

Discipline: An Explanation

Discipline defined

Discipline is defined in the AQF as follows:

Discipline refers to a defined branch of study or learning.

Discipline explained

Use of the term discipline in the AQF is consistent with the field of education classification in the Australian Standard Classification of Education (ASCED)¹.

ASCED is Australia's statistical classification for the collection and analysis of data on educational activity and attainment. The ASCED field of education classification is used in each education sector in Australia and is broadly comparable to the international standard classification for education used for international comparisons.

ASCED includes 12 broad fields of education with each classification subdivided into narrow fields of education.

In the AQF, the use of the term 'same discipline' is intended for qualifications that enable graduates to deepen their knowledge, skills and application through further learning. Conversely the term 'different discipline' is intended for qualifications that enable graduates to broaden their knowledge, skills and application through further learning.

The terms 'same discipline' and 'different discipline' are used in the AQF to provide further detail on:

- the volume of learning to be applied to a qualification
- the requirements for developing and accrediting qualifications, and
- the requirements for giving credit for previous learning.

Discipline applied

It is the responsibility of organisations developing and/or accrediting qualifications to exercise professional judgment to ensure that design of programs of learning leading to qualifications enables students to achieve the learning outcomes for both the qualification type and the discipline. Decisions about design of qualifications must take into account students' likelihood of successfully achieving qualification outcomes and also must ensure that integrity of qualification outcomes is maintained. Those developing and/or accrediting qualifications should be able to provide a pedagogical rationale to justify a decision about discipline coherence.

In designing the qualification, the sufficiency of the volume of learning must be considered in the context of the discipline. It would be usual for a qualification designed to build on a previous qualification in a different discipline to have a greater volume of learning than a qualification of the same type used to build on a qualification in the same discipline. However, there may be sufficient differences between subsets within a discipline to require a greater volume of learning to ensure the coherence of the program of learning.

Similarly, in designing the qualification, the sufficiency of the proportion of the component parts of the qualification at the level needs to be determined in the context of the discipline. If the minimum volume of learning is applied for a qualification building on a qualification in the same discipline, the components of the program of learning should be predominately or entirely at the level of the qualification type. If the discipline is different enough to require the inclusion of preparatory studies at a lower level to allow graduates to achieve the learning outcomes at the level required, a greater volume of learning will be required.

See also

[AQF explanation on volume of learning](#)

[AQF explanation on proportion of components of a qualification at a level](#)

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Standard Classification of Education (ASCED), 2001 (reissued with minor changes 2008), Commonwealth of Australia.