



Electronic signing – financial statements

Electronic signatures (e-signatures) are the electronic version of a handwritten signature (also called a wet signature).

QAO uses electronic signatures to sign our independent auditor's opinions. We introduced them to:

- limit paper consumption, with the aim to provide potential cost savings and reduce environmental impacts
- allow timely return of the certified financial statements
- improve reproduction quality.

This fact sheet outlines the legal requirements, explains what this means for our clients, and gives an overview of our internal process.

Legal requirements

To meet the legal requirements, there are 3 criteria for using an electronic transaction to 'sign' a document:

- identification – we must use a method to identify the person/people and capture their intentions. For example, the signing officer is bound by their declaration even if they did not send the communication but rather consented to someone sending it on their behalf
- reliability – the process must maintain the integrity of the information. For example, the information must remain complete and unaltered throughout the course of a transaction
- consent – parties agree to send and receive digitally signed documents.

Records of signing electronically

Legislation dictates who is to sign the financial statements for your entity. Where your entity uses electronic signatures, you must maintain records to support that the financial statements comply with legislation. This entails:

- ensuring appropriate security measures are in place to prevent any unauthorised use of electronic signatures
- developing policies and/or procedures regarding the use of electronic signatures
- appropriately managing the document to which the signature has been added and any supporting documents to ensure your entity is keeping full and accurate records for as long as required.

This also applies to the signing of management representation letters.

We expect e-signatures to be a replica of the signers' actual signature, not a typed name.

Fact sheet

Submitting financial statements

QAO has a portal that entities can use to submit the final version of their financial statements. To maintain the integrity of the portal, we grant access on a need-to-know basis. Your audit team can advise how to request access.

Once you access the site, you will complete a form to submit your financial statements. You will be required to provide some basic details about the submission such as name of the entity, financial year end, name of the person submitting the documents, and so on. The date of submission will be recorded automatically. In the form, you also attach the following documents:

- financial statements – where there is more than one statement, such as financial statements and current year financial sustainability statement, submit these documents as separate files. (Word or PDF format)
- signed and dated management certificate(s). Separate documents where there is more than one. (PDF format only)
- signed management representation letter(s). (PDF format only).

You will only see the forms you submit. You will not have access to forms from other entities.

Should you need to make an amendment to the form this can be done through the edit function. A version history of the edits is maintained.

QAO process

Once we receive the financial statements, they will be provided to your audit team for processing.

The submitted financial statements are verified against the version your auditors cleared to ensure we received the correct version.

Once clearance is given, we will combine the financial statements, management certificate, and our independent auditor's report(s) for signing.

When signed, we will return a signed version to your entity. Letters and a copy of the financial statements will also be sent via email to the relevant parties.

It is important that you keep your audit manager up-to-date with any changes in email address for the mayor, director-general, chief executive officer, or chief financial officer so that these emails are addressed correctly.

What happens if you are unable to access the portal to submit financial statements?

If you have difficulty submitting your financial statements, please contact your audit team to discuss alternate solutions.

Feedback

Feedback from our clients is important to us. If you have feedback on the electronic signing process or encounter any difficulties, please reach out to your audit team.

Resources

For more information on using e-signatures, please read the Queensland Government's *Electronic signatures guideline*. Available from: www.forgov.qld.gov.au/information-and-communication-technology/qgea-policies-standards-and-guidelines/electronic-signatures-guideline



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