



# **Manufacturing Skills Australia's response to Draft National Strategy for International Education**

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**Manufacturing a skilled Australia**

This response has been prepared by Manufacturing Skills Australia to the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training's discussion paper on the Draft National Strategy for International Education

Manufacturing Skills Australia (MSA) is the national industry skills council recognised by the Australian Government to ensure that the skill needs of manufacturing enterprises are being met. It is responsible for liaising with industry and enterprises to identify current and future skill needs and supporting the development, implementation and improvement of nationally recognised training and qualifications, providing industry intelligence and advice to inform government policy; and providing skills and training advice to individual enterprises to assist with training and development processes.

Our vision is to be the pre-eminent organisation in Australia fostering and advocating for the workforce skill development needs of a thriving industry. We provide bi-partisan leadership and value the empowered and informed input of industry stakeholders. We strive to provide high quality information and resources around skill development to support the participation of industry in developing an innovative, highly productive and globally competitive manufacturing industry.

MSA is funded by the Australian Government through the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training, and works closely with industry associations, unions, training providers, government agencies and employers to continually evolve and improve skills for manufacturing.

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## Preamble

MSA welcomes the opportunity to provide a response to the draft National Strategy for International Education.

As the Industry Skills Council for the manufacturing industry, MSA supports Australian Government initiatives which support the development of the skills necessary for a high skilled, value add and innovative manufacturing industry. Accredited training through the national training system and access to high quality training providers are key to ensuring manufacturing in Australia is able to meet the future demands of the Australian economy as it positions itself to be an integral part of the global supply chain.

Australian manufacturing faces significant challenges. As we move out of labour-intensive manufacturing to one of higher value-add, we will need to transform our workforce to one of higher and deeper skills. Adaptable solutions to our workforce needs may well lie in places beyond our shores. Australia's future workforce will be drawn from labour from overseas as well as domicile Australians.

MSA's International Strategy<sup>1</sup> responds to these challenges and changes. It sets directions for MSA's deeper engagement with the global community.

## Key concerns in our response

“International education is a key enabler of productivity and growth for virtually every part of an economy.” (p.8)

The importance of the international education industry to the Australian economy through its direct contribution is considerable. It also has the potential to have a significant indirect contribution by providing a global workforce that has the skills and knowledge required by Australian industry. As the global competition for skilled workers increases in the next decades, increasing the pool of workers with Australian qualifications and work experience through our international education industry may be crucial for the Australian economy.

Our response aims to address three key areas – quality, work experience and offshore delivery/“internationalisation of curriculum” and is in line with the key focus areas of our International Strategy:

- skills
- workforce development
- education and training
- research and planning
- international engagement.

Our response seeks to support and strengthen the Draft National Strategy for International Education.

<sup>1</sup> Manufacturing Skills Australia, 2013, *International Strategy*, <http://mskills.org.au/DownloadManager/downloads/MSA%20international%20strategy%20final%20May2013.pdf>

## Quality in international education

“... recognising a shared responsibility by businesses, education providers and governments to provide international students with good quality returns on their investments, ensuring they gain a high-quality education and an enriching living experience while in our country.”  
(p. 9)

MSA supports the introduction of a national strategy to support our economically valuable international education industry. In particular we support the introduction of quality indicators for the industry that ensure that students, both those from overseas and domestic students, have access to high quality, ethical education providers whose focus is on providing students with a quality learning experience that also meets the students’ reasons for choosing to study in Australia.

Studying in Australia is not cheap. It is important to acknowledge that international students and their parents are informed consumers who seek value for their investment. Providing high quality education that not only meets the standards of the student’s originating country but also the standards demanded by Australian employers is an imperative if we are to maintain and build Australia’s reputation.

To do this, we need to acknowledge the reasons why international students choose to study in Australia. These reasons fall into three broad groups:

- Improving their English language skills to improve their employment opportunities in their home country
- Gaining an Australian qualification to increase career opportunities in their home country
- Gaining an Australian qualification as a pathway for migration to Australia.<sup>2</sup>

Understanding these drivers and developing ethical marketing practices ensure that prospective students receive honest information that enables them to make informed choices about their educational opportunities. For example, for students undertaking an Australian qualification for migration purposes, education providers need to ensure that the advice given to these students reflects the job market in Australia. It is a waste of talent to have highly educated and potentially high contributing migrants in low paid work, for example taxi driving, due to poor advice being provided by education providers.

Therefore MSA supports *Strategic action 1.3 – Supporting better information on quality performance*. MSA is aware that new Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) are due for release later this year. MSA would support the extension of these Indicators to the vocational education and training (VET) sector.

MSA also supports action by the Australian Government under *Strategic action 2.3 – Building confidence through government-to-government engagement*, specifically action to “support the International Roundtable on Integrity in International Education and the Statement of Principles for the Ethical Recruitment of International Students by Education Agents and Consultants (the London Statement)”. Furthermore MSA would support the codification of the London Statement to provide an enforceable Code of Behaviour that all education agents and consultants in both the international

<sup>2</sup> Hearps, Rod, 2015, Presentation to 2015 NEAS Management Conference, Sydney  
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and domestic education markets are required to adhere to. MSA notes that the Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) has recently done this for its members and we support this initiative.

## **Work integrated learning and VET**

“Producing work-ready graduates who are equipped with the tools to engage as global citizens should be a key measure of the quality of Australian education.” (p. 8)

Australia’s vocational education and training (VET) system is held in high esteem internationally. It also provides international students with a pathway to both higher education and into multinational careers. It is important that international students complete onshore VET qualifications under the same requirements as domestic students. MSA is concerned that qualifications that are delivered to domestic students under an apprenticeship arrangement are being offered to international students with no or minor work experience components (see example in Appendix A).

