

Bachelor Degree Guideline

1. Purpose

To assist employers, professional associations, curriculum developers, accrediting bodies and the wider public, including students, parents, and education and training bodies, to understand factors determining the level of the qualification.

2. Context

These Guidelines replace the RATE Descriptions, which have previously been used to provide guidance on qualification levels.

3. Learning Outcomes

3.1 Authority

Objectives and academic requirements of courses are set by higher education institutions having regard for requirements set by peer review and the requirements of relevant professional bodies and employer groups. They may establish course advisory committees comprising a range of interested parties including practitioners, employers, community representatives and academic staff from other institutions to facilitate ongoing review of content and relevance. Universities and other self-accrediting institutions are authorised to accredit their own courses. Non self-accrediting institutions must have their courses approved by government accreditation authorities through processes which ensure that the courses are comparable in requirements and learning outcomes to a course at the same level in a similar field at an Australian university.

3.2 Characteristics

Characteristics of learning outcomes at this level include:

- the acquisition of a systematic and coherent body of knowledge, the underlying principles and concepts, and the associated communication and problem-solving skills;
- development of the academic skills and attributes necessary to undertake research, comprehend and evaluate new information, concepts and evidence from a range of sources;
- development of the ability to review, consolidate, extend and apply the knowledge and techniques learnt, including in a professional context;
- a foundation for self-directed and lifelong learning; and
- interpersonal and teamwork skills appropriate to employment and/or further study.

A course leading to this qualification also usually involves major studies in which a significant literature is available. Course content is taken to a significant depth and progressively developed to a high level which provides a basis for postgraduate study and professional careers.

4. Responsibility for Assessment

Responsibility for assessment lies with the institution that issues the degree.

5. Pathways to the Qualification

Candidates on entry typically hold the Senior Secondary Certificate of Education or its equivalent, including mature age or other special provisions for entry or bridging or foundation programs. Candidates may also enter from a Diploma, Advanced Diploma or Associate Degree, which may involve articulation and credit transfer arrangements, or from another undergraduate degree.

There is a range of Bachelor Degree programs, including the following:

- the three-year degree;
- the three- or four-year (or longer) professional degree which equips students with the practical skills and techniques necessary to apply their skills effectively in a professional context;
- the combined or double degree program which allows students particular combinations of subjects from the two degrees and to graduate with both degrees in a shorter time than required to complete both degrees independently;
- the graduate entry degree, which is a minimum of two years in duration, is specifically designed on the assumption of graduate entry, sometimes in a specified discipline, often as a shorter alternative to the standard four year (or longer) degree for initial professional preparation; and
- the Bachelor Honours Degree which may be undertaken by students who demonstrate a high level of achievement at an earlier stage in the undergraduate degree program, and involves some research preparation. In the case of the three-year degree, the Bachelor Honours Degree requires the completion of an additional year or its equivalent. For degrees of four (or more) years, the Bachelor Honours Degree is awarded on the basis of the level of performance in the degree as a whole.

A graduate of a Bachelor Degree is eligible to apply for entry to a relevant Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma and a Masters Degree by coursework program. A graduate from a Bachelor Honours Degree may also be eligible for entry to a Doctoral Degree program, providing that the candidate has demonstrated potential to undertake work at this level. In some circumstances, a period of professional experience may be required for admission to these postgraduate programs.

6. Authority to Issue the Qualification

Universities are empowered by governments to issue qualifications. Additionally, States and Territories have established processes to facilitate the accreditation of courses and issuance of qualifications by other recognised higher education institutions.

7. Certification Issued

A qualification is:

formal certification, issued by a relevant approved body, in recognition that a person has achieved learning outcomes relevant to identified individual, professional, industry or community needs.

The issuing body will be responsible for providing and maintaining records in relation to the above.

Graduate Certificate Guideline

(Revised February 2005)

1. Purpose

To assist employers, professional associations, curriculum developers, accrediting bodies and the wider public, including students, parents, and education and training bodies, to understand factors determining the level of the qualification.

2. Context

These Guidelines replace those published within the first, second and third editions of the AQF Implementation Handbook.

3. Learning Outcomes

3.1 Authority

Objectives and academic requirements of courses are set by higher education institutions having regard for requirements set by peer review and the requirements of relevant professional bodies and employer groups. They may establish course advisory committees comprising a range of interested parties including practitioners, employers, community representatives and academic staff from other institutions to facilitate ongoing review of content and relevance. Universities and other self-accrediting institutions are authorised to accredit their own courses. Non self-accrediting institutions must have their courses approved by government accreditation authorities through processes which ensure that the courses are comparable in requirements and learning outcomes to a course at the same level in a similar field at an Australian university.

