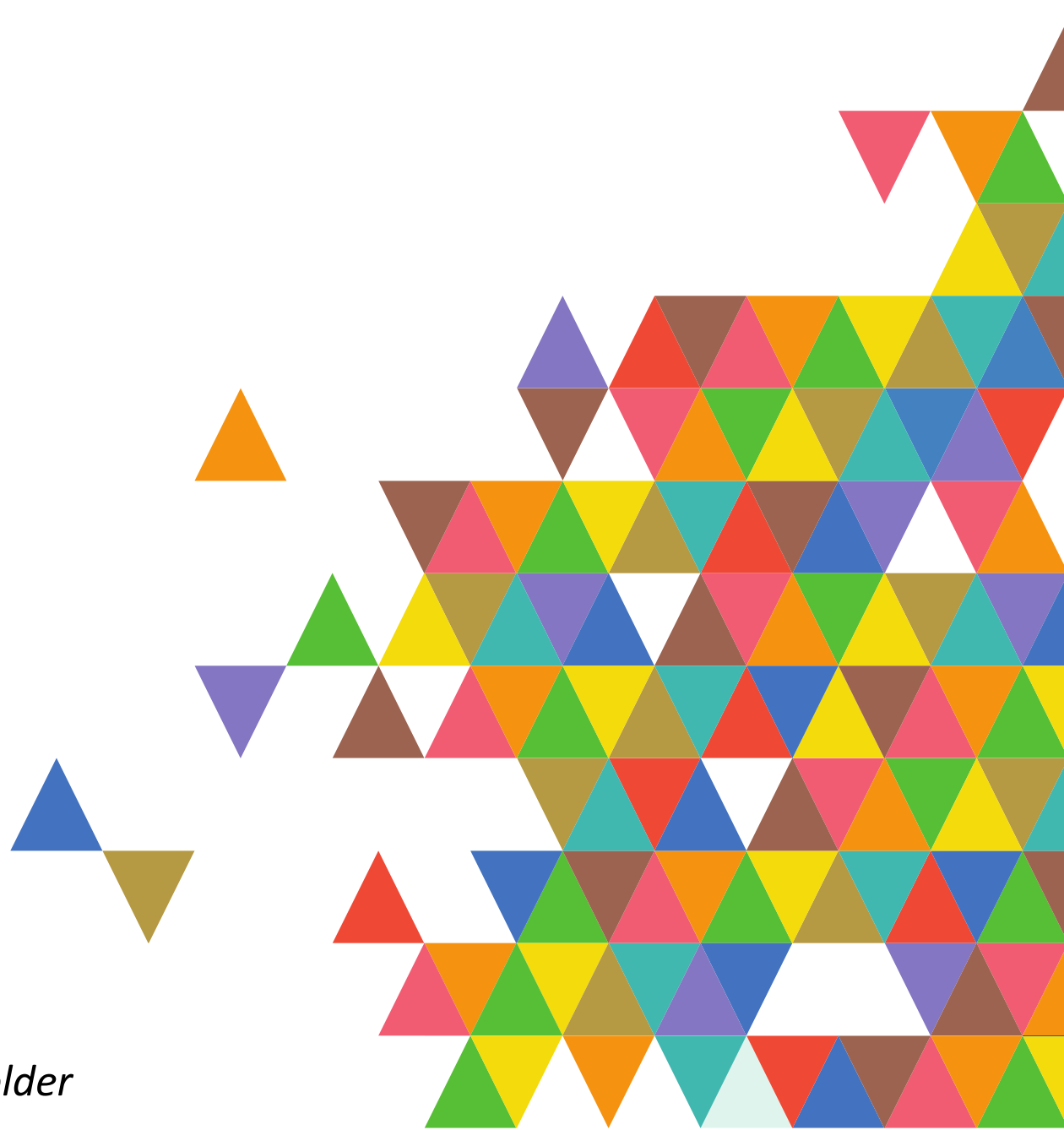# Review
of the
Australian Qualifications Framework

A Discussion of Major Issues

The PowerPoint Presentation as delivered at Stakeholder consultations in February and March 2019.

Consultation

Discussion paper

released 12 December 2018

Available at: https://docs.education.gov.au/node/51926

- Looking for proposals from education providers, industry, students, government bodies and other interested parties

Submissions close 15 March 2019

Consultations currently underway

- From 6 February to 6 March, consultation sessions are being held in each capital city, as well as in Albury and Townsville

- Webinar to be held 1 March for those unable to make the face-to-face sessions

Purpose of the AQF Review

AQF Evolution

- Originally a loose framework first released in 1995

- Covered qualifications in VET, higher education and senior secondary school

- Last revised in 2011

- 2019 Review needs to accommodate changes in the level and nature of demand for knowledge and skills and changes in the landscape of senior secondary and tertiary education.

