

AQF Glossary of Terminology

The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) includes qualifications across the different education and training sectors and in a broad range of fields of study/disciplines.

The terms used in the AQF are not sector specific and do not preclude sector-specific terms being used in the different education and training sectors provided that there is consistency in application of the concept.

To maximise consistency in understanding and interpretation of the terminology used in the AQF, the terminology is defined in this glossary. The terminology is an essential component of the levels criteria, qualification type descriptors and policies which cannot be correctly used without the use of the definitions in the glossary.

All of the terms in the glossary are defined in the context of their use in AQF policies. Only those words or phrases that occur in the AQF levels criteria, qualification type specifications or policies are included in the glossary.

A	
Term	AQF definition
Academic transcript	See record of results
Accountability in the application of knowledge and/or skills	Accountability in the application of knowledge and/or skills refers to the degree that a person is required to account for their own conduct in work or learning contexts appropriate for the level of the qualification
Accredited unit	An accredited unit is a single component of a qualification, or a stand-alone unit, 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', 'unit of competency' or 'unit'
Accredited short course	An accredited short course is a program of learning that comprises one or more components (e.g. units of competency, modules or subjects) that has been accredited by an accrediting authority
Accreditation	Accreditation is the process for approval by an accrediting authority of a program of learning leading to an AQF qualification using the quality assurance standards for the relevant education and training sector
Accrediting authority	An accrediting authority is either authorised under legislation or has been given responsibility to accredit programs of learning leading to AQF qualifications and/or to register institutions to issue AQF qualifications ¹
Advanced knowledge and/or skills	Advanced knowledge and skills are those that have been developed beyond the attainment of a previous level

¹ The accrediting authorities currently (2011) in place are:

- State and territory government authorised statutory bodies responsible for the *Senior Secondary Certificate of Education* in their own state or territory.
- State and territory government accrediting authorities for *vocational education and training* responsible for accrediting AQF qualifications and for authorising registered training organisations (RTOs) to issue AQF qualifications. The National Quality Council, a committee of the Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment, is responsible for the endorsement of AQF qualifications in national Training Packages.
- State and territory government accrediting authorities for *higher education* responsible for accrediting AQF qualifications and authorising non-self-accrediting higher education institutions to issue them.
- Universities and other self-accrediting higher education institutions responsible for accrediting and issuing their own AQF qualifications.

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Term	AQF definition
Advanced standing	Advanced standing is a form of credit for any previous learning. See also articulation arrangements, 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
AQF qualification	An AQF qualification is the result of an accredited complete program of learning that leads to formal certification that a graduate has achieved learning outcomes as described in the AQF
AQF register	The AQF register is the official national public record of Australian accrediting authorities, AQF qualifications accredited and organisations authorised to issue qualifications
Area of learning or work	Area of learning or work is a sub-category of a field of learning or work
Articulation arrangements	Articulation arrangements enable students to progress from a completed qualification to another with admission and/or 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 and oral methods and practice or demonstration
Authorised issuing organisation	An authorised issuing organisation either is authorised through Commonwealth, state or territory legislation to issue AQF qualifications or has been given responsibility to issue its own AQF qualifications ²
Authoritative judgement	Authoritative judgement is the highest degree of judgement exercised by graduates of level 10 qualifications
Autonomy in the application of knowledge and/or skills	Autonomy in the application of knowledge and/or skills is the ability to apply knowledge and/or skills with an appropriate degree of independence for the level of the qualification
Award of a qualification	Award of a qualification occurs when a student has met the requirements of the qualification and the qualification is certified through the provision of a testamur. The term 'conferral' may also be used to describe this process

² The authorised issuing organisations for AQF qualifications currently (2011) in place are:

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

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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	Block credit is credit granted towards whole stages or components of a program of learning leading to a qualification
Body of knowledge	A body of knowledge refers to the complete set of concepts, terms and activities that make up a field of study
Broad knowledge and/or skills	Broad knowledge and/or skills describe a general or extensive area of learning or work

C

Term	AQF definition
Certification	Certification is the verification and authentication of a student's entitlement to a qualification
Certification documentation	Certification documentation is the set of official documents that confirms that a qualification has been completed and awarded to an individual
Cognitive skills	Cognitive skills include the mental skills that are used in the process of acquiring and applying knowledge and include reasoning, perception and intuition
Coherent knowledge and/or skills	Coherent knowledge and/or skills include those that are logically ordered, sound and/or integrated
Communication skills	Communication skills are the skills that enable a person to convey information so that it is received and understood and include written and oral skills appropriate for the level of the qualification
Complex/complexity	Complex/complexity describes information, problems, situations and theories that are made up of complicated and inter-related parts
Components of a qualification	Components of a qualification include modules, subjects, units of competency or units, the completion of which leads 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, accredited unit and accredited short course
Coursework	Coursework is a method of teaching and learning that leads to the acquisition of skills and knowledge that does not include a major research component

