

**WESTERN AUSTRALIAN SUMMARY AND
SUPPLEMENT**
to
**AUSTRALIAN QUALITY TRAINING FRAMEWORK
GUIDELINES FOR COURSE DEVELOPERS**
ANTA 2002, MELBOURNE

Version 2

July 2005

Notes:

In this document the indented text appearing in *italics* is quoted direct from the *Guidelines For Course Developers*.

Statements in standard font are clarifications or additions included by the Western Australian Training Accreditation Council in association with the Department of Education and Training.

The numbering system in this document refers to the clauses in the Guidelines for Course Developers as a consequence some of the numbers are not sequential because in some cases no additional information is provided in relation to a particular clause.

Introduction

Purpose

Accreditation of courses is primarily determined by Standards 27 and 28 from the AQTF Standards for State and Territory Registering/Course Accrediting Bodies. These are available on the web. The Australian National Training Authority, in conjunction with the State and Territory Training Authorities, have developed *Guidelines for the Development of Vocational Education and Training Courses for Accreditation under the AQTF*. This is also available on the web. The purpose of this supplement is to provide a brief summary and specific detail and/or interpretation to the use of these guidelines in Western Australia. All indented text appearing in *italics* below is quoted direct from the *Guidelines for Course Developers*.

What Is Accreditation?

Accreditation is the process used to formally recognise national qualifications not covered by nationally endorsed Training Packages. (Guidelines for course Developers 2002, p. 1)

What Does Accreditation Mean?

Accreditation means the course is nationally recognised and that a registered training organisation (RTO) can issue a nationally recognised qualification or statement of attainment following its full or partial completion. Once a course has been accredited, it is listed on the national training information service (NTIS) by the course accrediting body.

(Guidelines for Course Developers 2002, p. 1)

Who Can Apply For Accreditation?

An organisation or individual responsible for the development of a course may apply to have a course accredited. The course developer does not need to be a RTO.

(Guidelines for Course Developers 2002, p. 1)

Who Is Responsible for Accreditation in the Vocational Education And Training System?

The state or territory course accrediting body, or its delegate, is responsible for the accreditation of courses.

(Guidelines for Course Developers 2002, p. 2)

In Western Australia, the Training Accreditation Council is the State Accrediting Body. The Council does not delegate its accrediting power. The Council generally meets as full Council or as an Executive Committee twice per month to handle applications for accreditation. The Council's address is:

The Executive Officer, Training Accreditation Council, 22 Hasler road, Osborne Park, WA 6017. E-mail tac@det.wa.edu.au

What can be Accredited?

A course leading to an AQF qualification including Vocational Graduate Certificates and Vocational Graduate Diplomas or a statement of attainment can be accredited. This includes a course based on:

- A combination of units of competence from one or more Training Packages, or groups of endorsed national units of competence, where the outcomes of the new course meet industry, enterprise and/or community needs not covered by existing Training Packages; or*
- Units of competence developed to meet an identified training need where no relevant Training Package and/or endorsed competency standards exist (e.g. specific enterprise units of competence); or*
- Modules comprising learning outcomes where the course developer can show it is not possible to develop appropriate competency standards. (Guidelines for Course Developers 2002, p. 2)*

Modules can only be used when the developer can justify that no competencies exist and it is not appropriate to create any. If there are any Australian occupational outcomes, competencies are mandatory. See section 2.1 for more detail.

What will not be accredited

A state or territory course accrediting body will not accredit a course if:

- The outcomes can be achieved through the customisation of a Training Package in accordance with the packaging rules and customisation advice;*
- The course is a sub-set of a Training Package qualification which could be recognised through one or more statements of attainment;*
- The course includes competencies additional to those in a Training Package qualification that could be recognised through one or more statements of attainment, in addition to an AQF qualification;*
- The course is made up of modules that ultimately achieve the competencies of a Training Package qualification; or*
- The course is made up of modules comprising learning outcomes and the developer has not demonstrated that units of competence cannot be developed.
(Guidelines for Course Developers 2002, p. 2)*

The influence of Training Packages is now significant. There are now over 70 public Training Packages, more than 1,500 qualifications, and more than 15,000 competencies. There are only small industry sectors that sit outside the scope of the Packages. The nature of competencies, each with a wide range of variables, and the need to contextualise each competency into a specific setting, provides coverage that expands beyond what is seen at first glance. The capacity to customise many qualifications adds to this scope of coverage.

