



**Higher Level Qualifications:
Towards a New Future**



January 2010



IBSA wishes to acknowledge the work of:

- Anne Jones of Victoria University
- Trish McCluskey of Victoria University
- John Pardy of Monash University

who prepared this report.

IBSA also wishes to acknowledge the people and organisations that have supported IBSA and the authors of this report in this project.

For further information about this report or any other work being undertaken by Innovation & Business Skills Australia Ltd, please visit www.ibsa.org.au.

Innovation & Business Skills Australia Ltd
Level 1, 176 Wellington Parade
East Melbourne, Victoria 3002
Tel: 03 9815 7000, Fax: 03 9815 7001
Email: reception@ibsa.org.au

IBSA also wishes to acknowledge the people and organisations that have supported IBSA and the authors in this project. A list of acknowledgements is included in Appendix 2 on page 36.

This work has been produced with the assistance of funding provided by the Commonwealth Government through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). The views expressed in this work do not necessarily represent the views of DEEWR. In addition, DEEWR does not give warranty or accept any legal liability in relation to the content of this work.

CONTENTS

1. STARTING POINT.....	1
2. A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH	4
3. HIGHER LEVEL VET IN INTERESTING TIMES	6
3.1. Why Higher Level Qualifications Matter	6
3.2 The Blurring of Sectoral Boundaries.....	7
3.3 The Emergence of New Higher Level Qualifications	10
3.3.1 Associate Degrees	10
3.3.2 Vocational Graduate Certificates and Vocational Graduate diplomas	11
3.3.3 The UK Experience with Foundation Degrees	11
3.4 Learning, Assessment, Pathways and CBT	12
3.5 The Rudd Education Revolution	14
3.5.1 The Bradley Review	15
3.6 Higher Level VET Under Siege	17
4. KEY EVIDENCE.....	19
4.1 The Purpose of Higher Level VET Qualifications	19
4.1.1 Problems with Process	20
4.2 Pathways	20
4.2.1 Barriers to Pathways	21
4.2.2 Strategies for Pathways.....	23
4.3 Future Qualifications Options	24
4.3.1 Minimalist Revision	26
4.3.2 A New Architecture	26
4.3.3 Associate Degrees	27

4.3.4 Graduate Certificates and Diplomas	27
4.3.5 Implications of Change	28
5. An Agenda for Further Work	29
5.1 Recommended Actions.....	30
5.2 Potential Projects	31
5.2.1 Project One: Towards a New Qualifications Architecture.....	31
5.2.2 Project Two: A New Qualifications Development Process.....	32
5.2.3 Project Three: The 'IBSA Friendly' University Network.....	32
5.2.4 Project Four – Cross-Industry Leadership	33
APPENDICES.....	34
Appendix One: IBSA Training Packages	35
Appendix Two: Key Informants	36
Appendix Three: Interview Guide Questions	37
Appendix Four: Credit Transfer for VET Accounting	38
Appendix Five: Characteristics of Higher Level VET Learners	40
Appendix Six: Comparison of Graduate Certificates	41
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	43

1. STARTING POINT

New markets require new products and services. Australia is embarking on a wave of tertiary education reforms precipitated by the need to respond to emerging labour market and skills development needs locally and internationally. Reform in the newly badged *tertiary* education sector is focusing on qualifications at AQF levels 5 to 7 and the capabilities these represent. In this context the recent Higher Education Review (Bradley *et al.*) signposts significant policy changes that affect VET as much as Higher Education providers. The consequences of this report - changes in Higher Education funding and participation rates - will potentially have significant impact on the market for VET products. This is so because VET qualifications at diploma level and above now compete directly with Higher Education qualifications and there is growing evidence that higher level VET products are not doing very well in the Australian tertiary education market. Therefore it is important and timely to consider the purpose and future of higher level VET qualifications. Innovation and Business Skills Australia (IBSA) has commissioned this paper to identify:

- Key issues for the development of higher level VET provision in the Innovation and Business Skills industries,
- Key issues to address in articulation from higher level VET provision to Higher Education and vice versa for those industries, and
- Development of a detailed brief for the subsequent project designed to deliver a comprehensive policy base and action program for IBSA aimed at the development of higher level qualifications and an articulation framework for IBSA's industries.

