

Monitoring the Framework

Please note: This section has not been updated from 2002 pending substantive changes to the governance of the AQF anticipated late 2007/early 2008.

1. Introduction

The Australian Qualifications Framework Advisory Board (AQFAB) which reports to the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) was established in 1995. This Board replaced the Register of Australian Tertiary Education (RATE) Advisory Committee and is the means of facilitating and monitoring the Australian Qualifications Framework. The nature of the Board's membership and its functions are outlined below.

2. Australian Qualifications Framework Advisory Board (AQFAB)

2.1 Role

The national body AQFAB complements the operations of school sector accreditation agencies, self-accrediting higher education institutions, State/Territory accreditation and recognition authorities and the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) which is responsible for advising the ANTA Ministerial Council on resource allocation and other national policy matters, and undertaking national strategic planning for vocational education and training.

AQFAB reports directly to MCEETYA. Through a small staff it provides 'hands on' input into the implementation and monitoring of the Framework.

2.2 Membership

AQFAB is small, reflects the range of stakeholders, and brings the necessary expertise to advise on the implementation and monitoring of the Framework. Accordingly, AQFAB includes:

- two representatives of each of the education and training sectors (schools, vocational education and training, higher education);
- three community representatives (one industry, one union and one representing equity groups);
- a representative of the Australian Government;
- an observer representing the New Zealand Qualifications Authority; and
- an independent Chair.

2.3 Reporting Relationships

AQFAB liaises closely with the higher education sector, the schools sector, the vocational education and training sector and, especially, accrediting bodies. In order to monitor implementation and the general progress of the development of the Framework effectively, a system of reporting by all such bodies will be put in place on a regular basis and as requested. AQFAB has an evaluation role and is an agent of change, in particular recommending action to achieve the goals of the Framework.

AQFAB reports publicly and to MCEETYA annually, or more frequently as required.

2.4 Functions

AQFAB has the following functions as revised in 2000:

AQFAB is responsible to MCEETYA to :

- review and revise AQF qualifications criteria and guidelines;
- monitor the operation of the AQF with particular emphasis on the cross-sector interface and national policy implications and undertake related research;
- promote the quality assurance processes in place in each sector to protect AQF provider standards;
- maintain registers of bodies authorised by governments to accredit courses, recognise providers and issue qualifications;
- monitor international movements in qualifications and their implications for the AQF;
- maintain an electronic infrastructure as a cost-effective medium to disseminate information about the AQF, in particular the qualifications guidelines;
- provide relevant advice on the AQF to all interested parties;
- maintain liaison with school sector accrediting bodies, higher education accreditation bodies (including bi-annual meetings between the Chair of the Multilateral Joint Planning Committee and the AQF Advisory Board), recognition bodies in the vocational education and training sector, training bodies and providers as well as industry, enterprises, the community and professional organisations, and Australian agencies responsible for international education and training, in particular, Australian Education International;
- maintain liaison with international and overseas bodies to receive and provide advice;
- advise MCEETYA on the operation of the AQF, including compliance, and recommend any appropriate changes to the Framework and its operation.

National Guidelines on Cross-Sector Qualification Linkages

These *National Guidelines* were developed jointly by the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee and the Australian National Training Authority in 2002, and approved by the AQF Advisory Board to replace the 1995 AQF guidelines on articulation and credit transfer. In 2004 the *National Guidelines* were expanded to include the schools sector.

Please also refer to the MCEETYA *Good Practice Principles for Credit Transfer and Articulation from VET to Higher Education* and the MCEETYA *Principles for Good Practice Information Provision on Credit Transfer and Articulation from VET to Higher Education*, which complement the AQF *National Guidelines on Cross-Sector Qualification Linkages* and the AQF *National Principles and Operational Guidelines for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)*.

1. Preamble

An important aspect of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) is the development of closer connections between secondary education, vocational education and training (VET) and higher education. The development of structured arrangements to link qualifications across the sectors represents a key process in building closer intersectoral relationships.

