

# National Quality Council - Charter

## Context

As a Committee of the Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education, the National Quality Council oversees quality assurance and ensures national consistency in the application of the Australian Quality Training Framework standards for the audit and registration of training providers.

It has specific decision-making powers in relation to the endorsement of Training Packages and other aspects of the quality assurance under the National Skills Framework.

The National Quality Council has a key role in bringing together the major players in the vocational and technical education sector - industry, unions, governments, equity groups and practitioners - to oversee and support the current and future quality of vocational and technical education across Australia. It is also critical to ensuring the successful operation of the National Skills Framework – the system's requirements for quality and national consistency in terms of qualifications and the delivery of training.

## Terms of reference

The functions of the National Quality Council will include:

- reporting to the Ministerial Council on the operation of the National Skills Framework, including Training Packages, Australian Quality Training Framework standards and other quality assurance arrangements
- advising Ministers on the endorsement of Training Packages
- recommending approaches to improve national consistency within the operation of the National Skills Framework
- fulfilling accountability requirements through providing an annual report on its operations to the Ministerial Council.

These functions will be implemented as follows:

### **a) Reporting to the Ministerial Council on the operation of the National Skills Framework, including Training Packages, Australian Quality Training Framework standards and other quality assurance arrangements**

The National Quality Council will report to each Ministerial Council meeting against its approved annual work plan. The work plan will prioritise work for the National Quality Council around the key components of the National Skills Framework, including Training Packages, accredited courses, the Australian Quality Training Framework, and the Australian Qualifications Framework.

The report will provide advice to Ministers on progress of work being undertaken in relation to various projects around the National Skills

Framework, as outlined in its work plan. It may also include additional relevant information such as:

- qualitative and quantitative advice on the delivery of training products and services at State/Territory levels; or
- any significant emerging policy issues.

The National Quality Council may also present its own papers to the Ministerial Council on key issues relevant to the National Skills Framework not already addressed through the agreed work plan or the annual report, or which require particular guidance from the Ministerial Council.

#### **b) Advising Ministers on the endorsement of Training Packages**

The National Quality Council will make decisions in relation to the endorsement of individual Training Packages, and the noting of associated resource materials, to ensure that they meet current and future workforce skill development needs. The National Quality Council will also make decisions in relation to the continuous improvement of Training Packages and associated materials. Advice on these decisions will be provided to Ministers through processes agreed with the Ministerial Council.

This function of advising Ministers on the endorsement of Training Packages includes:

- Consulting with States and Territories, the Australian Government and relevant industry bodies on implementation of the National Skills Framework
- Requesting States and Territories to formally agree to the Council's Training Package endorsement decisions
- Monitoring implementation of national training and assessment products and ensuring that industry qualifications and accredited courses comply with the Australian Qualifications Framework
- Ensuring adherence to relevant national policy documents concerning the development, continuous improvement and quality assurance of Training Packages and related products/services.

The National Quality Council may delegate functions related to Training Packages and supporting material as appropriate following approval of the related processes from the Ministerial Council.

#### **c) Recommending approaches to improve national consistency within the operation of the National Skills Framework**

As a priority within its work plan, the National Quality Council will monitor national consistency in the operation of the National Skills Framework, and investigate areas where consistency could be improved. The report to the Ministerial Council will therefore make recommendations for improvements as appropriate.

#### **d) Fulfilling accountability requirements through providing an annual report on its operations to the Ministerial Council.**

The National Quality Council will provide an annual report to the Ministerial Council on its financial operations. The report should also include information not covered in the report against its annual work plan such as the involvement of the National Quality Council members on the Australian Qualifications Framework Advisory Board, or processes put in place to formally engage with the Industry Skills Councils or the National Industry Skills Committee.

### **Membership and appointments**

During 2005 and 2006, the membership of the National Quality Council will be as per previous National Training Quality Council membership supplemented by two provider representatives, one public and one private, nominated by the Australian Council for Private Education and Training and TAFE Directors Australia respectively and approved by the Australian Government following consultation with the Ministerial Council.

