



Australian Qualifications *Framework*

AQF COUNCIL

STRENGTHENING THE AQF:

A Framework for Australia's
Qualifications

CONSULTATION PAPER

July 2010

Australian Qualifications Framework Council
A Committee of the Ministerial Council for
Tertiary Education and Employment
www.aqf.edu.au

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I am pleased to invite you to comment on the draft of the proposed strengthened AQF. This consultation paper provides you with the opportunity to consider the complete package of the strengthened AQF. It is the culmination of 18 months of development by the AQF Council and considerable input from AQF stakeholders from across the education and training sectors as well as from industry and the professions.

Your responses to the previous AQF Council consultation papers and willing participation in the development of the strengthened AQF, particularly through involvement in the consultation program, research to test the structure and technical workshops, has enhanced the development of the full package that will comprise the strengthened AQF.

The revisions to the AQF are designed to build confidence in qualification outcomes. They will improve student pathways both within and between the education sectors and the workplace, enhance the mobility of graduates through increased recognition of the value of Australian qualifications and enable Australian qualifications to be mapped against those of other countries. They are also designed to ensure that the AQF is contemporary, flexible, will take Australia's education system into the future and at the same time support quality.

The design is comparable with international best practice and builds on the fundamental features of the existing AQF. Australia has been a world leader with its qualifications framework; maintaining this lead with a revised and contemporary AQF will ensure that Australian qualifications continue to be highly regarded nationally as well as internationally. The strengthened AQF is intended to ensure Australia retains its reputation as an educational leader and innovator.

The AQF Council is again keen to hear your views to assist it with finalising its advice to MCTEE on the strengthened AQF. I encourage you to respond to the consultation paper and attend one of the presentations to be held during July.

John Dawkins AO
Chair AQF Council

Designing the Strengthened AQF

The AQF Council was established in May 2008 with the objective 'to provide strategic and authoritative advice to the Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment (MCTEE) and the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) on the AQF to ensure it is nationally and internationally robust and supports flexible cross sectoral linkages and pathways.'¹ Its terms of reference also include providing advice on strategically strengthening the AQF to improve its national consistency, contemporary relevance and the national and international portability of qualifications.

The AQF Council responded quickly to the imperative to strengthen the AQF because it recognised the importance of credible, respected and nationally and internationally recognised qualifications for Australia to achieve the goals of building the knowledge and skills of the nation.

During its first half year of operation the AQF Council considered the rationale for strengthening the AQF and gained ministerial council agreement for a project to develop its advice to MCTEE. The project has been supported and funded by all nine governments through MCTEE, MCEECDYA and the Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR).

The strengthening the AQF project has been structured as follows:

Phase 1 – Design: Identify areas for strengthening and develop the design requirements

Phase 2 – Build: Develop the strengthened AQF structure and policies

Phase 3 – Implement: Develop implementation and transition arrangements.

Phase 1 of the project commenced in January 2009 and identified the areas for strengthening and developed the design requirements. Throughout 2009, the AQF Council sought stakeholder comment on the proposed design for the strengthened AQF and the progressive development of the design.

In May 2009 the first consultation paper *Strengthening the AQF: a proposal* proposed a levels-based structure and a taxonomy of learning outcomes to describe the levels and AQF qualification types. Stakeholders were invited to comment on the composition of the taxonomy; the number of levels that would be needed to encompass the increasing complexity of Australian qualifications; and options for a measurement of the volume of learning.

An extensive consultation program led by the Chair of the AQF Council during May and June 2009 provided stakeholders with an opportunity to provide input into the design. In addition eighty-four written responses from stakeholder organisations and individuals from all education and training sectors were received. Overall, stakeholders supported the direction being taken by the AQF Council for the AQF to be a levels-based structure and the use of a taxonomy of learning outcomes to describe the levels and qualification type descriptors. The many considered comments assisted the AQF Council in refining its design for the structure of the AQF. An analysis of the responses is on the AQF website.²

In September 2009, the second consultation paper *Strengthening the AQF: an architecture for Australia's qualifications* invited written comments on a 10 level structure expressed as learning outcomes, draft qualification type descriptors, a measurement of the notional duration of student learning for each qualification type and an integrated set of qualification types positioned on the levels structure. The AQF Council undertook consultation forums and workshops from September to December 2009. The responses from the consultations lead to further refinement of the levels criteria, the qualification type descriptors and the notional duration of student learning.

¹ Terms of reference for the Australian Qualifications Framework Council

² <http://www.aqf.edu.au/Projects/tabid/186/Default.aspx>

The development of the design of the AQF in phase 1 was highly consultative and interactive. In all, over 500 organisations from across the three education and training sectors, representing providers, industry and professional associations and representative bodies, provided written feedback and/or participated in a consultation forum or workshop.

In developing its advice to MCTEE, the AQF Council has noted other national policy directions, including the Commonwealth Government's development of the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA) and the Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) decision to establish a national VET regulator and a national VET standards council, the development of learning and teaching academic standards by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council, the developments towards national curriculum for senior secondary schooling, the recommendations from the Baird review on protecting international students and Skills Australia's findings on workforce development.

Other influences that have been taken into account include the developments of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the Framework of Qualifications - European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA) and the emergence of qualifications frameworks in all regions of the world recognising the role of qualifications frameworks in providing transparency of qualifications within and between countries.

In November 2009, MCTEE accepted the AQF Council's preliminary advice on the proposed design of the strengthened AQF and agreed to fund the next phases of the project. The advice included:

- A strong architecture or structure that defines all AQF qualification types and positions them in relation to each other
- A set of policies allowing for:
 - the addition and removal of qualification types
 - qualification linkages and pathways
 - requirements for issuing qualifications
 - a national AQF qualifications register
 - guidance to support nationally consistent use of the AQF
- Strong governance arrangements to underpin a strengthened AQF if improvements are to be realised
- Implementation and transition arrangement including the need for international alignment with other qualifications frameworks.

Building the Strengthened AQF

Phase 2, the building phase, commenced at the beginning of 2010. The architecture of the AQF – the levels and the qualification types – was the focus of Phase 1 because this is the core of a qualifications framework. Phase 2 has focused on bringing together the whole package of the strengthened AQF – the architecture or structure and the supporting policies.

The structure of the AQF

The foundation of the strengthened AQF is a robust structure that defines all AQF qualification types and positions them in a levels structure in relation to each other.

The proposed structure of the strengthened AQF is comprised of:

- 10 levels of increasing complexity against which the existing qualification types in all education and training sectors have been located, and
- learning outcome-based descriptors for each qualification type based on a common taxonomy of knowledge, skills and application of the knowledge and skills with embedded generic skills and a specified notional duration of student learning time for each qualification type.

The structure of levels enables more than one qualification type of similar complexity but different focus to be accommodated at each level. It will enable new qualification types to be added if required and it will allow for comparison with other qualifications frameworks which are also levels-based.

The qualification type descriptors that are consistently expressed for each qualification type regardless of the sector of education and training, will facilitate student pathways across the sectors. The notional duration of student learning provides additional guidance on the breadth and depth of the learning outcomes. The descriptors recognise the importance of generic skills to outcomes for graduates.

Phase 2 commenced with research commissioned by the AQF Council to empirically test the proposed structure. While extensive stakeholder contributions confirmed the rigour of the design, further verification was sought through objectively testing the robustness and stability of the design. A consortium of researchers, recognised nationally and internationally for their expertise in psychometric testing and item response modelling techniques, as well as for the design and review of qualification and credit frameworks, was engaged to undertake this research.

The research investigated:

- the ordered nature of the levels criteria
- the internal coherency of the learning outcomes taxonomy for both the levels and the qualification types
- the relative complexity of each descriptors
- any redundant or non-discriminating descriptors or item bias
- the calibration of the qualification type descriptors within the levels criteria, and
- the adequacy of the notional duration of student learning.

The research required qualification and accreditation experts to test the criteria and descriptors against their knowledge of actual qualifications that they use. Almost 800 complete survey responses were received across all qualification types and from all sectors.

The findings of the research³, based on respondents' perceptions, confirmed that the architecture is cumulative and hierarchical as designed; that the qualification type descriptors describe the qualification types well and that the qualification types (with one exception) aligned with the proposed levels. On the basis of the findings of the research, refinements to the levels criteria and the qualification type descriptors have been made to improve the structure. This work has been undertaken with the assistance of qualifications and accreditation experts and representatives from the education and training sectors.

Since the early draft of the proposed architecture was published in September 2009 and following the testing and further development, the following changes have been made:

- the criteria for the 10 levels have been refined
- the Associate Degree qualification type descriptor has been redrafted to increase its complexity in relation to a level 6 qualification type
- the Bachelor Degree qualification type descriptor has been refined
- the Bachelor Honours Degree has been separated from the Bachelor Degree, located at level 8 and the qualification type descriptor has been developed
- the Masters Degree qualification type descriptor has been refined to describe two kinds: research and coursework and to accommodate entry level qualifications for regulated professions
- the notional duration of student learning has been refined for some qualification types including the Certificate III and Masters Degrees
- the Senior Secondary Certificate of Education has been located at level 3 but recognising that students achieve at different levels.

The final draft of the AQF structure is included in Appendix 1 for comment.

AQF Policies

The structure is supported by a set of policies.

Policies have underpinned the Australian Qualifications Framework since its inception in 1995. The current policies that comprise the AQF include:

- guidelines for each qualification type
- policy and protocols for issuing a qualification
- guidelines on cross-sector linkages and national principles and operational guidelines for recognition of prior learning, and
- the requirement for the inclusion of AQF qualifications on the *AQF Register of Recognised Education Institutions and Authorised Accreditation Authorities in Australia*.

Each policy has been reviewed for its relevance in the strengthened AQF and two additional policies have been added. The policies are intended to provide a high level policy framework leaving operational guidelines to be developed at the discretion of the accrediting or standards-setting authorities in each sector. In addition, the terminology used in the structure and policies has been defined and compiled as a glossary.

3 A report on the research findings will be available in August 2010

The proposed policies are:

- revised specifications for developing and accrediting qualifications
- a new policy on generic skills
- a revised policy for issuance of qualifications
- a revised policy on qualifications pathways and linkages
- a revised policy for the register of AQF qualifications
- a new policy for the addition or removal of qualification types, and
- a new glossary of terminology.

The AQF Council has reaffirmed the AQF as a framework preserved for Australian qualifications that meet AQF requirements and have been accredited by an Australian accrediting authority within any government regulatory and quality assurance arrangements. This is reflected in the policies. The AQF Council recognises the importance of the recognition of international qualifications and its future work will consider how foreign qualifications might be acknowledged through the AQF.

Specifications for the development and accreditation of AQF qualifications

Comprehensive specifications have been developed to ensure the consistent application of the strengthened AQF in the development, accreditation and quality provision of Australian qualifications. A specification for each current AQF qualification type provides the level of the qualification type and detail about the level criteria, qualification type descriptor, the notional duration of student learning, qualification nomenclature, pathways and linkages and issuance requirements. Each specification also includes responsibilities for accreditation and the relationship to other AQF policies.

The specifications have been developed with the assistance of representatives from each of the sectors. They have been built on and will replace the qualification guidelines in the existing *AQF Implementation Handbook*.

Draft specifications for five qualification types are included in Appendix 1. Draft specifications for all the AQF qualification types are on the AQF website www.aqf.edu.au

AQF Generic Skills Policy

An outcome of the design phase in 2009, based on the predominant stakeholder view, was the decision to embed generic skills in the taxonomy of learning outcomes for each of the three dimensions: knowledge, skills and application of knowledge and skills.

The AQF Council then commissioned research to identify the understanding of generic skills in each sector to assist with the development of a set of generic skills common to all sectors. Four broad categories which accommodate the generic skills used in each sector were identified. These are included in the policy. The research supported the use of the term ‘generic skills’ both to distinguish these skills from discipline or qualification specific skills and to encompass the different terms currently used by the sectors.

The policy formalises current practices for including generic skills in qualifications in the education and training sectors. It describes the embedded nature of generic skills in the AQF structure and gives the broad parameter for what comprises generic skills in AQF qualifications. The policy requires generic skills to be made explicit in qualifications through development and accreditation processes.

AQF Qualifications Issuance Policy

The purpose of the AQF qualifications issuance policy is to ensure that graduates receive the certification documentation to which they are entitled when they graduate and that they and others are confident that the qualifications they have been awarded are part of Australia’s national qualifications framework. As well as providing a form of protection of the bona fides of qualifications, issuance documentation

provides more detailed and useful information to qualification users (including graduates, employers, institutions, and the community) about the nature of the qualification that has been achieved.

An issuance policy that requires nationally consistent documentation across all sectors and details what a graduate has achieved with a qualification has been one of the principal policies of the existing AQF and will continue to be one of the most important policies of the strengthened AQF.

Since 1980, the registration of qualifications and conventions for the titles or nomenclature of Australian qualifications in the vocational education and training and higher education sectors have been based on the qualifications listed in the *Awards registered in the years 1980-1989* published by the Australian Council of Tertiary Awards (ACTA) and the levels and nomenclature of national tertiary course awards in the 1989-1990 *Register of Australian Tertiary Education (RATE)*. This long history of Australian qualifications is reflected in the AQF qualifications issuance policy.

Because of the importance of this policy, the AQF Council has previously provided two opportunities for stakeholders to comment. All comments have been taken into account, and conflicting views balanced with what the policy is intended to achieve. Applying the policy across all sectors and taking into account differing terminology and practices has been challenging for the Council.

AQF Qualifications Pathways and Linkages Policy

Credit arrangements that improve student pathways into qualifications and increase credit towards qualifications based on previous learning must continue to be part of the AQF. This policy builds into the AQF the capacity to support lifelong learning in a way that reflects the reality of student movement over a lifetime. The AQF by its nature is hierarchical however students do not necessarily gain qualifications in this way. This policy acknowledges the multiple pathways that students take to gain qualifications and to have their knowledge and skills recognised.

The current AQF policy is a statement of intent about credit transfer, articulation and recognition of prior learning. The AQF Council, early in its term, revised and strengthened the existing statements and consolidated them into a policy on credit arrangements. Following extensive feedback from stakeholders during 2008 and 2009, the policy was endorsed by the AQF Council and made available for voluntary use by institutions in each of the three sectors.

During 2009, the AQF Council was commissioned by the Commonwealth Minister for Education and Employment to provide advice on improving qualifications and credit arrangements to support more seamless pathways between qualifications. The research undertaken for the pathways project has informed the revised policy on qualifications pathways and linkages.

In contrast to earlier policies, the revised policy does not include detailed operational guidelines for the development of pathways, linkages and credit arrangements. These will be available as a separate resource on the AQF website for those organisations seeking guidance in the development of their policies and procedures.

