



# INFORMATION SHEET

## PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION IN BUILDING TRADES

The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) is the national policy for regulated qualifications in Australian education and training. It incorporates the qualifications from each education and training sector into a single comprehensive national qualifications framework. The AQF was first introduced in 1995 to underpin the national system of qualifications in Australia encompassing higher education, vocational education and training and schools.

The users of the AQF span each education and training sector: schools, vocational education and training and higher education. The many AQF stakeholders include industry and its representative bodies, unions, professional associations and licensing authorities and governments.

In Australia, education and training is a shared responsibility of all Commonwealth, State and Territory governments. Education, training and employment ministers collectively own and are responsible for the AQF.

The objectives of the AQF are to provide a contemporary and flexible framework that:

- accommodates the diversity of purposes of Australian education and training now and in the future;
- contributes to national economic performance by supporting contemporary, relevant and nationally consistent qualification outcomes which build confidence in qualifications;
- supports the development and maintenance of pathways which provide access to qualifications and assist people to move easily and readily between different education and training sectors and between those sectors and the labour market;
- supports individuals' lifelong learning goals by providing the basis for individuals to progress through education and training and gain recognition for their prior learning and experiences;
- underpins national regulatory and quality assurance arrangements for education and training;
- supports and enhances the national and international mobility of graduates and workers through increased recognition of the value and comparability of Australian qualifications;
- enables the alignment of the AQF with international qualifications frameworks.

The AQF provides the standards for Australian qualifications. It is an integrated policy that comprises:

- the learning outcomes for each AQF level and qualification type;
- the specifications for the application of the AQF 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; and
- the definitions of the terminology used in the policy.



AQF Qualification by Sector of Accreditation						
Schools Accreditation	Sector	Vocational Training Sector	Education Sector Accreditation	and Higher Education Accreditation	Education	Sector
Senior Certificate of Education	Secondary	Vocational Graduate Diploma		Doctoral		Degree
		Vocational Graduate Certificate		Master's Degree		
		Advanced Diploma		Graduate		Diploma
		<b>Diploma</b>		Graduate Certificate		
		<b>Certificate IV</b>		Bachelor Degree		
		<b>Certificate III</b>		Associate Degree		
		Certificate II		Advanced Diploma		
		<b>Certificate I</b>		Diploma		

This paper covers entry level trades training, recognition of prior learning, and post-trade training to the level of a professional residential home builder.

### Entry level qualifications

In Australia, the entry level qualification for building trades remains the 4-year apprenticeship model, consisting of on-the-job training supplemented with part-time off-the-job training for the first three years of the apprenticeship. Apprentices are paid a training wage that increases in each year of the apprenticeship, to reflect the nature of their work pattern and their growing competence as they move through their apprenticeship.

Within the broader Australian national qualification structure, these Apprenticeships are aimed at a Certificate III level.

There are Certificate I and Certificate II level courses available, although these tend to be designed either as pre-vocational courses that are undertaken part-time by school students, or for employees who wish to be trained in a very specific technical area and do not require, or wish to complete, a full apprenticeship.

Much of the entry level training is either part or fully funded by either the State or Federal Government, with either the employer or apprentice paying a small co-contribution towards the cost.

There is now a strong debate in the Australian political landscape about the nature and direction of Australian apprenticeships. The Union movement is pressing for a substantial increase in apprentice wages – for a 1<sup>st</sup> Year Apprentice, an increase from 40% of a trade wage to 60% – and for apprenticeships progression to be based purely on competency standards alone, rather than be subject to time served plus passing off-the-job training units.

While many apprentices are paid above-Award wages now and there is some flexibility in progression and early completion based on the competency of the Apprentice, the Union push, if successful, will entrench these conditions in the various Awards.

At present, Trade qualifications are issued on a state-by-state basis. This presents difficulties when a person qualified in one state attempts to relocate to another state and pursue their chosen career in certain trades, and their trade may not be recognised. There is a substantial push towards creating national standards to allow skills and qualifications to be transportable across states and this is an ongoing process. Similarly, overseas qualifications present a real issue in the Australian market; at present, people with overseas qualifications have their qualifications assessed by a Federal Government department and are either approved, asked to undertake further training to cover assessed gaps, or have their overseas qualifications declined.

### White Card qualification

Every person who wishes to access a building site in Australia must hold a white card qualification. This qualification incorporates general building site safety and operations and is generally gained in a day-long course.



## **Recognition of Prior Learning**

Within the vocational education and training sector, a system operates which recognises skills and knowledge gained through a combination of formal or informal training and education and translates these skills into a formal qualification. This system, called Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), assesses an applicant against key criteria and results either in awarding of a partial or full nationally recognised qualification or to a program of training that addresses identified skills gaps. This system is often provided with full or part Government funding.

## **Post-Trade Training**

In Australia, tradespeople need to undertake further training prior to becoming a registered residential home builder. The qualification required varies between states, but in most states is presently set at a Certificate IV level. To attain this qualification, an applicant needs to hold a Certificate III trade qualification and to be working in the industry, or have access to a building site.

The Certificate IV level (Builder) course typically runs during evenings and weekends to suit full-time workers and takes between six and nine months to complete.

Other Certificate IV courses are offered for industry participants who wish to broaden their careers. These include Certificate IV courses in Estimating, Project Management, Planning, Occupational Health and Safety, Business, and more.

Some states require either a complete or parts of the Diploma level Building course to operate as a residential builder. There is a review of this requirement in one state, with the potential of bringing this requirement back to the Certificate IV level.

Builders of higher level residential or commercial buildings require separate qualifications.

## **Continuing Professional Development (CPD)**

Some states require builders to undergo a program of Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Professionals in these states achieve CPD points for attending training programs, industry seminars, or industry shows. A minimum number of points need to be achieved each year to retain their ability to operate as a builder in that state.

## **University qualifications and the Building Industry**

Residential builders and contractors do not normally require university qualifications in Australia, unless they are constructing high-rise apartments or commercial/residential constructions. A paper detailing University qualifications in the building industry is provided at Attachment A.