3.2 Characteristics

Characteristics of learning outcomes at this level cover a wide range of specialised needs following an undergraduate program or relevant prior work, ranging from initial and ongoing professional development to preparation for further postgraduate study. The learning outcomes reflect a standard appropriate to advanced study and primarily include the acquisition and application of knowledge and skills in a new discipline or professional area, which may also involve extending knowledge and skills already gained in an undergraduate program or relevant prior work.

4. Responsibility for Assessment

Responsibility for assessment lies with the body that issues the Graduate Certificate. It is responsible for ensuring the quality of the assessment strategies, ie that they are flexible, valid, reliable and provide for the recognition of prior learning. It is also responsible for providing and maintaining records of achievement.

5. Pathways to the Qualification

Candidates may enter under various arrangements, such as:

- from a Bachelor Degree, sometimes with relevant professional practice required;
- from an Advanced Diploma, Diploma or higher-level vocational Certificate together with extensive relevant work experience; or
- on the basis of extensive relevant work experience demonstrating potential to undertake work at this level.

Although the duration of programs may vary, courses at this level typically require six months of full-time study.

Upon completion, depending upon their level of results, candidates may be admitted to a relevant Graduate Diploma with credit for up to half of the longer program, often within an articulated program leading to a Masters Degree.

6. Authority to Issue the Qualification

Universities are empowered by governments to issue qualifications. As such they are responsible for decisions relevant to the certification of their own Graduate Certificate programs. Additionally, some States and Territories have established processes to facilitate the accreditation of courses and issuance of qualifications by other recognised higher education institutions.

7. Certification Issued

A qualification is:

formal certification, issued by a relevant approved body, in recognition that a person has achieved learning outcomes relevant to identified individual, professional, industry or community needs.

Issuance of the qualification follows satisfactory completion of the requirements set by a university or other recognised higher education institution.

Vocational Graduate Certificate Guideline

1. Purpose

To assist employers, employees, professional associations, unions, Training Package and course developers, accrediting bodies, Registered Training Organisations and the wider public, including students, parents, and education and training bodies, to understand factors determining the level of the qualification. Also, to assist developers of Training Packages and courses of training to assign appropriate AQF qualifications within a Training Package, or to a course to be submitted for accreditation.

2. Context

The Vocational Graduate Certificate qualification is authorised in the vocational education and training sector. The Vocational Graduate Certificate qualification takes into account developments under the National Skills Framework – the introduction of Training Packages and the implementation of the Australian Quality Training Framework 2007 (AQTF 2007). Training Packages use competency standards to describe the skills and knowledge needed to perform effectively in the workplace. These competency standards are packaged into units of competency. Units of competency are components of AQF qualifications. It is a requirement of the AQTF 2007 that competency standards from relevant Training Packages be used where they exist.

Qualifications developed outside Training Packages must not duplicate qualifications contained in Training Packages. Registered Training Organisations and/or State/Territory Course Accrediting Bodies will need to be satisfied that any qualification proposed outside a Training Package cannot be achieved by the customisation and flexibility offered within a Training Package or by the issuance of a Training Package qualification together with one or more Statements of Attainment.

The National Quality Council, the body responsible for the endorsement of Training Packages, also has responsibility for the endorsement of national competency standards that are not part of Training Packages. These Guidelines apply equally to qualifications based on these competency standards.

In the vocational education and training sector there are a number of useful reference documents, which are listed in the Appendix.

3. Learning Outcomes

3.1 Authority

In the vocational education and training sector, qualifications are based on nationally endorsed competency standards where they exist or on competency standards and vocational knowledge developed by relevant industry, enterprise, training, community or professional groups. The qualifications certify achievement of learning outcomes generally identified as sets of competencies for levels of workplace performance reflected in the characteristics and distinguishing features of each qualification. The focus in the vocational education and training sector is on the capacity to assess directly the performance criteria in the competencies specified within the Training Package or accredited course.

Authorisation of alignment of competency standards to AQF qualifications occurs as follows:

- National Industry Skills Councils, through the process of developing Training Packages, determine the relevant qualification for each set of national competency standards in their respective Training Packages. Through this process a Vocational Graduate Certificate may be added to an existing Training Package or included in a new Training Package. This determination is subject to endorsement by the National Quality Council.
- State/Territory Course Accrediting Bodies, or Registered Training Organisations with delegated authority to self-manage accreditation, through the course accreditation process determine the relevant qualifications for any combined sets of national competency standards for which there is a training need, derived either from more than one Training Package and/or other endorsed sets of competency standards. The title of the new qualification must be clearly distinct from those in the related Training Packages.
- Where there is no relevant Training Package, State/Territory Course Accrediting Bodies, through the course accreditation process, determine the relevant qualification for other sets of competency standards and vocational knowledge developed by relevant industry, enterprise, training, community or professional bodies to meet an identified training need.