Approach to the Review

- Discussion paper extends the debate beyond issue identification
  - Outlines possible approaches
  - Welcomes alternative proposals
- Considers short, medium and longer term changes

Three questions for all to consider

- ❖ Is the AQF fit for purpose?
- ❖ What reforms should be made with what priority?
- ❖ What implementation issues arise from any proposed approaches?

Today's discussion: Five Areas for Possible Change

Session Plan

o Introduction

o Five key focus areas

o presentations on each area, followed by questions (*please keep relevant to the proposal being discussed*)

▪ **If time:**

o Open discussion, alternative ideas welcome

1 – Shorter Form Credentials

2 – Enterprise and Social Skills

3 – The AQF Taxonomy and Levels

4 – Senior Secondary School Certificate

5 – Volume of Learning & Credit Points

1 – Include shorter form credentials?

What are Shorter Form Credentials?

- Skill sets
- Short courses
- Incomplete qualifications
- Enabling courses
- Foundation courses
- MOOCs
- Microcredentials
- Professional and vendor courses

Possible approaches

- Include shorter form credentials in the AQF.

- Criteria for inclusion:
  - Quality assured, accredited, AQF learning outcomes, assign to AQF level, clear AQF pathway, not duplicative, meet industry/professional/community need.

- Align shorter form credential types to a number of AQF levels.

- Group shorter form credentials and create them as credential types in the AQF.

- To help to aggregate shorter form credentials into full qualifications, create a credential type defined by link to a qualification type.

As is the case in Ireland and Scotland, it may be that a single style of shorter form credential could be assigned to a number of levels (perhaps similar to how we currently distinguish four certificates).

1 (cont.) – Include shorter form credentials?

Incorporating short courses into the AQF could simply involve expanding 10 vertical levels horizontally.

The AQF enlarged horizontally to accommodate broad-banded micro-credentials and skill-sets but with no other changes could present as follows:

Level	Full Course (the current AQF)	Minor Course*	Skill Set*	Supplementary*
10	Doctorate	Minor course at AQF level 10		
9	Masters	Minor course at AQF level 9	Skill Set in (subject) at AQF level 9	Supplementary course AQF level 9
8	Honours, Grad Cert., Grad Dip.	Minor course at AQF level 8	Skill Set in (subject) at AQF level 8	Supplementary course AQF level 8
7	Bachelor	Minor course at AQF level 7	Skill Set in (subject) at AQF level 7	Supplementary course AQF level 7
6	Associate Degree, Advance Diploma	Minor course at AQF level 6	Skill Set in (subject) at AQF level 6	Supplementary course AQF level 6
5	Diploma	Minor course at AQF level 5	Skill Set in (subject) at AQF level 5	Supplementary course AQF level 5
4	Cert IV	Minor course at AQF level 4	Skill Set in (subject) at AQF level 4	Supplementary course AQF level 4
3	Cert III		Skill Set in (subject) at AQF level 3	Supplementary course AQF level 3
2	Cert II		Skill Set in (subject) at AQF level 2	Supplementary course AQF level 2
1	Cert I		Skill Set in (subject) at AQF level 1	Supplementary course AQF level 1

Issues

- Comparability at levels
- Comparative value of qualifications
- Complexity of learning
- Volume of learning
- Quality assurance
- Nomenclature
- Aggregated qualifications
- Exit qualifications

These titles are given as examples only.

2 – Enterprise and social skills

Are they....
- Personality traits

Can they be....
- Taught
- Assessed

Context dependent....
- Discipline
- Vocational field
- Learner cohort

AQF generic skills
- **Fundamental skills** (literacy, numeracy)
- **People skills** (working with others, communication)
- **Thinking skills** (decision making, problem solving)
- **Personal skills** (self-direction, integrity)

Table 1: Some enterprise and social skills			
Interpersonal & Human Intelligence	Growth	Digital	Data
• Collaboration	• Adaptability	• Digital Fluency	• Data Literacy
• Communication	• Resilience	• Interaction & Connectedness	• Data Science
• Creativity	• Global Mindset	• Digital Design	• Insights to Action
• Critical Thinking	• Learning Agility		
• Empathy			

Possible approaches

- **Enterprise and social skills in AQF qualifications should be able to be taught with core content, acquired through teaching and learning, assessed and reported in fair, valid and reliable ways.**

