or via a blended delivery model. In this context, the Committees propose new requirements to support the effectiveness of online delivery, including by setting minimum standards for active learning and student engagement (set out in the next section).

This approach aligns with the national regulation of tertiary education providers which, to promote innovation, flexibility and focus on learning design and delivery outcomes across providers, does not prescribe types of delivery modes.⁸ It also recognises that policy at the national level acknowledges online learning as a legitimate way to promote equity, access and inclusion in higher education.⁹

The Committees have heard initial consultation feedback about the importance of ensuring that certain cohorts of students, such as women, First Nations people, those living in regional, rural, remote and very remote (RRRR) areas and those from neurodiverse backgrounds or with a disability, have improved access to legal education by law courses being offered fully or partially online. This enhances diversity of representation across the legal profession and in RRRR areas seeking to attract lawyers. The Committees recognise the role of the Standards in supporting these objectives, while maintaining appropriate minimum standards in relation to law courses.

The relevant changes in the Draft Revised Standards are as follows:

- new clause 4.1 (The delivery of the law course)
- adjusted and new definitions at clause 2.1 for “online”, “delivery mode”, “in-person” and “synchronous online learning”, as well as the deletion of the “face-to-face” definition, and
- ancillary adjustments to clause 4.6 (Teaching of the law course and active learning) to extend current Standards to apply to the range of delivery modes possible for online learning.

The revised definitions have been developed taking into account initial consultation feedback about the need for:

- clearer definitions to respond to the widespread online delivery of law courses
- clearer delineation between synchronous and other online learning, and having regard to consistency with the national regulation of tertiary education providers¹⁰

⁸ [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#), Section 3.1.1b, TEQSA, [Guidance note: Course design \(including learning outcomes and assessment\)](#) (11 October 2017) and TEQSA, [Guidance note: Technology-enhanced learning](#) (11 April 2019).

⁹ [Australian Universities Accord Final Report 2023](#) (28 December 2023), pages 2–3, 7–8, 11 and 110–150 (Chapter 3), Federal Department of Education, [National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy](#) (19 August 2019), [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#), Section 2.2 and TEQSA, [Guidance note: Diversity and Equity](#) (11 October 2017).

¹⁰ While TEQSA does not appear to have published official definitions of ‘synchronous’ and ‘asynchronous’ learning, it does provide the following general descriptions: ‘*synchronous learning* allows social interaction in real time and is often more technologically demanding (for example of bandwidth). Examples include videoconferencing, chat and livestreaming of lectures’ compared with ‘*asynchronous learning* means that staff and students may all work at different times, as is the case with email and much social media. It uses platforms such as email, discussion boards,

- a definition for “delivery mode” that does not limit the types of delivery modes permitted when tertiary education providers offer a course of study¹¹
- updating the definition of “online” by removing references to technological hardware given the emergence of laptops, tablets, wearables and the possible development of other new types of hardware, and
- removal of the “face-to-face” definition, as it was creating some confusion. Instead, the Committees propose that the definition of “in-person” will continue to apply with slight modification.

Teaching hours, active learning and student engagement

The Committees propose revisions in response to initial stakeholder feedback that the Standards:

- be brought up-to-date by clarifying that teaching may be delivered not just in-person, but also through online or blended delivery modes, and
- provide an indicative range of possible ways in which teaching may occur through the introduction of a definition for “teaching method”.

Consistent with the clarifications for online learning, the Draft Revised Standards propose revisions at clause 4.5 (Content of the law course) and the introduction of new definitions at clause 2.1 for “delivery mode” and “teaching method” to provide clearer guidance as to what may count towards the 36 hours of teaching for each Priestley 11 subject.

To support effective online delivery, the Committees also propose to make updates to the Standards in relation to active learning and student engagement. The Committees propose these revisions in response to initial stakeholder feedback that active learning and student engagement in an online learning environment is best supported by synchronous online learning, and that the Draft Revised Standards can best achieve consistency in accreditation by setting a threshold number of hours to promote active student learning and engagement that would apply across all delivery modes.

The Draft Revised Standards propose revisions to clause 4.6 (Teaching the law course) by transferring commentary, with minor modification, about “active learning” to a new definition at clause 2.1 and by updating the definition of “direct interaction” to ensure it is appropriate for an online teaching and learning environment.

The minor modifications to the definition of “active learning” remove the reference to “test” (so there is no confusion with assessments) and includes a reference to factual “scenarios”.

The introduction of a new proposed requirement at clause 4.6 would allow an admitting authority to consider the number of hours provided by a law school for a student’s active learning and engagement in a Priestley 11 subject when considering whether a law course will enable a student to acquire an adequate level of understanding and competence.

The Committees consider the provision of a minimum number of 18 hours for active learning and/or direct interaction, whether the student’s participation is in-person or through synchronous

blogs, downloadable readings and recorded resources such as short video and audio talks’ in TEQSA, [Going Online: Reimagining teaching and Learning webinar series](#) (May – June 2020), pages 1–2.