AQF Register Policy

The AQF qualifications register policy requires any AQF qualification accredited and any institution authorised to issue it, to be included on a public register of qualifications. The policy also requires authorised issuing organisations to maintain a register of all AQF qualifications issued.

Providing a comprehensive, reliable, credible and publicly accessible register that is available to students choosing qualifications and to employers checking qualifications is the key mechanism for recording the bona fides of qualifications and institutions. The register of qualifications issued further assists with protection against fraudulent qualifications.

There are a number of register databases and websites maintained by accrediting authorities in states and territories that currently form part of the AQF Register. With the move to TEQSA and the National VET Regulator, it is anticipated that many of these registers will be consolidated. The AQF register policy will contribute to consistency in documentation of and access to registers across and within the sector.

Addition or Removal of AQF Qualification Types Policy

The purpose of the AQF policy for the addition or removal of qualifications types is to ensure that the AQF has flexibility and is responsive to Australia's changing education and training environment. This policy will ensure that changes to the structure of the AQF are able to be made, when required, that do not compromise the stability of the AQF.

Stakeholders comments on this policy through the September 2009 consultation period have informed this policy.

AQF Glossary of Terminology

The terminology in the AQF glossary has been defined to assist with understanding the concepts in the AQF and to ensure there is consistent interpretation of its terms.

The AQF includes qualifications from across all education and training sectors and different terminology is used in each. The AQF glossary of terminology is not sector specific.

The draft policies are provided in Appendix 1 for comment.

Implementing the Strengthened AQF

The AQF Council understands the need for implementation arrangements and a transition period that will assist all AQF users in understanding and applying the strengthened AQF.

During Phase 3 of the strengthening the AQF project, the AQF Council will develop a plan for the implementation of the AQF, including the identification of the transition arrangements, timelines and the resources required to support implementation.

Consultation with stakeholders to identify issues that require further consideration to successfully implement the strengthened AQF will occur later in 2010.

Commenting on the proposed strengthened AQF

AQF stakeholders are invited to provide written comments on the strengthened AQF.

Guiding questions to consider are:

1. Is the set of policies comprehensive?
2. Are there other policy aspects that should be considered?
3. Are there transition and implementation issues of which the AQF Council should be aware?

The AQF Council will offer presentations on the strengthened AQF in each of the capital cities during July. The presentations will provide an opportunity to learn more about the policies to assist stakeholders with written responses.

All stakeholders are encouraged to attend one of the following presentations:

Perth	Thursday	July 15	9.30 am – 11.30 am and 1 pm – 3 pm
Brisbane	Monday	July 19	10 am – 12 noon and 2 pm – 4 pm
Sydney	Tuesday	July 20	10 am – 12 noon and 2 pm – 4 pm
Canberra	Wednesday	July 21	10 am – 12 noon and 2 pm – 4 pm
Adelaide	Thursday	July 22	2 pm – 4 pm
Darwin	Monday	July 26	9 am – 11 am
Hobart	Wednesday	July 28	12.30 pm – 2.30 pm
Melbourne	Thursday	July 29	10 am – 12 noon and 2 pm – 4 pm

Written responses are required by close of business on Wednesday 4 August 2010.

Responses can be sent by:

Email to aqfc@sa.gov.au

Post to AQF Council

GPO Box 320, Adelaide, South Australia, 5001

Following requests from stakeholders, written responses will be published on the AQF website.

If you do not want your response published, please include this request in your response.

Telephone enquiries can be made to 08 8226 2775.

Appendix I: The Strengthened AQF

Draft AQF levels criteria and qualification type descriptors	13
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Australian Qualifications *Framework*

Draft AQF Levels Criteria

Draft AQF Qualification Type Descriptors

July 2010

Table 1: AQF levels criteria

LEVELS	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5
LEVEL SUMMARIES Graduates at this level have....	Knowledge and skills for initial work, community involvement and for further learning	Knowledge and skills for work in a defined context and for further learning	Knowledge and skills for skilled work and for further learning	Theoretical and practical knowledge and skills for specialised and/or skilled work and for further learning	Specialised knowledge and skills for skilled/paraprofessional work and for further learning
LEVEL CRITERIA					
LEARNING OUTCOMES KNOWLEDGE	Foundational knowledge for everyday life, further learning and preparation for initial work	Basic factual, technical and procedural knowledge of a defined area of work and learning	Factual, technical, procedural and some theoretical knowledge of a specific area of work and learning	Broad factual, technical and some theoretical knowledge of a specific area or a broad field of work and learning	Technical and theoretical knowledge in a specific area or a broad field of work and learning
LEARNING OUTCOMES SKILLS to demonstrate	Foundational cognitive, technical and communication skills to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • undertake defined routine activities • identify and report simple issues and problems 	Basic cognitive, technical and communication skills to apply appropriate methods, tools, materials and readily available information to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • undertake defined activities • provide solutions to a limited range of predictable problems 	A range of cognitive, technical and communication skills to select and apply a specialised range of methods, tools, materials and information to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • complete routine activities • provide and transmit solutions to predictable and sometimes unpredictable problems 	A broad range of cognitive, technical and communication skills to select and apply a range of methods, tools, materials and information to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • complete routine and non-routine activities • provide and transmit solutions to a variety of predictable and sometimes unpredictable problems 	Wide range of cognitive, technical and communication skills to select and apply methods and technologies to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • synthesise information to complete a range of activities • provide and transmit solutions to sometimes complex problems • transmit information and skills to others
LEARNING OUTCOMES KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS are applied to demonstrate....	Autonomy in highly structured and stable contexts and within narrow parameters	Autonomy and limited judgement in structured and stable contexts and within narrow parameters	Autonomy and judgement in known and stable contexts and within established parameters	Autonomy, judgement and limited responsibility in known or changing contexts and within established parameters	Autonomy, judgement and defined responsibility in known or changing contexts and within broad but established parameters

LEVELS	LEVEL 6	LEVEL 7	LEVEL 8	LEVEL 9	LEVEL 10
LEVEL SUMMARIES Graduates at this level have....	Broad knowledge and skills for paraprofessional/highly skilled work and for further learning	Broad and coherent knowledge and skills for professional work and for further learning	Advanced knowledge and skills for professional or highly skilled work and for further learning	Specialised knowledge and skills for research, and/or professional practice and for further learning	Systematic and critical understanding of a complex field of learning and specialised research skills for the advancement of learning and/or for professional practice
LEVEL CRITERIA					
LEARNING OUTCOMES KNOWLEDGE	Broad theoretical and technical knowledge of a specific area or a broad field of work and learning	Broad and coherent theoretical and technical knowledge with depth in one or more fields of study or practice	Advanced theoretical and technical knowledge in one or more fields of study or practice	Advanced and integrated understanding of a complex body of knowledge in one or more disciplines or areas of practice	Systemic and critical understanding of a substantial and complex body of knowledge at the frontier of a discipline or area of professional practice
LEARNING OUTCOMES SKILLS to demonstrate	Broad range of cognitive, technical and communication skills to select and apply methods and technologies to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyse information to complete a range of activities • interpret and transmit solutions to unpredictable and sometimes complex problems • transfer information and skills to others 	Well developed cognitive, technical and communication skills to select and apply methods and technologies to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyse and evaluate information to complete a range of activities • analyse, generate and transmit solutions to unpredictable and sometimes complex problems • transfer knowledge, skills and ideas to others 	Advanced cognitive, technical and communication skills to select and apply methods and technologies to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • critically evaluate and transform information to complete a range of activities • analyse, generate and transmit solutions to complex problems • transfer knowledge, skills and ideas to others 	Expert, specialised cognitive and technical skills in a body of knowledge or practice to independently: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • critically analyse, reflect on and interpret complex information, problems, concepts and theories • research and apply established theories to a body of knowledge or practice • interpret and transfer knowledge, skills and ideas to specialist and non-specialist audiences 	Expert, specialised cognitive, technical and research skills in a discipline area to independently and systematically: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • engage in critical reflection, synthesis and evaluation • develop and adapt research methodologies to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice • disseminate and promote new insights to peers and the community • generate new knowledge and understanding to make a substantial contribution to a discipline or area of professional practice
LEARNING OUTCOMES KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS are applied to demonstrate....	Autonomy, judgement and defined responsibility: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in contexts that are subject to change • within broad parameters to provide specialist advice and functions 	Autonomy, well developed judgement and responsibility: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in contexts that require self-directed work and learning • within broad parameters to provide specialist advice and functions 	Autonomy, well developed judgement, adaptability and responsibility as a practitioner or learner	Autonomy, expert judgement, adaptability and responsibility as a practitioner or learner	Autonomy, authoritative judgement, adaptability and responsibility as an expert and leading practitioner or scholar

Table 2: AQF qualification type descriptors

QUALIFICATION TYPE	Senior Secondary Certificate of Education	Certificate I	Certificate II	Certificate III	Certificate IV
LEVELS	3	1	2	3	4
PURPOSE This qualification is designed...	To qualify individuals with a solid foundation in knowledge, skills and values for further learning, work and participation in civic life. It marks completion of the equivalent of a two year full-time program of studies.	To qualify individuals with basic functional knowledge and skills for work, further learning and community involvement	To qualify individuals for mainly routine work and as a pathway to further learning	To qualify individuals who apply a broad range of knowledge and skills in varied contexts to enter skilled work and/or as a pathway for further learning	To qualify individuals who apply a broad range of specialised knowledge and skills in varied contexts to enter skilled work and/or as a pathway for further learning
KNOWLEDGE Graduates of the qualification type will have...	A foundation in general knowledge and some specialist discipline knowledge that may include technical and/or theoretical knowledge	Basic fundamental knowledge and understanding in a narrow area of work and learning	Basic factual, technical and procedural knowledge in defined areas of work and learning	Factual, technical, procedural and theoretical knowledge in an area of work and learning	Broad and integrated factual, technical and theoretical knowledge in a specialised field of work and learning
SKILLS Graduates of the qualification type will have...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General capabilities that underpin flexible and analytical thinking including literacy and numeracy, a capacity to work with others and an ability to move across subject disciplines to develop new expertise • Cognitive skills to access, record and act on information from varied sources and literacy and numeracy appropriate to subject disciplines • Cognitive, technical communication and creative skills for particular disciplines and to integrate disciplines and solve problems and work with others • Literacy and communication skills including everyday reading, writing skills and using information communication technologies skills to present knowledge and ideas to others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic skills to participate in everyday life and further learning • Cognitive and communication skills to receive, pass on and recall information in a narrow range of areas • Technical skills involving the use of tools appropriate to the activity and use of basic communication technologies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive skills to access, record and act on a defined range of information from a range of sources • Cognitive and communication skills to apply and communicate known solutions to a limited range of predictable problems • Technical skills to use a limited range of equipment to complete tasks involving known routines and procedures with a limited range of options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive, technical and communication skills to interpret and act on available information • Cognitive and communication skills to apply and communicate known solutions to a variety of predictable problems and to deal with unforeseen contingencies using known solutions • Technical and communication skills to provide technical information to a variety of specialist and non-specialist audiences • Technical skills to undertake routine and non-routine tasks in a range of skilled operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive skills to identify, analyse, compare and act on information from a variety of sources • Cognitive, technical and communication skills to apply and communicate technical solutions of a non-routine or contingency nature to a defined range of predictable and unpredictable problems • Specialist technical skills to complete routine and non-routine tasks and functions • Communication skills to guide activities and provide technical advice in the area of work and learning
APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS Graduates will be able to...	<p>Apply knowledge and skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • with depth in some areas to tasks or functions in known or changing contexts • in particular contexts within civic life, work and lifelong learning as successful learners, confident individuals and team members and active and informed citizens • in contexts that include taking individual responsibility with some direction and some accountability for the quality of outcomes 	<p>Apply knowledge and skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • with autonomy in defined contexts and within established parameters • in contexts that may include preparation for further learning, life activities and/or a variety of initial routine and predictable work-related activities including participation in a team or work group 	<p>Apply knowledge and skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • with some accountability for the quality of own outcomes and some responsibility for own outputs in work and learning • with limited autonomy and judgement in the completion of own defined and routine tasks in known and stable contexts • with limited autonomy and judgement to complete routine but variable tasks in collaboration with others in a team environment 	<p>Apply knowledge and skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • with discretion and judgement in the selection of equipment, services or contingency measures • by adapting and transferring skills and knowledge within known routines, methods, procedures and time constraints • in contexts that may include taking responsibility for own outputs in work and learning including participation in teams 	<p>Apply knowledge and skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to specialised tasks or functions in known or changing contexts • with responsibility for own functions and outputs, and can have limited organisation of others. • with limited responsibility for the quantity and quality of the output of others in a team within limited parameters
NOTIONAL DURATION OF STUDENT LEARNING	2 years	0.5 – 1 year	0.5 – 1 year	1 – 3 years There may be variations in duration based on full-time institutionally based study compared with training involving both on and off the job structured learning.	0.5 – 2 years There may be variations between short duration specialist qualifications that build on skills already acquired and longer duration qualifications that are designed as entry level requirements for work.

