



## VET Qualifications Reform Survey

### Introduction

Skills Ministers recognise the importance of retaining and building upon the existing strengths of the VET System and are guiding work to modernise training product design.

An immediate reform priority is simplifying, streamlining and rationalising national VET qualifications across industry groupings and the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF).

Qualifications reform has a particular focus on what will better meet the needs of employers and learners now and in the future.

We have developed some preliminary conceptual thinking about a new approach to qualification design in the national training system. We want to hear your views and feedback about our proposals.

Feedback will inform advice to Skills Ministers and future approaches to qualification design.

You can provide feedback by completing the online survey [https://submit.dese.gov.au/jfe/form/SV\\_5AOHL7YvoxYr9LU](https://submit.dese.gov.au/jfe/form/SV_5AOHL7YvoxYr9LU).

### About this document

This document has been developed to support consultation. It explains why qualifications reform is needed and describes an example of how qualifications could be designed in a new national training system.

Three diagrams, supported by explanatory text, set out what we want to achieve, and early thinking about how the training system could be different in the future.

## VET Qualifications Reform

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## The need for Qualifications Reform

### Simplifying the national VET system

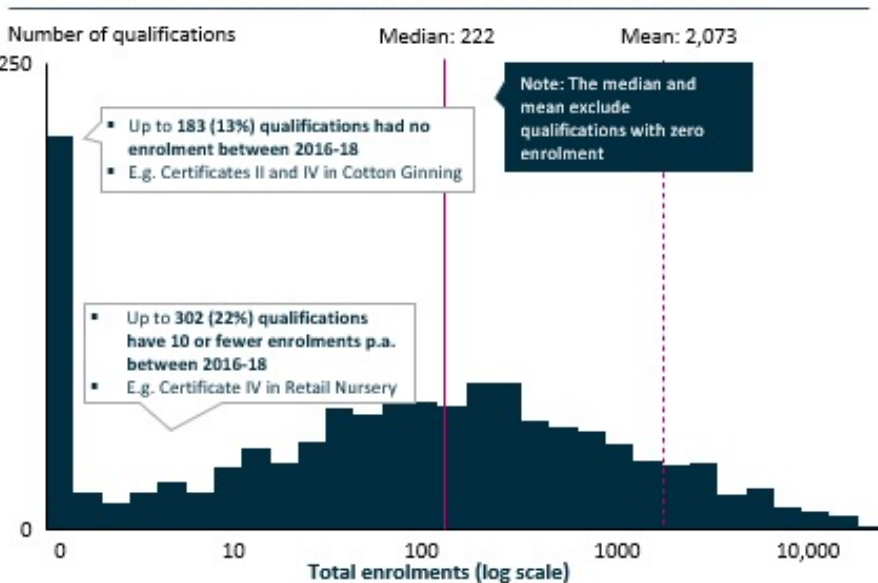
#### Proliferation of training products/significant duplication:

- There are 67 IRCs and 56 training packages, over 1,200 qualifications, and close to 16,000 units of competency.
- Over 2,000 units of competency have more than 90% overlap with at least one other unit, and over 5,500 units have more than 70% overlap.

#### The VET system is cluttered, hard to navigate and costly to maintain:

- 13% of qualifications with no enrolments
- Half of all qualifications have enrolments of ~200 or less

Distribution of average enrolments between 2016 and 2018 in current qualifications



#### Units of Competency have become increasingly complex:

- Many units have become prescriptive and conflated with delivery requirements.
- The high level of detail means that training products require frequent updating, with significant impacts on training delivery and outcomes.

## New Approaches to Qualification Design

### In Oct 2020, Skills Ministers agreed to qualifications reform trials that seek to achieve the following:

Broader vocational outcomes to recognise skill commonality and promote labour mobility, where feasible.

A reduction in unnecessary training product duplication

A reduction in training product complexity, through reducing over-specification and improving training delivery and assessment advice

An enhanced relationship between training products, training needs and pathways to employment and further education

Greater training product flexibility and enhanced responsiveness to changing industry need through short courses (micro-credentials and skill sets)

Improved articulation and pathways between education sectors, building on the AQF review recommendations

## Evidence and Evaluation

Three trials led by Skills Organisations Pilots will test new evidence-led approaches to qualifications in the mining, digital and human services sectors.



Trials are being run 'outside the system' to allow concepts to be tested without impacting on the national training system.

A desktop analysis will test the qualification design concepts against all products in the national training system.

### Trials will inform advice to Skills Ministers by end 2021

Evidence from these trials will support future qualification design policies that enable:



Greater labour mobility through stronger recognition of cross-sector and transferable skills



Making better use of industry and educator expertise to ensure better quality outcomes



Improved pathways advice to support lifelong learning and build labour market resilience for individuals

### Stakeholders said



600

responded to the qualification design survey

89%

of respondents agree that the right concepts are being tested

## Simplifying the VET system

The complexity of the national training system hinders employers and learners from readily identifying the training products they need to gain the right skills and build their workforce.