From 2007, the membership of the National Quality Council will be:

- an independent Chair, appointed by the Australian Government following consultation with the Ministerial Council;
- seven industry representatives and an ACTU representative, nominated by the National Industry Skills Committee;
- a representative from each State and Territory and the Australian Government, appointed by their own Government;
- two provider representatives, one public and one private, nominated by the Australian Council for Private Education and Training and TAFE Directors Australia and appointed by the Australian Government following consultation with the Ministerial Council; and
- two equity representatives, one for Indigenous Australians and one for people with a disability, nominated by States and Territories, and drawn from the State and Territory advisory networks.

The Australian Government Minister will approve all non-government members and appoint a Deputy Chair from the industry representatives, following consultation with the Ministerial Council.

Appointments will be in writing signed by or on behalf of the Australian Government Minister. Members will be appointed for three year terms.

### **Termination and resignation processes**

The Australian Government Minister, following consultation with the Ministerial Council, may terminate the appointment of any member of the National Quality Council for reasons including:

- inability to continue to represent the nominating agency
- physical or mental incapacity
- improper or inappropriate use of information gained through membership of the Committee

- underperformance or failure to contribute
- absence from three consecutive meetings other than where leave has been granted by the Chair.

The seat of a member will become vacant if the member:

- becomes bankrupt, applies to take the benefit of any law for the relief of bankrupt or insolvent debtors, compounds with creditors or makes an assignment of any remuneration or estate for their benefit, or
- is convicted of a crime punishable or an offence punishable by imprisonment for 12 months or longer.

A casual vacancy arising due to a member leaving their position may be filled by the appointment of another person to hold that position. A person appointed to fill a casual vacancy will hold office for the balance of the term of appointment of the member in relation to whom the vacancy arises.

Members may resign from the National Quality Council by writing to the Australian Government Minister and Chair. The Chair and Deputy Chair of the National Quality Council may also resign from their respective roles by writing to the Australian Government Minister.

## **Relationship with other elements of the national training system**

### Ministerial Council

The National Quality Council is a Committee of the Ministerial Council. The National Quality Council Chair is responsible to the Ministerial Council and reports to the Chair of the Ministerial Council.

The National Quality Council will submit an annual work plan to the Ministerial Council for approval, and provide a report on its operations against this work plan to each Ministerial Council meeting. The National Quality Council will also submit an annual financial report of its operations to the Ministerial Council.

### National Senior Officials Committee

The work of the National Quality Council underpins the operation of the National Skills Framework and is therefore closely linked to the operation of the National Senior Officials Committee.

The National Quality Council may submit papers to the National Senior Officials Committee for decision, information or forwarding to the Ministerial Council, where relevant.

Papers cleared by the National Quality Council for forwarding to Ministers as part of Council responsibilities as a committee of the Ministerial Council, will be forwarded via the National Senior Officials Committee for information and discussion but will proceed to Ministers without change.

### National Industry Skills Committee

The National Quality Council will formally engage with the National Industry Skills Committee. They will work together to ensure industry's views inform the quality assurance arrangements for training packages, accredited courses and registered training providers.

#### Australian Qualifications Framework Advisory Board

The National Quality Council will nominate representatives of vocational and technical education to the Australian Qualifications Framework Advisory Board consistent with its charter, to ensure consistency in the relationship between the Australian Qualifications Framework and endorsed standards and qualifications.

#### Industry Skills Councils

The National Quality Council will engage formally with Industry Skills Councils.

This engagement will require Industry Skills Councils to report to the National Quality Council on all aspects of Training Package design, development, review, maintenance and implementation.

#### Training providers and other stakeholders

The National Quality Council will also establish close working relationships with Action Groups whose activities are related to its terms of reference and will liaise closely with other key stakeholders as required, consistent with the National Quality Council's work plan.

#### Protocols for engagement

The National Quality Council will work together with other elements of the national training system to establish protocols for engagement.

### **Roles and responsibilities of Chair, Deputy Chair and members**

The Chair of the National Quality Council is responsible for ensuring that advice provided to Ministers is considered and is evidence-based, and is in the best interests of industry, the national training system and individual clients.

The Chair will ensure that meetings are conducted openly and ethically and with the full participation of members, so that all members have an opportunity to contribute their views and are involved in discussions. The Deputy Chair will support the Chair in this regard.