Table 2: AQF qualification type descriptors continued

QUALIFICATION TYPE	Diploma	Advanced Diploma	Associate Degree	Bachelor Degree
LEVELS	5	6	6	7
PURPOSE This qualification is designed...	To qualify individuals who apply integrated technical and theoretical concepts in a broad range of contexts to enter advanced skilled or paraprofessional work and/or as a pathway for further learning	To qualify individuals who apply specialised knowledge in a range of contexts to enter advanced skilled or paraprofessional work and/or as a pathway for further learning	To qualify individuals who apply underpinning technical and theoretical knowledge in a range of contexts to enter paraprofessional work and/or as a pathway for further learning	To qualify individuals who apply a broad and coherent body of knowledge in a range of contexts to enter professional work and/or as a pathway for further learning
KNOWLEDGE Graduates of the qualification type will have....	Knowledge integrating technical and theoretical concepts, with depth in some areas within a field and a broad knowledge of related fields of work and learning	Specialised technical and theoretical knowledge with depth within one or more fields of work and learning	Broad theoretical and technical knowledge with some depth in the underlying principles and concepts in one or more disciplines	A broad and coherent body of knowledge, with depth in the underlying principles and concepts in one or more disciplines as a basis for independent lifelong learning
SKILLS Graduates of the qualification type will have....	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cognitive and communication skills to identify, analyse, synthesise and act on information from a variety of sources Cognitive, technical and communication skills to analyse, plan, design and evaluate approaches to unpredictable problems and/or management requirements Specialist technical and creative skills to express ideas and perspectives Communication skills to transfer knowledge and specialised skills to others and demonstrate understanding of knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cognitive and communication skills to generate, communicate and implement ideas and actions through the identification, analysis and evaluation of information in a field of work and learning Cognitive and communication skills to transfer knowledge and skills to others and to demonstrate understanding of specialised knowledge with depth in some areas Cognitive and communication skills to formulate responses to complex problems Wide-ranging specialised technical, creative or conceptual skills to express ideas and perspectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cognitive skills to identify, analyse and evaluate information and concepts from a range of sources Cognitive, technical and creative thinking skills to demonstrate a broad understanding of knowledge and ideas with some depth in a discipline Cognitive, communication and critical thinking skills to interpret and transmit responses to sometimes complex problems Communication skills to make a clear and coherent presentation of knowledge and ideas with some intellectual independence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cognitive skills to critically review, analyse, consolidate and synthesise knowledge Cognitive and technical skills to demonstrate a broad understanding of knowledge with depth in some areas Cognitive and creative skills to exercise critical thinking and judgement in identifying and solving problems with intellectual independence Communication skills to present a clear, coherent and independent exposition of knowledge and ideas
APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS Graduates will be able to...	<p>Apply knowledge and skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> with depth in some areas of specialisation, in known or changing contexts to transfer and apply theoretical concepts and/or technical and/or creative skills in a range of situations with personal responsibility and autonomy in performing complex technical operations with responsibility for own outputs in relation to broad parameters for quantity and quality by applying initiative and judgement to organise the work of self and others and plan, coordinate and evaluate the work of teams within broad but generally well-defined parameters 	<p>Apply knowledge and skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> with depth in areas of specialisation, in contexts subject to change to apply a range of fundamental principles and complex techniques to known and unknown situations to apply initiative and judgment in planning, design, technical or management functions with some direction across a broad range of technical or management functions with accountability for personal outputs and personal and team outcomes within broad parameters 	<p>Apply knowledge and skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> applying initiative and judgement in planning, problem solving and decision making in paraprofessional practice to adapt knowledge and skills in a defined range of contexts and/or for further studies in a discipline by applying fundamental principles, concepts and techniques to known and unknown situations with some direction with responsibility and accountability for own learning and work and collaboration with others within broad parameters 	<p>Apply knowledge and skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> using judgement and initiative in professional practice and/or scholarship to adapt knowledge and skills in diverse contexts to take responsibility and accountability for own learning and professional practice and collaboration with others within broad parameters
NOTIONAL DURATION OF STUDENT LEARNING	1 – 2 years	1.5 – 2 years	2 years	3-4 years

Table 2: AQF qualification type descriptors continued

QUALIFICATION TYPE	Bachelor Honours Degree	Graduate Certificate Vocational Graduate Certificate	Graduate Diploma Vocational Graduate Diploma
LEVELS	8	8	8
PURPOSE This qualification is designed...	To qualify individuals who apply a body of knowledge in a specific context to enter professional work and as a pathway for research and further learning	To qualify individuals who apply a body of knowledge in a range of contexts for professional or highly skilled work and/or as a pathway for further learning	To qualify individuals who apply a body of knowledge in a range of contexts for professional or highly skilled work and/or as a pathway for further learning
KNOWLEDGE Graduates of the qualification type will have....	Coherent and advanced knowledge of the underlying principles and concepts in one or more disciplines and knowledge of research principles and methods	Specialised knowledge within a systematic and coherent body of knowledge that may include the acquisition and application of knowledge and skills in a new or existing discipline or professional area	Advanced knowledge within a systematic and coherent body of knowledge that may include the acquisition and application of knowledge and skills in a new or existing discipline or professional area
SKILLS Graduates of the qualification type will have....	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive skills to critically review, analyse, consolidate and synthesise knowledge to identify and provide solutions to complex problems with intellectual independence • Cognitive and technical skills to demonstrate a broad understanding of a body of knowledge and theoretical concepts with advanced understanding in some areas • Cognitive skills to exercise critical thinking and judgement in developing new understanding • Technical skills to design and use research in a project • Communication skills to present a clear and coherent exposition of knowledge and ideas to a variety of audiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive skills to critically review, analyse, consolidate and synthesise knowledge and identify and provide solutions to complex problems • Cognitive and communication skills to generate and evaluate complex ideas demonstrating an understanding of theoretical concepts • Specialised technical and creative skills to a field of highly skilled and/or professional practice • Communication skills to transfer complex knowledge and ideas to a variety of audiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive skills to critically review, analyse, consolidate and synthesise knowledge and identify and provide solutions to complex problems • Cognitive and communication skills to generate and evaluate complex ideas demonstrating an understanding of theoretical concepts • Specialised technical and creative skills to a field of highly skilled and/or professional practice • Communication skills to transfer complex knowledge and ideas to a variety of audiences
APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS Graduates will be able to...	<p>Apply knowledge and skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exercising judgement and using initiative in professional practice and/or scholarship • to apply and adapt knowledge and skills in a range of contexts, taking responsibility and accountability for own learning and practice and collaboration with others within broad parameters • to plan and execute project work and/or a piece of research and scholarship with some independence 	<p>Apply knowledge and skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to make high level, independent judgements in a range of technical or management functions in varied specialised contexts • to initiate, plan, implement and evaluate broad functions within varied specialised technical and/or creative contexts • to demonstrate responsibility and accountability for personal outputs and all aspects of the work or function of others within broad parameters 	<p>Apply knowledge and skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to make high level, independent judgements in a range of technical or management functions in varied specialised contexts. • to initiate, plan, implement and evaluate broad functions within varied specialised technical and/or creative contexts • to demonstrate responsibility and accountability for personal outputs and all aspects of the work or function of others within broad parameters
NOTIONAL DURATION OF STUDENT LEARNING	4 years (1 year following a 3 year Bachelor Degree)	0.5 - 1 year	1 - 2 years

Table 2: AQF qualification type descriptors continued

QUALIFICATION TYPE	Masters Degree (Research)	Masters Degree (Coursework)	Doctoral Degree (Research)	Doctoral Degree (Professional)
LEVELS	9	9	10	10
PURPOSE This qualification is designed...	To qualify individuals who apply an advanced body of knowledge in a range of contexts for research and/or as a pathway for further learning	To qualify individuals who apply an advanced body of knowledge in a range of contexts for professional practice or scholarship and/or as a pathway for further learning	To qualify individuals who apply a substantial body of knowledge to research, investigate and develop new knowledge, in one or more fields of investigation	To qualify individuals who apply a substantial body of knowledge to research, investigate and develop new knowledge, in one or more fields of professional practice
KNOWLEDGE Graduates of the qualification type will have....	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A body of knowledge that includes the understanding of recent developments in a field of knowledge and/or area of professional practice • Advanced knowledge of research principles and methods applicable to the field of work or learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A body of knowledge that includes the understanding of recent developments in a field of knowledge and/or area of professional practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A substantial body of knowledge at the frontier of a field of work or learning, including knowledge that constitutes an original contribution • Substantial knowledge of research principles and methods applicable to the field of work or learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A substantial body of knowledge at the frontier of a field of work or learning, including knowledge that constitutes an original contribution • Substantial knowledge of research principles and methods applicable to the field of work or learning
SKILLS Graduates of the qualification type will have....	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive skills to demonstrate mastery of theoretical knowledge and to critically reflect on theory and professional practice • Cognitive, technical and creative skills to critically investigate, analyse and interpret complex information, problems, concepts and theories and to apply established theories to different bodies of knowledge or practice • Cognitive, technical and creative skills to generate and evaluate complex ideas and concepts at an abstract level • Cognitive and technical skills to design, use and evaluate research and research methods • Communication and technical skills to present a coherent and sustained argument and to disseminate research results to specialist and non-specialist audiences • Technical and communication skills to design, evaluate, implement, analyse, theorise and disseminate research that makes a contribution to knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive skills to demonstrate mastery of theoretical knowledge and to critically reflect on theory and professional practice • Cognitive, technical and creative skills to critically investigate, analyse and interpret complex information, problems, concepts and theories and to apply established theories to different bodies of knowledge or practice • Cognitive, technical and creative skills to generate and evaluate complex ideas and concepts at an abstract level • Communication and technical research skills to justify theoretical propositions, methodologies, conclusions and professional decisions to specialist and non-specialist audiences • Technical and communication skills to design, evaluate, implement, analyse and theorise about developments that contribute to professional practice or scholarship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive skills to demonstrate expert understanding of theoretical knowledge and to critically reflect on that theory and practice • Cognitive skills and using intellectual independence, to think critically, evaluate existing knowledge and ideas, undertake systematic investigation and reflection on theory and practice to generate new knowledge • Expert technical and creative skills applicable to the field of work or learning • Communication skills to explain and critique theoretical propositions, methodologies and conclusions • Communication skills to cogently present a complex investigation or original research for external examination against international standards and to communicate results to peers and the community • Expert skills to design, implement, analyse, theorise and communicate research that makes a significant and original contribution to knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive skills to demonstrate expert understanding of theoretical knowledge and to critically reflect on that theory and practice • Cognitive skills and using intellectual independence, to think critically, evaluate existing knowledge and ideas, undertake systematic investigation and reflection on theory and practice to generate new knowledge • Expert technical and creative skills applicable to the field of work or learning • Communication skills to explain and critique theoretical propositions, methodologies and conclusions • Communication skills to cogently present a complex investigation or original research for external examination against international standards and to communicate results to peers and the community • Expert skills to design, implement, analyse, theorise and communicate developments that make a significant and original contribution to knowledge, policy or professional practice
APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS Graduates will be able to...	<p>Apply knowledge and skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to demonstrate creativity and initiative in the application of knowledge and skills to new situations and/or for further learning • to demonstrate high level personal autonomy and accountability • to demonstrate the planning and execution of a substantial piece of scholarship and/or research 	<p>Apply knowledge and skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to demonstrate creativity and initiative in the application of knowledge and skills to new situations in professional practice and/or for further learning • to demonstrate high level personal autonomy and accountability • to demonstrate the planning and execution of a substantial research-based project, capstone experience or piece of scholarship 	<p>Apply knowledge and skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to demonstrate initiative and creativity in new situations and/or for further learning • to demonstrate full responsibility and accountability for personal outputs • to demonstrate the planning and execution of original research • to demonstrate the ongoing capacity to generate new knowledge 	<p>Apply knowledge and skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to demonstrate initiative and creativity in new situations and/or for further learning • to demonstrate full responsibility and accountability for personal outputs • to demonstrate the planning and execution of an original research-based project or a piece of scholarship • to demonstrate the ongoing capacity to generate new knowledge, policy or practices
NOTIONAL DURATION OF STUDENT LEARNING	1 - 2 years: 1 year following a 4 year level 7 or 8 qualification; 2 years following a 3 year level 7 or 8 qualification	1 - 2 years: 1 year following a 4 year level 7 or 8 qualification; 2 years following a 3 year level 7 or 8 qualification. Duration may also be up to 4 years, following a level 7 or 8 qualification, to prepare graduates for entry to a regulated profession	3-4 years	3-4 years

Australian

Qualifications *Framework*

Draft selected AQF qualification type specifications

Senior Secondary Certificate of Education

Certificate III

Certificate IV

Bachelor Degree

Masters Degree

July 2010

Please Note: specifications for all AQF qualification types are included in a separate paper available on the website www.aqf.edu.au

AQF specifications for the Senior Secondary Certificate of Education

I Introduction

The purpose of the Senior Secondary Certificate of Education qualification type is to qualify individuals with a solid foundation in knowledge, skills and values for further learning, work and participation in civic life. It marks completion of the equivalent of a two year full-time program of studies.

Senior Secondary Certificate of Education qualifications are located as a qualification type at level 3 of the Australian Qualifications Framework.

In the development and accreditation of a Senior Secondary Certificate of Education qualification accrediting authorities must ensure that overall the majority of learning outcomes are at AQF level 3.

However, the program of studies that a student has actually completed to meet the requirements of the Senior Secondary Certificate of Education may be a program with the majority of outcomes at AQF levels 2, 3 or above.

When reporting on the achievements of individual students, the state and territory statutory bodies responsible for the accreditation and issuance of a Senior Secondary Certificate of Education will identify the AQF levels of the student's learning outcomes.

The specifications for AQF level 3 and the Senior Secondary Certificate of Education qualification type are expressed as learning outcomes in terms of what graduates are expected to know, understand and be able to do as a result of learning.¹

2 AQF level 3 criteria

Summary	A graduate at this level will have knowledge and skills for skilled work and further learning
Knowledge	Graduates at this level will have factual, technical, procedural and some theoretical knowledge of a specific area of work and learning
Skills	Graduates at this level will have a range of cognitive, technical and communication skills to select and apply a specialised range of methods, tools, materials and information to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• complete routine activities• provide and transmit solutions to predictable and sometimes unpredictable problems
Application of knowledge and skills	Graduates at this level will apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy and judgement in known and stable contexts and within established parameters

¹ Definitions of the words used in the levels criteria, the qualification type descriptors and other AQF policy documents can be found in the *AQF Glossary of Terminology*

3 Senior Secondary Certificate of Education qualification type descriptor

Purpose	To qualify individuals with a solid foundation in knowledge, skills and values for further learning, work and participation in civic life. It marks completion of the equivalent of a two year full-time program of studies.
Knowledge	Graduates of a Senior Secondary Certificate of Education will have a foundation in general knowledge and some specialist discipline knowledge that may include technical and/or theoretical knowledge
Skills	<p>Graduates of a Senior Secondary Certificate of Education will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • general capabilities that underpin flexible and analytical thinking including literacy and numeracy, a capacity to work with others and an ability to move across subject disciplines to develop new expertise • cognitive skills to access, record and act on information from varied sources and literacy and numeracy appropriate to subject disciplines • cognitive, technical communication and creative skills for particular disciplines and to integrate disciplines and solve problems and work with others • literacy and communication skills including everyday reading, writing skills and using information communication technologies skills to present knowledge and ideas to others
Application of knowledge and skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduates of a Senior Secondary Certificate of Education will demonstrate the application of knowledge and skills: • with depth in some areas to tasks or functions in known or changing contexts • in particular contexts within civic life, work and lifelong learning as successful learners, confident individuals and team members and active and informed citizens • in contexts that include taking individual responsibility with some direction and some accountability for the quality of outcomes

4 Generic learning outcomes

Generic learning outcomes are embedded in the levels criteria and qualification type descriptors.

Further information is available in the *AQF Generic Skills Policy*.

5 Notional duration of student learning

The notional duration of student learning is the time it takes a student, on average, to complete all learning and assessment activities required for the achievement of a qualification. It is expressed in equivalent full-time years.

Senior Secondary Certificate of Education qualifications are typically 1 to 2 years in duration.

6 Qualification nomenclature

The qualification title is determined by the senior secondary education statutory authority in each state or territory. Information is available from <http://acaca.bos.nsw.edu.au/go/about-acaca/>

7 Responsibility for accreditation

Each state and territory has a statutory authority that is responsible for the accreditation of the Senior Secondary Certificate of Education in its jurisdiction.

