



The Road to Higher Education

A Community College Journey

Impetus for Higher Ed

WHY?

- A ‘space’ not currently occupied by Community Colleges (in Australia; CC’s play a critical Higher Ed role in the US)
- More appropriate AQF level for the course you want to offer (step into academia) – however ‘sub-bachelor Diplomas’ are also an option
- Total control of course content and structure (within limitations of accreditation requirements)
- Greater accessibility to Higher Education for communities (inc your own former students)
- Income (diversification = good; profit = unlikely, at least for some time)
- Stronger institutional rigour (review of P&P’s, strengthened corporate/academic structure, focus on student experience aligns with new ASQA approach)

Before we venture in...

- Higher Education applications take time and money
 - We began to put our application together in 2013
 - We submitted in late 2016
 - TEQSA guidelines are:
 - *notify of 'intent to submit' six months prior to submission*
 - *Submit application and pay preliminary assessment fee (cost \$7500 for one course + registration, 30 day wait)*
 - *If passed, pay substantive assessment fee (cost \$23,500 for one course + registration, 9 month wait, plus option for 9 month extension)*
 - *If passed, submit FEE-HELP application (approx. 7 months with extensions available on top of that)*
- There are course development costs (developers are generally highly qualified academics)

TEQSA's application

- TEQSA = ASQA
- My experience:
 - Generally more communicative
 - Provide a **wealth** of resources to support good practice and facilitate change
 - Give clear expectations and timeframes
- Application involves:
 - Registration as a Higher Education Provider (registration is up to 7 years)
 - Course Accreditation (at least one course must be submitted)

Registration Issues and Quirks – Academic Governance

- “Academic Governance” – establishing an academic board distinct from the corporate board
 - Responsible for teaching and scholarship and processes/structures that ensure quality outcomes (academic quality assurance)
 - Can (and should) still report to the Corporate Board which retains all organisational control (the company CEO can be a member of the Academic Board for example), however distinct independence is expected.
 - Must meet prior to application submission (minutes need to be included)
 - Every Academic Board is different, but some things to delegate can be:
 - *‘Steering’ the academic community (ensuring appropriate staff are appointed)*
 - *Development and participation in policies affecting academia (e.g. assessment processes, student grievances)*
 - *Driving continuous improvement*
 - *Facilitating information flow in dual sector providers – overseeing equivalence of academic standards in articulation arrangements etc*
 - *Endorsing new courses/subjects/assessment items/structures etc*

Registration Issues and Quirks – Scholarship

- “Scholarship” relates to staff development, not paying for student fees 😊
- “Academic staff must be active in scholarship that informs their teaching”
- Evidence required:
 - Incentives and support for staff to engage in literature on teaching and learning
 - Access to ‘awards’ for teaching
 - Encouraging publishing on teaching and learning practice
 - Presenting at conferences and workshops
 - Undertaking professional development
 - Participating in reviews/validations
 - Continuing education (for example pursuing a higher AQF level qualification)
 - You **need** a professional development budget and justify it is ‘enough’

Registration – Other Key Points

- Focus in on the student experience, pay particular attention to application, admissions, enrolment, student support and resources (on site resources and online)
- Consider Library and learning resources (must be adequate to support the needs of the program). Note: e-journals are excellent but expensive, consider relationships with other Universities. If you have been to a University, remember what you had at your fingertips, try to emulate that.
- New Student Management System may eventually need to be purchased (not required for application) – must log grades, staff details etc

Course Accreditation

- No 'Training Packages' in Higher Ed
- Mapping and alignment to AQF needs to be developed, as well as unit outlines
- List staff and qualifications (AQF + 1 rule)
- You need an expert to develop this, requires extensive consultation and research, TEQSA will want to see why you structured and designed in the way you did

FEE-HELP...

- Once approved, you need to apply for FEE-HELP
- **You do not have access to 'HECS'**
- Note that since the VET FEE-HELP debacle, the Department is cautious about new entrants
- New powers allow 'capping' of FEE-HELP, you must enter the market for the right reasons or you won't succeed

Our Experience so far

- It takes longer than you might think to put the application together...
- It costs more than you might think (staff time mainly)
- Consultants are potentially helpful, but TEQSA doesn't like them, and our experience wasn't fantastic (**potentially** more cost than they are worth – no doubt there are good ones out there though)
- TEQSA are generally good people to deal with, and respectful in their communication
- It has improved our business processes substantially, and is continuing to do so
- It is frankly a 'refreshing' change from the turmoil of the VET sector
- It is exciting to have as another opportunity for the CC sector to consider and champion – potentially opening doors to so many people to get a degree
- It is an extremely challenging and burdensome undertaking, but the potential is what drives and motivates the hard work
- We are a good way into 'substantive' assessment now, a visit is impending... will report back!