

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING IN VET: OPTIONS PAPER

1. Do you believe that current arrangements for assuring the quality of VET teaching are satisfactory?

We believe there are a range of elements currently in place that help assure quality in VET teaching. These include

- validation of assessment to assure reliability
- standards for recruitment to ensure candidates have minimum experience and qualifications in their industry and in the basics of VET delivery and assessment
- external audits
- and so on.

That said, current approaches to assuring quality through external audits are still overly-focused on inputs to teaching rather than on the teaching itself or its outcomes.

We believe the TAAIV/TAE is adequate as an entry level qualification, especially as an introduction to assessment and training packages; however, we don't believe it provides the necessary understanding of the full range of roles possible for a VET teacher, nor the full range of capabilities for those roles. And it doesn't necessarily guarantee someone can engage students and effectively teach them straight away. But that is true of all qualifications - only experience, feedback and a commitment to ongoing PD can help individuals achieve expertise.

The VET system is complex, delivering many different types of qualifications, to many kinds of learners, in many different contexts, and it is arguable that one VET teacher can't necessarily master all approaches.

Mentoring, coaching, access to supervision, timely student and employer feedback and so on are all required as part of an individual's professional development to ensure quality. These are fundamental and shared responsibilities of every RTO and each practitioner, but there is no doubt a national drive to resource and support this would be welcome.

2. To what extent do the options outlined here allow teachers, RTOs, and/or VET more broadly to build on existing processes to improve and ensure the quality of VET teaching?

The options outlined in the paper would support RTO's to develop their workforce to meet customer needs and to help ensure the quality of VET teaching.

VET Head Teachers meet the diverse needs of their customers through a team of differently skilled practitioners, with diverse qualifications and attributes relevant to different settings. Any move to a national approach must enhance the capacity of RTO's to create such teams, rather than aiming for a "one standard" of VET teacher.

Induction, continuing professional development, mentoring and research are key underpinning elements, and it is good to see these reflected across the options.

We support the proposal for a national professional body that provides some form of registration and advice about CPD to ensure ongoing currency for registered VET teachers and that allows varying levels of membership depending on the qualifications and experience of the individual member.

Membership of a professional body could be tiered in much the same way as psychologists are registered i.e. associate members and full members. We note that the national award caters for several tiers of VET teachers and perhaps that could be adopted more widely.

However, a shift to overt professionalism would require a comprehensive campaign so that industries and the community in general understand the meaning of the various memberships. Further work would be needed to establish the usefulness of different levels and/or different categories e.g. specialisations via modes such as online? or via industry?

We do not support a heavily paper-based registration system akin to that of school teachers however!

3. Do you find helpful the paper's presentation of options in stages: Stage 1 – the augmented status quo, Stage 2 – intermediate enhancement, and Stage 3 – ambition?

Yes, although it implies a movement from Stage 1 to 3 over time, rather than acknowledging that Stage 1 will always be appropriate to some contexts; Stage 2 to others and so on.

4. Do you find helpful the paper's analysis of VET teaching into the following elements –

- The structure of the VET teaching workforce
- Developing master practitioners
- Cross sectoral teachers
- Staff data collection
- Entry level teacher qualifications
- Mentoring and supporting new teachers
- Continuing teacher education qualifications
- Continuing professional development
- Maintaining teachers' industry currency
- Research on VET pedagogy and models of teaching
- Accrediting qualifications
- Registering VET teachers
- Evaluating the quality of VET teaching

Yes – they provide a very complete picture, apart from the cross-sectoral teachers item. That seems out of place here as its relationships to quality is comparatively oblique.

Some comments:

- We note that the proposal for developing master practitioners could be made “richer” by picking up some of the work put forward by John Mitchell.
- It is not clear how categories such as cross sectoral teachers are relevant to, or have an impact on, quality.
- In a competitive environment, there are some issues about what information about staff is shared publicly.
- We do not support a perspective on currency that is based on separate projects – we believe a more effective model is a wholly integrated one. We would contend that industry currency is best maintained by VET practitioners being directly engaged with employers in their day-to-day work, rather than through periodic one-off industry placements. Mentoring and coaching staff to build day-to-day, direct relationships with employers is the thing that keeps staff ‘perpetually’ current (rather than ‘periodically’ current, as projects do). Many RTO’s have developed this approach, though it is not yet systemic.
- We do not support a heavily paper-based registration system akin to that of school teachers
- We believe there needs to be a really clear idea about what is being evaluated when it comes to peer evaluation and what the consequences are of satisfactory and unsatisfactory evaluations.

5. Have we missed any element or might some elements be combined?

We believe the options need to be more overt about the diversity of the sector, and the term ‘stage’ perhaps needs to be reviewed as it suggests an inevitable movement along a continuum as opposed to a reality that each stage perhaps has value/appropriateness in its own right for particular contexts.

6. Is there any option that we have missed that you believe should be considered?

We support the implicit message that the nation’s regard for VET teaching needs to be addressed, given the sector’s essential role is building the nation’s skills.