Accrediting authorities must adhere to these AQF specifications for this qualification type and any government accreditation standards for the schooling sector.

Government accreditation standards will explicitly reference the AQF levels criteria and qualification type learning outcomes descriptors and any relevant AQF policies.

Once a qualification is accredited it must be placed on the AQF Register of accredited qualifications in a form consistent with the *AQF Register Policy*.

8 Pathways and linkages

Entry to a Senior Secondary Certificate of Education Degree is generally based on completion of 10 years of schooling and entry specifications will be documented in the accreditation documentation of the qualification.

Admission to a Senior Secondary Certificate of Education is the responsibility of the admitting institution and must take into account the *AQF Qualifications Pathways and Linkages Policy* and an entrant's qualifications and experience.

Each qualification accredited as a Senior Secondary Certificate of Education must contain documented negotiated arrangements for articulation and credit transfer to a higher level qualification. These are detailed in the *AQF Qualifications Pathways and Linkages Policy*.

Authorised organisations offering a Senior Secondary Certificate of Education qualification must develop publically available policies and procedures on admission, credit and articulation arrangements informed by the *AQF Qualifications Pathways and Linkages Policy*.

9 Applying the specifications

The qualification type descriptor identifies the outcomes for a Senior Secondary Certificate of Education in terms of what graduates are expected to know, understand and be able to do as a result of learning at this level and in this qualification type.

All the learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and application) of the Senior Secondary Certificate of Education qualification type and the level 3 criteria must be evident in each qualification accredited as this type. Some may have more emphasis than others in different Senior Secondary Certificate of Education qualifications.

In the construction and accreditation of a Senior Secondary Certificate of Education qualification developers and accrediting authorities must ensure that, overall, the majority of learning outcomes of the qualification are at AQF level 3.

However, the program of studies that a student has actually completed to meet the requirements of the Senior Secondary Certificate of Education may be a program with the majority of outcomes at AQF levels 2, 3 or above.

In the development and accreditation of AQF qualifications the following points should be considered:

- The relationship between the level criteria and qualification type descriptor, and the field of study.
- Whether there is sufficient time allowed for completion of the qualification so students can demonstrate that the learning outcomes are achieved and that there is a correlation with the notional duration of student learning specified for this qualification type.
- Whether the design of the components of learning and assessment will provide coherent outcomes for the level and qualification type and enable students to demonstrate them.

- Whether generic skills are explicitly identified in the qualification and are commensurate with the level of the qualification type and the field of study.

10 Authority to issue the qualification

The Senior Secondary Certificate of Education is issued in each state and territory by a statutory authority.

Responsibility for assessment leading to the awarding of the qualification lies with the organisation that is authorised to issue it. The organisation is responsible for ensuring the quality of the assessment outcomes under the any government regulatory or quality assurance arrangements for senior secondary schooling.

When reporting on the achievements of individual students, the state and territory statutory bodies responsible for the accreditation and issuance of a Senior Secondary Certificate of Education will identify the AQF levels of the student's learning outcomes.

Individuals who complete some of the requirements of a Senior Secondary Certificate of Education will receive a record of their achievements identifying the AQF levels of their learning outcomes.

All authorised qualification issuing organisations will maintain an auditable quality register of the AQF qualifications they have issued. Further information is available in the *AQF Register Policy*.

AQF specifications for the Certificate III

I Introduction

The purpose of the Certificate III qualification type is to qualify individuals who apply a broad range of knowledge and skills in varied contexts to enter skilled work and/or to provide a pathway for further learning.

Certificate III qualifications are located at level 3 of the Australian Qualifications Framework and document pathways to higher level qualifications.

AQF level 3 criteria and the Certificate III qualification type descriptor are expressed as learning outcomes in terms of what graduates are expected to know, understand and be able to do as a result of learning.

2 AQF level 3 criteria

Summary	A graduate at this level will have knowledge and skills for skilled work and further learning
Knowledge	Graduates at this level will have factual, technical, procedural and some theoretical knowledge of an area of work and learning
Skills	Graduates at this level will have a range of cognitive, technical and communication skills to select and apply a specialised range of methods, tools, materials and information to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• complete routine activities• provide and transmit solutions to predictable and sometimes unpredictable problems
Application of knowledge and skills	Graduates at this level will apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy and judgement in known and stable contexts and within established parameters

3 Certificate III qualification type descriptor

Purpose	The Certificate III qualification type qualifies individuals who apply a broad range of knowledge and skills in varied contexts to enter skilled work and or provide a pathway for further learning
Knowledge	Graduates of a Certificate III will have factual, technical, procedural and theoretical knowledge in an area of work and learning
Skills	<p>Graduates of a Certificate III will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cognitive, technical and communication skills to interpret and act on available information • cognitive and communication skills to apply and communicate known solutions to a variety of predictable problems and deal with unforeseen contingencies using known solutions • technical and communication skills to provide technical information to a variety of specialist and non-specialist audiences • technical skills to undertake routine and non-routine tasks in a range of skilled operations
Application of knowledge and skills	<p>Graduates of a Certificate III will demonstrate the application of knowledge and skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • with discretion and judgement in the selection of equipment, services or contingency measures • by adapting and transferring skills and knowledge within known routines, methods, procedures and time constraints • in contexts that may include by taking responsibility for their own outputs in work and learning including participation in teams

4 Generic learning outcomes

Generic learning outcomes are embedded in the levels criteria and qualification type descriptors.

Further information is available in the *AQF Generic Skills Policy*.

5 Notional duration of student learning

The notional duration of student learning is the time it takes a student, on average, to complete all learning and assessment activities required for the achievement of a qualification. It is expressed in equivalent full-time years.

Certificate III qualifications are typically 1 to 3 years in duration. There may be variations in duration based on full-time institutionally based study compared with training involving both on and off the job structured learning.

6 Qualification nomenclature

The full title of the qualification is Certificate III in ... (field of study)

The abbreviated form is CertIII(field of study abbreviated).

Further information is available in the *AQF Qualifications Issuance Policy*.

7 Responsibility for accreditation

Responsibilities for the accreditation of Certificate III qualifications are set out in the government accreditation standards for the vocational education and training sector.

Accrediting authorities must adhere to these AQF specifications for this qualification type, any other AQF policies and any government accreditation standards for vocational education and training when accrediting a Certificate III qualification.

Once a qualification is accredited it must be placed on the AQF Register of accredited qualifications in a form consistent with the *AQF Register Policy*.

8 Pathways and linkages

Entry to a Certificate III is generally based on completion of a lower level AQF qualification and any entry specifications will be documented in the accreditation documentation of the qualification.

Admission to a Certificate III is the responsibility of the admitting institution and must take into account the *AQF Qualifications Pathways and Linkages Policy* and the applicant's qualifications and experience.

Each qualification accredited as a Certificate III must include documented negotiated arrangements for articulation and credit transfer to higher level qualifications. These are detailed in the *AQF Qualifications Pathways and Linkages Policy*.

Authorised organisations offering an AQF Certificate III qualification must develop publically available policies and procedures on admission, credit and articulation arrangements informed by the *AQF Qualifications Pathways and Linkages Policy*.

9 Applying the specifications

The qualification type descriptor identifies the outcomes for a Certificate III in terms of what graduates are expected to know, understand and be able to do as a result of learning at this level and in this qualification type.

In the development and accreditation of a Certificate III qualification developers and accrediting authorities must ensure that, overall, the majority of learning outcomes of the qualification are at AQF level 3.

All the learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and application) of the Certificate III qualification type must be evident in each qualification accredited as this type. However, some learning outcomes may have more emphasis than others in different Certificate III qualifications.

In the development and accreditation of AQF qualifications the following points should be considered:

- The relationship between the level criteria and qualification type descriptor, and the field of study.
- Whether there is sufficient time allowed for completion of the qualification so students can demonstrate that the learning outcomes are achieved and that there is a correlation with the notional duration of student learning specified for this qualification type.
- Whether the design of the components of learning and assessment will provide coherent outcomes for the level and qualification type and enable students to demonstrate them.
- Whether generic skills are explicitly identified in the qualification and are commensurate with the level of the qualification type and the field of study.

10 Authority to issue the qualification

Responsibility for assessment leading to the award of the qualification lies with the organisation that is authorised to issue it. The organisation is responsible for ensuring the quality of the assessment outcomes under any government regulatory and quality assurance arrangements for vocational education and training.

An AQF Certificate III may only be issued by organisations that are authorised by an accrediting or registering authority to do so, and have met any standards for registration.

Accrediting and registering authorities are responsible for monitoring the quality of the organisations issuing the qualification against any government regulatory and quality assurance arrangements.

The issuance arrangements for AQF qualifications are provided in the *AQF Qualifications Issuance Policy*.

All authorised qualification issuing organisations will maintain an auditable quality register of the AQF qualifications they have issued. Further information is available in the *AQF Register Policy*.

AQF specifications for the Certificate IV

I Introduction

The purpose of the Certificate IV qualification type is to qualify individuals who apply a broad range of specialised knowledge and skills in varied contexts to enter skilled work and/or to provide a pathway for further learning.

Certificate IV qualifications are located at level 4 of the Australian Qualifications Framework and document pathways to higher level qualifications.

AQF level 4 criteria and the Certificate IV qualification type descriptor are expressed as learning outcomes in terms of what graduates are expected to know, understand and be able to do as a result of learning.

2 AQF level 4 criteria

Summary	A graduate at this level will have theoretical and practical knowledge and skills for specialised and/or skilled work and for further learning
Knowledge	Graduates at this level will have broad factual, technical and some theoretical knowledge of a specific area or a broad field of work and learning
Skills	Graduates at this level will have a broad range of cognitive, technical and communication skills to select and apply a range of methods, tools, materials and information to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• complete routine and non-routine activities• provide and transmit solutions to a variety of predictable and sometimes unpredictable problems
Application of knowledge and skills	Graduates at this level will apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, judgement and limited responsibility in known or changing contexts and within established parameters

3 Certificate IV qualification type descriptor

Summary	The purpose of the Certificate IV qualification type is to qualify individuals who apply a broad range of specialised knowledge and skills in varied contexts to enter skilled work and/or to provide a pathway for further learning
Knowledge	Graduates of a Certificate IV will have broad and integrated factual, technical and theoretical knowledge in a specialised field of work and learning
Skills	Graduates of a Certificate IV will have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cognitive skills to identify, analyse, compare and act on information from a variety of sources • cognitive, technical and communication skills to apply and communicate technical solutions of a non-routine or contingency nature to a defined range of predictable and unpredictable problems • specialist technical skills to complete routine and non-routine tasks and functions • communication skills to guide activities and provide technical advice in the area of work and learning
Application of knowledge and skills	Graduates of a Certificate IV will demonstrate the application of knowledge and skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to specialised tasks or functions in known or changing contexts • with responsibility for own functions and outputs, and can have limited organisation of others • with limited responsibility for the quantity and quality of the output of others in a team within limited parameters

4 Generic learning outcomes

Generic learning outcomes are embedded in the levels criteria and qualification type descriptors.

Further information is available in the *AQF Generic Skills Policy*.

5 Notional duration of student learning

The notional duration of student learning is the time it takes a student, on average, to complete all learning and assessment activities required for the achievement of a qualification. It is expressed in equivalent full-time years.

Certificate IV qualifications are typically 0.5 to 2 years in duration. There may be variations between short duration specialist qualifications that build on skills already acquired and longer duration qualifications that are designed as entry level requirements for work.

6 Qualification nomenclature

The full title of the qualification is Certificate IV in ... (field of study)

The abbreviated form is CertIV(field of study abbreviated).

Further information is available in the *AQF Qualifications Issuance Policy*.

7 Responsibility for accreditation

Responsibilities for the accreditation of Certificate IV qualifications are set out in the government accreditation standards for the vocational education and training sector.

Accrediting authorities must adhere to these AQF specifications for this qualification type, any other AQF policies and any government accreditation standards for vocational education and training when accrediting a Certificate IV qualification.

Once a qualification is accredited it must be placed on the AQF Register of accredited qualifications in a form consistent with the *AQF Register Policy*.

8 Pathways and linkages

Entry to a Certificate IV is generally based on completion of a lower level AQF qualification and any entry specifications will be documented in the accreditation documentation of the qualification.

Admission to a Certificate IV is the responsibility of the admitting institution and must take into account the *AQF Qualifications Pathways and Linkages Policy* and the applicant's qualifications and experience.

Each qualification accredited as a Certificate IV must include documented negotiated arrangements for articulation and credit transfer to higher level qualifications. These are detailed in the *AQF Qualifications Pathways and Linkages Policy*. Section 2.2 identifies base levels of credit transfer for completed AQF qualifications and Section 2.3 requires identification and documentation of articulation pathways and credit.

Authorised organisations offering an AQF Certificate IV qualification must develop publically available policies and procedures on admission, credit and articulation arrangements informed by the *AQF Qualifications Pathways and Linkages Policy*.

9 Applying the specifications

The qualification type descriptor identifies the outcomes for a Certificate IV in terms of what graduates are expected to know, understand and be able to do as a result of learning at this level and in this qualification type.

In the development and accreditation of a Certificate IV qualification developers and accrediting authorities must ensure that, overall, the majority of learning outcomes of the qualification are at AQF level 4.

All the learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and application) of the Certificate IV qualification type must be evident in each qualification accredited as this type. However, some learning outcomes may have more emphasis than others in different Certificate IV qualifications.

In the development and accreditation of AQF qualifications the following points should be considered:

- The relationship between the level criteria and qualification type descriptor, and the field of study.
- Whether there is sufficient time allowed for completion of the qualification so students can demonstrate that the learning outcomes are achieved and that there is a correlation with the notional duration of student learning specified for this qualification type.
- Whether the design of the components of learning and assessment will provide coherent outcomes for the level and qualification type and enable students to demonstrate them.
- Whether generic skills are explicitly identified in the qualification and are commensurate with the level of the qualification type and the field of study.

I0 Authority to issue the qualification

Responsibility for assessment leading to the award of the qualification lies with the organisation that is authorised to issue it. The organisation is responsible for ensuring the quality of the assessment outcomes under any government regulatory and quality assurance arrangements for vocational education and training or higher education.

An AQF Certificate IV may only be issued by organisations that are authorised by an accrediting or registering authority to do so, and have met any standards for registration.

Accrediting and registering authorities are responsible for monitoring the quality of the organisations issuing the qualification against any government regulatory and quality assurance arrangements.

The issuance arrangements for AQF qualifications are provided in the *AQF Qualifications Issuance Policy*.

All authorised qualification issuing organisations will maintain an auditable quality register of the AQF qualifications they have issued. Further information is available in the *AQF Register Policy*.

