



Review of the Australian Qualifications Framework

Discussion Paper

DECEMBER 2018

The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Review Panel wishes to draw on the considerable expertise and experience that has developed across a broad range of organisations and individuals in relation to the Review's [Terms of Reference](#).

In its discussion paper, the Panel has opted to provide to organisations and individuals some of the Panel's initial thinking about the case for change to the AQF, but invites differing analysis, conclusions and proposals.

To make a submission to the Review, please email this form to AQFReview@education.gov.au by **15 March 2019**.

Please note that the Australian Government Department of Education and Training will not treat a submission as confidential unless requested that the whole submission, or part of the submission, be treated as such.

Please limit your response to no more than 3000 words.

Respondent name

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Respondent organisation (where relevant)

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1. In what ways is the AQF fit, or not fit, for purpose?

Whilst the broad objectives of the AQF remain fit for purpose, the value add to the education system needs to be clearly defined. The flexible nature of the objectives, the focus on quality assurance and the alignment with international qualifications framework remain important underpinnings of the education system.

Nevertheless, the framework must continue to evolve and adapt to match the evolving needs of students and employers.

QTIC supports the notion that to remain current, micro-credentialing should be introduced. Micro-credentialing enables students to up-skill in a specific area to fit a need or an identified deficiency within the workplace. The short timeframe and immediate nature of these mean that they are built for purpose and provide the opportunity for employees to up-skill in a short timeframe. They also create the opportunity for a full qualification to be obtained at a later date, should that be the desired course of action. This is a preferred method of learning for many businesses and individuals seeking to upskill to meet the requirements of employment.

In offering such a program, it is important that courses are not unduly short and opportunities for work integrated learning and on-the-job training are also considered in order to support the delivery of qualifications that meet industry need.

2. Where the AQF is not fit for purpose, what reforms should be made to it and what are the most urgent priorities? Please be specific, having regard to the possible approaches suggested in the discussion paper and other approaches.

A core focus of reform should be on transferable skills and flexibility. Predefined learning modules are no longer suiting the "gig economy", whereby people are taking on multiple roles, across multiple organisations, to the equivalent of a full-time work load. The gig economy promotes skills that can be utilised in multiple occupations. Training should be reflective of the diversity that is required, offering skills that are flexible, enable problem solving, encourage strategic decision making and provide digital literacy development.

Traditional models do not reflect the changing environment. It is important that both vocational and higher education adapt and evolve as other industries do, to ensure that they remain relevant and support the upskilling and provision of workers fit for the roles industry requires. MOOCs are a strong example of the evolution of training to meet learners' needs. The rapid expansion, and engagement of this style of delivery demonstrate a need. The recognition of certain MOOCs under the AQF would support flexible learning and validate learners' engagement with these courses. The scope for inclusion within these courses would need to be defined, including whether the MOOC would be developed into a nationally accredited course or competency for delivery, and the level of learning and outcome from MOOCs in order to align appropriately with the AQF.

With the *future of work* upon us, training products need to support skilled workers for a broader range of jobs. The current training system has significant strengths; however it is weighted towards learners gaining technical competencies, rather than integrating the broader skills of problem solving, intergenerational communication, language, literacy and numeracy skills, digital literacy, creative thinking and the wider knowledge base that the jobs of the future are likely to need. Previous reviews have identified the insufficiency of foundation skills in VET and higher education graduates and have sought to embed them within technical units of competency, however this has been inconsistently applied.

There is still a question as to who is responsible for the development of these critical skills among learners – should it be through the schooling system, through VET and Higher Education or at home. In tourism and hospitality these power (soft) skills remain vital to a productive and sustainable industry. A core outcome of this review should be a national discussion around the power skills required for the future, common terminology and how to embed them.

As the economy and skills needs change, society requires a training system that incorporates future work skills that build on foundation and technical skills. This will provide a more flexible workforce as the specific technical skills required by industry can be updated more readily. By enhancing training products to address emerging skill needs and changing workforce environments, the workforce will be better equipped to adapt to change. This would require the re-examination of the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment to ensure that trainers are appropriately skilled in understanding how to build these skills and embed them across training packages.

The VET system and funding opportunities that support the system need to offer greater flexibility for eligibility. Full time employment requirements do not always meet the needs of tourism businesses. With the casual and contracted workforce representation growing in the tourism and hospitality sectors, flexible pathways should be considered when offering opportunities for work integrated learning and industry-based training (including apprenticeships and traineeships). The shift in employment patterns also means that often learners are seeking immediacy in training, requiring skills over a short duration.

Examining the relationships between levels and qualifications, there is some ambiguity across the levels, specifically regarding different education sectors. The level and quality of training is often confused, and the value of different qualifications undermined by a lack of understanding of the purpose and the skill level required for graduates. The devaluing of courses is accentuated by instability and uncertainty of federal policy and funding streams.

3. In relation to approaches suggested by the Panel or proposed in submissions or through consultations, what are the major implementation issues the Review should consider? Please consider regulatory and other impacts.

The inclusion of social and enterprise skills is important. These fundamental skills are often glossed over in training and employers are finding graduates lack the skills required to be effective in the workplace. QTIC supports the expansion of the list of enterprise and social skills included in the AQF and provide guidance or advice about delivering them through various qualifications.

Furthermore, it is important that the skills are explicitly taught in relation to the course content. Tailored approaches are important for education providers to offer relevant and practical content.

Endorsement of courses by industry is an important step in ensuring that that courses reflect industry needs and promote opportunities. Often those within the training and education systems have little contact with industry, this has a negative impact on course delivery as content fails to match needs and graduates are not fit for roles. By working closely with industry to validate training and courses there is opportunity to strengthen the system.

Further to the endorsement of courses, consideration to the validity of skill sets should also be validated by industry. Skill sets that fail to prepare students for the workforce and promote unrealistic industry insight and expectations should not be endorsed. Flexible skill sets must offer a solution to an industry shortage and must reflect genuine needs rather than skills not fit for purpose and developed to drive revenue for organisations.

Other

Perception across industry is that VET and higher education is not responsive or flexible and is often unable to meet the needs of industry. In a recent consultation with industry regarding training needs, one member notes *"Tourism operators are constantly frustrated by the esoteric, insular and inflexible nature of training options"*. Tourism operates within a dynamic and fast-moving industry, it is important that the education model is able to evolve with these changes.

A broader issue is highlighted through research recently conducted by QTIC in its role as the Queensland State Government's Vocational Education and Training Industry Advisory Organisation agreement. The expected needs for industry over the next five years, in particular digital business literacy, middle management and leadership skills and strategic thinking and problem solving will need further training adjustments. It is identified that it is the power (soft) skills that are required to assist businesses in the future. These skills are not currently strongly featured in school or vocational education. Tailoring of programs is required to meet the needs of the workforce. For example, one employer states, *"From my perspective there is a total lack of personal interaction, and customer service being taught today. This is a skill that cannot be learnt from an online course"*. Other concerns relate to occupations with existing skills shortages,

in particular chefs, and the time it takes for completion of courses. Whilst referring to the same issue, another respondent says, *"I don't think we have done this very well and the current skills shortage in kitchens is evidence. We need to plan well in advance, but also come up with quality initiatives to combat current shortfalls"*. The relationship between education providers, from school through to higher education, and in-between needs to be re-examined in the context of what skills need to be delivered in order to ensure that learners are competent.

Strengthening partnerships between industry and the education and training sector will also contribute to ensuring training and skills programs are relevant, world class and contemporary.