

## Quality Council Focus

*The National Quality Council (NQC) is a Committee of the Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education (MCVTE). The Council plays a key role in bringing together industry, unions, governments, equity groups and providers to oversee and support the quality of vocational and technical education across Australia.*

Welcome to the sixth *Quality Council Focus*, a regular newsletter from the Chair and Members of the National Quality Council. The Council seeks to strengthen relationships with its key stakeholders, by providing relevant news and updates on progress of work being undertaken by the Council.



## From The Chair

It has been a busy start to 2008 for the National Quality Council.

The recent NQC Planning Day on 27 March, gave Council members the opportunity to set strategic directions, review the annual work plan and consider how the NQC might best respond to COAG priorities in driving the quality agenda.

The Planning Day was the first meeting of the revised NQC, with a new membership totalling 14 people. The reduced membership positions the Council to operate efficiently and effectively in delivering on its Charter.

Importantly, the NQC is still made up of representatives from industry, unions, equity, Commonwealth, State, and Territory governments, and training providers. This combined experience provides a strong foundation on which the Council will deliver its 2008 Work Plan.

I am pleased to announce that the NQC has agreed to establish three Standing Committees in 2007: Training Packages; Quality; and VET Workforce Development. The three Standing Committees will ensure the successful achievement of the Council's 2008 Work Plan in delivering on national initiatives.

Throughout the year, I will be engaging extensively with system stakeholders including Training Ministers, peak industry bodies, Industry Skills Councils (ISCs), unions, and Commonwealth, State and Territory Training officials. These meetings will provide an opportunity to discuss the activities of the NQC as well as strengthen relationships. I will also be presenting at a number of key national VET conferences and events to report on the progress of the 2008 NQC Work Plan and Council priorities.

My recent participation in the 2020 Summit brought home to me the critical role of "quality" in training, particularly in light of Australia's future prosperity and skill requirements. As Chair of the NQC, I look forward to continuing to work with Council members and all stakeholders in building a world-class national training system.

Regards,



Patrick McKendry

Chair

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**PROFILE****Mary Hicks**

**Director Employment and Training**

**Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI)**

Ms Mary Hicks is the Director of Employment and Training for the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI). In this position Ms Hicks plays a catalytic role in consulting with ACCI business and industry members to develop employment, education and training policy and in representing ACCI views with stakeholders. She provides leadership and support to ACCI members in utilising the ACCI network in the education and training area.

Previously Ms Hicks was a senior secondary school teacher and has also worked in Government and business. Ms Hicks has extensive community experience including work with the Alliance Française. She was awarded the National Order of Merit by the President of France for her services to the study of French in 2005.

Ms Hicks has a well-rounded background and an extensive knowledge of the needs of business and industry. She is committed to and passionate about achieving quality outcomes in education and training for the benefit of the Australian community. She is a member of the Board of World Skills Australia, the National Quality Council (NQC) and the Training Packages Standing Committee and is Deputy Chair of the NQC Quality Standing Committee.

**NQC PLANNING DAY OUTCOMES**

The National Quality Council held its first planning day for 2008 on 27 March. The day was facilitated by Peter Noonan (Peter Noonan Consulting). It was agreed that the program for the day would be considered within three broad areas: 2008 Priorities for the NQC; more effective ways of working; and stakeholder engagement and communication.

**2008 Priorities for the NQC**

Members identified three clear priority areas with a potential additional priority to be considered after the development of a scoping paper for a future meeting. They also identified a number of contextual issues which would need to be considered across all priorities.

The three agreed priority areas are:

- 1 Training Packages** – ensuring that the next generation of Training Packages provide greater flexibility and adaptability, including consideration at the strategic level of the industrial issues that could make this outcome difficult. This to include addressing broader issues around the concept of workforce development.
  - 2 VET workforce development** – ensuring that the VET workforce in particular has the capacity to meet growth and demand in the delivery of quality training outcomes.
  - 3 Quality** – the ongoing responsibility for ensuring the quality management of the national training system to deliver quality training outcomes, including regulation, accountabilities and decision-making processes.
- An additional priority is:
- 4 International** – including offshore delivery, the quality of training associated with demand generated through overseas students seeking permanent residence and skills recognition.