¹¹ [Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011](#), section 5, definition of “provide a course of study”.

online learning, sets an appropriate balance between active and other learning. A minimum 18 hours is proposed as this would equate to 50% of the student experience with respect to the 36 hours of teaching for a Priestley 11 subject.

Invigilated assessments

In relation to assessments, the Committees received feedback in the initial stakeholder consultation that:

- universities should continue to have flexibility to allow for best practice innovation in assessment design and to select the assessment method that best achieves the desired learning outcomes, and
- it would be appropriate for a requirement to be imposed that at least 50% or half of all assessments for a Priestley 11 subject must be conducted by a form of invigilated assessment. This seeks to provide a sufficient level of assurance that a student has been appropriately awarded their grades and law degree.

The Draft Revised Standards introduce a new requirement at clause 4.7 (Assessing understanding and competence) and new definitions for “assessment method” and “invigilation” at clause 2.1.

The introduction of a new requirement at clause 4.7 would allow an admitting authority to consider for each unit of the law course that covers a Priestley 11 subject and statutory interpretation, the allocation of assessments, the assessment methods and whether a sufficient proportion of those assessments are conducted by invigilation (whether an online invigilated exam or another type of invigilated assessment). This will allow the admitting authority to ensure the law course provides an appropriate level of quality assurance that a student has been awarded a grade that accurately reflects their level of acquired understanding and competence.

The Draft Revised Standards impose a new requirement at clause 4.7(b) that at least 50% of assessments for a unit covering a Priestley 11 subject and statutory interpretation be conducted by a form of invigilated assessment. The new requirement does not require any specific method of invigilated assessment to allow law schools flexibility to use a method of assessment that would best achieve the intended learning outcomes and suit the delivery mode.

The introduction of a new definition for “assessment method” seeks to respond to initial stakeholder feedback that it would be helpful to include examples of the types of assessments that law schools may use in addition to examinations.

The introduction of a new definition for “invigilation” seeks to confirm that supervision of an assessment applies to all types of delivery modes, including when an assessment is conducted in-person or online.

Intensives and block learning models

The Committees received initial stakeholder feedback that it would enhance national consistency of accreditation if there was additional guidance in the Standards about the use of intensives and block delivery and what is needed for a law course to be considered “intensive”.

While the Committees are aware of two law schools that have already introduced block delivery of a whole law course, other stakeholders have expressed reservations about the appropriateness of intensive or block delivery models for Priestley 11 subjects.

To respond to the initial stakeholder feedback, the Committees propose to update the Standards to include additional guidance that intensive or block delivery should only be used for Priestley 11 subjects where the law school satisfies the admitting authority that it is appropriate in all the circumstances. To support this, it is proposed that the Standards also provide commentary that an admitting authority may seek further information and data from a law school, and that the Standards include more information about the nature of accelerated modes of delivery, of which intensive or block learning models are a type.

The proposed additional guidance acknowledges the practices of the Victorian and New South Wales admitting authorities which have already considered or are in the process of considering the offerings of the two law schools that have already introduced block delivery models for a whole law course.

By making these amendments to the Standards, it is intended that law schools may make a case for delivery in accelerated mode (intensive or block delivery) by satisfying the admitting authority that it is appropriate in all the circumstances for Priestley 11 subjects to be delivered in the proposed way. It is also intended that law schools that adopt intensive or block delivery of Priestley 11 subjects would still need to meet the at least three-year (or equivalent) requirement for the duration of the law course and the proposed new minimum requirement for active learning and student engagement discussed above. It may be open to the admitting authority to consider whether a reduced number of teaching hours would be permissible for a Priestley 11 subject.

The Draft Revised Standards propose amendments at clause 4.3 (The duration of the law course) in response to the initial stakeholder feedback.

Other minor revisions

The Draft Revised Standards propose other minor revisions to update, clarify and streamline in response to initial stakeholder feedback. These include:

- a new definition of “law course” at clause 2.1 that draws from the drafting in the Uniform Law Admission Rules¹² and further commentary in the explanatory note at clause 4.2(a) to clarify the requirement for a coherent sequence of units applies to a law course that is a single degree and, for a combined or double degree, to the law component of the combined or double degree
- a new definition of “unit” at clause 2.1 that is consistent with the TEQSA definition¹³ and accompanying revisions throughout the Draft Revised Standards, for example at clauses 4.2, 4.3 and 4.5, and
- updates to the definition of “prescribed areas of knowledge” at clause 2.1 and elsewhere to include statutory interpretation.

¹² [Legal Profession Uniform Admission Rules 2015](#), rule 5.

¹³ [Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011](#), section 5, definition of “unit of study”.

Regulatory landscape

The LACC Standards operate alongside the Australian Law School Standards,¹⁴ developed by the Council of Australian Law Deans (CALD), as well as the broader national regulation of the higher education sector by TEQSA.