AQF specifications for the Bachelor Degree

I Introduction

The purpose of the Bachelor Degree qualification type is to qualify individuals who apply a broad and coherent body of knowledge in a range of contexts to enter professional work and/or as a pathway for further learning.

Bachelor Degree qualifications are located at level 7 of the Australian Qualifications Framework and document pathways to higher level qualifications.

AQF level 7 criteria and the Bachelor Degree qualification type descriptor are expressed as learning outcomes in terms of what graduates are expected to know, understand and be able to do as a result of learning.

2 AQF level 7 criteria

Summary	A graduate at this level will have broad and coherent knowledge and skills for professional work and for further learning
Knowledge	Graduates at this level will have broad and coherent theoretical and technical knowledge with depth in one or more fields of study or practice
Skills	Graduates at this level will have well developed cognitive, technical and communication skills to select and apply methods and technologies to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• analyse and evaluate information to complete a range of activities• analyse, generate and transmit solutions to unpredictable and sometimes complex problems• transfer knowledge, skills and ideas to others
Application of knowledge and skills	Graduates at this level will apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, well developed judgement and responsibility: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• in contexts that require self-directed work and learning• within broad parameters to provide specialist advice and functions

3 Bachelor Degree qualification type descriptor

Summary	To qualify individuals who apply a broad and coherent body of knowledge in a range of contexts to enter professional work and/or as a pathway for further learning
Knowledge	Graduates of a Bachelor Degree will have a broad and coherent body of knowledge, with depth in the underlying principles and concepts in one or more disciplines as a basis for independent lifelong learning
Skills	Graduates of a Bachelor Degree will have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cognitive skills to critically review, analyse, consolidate and synthesise knowledge • cognitive and technical skills to demonstrate a broad understanding of knowledge with depth in some areas • cognitive and creative skills to exercise critical thinking and judgement in identifying and solving problems with intellectual independence • communication skills to present a clear and coherent exposition of knowledge and ideas
Application of knowledge and skills	Graduates of a Bachelor Degree will demonstrate the application of knowledge and skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using judgement and initiative in professional practice and/or scholarship • to adapt knowledge and skills in diverse contexts • to take responsibility and accountability for own learning and professional practice and collaboration with others within broad parameters coherent and independent exposition of knowledge and ideas

4 Generic learning outcomes

Generic learning outcomes are embedded in the levels criteria and qualification type descriptors.

Further information is available in the *AQF Generic Skills Policy*.

5 Notional duration of student learning

The notional duration of student learning is the time it takes a student, on average, to complete all learning and assessment activities required for the achievement of a qualification. It is expressed in equivalent full-time years.

Bachelor Degree qualifications are typically 3 to 4 years in duration.

6 Qualification nomenclature

The full title of the qualification is Bachelor of ... (field of study)

The abbreviated form is B(field of study abbreviated).

Further information is available in the *AQF Qualifications Issuance Policy*.

7 Responsibility for accreditation

Responsibilities for the accreditation of Bachelor Degree qualifications are set out in government accreditation standards for the higher education sector.

Accrediting authorities (and institutions authorised to self-accredit qualifications) must adhere to these AQF specifications for this qualification type, other AQF policies and any government accreditation standards for higher education when accrediting a Bachelor Degree qualification.

Once a qualification is accredited it must be placed on the AQF Register of accredited qualifications in a form consistent with the *AQF Register Policy*.

8 Pathways and linkages

Entry to a Bachelor Degree is generally based on completion of a lower level AQF qualification and any entry specifications will be documented in the accreditation documentation of the qualification.

Admission to a Bachelor Degree is the responsibility of the admitting institution and must take into account the *AQF Qualifications Pathways and Linkages Policy* and the applicant's qualifications and experience.

Each qualification accredited as a Bachelor Degree must include documented negotiated arrangements for articulation and credit transfer to higher level qualifications. These are detailed in the *AQF Qualifications Pathways and Linkages Policy*. Section 2.2 identifies base levels of credit transfer for completed AQF qualifications and Section 2.3 requires identification and documentation of articulation pathways and credit.

Authorised organisations offering an AQF Bachelor Degree qualification must develop publically available policies and procedures on admission, credit and articulation arrangements informed by the *AQF Qualifications Pathways and Linkages Policy*.

9 Applying the specifications

The qualification type descriptor identifies the outcomes for a Bachelor Degree in terms of what graduates are expected to know, understand and be able to do as a result of learning at this level and in this qualification type.

In the development and accreditation of a Bachelor Degree qualification developers and accrediting authorities must ensure that, overall, the majority of learning outcomes of the qualification are at AQF level 7.

All the learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and application) of the Bachelor Degree qualification type must be evident in each qualification accredited as this type. However, some learning outcomes may have more emphasis than others in different Bachelor Degree qualifications.

In the development and accreditation of AQF qualifications the following points should be considered:

- The relationship between the level criteria and qualification type descriptor, and the field of study.
- Whether there is sufficient time allowed for completion of the qualification so students can demonstrate that the learning outcomes are achieved and that there is a correlation with the notional duration of student learning specified for this qualification type.
- Whether the design of the components of learning and assessment will provide coherent outcomes for the level and qualification type and enable students to demonstrate them.
- Whether generic skills are explicitly identified in the qualification and are commensurate with the level of the qualification type and the field of study.

I0 Authority to issue the qualification

Responsibility for assessment leading to the award of the qualification lies with the organisation that is authorised to issue it. The organisation is responsible for ensuring the quality of the assessment outcomes under any government regulatory and quality assurance arrangements for higher education.

AQF Bachelor Degrees may only be issued by organisations that are authorised by an accrediting or registering authority to do so, and have met any standards for registration.

Accrediting and registering authorities are responsible for monitoring the quality of the organisations issuing the qualification against any government regulatory and quality assurance arrangements.

The issuance arrangements for AQF qualifications are provided in the *AQF Qualifications Issuance Policy*.

All authorised qualification issuing organisations will maintain an auditable quality register of the AQF qualifications they have issued. Further information is available in the *AQF Register Policy*.

AQF specifications for the Masters Degree

I Introduction

There are two main forms of Masters Degrees within the Masters Degree qualification type: the Masters Degree (Research) and the Masters Degree (Coursework).

The purpose of the Masters Degree (Research) is to qualify individuals who apply an advanced body of knowledge in a range of contexts for research and/or as a pathway for further learning.

The purpose of the Masters Degree (Coursework) is to qualify individuals who apply an advanced body of knowledge in a range of contexts for professional practice or scholarship and/or as a pathway for further learning.

Masters Degree qualifications are located at level 9 of the Australian Qualifications Framework and document pathways to higher level qualifications.

AQF level 9 criteria and both the Masters Degree qualification type descriptors are expressed as learning outcomes in terms of what graduates are expected to know, understand and be able to do as a result of learning.

2 AQF level 9 criteria

Summary	A graduate at this level will have specialised knowledge and skills for research and/or professional practice and for further learning
Knowledge	Graduates at this level will have advanced and integrated understanding of a complex body of knowledge in one or more disciplines or areas of practice
Skills	Graduates at this level will have expert, specialised cognitive and technical skills in a body of knowledge or practice to independently: <ul style="list-style-type: none">critically analyse, reflect on and interpret complex information, problems, concepts and theoriesresearch and apply established theories to a body of knowledge or practiceinterpret and transfer knowledge, skills and ideas to specialist and non-specialist audiences
Application of knowledge and skills	Graduates at this level will apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, expert judgement, adaptability and responsibility as a practitioner or learner

3 Masters Degree qualification type descriptors

	Masters Degree (Research)	Masters Degree (Coursework)
Purpose	The purpose of the Masters Degree (Research) is to qualify individuals who apply an advanced body of knowledge in a range of contexts for research and/or as a pathway for further learning	The purpose of the Masters Degree (Coursework) is to qualify individuals who apply an advanced body of knowledge in a range of contexts for professional practice or scholarship and/or as a pathway for further learning
Knowledge	<p>Graduates of a Masters Degree (Research) will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a body of knowledge that includes the understanding of recent developments in a field of knowledge and/or area of professional practice • advanced knowledge of research principles and methods applicable to the field of work or learning 	<p>Graduates of a Masters Degree (Coursework) will have a body of knowledge that includes the understanding of recent developments in a field of knowledge and/or area of professional practice</p>
Skills	<p>Graduates of a Masters Degree (Research) will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cognitive skills to demonstrate mastery of theoretical knowledge and to critically reflect on theory and professional practice • cognitive, technical and creative skills to critically investigate, analyse and interpret complex information, problems, concepts and theories and to apply established theories to different bodies of knowledge or practice • cognitive, technical and creative skills to generate and evaluate complex ideas and concepts at an abstract level • cognitive and technical skills to design, use and evaluate research and research methods • communication and technical skills to present a coherent and sustained argument and to disseminate research results to specialist and non-specialist audiences • technical and communication skills to design, evaluate, implement, analyse, theorise and disseminate research that makes a contribution to knowledge 	<p>Graduates of a Masters Degree (Coursework) will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cognitive skills to demonstrate mastery of theoretical knowledge and to critically reflect on theory and professional practice • cognitive, technical and creative skills to critically investigate, analyse and interpret complex information, problems, concepts and theories and to apply established theories to different bodies of knowledge or practice • cognitive, technical and creative skills to generate and evaluate complex ideas and concepts at an abstract level • communication and technical research skills to justify theoretical propositions, methodologies, conclusions and professional decisions to specialist and non-specialist audiences • technical and communication skills to design, evaluate, implement, analyse and theorise about developments that contribute to professional practice or scholarship
Application of knowledge and skills	<p>Graduates of a Masters Degree (Research) will demonstrate the application of knowledge and skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to demonstrate creativity and initiative in the application of knowledge and skills to new situations and/or for further learning • to demonstrate high level personal autonomy and accountability • to demonstrate the planning and execution of a substantial piece of research 	<p>Graduates of a Masters Degree (Coursework) will demonstrate the application of knowledge and skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to demonstrate creativity and initiative in the application of knowledge and skills to new situations in professional practice and/or for further learning • to demonstrate high level personal autonomy and accountability • to demonstrate the planning and execution of a substantial research-based project / capstone experience or piece of scholarship

4 Generic learning outcomes

Generic learning outcomes are embedded in the levels criteria and qualification type descriptors.

Further information is available in the *AQF Generic Skills Policy*.

5 Notional duration of student learning

The notional duration of student learning is the time it takes a student, on average, to complete all learning and assessment activities required for the achievement of a qualification. It is expressed in equivalent full-time years.

Masters Degree (Research) qualifications are typically 1-2 years in duration: 1 year following a 4 year level 7 or 8 qualification; 2 years following a 3 year level 7 or 8 qualification.

Masters Degree (Coursework) qualifications are typically 1-2 years in duration: 1 year following a 4 year level 7 or 8 qualification; 2 years following a 3 year level 7 or 8 qualification. Duration may extend for up to 4 years, following a level 7 or 8 qualification, to prepare graduates for entry to a regulated profession.

6 Qualification nomenclature

Masters Degree (Research): The full title of the qualification is Master of Philosophy or Master of ... (field of study)

The abbreviated form is MPhil or M(field of study abbreviated).

Masters Degree (Coursework): The full title of the qualification is Master of ... (field of study)

The abbreviated form is M(field of study abbreviated).

Further information is available in the *AQF Qualifications Issuance Policy*.

7 Responsibility for accreditation

Responsibilities for the accreditation of Masters Degree qualifications are set out in the government accreditation standards for the higher education sector.

Accrediting authorities (and institutions authorised to self-accredit qualifications) must adhere to these AQF specifications for this qualification type, other AQF policies and any government accreditation standards higher education when accrediting a Masters Degree qualification.

Once a qualification is accredited it must be placed on the AQF Register of accredited qualifications in a form consistent with the *AQF Register Policy*.

8 Pathways and linkages

Entry to a Masters Degree is generally based on completion of a level 7 or 8 AQF qualification and any entry specifications will be documented in the accreditation documentation of the qualification.

Admission to a Masters Degree is the responsibility of the admitting institution and must take into account the *AQF Qualifications Pathways and Linkages Policy* and the applicant's qualifications and experience.

Each qualification accredited as a Masters Degree must include documented negotiated arrangements for articulation and credit transfer to higher level qualifications. These are detailed in the *AQF Qualifications Pathways and Linkages Policy*. Section 2.2 identifies base levels of credit transfer for completed AQF qualifications and Section 2.3 requires identification and documentation of articulation pathways and credit.

Authorised organisations offering an AQF Masters Degree qualification must develop publically available policies and procedures on admission, credit and articulation arrangements informed by the *AQF Qualifications Pathways and Linkages Policy*.

9 Applying the specifications

The qualification type descriptor identifies the outcomes for a Masters Degree (Research) or a Masters Degree (Coursework) in terms of what graduates are expected to know, understand and be able to do as a result of learning at this level and in this qualification type.

Masters Degrees in Australia generally take one of two forms, depending on the purpose, predominant mode of learning and delivery. Whether a Masters Degree is described as research or coursework depends on the relative proportions of structured learning, independent study, professional practice and research training making up the qualification.

In the Masters Degree (Research) the purpose is to qualify individuals for research. The predominant mode is generally independent supervised study and research. Two thirds of a Masters Degree (Research) must be devoted to research, research training and independent study.

In the Masters Degree (Coursework) the purpose is to qualify individuals for professional practice or scholarship. The predominant mode is generally a program of structured learning with some research and/or project work and/or practice integrated learning.

A Masters Degree (Coursework) may be designed for entry to a 'regulated' profession and may include a significant component of structured work-integrated, or practice related learning developed in collaboration with a relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body.

In the development and accreditation of a Masters Degree qualification developers and accrediting authorities must ensure that, overall, the majority of learning outcomes of the qualification are at AQF level 9.

All the learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and application) of the Masters Degree qualification type, either a Masters Degree (Research) or a Masters Degree (Coursework), must be evident in each qualification accredited. However, some learning outcomes may have more emphasis than others in different Masters Degree qualifications.

In the development and accreditation of AQF qualifications the following points should be considered:

- The relationship between the level criteria and qualification type descriptor, and the field of study.
- Whether there is sufficient time allowed for completion of the qualification so students can demonstrate that the learning outcomes are achieved and that there is a correlation with the notional duration of student learning specified for this qualification type.
- Whether the design of the components of learning and assessment will provide coherent outcomes for the level and qualification type and enable students to demonstrate them.
- Whether generic skills are explicitly identified in the qualification and are commensurate with the level of the qualification type, the form of the Masters Degree and the field of study.

10 Authority to issue the qualification

Responsibility for assessment leading to the award of the qualification lies with the organisation that is authorised to issue it. The organisation is responsible for ensuring the quality of the assessment outcomes under any government regulatory and quality assurance arrangements for higher education.

AQF Masters Degrees may only be issued by organisations that are authorised by legislation or an accrediting or registering authority to do so, and have met any government standards for registration.

