



Novel coronavirus – information for VET, ELICOS and higher education providers

International students starting the new academic year may be impacted by travel restrictions and exclusion periods following the novel coronavirus outbreak in China.

Information for providers

From 1 February 2020, international students will not be allowed to enter Australia for 14 days from the time they have left or transited through mainland China. Students already in Australia may also be subject to exclusion periods which prevent them from being at their place of study. If a student has travelled to mainland China within the past 14 days, or has been in close contact with a confirmed case of novel coronavirus, they must isolate themselves for 14 days after leaving mainland China.

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment encourages providers to consider flexible arrangements for affected students during this time. Examples include flexible course delivery, such as through online delivery of courses or additional sessions to make up for days missed for students who are prevented from attending classes in Australia

Providers may also need to adopt a flexible approach to student attendance. Students may need to exclude themselves from their place of study for a period. A period of isolation like this may be considered as consistent with a period of illness with respect to student attendance under *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* requirements.

The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) and the Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE) as the regulatory agencies

under the *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* acknowledge that due to circumstances surrounding the novel coronavirus, providers may not be in a position to fully comply with the requirements of Standards under the National Code 2018.

Providers should document all flexible arrangements made on a student-by-student basis. This is particularly important for arrangements that would usually be considered non-compliant with the ESOS Act.

ASQA, TEQSA and DESE acknowledge the current challenges take many forms for different providers and will work with providers on a case-by-case basis to minimise the impact this situation has on both providers and students.

Further information

Providers and students should stay up to date with the latest advice on the novel coronavirus from the Department of Health [website](#). Providers and students should also stay up to date on the latest advice on visa and travel matters related to the virus from the Department of Home Affairs [website](#).

Higher education providers can contact TEQSA at enquiries@teqsa.gov.au or access the [TEQSA](#) websites for further information.

VET providers can access the [ASQA](#) website for more information or contact ASQA's InfoLine on 1300-701 801 or at enquiries@asqa.gov.au

Useful links

Further advice for international students is available on the Department of Education, Skills and Employment [website](#). Enquiries can be directed to international.students@dese.gov.au.

The Tuition Protection Service has published advice for students and education providers regarding the [Coronavirus Restrictions on Travel](#).

PRISMS help desk has provided advice for education providers in relation to [managing international student Confirmation of Enrolment records \(CoEs\)](#).

The [TEQSA](#) and [ASQA](#) websites contain further information for providers.

Frequently asked questions

What level of reporting do providers need to collect on accommodations made for students which do not meet the ESOS Standards?

The department acknowledges that providers may not be able to fully comply with requirements under the ESOS Act for students that have been affected by the travel and quarantine restrictions. In these cases, the department recommends that providers document all accommodations made in each student's record. This includes, and is particularly important for, actions that would otherwise be non-compliant with the ESOS Act and the National Code.

Are the flexible teaching options restricted to Chinese students or can these also be extended to others who are not attending class or deferring due to this issue?

The department is encouraging the use of flexible arrangements, that otherwise would be considered non-compliant with the ESOS Act, for students directly affected by the travel and quarantine restrictions which prevent them from attending classes in Australia.

The department understands that some other students may be hesitant to travel due to the novel coronavirus. Providers should consider requests for deferral or suspension on a case by case basis, in line with the requirements under Standard 9 of the National Code on granting suspensions and deferrals on the basis of compelling or compassionate grounds.

What portion of ELICOS courses can now be delivered online? Can an entire course be delivered online?

ASQA and TEQSA do not intend to pursue regulatory action for providers who deliver ELICOS courses online for students who are directly impacted by travel restrictions from attending class in Australia. For short courses (3-5 weeks) this may be the whole course. This does not apply to other students.

Can providers offer additional sessions for students to make up for days missed?

Yes. Increasing contact hours for a period to make up for missed classes would be considered a reasonable adjustment.

Should providers defer or suspend CoEs for incoming or continuing students who are restricted from travelling to Australia but will take online courses or alternative delivery methods?

No. Providers should not defer or suspend these students' CoEs. Providers are reminded that under Standard 8 of the National Code they should offer support to students who are undertaking online or distance learning.