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C

Term	AQF definition
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. Credit reduces the amount of learning required to achieve a qualification and may be through credit transfer, articulation, recognition of prior learning or advanced standing
Credit arrangements	Credit arrangements are formal negotiated arrangements within and between issuing organisations or accrediting authorities and are about student entitlement to credit. They may also be formal arrangements made between issuing organisations and students
Credit outcomes	Credit outcomes are the results of a process of determining a student's application for credit or credit transfer
Credit transfer	Credit transfer is a process that provides students with agreed and consistent credit outcomes for components of a qualification based on identified equivalence in content and learning outcomes between matched qualifications

D

Term	AQF definition
Depth of knowledge/skills	Depth of knowledge/skills indicates an advanced degree of difficulty or complexity
Defined activities and/or contexts	Defined activities and/or contexts refer to definite and clear activities and/or contexts within distinct boundaries
Discipline	Discipline refers to a defined branch of study or learning. See also field of study, work and/or learning

E

Term	AQF definition
Employability skills	See generic learning outcomes
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 in a particular area of study
External examiner	An external examiner for higher research degrees is one who is not connected to the university or student's research

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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. See also discipline
Formal learning	Formal learning is the learning that takes place through a structured program of learning that leads to the full or partial achievement of an officially accredited qualification. See also informal and non-formal learning
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 learning outcomes
Generic learning outcomes	Generic learning outcomes refer to transferable, non-discipline specific skills a graduate may achieve through learning that have application in study, work and life contexts. The four broad categories in the AQF are: fundamental skills; people skills; thinking skills and personal skills
Graduate	A graduate is a person who has been awarded a qualification by an authorised issuing organisation
Graduate attributes/capabilities	See generic learning outcomes
Graduation statement	A graduation statement is a supplementary statement to the testamur and record of results that provides additional information to enhance understanding of the qualification by students, employers, industry, professional associations and internationally

H

Term	AQF definition
Higher education institution	A higher education institution is a body that is established or recognised by the Commonwealth or a state or territory government to issue qualifications in the higher education sector. It may be a university, self-accrediting institution or non-self-accrediting institution

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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. See also formal and non-formal learning
Integrated knowledge	Integrated knowledge combines two or more kinds of knowledge and concepts (e.g. technical and theoretical)
Integrated qualification	Integrated qualifications are purposely designed qualifications that enable explicit articulation pathways and encompass more than one AQF level and/or qualification type and/or education and training sector. See also nested qualifications
Issuing organisation	See authorised issuing organisation

J

Term	AQF definition
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 opinions or to evaluate work and/or learning activities appropriate for the level of the qualification

K

Term	AQF definition
Knowledge	Knowledge refers to what a graduate knows and understands and it can be described in terms of depth, breadth, kinds of knowledge and complexity

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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, actions and values and thus acquires knowledge, skills and/or the application of the knowledge and skills
Learning outcomes	Learning outcomes are the expression of the set of knowledge, skills and the application of the knowledge and skills a person has acquired and is able to demonstrate as a result of learning
Levels	AQF levels are an indication of the relative complexity and/or depth of achievement and the autonomy required to demonstrate that achievement. AQF level 1 has the lowest complexity and AQF level 10 has the highest complexity
Levels criteria	AQF levels criteria describe the relative complexity and/or depth of achievement and the autonomy required to demonstrate that achievement for each AQF level from 1 – 10
Levels summaries	AQF levels summaries are statements of the typical achievement of graduates who have been awarded a qualification at a certain level in the AQF
Lifelong learning	Lifelong learning is the term used to describe any learning activities that are undertaken throughout life to acquire knowledge, skills and the application of knowledge and skills within personal, civic, social and/or employment-related contexts

M

Term	AQF definition
Mastery of knowledge	Mastery of knowledge refers to the attributes of a graduate who demonstrates comprehensive knowledge and understanding of a field of work or learning

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N

Term	AQF definition
Nested qualifications	Nested qualifications are qualifications that include articulated arrangements from a lower level qualification into a higher level qualification to enable multiple entry and exit points. See also integrated qualifications
Non-formal learning	Non-formal learning refers to learning that takes place through a structured program of learning but does not lead to an officially accredited qualification. See also formal and informal learning
Non-self-accrediting institution	A non-self-accrediting institution is a higher education institution that does not have responsibility for accrediting its own qualifications

