

Writer - Tony Feagan (BFet)

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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. The VET Gazette is published every couple of months and hopefully, includes stories and articles that contain something for everyone.

If you are receiving The VET Gazette through a colleague and you would like to be on the mailing list, please send an email to therese@wheretofromhere.com.au and we will add you to the list of recipients.

The writer has over 25 years experience in all areas of the VET sector including training and assessing, auditing, consulting, quality and risk management, project management, instructional design, administration and business development.

He is an approved DET Auditor, an RABQSA Registered Lead Auditor and holds a Bachelor of Further Education and Training (USQ).

Out with the old, In with the new

1st July 2011 marked an important day in the Australian VET sector. It was the day that the new national VET regulator, the [Australian Skills Quality Authority](#), or ASQA started its regulatory role in some States and Territories. Note that not all States made the transition to ASQA on 1st July. For transition arrangements follow [this link](#).

Part of the challenge a national regulator faced was having the legislative basis for operation because there had never been a Commonwealth law overseeing VET regulation. The [National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011](#) establishes this new approach to national regulation.

One very important term we should all become familiar with is the [VET Quality Framework](#) which consists of 5 elements. *When reading through these documents be mindful that they don't necessarily mean major changes to how RTOs operate.*

The VET Quality Framework consists of the following documents. *Click on any document to follow the link.*

- the Standards for NVR Registered Training Organisations
- the Fit and Proper Person Requirements
- the Financial Viability Risk Assessment Requirements
- the Data Provision Requirements and
- the Australian Qualifications Framework

The differences between the AQTF and the Standards for NVR RTOs are tabled here.

Initial registration – [click here](#)

Continuing registration – [click here](#)

Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)

The Australian Qualifications Framework also had some changes which took effect on 1st July. You can read about those changes [here](#).

AQTF & Fees—Condition 5

AQTF Condition 5 or SNR 11 for Initial Registration (ASQA) or SNR 22 for Continuing Registration (ASQA)

The amendments to condition 5 of the AQTF also took effect on 1st July. Again there's a communiqué about this on the NQC website which you can read [here](#). Many of you may recall, this condition had been stalled a few times pending discussions around tuition assurance schemes and fees in advance. The 'approval' process for the tuition assurance scheme is supposed to be completed by October 2011. The capping of fees in advance (condition 5 option 3) has also been clarified and appears different to what was proposed in the AQTF 2010 changes.

One of the contentious condition 5 options, option 3, relates to fees in advance and one of those subject to much discussion in the private RTO market was around collecting no more than \$1,000 from each student before the course commenced and then no more than \$1,500 in advance at any time after that during the course. The AQTF2010 User Guide on www.training.gov.au reads:

(Option 3) The RTO may accept payment of no more than \$1,000 from each individual student prior to the commencement of the course. Following course commencement, the RTO may require payment of additional fees in advance from the student but only such that at any given time, the total amount required to be paid which is attributable to tuition or other services yet to be delivered to the student, does not exceed \$1,500.

Now here's the interesting part.

DET QLD publish registration notices for all QLD registered RTOs. They can be found on the department's website at <http://training.qld.gov.au/training-organisations/registration-audit/notices.html>.

In Registration Notice 72 dated 24/06/2011, the following is outlined:

Option 3 – Limiting the amount of fees collected in advance.

A maximum on the amount of fees able to be collected in advance will limit the amount that a student may lose if an RTO collapses with no financial assets. At no point in time should the individual student have paid any more than \$1,500 to the RTO for tuition or other services yet to be delivered to the student. This threshold is to apply to each course/qualification that the student is enrolled. The threshold is to apply to all training, assessment and other services that the RTO has agreed with the student would be provided.

So the change here is in the amount that can be accepted pre-course which seems to have shifted from \$1,000 to \$1,500. Still some invoicing involved for those who take this option.

NQC is now NSSC

Just when you thought you had all the acronyms worked out, guess again. Part of the July 1 changes was also the announcement of the replacement of the National Quality Council (NQC) with the National Skills Standards Council whose [website](#) is accessible via TVET Australia. Although membership of the Council hasn't yet been finalised, it does however have a charter which broadly outlines:

- *The Development and Maintenance of National Standards (like the new RTO standards)*
- *Inform regulators on the implementation and interpretation of the national standards and on quality standards generally*
- *Provide information to the VET sector on national standards*
- *Advice on the operation of the regulators*
- *Endorsing training packages*

So on the surface it looks as though this body has an enormous task ahead and may be the one definitive source of information that we RTOs are always seeking. What you'll see throughout their website is another acronym 'SCOTEESE' which is the Standing Council for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment which itself is one the standing committees of COAG. So another 'new for old' is that SCOTEESE replaces MCTEE. On the TVET website you'll see a few more new acronyms which we'll cover in a subsequent newsletter.

Auditor's Tip

Apart from death and taxes, the only other certainty is change and in the VET sector we certainly get our share. As a consultant to many RTOs, one of my favourite keyboard shortcuts has become Ctrl+H which is the shortcut for 'find and replace'. The changes mentioned above will require many of us to trawl through large numbers of files and replace references to the AQTF or to VETAB for example.

For those readers who have used our consultancy services, you know that while we have an eye on your RTOs compliance requirements, our major focus is helping you to be efficient and being efficient starts with finding smarter and less time consuming ways of doing things. Having been a consultant for 10 years now, I have seen many of these changes and the ensuing 'find and replace' activities that result.

So here's my tip for this edition of The VET Gazette.

Do two things when reviewing or auditing your documentation.

1. Learn how (and when) to write generically.
 - Start writing about the 'regulator' rather than DET or VETAB (or ASQA) for example.
 - Write about health and safety laws rather than the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995 (if you are in Queensland) for example.
 - Talk about student records system/s rather than AVETMISS or 'NAME OF SOFTWARE'.
 - Now that the AQTF standards and element numbers have been replaced by SNR's, forget about the numbers. Just write as '*in accordance with (IAW) the RTO standards etc.*' Numbers just confuse everyone anyway.

The benefits of writing generically become really obvious over time because you know things are going to change. You just need to be selective as to when you can write generically and when you have to be more specific.

2. Another option is to look at purchasing or otherwise locating a 'batch replacement' type of software. One of these is Batch Word Find and Replace which allows you to drop a number of word documents into a single folder and then Ctrl+H them (find and replace). This is considerably faster and more efficient than opening each one, making the changes, saving etc.

Control H – find and replace. Best of luck with all the changes.

Innovation in Improvement

Recently I conducted a number of PD workshops on the topic of continuous improvement in RTOs.

Without a doubt, the most valuable session of the workshop focussed on recording improvements and being able to identify emerging trends or patterns in improvements. Being able to identify patterns links all improvements to the overall success of the business and in turn justifies the improvement effort. Having done over 400 AQTF audits, I haven't seen too many RTOs with this sort of depth in their continuous improvement mechanisms so I went about designing a system that would.

ITA is the Improvement Tracking and Analysis database.

ITA is a web based product which allows RTOs to record ALL improvements in their business, manage the action items associated with the improvements and has an extensive reporting capacity including overdue alerts as well as reporting the improvement trends.

This is the most unique and innovative piece of software that the VET market has seen in a long time. To learn more about how this inexpensive database will completely revolutionise how you manage and track improvements, please register your interest at ita@wheretofromhere.com.au. Free two hour demonstrations will be conducted in capital cities and regional areas based on demand.