- **Expand the list of enterprise and social skills included in the AQF and provide guidance or advice about delivering them through various qualifications (but do not include these skills as a taxonomy).**

3 – Taxonomies and levels

Table 2: Current AQF descriptors *with duplication* between levels and qualifications	
Level Descriptors	**Qualification Type Descriptors With Duplication**
• Summary • **Knowledge** • **Skills** • **Application of knowledge and skills**	• Purpose • **Knowledge** • **Skills** • **Application of knowledge and skills** • Volume of learning • Pathways • Responsibility for accreditation and development • Authority to issue the qualification

Table 3: Current AQF descriptors *with no duplication* between levels and qualifications	
Level Descriptors	**Qualification Type Descriptors With No Duplication**
• Summary • **Knowledge** • **Skills** • **Application of knowledge and skills**	• Purpose • Volume of learning • Pathways • Responsibility for accreditation and development • Authority to issue the qualification

Possible approach

- **Use AQF levels only to describe knowledge and skills and their application, and provide a description of each qualification type that is linked to levels.**

Issues

- **Application of knowledge and skills**
  - E.g. Autonomy - Trades graduate vs Bachelor graduate

- **Status of VET and higher education**
  - Mainly affected by broader social and cultural attitudes, also funding and policy differences?
  - The level at which qualifications are set is the responsibility of qualifications developers.
  - Revisions of expectations of autonomy and addition of generic skills within levels may assist in raising the reputation of VET courses.

- **Some qualification types may not conform to their AQF level descriptors**
  - E.g. Certificate III for trades, Bachelor Honours v. Graduate Certificates and Graduate Diplomas

- **Dual sector qualification types**
  - Levels 5, 6, 8 apply in both higher education and VET

- **Unclear descriptors**

Possible approaches

- **Review the application of knowledge and skills domain of the AQF taxonomy and how it should be applied across the AQF levels**

- **Revise descriptors to simplify them and ensure clear distinctions between levels.**

Issues

- **SSCE does not align with any one AQF level**

    - Students can study VET Certificates I, II or III. In some states Certificate IV, VET Diploma (Level 5).

    - Depending on ATAR rank, SSCE graduates and Certificate IV in Tertiary Preparation graduates can gain entry to AQF Level 7 Bachelor Degrees.

- **How can the AQF support the SSCE's role?**

    - Set out high-level learning outcomes, pathways to employment, and many VET and higher education qualifications.

    - It could more clearly outline approaches to credit into tertiary education.

Possible approach

- **Revise the SSCE descriptor to recognise that the knowledge and skills acquired in the SSCE can be at a broad range of AQF levels and result in multiple pathways.**

5 – Volume of learning and Credit Points

Introduced to….

- Be a guide to depth/breadth of learning outcomes
- Make qualifications of one type more consistent
- Make different qualification types more distinct

Issues

- An input measure when the growing focus is on outputs
- Difficult to regulate volume of learning in an age of blended learning
- 'Typical volume of learning' too imprecise – 'new learners' preferred by ASQA
- Measurement in years out of date with flexible learning methods

Possible approaches

- **Change the volume of learning unit of measurement from years to hours.**
- **Base the number of hours for a qualification type on the needs of a learner new to the field of study.**

5 (cont.) – Volume of learning and Credit Points

Issues

- Provider practice not driven by Pathways Policy.
- Policy valued for encouraging RPL, providing credit guidance, basis for controlling poor practice.
- Most learners are unaware of what credit they may be entitled to.

AQF optional credit point system

- Simplify comparison of learning outcomes for students and providers.
- Facilitate greater recognition of shorter form qualifications.
- Express the equal importance of both VET and higher education.
- Allow easier comparison with international qualifications.

Possible approaches

- **Revise the Pathways Policy as guidance, noting that primary responsibility for providing pathways sits with providers, training package developers and regulators.**

- **Develop a shared credit transfer register.**

- **Develop an hours-based credit point system in the AQF that may be voluntarily referenced by providers.**

6 – Other Policies

Issues

- Register Policy was never implemented.
- Qualification Type Addition and Removal Policy necessary to consider new credential types.
- Issuance Policy could be given effect by regulators without the policy.
- Principles and Processes for the Alignment of the AQF with International Qualifications Frameworks used by Commonwealth education department – could be its policy.

Possible approaches

- **Remove the AQF Qualifications Register Policy.**

- **Retain the AQF Qualification Type Addition and Removal Policy.**

- **Consider whether the AQF Qualifications Issuance Policy should be retained in the AQF.**

- **Remove the Principles and Processes for the Alignment of the AQF with International Qualifications Frameworks and retain them as a Department of Education and Training Policy.**