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The VET Gazette is a collection of information and relevant stories about goings on in the Vocational Education and Training sector.

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If you would like to see a particular topic covered in the next edition please contact us.

## Training Qualifications – TAE

Back in 2004 when TAA40104 first came into play, I recall some aggressive marketing based on 'you have to transition to the new qualification otherwise you won't be compliant'. I also remember receiving many calls from people about the truth in this. Well we found out it was just that, marketing. The other favourite around that time was another misconceived idea that in order to run an RTO you had to have the Diploma of Training and Assessment (TAA50104) which we also found out was inaccurate.

Fast forward to 2010. I have already seen plenty of advertising offering bridging or upgrade courses from TAA to TAE. One of our clients even told us that she received an enrolment form from an RTO already completed, requiring only a signature and payment. *Before rushing off consider a few things.*

The NQC determination made on 17 June 2010, which you will find as appendix 2 in the AQTF User Guide, outlines that the BSZ40198 Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training will be finally laid to rest in June 2012. So anyone who is relying on the old BSZ qualification to (partially) address AQTF 1.4 will need to make the transition. It further states that the decision made by NQC on 18 December 2009 which is appendix 3 to the User Guide, will hold until June 2012. **This means that there is no immediate requirement to upgrade from TAA to TAE.** What is being sold around these determinations is that TAA is to be retired by 2012. That is **not correct**.

Many will tell you that as part of a planned approach to professional development, people usually go through that 'upgrading' process anyway and I agree that should always be a consideration. Again it is worth being patient as IBSA have not yet finalised the mapping of individual units between the two packages. The TAE package gives us some guidance, but at recent workshops run by ISBA, the Skills Council representatives told people that the mapping of units was underway. IBSA have also made available on their website a self assessment tool to assist people. This can be found by following the link . . .

<http://www.ibsa.org.au/products-and-services/tabid/57/txtSearch/cp-tae/List/0/productid/2313/Default.aspx?SortField=DateCreated+DESC,ProductName>

IBSA also confirm that they have outlined that there is NO RUSH to transition from TAA to TAE. From the IBSA website:

*"IBSA would further like to draw the attention of all RTOs and current holders of TAA04 and BSZ98 qualifications to the guidance provided in the bulletin: It is important to note that the new policy includes provision for trainers and assessors to 'demonstrate equivalent competencies'. In other words, **it is not the NQC's intention to require trainers and assessors to upgrade their formal qualifications** if they are able to demonstrate they have gained the required competencies through continued professional practice. (emphasis applied by IBSA)".*

I believe that generally, as a sector, when it comes to our training and assessment qualifications, we have been perhaps focussed too much on credentials. A training and assessment qualification held by a practising trainer and assessor who has a clearly structured approach to achieving professional development in both their area of expertise and in training and assessment generally, would more than likely be vocationally competent.

Here's the bottom line. IF YOU HAVE TAA40104 YOU ARE NOT COMPELLED TO UPGRADE.

You will also see in the wording of AQTF element 1.4 that there's been a change between the AQTF 2007 version and the 2010 version. The old version has three subsections, the new one has four. The new one is really (c) where the word 'current' has crept back. Now in this case the currency relates to industry skills relevant to the training and assessment being undertaken.

But we had some clarification some time ago on what constituted vocational competencies as mentioned in the AQTF 2007 element 1.4 (b) and now it is mentioned in the AQTF2010 1.4 (b) also.

It would be an unenviable task to write the AQTF elements with any clarity and I am not too sure why the new subsection was included. By definition, vocational competency (as outlined in appendix 2) says (in part) that:

*"A person who has vocational competency will be familiar with the content of the vocation and will have relevant current experience in the industry".*

So why is a new section included focussing on currency when it is already mentioned in the definition of vocational competence? The only real difference is that the definition of vocational competency says that the person will have relevant current experience in the industry whereas the new 1.4 part (c) says that the person has to demonstrate current industry skills directly relevant.

The underlined words tell the story. Not only does the trainer and assessor have to have experience but they have to be able to demonstrate relevant skills also.

Another one for the Bermuda Triangle of VET?

## AQTF Version—2010

The other big news that has happened recently is the new version of the AQTF. For many RTOs this will have very little impact and the changes are not significant. There have already been some professional development workshops being run and you may find some of these helpful but we are going to try and summarise here for you. *NOTE: anyone who attended PD workshops leading up to July 1 will need to review these changes.* The PD workshops that were run early in the piece were done so against DRAFT standards. In fact the final version of the new AQTF standards were signed by the Ministerial Council on June 9 so if you attended a PD session before that, you may have been given the wrong or at least incomplete information because there were a few last minute changes.

The first and most obvious change is that there are now two sets of standards. One is for initial registration and the other for continuing registration. As this newsletter only goes out to existing RTOs, we have only covered the standards for continuing registration.