Members of the National Quality Council will act in good faith and will represent the view of their nominating agency or stakeholder group. They will participate fully in meetings and take steps to declare or avoid any real or perceived conflict of interest.

### **Meeting arrangements**

The National Quality Council will meet four to six times a year. Meetings may be conducted face-to-face, by telephone, by video-conference or any combination of these.

A quorum will be a simple majority of members. In extenuating circumstances, members may nominate a proxy to attend meetings, with the agreement of their nominating agency and the Chair of the National Quality Council. A member cannot nominate a proxy for more than two meetings within a year.

The National Quality Council will make decisions based on the best available information, recognising varying views of members but seeking to reach decisions through consensus. Members will support National Quality Council resolutions once made.

Meeting agendas and papers will be provided through an independent secretariat, following clearance by the Chair.

### **Remuneration**

The Chair and members of the National Quality Council will be paid appropriate sitting fees and travelling allowances.

A member is not entitled to be paid any remuneration if that member holds an office or appointment, or is otherwise employed, on a full-time basis in the service or employment of the Commonwealth, a State or Territory.

### **Work plan and Budget**

The National Quality Council will prepare an annual work plan, including an indicative budget, for consideration by the Ministerial Council. The work plan will be funded on a three year basis from the Commonwealth-State Agreement for Skilling Australia's Workforce. The National Quality Council budget will be set annually by the Ministerial Council.

The approved work plan will provide the basis for the work of the National Quality Council on an annual basis. Ministerial Council's agreement must be sought for any significant variation to this work plan, including any major new pieces of work. Attachment A outlines 2006 priorities for the National Quality Council as detailed in the *Framework for the New National Training System*.

Funds will also be provided to cover the operational aspects of the National Quality Council, including the conduct of meetings and related travel/accommodation of members.

Financial support for the Secretariat will be shared between jurisdictions with the Australian Government contributing 50 per cent and the States and Territories contributing the remainder, apportioned according to the formula for the National Centre for Vocational and Educational Research, ie resident population figures published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Based on

the March Quarter 2004 figures, the current Commonwealth/State/Territory breakdown is as follows:

Commonwealth	50.00%
New South Wales	17.16%
Victoria	12.74%
Queensland	9.98%
Western Australia	5.30%
South Australia	4.21%
Tasmania	1.58%
Australian Capital Territory	1.19%
Northern Territory	0.88%

### **Secretariat arrangements**

The National Quality Council will be supported by an independent secretariat, to be managed within a Ministerial company. This secretariat will be shared by the National Industry Skills Committee.

The joint secretariat will comprise a Secretariat leader, one senior staff member to support the National Quality Council, one senior staff member to support the National Industry Skills Committee and up to three administrative support staff.

The National Quality Council/National Industry Skills Committee secretariat will establish a close working arrangement with the Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education/National Senior Officials Committee secretariat. This will allow for the appropriate exchange of agendas, relevant papers and resolutions of the respective committees.

**List of priorities for the National Quality Council from *the Framework for the New National Training System***

For 2006, priorities for the National Quality Council include:

- seeking ongoing improvement of training packages including by:
  - driving process in implementing the recommendations of the High Level Review of Training Packages.
  - ensuring all training package qualifications are available as New Apprenticeship pathways.
  - ensuring qualifications can be delivered in a modular way that reflects the skill needs of industry rather than institutional needs.
- commissioning an independent review of State and Territory performance against the AQTF Standards, with an emphasis on identifying any areas where the standards are being applied inconsistently;
- on the basis of that review, recommend appropriate options to the Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education to achieve a significant improvement in the national consistency of registration and audit practices within 12 months of the new Commonwealth-State Agreement for Skilling Australia's Workforce being signed;
- developing an outcomes based audit model to address concerns that the Australian Quality Training Framework is too strongly focused on inputs and processes;
- commissioning strategic nationally coordinated audits, in all States and Territories, of high risk training areas, as determined by the Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education;
- developing a national model for offshore auditing and commissioning a pilot series of offshore audits;
- developing a single User Choice contract template for RTOs; and
- conducting a regular audit of accredited courses to ensure they are not being accredited in areas where relevant training package qualifications exist.

The implementation of priorities will be subject to the work plan submitted by the National Quality Council and endorsed by the Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education.