

2005



Australian
Quality
Training
Framework

• AQT Overview

• • •
AQT Overview

What is the Australian Quality Training Framework?

The Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) is the set of nationally agreed quality assurance arrangements for training and assessment services delivered by training organisations.

The AQTF is one of three core elements in the system of vocational education and training that operates in Australia, known as the National Training Framework.

The National Training Framework



The key objective of the AQTF is to provide the basis for a nationally consistent, high quality vocational education and training system. The AQTF comprises two sets of quality standards:

- *Standards for Registered Training Organisations* – registered training organisations (RTOs) must meet these standards in order to deliver and assess nationally recognised training and issue nationally recognised qualifications. There are 12 standards dealing with a range of matters, including learning and assessment strategies, staff competence, record keeping and quality systems.
- *Standards for State and Territory Registering/Course Accrediting Bodies* – these standards provide a common framework for the authorities in each state and territory that register and audit training organisations and accredit courses.

The AQTF standards were developed in collaboration with state and territory governments and the Australian Government, industry and training organisations. The original standards were fully implemented on 1 July 2002. The current standards are an updated version and will be implemented from 1 July 2005.

The principle of national recognition

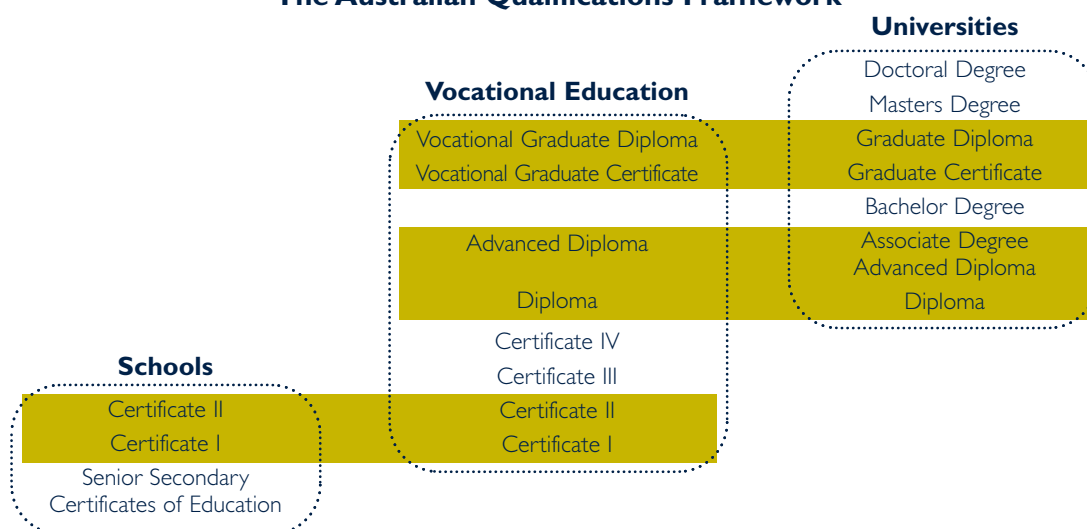
National recognition is the cornerstone of the AQTF. The principle of national recognition features in both sets of the AQTF standards and its implementation is critical to the operation of a nationally consistent vocational education and training system.

National recognition has two elements:

- national recognition of RTOs – each state and territory has agreed to recognise the decisions of all other states and territories in registering training organisations under the AQTF. This enables an RTO to operate in any state and territory without a further registration process.
- national recognition of qualifications and statements of attainment – RTOs must recognise and accept Australian Qualifications Framework qualifications and statements of attainment issued by other RTOs. This enables individuals to have national portability of the qualifications and statements of attainment they undertake.

The Australian Qualifications Framework sets out all nationally agreed education and training qualifications in Australia. The vocational education and training sector delivers eight qualifications under this framework – from Certificate I to Vocational Graduate Diploma.

The Australian Qualifications Framework



Why become registered?

A training organisation must be registered (and therefore meet the *Standards for Registered Training Organisations*) if it wants to issue qualifications under the Australian Qualifications Framework and deliver the associated training and/or undertake assessment. Registration is a nationally recognised 'stamp of approval'. Only RTOs can:

- deliver training, assess and issue qualifications or statements of attainment within the Australian Qualifications Framework that are recognised and accepted by industry and other RTOs throughout Australia
- use the nationally recognised training logo
- be listed on the national register for recording information about nationally recognised training (the National Training Information Service)
- be approved to provide vocational education and training courses to overseas students
- be eligible to tender for public funding to deliver vocational education and training.