3.2 Characteristics

Characteristics of competencies or learning outcomes at this level include:

- the self-directed development and achievement of broad and/or specialised areas of knowledge and skills building on prior knowledge and skills;
- substantial breadth, depth and complexity involving the initiation, analysis, design, planning, execution and evaluation of technical and/or management functions in highly varied and/or highly specialised contexts; and
- applications involve making significant, high level, independent judgements in major, broad or specialised planning, design, operational, technical and/or management functions in highly varied and/or highly specialised contexts. It may include responsibility and broad-ranging accountability for the structure, management and output of the work of others and/or functions.

The degree of emphasis on breadth as against depth of knowledge and skills may vary between qualifications granted at this level.

3.3 Distinguishing Features

Where additional information is required to assist in determining the qualification level, the following chart could be used to help determine the most compatible match.

It is emphasised that the chart is not intended to be used as a checklist which all Vocational Graduate Certificate qualifications must include, or to replace the authority statement above.

Table 11:
Distinguishing
Features: Advanced
Diploma,
Vocational Graduate
Certificate and
Vocational Graduate
Diploma

Advanced Diploma	Vocational Graduate Certificate	Vocational Graduate Diploma
Do the Competencies or Learning Outcomes enable an individual with this qualification to:	Do the Competencies or Learning Outcomes enable an individual with this qualification to:	Do the Competencies or Learning Outcomes enable an individual with this qualification to:
demonstrate understanding of specialised knowledge with depth in some areas	demonstrate the self-directed development and achievement of broad and/or specialised areas of knowledge and skills building on prior knowledge and skills	demonstrate the self-directed development and achievement of broad and/or highly specialised areas of knowledge and skills building on prior knowledge and skills
analyse, diagnose, design and execute judgements across a broad range of technical or management functions	initiate, analyse, design, plan, execute and evaluate major, broad or specialised technical and/or management functions in highly varied and/or highly specialised contexts	initiate, analyse, design, plan, execute and evaluate major functions either broad and/or highly specialised within highly varied and/or highly specialised contexts
generate ideas through the analysis of information and concepts at an abstract level	generate and evaluate ideas through the analysis of information and concepts at an abstract level	generate and evaluate complex ideas through the analysis of information and concepts at an abstract level
demonstrate a command of wide-ranging, highly specialised technical, creative or conceptual skills	demonstrate a command of wide-ranging, highly specialised technical, creative or conceptual skills in complex contexts	demonstrate an expert command of wide-ranging, highly specialised, technical, creative or conceptual skills in complex and/or highly specialised or varied contexts
demonstrate accountability for personal outputs within broad parameters	demonstrate responsibility and broad-ranging accountability for personal outputs	demonstrate full responsibility and accountability for personal outputs
demonstrate accountability for personal and group outcomes within broad parameters	demonstrate responsibility and broad-ranging accountability for the structure, management and output of the work of others and/or functions	demonstrate full responsibility and accountability for all aspects of work of others and functions including planning, budgeting and strategy

Note: In order to assist determining the relevant qualification, the most compatible set of features should be selected. Not all features will necessarily apply.

4. Responsibility for Assessment

Assessment is the responsibility of Registered Training Organisations. These bodies must comply with AQTF 2007 *Essential Standards for Registration* including the Conditions of Registration.

5. Pathways to the Qualification

5.1 Candidates may enter the qualification through a number of entry points demonstrating potential to undertake study at graduate level, including from:

- a relevant Advanced Diploma or Diploma, or a relevant Certificate IV or Certificate III together with significant relevant vocational practice;
- relevant extensive vocational practice, without formal qualifications;
- a Bachelor Degree; or
- other higher education qualification, often with relevant vocational practice.

Where a Vocational Graduate Certificate is in a directly related field, or is part of a program which includes a Vocational Graduate Diploma the Vocational Graduate Certificate would normally provide up to 50% credit towards the Vocational Graduate Diploma.

5.2 **Access** to the qualification in the vocational education and training sector could be through:

- a training program meeting the requirements of an endorsed Training Package or a training program meeting the requirements of an accredited course(s) delivered by a Registered Training Organisation;

or

- where it is necessary to meet specific vocational requirements, a training program meeting the requirements of an accredited course(s) delivered by a Registered Training Organisation drawing on units of competence from more than one endorsed Training Package and/or other competency-based programs accredited by States and Territories;

or

- a combination of a training program meeting the requirements of an endorsed Training Package or a training program meeting the requirements of an accredited course delivered by a Registered Training Organisation, plus recognition of prior learning and/or credit transfer and/or experience;

or

- the recognition of prior learning that provides evidence of the achievement of the competencies or learning outcomes for the qualification.

