

Submission to the Australian Qualifications Framework Review

March 2019

South West TAFE & Foundation for Young Australians' Response

South West TAFE (SWTAFE) and The Foundation for Young Australians (FYA) welcome the opportunity to make a submission to the Australian Qualification Framework Review.

We believe it is time to rethink how we prepare young people for the future of work and the management of their careers. We need to shift our thinking about careers from preparing for a single pathway to supporting young people to develop a portfolio of skills, knowledge and attitudes that expands and deepens over time - making them highly portable across many jobs and sectors. This thinking should form the basis of our qualification framework.

[FYA's New Work Order Report Series](#) details the changing nature of jobs, how it acutely affects young Australians and what options we have to future proof our economy.¹ This research guides our approach and forms the basis of our following recommendations for the Australian Qualification Framework review.

- 1 Formally recognise the development of micro-credentials to ensure current and future skills gaps can be filled, create more accessible pathways for reskilling and upskilling, and form part of a suite of tools to promote lifelong learning
- 2 Utilise the Core Skills for Work Framework from the VET sector as a foundation to embed and assess enterprise skills across higher education and vocational qualifications

Jobs are changing

Economic changes are transforming the world of work through automation, globalisation and more flexible working arrangements.² This brings opportunity, but also significant challenges if young people are not equipped with the skills, knowledge and attitudes to navigate a rapidly changing work landscape.

Transformation of work is also changing the portfolio of skills young people need. Reports from the World Economic Forum,³ together with [our research](#), outline the kind of skills and mindset our workforce needs

¹ Foundation for Young Australians, New Work Order: Report Series. Available at: <https://www.fya.org.au/our-research/>

² Foundation for Young Australians (2015), "New Work Order". Available at: <https://www.fya.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/fya-future-of-work-report-final-lr.pdf>

³ World Economic Forum (2018), "The Future of Jobs Report". Available at: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Future_of_Jobs_2018.pdf

now and into the future. These reports suggest technical and enterprise skills (such as critical thinking, problem solving and collaboration) should be recognised as of equal importance.

Recent research has also highlighted that our investment in skills in terms of hours committed to learning will need to double by 2040 (from 300 to 600 billion hours) due to a rapidly changing world of work.⁴ In fact by 2040, 41% of the average worker's total education and training will need to occur after the age of 21.⁵

The Australian Qualification Framework should encourage workers to continue formal learning on the job. In order to ensure our qualification system stays relevant in the future, we need to recognise that learning is a lifelong process, and that workers will continue to build skill sets over time. Qualifications will need to be seen as more than a one-off investment if graduates are to build a portable set of skills that prepare them for a range of jobs across their career.

Skills are more portable than we realise

It is commonly viewed that moving from one occupation to another is onerous and the costs to both employers and job seekers are high. However, jobs are more related than we might think, not all jobs require the acquisition of an entirely new skill set and the skill sets of many jobs are in fact 'portable' to other jobs. This is because, for many jobs, employers demand very similar skills⁶.

FYA's *New Work Mindset* report provides an approach to support young people to develop a portfolio of skills and navigate a more complex career. Using a first-time methodology for analysing millions of job advertisements, we grouped more than 1,000 different occupations into just 7 'areas of work' or job clusters. This research showed that on average, when an individual trains or works in 1 job, they acquire skills for 13 other jobs.⁷ Young people might not need to acquire an entirely new skill set when the skill sets of many jobs are 'portable' to other jobs.

FYA recommends the following actions to improve employability of graduates and the opportunities for lifelong learning:

RECOMMENDATION 1

Formally recognise the development of micro-credentials to ensure current and future skills gaps can be filled, create more accessible pathways for reskilling and upskilling, and form part of a suite of tools to promote lifelong learning

Micro-credentials offer a way to respond in real-time to fill skills gaps and meet the immediate needs of employers. The flexibility and responsiveness of micro-credentials offer a solution to a number of issues faced in the education sector, including how to:

- Respond to changes in industry demand in a flexible and timely way;
- Promote a culture of lifelong learning and;
- Ease transitions within the labour market through reskilling for improved job mobility.

⁴ Google and AlphaBeta (2019), "Future Skills". Available at: <https://www.alphabeta.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/google-skills-report.pdf>

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ On average, when a person trains or works in 1 job, they acquire skills for 13 other jobs. See *New Work Order*, FYA 2016.