Qualifications linkages enable individual learners to move from one qualification to another in more efficient and effective learning pathways. Qualification linkages are essential working tools for the operation of a meaningful and dynamic AQF. Qualification linkages also provide a mechanism for creating a more open, accessible and relevant post-compulsory education system and a vehicle for implementing lifelong learning.

The term 'cross-sector qualification linkage' is used deliberately to identify the scope of the *National Guidelines* as any formal connection between qualifications issued within secondary education, VET and higher education. These connections may be based on articulation and credit transfer arrangements, but may also extend to newer models of integrated cross-sector qualification linkages.

The *National Guidelines* support a diversity of organisational models for forging links from individual partnerships between institutions to statewide secondary education/VET arrangements, to VET partnerships with individual higher education institutions, to consortia models and national arrangements between Industry Skills Councils and partner universities.

The *National Guidelines* have been developed with particular attention to reforms in the VET sector involving the introduction of Training Packages and the Australian Quality Training Framework.

These *National Guidelines* relate to the formal linkages between qualifications across sectors.

2. Objectives of the Policy Guidelines

These *National Guidelines* have been developed to provide the organisations involved in determining structured cross-sector qualification linkages with a framework to guide and facilitate these arrangements.

The *National Guidelines* are also designed to provide students and other interested individuals and organisations with information about these processes, to assist general understanding and to clarify pathways and outcomes.

The *National Guidelines* are based on the acceptance of, and support for, a diverse set of arrangements and models for linking qualifications across the sectors. Different models have different strengths and reflect differing needs and contexts. The intent is to encourage a diversity of approach.

Specific Objectives of the National Guidelines

These *National Guidelines* have been developed to:

- provide advice at the national level on developing cross-sector linkages between qualifications;
- assist organisations involved in developing structured cross-sector qualification linkages by identifying key processes, models and approaches;
- promote the continuing development of diverse structured cross-sector qualification linkages by organisations;
- facilitate the establishment of diverse educational and training pathways for individuals participating in secondary and tertiary education; and
- give effect to lifelong learning.

3. General Principles

- 3.1 The AQF provides an agreed framework for designing, developing and issuing recognised qualifications within Australia and for supporting linkages between these qualifications.
- 3.2 Individual qualifications set benchmarks for establishing linkages across the AQF. In higher education, individual universities determine content of qualifications and accredit their own courses, and other approved higher education institutions submit their own courses for accreditation by the States and Territories. In VET, qualifications are based on competencies and established through industry-defined Training Packages and/or through accredited courses developed by State Accreditation Authorities, Registered Training Organisations and other bodies.
- 3.3 In secondary education the statutory authorities establish the requirements and standards of the Senior Secondary Certificate of Education (SSCE).
- 3.4 Cross-sector qualification linkages are critical to the achievement of a more efficient, open, integrated and relevant education system that can meet the challenge of rapidly changing needs and priorities for knowledge and skill development, including continuous skilling and lifelong learning.
- 3.5 In addition to providing more efficient pathways between qualifications, cross-sector linkages should seek to add value to the learning outcomes for students through development of different approaches to qualification structures.

- 3.6 Cross-sector linkages can be established between any of the qualification titles in the AQF, not only between proximate qualifications such as the Advanced Diploma and Bachelor Degree, or the SSCE and VET Certificates, and can take a variety of forms including sequential and concurrent studies. Appropriate care is to be exercised to avoid combinations of qualifications that are not justified.
- 3.7 Qualification linkages may be focused on various learning pathways such as VET to higher education, higher education to VET, secondary education to VET, VET to secondary education, secondary education to higher education, or any of these combinations.
- 3.8 Qualification linkages should incorporate admission arrangements in a transparent way, as part of the agreed arrangements.
- 3.9 Where appropriate and relevant, linkages between qualifications should identify credit relationships between one qualification and another. Not all qualification linkages will involve granting credit for previous qualifications.
- 3.10 Where credit arrangements are established through a structured qualification linkage, the credit should be awarded to individuals who have evidence of achievement without the need for further assessment or demonstration of the relevant knowledge/skills.
- 3.11 The formal agreement of a qualification linkage is determined by the organisation issuing the end-point award.
- 3.12 Credit should not be conditional on the students being required to undertake additional courses equivalent to the workload value of the credit awarded.
- 3.13 The decision to develop qualification linkages is a matter for individual authorised organisations to determine in collaboration with each other.
- 3.14 Information about qualification linkages should be widely disseminated to students as part of enrolment information.