The primary intention of the paper is to provoke thought and recommend constructive actions to ensure that VET 'diploma and above' qualifications are fit for purpose in the tertiary education and labour markets of the future. For the purposes of this discussion *higher level VET qualifications* are understood as being those at diploma level and above. 'Diploma and above' qualifications represent the both the boundary and the overlap between VET and higher education and for this reason our discussion focuses on diploma and advanced diploma level qualifications. These are available in both the VET and higher education sectors, cover the same

AQF levels as associate degrees and the earlier stages of bachelor degrees, and are the focus of an important 2009 COAG target. However the paper also includes commentary on possible futures for Graduate Certificates and Graduate diplomas in Training Packages.

The paper analyses perceptions and assesses the performance of higher level VET products in the tertiary education market. It looks at higher level VET qualifications as *stand-alone* products preparing graduates for work or further learning and as tools for credentialing existing knowledge and skills. It further examines the performance of higher level VET qualifications as pathways into Higher Education. This paper then presents an agenda for further work including the development of a new architecture for higher level VET qualifications, a new development and approval process to ensure that IBSA's higher level qualifications are more fit for purpose.

The paper is based on issues and perspectives identified through desktop research and by key informants from the VET and higher education sectors who reflected on:

- The future purpose of higher level VET qualifications particularly within Training Packages managed by IBSA,
- Options for future qualification architecture to improve articulation between VET and Higher Education and across industries, and
- An agenda for further work and research necessary to inform the future development of higher level qualifications within the 11 Training Packages managed by IBSA.

The paper proposes that new, consistent qualification architecture be developed for higher level VET awards in all eleven Training Packages managed by IBSA. The purpose of this architecture will be to:

- Provide a consistent and robust foundation for future study as well as future work, including work that we cannot yet specify,
- Form the basis for indisputable and confident VET and higher education pathways, and
- Facilitate movement across industries.

IBSA currently has carriage of eleven national industry Training Packages (Appendix One). This think piece proceeds from a position of appreciating both the diversity and specificity of these

products. A brief introduction and historical background to VET curriculum/qualification provides a departure point for presenting a vision for a new VET qualification architecture

2. A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH

We developed this paper through a systematic and consistent approach whereby the project team reflected on selected desk top research, interviewed key informants and discussed and work-shopped ideas and concepts relating to higher level VET qualifications. The key informants were selected to represent critical provider and policy stakeholder interests. They included VET and Higher Education providers (public and private) together with policy shapers and makers.

The Project team for this work, *Higher Level VET Qualifications: Towards a new future* consisted of:

Anne Jones, Deputy Vice Chancellor and Director TAFE, Victoria University

John Pardy, Lecturer, Faculty of Education, Monash University

Trish McCluskey, Deputy Director, Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching, Victoria University.

Section Three outlines the context and circumstances in which IBSA now needs to consider its higher level VET qualifications.

Section Four discusses the data that emerged from the key informant interviews. The questions guiding the interviews (See Appendix Three) explored the following themes:

- The purpose and function of VET higher level qualifications,
- Existing pathways between VET and Higher Education, and
- Potential future qualification architecture and a new approach to pathways for higher level VET qualifications.

The sixteen key informants interviewed for this think piece (See Appendix Two) provided important perspectives and advice about the deficiencies in current practices and potential solutions to develop higher level VET qualifications to meet emerging market needs. The interviews were conducted in November and December 2009, representing eight different tertiary providers, including dual sector universities, private providers, together with some key

policy officials. The key informants were sourced from five state and territory jurisdictions, with three providing input from a national policy perspective.

The key informants understood the changing contexts of Australian tertiary education and were frank in their responses about rethinking higher level VET qualifications. Their input is included in this paper in the form of identified issues but not directly attributed to particular informants or organisations.

The final section of the paper proposes a considered action oriented strategy that will enable IBSA to progress a vision for a new future for VET 'diploma and above' qualifications.

3. HIGHER LEVEL VET IN INTERESTING TIMES

This section looks at the context in which we now need to consider the future of higher level VET qualifications. In a time of deep and extensive change in Australia's VET sector it is difficult to work out what to include and what to exclude. We have identified circumstances that we think are particularly relevant to the future of higher level VET qualifications on the basis that these matters have been emphasised within recent VET policy discussion and were also raised by our key informants.

3.1. Why Higher Level Qualifications Matter

Australia, along with other developed countries, has identified higher level qualifications as pivotal to continued economic prosperity. Consequently over the last five years a number of reports and policy initiatives have sought to reposition Australia's education sectors to better respond to the 'demands of a rapidly moving global economy' (Bradley, 2008). The VET sector is familiar with this theme well established by Burke and Shah's work in 2006 and reflected in many reports including the Allen Consulting Report *World Class Skills for World Class Industries*, commissioned by the Australian Industry Group (Allen Consulting Group 2006).