Accrediting and registering authorities are responsible for monitoring the quality of the organisations issuing the qualification against any government regulatory and quality assurance arrangements.

The issuance arrangements for AQF qualifications are provided in the *AQF Qualifications Issuance Policy*.

All authorised issuing organisations will maintain an auditable quality register of the AQF qualifications they have issued. Further information is available in the *AQF Register Policy*.

Australian Qualifications *Framework*

Draft AQF Generic Skills Policy

July 2010

I INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

The AQF uses the term ‘generic skills’ to refer to those skills that are not discipline specific and may be acquired throughout education, work and life; they are a feature of every learning experience. The term encompasses the differing terminology used by each education sector in Australia.

The AQF levels criteria and qualification type descriptors are expressed as learning outcomes that describe the knowledge, skills, and the application of knowledge and skills with generic skills embedded in them.

The purpose of the policy on generic skills is to inform how the embedded generic skills in the levels criteria and qualification type descriptors are made more explicit in the development, accreditation and provision of AQF qualifications. It also assists with developing a common understanding by users of the AQF of these generic skills.

1.2 Scope

The policy covers all education and training sectors that offer AQF qualifications.

1.3 Users

The users of the policy are qualification developers, the accrediting authorities and the authorised issuing organisations in each education and training sector. The accrediting authorities are responsible for the implementation and monitoring of this policy.

The other users of the policy are graduates, employers, industry and professional associations, licensing and regulatory bodies and other interested parties.

2 POLICY

2.1 Definition

Generic skills are skills that are not specific to work in a particular occupation or industry, but are important for work, education and life in general. Generic skills are the key transferrable skills a graduate may achieve through learning that have application in study, work and life contexts. They are also referred to as graduate attributes or capabilities, employability skills or general capabilities.

Generic skills are acquired through the learning and performance of activities in study, and also in work and life contexts. They are progressively acquired while the student is at school and are built on as the student progresses to higher levels of education and over time in the rest of life.

Students will gain and use generic skills in many ways because they:

- translate to the workplace
- relate to the next levels of learning, and
- translate to all other aspects of their lives.

2.2 Categories of generic skills

The four broad categories¹ of generic skills are:

- basic fundamental skills, such as language, literacy, numeracy and ICT literacy skills
- people skills, such as being respectful to others, communication, team working skills
- thinking skills, such as analytic, problem solving, synthesis, creativity and learning skills
- personal skills, such as self management, cultural understanding, having a global perspective and acting with responsible, ethical behaviour.

¹ The examples included under each category are not exhaustive; the specifics for each category will vary in each education and training sector.

2.3 Generic skills in qualifications

Qualification developers and accrediting authorities will ensure that generic skills are explicit in qualifications and that the application of a generic skill will be commensurate with the level of the qualification type and the field of study.

Schools, vocational education and training and higher education providers will ensure that graduates achieve the generic skills associated with their sector and particular qualifications through incorporating the means for achieving generic skills into their teaching and learning strategies and include evaluation of the outcomes in assessment strategies.

Australian Qualifications *Framework*

Draft AQF Qualifications Issuance Policy

July 2010

I INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

Qualifications within the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) meet nationally agreed specifications. This ensures that they are able to be recognised as AQF qualifications by students, employers, the community, other accrediting agencies (such as professional associations and licensing bodies), in Australia and internationally, through consistent application of this policy.

This policy sets out the AQF policy for issuing AQF qualifications and provides the basis for the protection of the titles and the validity of the learning outcomes of AQF qualifications through consistency in their application across the education and training sectors.

The purpose of the AQF qualifications issuance policy is to:

- ensure that graduates receive the certification documentation to which they are entitled when they graduate and that they and others are confident that the qualifications they have been awarded are part of Australia's national qualifications framework – the AQF
- provide clarity and consistency nationally across the various education and training sectors.

This policy underpins institutional and sectoral mechanisms to assure graduates and the community of the legitimacy of their qualifications and that they are quality assured. The most significant means by which AQF qualifications are protected comes from:

- legislation that provides for the accreditation of qualifications and registration of institutions by accrediting authorities, including organisations that are empowered to self-accredit
- approval of authorised organisations to issue qualifications
- the consistent use of certification documentation, and
- the consistent and correct use of qualification nomenclature.

1.2 Scope

The AQF qualifications issuance policy and protocols cover all AQF qualifications regardless of where and how they are delivered (onshore, offshore, on the job, in the classroom or virtually). The policy and protocols cover all education and training sectors that offer AQF qualifications.

1.3 Users

The users of the policy are the authorised issuing organisations¹ and the accrediting authorities for each education and training sector. Under Australia's quality assurance arrangements for each sector, different accrediting authorities are responsible for the implementation and monitoring of these policies and protocols.

The other users are graduates, employers, industry and professional associations, licensing and regulatory bodies and other countries that may use the policy and protocols to identify authentic Australian qualifications.

¹ In this policy the phrase is abbreviated to 'issuing organisation'

2 POLICY

2.1 Issuing AQF qualifications

2.1.1 All graduates who have completed a program of learning that leads to the award of an AQF qualification are entitled to receive the following certification documentation on award of the qualification:

- A *testamur*, *and*
- A record of results.

A graduation statement will also be issued as its usage is adopted across the education and training sectors.²

2.1.2 Students who have completed an accredited unit or set of units³ that are not a full AQF qualification are entitled to receive:

- A statement of attainment, *and*
- A record of results.

Through the use of the statement of attainment, the AQF acknowledges that completion of accredited units contribute to the progression towards achievement of an individual's lifelong learning goals.

2.1.3 Students who complete only some of the requirements of the AQF qualification in which they are enrolled are entitled to receive a record of results. A statement of attainment should not be issued as an alternative.

2.1.4 Graduates are entitled to retain the certification documentation once it has been issued unless:

- the AQF qualification builds on a lower level qualification in the same field of study at the same institution and the institution has a policy regarding the surrender of documentation
- the graduate's AQF qualification is revoked under the terms of institutional or professional authorities' policies.

2.1.5 Programs of learning leading to AQF qualifications will normally be delivered and assessed at a level of English language proficiency appropriate to the context of delivery and intended use of the qualification. This does not preclude the use of languages other than English for delivery and assessment. However if any part of the qualification has been delivered and/or assessed in a language other than English, a statement that this has occurred will be included on either the *testamur*, the statement of attainment (where relevant), the record of results or the graduation statement.⁴

2.1.6 The words, 'The qualification certified herein is recognised within the Australian Qualifications Framework', or any subsequent AQF logo, will be included on the *testamur* and/or graduation statements of all AQF qualifications issued by all issuing organisations.

2.1.7 Statements of attainment will include the words, 'This Statement of Attainment is recognised within the Australian Qualifications Framework'.

2.1.8 Sufficient information must be provided on the qualification certification documentation to ensure that the documentation is able to be authenticated and to reduce fraudulent use.

Mandatory items are the minimum that should be included on the documentation to ensure clarity about the qualification, the graduate and the issuing organisation.

² The Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement is currently (2010) implemented on a voluntary basis in the higher education sector. It is yet to be developed for the VET and School sectors

³ Accreditation must follow the same process as for an AQF qualification.

⁴ This does not include use of another language to develop proficiency in that language

(a) Mandatory information on a testamur and statement of attainment must:

- correctly identify the authorised issuing organisation
- uniquely identify the graduate
- correctly identify the qualification by its full title
- include the date issued/awarded
- identify the person or persons in the organisation authorised to issue the documentation
- provide a means to ensure authenticity, in a form to reduce fraud, such as the authorised issuing organisation's seal, corporate identifier or other mode of uniqueness such as a watermark.

(b) The statement of attainment must be in a form that ensures it cannot be mistaken for a testamur for a full AQF qualification. It must include the statement 'A statement of attainment is issued when an individual has completed one or more accredited units'.

(c) The graduation statement will contain information about the graduate, the qualification, the issuing institution, the graduate's academic and relevant other activities, a description of the Australian Qualifications Framework, including any subsequent AQF logo, and the Australian education and training system. The graduation statement may include details about delivery methodologies used in the qualification.⁵

2.1.9 Accrediting authorities, including self-accrediting institutions may elect to require issuing organisations to include additional information on the certification documentation. Accrediting authorities will be responsible for developing policies for this.

2.2 Responsibility for issuing and authenticating AQF qualifications

2.2.1 AQF qualifications will only be issued by organisations authorised by legislation to do so.

The issuance arrangements for AQF qualifications currently in place (2010) are summarised as follows:

- Government authorised statutory bodies are responsible for issuing the Senior Secondary Certificate of Education in their own State and Territory.
- State and Territory government accrediting authorities for vocational education and training are responsible for authorising registered training organisations (RTOs) to issue AQF qualifications.
- State and Territory government accrediting authorities for higher education are responsible for authorising non-self accrediting higher education institutions to issue AQF qualifications.
- Universities and other self-accrediting higher education institutions are empowered in legislation to accredit and issue their own AQF qualifications.

Registers of AQF qualifications and institutions enhance the ability of national and international stakeholders to authenticate and verify the legitimacy of AQF qualifications and the organisations authorised to issue them. Further information is available in the *AQF Register Policy*.

2.2.2 The protection of qualifications requires that any issuing organisation delivering, assessing and/or issuing AQF qualifications adheres to any government regulatory and quality assurance arrangements for each qualification type and compliance is monitored by the relevant accrediting authority.

⁵ See footnote 2

- 2.2.3 The issuing organisation is responsible for authentication and verification of a graduate's certification documentation. The organisation is responsible for ensuring that they have in place mechanisms to reduce fraudulent reproduction and use of the AQF qualifications they issue.
- 2.2.4 All issuing organisations will have a policy that permits the replacement of certification documentation. The issuing organisation is responsible for authentication and verification of any replacement certification documentation.
- 2.2.5 The issuing organisation will maintain an auditable quality record of all AQF qualifications issued to graduates. Further information is available in the *AQF Register Policy*.

2.3 AQF qualification titles, abbreviations and postnominals protocols

Titles of AQF qualifications are the representation of the level and field of study of the qualification and provide the basis for national and international recognition. To ensure consistency in the use of AQF qualification titles, abbreviations and postnominals, the following conventions will be used.

Qualification type	Qualification Title	Abbreviations
Senior Secondary Certificate of Education	Various according to state or territory	
Certificate I	Certificate I in ... (field of study)	CertI(field abbreviated)
Certificate II	Certificate II in ... (field of study)	CertII(field abbreviated)
Certificate III	Certificate III in ... (field of study)	CertIII(field abbreviated)
Certificate IV	Certificate IV in ... (field of study)	CertIV(field abbreviated)
Diploma	Diploma of ... (field of study)	Dip(field abbreviated)
Advanced Diploma	Advanced Diploma of ... (field of study)	AdvDip(field abbreviated)
Associate Degree	Associate Degree of ... (field of study)	AssocD(field abbreviated)
Bachelor Degree	Bachelor of ... (field of study)	B(field abbreviated)
Bachelor Honours Degree	Bachelor of ... (field of study) (Honours)	B(field abbreviated)(Hons)
Vocational Graduate Certificate	Vocational Graduate Certificate in ... (field of study)	VocGradCert(field abbreviated)
Vocational Graduate Diploma	Vocational Graduate Diploma of ... (field of study)	VocGradDip(field abbreviated)
Graduate Certificate	Graduate Certificate in ... (field of study)	GradCert(field abbreviated)
Graduate Diploma	Graduate Diploma of ... (field of study)	GradDip(field abbreviated)
Masters Degree (Research)	Master of Philosophy Master of ... (field of study)	MPhil M(field abbreviated)
Masters Degree (Coursework)	Master of ... (field of study)	M(field abbreviated)
Doctoral Degree (Research)	Doctor of Philosophy	PhD
Doctoral Degree (Professional)	Doctor of ... (field of study)	D(field abbreviated) or (field abbreviated)D

Because the AQF is comprised of Australian qualifications only, the Graduation Statement will be used to document any equivalences with international qualifications.

Combined qualifications titles may follow different conventions:

- Combined qualifications must be identified in such a way to ensure there is certainty that the graduate has not achieved two whole AQF qualifications, such as the use of the word ‘and’ between the disciplines e.g. Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Economics; abbreviated as B(field abbreviated)/ B(field abbreviated). The order and form for qualifications at the same level will vary according to qualifications involved and institutional policy.
- Combined qualifications at different AQF levels will list the lower qualification first e.g. Diploma of (field of study) and Bachelor of (field of study); abbreviated as Dip(field abbreviated)/ B(field abbreviated).

2.3.1 Postnominals

Graduates may abbreviate their qualifications to communicate information about their qualifications or achievements and validate community expectations about the body of knowledge and expertise that an individual has gained.

Postnominals use the abbreviation for the qualification type and field of study of the qualification. They are usually placed immediately following the graduate’s title and name.⁶

2.3.2 Honorary awards and use of titles

Individuals who have been awarded a Doctoral Degree at Level 10 on the AQF are entitled to use the title ‘Doctor’.

An honorary award is not an AQF qualification. The title ‘Doctor’ will not be used by those who hold an honorary award. It is usually awarded by an institution to recognise a person’s public service or service to the organisation, or in recognition of distinguished contribution by the person in a field of academic endeavour. As such any certification documentation issued to an honorary award recipient will specify that the award is honorary.

3 DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS IN THIS POLICY

An **accredited unit** is a single component of a qualification that has been accredited by the same process as for a whole AQF qualification. In Australia an accredited unit may be called a ‘module’, ‘subject’, or ‘course’. In this policy, the term ‘unit’ is used.

An **accrediting authority** is authorised under legislation to accredit programs of learning leading to AQF qualifications and/or register institutions to issue AQF qualifications.

An **AQF qualification** is the result of a complete accredited program of learning that leads to formal certification that a graduate has achieved learning outcomes as described in the AQF.

An **authorised issuing organisation** is authorised through State, Territory or Commonwealth legislation to issue AQF qualifications. In this policy the phrase is abbreviated to ‘issuing organisation’.

Award of a qualification is the formal acknowledgement that a graduate has met the requirements of the qualification and is eligible for certification through a testamur. The term ‘conferral’ may also be used.

Certification is the verification and authentication of an individual’s entitlement to a qualification.

A **certification document** is the official document that confirms that a qualification has been awarded/conferred. In Australia this document may be called a ‘testamur’, ‘award’, ‘parchment’, or ‘certificate’. In this policy, the term ‘testamur’ is used.

⁶ Guidelines for discipline abbreviations such as the Commonwealth Universities Degree Guidelines may be followed in developing institutional policies.

Certification documentation is the set of official documents that confirms that a qualification has been completed and awarded. This documentation includes a testamur and record of results and will include a graduation statement as this is progressively implemented in all sectors.