5.3 **Time** taken to gain the qualification will vary according to the pathway taken (see 5.4 below) and factors related to the particular industry or work area. Nominal duration statements may appear in training programs that may be part of the non-endorsed Learning Strategies component of a Training Package. Nominal duration statements are also to be included in accreditation submissions for planning purposes but will not be used to determine the level of a qualification.

Although the duration of programs may vary, the volume of learning in the Vocational Graduate Certificate should be comparable to that of the higher education Graduate Certificate; that is, typically requiring six months full-time or the equivalent part-time.

5.4 **Examples** of possible pathways include:

- Work-Based Training and Assessment
- Institution-Based Education and Training and Assessment
- Part Institution-Based Education and Training and Assessment/Part Work-Based Training and Assessment
- Recognition of Prior Learning
- Recognition of Prior Learning combined with Further Training as required
- Accumulation of a Variety of Short Courses/Training Programs

NOTE: These examples suggest only some of a wide range of possible pathways. They are not intended to be prescriptive, nor are they limited to this particular qualification.

6. Authority to Issue the Qualification

In the vocational education and training sector, each State/Territory has legislative responsibility for authorising the issuance of the qualification. This responsibility is carried out by Registered Training Organisations or in some instances by a body authorised under statute. RTOs agree to AQTF 2007 Conditions of Registration within the *Essential Standards for Registration* regarding the certification and issuing of qualifications and Statements of Attainment.

7. Certification Issued

A qualification is:

formal certification, issued by a relevant approved body, in recognition that a person has achieved learning outcomes or competencies relevant to identified individual, professional, industry or community needs.

Individuals issued with the qualification Vocational Graduate Certificate will also receive documentation that identifies the units of competency that have been achieved.

Individuals who complete only some of the requirements for the qualification will receive a Statement of Attainment. The Statement of Attainment will include, either on the Statement itself or as an attachment, the whole units of competency that have been achieved.

The issuing body will be responsible for providing and maintaining records in relation to the above. See AQTF 2007 *Essential Standards for Registration* including the Conditions of Registration.

Graduate Diploma Guideline

(Revised February 2005)

1. Purpose

To assist employers, professional associations, curriculum developers, accrediting bodies and the wider public, including students, parents, and education and training bodies, to understand factors determining the level of the qualification.

2. Context

These Guidelines replace those published within the first, second and third editions of the AQF Implementation Handbook.

3. Learning Outcomes

3.1 Authority

Objectives and academic requirements of courses are set by higher education institutions having regard for requirements set by peer review and the requirements of relevant professional bodies and employer groups. They may establish course advisory committees comprising a range of interested parties including practitioners, employers, community representatives and academic staff from other institutions to facilitate ongoing review of content and relevance. Universities and other self-accrediting institutions are authorised to accredit their own courses. Non self-accrediting institutions must have their courses approved by government accreditation authorities through processes which ensure that the courses are comparable in requirements and learning outcomes to a course at the same level in a similar field at an Australian university.

3.2 Characteristics

Characteristics of learning outcomes at this level cover a wide range of specialised needs following an undergraduate or postgraduate program or relevant prior work, ranging from initial and ongoing professional development to preparation for further postgraduate study, including research higher degrees. The learning outcomes reflect a standard appropriate to a graduate intake and may include:

- the acquisition and critical application of knowledge and skills in a new discipline or professional area, which may also involve extending knowledge and skills already gained in an undergraduate program or relevant prior work; and
- further specialisation within a systematic and coherent body of knowledge.

4. Responsibility for Assessment

Responsibility for assessment lies with the body that issues the Graduate Diploma. It is responsible for ensuring the quality of the assessment strategies, ie that they are flexible, valid, reliable and provide for the recognition of prior learning. It is also responsible for providing and maintaining records of achievement.

5. Pathways to the Qualification

Candidates may enter under various arrangements, such as:

- directly from a Bachelor Degree;
- from a Bachelor Degree followed by a Graduate Certificate completed to a satisfactory standard, in a nested arrangement within the coursework Masters Degree;
- from an Advanced Diploma, Diploma or higher-level vocational Certificate with additional relevant work experience, often following completion of a Graduate Certificate; or
- on the basis of extensive relevant prior experience demonstrating potential to undertake work at this level, usually following completion of a Graduate Certificate.

