NSCC Policy: Application of the Australian Qualifications Framework Qualifications Issuance Policy within the VET Sector

The following publication was endorsed by the National Skills Standard Council (NSSC). The NSSC was dissolved by the COAG Industry and Skills Council on 3 April 2014.

This publication remains current and applicable to the VET sector.
NSSC POLICY:
APPLICATION OF THE AUSTRALIAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK QUALIFICATIONS ISSUANCE POLICY WITHIN THE VET SECTOR

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INTRODUCTION
The National Skills Standards Council (NSSC) is responsible for, among other things:
- The endorsement of Training Packages, including the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) qualifications and units of competency contained within Training Packages – this therefore means that the NSSC is an accrediting authority within the VET sector, as defined within the AQF.
- The development and maintenance of the national standards for the regulation of VET for approval by the Standing Council of Tertiary Education Skills and Employment (SCOTEST) – the standards are applied by VET regulators in determining provider registration, and once registered, authorises Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) to issue AQF qualifications and certification documentation to individuals for courses approved on its scope of registration.

Purpose
As an accrediting authority, the NSSC is responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the use of the AQF Qualifications Issuance Policy within the VET sector. The NSSC Policy: Application of the AQF Qualifications Issuance Policy within the VET Sector identifies the regulatory and quality standards applying to the VET sector and identifies the authority under which AQF certification may be issued, and such additional information that RTOs must include on certification documentation.

Scope
The NSSC Policy: Application of the AQF Qualifications Issuance Policy within the VET Sector covers the issuance of VET qualifications and statements of attainment in line with the AQF Qualification Type Specifications; the national standards for the regulation of VET; and the NSSC’s requirements for information on certification documentation in addition to the AQF Qualifications Issuance Policy.

VET qualifications are at levels 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8 of the AQF, encompassing the following qualifications:
- Certificate I;
- Certificate II;
- Certificate III;
- Certificate IV;
- Diploma;
- Advanced Diploma;
- Graduate Certificate; and
- Graduate Diploma. [1]

The national standards for the regulation of VET are applied by VET regulators in determining provider registration, and once registered provide RTOs with the authority to issue qualifications to individuals for qualifications within their scope of registration. The standards state that:

“The RTO must issue to persons whom it has assessed as competent in accordance with the Training Package or accredited course, a qualification or statement of attainment (as appropriate) that:
- meets the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) requirements;
- identifies the RTO by its national provider number from the National Register; and
- includes the Nationally Recognised Training (NRT) logo in accordance with the current conditions of service.” [2]
Users
The principal users of the NSSC Policy: Application of the AQF Qualifications Issuance Policy within the VET Sector are issuing organisations and accrediting authorities.

Within the VET sector, issuing organisations are RTOs who are compliant with the AQTF Essential Conditions and Standards for Initial/Continuing Registration or the Standards for NVR Registered Training Organisations 2011. In the case of RTO closure or other special circumstances, some VET Regulators[3] have authority to issue qualifications to affected students.

Within the VET sector, accrediting authorities are
- the NSSC; and
- VET Regulators/course accrediting bodies.

Monitoring
Authorities within the VET sector with responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of the use of this policy are accrediting authorities, who have responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of both the AQF Qualifications Issuance Policy and the NSSC Policy: Application of the AQF Qualifications Issuance Policy within the VET Sector. Accrediting authorities have specific functions within the VET sector in relation to the AQF.

Specific functions of the NSSC are:
- the development and communication of policies to ensure that certification issued by issuing organisations adheres to relevant regulatory and quality assurance arrangements applying within the VET sector and include such additional information as may be required within these arrangements;
- the monitoring of the implementation of its policies; and
- the endorsement of Training Packages, containing AQF qualifications.

Specific functions of VET Regulators:
- the authorisation of an RTO as an issuing organisation within its approved scope;
- the monitoring of the compliance of RTOs as issuing organisations against the regulatory and quality assurance arrangements applying in the VET sector; and
- the accreditation of courses and AQF qualifications.

[3] Formerly described as Registering Bodies
POLICY

The following describes the requirements set by the NSSC for RTOs issuing certification documentation to individuals, additional to that described within the AQF Qualifications Issuance Policy.

