

I INTRODUCTION

The *AQF Qualifications Pathways Policy* builds into the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) the capacity to genuinely support students' lifelong learning. It is Australia's national policy on qualifications pathways.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the policy is to maximise the credit that students can gain for learning already undertaken. It aims to:

- enhance student progression into and between AQF qualifications
- recognise the multiple pathways that students take to gain AQF qualifications and that learning can be formal, non-formal or informal, and
- support the development of pathways in qualifications design.

1.2 Scope

This policy covers all education and training sectors that issue AQF qualifications and the responsibilities for making qualification pathways accessible to students.

The terminology used in the AQF policies is not sector-specific. To support consistency of understanding and interpretation, definitions of the terminology are provided in the *AQF Glossary of Terminology*.

1.3 Users

The principal users of this policy are the authorised issuing organisations¹, accrediting authorities including self-accrediting organisations, students and graduates in each education and training sector.

The other users of this policy are employers, industry and professional bodies, and licensing and regulatory bodies who may use this policy as a guide to the role of credit in developing learning pathways and achieving learning outcomes.

1.4 Monitoring

Accrediting authorities in each education and training sector are responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the use of this policy.

¹ In this policy the term 'authorised issuing organisation' is abbreviated to 'issuing organisation'.

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2 POLICY

This policy is underpinned by the principles that pathways:

- are clear and transparent to students
- are systemic and systematic
- enable flexible qualification pathways
- may be horizontal across AQF qualifications at the same level as well as vertical between qualifications at different levels
- can facilitate credit for entry into, as well as credit towards, AQF qualifications, and
- eliminate unfair or unnecessary barriers for student access to AQF qualifications.

2.1 Responsibilities of issuing organisations

2.1.1 All issuing organisations² will have clear, accessible and transparent policies and processes to provide qualifications pathways and credit arrangements for students.

2.1.2 These policies and processes will:

- ensure that pathways into and between qualifications are available to all students for all relevant qualifications
- be made publicly available, widely promoted and easily accessible to all prospective and existing students to enable them to:
 - make well-informed choices between alternative pathways
 - take into account the credit that may be available to them, and
- be regularly reviewed to maximise applicability to new and updated qualifications and to student and industry needs.

2.1.3 Issuing organisations' decisions regarding the giving of credit into or towards AQF qualifications will:

- be evidence-based, equitable and transparent
- be applied consistently and fairly with decisions subject to appeal and review
- recognise learning regardless of how, when and where it was acquired, provided that the learning is relevant and current and has a relationship to the learning outcomes of the qualification
- be academically defensible and take into account the students' ability to meet the learning outcomes of the qualification successfully
- be decided in a timely way so that students' access to qualifications is not unnecessarily inhibited
- allow for credit outcomes to be used to meet prerequisites or other specified requirements for entry into a program of study leading to a qualification or for the partial fulfillment of the requirements of a qualification, and
- be formally documented for the student including any reasons for not giving credit.

2.1.4 Giving credit into or towards an AQF qualification should not impinge upon:

- the integrity of qualification outcomes and discipline requirements, or
- the responsibility of issuing organisations to make decisions on admission, prerequisites or programs of study, and the students' likely successful completion of the qualification.

² The authorised issuing organisations for AQF qualifications are listed on page 22

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- 2.1.5** Credit will be given on the basis of formal individual negotiations between students and issuing organisations or formal negotiated agreements between issuing organisations.
- 2.1.6** Recognition of prior learning or advanced standing for relevant and current informal or non-formal learning will be available for students and may be used for entry requirements or credit towards an AQF qualification.
- 2.1.7** Credit can be given to students in the form of block, specified or unspecified credit.
- 2.1.8** Issuing organisations will systematically negotiate credit agreements with other issuing organisations for any AQF qualifications to maximise the credit available to eligible students for both entry into and credit towards AQF qualifications.
- 2.1.9** Credit agreements negotiated between issuing organisations for credit for students towards AQF qualifications at any level, vertical or horizontal, will take into account the comparability and equivalence of the:
- learning outcomes
 - volume of learning
 - program of study, including content, and
 - learning and assessment approaches.
- 2.1.10** Credit agreements negotiated between issuing organisations for credit for students towards higher level AQF qualifications in the same or a related discipline, having taken into account 2.1.9, should use the following as the basis of negotiations:
- 50% credit for an Advanced Diploma or Associate Degree linked to a 3 year Bachelor Degree
 - 37.5% credit for an Advanced Diploma or Associate Degree linked to a 4 year Bachelor Degree
 - 33% credit for a Diploma linked to a 3 year Bachelor Degree
 - 25% credit for a Diploma linked to a 4 year Bachelor Degree.
- 2.1.11** These agreements do not preclude any further institutional or individual student negotiations for additional credit.

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2.2 Responsibilities of accrediting authorities and qualification developers

- 2.2.1** Accrediting authorities⁴ and organisations developing qualifications⁵ will have policies and processes that facilitate and promote qualification pathways and these policies and processes will be publicly available.
- 2.2.2** Accrediting authorities and organisations developing qualifications will identify, negotiate and document effective articulation arrangements between AQF qualifications.
- 2.2.3** Specific attention will be given to identifying, developing and documenting qualification pathways:
- between access qualifications such as Certificate I and Certificate II to Certificate III qualifications
 - from Diploma, Advanced Diploma and Associate Degree to Bachelor Degree in the same discipline to provide 'Diploma to Degree pathways' taking into account the percentages in 2.1.10, and
 - to create integrated qualifications at different AQF levels.

2.3 Registers

- 2.3.1** Issuing organisations will maintain publicly available registers of their credit transfer agreements linked to the AQF Register.
- 2.3.2** Accrediting authorities will maintain publicly available registers of articulation arrangements incorporated into qualifications linked to the AQF Register
- 2.3.3** These registers will link to any future national registers of articulation and credit transfer arrangements.

⁴ The accrediting authorities are listed on page 21

⁵ The developers of AQF qualifications for accreditation are listed on page 21



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