

Australian Qualifications Framework

AUSTRALIAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK COUNCIL
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Mr Tim Watling
Committee Secretary
Standing Legislation Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
ewr.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Mr Watling

Inquiry into the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Bill 2011 (the Bill)

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Bill 2011.

During the period 2009-2011, the Australian Qualifications Framework Council responded to the Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment (MCTEE) directive to strengthen the AQF which was first implemented in 1995, building on previous systems of registers and descriptions of tertiary education qualifications dating back to 1972.

MCTEE at its 19 November 2010 and 18 March 2011 meetings confirmed that the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) is the national policy spanning all education sectors and that relevant Ministerial Councils (or their successors) will continue to determine and endorse this policy.

MCTEE announced that a stronger qualifications framework will help build confidence in our system; make it easier for students to move between education sectors; will result in an increasingly integrated tertiary sector with stronger pathways between vocational education and training (VET) and higher education and will deliver greater take-up of VET in schools and greater connectedness between Australia and the global education market.

MCTEE approved the strengthened AQF as Australia's national qualifications policy covering regulated qualifications in all education and training sectors and which, as revised in 2011, encompasses the following:

- The standards for qualification learning outcomes for AQF qualification types
- The specifications for the application of the standards in the accreditation and development of qualifications
- The policy requirements for issuing AQF qualifications
- The policy requirements for qualification linkages and student pathways
- The policy requirements for the registers of:
 - organisations authorised to accredit AQF qualifications
 - organisations authorised to issue AQF qualifications
 - AQF qualifications and qualification pathways
- The policy requirements for the addition or removal of qualification types in the AQF.

The process for strengthening the AQF had included considerable involvement and discussion with the higher education sector in all aspects of the AQF.

In relation to the Bill, the AQF is defined within the Bill and an important connection between the AQF and the TEQSA standards is made through the provision that the TEQSA Qualifications Standards are to be based on the Australian Qualifications Framework. The definition of 'higher education award' in the Bill directly references AQF qualifications. It is important that this nexus is maintained to ensure that there is consistency and common understanding of the qualifications offered by Australia's higher education system through use of the AQF in the accreditation, delivery/assessment and issuance of AQF qualifications.

Should you wish to discuss any aspects of these comments, please contact me on 08 8226 2775 or ann.doolette@sa.gov.au or through aqfc@sa.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

Ann Doolette
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AQF Council