4. Operational Advice

Developing Linkages between Qualifications

- The bodies authorised to develop and/or issue AQF qualifications should consider the development of cross-sector qualification linkages as part of their responsibilities under the AQF.
- Linkages should define transparent and coherent relationships between the qualifications.
- Linkages will generally be developed between qualifications involving the same, similar or complementary specialisations/fields of study.
- Arrangements reflecting linkages between general and specialised qualifications may also be developed, where appropriate.
- Linkages should reflect and recognise different education and training pathways for achievement.

Processes for Developing Qualification Linkages

- Structured linkages can be established through a number of processes. These include:
 - articulation of existing awards
 - credit transfer between components of existing awards
 - integrated dual-sector sequential awards
 - integrated dual sector-concurrent programs
- Each of these processes is suited to different purposes and circumstances. Integrated dual-sector awards provide for linkages to be considered as part of the qualification development process. Articulation provides a sequential pathway between qualifications while credit transfer provides a means of linking individual components of existing awards.
- Where credit transfer is applied, consideration needs to be given as to whether full or partial credit transfer is granted. This will depend on the currency of the learning and the relationship between

the subjects or units or learning outcomes in one qualification with those in another qualification.

- In a dual-sector award, credit arrangements should be identified as part of the agreed structure of the award.

Basis of Determining the Qualification Linkage

- Linkages are generally based on a content or outcome relationship in which parts of one qualification are recognised as having equivalence with, or are integrated into, another qualification.
- Some linkages may also be based on acceptance of agreed relativities between different qualifications in the AQF. These linkages may also involve content or outcomes interrelationships.

Content and Outcomes Equivalence

- Linkages that are determined through a content or outcome relationship are established primarily through identification and assessment of same, similar or complementary knowledge and skill requirements across the linked qualifications.
- The basis used to establish the content and outcome linkage between VET and higher education is the relevant components of the Training Package, and/or accredited course curriculum (in qualifications recognised outside Training Packages), which are related to, and assessed against, the learning objectives and/or subject/unit descriptions of the relevant higher education qualifications.
- The basis used to establish linkages between secondary education and VET is the outcomes of secondary courses and the relevant units of the Training Package, and/or units or modules of an accredited VET course.
- The basis used to establish linkages between secondary education and higher education is the outcomes of the courses of study and the learning objectives and/or subject/unit descriptors of the relevant higher education qualification.

Linkages Using Training Package Qualifications

- In Training Package derived qualifications, competencies should be used as the instruments to identify content and outcome equivalences with secondary education and/or higher education qualifications. Training Package Support Materials, including the learning strategies and assessment materials, can also be used as additional tools to identify the linkage, where these materials will more clearly assist in identifying the relationships between qualifications from different sectors.
- Where competencies are used directly as the linkage instrument, the whole content of the competency needs to be considered to ensure all knowledge and skills relevant to the linkage have been identified. A key aspect of the competency to be considered is the Evidence Guide.
- Where learning strategies are used as an additional instrument, the relationship between these materials and the competencies that define the qualification in the Training Package needs to be clearly evident.

Linkages Using Accredited Courses

Where the qualifications in VET are based on accredited courses, a content linkage should be determined by comparing units or modules of the VET course against the subject content or outcomes of the secondary education/higher education courses.

Linkages Based on Agreed Relativities between Qualifications

- Linkages that incorporate an agreed connection and credit value between awards are suited to articulation and dual qualification arrangements that establish a sequential or concurrent pathway, particularly between Diploma level qualifications and Bachelor Degrees, and between SSCE and VET Certificates.
- These linkages are usually predicted on an accepted equivalence in content or in learning outcomes across a similar field or discipline between linked awards.