Contextual issues to be considered across all priorities include:

- Provision and demand - specifically

relating to the impact of the additional Commonwealth funded places, including the issue of the level of work placement requirements (e.g. health)

- The importance of enabling skills such as literacy, communication and learning to learn skills as key elements of strategies to help boost workforce participation and improve social inclusion;
- The potential for future growth of VET in schools provision (e.g. through trades training centres)
- The implications of the 'innovation agenda'
- The implications of general workforce development

**More effective ways of working**

Members discussed more effective ways of working including improvements to the Training Package endorsement process, strategies to improve policy development and communication of outcomes, more effective Standing Committee operations, amendments to NQC meeting and decision making processes, and NQC representation on other committees.

**Stakeholder communication and engagement**

Members recognised the need to improve and regularise Council's engagement and communication with its stakeholders and agreed that a strategy should be developed as part of the 2008 NQC Work plan.

**QUALITY STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT**

The Quality Standing Committee is overseeing continuing work in 2008 on components of AQTF 2007 to further increase its effectiveness and provide opportunities for continuous improvement. This ongoing work relates to:

- The deployment of quality indicators for registered training organisations; ▶

- The development and deployment of quality indicators for registering and accrediting bodies;
- The completion of the excellence criteria trial and development of the final business model for deployment of the excellence criteria to all interested registered training organisations.

## Competency Completion Quality Indicator Pilot

The NCVER pilot for the AQTF 2007 Competency Completion Quality Indicator Online System took place between Thursday 6 February and Wednesday 19 February. 50 registered training organisations representing a range of provider types and locations were invited to participate.

The pilot has allowed NCVER to test the usability of the Competency Completion Quality Indicator Online System, determine the time burden on RTOs, evaluate the draft user guide and obtain feedback and recommendations from RTOs.

The online system is pre-populated with:

- NTIS scope of registration data for all RTOs;
- Activity data for RTOs who submit to the national VET data collection (AVETMISS).

The live version of the online system will be automatically populated with the previous year's data in May of each year.

The online tool allows each RTO to access their own data only and to update actual numbers of enrolments and completions. The web-tool is designed to allow RTOs to either extract or report on competency completion data from a range of existing student records management systems. This interface component can be updated.

NCVER's recommendation arising from the pilot is that the online system is suitable for deployment to RTOs to be used for the capture and reporting of the competency completion quality indicator.

## Deployment of three quality indicators in one package

At its meeting on 13 December 2007, the National Quality Council agreed that the survey resources prepared for the AQTF 2007 Learner and Employer Quality Indicators should be provided as a Quality Indicators Resources Package to all RTOs, using an approach to promote sector-wide engagement and use which may include information sessions and training materials.

Now that the data collection tool for the third quality indicator is considered suitable for deployment as a result of the pilot, the NQC has agreed that the resources for all three indicators be provided to RTOs as one package using the AQTF 2007 branding. This is expected to reduce confusion amongst RTOs about what is required with regard to collection and reporting.

As previously advised, the Quality Indicators will be available for use in 2008, but the timeframes for information sessions and distribution of the resource package are changing. Whilst it is still expected that all RTOs will have mechanisms in place to collect the Quality Indicators in the 2008 calendar year, the reporting for this will take place in 2009. Distribution of the resource package and supporting information sessions are expected to take place from mid year.

## AQTF 2007 Excellence Criteria Trial

As part of the Expression of Interest process 94 submissions were received from RTOs around Australia by 18 February 2008. A Standing Committee of the TVET Australia Board selected 16 RTOs (6 large, 5 medium and 5 small) providing for a balance of provider size (small, medium and large), type (public, private, community, enterprise and industry) and location (metro, regional and rural). The RTOs selected for the Trial are:

**ACT:** Wisdom Learning; Canberra Institute of Technology

**NSW:** Association of Superannuation Funds of Australia; TAFE NSW Western Institute

**QLD:** First Impressions Resources; Triple A Training; Sunshine Coast Institute of TAFE

**SA:** The Open Access and Marden Senior College

**TAS:** TAFE Tasmania

**VIC:** Workstar; BRACE Education Training and Employment; Australian Vocational Training and Employment Services; BEST Community Development; East Gippsland Institute of TAFE