Issuing AQF Qualifications

In addition to the requirements contained in Section 2.1 of the AQF Qualifications Issuance Policy for issuing AQF qualifications, the NSSC, as an accrediting authority, may require issuing organisations to include additional information on the certification.

The NSSC requires issuing organisations to include the following information on the testamur in addition to the requirements of the AQF Qualifications Issuance Policy:

- the name, national RTO code and logo of the issuing organisation;
- the code and title of the awarded AQF qualification;
- the NRT logo; and
- the State / Territory Training Authority logo (only where use of the logo is directed by State / Territory Training Authorities, e.g. within User Choice contracts).

The following elements are to be included on the testamur as applicable:

- the industry descriptor, e.g. Engineering;
- the occupational or functional stream, in brackets, e.g. (Fabrication);
- where relevant, the words, ‘achieved through Australian Apprenticeship arrangements’; and
- where relevant, the words, ‘these units / modules have been delivered and assessed in <insert language>’ followed by a listing of the relevant units/modules.

Graduation Statements

The issuance of ‘Graduation Statements,’ as defined within the AQF Qualifications Issuance Policy, is not current practice within the VET sector.

Responsibility for Issuing and Authenticating AQF Qualifications

RTOs have authority to issue VET qualifications within their scope of registration. RTOs are required to adhere to the sector’s regulatory and quality assurance arrangements in their delivery, assessment and issuance of VET qualifications. Requirements specific to the issuance of VET qualifications are:

- AQTF Essential Conditions and Standards for Initial / Continuing Registration Condition 6 – Certification & Issuing of Qualifications; or
- VET Quality Framework SNR 12/ 23 Strategy for Certification, Issuing and Recognition of Qualifications & Statements of Attainment; and
- NSSC Policy: Application of the AQF Qualifications Issuance Policy within the VET Sector.

The RTO will retain registers of VET qualifications they are authorised to issue and of all VET qualifications they issue. In addition, RTOs will:

- retain records of qualifications issued for a period of 30 years; and
- provide reports of records of qualifications issued to its VET regulator on a regular basis as determined by the VET regulator.

AQF Qualification Titles

RTOs will use qualification titles for VET qualifications as described within the AQF Qualification Type Specification. These are listed in the AQF and in Section 1.2 within this policy.

Issuing Statements of Attainment

A statement of attainment will be issued in the VET sector when an individual has completed:

- one or more units from a VET qualification or an accredited short course;
- a Training Package identified skill set which meets a licence or regulatory requirement; or
- a Training Package identified skill set which meets a defined industry need.

RTOs are authorised to issue statements of attainment in the VET sector. An RTO issuing statements of attainment in the VET sector must comply with national RTO standards as identified in this policy and with the NSSC Policy: Application of the AQF Qualifications Issuance Policy within the VET Sector.
The RTO will:
- maintain registers of all statements of attainments issued to graduates;
- retain records of statements of attainment issued for a period of 30 years; and
- provide returns of its records of statements of attainment to its VET Regulator on a regular basis, as determined by the VET Regulator.

In addition to the requirements contained in Section 2.5 of the AQF Qualifications Issuance Policy for issuing AQF qualifications, the NSSC, as an accrediting authority, may require issuing organisations to include additional information on the certification.

The NSSC requires issuing organisations to include the following information on the statement of attainment in addition to the requirements of the AQF Qualifications Issuance Policy:
- the name, national RTO code and logo of the issuing organisation;
- a list of units of competency (or modules where no units of competency exist) showing their full title and the national code for each unit of competency;
- the authorised signatory;
- the NRT logo;
- the State/Territory Training Authority logo (only where use of the logo is directed by State/Territory Training Authorities, e.g. within User Choice contracts);
- the issuing organisation's seal, corporate identifier or unique watermark;
- the words ‘A statement of attainment is issued by a Registered Training Organisation when an individual has completed one or more accredited units’;
- the words ‘These competencies form part of [code and title of qualification(s)/course(s)]’ (if applicable); and
- the words, ‘These competencies were attained in completion of [code] Course in [full title] (if applicable; this is only for accredited short courses titled ‘Course in …’)’
- where relevant, the words, ‘these units / modules have been delivered and assessed in <insert language>’ followed by a listing of the relevant units/modules.