National Recognition of Accredited Courses

Once a course has been accredited by a course accrediting body and placed on the NTIS, it will be recognised in all other States and Territories without the need for further accreditation in those States and Territories. (Guidelines for Course Developers 2002, p. 2)

This is a key point. All other jurisdictions and RTOs are expected to recognise any accredited course, so it is imperative that all courses meet the standards specified under AQTF. It is the role of course proponents to ensure their submissions meet these standards. It is the role of the Training Accreditation Council to accept and accredit only those courses that do. If doubt exists, the Council will reject the application.

1.1 Research

Establish the industry, industry sector, enterprise and/or community need for a new course and determine the scope of the course. (Guidelines for Course Developers 2002, p. 7)

The important point here is the distinction between developing a course to meet an established need and developing a course and retrospectively seeking industry or community support to justify its accreditation. The Guidelines note the need to consult with industry or the community before and during development. This must be documented in the submission document. In Western Australia, it is the role of Industry Training Councils to provide advice on training needs in their industries. National Industry Skills Councils also provide valuable information on national trends in their industries.

In the case of courses developed to address a community need, course developers should endeavour to obtain as much evidence as possible in relation to the consultation process which was undertaken and the approval provided by the community and other stakeholders.

2.1 Units Of Competence

Standard 28.1a Standards for State and Territory Registering/Course Accrediting Bodies

Units of competence - the course must be based on nationally endorsed units of competence where available. Where these are not available, it must be based on competency standards developed in accordance with

the current Training Package Development Handbook (including key competencies) and in consultation with, and validated by, appropriate industry, enterprise, community and/or professional groups (the only exception to this is where the proponent can establish to the satisfaction of the course accrediting body that it is not possible to develop appropriate competency standards, for example in some general education areas)

(Guidelines for Course Developers 2002, p. 9)

In a competency based training system, it is clear that competencies form the base of all courses. In this section the advice with regard to general education is that in some instances competencies may not be appropriate. Consequently, only in limited cases will courses not based on competencies be accepted. Any application that alludes to Australian occupational or vocational outcomes will need to be based upon competencies. As a general principle, anything that can be created as a course can be documented as a competency, so very strong justification will be required before courses written in modules will be accepted.

2.1b Developing Units of Competence

Unit Code

A national coding system uniquely identifies each Training Package and nationally endorsed units of competence, as well as 'stand alone' competency standards.

The State and Territory course accrediting body may allocate a code to specific enterprise units of competence, but national codes are only allocated to nationally endorsed units of competence in Training Packages.

(Guidelines for Course Developers 2002, p. 10)

As specified for Training Packages, the unit code is up to 14 characters. In Western Australia the first seven characters will be coded as the RTO's National Identification Number (eg WA52342....). The proponent will need to uniquely identify their competencies with the remaining seven characters.

2.1c Developing Modules

If a course has no clear workplace or vocational outcomes, the development of units of competence may not be appropriate. In such cases, the course developer must justify this to the State or Territory course accrediting body. In this case, modules comprising learning outcomes may be used as a basis for a course, rather than units of competence.

(Guidelines for Course Developers 2002, p. 11)

As noted above, the presentation of courses based upon modules will need to be accompanied with clear demonstration that competencies are not appropriate. This demonstration will need to show why it is not possible, what attempts were made and where the barriers lie.

What is a module

A module is a description of a learning outcome which is not in competency based format. The most common method of drafting a module involves the determination of educational objectives this is called “**Criterion Referenced Instruction**”. Mager¹ lists three characteristics of objectives :

- Performance – What will the student be able to do?
- Conditions – The conditions under which performance occurs.
- Criteria - An explicit description of acceptable performance

When May A Module Be Used?