Although the duration of programs may vary, courses at this level typically require one year of full-time study.

The Graduate Diploma is typically articulated to a coursework Masters Degree and may be given credit of up to half of the Masters Degree.

6. Authority to Issue the Qualification

Universities are empowered by governments to issue qualifications. As such they are responsible for decisions relevant to the certification of their own Graduate Diploma programs. Additionally, some States and Territories have established processes to facilitate the accreditation of courses and issuance of qualifications by other recognised higher education institutions.

7. Certification Issued

A qualification is:

formal certification, issued by a relevant approved body, in recognition that a person has achieved learning outcomes relevant to identified individual, professional, industry or community needs.

Issuance of the qualification follows satisfactory completion of the requirements set by a university or other recognised higher education institution.

Vocational Graduate Diploma Guideline

1. Purpose

To assist employers, employees, professional associations, unions, Training Package and course developers, accrediting bodies, Registered Training Organisations and the wider public, including students, parents, and education and training bodies, to understand factors determining the level of the qualification. Also, to assist developers of Training Packages and courses of training to assign appropriate AQF qualifications within a Training Package, or to a course to be submitted for accreditation.

2. Context

The Vocational Graduate Diploma qualification is authorised in the vocational education and training sector. The Vocational Graduate Diploma qualification takes into account developments under the National Skills Framework – the introduction of Training Packages and the implementation of the Australian Quality Training Framework 2007 (AQTF 2007). Training Packages use competency standards to describe the skills and knowledge needed to perform effectively in the workplace. These competency standards are packaged into units of competency. Units of competency are components of AQF qualifications. It is a requirement of the AQTF that competency standards from relevant Training Packages be used where they exist.

Qualifications developed outside Training Packages must not duplicate qualifications contained in Training Packages. Registered Training Organisations and/or State/Territory Course Accrediting Bodies will need to be satisfied that any qualification proposed outside a Training Package cannot be achieved by the customisation and flexibility offered within a Training Package or by the issuance of a Training Package qualification together with one or more Statements of Attainment.

The National Quality Council, the body responsible for the endorsement of Training Packages, also has responsibility for the endorsement of national competency standards that are not part of Training Packages. These Guidelines apply equally to qualifications based on these competency standards.

In the vocational education and training sector there are a number of useful reference documents, which are listed in the Appendix.

3. Learning Outcomes

3.1 Authority

In the vocational education and training sector, qualifications are based on nationally endorsed competency standards where they exist or on competency standards and vocational knowledge developed by relevant industry, enterprise, training, community or professional groups. The qualifications certify achievement of learning outcomes generally identified as sets of competencies for levels of workplace performance reflected in the characteristics and distinguishing features of each qualification. The focus in the vocational education and training sector is on the capacity to assess directly the performance criteria in the competencies specified within the Training Package or accredited course.

Authorisation of alignment of competency standards to AQF qualifications occurs as follows:

- National Industry Skills Councils, through the process of developing Training Packages, determine the relevant qualification for each set of national competency standards in their respective Training Packages. Through this process a Vocational Graduate Diploma may be added to an existing Training Package or included in a new Training Package. This determination is subject to endorsement by the National Quality Council.
- State/Territory Course Accrediting Bodies, or Registered Training Organisations with delegated authority to self-manage accreditation, through the course accreditation process determine the relevant qualifications for any combined sets of national competency standards for which there is a training need, derived either from more than one Training Package and/or other endorsed sets of competency standards. The title of the new qualification must be clearly distinct from those in the related Training Packages.
- Where there is no relevant Training Package, State/Territory Course Accrediting Bodies, through the course accreditation process, determine the relevant qualification for other sets of competency standards and vocational knowledge developed by relevant industry, enterprise, training, community or professional bodies to meet an identified training need.

3.2 Characteristics

Characteristics of competencies or learning outcomes at this level include:

- the self-directed development and achievement of broad and/or specialised areas of knowledge and skills building on prior knowledge and skills;
- substantial breadth, depth and complexity involving the initiation, analysis, design, planning, execution and evaluation of major functions, both broad and/or highly specialised, in highly varied and/or highly specialised contexts;
- further specialisation within a systematic and coherent body of knowledge; and
- applications involve making high level, fully independent, complex judgements in broad and/or highly specialised planning, design, operational, technical and/or management functions in highly varied and/or highly specialised contexts. It may involve full responsibility and accountability for all aspects of work of others and functions including planning, budgeting and strategy.

The degree of emphasis on breadth as against depth of knowledge and skills may vary between qualifications granted at this level.

