

# **Australian** **Qualifications *Framework***

## **AQF COUNCIL**

### **AQF Qualification Issuance Policy**

*Second draft for consultation*

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Australian Qualifications Framework Council

A Committee of the Ministerial Council for  
Tertiary Education and Employment

# Table of contents

<b>Preface</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>1 Introduction</b> .....	<b>4</b>
1.1 Purpose of the policy and protocols.....	4
1.2 Scope of the policy and protocols.....	4
1.3 Users of the policy and protocols.....	4
1.4 Definitions of key terms in the policy and protocol.....	4
<b>2 Policies and Protocols</b> .....	<b>6</b>
2.1 Policy for issuing AQF qualifications.....	6
2.2 Responsibility for issuing, authenticating and verifying qualifications.....	7
2.3 Use of the AQF logo .....	7
2.4 Replacement certification documentation.....	8
2.5 Protocols for issuing AQF qualifications.....	8
2.5.1 Testamur .....	8
2.5.2 Academic transcript/statement of attainment	9
2.6 Supporting documentation protocols .....	10
2.6.1 Australian Graduation Statement.....	10
2.7 Qualifications titles, abbreviations and postnominals protocols.....	10
2.7.1 Use of postnominals.....	11
2.7.2 Use of titles .....	11
2.8 Honorary awards.....	12

## **Preface**

This policy forms part of the Australian Qualifications Framework.

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

Section 1 of the policy includes the intent, purpose and scope of the policy and protocols and definitions of key terms used in the document.

Section 2 includes the policy and protocols.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Purpose of the policy and protocols

The purpose of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) issuance policy and its associated protocols is to ensure that graduates receive the certification documentation to which they are entitled when they complete an AQF qualification and that the graduate and others are confident that the AQF qualifications they have been awarded are legitimate.

The issuance of AQF qualifications under one policy also provides clarity and consistency nationally across the various education and training sectors.

The policy provides a means of protecting AQF qualifications and ensuring that they are recognised in Australia and internationally. 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 issuing organisations to issue qualifications
- the use of consistent form and content for certification documentation, and
- the consistent use of qualification titles.

Adherence to the AQF policy and protocols on issuing qualifications enhances the integrity and authenticity of Australian qualifications.

## 1.2 Scope of the policy and protocols

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

## 1.3 Users of the policy and protocols

The users of the policy are the authorised issuing organisations and the accrediting authorities for each education and training sector. Under devolved 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, other countries and other interested parties may use the policy and protocols to identify authentic Australian qualifications.

## 1.4 Definitions of key terms in the policy and protocols

An **academic transcript** is a record of all studies leading to an AQF qualification in which a student is enrolled at an institution, whether complete or incomplete, and can be issued at any time during the qualification and will be issued on graduation.

An **accredited qualification** is an AQF qualification.

An **accredited short course** is a program of learning accredited by an accrediting authority that comprises two or more components (eg units of competency, modules or subjects), leading to an AQF qualification.

An **accrediting authority** is an authority authorised under legislation to accredit AQF qualifications and/or register institutions to issue AQF qualifications.

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.

An **Australian graduation statement** is a supplementary statement to qualification certification documentation that provides information to enhance understanding of the qualification by students, employers, industry, professional associations and internationally<sup>1</sup>. A graduation statement is issued only on award of a qualification.

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

**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.

**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 completed. In Australia this document may be called a 'testamur', 'award', 'parchment', or 'certificate'. In this policy, the term 'testamur' is used.

**Certification documentation** is the set of official documents that confirms that a qualification has been completed and awarded. This documentation includes a testamur and academic transcript and may include an Australian Graduation Statement.

A **combined qualification** is awarded when a graduate has completed the requirements for two different qualifications at consecutive AQF levels. A separate testamur is issued for each qualification completed.

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

**Components** of a qualification include units of competency, modules or subjects completion of which lead to an AQF qualification.

A **double qualification** is awarded when the requirements of two AQF qualifications of the same type have been completed, concurrently and in *less time* than the minimum time required to complete each qualification *separately*. 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. Other terms in use for double qualification arrangements include cotutelle, dual or multi-badged.

**Issuance number** is the unique number assigned to testamurs to enable verification of authenticity.

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.

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<sup>1</sup> The Australian Graduation Statement is currently (2010) only implemented on a voluntary basis in the higher education sector. A phased implementation period for the tertiary sector will be defined.

**Postnominals** are the abbreviated forms of an AQF qualification type and field.

**Qualification** see AQF qualification.

**Qualification codes** are the unique codes assigned by accrediting authorities to qualifications to enable verification of authenticity.

**Registration codes** are the unique codes assigned by accrediting authorities to institutions registered to deliver AQF qualifications to enable verification of authenticity.

**Registering authority** see Accrediting authority

A **skills set** is a group of units/modules/subjects from an AQF qualification identified as a subset of a qualification in a VET Training Package that meets a licensing or regulatory requirement or a defined industry or professional need.