Burke and Shah (2006) argued that by 2016 more people would be employed in 'associate professional' positions thus requiring an increase in diploma and advanced diploma provision. Underpinning Burke and Shah's (2006) proposition of a changing labour market is a need for the Australian VET system to deliver on 'skills deepening'.

Burke and Shah recognised that 'skills deepening' is important as the global economy becomes more complex and existing industries integrate or disappear. They predicted that 18.6% of new entrants into the Australian labour market will require 'diploma and above' qualifications to ensure there is a 'skills deepening' in the labour market.

Burke and Shah's modelling has underpinned a raft of Federal and State Government VET policy initiatives including Victoria's *Maintaining the Advantage (2006)* and *Securing Your Future Job* policies (Kosky 2006; Skills Victoria 2008; Victoria 2008). The *Bradley Review of Australia's Higher Education* (Bradley, Noonan et al. 2008) explored the same economic imperatives from a Higher Education perspective and will be discussed further below. Internationally, other

developed countries are following a similar path. For example Brown and Hesketh, in their analysis of employment trends in the United States and United Kingdom, have shown that the most rapid job growth in 'knowledge economies' is at the skilled technical or paraprofessional level, requiring short cycle education. (Brown and Hesketh 2004) They argue that 78% of jobs in 2010 will require education ranging from on-the-job training to associate degree level.

Although there is general agreement on the need for qualifications at AQF level 5-7 there exists policy uncertainty about what those qualifications ought to be, particularly whether they ought to be VET or higher education qualifications. In the VET sector, there is also persistent uncertainty about the purpose of higher level VET qualifications. Some advocate for a primarily vocational purpose for all VET qualifications. For example the final report for *VET Products for the 21st Century*' states that:

Each year, the publicly funded VET system provides programs to over 1.6 million students, the vast majority of whom are engaged in VET to achieve vocational and labour market outcomes. It engages with thousands of enterprises to deliver these outcomes... It should be recognised that regardless of their learning pathway, the vast majority of students are engaged in VET for vocational and work related purposes.

However Stanwick (2006) analysing AVETMISS data regarding government funded diploma and advanced diploma delivery, found that many VET students, especially those aged 25 and over undertake higher level VET qualifications as 'a stepping stone to university-level studies', which in turn may have a vocational purpose.

3.2 The Blurring of Sectoral Boundaries

The boundaries between the VET and higher education sectors in Australia are permeable with both sectors delivering diploma, advanced diploma, graduate certificate and graduate diploma awards. Furthermore diplomas and advanced diplomas operate at the same AQF level as associate degrees and the first two years of bachelor degrees. Similarly graduate certificates and graduate diplomas operate at the same AQF level as the first stages of masters degrees. This overlap is reflected amongst providers which increasingly operate in both sectors: many universities now offer higher education diplomas to local students; numerous private providers operate as both Registered Training Organisations and Higher Education Providers; and the

number of TAFE institutes delivering degrees has grown remarkably in the last 10 years. It is clear that:

The role and place of the diploma and advanced diploma is becoming increasingly ambiguous, and this will be accentuated with the growth of associate degrees and degrees in TAFE (Wheelahan 2009)

Australian Qualifications Framework policy has not resolved the ambiguity in the past and, based on its October 2009 discussion paper, may not provide sufficient clarification in the future:

... a higher education diploma may have more theoretical learning than a vocational education and training diploma which may have a higher skills component. Pathways for both diplomas have been identified to advanced diplomas and Bachelor Degrees. Applying the levels criteria in both cases will show that while the qualifications may 'look' different and may have a different notional duration of student learning, they are similar in terms of the complexity of the overall learning outcomes and are appropriately the same qualification type (AQF Council 2009).