There are currently over 1,200 qualifications, close to 16,000 units of competency and around 670 accredited courses. Many highly specialised qualifications, while strongly linked to specific occupations, limit the career paths for graduates and the workforce available to employers.

Analysis of the text in current training products tells us that over 2,000 units of competency have more than 90% overlap with at least one other unit, and over 5,500 units have more than 70% overlap.

An analysis of enrolment data for VET qualifications between 2016 and 2018 shows:

- Up to 13% of qualifications had no enrolments
- Up to 22% of qualifications had 10 or fewer enrolments per year
- Half of all qualifications had around 200 enrolments or less.

While low enrolments do not always indicate an issue where a qualification is providing in-demand skills in a niche sector; qualifications need to be relevant to industry skills needs and fit for purpose.

A streamlined national training system is not just about rationalising the number of products, but ensuring the system is usable, navigable and meets the needs of all users.

## New approaches to qualification design

In October 2020, Skills Ministers agreed to trial new evidence-led approaches to designing qualifications, with qualification design trials to be run by three Skills Organisation Pilots in mining, digital and human services.

The qualification design trials are underway and underpinned by the following design objectives:

- Broader vocational outcomes to recognise skill commonality and promote labour mobility, where feasible - to improve individual mobility and labour market resilience, and increase the pool of available talent for employers

- A reduction in unnecessary training product duplication – making the national training system easier to navigate
- A reduction in training product complexity, through reducing over-specification and improving training delivery and assessment advice – increasing industry’s trust in qualification outcomes
- An enhanced relationship between training products, training needs and pathways to employment and further education
- Greater training product flexibility to meet employer needs – ensuring greater responsiveness to changing industry needs and education and training relevance including short courses (micro-credentials and skill sets)
- Improved articulation and pathways between education sectors, building on the AQF review recommendations.

A desktop trial, taking a system wide view, is also underway to complement the practical trials being run by the Skills Organisation Pilots. This analysis is looking at current qualifications, skill sets, units of competency and accredited courses to identify opportunities to:

- introduce qualifications that lead to broader vocational outcomes
- streamline qualifications across AQF levels
- use short training products to build new and specialised skills.

Lessons learnt from trials, along with stakeholder feedback, will inform advice to Ministers by the end of 2021.

## Future product design architecture

One of the qualification design concepts being tested is the separation of units of competency into occupational, training and certification standards to ensure users have the right product with the right level of information for their stakeholder group.

The diagram below sets out some early thinking about what a future national training system architecture might look like, using these new products.

# Current State

## Unit of Competency

Application

Elements

Performance criteria

Foundation skills

Unit mapping information

## Assessment requirements

Performance evidence

Knowledge evidence

Assessment conditions



Often these are at the task level, contextualised to a specific industry.

## Qualification

Qualification description

Packaging rules

Core units, elective units

Qualification mapping

## Credit arrangements

**Companion Volume  
Implementation Guide**  
*(not endorsed, quality assured)*

# Future State

## Occupational Standard

### Skills and knowledge statement

Actions or outcomes that are observable and can be demonstrated, including the application of skills and knowledge

### Job activity performance measures

How the job function needs to be performed to be accepted by industry

### Workplace capabilities

Capabilities to effectively perform the work function, including foundation skills



Industry leadership in identifying and validating job functions

## Training Standard / Guidance

Training course design and development

Resources, advice, curriculum



Educator input into what is required to train learners to perform job functions

## Certification Standard

Nationally recognised training outcome

Packaging rules  
(could also include pathways advice, recognition of foundation, employability skills)

AQF alignment



A certification standard reflects a combination of job functions that industry agrees maps to an occupation or group of occupations

## Assessment

Competency assessment guidance (critical aspects of assessment) and Licencing/registration requirements



Where does assessment belong?  
In the occupational, training or certification standard – or stand alone?



What is the role of context for transferable skills?

## Current training products

Some of the issues with existing training products identified through recent reviews and stakeholder feedback include:

- Over time, the content of qualifications, units of competency, and companion volumes have become lengthy and overly prescriptive.
- Units of Competency often focus on discrete tasks needed to do a job in a specific industry - rather than more holistic job functions in the workplace.
- Qualifications are often designed to lead to one occupation, even though some occupations and industries share common skills.

## Future state design elements

Qualification design trials are testing the development of training products that are more flexible, supporting individual mobility, labour market resilience and greater responsiveness to the needs of industry.

The proposed occupational, training and certification standards would clarify the roles of different user groups in the VET system.

### **Occupational standards**

Occupational standards would be developed at the job-function level – describing what a person needs to be able to know and do to perform a job function in the workplace. They would be used to support holistic delivery and assessment that looks much like what people actually do in the workplace.