3.3 Distinguishing Features

Where additional information is required to assist in determining the qualification level, the following chart could be used to help determine the most compatible match.

It is emphasised that the chart is not intended to be used as a checklist which all Vocation Graduate Diploma qualifications must include, or to replace the authority statement above.

Table 12:
Distinguishing
Features: Advanced
Diploma,
Vocational Graduate
Certificate and
Vocational Graduate
Diploma

Advanced Diploma	Vocational Graduate Certificate	Vocational Graduate Diploma
Do the Competencies or Learning Outcomes enable an individual with this qualification to:	Do the Competencies or Learning Outcomes enable an individual with this qualification to:	Do the Competencies or Learning Outcomes enable an individual with this qualification to:
demonstrate understanding of specialised knowledge with depth in some areas	demonstrate the self-directed development and achievement of broad and/or specialised areas of knowledge and skills building on prior knowledge and skills	demonstrate the self-directed development and achievement of broad and/or highly specialised areas of knowledge and skills building on prior knowledge and skills
analyse, diagnose, design and execute judgements across a broad range of technical or management functions	initiate, analyse, design, plan, execute and evaluate major, broad or specialised technical and/or management functions in highly varied and/or highly specialised contexts	initiate, analyse, design, plan, execute and evaluate major functions either broad and/or highly specialised within highly varied and/or highly specialised contexts
generate ideas through the analysis of information and concepts at an abstract level	generate and evaluate ideas through the analysis of information and concepts at an abstract level	generate and evaluate complex ideas through the analysis of information and concepts at an abstract level
demonstrate a command of wide-ranging, highly specialised technical, creative or conceptual skills	demonstrate a command of wide-ranging, highly specialised technical, creative or conceptual skills in complex contexts	demonstrate an expert command of wide-ranging, highly specialised, technical, creative or conceptual skills in complex and/or highly specialised or varied contexts
demonstrate accountability for personal outputs within broad parameters	demonstrate responsibility and broad-ranging accountability for personal outputs	demonstrate full responsibility and accountability for personal outputs
demonstrate accountability for personal and group outcomes within broad parameters	demonstrate responsibility and broad-ranging accountability for the structure, management and output of the work of others and/or functions	demonstrate full responsibility and accountability for all aspects of work of others and functions including planning, budgeting and strategy

Note: In order to assist determining the relevant qualification, the most compatible set of features should be selected. Not all features will necessarily apply.

4. Responsibility for Assessment

Assessment is the responsibility of Registered Training Organisations. These bodies must comply with AQTF 2007 *Essential Standards for Registration* including the Conditions of Registration.

5. Pathways to the Qualification

5.1 Candidates may enter the qualification through a number of entry points demonstrating potential to undertake study at graduate level, including from:

- a relevant Vocational Graduate Certificate, Advanced Diploma or Diploma, or a relevant Certificate IV or Certificate III together with significant relevant vocational practice;
- relevant extensive vocational practice, without formal qualifications, usually following completion of a Vocational Graduate Certificate;
- a Bachelor Degree; or
- other higher education qualification, often with relevant vocational practice.

The completion of a Vocational Graduate Certificate from a directly related field, for example from the same Training Package, or in a program which includes a Vocational Graduate Diploma would normally provide up to 50% credit towards the completion of the Vocational Graduate Diploma.

5.2 **Access** to the qualification could be through:

- a training program meeting the requirements of an endorsed Training Package or a training program meeting the requirements of an accredited course(s) delivered by a Registered Training Organisation;

or

- where it is necessary to meet specific vocational requirements, a training program meeting the requirements of an accredited course(s) delivered by a Registered Training Organisation drawing on units of competence from more than one endorsed Training Package and/or other competency-based programs accredited by States and Territories;

or

- a combination of a training program meeting the requirements of an endorsed Training Package or a training program meeting the requirements of an accredited course delivered by a Registered Training Organisation, plus recognition of prior learning and/or credit transfer and/or experience;
- the recognition of prior learning that provides evidence of the achievement of the competencies or learning outcomes for the qualification.

5.3 **Time** taken to gain the qualification will vary according to the pathway taken (see 5.4 below) and factors related to the particular industry or work area. Nominal duration statements may appear in training programs that may be part of the non-endorsed Learning Strategies component of a Training Package. Nominal duration statements are also to be included in accreditation submissions for planning purposes but will not be used to determine the level of a qualification.

Although the duration of programs may vary, the volume of learning in the Vocational Graduate Diploma should be comparable to that of the higher education Graduate Diploma; that is, typically requiring one year full-time or the equivalent part-time.