**WA:** Western Australian Police Academy; Challenger TAFE

As part of the Trial, the RTOs will develop a 'self-evaluation report' outlining how they meet the AQTF Excellence Criteria, and will then be externally evaluated by a Panel of industry experts. An information session for the selected RTOs was held on 5 March 2008. RTOs attending the session indicated a strong desire to go beyond the Essential Standards of AQTF 2007 and to demonstrate their excellence to students, industry and Governments as well as gain recognition of excellence, internally for their staff. The Trial will be completed by the end of July 2008.

## TRAINING PACKAGES STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT

Over the last year, this Committee has provided strategic oversight of a number of NQC projects designed to ensure Training Packages are sufficiently flexible and responsive to changing industry and client needs and workplace practices.

## Streamlining the Training Package Development and Endorsement Process

A major project to streamline Training Packages development and endorsement processes to make them faster and more responsive to industry priorities for new and updated skills has now been completed. The new model, Training Packages Development and Endorsement Process 2008, which gives Industry Skills Councils (ISCs) greater responsibility and accountability for the final product, is being successively

implemented and from 1 April will apply for all new Training Package development work. As part of the new model, all ISCs will be developing and publishing on their websites, a number of new documents including an annual Environmental Scan (see below for further details of the purpose and content of the Scan), an annually updated Continuous Improvement Plan, and a Case for Endorsement to support each Training Package submitted for endorsement. An overview of the new model providing details of the underpinning principles, processes and key documents is available from [http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training\\_skills/policy\\_issues\\_reviews/training\\_package\\_development\\_endorsement\\_process\\_2008.htm](http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training_skills/policy_issues_reviews/training_package_development_endorsement_process_2008.htm)

### Improving industry confidence in VET assessment

A project to investigate industry confidence in and expectations of VET assessment across non-licensed industry sectors is nearing completion. The investigation, which has involved a national on-line survey, covers both employer and employee perceptions and expectations of VET assessment processes and outcomes. Anticipated outcomes include examples of best practice around industry engagement in VET assessment processes and industry supported strategies for increasing industry confidence in the outcomes of VET assessment. Outcomes from this project, including details of any further work to improve the quality of VET assessment which emerges, will be provided in the next newsletter.

### Engaging stakeholders on policy options for the next generation of Training Packages

Over the last six months the Committee has overseen a number of developmental projects scoping issues and options around the next generation of Training Packages and the future construction of units of competency. A special teleconference meeting of the Council will be held in late May in order to finalise a consultation tool and strategy to effectively engage industry,

providers and other stakeholders in the discussion of policy options in order to identify the way forward in this critical area.

### INDUSTRY SKILLS COUNCILS – ENVIRONMENTAL SCANS

As part of their contractual arrangements with the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), all ISCs are now required to prepare an annual Environmental Scan (the Scan). The Scan is a formative document which captures and analyses the most recent grass-roots industry intelligence gathered by each ISC and identifies existing and emerging skill shortages and training requirements. The Scans will provide the NQC with valuable contextual information to inform Training Package policy and will also provide Skills Australia (a new independent statutory authority with responsibility for providing the Government with advice on future skills needs and investment of public funds in training) with up-to-date industry information to assist in its analysis of Australia's workforce development needs.

Copies of the Environmental Scans are publicly available and can be downloaded from <http://www.isc.org.au>

### EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

The second stage project to develop and initiate an employability skills communication strategy, initiate roll-out of an employability skills professional development strategy and establish a website to facilitate reporting of employability skills has now been completed.

A detailed communication strategy and a range of associated materials targeting learners, employers and RTO staff have been developed and widely disseminated. All these materials have been consolidated on the training.com site and can be downloaded from <http://www.training.com.au/portal/site/public/menuitem.217c2722b4441eacc715a2b917a62dbc/>

The website to facilitate reporting of employability skills by providing public access to the Employability Skills Summaries for Training Package

qualifications has been established at <http://employabilityskills.training.com.au>. Summaries are being added as they are developed by ISCs through the embedding of employability skills processes. Details of the transition arrangements agreed by the Council for moving to the new reporting arrangements- including dates by which providers will be required to provide learners with the URL for the website from which they can download an Employability Skills Summary on completion of a Training Package qualification- are provided in the Employability Skills Official Communiqué included as an attachment to this newsletter.