Guide to Credit Levels

- The following linkage relationships are identified as a guide in developing articulation arrangements and dual award qualifications in the same fields between Diploma and Bachelor qualifications. Depending on the particular nature of the awards being linked actual credit levels may be greater or less than the recommended level:*
- 50% credit for an Advanced Diploma when linked to a three-year Bachelor Degree
- 37.5% credit for an Advanced Diploma when linked to a four-year Bachelor Degree
- 33% credit for a Diploma when linked to a three-year Bachelor Degree
- 25% credit for a Diploma when linked to a four-year Bachelor Degree
- In most instances students may be granted up to 40% credit towards the requirements for the award of the SSCE in jurisdictions where these are specified. Depending on the particular circumstance, the credit levels may be greater or less than the recommended level.

Application of the Linkage

- The specific organisation(s) involved in the linkage process will determine which process to use in determining the linkage.
- It is accepted that differing credit outcomes may be established to reflect differing requirements of individual awards.
- Linkages only have application between the agreed parties.

Responsibility for Developing Qualification Linkages

- Responsibility for developing qualification linkages between VET and higher education and higher education and VET is the responsibility of the universities and other approved higher education providers in partnership with:
 - Individual Registered Training Organisations
 - Training Package Developers
 - State Accreditation Authorities
- Responsibility for developing qualification linkages between secondary education and VET involves a partnership between senior secondary statutory authorities and one or more of the following:
 - Individual Registered Training Organisations
 - Training Package Developers
 - State VET Accreditation Authorities

* The recommended levels of credit may be reviewed in the future following monitoring and analysis of the actual levels of credit granted.

- Responsibility for developing qualification linkages between secondary education and higher education is the responsibility of the statutory authority in partnership with the universities.

Responsibility for Endorsement and Maintenance

- The formal endorsement of a linkage should be given by the institution/authority responsible for issuing the destination qualification.
- Maintenance of the linkage is the responsibility of the partnership organisations.
- A Training Package Endorsement and/or Review and/or course accreditation in VET or a restructuring of the higher education qualification or the SSCE is the catalyst for review of the linkage arrangements.

Credit Outcomes

- Where credit is the outcome of the formal linkage, it is standardised, that is the quantum credit is predetermined as part of the linkage process.
- The quantum of standardised credit in qualification linkages will vary with each linkage and is dependent upon the level of agreed overlap and equivalence and the agreed relationships between awards.

Factors Impacting on Credit

- Credit should not be conditional on students meeting other substituted requirements in order to make up a 'normal load'.
- Individuals who have completed part of the relevant previous award may be entitled to receive credit for the specific components they have achieved. Restraints on credit may be employed where there is a significant time lapse between achievement of the qualification/part qualification and an application for credit in the destination qualification.
- Full credit might not be possible for a linkage depending on the field or area, or the relationship between one qualification and the other.

Forms of Credit

- Credit can be granted in different forms. These include specialised credit, unspecified credit and block credit. The form of credit will depend on the circumstances and context. Variables may include:
 - the linkage process
 - the qualifications being linked
 - the fields or areas
 - the competencies or learning outcomes.
- As a general guide:
 - Specified credit is most relevant to credit transfer based linkages based on specific content linkages, for example Module Y in VET is equivalent to Unit X in higher education.
 - Specified credit is also the most appropriate form for incomplete qualifications.
 - Unspecified credit is most appropriate to articulation arrangements based on agreed relative value of awards being linked and/or linkages between generic qualifications.
 - Unspecified credit taken as a block is most appropriate in dual and nested awards.