A **combined qualification** is awarded when a graduate has completed a program of learning leading to the award of one AQF qualification that includes the components of two different qualifications, satisfying the minimum requirements of one but not both of the component qualifications. A single testamur is issued for the combined qualification with the names of both of the component qualifications linked by 'and' in the qualification title.

Completion of a qualification signifies that a student has met the requirements of a qualification, prior to award of the qualification.

A **double qualification** is awarded when the requirements of two AQF qualifications of the same type have been completed concurrently. A separate testamur is issued for each of the two qualifications completed. Double qualifications may be issued by one institution or by two institutions under a formal agreement.

A **graduation statement** is a supplementary statement to the testamur and record of results that provides information to enhance understanding of the qualification by students, employers, industry, professional associations and internationally.⁷ A graduation statement is issued only on award/conferral of a qualification.

A **joint qualification** is awarded to a graduate who has completed a single qualification in more than one institution under a formal agreement between the institutions. One testamur is issued to the graduate. Other terms include joint qualification arrangements include cotutelle, dual or multi-badged.

Postnominals are the abbreviated forms of an AQF qualification type and field of study used by graduates to identify their qualification in a shortened form.

Qualification see AQF qualification.

Qualification type refers to the broad discipline free nomenclature used in the AQF to describe each type of AQF qualification (for example Diploma, Masters Degree)

A **record of results** is a record of all learning leading to an AQF qualification in which a student is enrolled at an institution. It can be issued at any time during the program of learning and will be issued on graduation. In Australia this document may be called a 'transcript of results', 'academic transcript' or 'statement of results'. In this policy, the term 'record of results' is used.

A **statement of attainment** confirms that one or more accredited units have been completed.

A **testamur** is the official document that confirms that a qualification has been awarded. In Australia this document may be called an 'award', 'parchment', or 'certificate'. In this policy, the term 'testamur' is used.

Unit see Accredited unit.

⁷ See footnote 2.



Australian Qualifications *Framework*

Draft AQF Qualifications Pathways and Linkages Policy

July 2010

I INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

This policy forms part of the Australian Qualifications Framework and represents the progression of Ministerial objectives to support the development and application of pathways and linkages between qualifications and the increased use of credit in Australia's education and training system, providing benefits for students and enhancing their learning pathways.

This policy sets out Australia's national policy on qualifications pathways and linkages and builds into the AQF the capacity to genuinely support lifelong learning in a way that reflects the reality of student movement over a lifetime, that learning can be formal, non-formal or informal and that all forms of learning can potentially contribute to gaining a qualification.

This policy is underpinned by the principle that qualification pathways and linkages will be developed that:

- make progression into and between qualifications clear and transparent;
- create systemic and systematic pathways;
- increase flexibility of qualification pathways;
- facilitate credit and clarify linkages between qualifications;
- eliminate barriers to access.

The AQF by its nature is hierarchical however students do not necessarily gain qualifications in this way. This policy acknowledges the multiple pathways that students take to gain qualifications.

The purpose of the policy is to maximise the credit that can be gained for learning already undertaken.

1.2 Scope

This policy covers all education and training sectors that offer AQF qualifications.

This policy and guidelines should not impinge upon or replace the academic integrity of qualifications or the autonomy and responsibility of individual education and training institutions in making decisions on admission, prerequisites for successful ongoing study, and the levels and amounts of credit granted in their programs of study.

1.3 Users

The principal users of this policy will be the issuing organisations,¹ accrediting authorities and students in each education and training sector.

The other users of this policy are employers, industry and professional association, licensing and regulatory bodies who may use this policy to develop their general understanding of the role of credit in developing learning pathways and outcomes.

2 POLICY

2.1 All issuing organisations who offer AQF qualifications will develop clear, accessible and transparent policies, systems and processes to implement qualifications pathways, linkages and credit arrangements for determining and managing credit for students.²

1 An authorised issuing organisation is authorised through State, Territory or Commonwealth legislation to issue AQF qualifications. In this policy the phrase is abbreviated to 'issuing organisation'.

2 Best practice guidelines and definitions of common terminology will be available on the AQF website and policy users are encouraged to use them when developing their organisational policies and processes.

These pathways, linkages and credit arrangements will:

- be systematic, evidence-based, equitable, transparent, consistent and reliable with decisions subject to appeal and review;
- recognise learning regardless of how, when and where it was acquired, provided that the learning is relevant and current to the learning outcomes of the accredited unit or qualification;
- available for all students and will not unfairly advantage or disadvantage any students who enter courses and programs of study with credit;
- decided in a timely way so that students' access to qualifications is not unnecessarily inhibited;
- result in the same value and standing as educational outcomes achieved through formal learning and assessment;
- allow for credit outcomes to be used to meet specified prerequisites for entry into a qualification or for the partial or complete fulfilment of a qualification;
- be subject to the same rigour of quality assurance as other educational policies, procedures and processes of the education and training provider including external quality requirements;
- be widely promoted and easily accessible to all prospective and existing students to enable them to make well-informed choices about study options, pathways and alternatives by taking into account the credit they can expect;
- be continually reviewed by education and training providers to maximise the applicability to new and updated qualifications and to student and industry needs.

2.2 Base levels of credit transfer for completed AQF qualifications will be awarded to students, as follows.

2.2.1 Qualifications in the same discipline:

Completed qualifications at level 4 will result in 10% credit towards level 7 qualifications

Completed qualifications at levels 5 and 6 will result in 33% credit towards level 7 qualifications

Completed qualifications at level 7 will result in 50% credit towards levels 5 and 6 qualifications

2.2.2 Qualifications in a different discipline:

Completed qualifications at levels 5 and 6 will result in 10% credit towards level 7 qualifications

Completed qualifications at level 7 will result in 10% credit towards level 5 and 6 qualifications

2.3 All qualification developers and accrediting authorities will identify and document articulation pathways into and credit towards other AQF qualifications for any qualifications accredited.

In particular:

2.3.1 Accreditation documentation for all AQF qualifications at levels 5 and 6³ will include documented articulation to level 7 qualifications in the same and different disciplines.

2.3.2 Accreditation documentation for all AQF qualifications at levels 4, 5, 6 and 7⁴ will document base levels of credit.

³ Diploma, Advanced Diploma and Associate Degree

⁴ Certificate IV, Diploma, Advanced Diploma, Associate Degree and Degree qualifications

2.4 Base levels of credit do not preclude any individual negotiations for further credit by students or institutional agreements that may go beyond these levels. These include articulation, credit transfer and recognition of prior learning agreement or negotiations.

2.5 Credit can be in the form of either block credit, specified credit or unspecified credit.

2.6 All articulation and credit transfer arrangements will be documented in the issuing organisations' and/or accrediting authorities' registers of AQF qualifications and any registers of articulation and credit transfer agreements.

3 DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS IN THIS POLICY⁵

Articulation is a process that enables students to progress from one completed qualification to another with credit in a defined pathway. Articulation is a formal route to pathways, linkages and credit for students.

Block credit is credit granted towards whole stages or components of a qualification.

Credit is the value assigned for the recognition of equivalence in content and learning outcomes between different types of learning and/or qualifications which reduces the amount of learning required to achieve a qualification.

Credit transfer is a process that provides students with agreed and consistent credit outcomes based on equivalence in content and learning outcomes between matched qualifications. Credit transfer is a flexible route to pathways, linkages and credit for students.

Formal learning is the learning that takes place through a structured program of learning and assessment that leads to the full or partial attainment of a formally recognised qualification.

Informal learning is learning gained through work, social, family, hobby or leisure activities and experiences. Unlike formal and non-formal learning, informal learning is not organised or externally structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support.

Non-formal learning refers to learning that takes place through a structured program of learning but does not lead to a formally recognised qualification.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is an assessment process that involves assessment of an individual's relevant prior learning (including formal, informal and non-formal learning) to determine the credit outcomes of an application for credit.

Specified credit is credit granted towards particular or specific components of a qualification.

Unspecified credit is credit granted towards elective components of a qualification

Note: This policy document builds on the previous 'Credit arrangements' policy endorsed at the AQF Council meeting on May 12, 2009.

⁵ More detailed information on these definitions is provided on the AQF website

Australian Qualifications *Framework*

Draft AQF Register Policy

July 2010

I INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the AQF register policy is to ensure the accuracy and consistency of information about AQF qualifications and the organisations authorised to issue them to contribute to the protection and verifiability of AQF qualifications.

It facilitates the identification of AQF qualifications by the public. It also facilitates the comparison of qualifications and institutions to enable informed choice making by consumers of AQF qualifications.

1.2 Scope

The AQF Register Policy covers the responsibilities for the provision and management of registers of AQF qualifications and organisations authorised to issue AQF qualifications.

The policy is also intended to inform the development of any public registers based on information derived from, or purporting to be about, AQF qualifications and organisations authorised to issue them.

1.3 Users

The primary users of the policy are government accrediting authorities and self-accrediting institutions that have responsibility for maintaining registers of AQF qualifications.

The other users are those who utilise the registers of AQF qualifications to gain information about AQF qualifications and accredited institutions such as: students and prospective students in the Australian education and training system, graduates, employers, industry and professional associations, licensing and regulatory bodies, migrants and migration advisors, qualifications developers, researchers, the general public and international education agencies.

2 POLICY

2.1 There will be an official public record of all AQF qualifications, the organisations authorised to issue them, and the AQF qualifications issued. This is known as the AQF Register.¹

2.2 The AQF Council is responsible for providing a web-based portal for entry to any register that is part of the AQF Register.²

2.3 Any register that comprises part of the AQF Register will contain reliable and accurate information. It will enable easy access for the public to gain information about AQF qualifications and the institutions authorised to issue them.

2.4 Register of Accrediting Authorities

The AQF Council will maintain a register of all authorities that accredit organisations to issue qualifications or are self-accrediting higher education institutions.

This register will contain the following details:

- Name and contact details of each authority
- Legislative base for each authority and scope of its authority.

1 <http://www.aqf.edu.au/RegisterAccreditation/AQFRegister/tabid/174/Default.aspx>

2 The registers that currently make up the AQF register are:

- State/territory registers of the Senior Secondary Certificate of Education qualifications
- The National Training Information Service - a national register of all endorsed vocational education and Training Package qualifications and qualifications accredited by State/territory accrediting authorities: registered training organisations and the qualifications they are approved to issue
- State/territory accrediting authority registers of non self-accrediting higher education institutions and the qualifications they are authorised to issue
- Universities and other self-accrediting higher education institutions' registers of AQF qualifications they have accredited

2.5 Registers of AQF qualifications and institutions authorised to issue them.

All accrediting authorities will maintain a register of organisations they have authorised to issue AQF qualifications and the qualifications they are authorised to issue.

The accrediting authorities currently (2010) are:

- Government authorised statutory bodies are responsible for issuing the *Senior Secondary Certificate of Education* in their own State and Territory.
- State and Territory government accrediting authorities for *vocational education and training* are responsible for authorising registered training organisations (RTOs) to issue AQF qualifications.
- State and Territory government accrediting authorities for *higher education* are responsible for authorising non-self accrediting higher education institutions to issue AQF qualifications.
- Universities and other self-accrediting higher education institutions are empowered in legislation to accredit and issue their own AQF qualifications.

Sufficient information must be provided in the registers to correctly identify the issuing organisation and the AQF qualifications it is authorised to issue. The mandatory items must:

- correctly identify the authorised issuing organisation
- correctly identify the responsible person or persons and contact details of the organisation, including contact details for public enquiries
- accurately list the AQF qualifications the organisation is authorised to issue, including the correct AQF qualification title, the accreditation period, and any caveats.

2.6 Register of issued AQF qualifications

All authorised issuing organisations will maintain an auditable quality register of the AQF qualifications that they have issued.

Sufficient information must be provided in the register to correctly identify the AQF qualifications they have issued. The mandatory items must:

- uniquely identify the graduate
- correctly identify the AQF qualification by its full title
- include the date issued/awarded.

Australian Qualifications *Framework*

Draft Addition or Removal of AQF Qualification Types Policy

July 2010

I INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the policy for the addition or removal of qualifications types is to ensure that the AQF has flexibility and is responsive to Australia's changing education and training environment. There may be a range of reasons why the AQF Council will be requested to add or remove qualification types from the AQF, including changing educational, industry, professional or community needs.

This policy will ensure that changes to the structure of the AQF are able to be made, when required, that do not compromise the stability of the AQF.

1.2 Scope

This policy sets out the requirements for the addition of qualification types to the AQF or removal of qualification types from the AQF. The policy covers all education and training sectors that offer AQF qualifications.

1.3 Users

The users of the policy are the authorised issuing organisations¹ and the accrediting authorities in each education and training sector. Under Australia's quality assurance arrangements for each sector, different accrediting authorities are responsible for the implementation and monitoring of these policies and protocols.

The other users of the policy are graduates, employers, industry and professional associations, licensing and regulatory bodies and other interested parties.

2 POLICY

2.1 Addition of qualification types

Qualification types can be added to the AQF by the AQF Council if there is a clear industry, professional or community need and a sound educational rationale.

2.1.1 Criteria

To be included in the AQF a new qualifications type will:

- be able to be quality assured by government approved standards
- be able to be accredited by an authority authorised under legislation to accredit AQF qualifications
- be described according to the AQF taxonomy of learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and application of knowledge and skills)
- be able to be located at an existing AQF level
- have clear pathways within the AQF.

2.1.2 Consultation

Consultation will have occurred with the relevant industry, provider and government stakeholders and be documented as support with robust evidence that the new qualification type:

- does not duplicate an existing AQF qualification type
- meets a defined industry, professional or community need, and
- there is a sound educational reason for its addition.

¹ An authorised issuing organisation is authorised through State, Territory or Commonwealth legislation to issue AQF qualifications.

2.1.3 Recommending authorities

Only relevant accrediting authorities authorised under legislation to accredit AQF qualifications may put forward a recommendation for inclusion of a qualification type, in writing, to the AQF Council.

2.1.4 Decision making

The AQF Council will make a decision based on the evidence provided that a qualification type will be added to the AQF.

2.2 Removal of qualification types

Qualification types can be removed from the AQF if there is a clear industry or professional need and a sound educational rationale.

2.2.1 Criteria and consultation

To be considered for removal from the AQF, consultation will have occurred with the relevant industry, provider and government stakeholders and be documented as support with robust evidence that:

- the qualification type is redundant
- there is agreement across the relevant sector, and
- pathways have been developed for any students who may still be enrolled as the qualification type is phased out.

2.2.2 Recommending authorities

Only relevant accrediting authorities authorised under legislation to accredit AQF qualifications may put forward a recommendation for removal of a qualification type, in writing, to the AQF Council.

2.2.3 Decision making

The AQF Council will make a decision based on the evidence provided that a qualification type will be removed from the AQF.