The NQC has no planned further employability skills related projects and key stakeholders including States and Territories will now be responsible for the further roll-out of the communication and professional development strategy as they see fit within their various jurisdictions and constituencies.

### NATIONAL INDUSTRY SKILLS COMMITTEE (NISC) WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STARTER TOOL

During 2007 the NISC coordinated the development of a user-friendly, web-based Workforce Development Starter Tool to assist employers and enterprises in identifying and proactively addressing their future workforce skill requirements.

Features of the online tool include a series of dynamic and interactive screens, which enable the user to enter basic information about their organisation and then receive summary details about the factors affecting their workforce. The user can also review future forecasts and issues pertinent to their business and workforce.

The online Workforce Development Starter Tool will be publicly launched during May 2008 and, following the launch, the tool will be available, free of charge, from the NISC website: <http://www.nisc.tvetaustralia.com.au/>

## USER CHOICE

A national User Choice Steering Group, set up in 2006 to create a national User Choice contract template and a price table, has completed its work. A User Choice price table including indicative prices and caveats is available at Australian Apprenticeships Training Information Service at [www.aatinfo.com.au](http://www.aatinfo.com.au). Any user can log on to the website, search for a given qualification, and find an indicative price for that qualification offered by each jurisdiction. The website is currently maintained through funding provided by DEEWR.

A User Choice contract template was also completed and is now in the public domain. The template is not a pro-forma contract, but rather a set of minimum standards that apply should RTOs wish to apply for User Choice. A copy of the template is available on the WA training website <http://www.det.wa.edu.au> but providers should seek advice from the State Training Authority in their own jurisdiction in relation to User Choice funding arrangements.

**For further information please contact:  
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## 2008 Future NQC Meeting Dates

26 June	NQC meeting (all day)
25 September	NQC meeting (all day)
6 Nov	ISC CEOs forum (PM - TBC) - Environmental Scans
7 Nov	NQC 2009 Planning Day (all day)
4 Dec	NQC meeting (all day)

## ACRONYMS

**AEI** Australian Education International

**AESOC** Australian Education Systems Officials Committee

**AQF** Australian Qualifications Framework

**AQFAB** Australian Qualifications Framework Advisory Board

**AQTF** Australian Quality Training Framework

**AVETMISS** Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard

**COAG** Council of Australian Governments

**DEEWR** Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

**ISC** Industry Skills Council

**MCVTE** Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education

**NSOC** National Senior Officials Committee

**NISC** National Industry Skills Committee

**NTIS** National Training Information Service

**NCVER** National Centre for Vocational Education Research

**NQC** National Quality Council

**MCEETYA** Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs

**RTO** Registered Training Organisation



### Transition to new arrangements for reporting on employability skills

At its July 2007 meeting the Council endorsed an approach to descriptive reporting on employability skills which involves: learners downloading qualification specific Employability Skills Summaries for Training Package qualifications they have completed from an internet site; and RTOs adding a mandatory sentence providing directions to the site to all qualification testamurs for Training Package qualifications.

The website housing the Employability Skills Summaries for Training Package qualifications has now been established. In order to allow sufficient time for RTOs to modify their qualification testamurs to include the mandatory sentence, at its March 2008 meeting the Council agreed to the following two step process for moving to the new reporting arrangements:

- From 1 July 2008, RTOs will be required to inform all students issued with Training Package qualifications that Employability Skills Summaries for Training Package qualifications can be downloaded from <http://employabilityskills.training.com.au> ; and
- From 1 January 2009, RTOs will be required to add the following mandatory sentence to all qualification testamurs issued for Training Package qualifications:

A summary of the employability skills developed through this qualification can be downloaded from <http://employabilityskills.training.com.au>

The AQF Implementation Handbook will be changed to reflect the requirement for RTOs to add the mandatory sentence to Training Package qualification testamurs from 1 January 2009.