Provision of Information to Individuals

- Organisations involved in establishing structured qualification linkages, with or without credit, should disseminate information on their arrangements via handbooks, websites and through State/Territory Admissions Centres.
- Information about linkages should include advice that indicates that the existence of a pathway/linkage between qualifications does not imply automatic entry into the destination qualification. However, if admission is part of the agreement, this should be clearly stated.
- Information on linkages should clearly indicate, where appropriate, whether the meeting of additional requirements (such as bridging courses) designed to provide prerequisite knowledge or skills not included in the original qualification is a condition of the pathway/linkage.
- Information about linkages which involve the applicant incurring costs should indicate whether, and in what form, such costs will be recovered.

Appeal Mechanisms

- An effective means of appeal should be established in each institution in relation to credit transfer/articulation decisions. In the VET sector, *AQTF 2007 Essential Standards for Registration* Standard 2.6 requires that complaints and appeals are addressed efficiently and effectively.
- Appeals against decisions are able to be lodged in accordance with the appeal procedures of the relevant organisations.

Recognition of Prior Learning: National Principles and Operational Guidelines for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

1. Preamble

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) may be defined in a number of ways, some more expansive than others. All definitions, however, include the key notion that RPL involves the assessment of previously unrecognised skills and knowledge that an individual has achieved outside the formal education and training system. RPL assesses this unrecognised learning against the requirements of the qualification, in respect of both entry requirements and the outcomes to be achieved. By removing the need for duplication of learning, RPL encourages an individual to continue upgrading their skills and knowledge, through structured education and training, towards formal qualifications and improved employment outcomes.

The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) sets out the qualification standards upon which RPL ultimately relies for its credibility. Under the AQF, each qualification Guideline provides for an RPL pathway as an 'alternative' or 'non-institutional' access point or source of credit. This keeps the system of qualifications open to recognition of the value of learning achieved outside the formal system, as part of everyday living in a continuum of learning throughout one's life.

With the introduction of the AQF in 1995, the AQF Advisory Board commenced the development of 'readily available, transparent and consistent RPL policy and procedures' within and across each of the schools, vocational education and training, and higher education sectors. In 1997 the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs gave the support of the jurisdictions to this policy objective, together with recommendations on monitoring key indicators, such as parity of esteem for qualifications gained through (or partly through) RPL assessment, RPL funding arrangements which maximise savings for the taxpayer, and widely accessible models of good RPL practice.

The *National Principles and Operational Guidelines for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)* represent the progression of these Ministerial objectives into a set of national cross-sector guidelines to support implementation of RPL as an important element of Australian education and training. They have been derived from intensive consultations with all the interested parties in the period 2002–03. The *National Principles and Guidelines* are not prescriptive in intent but, acknowledging the wide diversity of RPL policy and practice, seek to encourage national consistency through sharing and facilitating good practice across sectors and jurisdictions. The *National Principles and Operational Guidelines for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)* complement the *National Guidelines on Cross-Sector Qualification Linkages (2002)* which provide guidance on credit transfer and articulation agreements and arrangements within and between sectors.