Australian Qualifications *Framework*

Draft AQF Glossary of Terminology

July 2010

The AQF supports qualifications across a broad range of fields of study in the different education and training sectors. The language of qualifications and qualifications frameworks can be complex and differs across the sectors. To maximise consistency in understanding of the terminology used in the AQF, the terminology is defined and consolidated in the AQF Glossary.

A

Term	AQF Definition
Academic transcript	See Record of results
Accredited unit	An accredited unit is a single component of a qualification that has been accredited by the same process as for a whole AQF qualification. In Australia an accredited unit may be called a 'module', 'subject', or 'course'. In AQF policy, the term 'unit' is used
Accredited course	An accredited course is a program of learning that comprises one or more components (eg units of competency, modules or subjects), drawn from an AQF qualification and subject to the same accreditation process as an AQF qualification
Accreditation	Accreditation is a process indicating that a program of learning has been approved by the relevant legislated accrediting authorities and has met predetermined quality assurance standards
Accrediting authority	An accrediting authority is authorised under legislation to accredit programs of learning leading to AQF qualifications and/or register institutions to issue AQF qualifications
Advanced knowledge and/or skills	Advanced knowledge and skills are those that have been developed beyond that of a previous level
Advanced standing	Advanced standing is a process used for obtaining credit for previous learning. See also articulation, credit transfer, recognition of prior learning
Application of knowledge and/or skills	Application of knowledge and/or skills refers to how a graduate applies knowledge and skills in context and in terms of autonomy, responsibility and accountability
Apprenticeship and traineeship	Apprenticeship and traineeships are structured training arrangements for a person employed under a contract of training. It usually involves the person receiving training and being assessed both on and off the job. (NQC training packages glossary)
AQF qualification	An AQF qualification is an accredited complete program of learning that leads to formal certification that a graduate has achieved learning outcomes as described in the AQF
Area of learning or work	Area of learning or work is the sub-category of a field of learning or work
Articulation	Articulation is a process that enables students to progress from one completed qualification to another with credit in a defined qualification pathway. See also credit transfer
Assessment	Assessment is a process to determine a student's achievement of expected learning outcomes and may include a range of written, oral and practical methods

Assessment criteria	Assessment criteria are descriptions of what the student is expected to know, understand and do, in order to demonstrate that a learning outcome has been achieved
Authorised issuing organisation	An authorised issuing organisation is authorised through State, Territory or Commonwealth legislation to issue AQF qualifications
Authoritative judgement	Authoritative judgement refers to the high degree of judgement exercised by Masters Degree and Doctoral Degree graduates
Autonomy in the application of knowledge and/or skills	Autonomy is the ability to apply knowledge and/or skills with appropriate degrees of independence for the level of the qualification.
Award	Award of a qualification is the formal acknowledgement that a graduate has met the requirements of the qualification and is eligible for certification through a testamur. The term 'conferral' may also be used to describe this process.

B

Term	AQF Definition
Basic knowledge and/or skills	Basic knowledge and/or skills include those that form a starting point or basis for development of learning and work
Block credit	Credit granted towards whole stages or components of a qualification
Broad knowledge and/or skills	Broad knowledge and/or skills include those that cover a general, wide-range of area learning or work

C

Term	AQF Definition
Certification	Certification is the verification and authentication of an individual's entitlement to a qualification
Certification document	A certification document is the official document that confirms that a qualification has been awarded/conferred. In Australia this document may be called a 'testamur', 'award', 'parchment' or 'certificate'. In AQF policies, the term 'testamur' is used
Certification documentation	Certification documentation is the set of official documents that confirms that a qualification has been completed and awarded. This documentation includes a testamur and record of results and may include an Australian Graduation Statement
Cognitive skills	Cognitive skills include the mental skills that are used in the process of acquiring knowledge; these skills include reasoning, perception, and intuition. They are defined by the skills dimension in the AQF i.e. <i>interpret, analyse, transform</i>
Coherent knowledge and/or skills	Coherent knowledge and/or skills include those that are logically ordered, sound and/or integrated

Combined qualification	A combined qualification is awarded when a graduate has completed a program of learning leading to the award of one AQF qualification that includes the components of two different qualifications, satisfying the minimum requirements of one but not both of the component qualifications. A single testamur is issued for the combined qualification with the names of both of the component qualifications linked by 'and' in the qualification title.
Communication skills	Communication skills are the skills that enable a person to convey information so that it is received and understood. Communication skills include the appropriate written and oral skills for the level of the qualification
Competence	The application of, and context in which knowledge and skills are applied
Competency	Competency is the consistent application of knowledge and skill to the standard of performance required in the workplace. It embodies the ability to transfer and apply skills and knowledge to new situations and environments (NQC Training packages glossary)
Completion of a qualification	Components of a qualification include units of competency, modules or subjects, completion of which lead to an AQF qualification
Components of a qualification	Components of a qualification include units of competency, modules or subjects, completion of which lead to an AQF qualification
Comprehensive knowledge and/or skills	Comprehensive knowledge and/or skills are knowledge or skills that cover a complete area or field of work or learning
Context of learning and/or work	The context of learning and/or work is the circumstance within which a graduate applies knowledge and skills
Course	See Program of learning
Coursework	Coursework is a method of teaching and learning that leads to the acquisition of specific skills and knowledge that does not include major research component(s)
Creative skills	Creative skills are those that may lead to innovative, imaginative and artistic outputs
Credit	Credit is the value assigned for the recognition of equivalence in content and learning outcomes between different types of learning and/or qualifications which reduces the amount of learning required to achieve a qualification
Credit system	The processes involved in valuing credit, transferring credit and accumulating credit that are governed by rules in a qualifications framework. Credit systems may be qualifications or unit based
Credit transfer	A process that provides students with agreed and consistent credit outcomes based on identified equivalence in content and learning outcomes between matched qualifications.

D

Term	AQF Definition
Defined activities and/or contexts	Defined activities and/or contexts refers to definite and clear activities and/or contexts within distinct boundaries
Discipline	Discipline refers to the subject or field of study or learning See also Field of study, work and/or learning
Double qualification	A double qualification is awarded when the requirements of two AQF qualifications of the same type have been completed concurrently. A separate testamur is issued for each of the two qualifications completed. Double qualifications may be issued by one institution or by two institutions under a formal agreement.

E

Term	AQF Definition
Employability skills	See Generic skills
Expert knowledge and/or skills	Expert knowledge and/or skills are the highest level of skills underpinned by extensive knowledge or ability based on research, experience, or occupation and in a particular area of study
External assessment/examiner	An external examiner for higher degree research purposes is one who is not connected to the university or student' research

F

Term	AQF Definition
Field of study, work and/or learning	A field of study, work and/or learning refers to the main focus of work activities and/or a learning program
Formal learning	Formal learning is the learning that takes place through a structured program of learning that leads to the full or partial attainment of a formally recognised qualification
Foundational knowledge and skills	Foundational knowledge and skills are initial or introductory knowledge and skills upon which further development can be built

G

Term	AQF Definition
General capabilities	See Generic skills
Generic skills	Generic skills are the key transferrable skills a graduate may achieve through learning that have application in study, work and life contexts. They may be referred to as graduate attributes or capabilities, employability skills or general capabilities
Graduate	A graduate is a person who has been awarded a qualification in an educational institution and/or workplace setting
Graduate attributes/capabilities	See Generic skills

Graduation statement	A graduation statement is a supplementary statement to the testamur and record of results that provides information to enhance understanding of the qualification by students, employers, industry, professional associations and internationally. A graduation statement is issued only on award/conferral of a qualification.
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H

Term	AQF Definition
Higher education institution	A higher education institution is a body that is established or recognised by or under Commonwealth, State or Territory legislation to issue qualifications in the higher education sector. A higher education institution is either a university, self-accrediting institution or non self-accrediting institution

I

Term	AQF Definition
Informal learning	Informal learning is learning gained through work, social, family, hobby or leisure activities and experiences. Unlike formal or non-formal learning, informal learning is not organised or externally structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support
Institution	Institution refers to an organisation approved to provide programs of learning that lead to qualifications. Institutions include: higher education institutions, universities, registered training organisations (RTOs), and secondary schools
Integrated knowledge	Integrated knowledge combines two or more kinds of knowledge and concepts (e.g. technical and theoretical)
Issuing organisation	See Authorised issuing organisation

J

Term	AQF Definition
Joint qualification	A joint qualification is awarded to a graduate who has undertaken a single qualification in more than one institution under a formal agreement between the institutions. One testamur is issued to the graduate. Other terms include joint qualification arrangements include cotutelle, dual or multi-badged.
Judgment in the application of knowledge and/or skills	Judgement in the application of knowledge and skills includes the ability to apply knowledge to form appropriate opinions or to evaluate work and/or learning activities for the level of the qualification

K

Term	AQF Definition
Knowledge	Knowledge is defined as what a graduate knows and understands. Knowledge can be described in terms of depth, breadth, kinds of knowledge and complexity

L

Term	AQF Definition
Leading practitioner and/or scholar	A leading practitioner and/or scholar is a person at the forefront of a field of work and/or learning
Learner	See Student
Learning	Learning is a process by which a person assimilates information, ideas and values and thus acquires knowledge, skills and/or competences.
Learning outcomes	Learning outcomes are the expression of the set of knowledge, skills and/or competences a person has acquired and/or is able to demonstrate after completion of a learning process. In the AQF these are expressed in terms of knowledge, skills and application
Levels	Levels are an indication of the relative complexity and/or depth of achievement and the autonomy required to demonstrate that achievement
Levels criteria	Levels criteria describe the relative complexity and/or depth of achievement and the autonomy required to demonstrate that achievement for each AQF level 1 – 10
Levels summaries	Levels summaries are general statements of typical achievement of learners who have been awarded a qualification at a certain level in the AQF
Lifelong learning	Lifelong learning is learning activities that are undertaken throughout life to improve knowledge, skills and competences within personal, civic, social and/or employment related perspectives

M

Term	AQF Definition
Mastery of knowledge	Mastery of knowledge refers to the attributes of a person who demonstrates comprehensive knowledge and understanding of their field of work or learning
Module	See Program of learning

N

Term	AQF Definition
Non-formal learning	Non-formal learning refers to learning that takes place through a structured program of learning but does not lead to a formally recognised qualification
Non self-accrediting institution	A non self-accrediting institution is a higher education institution that does not have the authority to accredit its own qualifications
Non-trade qualification	Non-trade qualifications are completed by students not trained through an apprenticeship or traineeship
Notional duration of student learning	Notional duration of student learning is the time it takes a student, on average, to complete all learning and assessment activities required for the achievement of a qualification

O

Term	AQF Definition
Outcomes	See Learning outcomes

P

Term	AQF Definition
Parameters	Parameters refers to the boundaries that define the context of learning and/or work
Para-professional work and/or learning	Para-professional work and/or learning are work contexts that generally support professional practice
Parchment	See Testamur
Postnominals	Postnominals are the abbreviated forms of an AQF qualification type and field of study used by graduates to identify their qualification in a shortened form.
Professional work and/or learning	Professional work and/or learning are work contexts requiring specialised knowledge and advanced learning, responsibility and autonomy, and intensive preparation
Program of learning	A program of learning is a curriculum, training package, units of study etc that lead to the award of a qualification
Provider	See Institution

Q

Term	AQF Definition
Qualification	See AQF qualification
Qualification type	The qualification type refers to the broad discipline free nomenclature used in the AQF to describe each type of AQF qualification (for example Diploma, Masters Degree)

Qualification type descriptor	The qualification type descriptor is a statement that describes the learning outcomes of each of the AQF qualification types
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R

Term	AQF Definition
Record of results	A record of results is a record of all learning leading to an AQF qualification in which a student is enrolled at an institution. It can be issued at any time during the program of learning and will be issued on graduation. In Australia this document may be called a 'transcript of results', 'academic transcript' or 'statement of results'. In AQF policy, the term 'record of results' is used
Recognition of prior learning (RPL)	An assessment process that involves assessment of an individual's relevant prior learning (including formal, informal and non-formal learning) to determine the credit outcomes of an application for credit
Registered training organisation (RTO)	An organisation registered by a state or territory registering body in accordance with the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) <i>Essential Standards for Registration</i> within a defined scope of registration. (NQC training packages glossary)
Registering authority	See Accrediting authority
Research	Research comprises systematic experimental and theoretical work, applied research, experimentation and/or development work in order to increase the dimensions of knowledge.
Responsibility in the application of knowledge and/or skills	Responsibility in the application of knowledge and/or skills refers to the degree of accountability in applying knowledge and/or skills in work and/or learning contexts for the level of the qualification

S

Term	AQF Definition
School	A school is an educational institution that provides compulsory education and the Senior Secondary Certificate of Education qualification. The term 'school' may also be used in higher education to refer to a faculty or department
Self-accrediting institution	A self-accrediting institution is one which has authority to accredit its higher education courses. Self-accrediting institutions may be limited to certain fields of study and/or qualification levels
Skills	Skills refer to what a graduate can do. They can be described in terms of kinds and complexity. Skills include cognitive skills, technical skills, creative skills and generic skills
Specialised knowledge and/or skills	Specialised knowledge and/or skills refers to the depth and specificity of knowledge and/or skills required at a particular AQF level
Specialised qualification	A specialised qualification is one of short duration that builds on the knowledge and skills already acquired

Specified credit	Credit granted towards particular or specific components of a qualification
Statement of attainment	A statement of attainment confirms that one or more accredited units have been completed.
Student	A student is a person enrolled in a formal program of learning in an educational institution and/or a workplace setting
Substantial body of knowledge Substantial original contribution	A substantial body of knowledge and/or original contribution refers to the extensive and significant knowledge and outputs required of Masters Degree and Doctoral Degree graduates
Systematic knowledge and/or skills	Systematic knowledge and/or skills are those that are coherent and well ordered

T

Term	AQF Definition
Taxonomy	A taxonomy refers to the system of classification of learning outcomes in qualifications frameworks
Technical skills	Technical skills are the operational skills necessary to perform certain work and learning activities. They are specifically defined by the skills dimension in the AQF
Testamur	A testamur is the official document that confirms that a qualification has been awarded. In Australia this document may also be called an 'award', 'parchment' or 'certificate'. In AQF policies, the term testamur is used
Theoretical knowledge and concepts	Theoretical knowledge and concepts are those knowledge requirements relating to or having the character of theory rather than practical application
Trade qualifications	Trade qualifications are completed by students through an apprenticeship or traineeship
Training package	A nationally endorsed, integrated set of competency standards, assessment guidelines and Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) qualifications for a specific industry, industry sector or enterprise (NQC training packages glossary)

U- Z

Term	AQF Definition
Units	See Accredited unit
University	Higher education institution empowered by legislation to accredit its own courses and issue qualifications
Unspecified credit	Credit granted towards elective components of a qualification