Despite this blurring or perhaps because of it, many argue that the two sectors in Australia have discrete missions. They certainly have different governance, funding regulatory and, importantly, curriculum and course development arrangements. However it is no longer reasonable to argue that the purposes of VET qualifications are distinct from those of higher education qualifications. Both sectors rightly claim to prepare graduates for the workforce and for further learning. The VET sector tends to be ambivalent about this dual purpose as this extract from the DEEWR website demonstrates:

Vocational education and training, often called VET, is an important part of the modern workplace. As the world of work, and the technology that supports it, becomes increasingly complex, employees need higher levels of skills to be effective, and to contribute to Australia's economic growth and prosperity. Training and learning is no longer something you do between school and work. Now employees will train, retrain and continue to develop new and higher levels of skills throughout their lives. This ongoing learning is critical to the individual employee, the employer and the economy. VET also provides general education to help people to move into work, further study or work in the community. Many people also choose VET for personal development purposes.¹

¹ http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training_skills/default2.htm

Yet Stanwick, mentioned earlier, demonstrated that three main groups of students undertake diploma or advanced diplomas:

- Year 12 completers undertaking the course for employment, or with a view to going on to university level studies
- people aged 25 and over doing the course for reasons related to their employment
- people aged 25 and over who have not completed Year 12 and are ‘catching up’ on qualifications (Stanwick, 2006).

Stanwick showed that many graduates from IBSA diplomas and advanced diplomas find that they need to undertake further study to achieve their career goals. In 2002, 74% of Information Technology and 66% of management and commerce students aged 15-24 undertook a VET qualification for employment related reasons. But only 25% of IT and 23% of management and commerce were employed full time after the course (26% and 37% respectively if we include those who were already working when they commenced study). When Stanwick looked into what these under-employed graduates were doing, he found that many of them were engaged in further study. Table 1 below shows the proportion of 2002 diploma graduates going on to further study at bachelor degree or higher, in fields represented by IBSA Training Packages.

Table 1: 2002 diploma graduates going into higher education

Field of Education	15 -24	25 and over
Information Technology	37%	13%
Management and Commerce	39%	15%
Accountancy	53%	23%
Creative Arts	24%	17%
All Graduates in the10 most popular VET diplomas	32%	14%

From this it is clear that for young learners in particular further study in higher education is an important destination for graduates from higher level VET qualifications managed by IBSA.

3.3 The Emergence of New Higher Level Qualifications

The last decade has seen the emergence of new higher level VET and Higher Education qualifications competing with those already established: Vocational Graduate Certificates and Vocational Graduate diplomas and associate degrees. It is worth noting that...as of February 2009 there were ten TAFE institutes in five states that were registered to offer higher education programs and VET qualifications are typically nested into these degrees (Kelly, Wheelahan et al. 2009). The dual sector universities also tend to offer packages consisting of VET and higher education qualifications. For example, Victoria University offers five degrees for which the first year is a VET diploma.

3.3.1 Associate Degrees

In July 2003 MCEETYA² listed associate degrees on the AQF, accredited as higher education qualifications. The AQF website states that:

A course leading to the associate degree is generally but not exclusively articulated with relevant Bachelor Degree programs. A course leading to an associate degree will vary in breadth and depth according to whether it is a single or multidisciplinary program but will be taken to sufficient depth to provide a basis for full articulation with relevant Bachelor Degree programs.

Australian providers are slowly taking up associate degrees. There is no doubt that this qualification competes directly with VET diplomas and advanced diplomas with the market advantage identified by the TDA when associate degrees were first proposed in 2002:

...a higher education associate degree will have full 2 year articulation into a bachelor degree, a much more competitive option than the one to one and a half year articulation for TAFE diplomas;

while some TAFE institutes have or are developing higher education qualifications, they will still be significantly limited in competing with universities; competition in the higher education associate degree market will be across all the current courses and most particularly in business and IT, and may well bring with it greater compliance with higher education quality assurance processes as well as the AQTF.³

² http://www.aqf.edu.au/Portals/0/Documents/Handbook/AQF_Handbook_37-50.pdf#Page=13

³ TAFE Directors of Australia: <http://www.tda.edu.au/>

3.3.2 Vocational Graduate Certificates and Vocational Graduate diplomas

The scope and uptake of Vocational Graduate Certificates and Vocational Graduate diplomas are slowly growing. It is difficult to gauge participation rates without seeking access to specialised NCVER data and in its public reports, the NCVER aggregates all VET courses at diploma level and above. However anecdotally, providers report slow uptake.⁴

The present and future success of vocational postgraduate qualifications is beset with potential for market confusion. The AQF defines the characteristics of vocational and higher education graduate qualifications very differently although the entry level qualification requirements may be the same. Similarly both categories of postgraduate award may package a graduate certificate as 50% of a graduate diploma but the AQF alludes to the possibility of credit into masters degrees only for the higher education qualifications. Appendix Six provides an extract of the AQF information on vocational and higher education graduate certificates and diplomas.