2. Principles

- 2.1 The AQF provides an agreed framework for designing, developing and issuing recognised qualifications within Australia.
- 2.2 The AQF supports the development of pathways between qualifications based on access and credits that may consist of, or may include, RPL.
- 2.3 RPL is critical to the development of an open, accessible, inclusive, integrated and relevant post-compulsory education and training system, and is the key foundation for lifelong learning policies that encourage individuals to participate in learning pathways that include formal, non-formal and informal learning.
- 2.4 There is no one RPL model that is suitable for all qualifications and all situations. In particular, different sectors give rise to different models. The model of RPL that is implemented must be aligned with the outcomes, goals and objectives of the qualification.
- 2.5 RPL should recognise learning regardless of how, when and where it was acquired, provided that the learning is relevant to the learning or competency outcomes in a subject, unit module, course or qualification.
- 2.6 RPL will be more accessible to the individual if there is consistency in definition across sectors.
- 2.7 RPL can be used for:
 - access into a course when the specified prerequisites based on completion of a formal course of education and training have not been undertaken; and
 - the award of credit for the partial or complete fulfilment of a qualification, within the relevant institutional or sectoral guidelines that specify the maximum amount of credit that may be granted.
- 2.8 RPL processes should be timely, fair and transparent.
- 2.9 RPL assessment should be based on evidence, and should be equitable, culturally inclusive, fair, flexible, valid and reliable.
- 2.10 RPL assessment processes should be:
 - of a comparable standard to those used to deliver and assess the qualification;
 - evidence-based, transparent and accountable; and
 - explicitly subject to the quality assurance processes used to ensure the standard and integrity of assessment processes within sectors, or institutions, and be validated and monitored in the same way other assessment processes are validated and monitored.
- 2.11 RPL policies, procedures and processes should be explicitly included in quality assurance procedures within institutions to ensure that qualifications achieved in part or full through RPL are of the same quality and have the same standing as qualifications achieved as a consequence of formal education and training.
- 2.12 RPL assessment should be structured to minimise costs to the individual.
- 2.13 RPL decisions should be accountable, transparent, and subject to appeal and review.
- 2.14 RPL information and support services should be actively promoted, easy to understand and recognise the diversity of learners.
- 2.15 Jurisdictions, institutions and providers should develop advice and information about RPL for employers of students and potential students to promote RPL among those employers; help employers understand the possible benefits to their business that may ensue through implementing RPL; and encourage employers to support staff in undertaking RPL.

2.16 Jurisdictions, institutions and providers should include RPL in access strategies for disadvantaged learners who are not in the work force, or are marginally attached to the work force, and who are not engaged with studying or training.

2.17 Funding models should not impede the implementation of RPL.

3. Objectives of the Policy Principles and Operational Guidelines

These principles and operational guidelines have been developed to provide advice at the national level about RPL, and to guide the four sectors of post-compulsory secondary education and training (senior secondary, adult and community education, vocational education and training, and higher education) to develop RPL policies and procedures that ensure:

- opportunities for Australians to have their non-formal and informal learning recognised and counted towards a qualification;
- diverse and inclusive pathways to lifelong learning;
- consistency in the principles used in implementing RPL within sectors and between sectors; and
- the quality, integrity and standing of Australian qualifications.

The principles and guidelines have also been developed to provide information to individuals and organisations about:

- how RPL is defined;
- the principles and processes used by institutions to implement RPL; and
- how to promote greater awareness and understanding of RPL and how it can be used.

4. Definition

4.1 RPL and Credit Transfer

Although RPL and credit transfer are related, and the boundaries between them are often blurred, they are distinguished as alternative pathways to an AQF qualification. They are distinguished by the way they relate to learning achieved through formal education and training (credit transfer) and learning achieved outside the formal education and training system (RPL).

RPL is an assessment process that assesses the individual's non-formal and informal learning to determine the extent to which that individual has achieved the required learning outcomes, competency outcomes, or standards for entry to, and/or partial or total completion of, a qualification.

Credit transfer assesses the initial course or subject that the individual is using to claim access to, or the award of credit in, the destination course to determine the extent to which it is equivalent to the required learning outcomes, competency outcomes, or standards in a qualification. This may include credit transfer based on formal learning that is outside the AQF framework.

4.2 How RPL is Used and Assessed

The key distinguishing characteristic is that it is the student who is assessed in the case of RPL, and the course or subject in the case of credit transfer. In credit transfer the judgement is about the learning program, outcomes and assessment in the initial course or subject.

Both credit transfer and RPL are learning pathways that can be used in two ways:

- as alternative mechanisms for access to a course or qualification. A student may gain entry to a course or qualification using credit transfer or RPL as an alternative to having undertaken and completed the prerequisites for entry based on formal education and training. An example of this is a student who obtains a place in a degree program in a university using RPL (based on life or work experience) or credit transfer (based on having completed an alternative course at an equivalent level) when they have not completed the senior school certificate; and/or
- for the award of credit in a course or qualification, leading to the partial or full completion of the requirements for that course or qualification.

In order to recognise prior learning it is necessary to:

- compare the informal or non-formal learning the individual has achieved against the learning outcomes or performance criteria of the course or qualification for which the student is using as a basis for seeking entry or the award of credit; and
- determine appropriate evidence to support the claim of prior learning.