A **statement of attainment** is a form of academic transcript that confirms that an accredited short course or a group of units/modules/subjects from an AQF qualification that form a skills set have been completed. See also Academic transcript.

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.

## 2 POLICIES and PROTOCOLS

### 2.1 Policy for issuing AQF qualifications

On award of an AQF qualification, a graduate will receive the following certification documentation:

- A testamur, *and*
- An academic transcript

An Australian Graduation Statement may also be issued.<sup>2</sup>

Graduates are entitled to be issued with a full set of certification documentation once they have completed the requirements of the qualification.

Graduates are entitled to retain the certification documentation once it has been issued regardless of their progression to a higher level qualification that builds on the first.

Graduates are entitled to list postnominals after their name to indicate the AQF qualifications they have been awarded.

Students who complete only some of the requirements for a qualification are entitled to receive an academic transcript.

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.

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<sup>2</sup> See footnote 1

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 the testamur, the academic transcript and the Australian Graduation Statement.

## **2.2 Responsibility for issuing, authenticating and verifying AQF qualifications**

The following protocols are designed to reduce the misrepresentation of AQF qualifications and guard against their fraudulent use.

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.
- Government accrediting authorities for *vocational education and training* are responsible for the authorising registered training organisations (RTOs) to issue AQF qualifications.
- 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.

The protection of qualifications also requires that any authorised issuing organisation delivering, assessing or issuing AQF qualifications adheres to the regulatory and quality assurance arrangements for each qualification type.

Detailed information on regulatory and quality assurance arrangements for the training and education sectors in Australia is available at [www.aqf.edu.au](http://www.aqf.edu.au).

The authorised issuing organisation is responsible for authentication and verification of an graduate's certification document.

The national register of all AQF qualifications and institutions enhances the ability of national and international stakeholders to authenticate and verify the existence of AQF qualifications and the organizations authorized to issue them.

## **2.3 Use of the AQF logo**

The AQF logo will be used on the testamur and Australian graduation statements of all AQF qualifications issued by all authorised issuing organisations. Use of the AQF logo ensures that graduates and others can be certain that the qualification is a legitimate AQF qualification.

Use of the AQF logo means that at the time the certification documentation was issued:

- the issuing organisation was authorised by a State, Territory or Commonwealth authorised accrediting authority or was an authorised self-accrediting institution

- the issuing organisation was authorised to issue the relevant qualification and complied with the relevant regulatory and quality assurance requirements for accreditation and registration
- the delivery and assessment resulted in a recognised AQF qualification.

The AQF logo specifications provide the conditions and requirements for the use of the AQF logo by authorised issuing organisations and are available at the time of authorisation. [The conditions and requirements for use are not yet available.]

## 2.4 Replacement certification documentation

All authorised issuing organisations will have a policy that permits the replacement of certification documentation.

Any replacement certification documentation will include:

- all the required elements listed above for a qualification testamur, academic transcript, Australian Graduation Statement or statement of attainment
- a statement that the document is a replacement of an original
- the date of the original document
- the date on which the replacement is issued
- the signature, name and title of the person in the organisation authorised to issue the replacement certification.

## 2.5 Protocols for issuing AQF qualifications

### 2.5.1 Testamur

Testamurs for AQF qualifications will include the following required elements:

- legal and trading name and logo of the authorised issuing organisation
- full name of the person being issued the qualification
- correct qualification title, and if relevant, the qualification field and in brackets an occupational or functional stream
- date issued
- signature, name and title of the person or persons in the organisation authorised to issue the testamur
- AQF logo and the statement ... *This qualification is recognised within the Australian Qualifications Framework*
- authorised issuing organisation's seal or other mode of uniqueness such as a watermark
- if relevant, ... *This qualification has been delivered and assessed in <insert fully or partially (include proportion)> in <insert language>.*

In addition, testamurs may include the following elements:

- accrediting authority/statutory authority logo
- statement ... *Issued under authority of (relevant legislation)*
- registration and qualification codes
- unique issuance number
- legal name and logo of a partnering institution where a formal arrangement is in place for a joint qualification
- national recognised training (NRT) logo for vocational education and training.

- Student identification number

The testamur will be limited to one page, the reverse may be used for registration and qualification codes and issuance and/or paper stock numbers.

## 2.5.2 Academic transcript/statement of attainment

Graduates will be provided with the detail of their qualification including the units of study/competency, modules, subjects or courses that they have undertaken during their learning.

Each graduate will be provided with an academic transcript as outlined in section 2.1.

An academic transcript will be used to document:

- partial completion of a qualification
- full completion of a qualification
- recognition of completion of an accredited short course
- recognition of completion of a skills set.

An academic transcript may also be called a 'statement of attainment' when used to recognise completion of an accredited short course or a skill set. The term 'statement of attainment' will be used for these purposes only.

The term 'statement of attainment' will not be used for partial completion of qualifications. An academic transcript will be issued to the student to document partial completion of a qualification.