As an example of the confusion that arises, it is worth noting that the University of Wollongong delivers its own Graduate Certificate in Vocational Education and Training offering 24 credit points into its 48 credit point Master of Education. Meanwhile some Victorian TAFE institutes deliver the state accredited Vocational Graduate Certificate in Vocational Education and Training, often without any credit into masters degrees at all. The reason usually given for lack of credit is the competency based nature of the learning and assessment tasks which do not mirror the substantial pieces of analytical writing usually required in masters degrees.

3.3.3 The UK Experience with Foundation Degrees

In 2000 The Blair Government targeted 50% of 18-30 year olds to have higher education qualifications by 2010 and Foundation Degrees were designed to achieve this (Greenwood, Little et al. 2008). Foundation degrees are a new type of higher education product: aimed largely at existing workers, short cycle, work-based learning, developed in partnership with industry (Parry

⁴ NCVER *Students and Courses 2008*
http://www.ncver.edu.au/statistics/vet/ann08/students_and_courses_2008.pdf

2006). These degrees are accredited by universities but mainly delivered by colleges of further education providing a low cost means of expanding higher education provision.

The latest United Kingdom report on Higher Education emphasises that:

In order to attract a greater diversity of students, more part-time study, more vocationally-based foundation degrees, more work-based study and more study whilst living at home must be made available. This is a core aim of these proposals, and our wider skills strategy (Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2009).

Foundation degrees have almost replaced Higher National diplomas (HND) in the colleges of further education. Senior British FE staff report that they prefer to deliver foundation degrees because they are involved in the curriculum development, have more autonomy in their delivery than was the case with HNDs, and believe that the curriculum based qualification is more appropriate for higher level VET learners.

3.4 Learning, Assessment, Pathways and CBT

Discussion of issues affecting the success of higher level VET qualifications cannot ignore questions of course structure and pedagogy - learning and assessment strategies. The differences between higher and vocational education curriculum and pedagogy are obviously central to our current interest since these are frequently cited as a principal barrier to efficient credit transfer between the sectors. Critics also attribute the failure of higher level VET products to prepare learners for future work and learning to deficiencies in curriculum and pedagogy.

The barriers to pathways between the sectors are based in the dissonance between the perceived purposes of each sector and the way these are reflected in qualification design and delivery. The main differences are outlined below.

- VET diploma and advanced diploma qualifications prepare learners for relatively narrowly defined occupations, whereas higher education qualifications are designed to combine general education with vocational outcomes. This means that VET qualifications rarely line up neatly with the first 6, 12 or 18 months of a degree. For an example, refer to Appendix Four which illustrates the credit that Victoria University gives in its Bachelor of Business (Accounting) to graduates from the advanced diploma in Accounting. You will see that this credit amounts to 7/8 of first year, 1/8 of second year

and 4/8 of third year units. Such credit transfer does not make it easy for a VET graduate to save time and money when articulating into university. It is for this reason that many universities have developed their own diplomas which map neatly against the whole first year of degrees. In VU's case we have accredited a higher education diploma of Business which we deliver to international students. Increasingly universities are making such higher education diplomas available to local students.

- Higher level VET qualifications do not include explicit knowledge that graduates require for the next step in their learning where this is not required for the destination occupation. This is a significant barrier to articulation. For example, VET engineering qualifications don't include the Calculus normally included in first year university engineering in preparation for second year so VET graduates have to overcome the calculus barrier before they can articulate.
- VET qualifications rely on competency based assessment which involves demonstration of skill and is not necessarily graded. Assessment in higher education can include performance (nursing, music) but often relies on written articulation of knowledge and is usually graded. Universities claim that these differences make it hard for them to select VET graduates. Teaching in higher level VET qualifications usually relies on very different learning and assessment strategies to those commonly used in universities. As a generalisation there is less reliance on substantial written tasks involving critical analysis. Conventional essays and long written examinations are rare in VET. This difference means that VET students do not acquire the academic skills that they will need in higher education.

Those interested in making higher level VET qualifications more relevant for future work and learning identify many of the same issues. For example, participants in the July 2009 *Training for the Recovery* at Parliament House Canberra chose to focus on skills preparation for any unknowable future; the robust and rich preparation that people need to navigate lifelong careers in unpredictable globalised economies. Many participants stressed the need for the VET system to deliver stronger foundations in language, literacy and numeracy, problem solving, technological savvy, creativity and other skills to provide a foundation for future skills development including pathways into higher education. The group identified the importance of

portable yet broadly based qualifications rather than those based on narrowly defined occupations⁵.