The processes used to assess RPL applications may take several (not mutually exclusive) forms, for example:

- Participation in exactly the same or modified versions of the assessment the student would be required to complete as part of the full course.
- Assessment based on a portfolio of evidence.
- Direct observation of demonstration of skill or competence.
- Reflective papers, journals or portfolios that relate past learning to the learning or competency outcomes of the current course or qualification.
- Provision of examples of the student's work drawn from the workplace, social, community or other setting in which the student applies their learning, skill or competence.
- Testimonials of learning, skill or competence.
- Combinations of any of the above.

5. Operational Guidelines

5.1 Development of Institutional RPL Policies

The bodies authorised to develop and/or issue AQF qualifications should consider the development of RPL policies as part of their responsibilities under the AQF. The sectors differ in the extent to which RPL can be used for the partial or complete fulfilment of the requirements of a qualification. For example:

- RPL can be used for access and for the award of credit in a higher education course leading to an AQF qualification, but it is not normally possible to gain an entire higher education qualification using RPL.
- RPL can be used for access and for the partial or complete fulfilment of the requirements of a qualification in the vocational education and training (VET) sectors and the adult and community education (ACE) sectors, and for VET accredited qualifications in the ACE and senior secondary school sectors. VET accredited qualifications are required to make RPL available to all students in compliance with the Australian Quality Training Framework.
- RPL can be used for access and for the award of credit in many of the senior secondary school certificates (particularly for the VET components), but cannot normally be used to gain the entire school certificate.

5.2 RPL Models

All providers and institutions within each sector should develop and maintain quality assured procedures

that promote RPL to the individual/learner. This may be in the form of:

- Information and advice to students about which subjects, modules, competencies, courses and qualifications for which RPL can be used to establish access and exemptions.
- Information for students about how to apply for RPL, who to contact for further information concerning the process, who to contact for support in preparing their application, and information about time lines, appeals processes and fees.
- An outline of the learning competency outcomes against which students will be assessed.
- Advice to students as to the nature of the RPL assessment process, the kind of evidence that can be used, the forms in which it can be presented, and, where appropriate, a guide as to what is considered sufficient and valid evidence.
- Administrative processes for receiving RPL applications, administering assessment, recording results, advising students of the outcome, and administering appeals processes.
- Designation of responsibilities and accountabilities for undertaking RPL assessments, and a statement of the qualifications and skills assessors are expected to possess.
- An outline of the different assessment processes that may be used.
- An outline of the way in which RPL policies, processes and assessments are quality assured.

5.3 RPL Processes

- Processes should ensure that, where possible, the student is able to complete the qualification in less time.
- Processes should include and clearly label academic and administrative responsibilities and accountabilities, and these should be widely publicised in information about RPL.
- Processes should be timely, and, where possible, decisions made prior to the subject commencement of the course, subject or unit for which RPL is being claimed.

5.4 Assessment Processes

- RPL processes and procedures may consist of the following stages:
 - establishing the purpose of the assessment;
 - identifying the evidence required;
 - using appropriate evidence-gathering methods;
 - interpreting the evidence and making a judgement;
 - recording the outcome; and
 - reporting to key stakeholders.
- Assessment methods should accommodate literacy levels, cultural background and experiences of students. Assessment methods should provide for a range of ways for students to demonstrate that they have met the required outcomes. RPL assessment processes should not be proxy for assessment of skills such as literacy, except where these are intrinsic to the learning or competency outcomes in the subject, unit, module, course or qualification.

- Students should be provided with advice about the assessment processes and the sort of evidence the institution will consider in assessing their RPL application. Students should be provided with sufficient information to enable them to prepare their evidence to the standard required for the RPL assessment process.
- As with all assessment, RPL assessment should be undertaken by academic or teaching staff with expertise in the subject, content or skills area, as well as knowledge of, and expertise in, RPL policies and procedures.
- RPL assessment processes should be comparable to other assessment processes used to assess whether the learning or competency outcomes in a subject, module, unit, course or qualification have been met.