⁷ Foundation for Young Australians (2016), "New Work Mindset". Available at: <https://www.fya.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/The-New-Work-Mindset.pdf>

Micro-credentials mapped to the most in-demand skills identified by employers and highlighted through FYA's *New Work Mindset* report will provide greater industry and job relevance for young people, and build confidence in employers that students will leave their post-school training 'work ready'.

One example of the creation of high-quality, industry relevant micro-credentials is by a collaboration between SWTAFE, FYA, Lyndoch Living, Western District Health Service and Eventide Homes.

Case Study: South West Victoria

SWTAFE, FYA and industry partners Lyndoch Living, Western District Health Service and Eventide Homes have joined together to explore new ideas and solutions to enhance the employability of graduates, workplace productivity and employee longevity.

Based in South West Victoria this initiative, funded by the Victorian Department of Education and Training's Workforce Training Innovation Fund, is a collaboration between education, industry and for-purpose providers that aims to map job opportunities and the skills workers need to succeed now, and into the future.

It has three primary components:

- Building localised, future focussed evidence of skills needs
- A new approach to career development and management for current and future workers
- Design and delivery of high-quality skills training that responds to industry needs and latest research on the future of work.

As part of the delivery of this project SWTAFE are piloting micro-credentials as a new mode of delivering skills training in the region. Through building the evidence of skills needs in the region and mapping the skills TAFE courses provide, the project team uncovered areas of opportunities for additional training which can be filled through micro-credentials.

Delivering micro-credentials in time management, self management, leadership, digital literacy, creativity and others could help current and future workers in the region better prepare for entering or transitioning in the workplace.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Utilise the Core Skills for Work Framework from the VET sector as a foundation to embed and assess enterprise skills across higher education and vocational qualifications

In order to develop micro-credentials or new qualifications that recognise and accredit enterprise skill sets (such as communication, teamwork, leadership) there needs to be a common framework that can identify levels of competency of these skills. The [Core Skills for Work Framework](#) offers a foundation for the assessment and recognition of these skill sets.

The Core Skills for Work Framework provides a common understanding of enterprise skills (often referred to as employability or generic skills) across the Vocational Education and Training sector and underpins training package delivery.

The framework encompasses five stages of performance for each skill - Novice, Advanced Beginner, Capable, Proficient and Expert, which provides a common understanding of competency at each level. The framework was developed with over 800 people, including employers, unions and industry groups and a broad cross-section of organisations and sectors.⁸ The collaborative nature of this framework and the relevance to industry ensures it provides a relevant option for developing a common understanding of these skills across all AQF levels and within micro-credentials.

FYA and SWTAFE recommend investigating existing frameworks, such as the Core Skills for Work Framework, as a feasible option for developing a system for assessment and recognition of enterprise skills across higher education and vocational qualifications.

About SWTAFE & FYA

About SWTAFE

South West TAFE has grown to become the largest and highest regarded provider of skills training in south-west Victoria.

At South West TAFE we go a step further than other training providers. To ensure that the skills training we provide is for in-demand jobs, we actively develop training programs to help address regional skills shortages. As a result, graduates have a very high chance of finding employment and excelling in their chosen fields.

We offer a wide range of accredited qualifications, plus short courses and stand-alone units from industry training packages. In addition, there are pre-apprenticeship, apprenticeship, traineeship, vocational and graduate studies, industry certificates and VET in Schools programs.

About FYA

FYA is committed to young people, their futures and the contribution they can make to Australia. Our work, informed by strong evidence, research and evaluation, backs young people and informs the national agenda on the issues that most affect them. FYA believes young people are ambitious, creative and capable of rethinking the world and solving tomorrow's problems today.

- We **back** young people by building the skills, capabilities and knowledge they need to thrive in the future of work.
- We **inspire** young people by providing ideas and opportunities to create purposeful lives.
- We **connect** young people by building a network of inspired and inspiring young Australians.
- We **transform** the way government, industry and community sectors engage with young people to rethink the systems that shape the world.

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⁸ Australian Government, "Core Skills for Work Framework Overview". Available at: https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/2_csfw_overview.pdf