General Principle:

A module should only be developed when the course developer can satisfy the accrediting body that it is *not possible to develop appropriate competency standards, for example in some general education areas. (RCAB standard 28.1b)*

Some Possible Applications:

- General education programs such as literacy and numeracy where the nature of the outcome is to prepare the student to enter either academic streams of study or training.
- General education programs which articulate to qualifications in higher education but have no vocational outcome. These will normally be AQF Certificate IV, AQF Diploma or AQF Advanced Diploma.
- Courses which are enabling, bridging or foundation which permit a student to enter either an academic program or a training program. These often involve a mixture of units of competence and modules, in these circumstance the facilitator must be able to conduct competency based assessment.
- In vocational courses where there is a significant amount of underpinning knowledge which is applicable to number of different units of competence. In these circumstances it may be preferable to teach the principles as a module and have this module as a prerequisite for a range of units of competence rather than include the underpinning knowledge in each units of competence.

¹ P21 Mager,R (1975) Preparing instructional Objectives (2nd Ed.) Belmont, California; Pitman Learning.

- Courses that are not intended for people wishing to enter the Australian workforce. In these courses the main target may be overseas students and the course may in part be delivered either overseas or in Australia. In either case the Australian standards lack relevance.

2.2a Assessment

This section of the application refers to general principles of assessment for the course, The detailed assessment requirements for units of competence or for modules are provided within the specification of each unit or module.

2.3a Packaging And Titling

A course developer must:

- *package units of competence or modules into combinations meaningful to the industry, enterprise or community bodies involved in the course development;*
- *determine the AQF qualification by assessing the course outcomes against the distinguishing features of the AQF qualifications; and*
- *give the course a name in accordance with the AQF titling protocol.*

The AQF Implementation Handbook 2002 provides details on these issues, including how to determine the qualification and course title. The course must not have the same title as a Training Package qualification. (Guidelines for Course Developers 2002, p. 14)

The course title should accurately describe the course and not be misleading to the public.

2.3b Accrediting Courses Leading Only to a Statement of Attainment.

A course may meet an identified industry/enterprise/community need but may not have the breadth and depth required for a qualification, as stated in the guidelines for qualifications in the AQF Implementation Handbook 2002. In this case, the requirement to package units of competence still applies and the course will lead to a Statement of Attainment. Courses that lead only to a statement of attainment, rather than a qualification, must comply with the standards for State And Territory Registering/Course Accrediting Bodies. The AQF titling protocol is still to be used for a course that results in a Statement of Attainment, with the exception that the course title will read 'Course in'. A unit of competence is the smallest subset of a Training Package qualification that can result in a Statement of Attainment.

(Guidelines for Course Developers 2002, p. 14)

- The concept of breadth and depth is not clearly specified in AQF or AQTF documentation. As a guide, course developers should take note of the number and dimensions of competencies in the qualifications in Training Packages in related industry sectors. If a Certificate II in a comparable Package is based on 10 competencies, it would suggest that 10 competencies is an indicator of the appropriate number units of competence to be included at Certificate II level. Working on 10 competencies as average, adding or subtracting 30% to the accepted number of competencies (ie seven to thirteen competencies) might be justified, but offering half or fewer competencies than the accepted number would have to be justified.
- It must be noted that in developing a “short course” the requirements of course accreditation still apply. Thus the need for inclusion into the course development of competencies, the definition of assessment guidelines, the gathering of evidence that is sufficient, valid, reliable and fair, and the avoidance of duplication of Training Packages is still important. As the broadest interpretation of inclusiveness is taken by the Training Accreditation Council, it is likely in the future that many “short courses” will be seen as duplicating one or more Training Packages as related studies. As the scope of Packages widens, proponents therefore need to be aware that it is permissible to customise or contextualise the required skills and knowledge for components of a unit of competence, expand the range statement and increase the underpinning knowledge and skills when looking for the boundaries of competencies.
- A course can be accredited if it is a collection of a small number of competencies from different Training Packages. There must be a clear industry demand, and the same collection of units must not be able to be combined into an existing qualification, and thereby awarded a statement of attainment in partial completion of that qualification.