*Condition 1* now includes a second and third paragraph which relate to senior officers and directors or shareholders who are in a position to influence the management of the RTO having to meet fit and proper person requirements. These will be outlined by each of the STAs. The third paragraph of condition 1 relates to the decision making processes used by senior management having to be informed by trainers and assessors. This is actually quite a big change for some RTOs. CEO's and senior management decisions being informed by trainers/assessors is the focus here.

*Condition 2* has some slight changes including the new fourth dot point i.e. CEO must advise registering body about significant changes to its ownership. The last dot point is also new – upon request of the registering body, the RTOs CEO must provide financial statements.

*Condition 3* is unchanged.

*Condition 4* is unchanged.

*Condition 5* is probably the most significant change with most of it being new. New words, however similar meaning.

*Condition 5.* The intent has always been about protecting student fees and the RTO being financially viable. The second part of that hasn't changed. The RTO must be able to prove financial viability at all times during the period of registration. The new condition then prescribes what information must be provided to each client about 'the total' amount of fees. Perhaps this should have included something like 'before they enrol'. This is designed to stop the 'surprise fees' that we saw in some RTOs. It is about transparency and a bit of old fashion honesty.

The condition goes on to prescribe how any fees paid in advance must be protected and provides five options. Some of these options are very interesting. (*tip: for those who attended early PD workshops on the new standards, option (5) only crept in at the last minute.*)

## AQTF – Version 2010 continued

Option 1 is straight forward. Option 2 is obvious although I am not aware of any 'approved' scheme or in fact a process for approving a scheme. Option 3 seems to be looking like the favourite although it will take some regular invoicing. Option 4 seems unlikely in the current economic climate and option 5 may cause some headaches for registering bodies.

One particular point of interest is that under the principles of national/mutual recognition, if a registering body makes a decision about an application under option 5, then the decision must be observed in all other States and Territories. Interesting to see if/when that gets tested.

*Condition 6* is another one with significant changes. The last three paragraphs are new. The first of these tells the RTO to have a student management system that has the capacity to provide the registering body with AVETMISS compliant data. What is interesting here is that between the final draft of the standards and these endorsed ones, the word 'database' was dropped. What the standard is asking for is a system. So, until the registering bodies advise their respective RTOs about how they want this data and when etc., we don't really know if the system needs to be one which has the capacity to submit data on line or some other way. Watch this space on that issue. You'll need to be guided by your State Registering Body and it may be worth calling them to seek clarification.

Another point of interest is that the User Guide in appendix 1 gives a few pointers on what it means to be AVETMISS compliant. The second last paragraph looks very much like the competency completion process that we've been doing and the last paragraph is about student ID numbers and has yet to be finalised so let's worry about that when it happens.

**Remember that there is a transition period for conditions 5 and 6 so you do not need to have everything in place until 03/01/2011 as long as you have the plan in place and are working towards it.**

*Conditions 7, 8 and 9* are unchanged.

## What has changed in the standards!

### Standard 1

*Element 1.2* has had one word dropped. It used to read that strategies had to be developed in consultation with industry stakeholders and the word 'stakeholders' is no longer there. The stakeholder may have been seen as a person or body whereas industry would include those but may also include research information, data, statistics etc.

*Element 1.4* (c) is new and has been covered earlier in this newsletter. The really obvious part is the 'current industry skills'.

*Element 1.5* part (d) is new and requires RTOs to ensure that all assessments including RPL are systematically validated. It has always been an implication but now it is clearly included so you can expect that it will become more 'popular' with auditors.

### Standard 2

*Element 2.1* is new and requires RTOs to establish the needs of clients and deliver a service to meet those needs. The user guide continues on to inform us about support services etc. This is very similar to the 2007 element 2.2 except this element is more about establishing the need rather than simply providing the service.

*Element 2.3* has had one word changed. It used to read 'before clients enrol or enter into a contract', the word 'contract' has now been changed to 'agreement'.

*Element 2.7* is the previous 2.6 with a slight enhancement. The new sentence includes the words 'The RTO provides appropriate mechanisms and services for learners'. It is still relevant to the effective resolution of complaints and appeals.

### Standard 3

*Element 3.1* is new and appears to be an extension of 2.1. While 2.1 asks to establish the needs of clients and deliver a service to meet those needs, element 3.1 requires the RTO to make certain that the management of operations ensures clients receive the services detailed in their agreement. This is clearly more about the management and the systems in place.

## The AQF

The Australian Qualifications Framework is the other key item in the VET system and there are some proposed modifications which are yet to be ratified. You can read about these on the AQF website [www.aqf.edu.au](http://www.aqf.edu.au) under the heading of 'What's New'. We will cover the changes in a later edition of the VET Gazette.