While the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) has the authority to enforce work requirements for international students if such requirements are stipulated in the endorsed components of Training Packages, Australia’s system of federation makes such requirements for qualifications that link to a trade occupation difficult to mandate. This is because the endorsement of a qualification as an apprenticeship or traineeship pathway remains the prerogative of individual states and territories and is linked to these governments’ funding arrangements.

This has the impact of devaluing the qualification for both domestic and international students and also for Australian industry. Occupations linked to these qualification are often in high demand not only here in Australia but also internationally, especially in developing economies.

MSA supports *Strategic action 5.2 – Identifying work experience opportunities*. Furthermore MSA supports the Australian Government working with state and territory governments, industry and education providers to develop and implement viable work experience pathways for international students that meet the occupational outcomes for these qualifications both here in Australia and internationally. Such action would not only build Australia’s reputation as a provider of quality education with real-world outcomes, it would also have the flow on effect for Australian businesses in providing them with close personal links with industry in developing markets as well “internationalising” their workforce.

“With their Australian qualification, English language skills and local work experience, international students are often a desirable source of skilled labour and can make a significant contribution to Australia’s economy.” (p. 40)

One of the barriers to successful post-study work participation is often the graduate’s English language proficiency. While many higher education institutions have specific English language proficiency levels for entry to courses, e.g. Macquarie University requires an IELTS level of 7 for its Economics and Accounting courses, the assessment instruments used are not designed to measure English language proficiency in the workplace, especially not in the Australian workplace.

The VET sector has mapped its training products to the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) which has not been mapped to any of the international English language assessment instruments.

Therefore MSA believes that the activities outlined in *Strategic action 5.3 – Improving English language proficiency* need to be extended to encourage active communication between all levels of government, industry, student bodies and education providers to ensure that English language proficiency includes the development of professional workplace English and workplace communication skills suitable for Australian workplaces.

## **Internationalisation of the curriculum**

“Internationalisation of the curriculum at Australian tertiary institutions helps all students studying in Australia to develop self-reliance, people skills, general employment skills and specialist skills.” (p. 27)

While *Strategic action 3.1 – Preparing students for global engagement* approaches internationalisation of the curriculum from the point of onshore delivery of Australian qualifications and Australian students and graduates working off-shore, consideration needs also to be given to moves to develop qualifications or to adapt Australian qualifications to meet the needs of education systems in other countries. For example Innovation and Business Skills Australia (IBSA) has been developing a qualification based on TAE40110 Certificate IV in Training and Assessment for the developing vocational training industry in India. This qualification will be mapped to the Australian qualification, however it will not be equivalent as the structure and operation of the Indian vocation training industry is significantly different to Australia’s. Through the mapping, graduates holding the Indian qualification wanting to work will be able to gain recognition for their qualification against the Australian and through gap training gain the Australian qualification if they seek to work in Australia or in an Australian training provider offshore. This is an example of best practice in adapting Australian qualifications to meet the needs of specific countries.

The development of “international” versions of Australian qualifications need to be mapped to the domestic qualification and to be clearly identified as “International” versions. Such work would have the potential for increasing the skills within the target country as well as providing Australian employers with access to a pool of workers who could be easily reskilled to the standards of Australian workplaces.

“The increased mobility of skilled labour is driving a greater focus on regional or international industry demands and labour markets, and Australia is well placed to support the development of industry-led regional occupational and training standards, which can be benchmarked against Australian standards.” (p. 51)

Therefore MSA supports activity by the Australian Government to

- “work with partner governments, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, to promote quality frameworks, VET systems and products (including international courses in specific industries).
- work with education and training providers, governments and industry in the Asia-Pacific region to identify regional occupational and skills standards in priority industries, which can be benchmarked to Australian standards.” (p. 52)

## **Conclusion**

The Draft National Strategy for International Education is both welcome and timely. The goals and strategic actions are well aligned. There is significant opportunity for Australia in the international education industry and this strategy will help to establish Australia's standing.

MSA supports the draft Strategy and would support strengthening some aspect of it as outlined in this submission.

-END-

## Appendix A

### Example of nominal hours and work experience for a designated trade qualification MEM30305 Certificate III in Engineering – Fabrication Trade

16 CRICOS registered providers were found

Provider	Level	Duration (wks)	Work component (hrs/wks)
Careers Australia Institute of Training Pty	Certificate III	53	Yes – 5 hours/wk for 45 weeks
Madanlall Jaggessar t/s In Tech Institute of Technology	Certificate III	103	No
TAFE Queensland Skills Tech	Certificate III	74	Yes – 20 hours/wk for 20 weeks
The Bendigo Kangan Institute	Certificate III	48	No
Sheila Baxter Training Centre Pty Ltd t/a Baxter Institute	Certificate III	62	No
Education Access (Australia) Pty Ltd	Certificate III	62	No
Victoria University	Certificate III	52	No
TAFE Queensland South West	Certificate III	93	Yes – 6.1 hours/wk for 33 weeks
Chisholm Institute	Certificate III	40	Yes – unspecified
Holmesglen Institute	Certificate III	48	No
TAFE Queensland East Coast	Certificate III	74	Yes- 20 hours/wk for 20 weeks
Technical And Further Education Commission	Certificate III	50	Yes – 8 hours/wk for 36 weeks
Technical and Further Education Commission	Certificate III	50	Yes – 35 hours/wk for 2 weeks
TAFE Queensland Gold Coast	Certificate III	94	Yes – 8 hours/wk for 50 weeks
TAFE Queensland Skills Tech	Certificate III	104	Yes – 3.9 hours/wk for 104 weeks
Vocational Education and Training (WBIT)	Certificate III	74	Yes – 20 hours/wk for 20 weeks