

***Queensland Quality Standards for Principal Employer Organisations***

***Queensland Apprenticeship and Traineeship Office***



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## **Section 1: General information**

### **Background**

An employer that employs 25 or more apprentices or trainees and is actively attempting to place the apprentices or trainees under a hosting arrangement, for a fee, must be recognised as a Principal Employer Organisation (PEO) or a Group Training Organisation (GTO) by the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (the department).

The purpose behind this requirement is to ensure that apprentices and trainees employed by PEOs and placed in hosting arrangements receive quality training and employment outcomes during the term of their apprenticeship or traineeship training contracts.

Employers seeking recognition as a PEO, and their ongoing recognition once recognised, will need to demonstrate that they are compliant against the Queensland Quality Standards for principal employer organisations and departmental requirements for PEOs.

The Queensland Quality Standards for principal employer organisations are based on the National Standards for group training organisations.

### **Scope**

The key objective of the Queensland Quality Standards for principal employer organisations is to improve the quality and breadth of training available to apprentices and trainees.

The Queensland Quality Standards for principal employer organisations provide the Queensland Government with a consistent basis for the recognition and continued recognition of PEOs.

The Queensland Quality Standards for principal employer organisations were endorsed by the Department on 3 June 2008.

## **Section 2: Audits**

### **About the audit**

The Queensland Government is committed to ensuring apprentices and trainees receive quality employment and training experiences during the period of their apprenticeships or traineeships.

The Queensland Quality Standards for principal employer organisations provides the government with a consistent basis for recognition and monitoring of PEOs.

Compliance against the Queensland Quality Standards for principal employer organisations is a requirement for initial recognition and continued recognition as a PEO in Queensland.

Independent audits are to be undertaken at least once every five years for a PEO to maintain its recognition. The costs of the independent audits are the responsibility of the PEO.

PEOs will also need to undertake an annual self- assessment by 31 December each year and submit to the department a certification from the PEO's Chief Executive Officer that the self-assessment has been completed and the organisation continues to be compliant against the standards by the following 31 January.

A copy of the self-assessment must be provided to the department on request.

### **Who conducts audits?**

Audits against the Queensland Quality Standards for principal employer organisations are to be undertaken by 'approved' auditors.

The department has determined that an approved auditor means an auditor that has been accredited as a "Lead Auditor" or higher by an appropriate accreditation body, either Exemplar Global (formerly RABQSA) or the International Register of Certificated Auditors (IRCA).

The auditor will be responsible for conducting the quality audit services and providing the department with a report as to the extent to which they believe a PEO does or does not comply with the four standards necessary to comply with the Queensland Quality Standards for Principal Employer Organisations.

## ***Responsibilities***

The department and PEOs have shared responsibilities in respect of audits:

The department is responsible for:

- advising auditors, as requested, of the scope and history of the PEO being audited;
- dealing with any issues that arise during the audit period; and
- reviewing the independent audit report and examining other issues, such as operational complaints, to determine whether or not a PEO complies with the Queensland Quality Standards for principal employer organisations.

The PEO is required to:

- select an auditor;
- advise the department of the auditor selected to undertake the audit and proof of their registration with either Exemplar Global or IRCA;
- organise times with the auditor to conduct audit activities;
- provide the auditor with all copies of self-assessment reports, as they will form the basis of the audit;
- provide sufficient, valid and reliable evidence to enable the auditor to form a professional opinion on whether or not the standards have been met;
- provide reasonable resources to ensure an effective and efficient audit process;
- ensure that management and staff are made aware of the audit process against the Queensland Quality Standards for principal employer organisations; and
- The cost of the audit service, including initial compliance audit and any rectification work undertaken involving any additional services, is borne by the PEO.

### ***Dealing with non-compliance***

A PEO has 14 days from the completion of the site audit to rectify any areas of non-compliance with the Queensland Quality Standards for principal employer organisations.

Where an auditor judges a non-compliance to be minor, a system improvement plan (strategy and timeframes) is negotiated with the PEO for preventive action. The strategy and timeframe must be appropriate for the degree of risk. The auditor is responsible for submitting the systems improvement plan to the department for approval.

Any areas of major non-compliance must be rectified before a PEO can be found compliant. The PEO must be informed by the auditor of the need for a full or partial re-audit, or whether a written declaration that corrective action is complete will be adequate.

If a PEO is unable to comply with the Queensland Quality Standards for principal employer organisations, the department may seek to have the PEO's certificate of recognition as a PEO cancelled.

### ***Section 3: Queensland Quality Standards for principal employer organisations***

#### ***Name of Standards***

These standards are the Queensland Quality Standards for principal employer organisations.

#### ***Application of Standards***

These standards apply to each recognised PEO.

#### ***Definitions***

In these standards

Apprenticeship/traineeship training contract means a contract for an apprenticeship or traineeship, made between an employer and an apprentice or trainee, which is registered with the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training, as required by the [Further Education and Training Act 2014](#).

Audit means a systematic, independent and documented process for assessing evidence to determine whether the operations of a PEO comply, or continue to comply, with the Queensland Quality Standards for principal employer organisations.

Chief Executive Officer means the most senior executive of the PEO.

Completion of an apprenticeship/traineeship training contract means completion of the on-the-job and off-the-job components of an apprenticeship or traineeship, leading to the issuing of a completion certificate by the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training.

Department of Employment, Small Business and Training means the Queensland State Government department that administers the vocational education and training system in Queensland.