Occupational standards raise the focus of training from units of competency, which are often at the task level, to job function – supporting a more cross sectoral and rationalised approach to defining the skills and knowledge needed to do a job role.

Occupational standards could be used in many ways within the training system. One way is as building blocks for training products that could:

- combine to form a full qualification
- add to qualifications by providing specialised skills or industry specific skills
- provide new skills that facilitate pathways between occupations and industries
- be delivered as stand-alone products, including to meet regulatory and licensing requirements.

Some occupational standards would describe job functions that may be common to more than one industry – while others may be specific to an industry or occupation.

Industry would take a lead role in identifying and validating occupational standards – and determine how common and specialised occupational standards should be combined into a training product that delivers the right mix of skills for the workplace. Employers could also use occupational standards in recruitment and workforce development - while individuals could use them to plan their careers.

It is anticipated that occupational standards would be stable, and not require frequent updating.

### **Training standard / guidance**

Training standards provide advice for training providers on how to design nationally consistent, high quality training and assessment - to prepare learners to perform job functions. They would be co-designed by educators (e.g. training course developers) and industry, enabling flexible and innovative training that meets employer and learner needs.

### **Assessment**

Competency assessment guidance would set out any critical aspects of assessment as well as regulatory and licensing requirements. Lessons from the qualification design trials will tell us more about where this assessment information best sits - in the occupational standard, in training guidance, or separately.

### **Certification standards**

Certification standards would reflect the combination of job functions (occupational standards) that industry agrees maps to an occupation or group of occupations.

The certification standard would provide a nationally recognised training outcome aligned to the AQF. It would set out the packaging rules and any regulatory or licensing requirements to achieve a qualification. It could also recognise employability and foundation skills, provide pathways advice, and include any licensing, industrial relations or apprenticeship requirements.

## **Example: What could Pest Controller qualifications look like in the future?**

The diagram below shows how qualifications for Pest Controllers could look different if current qualifications were reimagined using these new concepts. The example is based on a desk top analysis only and does not represent future training products.



# Current State

# Future State

## Qualifications

### Qualifications mapped to Pest Controller (841913)

AHC30318: Cert III in Rural and Environmental Pest Management

CPP30119: Cert III in Urban Pest Management

AHC41720: Cert IV in Pest Management

CPP41619: Cert IV in Urban Pest Management

AHC51316: Diploma of Pest Management

5 Qualifications    3 AQF Levels    1 ANZSCO Occupation

114 Units mapped to these qualifications

21 Core units

### Australian Skills Classification - Occupation Profile: Pest Controller (841913)

#### 10 Core Occupational Standards

- Treat Facilities To Eliminate Pests Licensing requirements
- Treat Greenery Or Surfaces With Protective Substances
- Clean Facilities or Sites
- Evaluate Reports Or Designs To Determine Work Needs
- Estimate Maintenance Service Requirements Or Costs
- Supervise Maintenance Workers
- Recommend Goods Or Services to Customers
- Drive Vehicles To, Or At, Work Sites
- Document Work Hours or Activities
- Inspect Buildings/Grounds to Determine Condition

#### 2 Specialist Occupational Standards

- Specialist OS: Urban
- Specialist OS: Rural and Environmental

Occupational Standards aligned to job function, not tasks (based on Australian Skills Classification)

Packaging Rules

Industry combine Occupational Standards to build qualifications (Alignment with AQF)

**NOTE:** Desktop example, not representative of final products

## Pathways

21 core units in 5 Pest Controller qualifications

4 units are core in other qualifications

2 x Working Safely units

2 x Chemical Management units

17 units are not core in any other qualifications

Limited mobility and recognition

Australian Skills Classification (ASC) Occupation Profile: Pest Controller

3 shared job functions

4 shared job functions

3 shared job functions

ASC Occupation Profile: Commercial Cleaner

ASC Occupation Profile: Greenskeeper

ASC Occupation Profile: Arborist

Recommend Goods Or Services to Customers

7 other occupations across different sectors



Task-level recognition of competency is a barrier to recognising the transferable skills of learners, and their pathways to new occupations



Occupational standards at the job-function level promote labour market resilience and flexibility by recognising learners' transferrable skills



There are currently 5 qualifications that map to the occupation Pest Controller. These qualifications are made up of 114 Units of Competency – of which 21 are 'core' units.

Using the Australian Skills Classification, and applying the qualification design concepts, as the 114 Units of Competency could transition to:

- 10 Core Occupational Standards
- 2 Specialist Occupational Standards

Core and Specialist Occupational Standards, aligned to job function, could be used by industry to build qualifications that are aligned to the AQF.

Some of these occupational standards describe job functions that are common across a range of occupations or industries. Learners could have these occupational standards recognised for other occupations such as Commercial cleaner, Greenskeeper or Arborist.

Better skills recognition would support give learners better career mobility - strengthening labour market resilience while also giving employers access to a bigger talent tool.