Clients benefit from:

- national recognition of qualifications gained
- knowing that their training is being delivered by an organisation which meets national standards
- enhanced career prospects because the qualifications are based on identified industry needs
- access to recognition of prior learning (ie the formal acknowledgement of a person's competencies, regardless of how, when or where the learning occurred)
- opportunities for articulation into further training and/or higher education.

How to become registered

To become registered, a training organisation must apply to the registering body in the state or territory where the organisation has its head office, or where it will conduct most or all of its training and assessment, and pay the fees set by that registering body. The state or territory registering body is responsible for the decision to register a training organisation and for auditing RTOs for compliance with the *Standards for Registered Training Organisations*.

When a training organisation becomes registered, the registering body records its details and the courses it delivers on a public national register, known as the National Training Information Service.

Registration is for up to five years (unless suspended or cancelled). Because registration has national effect, only one registration application, and the payment of one registration fee, is required. An RTO may, however, be required to pay additional fees, for example if it applies to change its scope of registration or if an audit of operations outside the state or territory of registration is required.

What is the scope of registration?

The RTO's scope of registration specifies the Australian Qualifications Framework qualifications and/or units of competency the training organisation is registered to issue and the training and/or assessment services it is registered to provide.

Details of the proposed scope of registration are required in the initial application for registration, together with the strategies for delivering and assessing each qualification that the training organisation intends to deliver.

During the period of registration, an RTO may seek to extend its scope of registration by applying to the body that registered it.

How and when will audits occur?

The initial registration of a training organisation will include an audit against the *Standards for Registered Training Organisations*. The state and territory registering body uses this first audit as part of the process of evaluating whether to register a training organisation. Newly registered training organisations will also be audited within 12 months of registration.

Continuing registration depends on ongoing compliance with the *Standards for Registered Training Organisations*. Each year, an RTO conducts its own internal audit against the standards, as part of a continuous improvement process. In addition, during the five-year registration period, the registering body will conduct external audits of the RTO. Audits may occur if there is a variation to the scope of registration, following a formal complaint or in a process of risk management. They may range from a full audit, to a partial or desk-top audit of documentation only.

States and territories also conduct strategic audits each year that focus on a particular part of the system. Strategic audits may be conducted for a particular industry, a particular qualification, a method of training delivery, a type of RTO or a specific state or territory priority.

Upon request, an RTO is required to provide information to the registering body about all of its operations, including interstate, flexible learning, on-line and overseas operations, to assist the registering body to determine the extent of an audit. All information obtained during audits remains confidential. RTOs are required to pay any fees set by the registering body for audits, including fees for audit of interstate or overseas operations.

Making registration decisions and sanctions

Based on the outcomes of audit and evaluation processes, a state or territory registering body may continue or cancel registration, extend or reduce the scope of registration of an RTO, and/or impose sanctions.

If an RTO does not comply with the standards, the steps taken will depend on the severity of the non-compliance. The registering body may ask the RTO to develop a strategy for correcting the non-compliance and allow it time to comply. If the non-compliance is not corrected within an agreed time, sanctions will be imposed. These may include the suspension or cancellation of registration.

The partnership option

The AQTF allows RTOs to partner with or sub-contract other organisations or individuals to conduct training or undertake assessment on their behalf. These are often enterprises or schools, which may not wish to become registered as a training organisation themselves.

Under such a partnership arrangement, the RTO develops and monitors a formal agreement which outlines the responsibilities of all parties for complying with the *Standards for Registered Training Organisations*. The RTO has full responsibility for the quality of training and assessment and the qualifications and statements of attainment issued. All assessment must be conducted by, or in partnership with the RTO. Only the RTO can issue qualifications and statements of attainment.

Using the nationally recognised training logo

The nationally recognised training logo is used on all Australian Qualifications Framework qualifications, statements of attainment and certificates relating to courses that meet the requirements of the AQTF. Only RTOs can use the logo and only for training that is within its scope of registration. The logo can only be used on promotional material in accordance with its specifications for use.

Following registration, the state or territory registering body will provide the RTO with an electronic version of the logo, along with specifications for its use.

The Nationally Recognised Training logo



Additional requirements for delivery to overseas students

An RTO may offer vocational education and training to overseas students in Australia only if it is listed on the Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students. It must apply for this approval from the state or territory in which it is seeking to deliver the training to overseas students.

To be registered on the Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students, the RTO needs to comply with the *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* and follow the *National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students*. These requirements are additional to the AQTF.

What's in the Standards for State and Territory Registering/Course Accrediting Bodies?

The *Standards for State and Territory Registering/Course Accrediting Bodies* provide the framework for how states and territories audit and evaluate training organisations to ensure they meet and continue to meet the *Standards for Registered Training Organisations*. They also set out standards for states and territories for accrediting courses.

Operation of the AQTF

