

NATIONAL QUALITY COUNCIL

COMMUNIQUE

The National Quality Council (NQC) was established as a Committee of the Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education in November 2005 to oversee quality assurance and ensure national consistency in the application of the Australian Quality Training Framework standards for the audit and registration of training providers. The Council replaces the former National Training Quality Council (NTQC) and is chaired by Ms Stella Axarlis AM.

The new Council has a key role in bringing together industry, unions, governments, equity groups and providers to oversee and support the current and future quality of vocational and technical education across Australia. The Council is supported by an independent Secretariat which is to be incorporated within the new Ministerial Company to be established during 2006.

This is the first communiqué issued by the NQC and will become a regular feature of Council activity in the future, along with a website to be established once the new Ministerial Company is set up.

The Council held its first meeting on 31 March 2006. This meeting provided an opportunity to examine progress with quality aspects of the national training system, endorse new approaches to support more flexible training pathways and review directions for 2006.

The meeting also provided an opportunity to respond to agreements reached at the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting held on 10 February 2006. At that meeting COAG agreed on a package of measures designed to underpin a new genuinely national approach to apprenticeships, training and skills recognition and to alleviate skill shortages – focusing particularly on the development of a national outcomes-based audit model and work to support full mutual recognition of licensed occupations between jurisdictions and wider recognition of prior learning. Many of the measures are directly relevant to the NQC's terms of reference and it will be the responsibility of the NQC to deliver COAG's requirements on behalf of the Ministerial Council.

Key outcomes of first NQC Meeting

National Strategic Audit of training in the hospitality industry

The Council considered the findings of a National Strategic Audit of Training in the Hospitality Industry - only the second national audit focusing on a whole industry – undertaken on a co-operative basis across all states and territories. The first audit was of the transport industry in 2004. Such audits are very significant as they can highlight systemic issues for Council attention and

provide valuable insights for industry, States and Territories and RTOs about ways to improve training for industry and individuals. A copy of the audit report, together with information on how the Council will be dealing with the report will be available shortly at:

http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training_skills/policy_issues_reviews/key_issues/nts/vet/nqc.htm

Certificate I in Industry (Pathways)

During 2005, the NTQC initiated a trial of a new form of cross industry, entry level qualification - a Certificate I in Industry (Pathways) – designed to form a new pathway within the vocational and technical education sector. Target groups identified for the trial included women, year 10 students, youth disengaged from school, people returning to work, Indigenous people, long term unemployed and people with a disability. Certificate I qualifications in three industries (Agri-food, Manufacturing, and Transport and Logistics) were conditionally endorsed for the duration of the trials, with 8 of 10 trial sites completed in 2005 and the remaining 2 to be completed by mid 2006.

The trial has demonstrated that the qualification has the potential to create genuine pathways to further study or employment. Twenty-two percent of participants indicated that, as a result of the program, they would go on to find full time employment and sixteen percent indicated they would go on to find part time employment as a result of the qualification. Eleven percent indicated they would go on to further vocational and technical education study.

Approximately 75 percent of the school aged participants stayed on at school at the end of the program. The report also illustrated that a project based approach (i.e. centring learning on activities specific to the industry) was a successful delivery approach for the target groups at the Certificate I level.

As a result of the successful trial, the conditionally endorsed qualifications will be put forward to the Council for full endorsement and DEST will be working with all ISCs regarding the possible application of the Certificate I in Industry (Pathways) model in other Training Packages, subject to industry support. DEST will also be managing the development of a specific professional development resource in collaboration with the NQC to assist the delivery of Certificate I qualifications using the project based approach outlined in the report on this project.

Employability skills

The High Level Review of Training Packages undertaken by the former NTQC in 2004 identified the incorporation of employability skills into Training Packages as a high priority, together with rationalisation of Training Package qualifications and competencies.

Since then, work has been underway to assist ISCs build employability skills into Training Packages. This work will continue in alignment with ongoing work to rationalise Training Packages during 2006. DEST and NQC will work collaboratively on the development of a range of professional development resources to support this work.

Working with Industry Skills Councils (ISCs)

The NQC is placing a high priority on building strong links with ISCs. This will provide a direct connection between policy in relation to Training Packages and the development, review and implementation of the Packages for which ISCs are responsible. As part of what will be an ongoing arrangement, the Council met with representatives of two ISCs - the Transport and Logistics ISC and the Construction and Property Services ISC – to discuss rationalisation of qualifications and units across Training Packages and work on harmonising qualifications and licences.

National outcomes based audit model

Although already included in the NQC 2006 work plan, the Council acknowledged that the work referred by COAG is its highest priority and agreed to accelerate the introduction of a national outcomes-based auditing model and stronger outcomes based quality standards for RTOs and agreed that DEST will undertake further work under the direction of the NQC.

NQC 2006 work plan

The NQC also considered a comprehensive work plan for 2006 which will address COAG decisions of relevance to the Council, priorities identified by Ministers in the *Framework for the New National Training System*, and recommendations arising from the High Level Review of Training Packages which have not already been actioned. When finalised by the Council, a copy of the final work plan will be made available on:

http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training_skills/policy_issues_reviews/key_issues/nts/vet/nqc.htm