5.5 Forms of Credit

- RPL may be used for access into a course when the specified prerequisites based on completion of a formal course of education have not been undertaken, or where other access mechanisms are not applicable or appropriate.
- The award of credit in a course as the result of a successful RPL application may include:
 - specified credit for designated subjects, modules, units or competencies;
 - unspecified credit, resulting in the student being required to complete fewer subjects, modules or competencies (for example, by exempting a student from undertaking elective units);
 - block credit, resulting in exemption from the requirement to undertake a block component of a course (for example, first semester of first year); and
 - exemptions or advanced standing. This involves exempting a student from preparatory subjects, units, modules or competencies in the early stages of the course or qualification, while still requiring them to undertake the same number of subjects, units, modules or competencies as they would be required to complete if they had not been granted the extension. This usually involves substituting the exempted subjects, units, modules or competencies with others.
- Credit may be awarded on the basis of a combination of credit transfer plus an individual RPL assessment for additional non-formal or informal learning.
- Once a student has been awarded credit on the basis of RPL, subsequent credit transfer based on these learning outcomes should not include revisiting the RPL assessment, but should be based on credit transfer agreements, articulation arrangements or other agreements between institutions.

5.6 Quality Assurance

- RPL policies, procedures and processes and assessment outcomes should be explicitly included in sectoral or institutional quality assurance mechanisms.
- Clear and transparent quality assurance mechanisms are essential for ensuring that one sector has confidence in the RPL decisions made by another sector. These arrangements should be included in negotiations between providers within and across sectors about credit transfer, articulation and other arrangements to link qualifications.

5.7 Support for Learners

- RPL should be offered prior to, or at enrolment, and be available at other times in the student's enrolment in a qualification. Where necessary, support should be available to students to learn the skills needed to gain RPL, in either a formal group, or an informal setting.
- Support should be offered to students to ensure they engage in appropriate learning pathways as a consequence of their RPL process. In some sectors, this may include advice about 'gap' training or education that may be necessary to meet the full requirements of the qualification. It may also include advice as to learning pathways that are available to them and how to access those pathways.

5.8 Advice and Information

- Institutions and other relevant bodies in each of the sectors should promote their RPL policies, and include information about whether RPL is offered, as well as the qualifications, courses, subjects, units, modules and competencies in which it is offered.
- Information should be provided about the processes, time lines, appeal mechanisms, who to contact for more information, and where to go for support.
- Information should be made available via institutional, faculty and school websites, in promotional material and advertising in handbooks and through the State and Territory Tertiary Admissions Centres.
- Information should be written in clear accessible language, and should take into account the literacy skills, cultural background, and educational background and experiences of students and potential students.

5.9 Fees and Funding

- Policies and procedures implemented by jurisdictions and institutions to improve cost efficiency and remove financial disincentives in the implementation of RPL may include:
 - working with groups of students from industries, enterprises or occupational areas to achieve economies of scale;
 - fee charges no higher than students would normally be required to pay if they were undertaking formal study towards the qualification;
 - incorporating RPL duties into workloads for teaching and administrative staff; and
 - funding specific RPL subjects or modules to assist students who are preparing RPL applications, which can then be credited towards the qualification.
- Institutional policy frameworks and strategies to implement RPL should be developed to encourage implementation of internal funding arrangements and allocations to support the policy framework.

5.10 Appeal Mechanisms

- An effective means of appeal should be established in each institution in relation to RPL decisions.
- Processes should be fair, transparent, accountable and subject to appeal.
- Information about appeal mechanisms should be provided at the commencement of RPL procedures and made available throughout a student's enrolment in a qualification.



Appendix: Vocational Education and Training Reference Documents

- *Essential Standards for Registration*
- *Standards for State and Territory Registering Bodies*
- *Users Guide to the Essential Standards for Registration*

The full suite of AQTF 2007 reference documents may be obtained from:
<http://www.training.com.au/aqtf2007>