5.4 **Examples** of possible pathways include:

- Work-Based Training and Assessment
- Institution-Based Education and Training and Assessment
- Part Institution-Based Education and Training and Assessment/Part Work-Based Training and Assessment
- Recognition of Prior Learning
- Recognition of Prior Learning combined with Further Training as required
- Accumulation of a Variety of Short Courses/Training Programs

NOTE: These examples suggest only some of a wide range of possible pathways. They are not intended to be prescriptive, nor are they limited to this particular qualification.

6. Authority to Issue the Qualification

In the vocational education and training sector, each State/Territory has legislative responsibility for authorising the issuance of the qualification. This responsibility is carried out by Registered Training Organisations or in some instances by a body authorised under statute. RTOs agree to AQTF 2007 Conditions of Registration within the *Essential Standards for Registration* regarding the certification and issuing of qualifications and Statements of Attainment.

7. Certification Issued

A qualification is:

formal certification, issued by a relevant approved body, in recognition that a person has achieved learning outcomes or competencies relevant to identified individual, professional, industry or community needs.

Individuals issued with the qualification Vocational Graduate Diploma will also receive documentation that identifies the units of competency that have been achieved.

Individuals who complete only some of the requirements for the qualification will receive a Statement of Attainment. The Statement of Attainment will include, either on the Statement itself or as an attachment, the whole units of competency that have been achieved.

The issuing body will be responsible for providing and maintaining records in relation to the above. See AQTF 2007 *Essential Standards for Registration* including the Conditions of Registration.

Masters Degree Guideline

1. Purpose

To assist employers, professional associations, curriculum developers, accrediting bodies and the wider public, including students, parents, and education and training bodies, to understand factors determining the level of the qualification.

2. Context

These Guidelines replace the RATE Descriptions, which have previously been used to provide guidance on qualification levels.

3. Learning Outcomes

3.1 Authority

Objectives and academic requirements of courses are set by higher education institutions having regard for requirements set by peer review and the requirements of relevant professional bodies and employer groups. They may establish course advisory committees comprising a range of interested parties including practitioners, employers, community representatives and academic staff from other institutions to facilitate ongoing review of content and relevance. Universities and other self-accrediting institutions are authorised to accredit their own courses. Non self-accrediting institutions must have their courses approved by government accreditation authorities through processes which ensure that the courses are comparable in requirements and learning outcomes to a course at the same level in a similar field at an Australian university.

3.2 Characteristics

Characteristics of learning outcomes at this level include the mastery or overview of the relevant field of study or area of professional practice and the emphasis may range from the acquisition or enhancement of specific professional or vocational skills and knowledge, usually undertaken in a combination of coursework and research, through to the acquisition of in-depth understanding in a specific area of knowledge which is usually undertaken through research.

A graduate of a Masters Degree program is able to:

- provide appropriate evidence of advanced knowledge about a specialist body of theoretical and applied topics;
- demonstrate a high order of skill in analysis, critical evaluation and/or professional application through the planning and execution of project work or a piece of scholarship or research; and
- demonstrate creativity and flexibility in the application of knowledge and skills to new situations, to solve complex problems and to think rigorously and independently.

4. Responsibility for Assessment

Responsibility for assessment lies with the body that issues the Masters Degree. It is responsible for

ensuring the quality of the assessment strategies, ie that they are flexible, valid, reliable and provide for the recognition of prior learning. It is also responsible for providing and maintaining records of achievement.

5. Pathways to the Qualification

Entry to the Masters Degree is based on evidence of a capacity to undertake higher degree studies in the proposed field. There is a wide range of entry pathways, varying according to the program methodology and the discipline involved. Predominantly research-based programs normally have a research prerequisite whereas predominantly coursework-based programs may be accessed more broadly.

Typical programs and entry pathways include:

- the typical coursework Masters Degree program comprising coursework, project work and research in varying combinations, may be entered from a Bachelor Degree, a Bachelor Honours Degree or a Graduate Diploma. Coursework Masters Degrees are often structured in a three- to four-semester nested arrangement with the Graduate Certificate (one semester), Graduate Diploma (a further semester), and Masters Degree (a further two semesters);
- the typical research Masters Degree program comprising at least two-thirds research with a substantial, often externally assessed thesis outcome, entered from a Bachelor Honours Degree or Masters preliminary year, a research-based Graduate Diploma or equivalent research experience;
- a professional coursework Masters Degree program, which may involve a work-based project, specifically designed for entry on the basis of a relevant qualification and professional experience or extensive relevant professional experience.

Because of the range of entry pathways and methodologies the duration of Masters Degree programs varies. However, most Masters Degrees require the equivalent of two years of study post the three-year Bachelor Degree or one year of study post the Bachelor Honours Degree or four-year (or longer) Bachelor Degree.

