



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

Bernadette Foley, National Manager, Accreditation

Respondent organisation (where relevant)

Engineers Australia

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

This submission has been prepared from the perspective of the professional body responsible for the accreditation of entry to practice engineering programs, to internationally agreed standards. Engineers Australia is also the recognised authority for engineering migration skills assessments and coordinates agreements for the international mutual recognition of engineering professionals in Australia. Engineers Australia is invested in the continuing professional development of the profession and has a subsidiary Registered Training Organisation, Engineering Education Australia.

The Australian Quality Framework (AQF) has served the engineering profession well, and Engineers Australia agree that with the rapidly changing education landscape the review is both timely and warranted.

The AQF has provided consistency and enabled international comparisons of engineering programs, and qualifications, at AQF 6, 7, 8 and 9 levels. Any changes to the AQF that would enable further alignment and/or consistency with international education frameworks would be welcomed.

Current alignment of programs with international education Accords include:

Occupation category	International Accord	Typical program structure	AQF Level
Professional Engineer	Washington	Master (coursework) (1-3 years)* Bachelor Honours (4 years)	9 8
Engineering Technologist	Sydney	Bachelor (3 years)	7
Engineering Associate (senior technicians)	Dublin	Associate Degree (2 years) Advanced Diploma (2 years)	6

*the duration of study for entry to practice Masters programs is dependent on entry requirements, including the level and field of the undergraduate qualification.

International mutual recognition agreements are also based on the above primary qualifications.

Brief comments on each of the areas for possible change identified in the December 2018 AQF Review Discussion Paper are provided below.

A wider range of credentials could be included in the AQF

Engineers Australia is supportive of the review exploring how shorter-form credentials can be included within the AQF. It is recognised that this is a rapidly changing area and can enable existing professionals to upskill or change areas of practice. As it is an emerging area, it is seen as important to not constrain future possibilities.

It is suggested that the impact of bundling of credentials is considered in relation to the wider range of shorter-form credentials. For example, 3-4 Graduate Certificates may or may not be equivalent to a Masters, even though the volume of learning may be similar. It is acknowledged that this is addressed within the existing AQF to some degree, but this may need further consideration with short-form credentials.

The treatment of enterprise and social skills could be clarified in the AQF

Engineers Australia is supportive of the need for these skills to be clarified within the AQF and that the emphasis should be on context and guidance rather than prescriptive attainment at different AQF levels.

AQF taxonomies and levels (including aspects of volume of learning)

Engineers Australia is supportive of having sufficient, but not more than necessary, AQF levels. Alignment with international education frameworks is seen as important.

The use of different types of qualifications at AQF levels is fit for purpose. However, the distinction between different qualification types, volume of learning and levels needs to be carefully articulated.

Four-year AQF 8 embedded honours programs are considered as the benchmark for entry to practice engineering programs in Australia. These programs are designed to embed and scaffold the intended outcomes throughout the entire program, with capstone experiences typical as a component of the final year.

Within the existing AQF, and particularly from a volume of learning perspective, four years of learning could achieve the following outcomes:

- 3 year AQF 7 + 1 year end-on honours = AQF 8
- 3 year AQF 7 + 1 year graduate diploma = AQF 8
- 4 year AQF 8 embedded honours = AQF 8
- 3 year AQF 7 + 1 year Masters = AQF 9 (in certain circumstances)

For accredited entry to practice engineering programs, a three-year AQF 7 cognate bachelor's degree plus a 1-year graduate diploma is not considered equivalent to an AQF 8 embedded honours degree. However, completion of three years of a four-year embedded bachelor honours degree could result in an AQF 7 qualification if designed appropriately.

Providing clarity for prospective students, employers and education designers regarding the different types of qualifications at a level would be helpful.

Senior secondary school certificates

Engineers Australia makes no comment on this area of the review.

Volume of Learning

Engineers Australia is supportive of AQF continuing to reference a volume of learning, for new learners. Enhancements that enable further comparisons with international education frameworks and provide additional clarity for students would be desired.

AQF policies and explanations

Engineers Australia notes the consideration of the structure and form of the policies and explanations in the discussion paper. Having these separate for flexibility appears appropriate.

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.

Please refer above

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.

No significant issues with implementation are envisaged with the possible approaches identified in the discussion paper.

Engineers Australia would welcome the opportunity to be further involved in the review, particularly with regard to implications for entry to practice embedded honours programs.

Other