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
Paraprofessional work and/or learning	Paraprofessional work and/or learning are work contexts that generally support professional practice
Pathways	Pathways allow students to move through qualification levels with full or partial recognition for the qualifications and/or learning outcomes they already have. See also credit, credit transfer and articulation
Postnominals	Postnominals are the abbreviated forms of an AQF qualification type and field of study/discipline used by graduates to identify their qualification
Practical knowledge and skills	Practical knowledge and skills are concrete or hands-on knowledge and skills
Professional work and/or learning	Professional work and/or learning are contexts requiring specialised knowledge, advanced learning, responsibility and autonomy, and require intensive preparation through learning
Program of learning	A program of learning is a course, curriculum, training package, units of study, or structured workplace learning that leads to the award of a qualification

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Q

Term	AQF definition
Qualification	See AQF qualification
Qualification title	Qualification title is the nomenclature used for an AQF qualification that denotes the type, level and field of study/discipline of the qualification
Qualification type	Qualification type refers to the broad discipline-free nomenclature used in the AQF to describe each category of AQF qualification
Qualification type descriptor	A qualification type descriptor is the set of statements that describes the learning outcomes of each of the AQF qualification types in terms of knowledge, skills and the application of knowledge and skills
Qualification type specification	An AQF qualification type specification is a detailed statement of the requirements for development and accreditation of a qualification of a particular AQF type

R

Term	AQF definition
Range	Range is the area between the limits of variation as in a narrow or a broad or limited range of knowledge/skills
Record of results	A record of results is a record of all learning leading to an AQF qualification or an accredited unit in which a student is enrolled and is issued by an authorised issuing organisation. In Australia this may be called a 'transcript of results', 'academic transcript', 'record of achievement' or 'statement of results'
Recognition of prior learning (RPL)	Recognition of prior learning 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 individual application for credit (National Quality Council Training Packages glossary)
Register	See AQF register
Registered training organisation (RTO)	A registered training organisation is a vocational education and training organisation registered by a state or territory registering body in accordance with the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) Essential Standards for Registration within a defined scope of registration (National Quality Council Training Packages glossary)
Registering authority	See accrediting authority

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R

Term	AQF definition
Research	Research comprises systematic experimental and theoretical work, application and/or development that results in an increase in the dimensions of knowledge
Responsible person	A responsible person is an individual in an organisation who has the responsibility, or delegated responsibility, to act officially on behalf of the organisation
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 appropriate for the level of the qualification

S

Term	AQF definition
Self-accrediting institution	A self-accrediting institution is one which has been given responsibility to accredit its own qualifications
Skilled work	Skilled work is an outcome that requires specific sets of knowledge and skills and specialised training
Skills	Skills refer to what a graduate can do. They can be described in terms of kinds and complexity and include cognitive skills, technical skills, communication skills, creative skills, interpersonal 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	Specified credit is credit granted towards particular or specific components of a qualification or program of learning
Statement of attainment	A statement of attainment recognises that one or more accredited units has been achieved
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 a substantial original contribution is the extensive and significant knowledge and outputs at the highest level of the AQF and characteristic of graduates of a level 10 qualification
Systematic knowledge and/or skills	Systematic knowledge and/or skills are those that are coherent and well-ordered

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T

Term	AQF definition
Taxonomy	A taxonomy refers to the system of classification of learning outcomes in a qualifications framework
Technical skills	Technical skills are the operational skills necessary to perform certain work and learning activities
Testamur	A testamur is an official certification document that confirms that a qualification has been awarded to an individual. In Australia this may be called an 'award', 'parchment', 'laureate' or 'certificate'
Theoretical knowledge and concepts	Theoretical knowledge and concepts are those knowledge requirements relating to or having the character of theory rather than practical application

U-Z

Term	AQF definition
Unit	See accredited unit and program of learning
University	A university is a higher education institution that is established by the Commonwealth or a state or territory government as a university
Unspecified credit	Unspecified credit is credit granted towards elective components of a qualification or program of learning
Volume of learning	The volume of learning is a dimension of the complexity of a qualification. It is used with the level criteria and qualification type descriptor to determine the depth and breadth of the learning outcomes of a qualification. The volume of learning identifies the notional duration of all activities required for the achievement of the learning outcomes specified for a particular AQF qualification type. It is expressed in equivalent full-time years