When developing the Draft Revised Standards, the Committees have been mindful of TEQSA's resourcing,¹⁵ role and regulatory powers in maintaining academic integrity in the tertiary education sector, and TEQSA having particular focus on responding to commercial contract cheating services¹⁶ and the emergence of generative AI. The Committees have also considered what universities and law schools are required to do to meet the TEQSA academic integrity requirements. Each university is required to have an up-to-date academic integrity policy and procedures that respond to contract cheating and generative AI,¹⁷ and to comply with the TEQSA re-accreditation process, regular TEQSA audits,¹⁸ and respond to enquiries or participate in other initiatives.¹⁹

To support universities adapt and respond to contract cheating and generative AI, TEQSA has published extensive resources, guidance and best practice materials about how universities can maintain academic integrity with respect to these technological developments.²⁰ Anyone, including universities, students and members of the public, can report an alleged contract cheating service to TEQSA.²¹ Regarding generative AI, TEQSA encourages universities to take the approach that "assessment and learning experiences equip students to participate ethically and actively in a society where AI is ubiquitous".²²

The Committees are mindful not to include requirements in the Standards that would replicate these aspects of TEQSA's work. This aligns with the intended application of the Standards, that they complement and not duplicate the standards of CALD and TEQSA.²³

¹⁴ CALD, [Australian Law School Standards](#) (30 July 2020).

¹⁵ TEQSA, [Updated fees and charges from 1 January 2025](#) (13 December 2024).

¹⁶ Since the introduction of the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Amendment (Prohibiting Academic Cheating Services) Act 2020 (Cth)* on 4 September 2020, TEQSA has blocked 422 illegal cheating service websites and removed more than 850 social media posts and accounts offering or advertising cheating services to students. On 8 October 2024, TEQSA announced it had commenced legal proceedings against a US-based cheating service. TEQSA is also part of a Global Academic Integrity Network (40 agencies) calling on social media and digital platforms to take action to stop the advertising of illegal cheating services: see TEQSA, [TEQSA blocks more websites to protect students and academic integrity](#) (3 December 2024), TEQSA, [Blocked illegal cheating websites](#) (28 May 2024), [TEQSA Annual Report 2023-24](#), page 4, TEQSA, [TEQSA commences legal proceedings against Chegg](#) (8 October 2024) and TEQSA, [Global action to address academic dishonesty](#) (13 September 2024).

¹⁷ [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#), 5.2; TEQSA, [Sector update: Maintaining up to date academic integrity policies and procedures](#) (18 January 2023), TEQSA, [Guidance note: Academic and research integrity](#) (2 February 2024) and TEQSA, [Protecting academic integrity](#) guides and resources (16 October 2024).

¹⁸ TEQSA, [How TEQSA protects student interests](#) (1 March 2023).

¹⁹ For example, between June and October 2023, TEQSA ran in-person workshops in all states and territories with senior leaders meeting to discuss new contract cheating service developments and case studies: see TEQSA, [Annual Report 2023-24](#), pages 45 and 54.

²⁰ See for example: TEQSA, [Academic integrity tool kit \(13 October 2022\)](#), TEQSA, [Protecting academic integrity](#) guides and resources (9 September 2024), TEQSA, [How to respond to contract cheating: Detection and management](#) (13 October 2022), TEQSA, [Online learning good practice: Strategies for using online invigilated exams \(Undated\)](#), TEQSA, [Online learning good practice: The prevention of contract cheating in an online environment \(Undated\)](#), TEQSA, [Good practice note: Addressing contract cheating to safeguard academic integrity](#) (October 2017) and TEQSA, [Artificial intelligence resources \(28 November 2024\)](#).

²¹ TEQSA, [Reporting a suspected academic cheating service form](#).

²² TEQSA, [Assessment reform for the age of artificial intelligence](#) (November 2023), page 2.

²³ Law Admissions Consultative Committee, [Accreditation Standards for Australian Law Courses](#) (July 2018), page 3.

Proposed implementation timing

The Committees anticipate working towards a publication date in the second half of 2025, although this may depend on the nature of the feedback received through the consultation process.

The Committees propose there be a staggered two-year implementation period to facilitate transition.

During this period:

- The final revised Standards will be published one year before the date of commencement.
- In the year following commencement, the final revised Standards will apply to:
 - all applications for accreditation and re-accreditation, and
 - all other accredited law courses. It is anticipated that each admitting authority will communicate with law schools which are in this category.

Consultation questions

1. Do you support the drafting of the proposed revisions set out in the Draft Revised Standards (**Attachment A**)? We are interested in the reasons for your view and suggestions for improved drafting.
2. Do you agree with the proposed transitional period for the Revised Standards? If not, why not?
3. Do you have any other comments in relation to this work that you would like to provide to the Committees?

To assist you with providing your views, a feedback form has been published with this consultation paper. Please feel free to use this form, or to provide your submission in another format.