The Australian education system

This document provides a brief overview of the Australian education system and the quality assurance arrangements within each sector. Detailed information is also available in the Australian Country Education Profile which can be downloaded from the Australian Education International website.

All AQF qualifications are quality assured.

The accreditation of AQF qualifications, the authorisation of organisations (registration) to issue them and the ongoing quality assurance of qualifications and issuing organisations is legislated within Australian jurisdictions. The Register of Accrediting Authorities is the official register of all government authorised accrediting authorities.

The extensive quality assurance arrangements that underpin AQF qualifications are the responsibility of other authorities in each education and training sector.

School education sector

Schooling in Australia can be provided by State or Territory governments or by private education providers. Each State and Territory has legislative responsibility for authorising the issuance of qualifications in the senior secondary schools. This is undertaken by a statutory body in each State and Territory. The Senior Secondary Certificate of Education is the AQF qualification for this sector.

Further information about the school sector at State and Territory level can be found on the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations website.

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Authorities (ACACA) is the national body for these statutory bodies. This website is a central access point for information about the provision of the Senior Secondary Certificates of Education in each State and Territory. Information is also available on the MySchool website.

Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector

The Vocational Education and Training sector (VET) gives students the opportunity to:

- gain the skills they need to enter the workforce for the first time
- re-enter the workforce
- upgrade their skills for an existing job
- retrain for a new job, or
- gain additional qualifications.

Traineeships and apprenticeships are available in a diverse range of trades and other occupations in most sectors of business and industry.

VET qualifications are delivered by Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) that must be registered to be able to provide government accredited qualifications.

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Nationally recognised VET qualifications can range from Certificate I to Advanced Diploma and include Graduate Diplomas and Graduate Certificates that have been accredited by a VET accrediting authority. The accrediting authorities are:

- **National Skills Standards Council (NSSC)** - The NSSC endorses training package qualifications and provides advice to Ministers on national standards for regulation of VET in Australia.

- **The Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA)** - ASQA is the National Regulator for Australia’s VET sector.

- **The Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA)** - VRQA is the Regulator for RTOs registered in Victoria.

- **The Western Australian Training Accreditation Council (TAC)** - TAC is the Regulator for RTOs registered in Western Australia.

**Higher Education sector**

The Higher Education sector in Australia is made up of universities and other higher education institutions, often referred to as higher education providers. The national regulator for the higher education sector is the **Tertiary Education Standards Agency (TEQSA)**. Its responsibilities include the registration and evaluation of the performance of higher education providers against the Higher Education Standards Framework.

In Australia, universities are self-accrediting institutions and each university has its own establishment legislation (generally State and Territory legislation). Universities and a small number of other higher education providers are authorised by TEQSA to accredit the qualifications which they deliver.

Universities receive the majority of their public funding from the Australian Government, through the **Higher Education Support Act 2003**.

Higher education institutions also include non self-accrediting institutions that are registered by TEQSA before they can deliver higher education qualifications.

For details of registered higher education providers and accredited qualifications, see the National Register of Higher Education Providers (TEQSA Register). Information can also be found on the MyUniversity website.

Nationally recognised qualifications accredited in the higher education sector include Diplomas, Advanced Diplomas, Associate Degrees, Bachelor Degrees, Bachelor Honours Degrees, Graduate Certificates, Graduate Diplomas, Masters Degrees and Doctoral Degrees.

**International students**

All providers of education and training services to overseas students studying in Australia on student visas must comply with the **Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000**. The Act protects Australia’s reputation for delivering quality education services and the interests of overseas students by setting minimum standards and providing tuition and financial assurance. Quality assurance of providers is undertaken by TEQSA for higher education providers, ASQA for VET providers and in the schools sector, each state or territory government department responsible for schools.