An academic transcript will not have the same appearance or format as a testamur.

An academic transcript will include the following features:

- legal and trading name and logo of authorised issuing organisation
- term ... *Academic Transcript* (or, where relevant, ... *Statement of Attainment*)
- full name of the person receiving the academic transcript
- date issued
- full qualification title (or, where relevant, the full title of the accredited short course or skills set) in which the individual is, or was, enrolled
- the qualification testamur issuance number will be included for completed qualifications
- list of the components of the qualification including the code for each, the results for each, and each identified by the term, semester or study period and year of study (Academic Transcript only)
- signature, name and title of the person or persons in the organisation authorised to issue the document
- if relevant, where units, modules or subjects have been delivered and assessed in a language other than English, a note will be included against each unit, module that... *These have been delivered and assessed <insert fully or partially (include proportion)> in <insert language>*
- if relevant... legal and trading name and logo of a partnering institution where a formal arrangement is in place for the joint qualification.

Where used to recognise completion of an accredited short course or skills set, academic transcripts or statements of attainment may include the following elements:

- accrediting authority/statutory authority logo

- registration and course codes
- for a skills set, the list of completed competencies
- unique issuance number
- student unique identifier
- statement ... *Issued under authority of (relevant legislation)*
- student identification number
- authorised issuing organisation's seal or other mode of uniqueness such as a watermark
- national recognised training (NRT) logo for a vocational education and training.

## 2.6 Supporting documentation protocols

### 2.6.1 Australian graduation statement

The Australian graduation statement is a supplement to each qualification issued that provides factual information to enhance understanding of the qualification by students, employers, industry, professional associations and other countries. A graduation statement is only issued on award of each qualification.

Institutions may elect to provide graduates with an Australian graduation statement.

The information on the Australian Graduation Statement will contain information about the graduate, the qualification, the issuing institution, the graduate's academic and relevant other activities and a description of the Australian education and training system and may include details about delivery methodologies used in the qualification.<sup>3</sup>

The Australian graduation statement will be presented in a uniform sequence by all authorised issuing organisations as detailed above.

The following purpose statement will be used on all Australian graduation statements by authorised issuing organisations:

*The Australian Graduation Statement is provided by education and training organisations to graduating students on completion of the requirements for a particular qualification. It provides a description of the nature, level, context and status of the studies that were pursued by the individual named. Its purpose is to assist in both national and international recognition of Australian qualifications and to promote international mobility and professional recognition of graduates. ([http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher\\_education/publications\\_resources/profiles/proposal\\_for\\_an\\_australian\\_higher\\_education\\_graduation.htm](http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher_education/publications_resources/profiles/proposal_for_an_australian_higher_education_graduation.htm) p15)*

## 2.7 Qualification titles, abbreviations and postnominals protocols

To ensure consistency in the use of qualification titles, abbreviations and postnominals, the following conventions will be used:

- the first letter of each word of all qualification titles will be capitalised and all numbers will be in the form of roman numerals. For example: Certificate IV in Metal Fabrication.
- AQF qualification titles and abbreviations will be used as follows:

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<sup>3</sup> Content will be based on the 2010 Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement. This will be updated to cover AQF qualifications in all education and training sectors and changes to the AQF.

Qualification type	Qualification Title	Abbreviation
Senior Secondary Certificate of Education	Various according to state or territory	
Certificates I – IV	Certificate .... in...(field of study)	Cert...(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 Honours Degree	Bachelor of...(field of study) Bachelor of...(field of study) (Hons)	B...(field abbreviated) 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	Master of Philosophy (field of study) Master of...(field of study) (mode of study eg coursework)	MPhil M...(field abbreviated)
Doctoral Degree	Doctor of Philosophy Doctor of ...(field of study)	PhD D...

### 2.7.1 Use of postnominals

Titles and postnominals are effective ways of communicating information about a graduate's qualifications or achievements. They enable the community to identify the roles, activities and characteristics associated with that title and postnominal. They 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. Examples are provided below

- CertIIBus for Certificate II in Business
- CertIVHosp for Certificate IV in Hospitality
- AdvDipBldDes for Advanced Diploma of Building Design
- AssocDEng for Associate Degree of Engineering
- GradCertIT for Graduate Certificate in Information Technology
- BSc for Bachelor of Science
- MAppPM for Master of Applied Project Management

### 2.7.2 Use of titles

Titles may be attributed to an individual through a variety of ways, usually as a result of training or education activities (such as a Doctoral Degree), formal acknowledgement of professional or other services to the community (such as the Order of Australia) or of a

position held (such as Director or Professor) or by convention (such as the use of the title 'Doctor' in certain professions).

The title 'Doctor' will only be used if the individual has been awarded a Doctoral Degree at Level 10 on the AQF or where legislation associates the title with traditional usage within the medical profession.

## **2.8 Honorary awards**

An honorary award is not an AQF qualification. It is usually awarded by an education and training organisation 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.

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