6. Authority to Issue the Qualification

Universities are empowered by governments to issue qualifications. As such they are responsible for decisions relevant to the certification of their own Masters Degree programs. Additionally, States and Territories have established processes to facilitate the accreditation of courses and issuance of qualifications by other recognised higher education institutions.

7. Certification Issued

A qualification is:

formal certification, issued by a relevant approved body, in recognition that a person has achieved learning outcomes relevant to identified individual, professional, industry or community needs.

Issuance of the qualification follows satisfactory completion of the requirements set by a university or other recognised higher education institution. If it is the view of the assessors and examiners that the work undertaken does not satisfy the requirements for a Masters Degree, it may be, in some circumstances, that the work undertaken will satisfy requirements for a Graduate Certificate or a Graduate Diploma which may be awarded in place of the Masters Degree.

Doctoral Degree Guideline

1. Purpose

To assist employers, professional associations, curriculum developers, accrediting bodies and the wider public, including students, parents, and education and training bodies, to understand factors determining the level of the qualification.

2. Context

These Guidelines replace the RATE Descriptions, which have previously been used to provide guidance on qualification levels.

3. Learning Outcomes

3.1 Authority

Objectives and academic requirements of courses are set by higher education institutions having regard for requirements set by peer review and the requirements of relevant professional bodies and employer groups. They may establish course advisory committees comprising a range of interested parties including practitioners, employers, community representatives and academic staff from other institutions to facilitate ongoing review of content and relevance. Universities and other self-accrediting institutions are authorised to accredit their own courses. Non self-accrediting institutions must have their courses approved by government accreditation authorities through processes which ensure that the courses are comparable in requirements and learning outcomes to a course at the same level in a similar field at an Australian university.

3.2 Characteristics

Characteristics of learning outcomes at this level include a substantial original contribution to knowledge in the form of new knowledge or significant and original adaptation, application and interpretation of existing knowledge. These characteristics of learning outcomes may be based on a comprehensive and searching review of the literature, experimentation, creative work with exegesis or other systematic approach or may be based on advanced, searching and expansive critical reflection on professional theory and practice.

A graduate of a Doctoral Degree program is able to:

- carry out an original research project, or a project(s) addressing a matter of substance concerning practice in a profession at a high level of originality and quality; and
- present a substantial and well ordered dissertation, non-print thesis or portfolio, for submission to external examination against international standards.

4. Responsibility for Assessment

Responsibility for assessment lies with the body that issues the Doctoral Degree.

The body responsible for the issuance of the qualification is also responsible for ensuring the quality of the assessment strategies. The provider of the program will also be responsible for providing and maintaining records of achievement where applicable.

5. Pathways to the Qualification

Candidates typically hold a Masters Degree or a Bachelor Honours Degree (First or Second Class, upper division) or equivalent and are expected to demonstrate potential to undertake work at this level in the proposed field of study. In some institutions, candidates may upgrade an in-progress Masters Degree to a Doctoral Degree where they have not yet taken out the Masters Degree. For some doctoral programs, substantial professional experience will be an integral requirement.

There is a range of doctoral programs, in varying combinations of research and coursework and professional orientation, as follows:

- The research doctorate is usually entered from a research or part-research Masters Degree or a Bachelor Honours Degree (First or Second Class, upper division) and is primarily achieved through supervised research.
- The professional doctorate is usually entered from a combined research and coursework Masters Degree, a Bachelor Honours Degree (First or Second Class, upper division) or equivalent and requires significant professional practice either prior to and/or as part of the program, which may be undertaken through varying combinations of coursework and research.

Because candidates hold a range of relevant skills and knowledge, the duration of programs varies. A typical research or professional doctoral program would be expected to require the equivalent of three to four years of full-time work.

There is a further type of Doctoral Degree, the higher doctorate, which is awarded to candidates usually possessing a Doctoral Degree on the basis of an internationally recognised original contribution to knowledge rather than supervised candidature, often in the context of a substantial association with the conferring institution.

6. Authority to Issue the Qualification

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7. Certification Issued

A qualification is:

formal certification, issued by a relevant approved body, in recognition that a person has achieved learning outcomes relevant to identified individual, professional, industry or community needs.

Issuance of the qualification follows satisfactory completion of the requirements set by a university or other recognised higher education institution. If it is the view of the assessors and examiners that the work undertaken does not satisfy the requirements for a Doctoral Degree, it may be, in some circumstances, that the work undertaken does satisfy requirements for a Masters Degree which may be awarded in place of the Doctoral Degree.