The following cannot be accredited as a short course:

- a single unit of competence from a Training Package

2.4 Access and Pathways

A course must not contain any implicit limitations to access and pathways based on age, gender, employment, social or educational background. If a limitation exists, it must be justified at the time the course is submitted for accreditation. (Guidelines for Course Developers 2002, p. 15)

It is important that no unnecessary restrictions are placed on entry to the course, and exit points that would justify the award of a lower AQF qualification must be identified and accredited.

Note on the Recognition of Prior Learning

The AQTF provides for two forms of recognition of prior learning: mutual recognition which is an administrative process by which relevant units of competence or modules delivered by another RTO are automatically recognised for credit or entry, and skills recognition (RPL) which is a process requiring assessment of the applicant to recognise relevant competencies derived from:

- experience;
- similar training delivered by a non-RTO; and/or
- similar units of competence delivered by an RTO.

2.6 Articulation and Credit Transfers

Where appropriate, a course should offer successful participants opportunities for articulation or credit transfer as part of a training, education or career pathway. Involving relevant schools, universities or vocational education and training system representatives in consultations early in the course design process, will facilitate articulation and credit transfer.

Where appropriate, the submission for accreditation must provide details on the relevant articulation and credit transfer arrangements with courses in schools, university or the VET sector, or provide evidence of negotiations underway.

Articulation refers to the formal linkages between different levels of credentials, or credentials in different fields, or between different levels or fields of training, including enterprise-based and industry-based training. Articulation arrangements help participants move between courses and Training Packages or between education and employment without duplication of education and/or training for competencies already achieved.

Credit transfer refers to the advanced standing obtained from prior agreements between institutions or organisations on the credit value of specific courses, units of competence or modules. It is available automatically to those who have documented evidence of achievement of these. (Guidelines for Course Developers 2002, p. 16)

Credit transfer arrangements with the Higher Education Sector provide a particularly important pathway for graduates of VET training. It is desirable to complete negotiations for credit transfer prior to submission of the application for accreditation as these negotiations may impact upon the structure of units of competence / modules, and assessment processes and records in order to facilitate the smooth transition across sector boundaries and maximise the recognition available. Such arrangements can form an important part of marketing the accredited course.

2.7 Customisation of Course

Customisation means the tailoring of the course to meet the specific needs of clients, including industry sectors, enterprises and individual learners, where this does not require separate accreditation of the tailored course. A course is customised by the addition, or substitution, of units of competence on which the course is based, or modules which comprise the course, in accordance with the course rules. (Guidelines for Course Developers 2002, p. 26)

All courses should incorporate a set of course rules. These define the requirements for completion of a course, issuing of qualifications and Statements of Attainment and reporting of results against competency standards. The course rules should clearly identify at what point the level of change would require separate accreditation of the course to reflect a changed qualification outcome, consistent with the customisation principle.

In relation to customisation, the course rules should set out the limits to customisation for a particular course by identifying:

- units of competence and/or modules which are essential to completion of the qualification;
- possible sources of alternative units of competence and/or modules which may be substituted or added without further endorsement;
- the type and number of units of competence and/or modules which may be added
- or substituted without affecting the overall integrity of the qualification; and
- the extent to which units of competence and/or modules may be modified without affecting the overall integrity of the course, units or qualification.

(Guidelines for Course Developers 2002, p. 27)

Submission for Accreditation

The State or Territory course accrediting body can provide advice on the processes to be followed prior to making a submission, the format of the submission, the accompanying information it requires for consideration of a course and any associated fees. (Guidelines for Course Developers 2002, p. 18)

The Accreditation Template (ACC-1) can be found on the Training Accreditation Council's website at www.tac.wa.gov.au .