Evidence required means the evidence to demonstrate a sub-clause of a standard has been met.

Evaluation means all the activities, such as audit results and reports, carried out by the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training to determine whether the PEO meets, or continues to meet, all of the requirements of the Queensland Quality Standards for principal employer organisations.

Hosting arrangements means an arrangement under which a PEO agrees in writing with another entity (the host employer) for:

- the organisation, for a fee, to hire out an apprentice or trainee employed by the organisation to perform work for the other entity (the host employer)
- the other entity (the host employer) to train the apprentice or trainee under a training plan

Internal review means reviews conducted by, or on behalf of, the PEO for its internal purposes. Where conducted by the organisation, these may usually be described as self-assessment.

Non-compliance means failure to comply with one or more of the Queensland Quality Standards for principal employer organisations.

Principal employer organisation means an entity recognised by the department that employs 25 or more apprentices and trainees and is actively attempting to, or has placed the apprentices or trainees, under hosting arrangements.

Quality means the ability of a set of inherent characteristics of a product, system or process to fulfil requirements of customers and other interested parties (from AS/NZS ISO 9000:2006)

Rotation means an apprentice or trainees moving from one host employer to another as part of his/her apprenticeship or traineeship with the PEO.

Staff means, when used with this document, the employees of the PEO other than its apprentices and trainees.

Standards means when used in Section 2 of this document the Queensland Quality Standards for principal employer organisations. Each Standard has a heading and a short statement of the principals behind the Standard.

Sub-clause means, when used in this document, the numbered clauses appearing under each of the Standards of the Queensland Quality Standards for principal employer organisations.

Training plan means a program of training and assessment that is required under an apprenticeship/traineeship training contract.



## **Section 4: The Standards**

### **Standard 1: Systems for principal employer organisation services**

The PEO has systems in place to plan for and provide quality services to apprentices, trainees and host employers.

- 1.1 The PEO shall conduct an internal audit of its compliance with the Standards and the policies and procedures in sub-clause 1.3 at least annually, adopting a continuous improvement approach to the self-assessment.
- 1.2 The PEO shall have effective systems to demonstrate demand for its services, industry support and responsiveness to industry to:
  - manage and track hosting, including demonstrating how the host and the PEO will discharge their responsibilities for compliance with the Standards and with legislative and regulatory requirements
  - manage recruitment, placement, welfare and career support of apprentices and trainees
  - rotate apprentices and trainees as appropriate
  - monitor training.
- 1.3 The principal employer organisation shall document, authorise, implement and review policies and/or procedures, as required by the Standards, for ensuring quality services consistent with the organisation's scale of operations.
- 1.4 The PEO shall document in a publicly available code of practice or similar document, the service level requirements of staff providing services to apprentices, trainees and employers, including information from its policy on complaints handling and resolution, and shall keep records of each complaint and its resolution and review.
- 1.5 The PEO shall identify relevant operational data and shall be able to demonstrate how this data is used to plan and monitor performance of the organisation and in the improvement of services to employers, apprentices and trainees.
- 1.6 The PEO shall collect and analyse stakeholder and client feedback and satisfaction data on the services it provides as a basis for continuous improvement to its policies and procedures.

**Standard 2: Compliance with Australian and Queensland legislation and regulatory requirements**

The PEO ensures that compliance with Australian and Queensland legislation and regulatory requirements relevant to its operations is integrated into its policies and/or procedures and that compliance is maintained.

- 2.1 The PEO shall have a documented process for:
- identifying relevant Australian and Queensland legislation and related regulations applicable to its operations
  - integrating these requirements, and changes to these requirements, into the organisation's policies and/or procedures
  - ensuring that staff are made aware of their obligations, related to their duties with other staff, hosts, apprentices and trainees, under such legislation and regulatory requirements, and for review compliance.

**Standard 3: The skills of principal employer organisation staff**

Each member of the PEO's staff who is involved in the provision of PEO services is skilled for the functions they perform.

- 3.1 The PEO shall develop, document and implement a policy and/or procedure for the recruitment, induction and ongoing development of each member of its staff who is involved in the provision of any aspect of principal employer service.
- 3.2 The PEO shall ensure that staff recruited are competent to carry out the duties of the position they are employed to fill, or that they are provided with adequate training to fulfil these competencies.
- 3.3 The PEO shall encourage and provide relevant opportunities for the professional development of staff on the vocational education and training system, with particular emphasis on the requirements of apprenticeships and traineeships, working with equity clients and working with other local networks.
- 3.4 The PEO shall maintain up-to-date records of qualifications, skills and experience of staff in management, payroll and field officer functions.
- 3.5 The PEO shall monitor and provide feedback to staff on their performance.
- 3.6 The PEO shall ensure that their staff are aware of or hold a qualification in Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) principles.

**Standard 4: Ethical practice**

The PEO's management and staff behave ethically in the provision of services.

- 4.1 The PEO shall disseminate clear and accurate information about its services and operations to each host employer, apprentice and trainee.
- 4.2 The PEO shall document, in a code of practice or similar document, a statement on ethical practice within the organisation which has been approved by its board for its own conduct and for the conduct of its management and staff, in the provision of its services.
- 4.3 The PEO shall ensure that its clients and stakeholders have access to a document on how it manages conflict of interest within its organisation and across other functions within the organisation or in related organisations.
- 4.4 The PEO's marketing and advertising plans and/or materials shall be accurate, define how key stakeholder relationships are managed and demonstrate that permissions, conditions and copyright requirements have been met.