The recent *Learning for Jobs Work OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training* report (2008 identified Training Packages as a key challenge for the Australian VET system, by stipulating that 'Training package development and implementation processes are inefficient (Hoeckel *et al* 2008p.5)'. The report recommended that Training Packages be replaced by more 'simple and much briefer statements of skills standards'. The OECD team also identified significant under utilization of Training Package qualifications with 'about 80% of all publically recorded enrolments in 2006 were in just 180 qualifications out of 1.709 available... around 70 qualifications were not used at all (Hoeckel *et al*, 2008, p.36)'.

The 2009 review 'Training Products for the Twenty First Century' recommended revision of the definition of competency to be:

...the consistent application of knowledge and skill to the standard of performance required in the workplace. It embodies the ability to transfer and apply skills and knowledge to new situations and environments.

3.5 The Rudd Education Revolution

The Rudd Labor government was elected in 2007 promising the 'education revolution' which is now reshaping the organizational and policy drivers of the entire education system from early childhood right through higher education. As is usual with reforms, the current agenda has resulted in a number of reviews and reports, both public and confidential. These include:

- The *Training Products for the 21st Century* report,
- The review of the Australian Qualifications Framework led by John Dawkins with a draft report available for consultation,
- A confidential report on articulation for Deputy Prime Minister Gillard, prepared by Kim Bannikoff, and

⁵NCVER *Training for the Recovery* at Parliament House Canberra on the 30 July 2009.

- The Bradley Review of Higher Education.

The Bradley Review will have a significant impact on higher level VET qualifications and therefore is discussed in detail below.

3.5.1 The Bradley Review

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and Minister for Social Inclusion, the Honourable Julia Gillard, launched the Bradley Report by commenting, amongst other matters, on the need to better align higher level VET qualifications with higher education to meet emerging workforce needs:

Technological change is narrowing the gap between the realms of ‘pure’ knowledge – traditionally the preserve of universities – and vocational skills – traditionally the preserve of VET.....We must offer students a broad band of learning that engages them intellectually and technically; that stretches their imagination, ingenuity and problem-solving skills(Gillard 2009)

She went on further to suggest that,

Australia’s vocational and academic systems must be able to speak a common language. They must work together to address Australia’s knowledge economy needs and they must develop easier pathways between each system for Australian students. Like an Apple Mac and a PC, our university and VET sectors need the right bridging software to connect effectively. The seamlessness of qualifications, fees, income support and regulatory oversight will all have to be re-examined as we look to the future

Bradley’s report was based on work commissioned from Access Economics who contrary to Burke and Shah, argued that by 2018 Australia will face an oversupply of post-graduates and diploma graduates. Access identified a greatly increased need for degree graduates from a new broader tertiary education and training sector which:

- defines a new interface between VET and higher education to meet the full range of learner, industry and social needs,
- Is underpinned by an equal valuing of both sectors, a recognition of the need for balance between sectoral divergence and convergence,
- Recommends national coordination of both sectors through streamlined regulation with a simplified, integrated approach to governance of tertiary education,
- Recommends a common tertiary entitlement funding model for higher education, VET at diploma level and above supported by deferred payment system,
- Supports a new expanded role for the NCVER as National Centre for Tertiary Education Research,

- Preserves a role for states and territories as 'owners' of TAFE and with legislative responsibility for universities, and
- Requires pathways that work.

Many of the recommendations have been adopted leading to significant changes to Higher Education with potential consequences for the VET sector.

COAG accepted Bradley's main premise and recommendations and encapsulated the latter in its target for... *Increasing the proportion of 25-34 year olds with bachelor level qualification or above from 32 per cent to 40 per cent by 2025.* This goal will be achieved through additional places in bachelor degrees supported by market driven, uncapped funding from 2012 and there is no doubt that from 2012 many universities will enrol larger number of students in undergraduate degrees. For example the University of Adelaide has announced its intention to increase its undergraduate numbers by 4000. Many universities will accept students who have lower TER scores and are otherwise less well prepared for higher education.

Most universities appear to be focusing on school leavers as a basis for expanded participation and such growth in higher education provision will decrease the number of school leavers enrolling in VET diplomas and advanced diplomas. The Federal Government has recognised that growth will require increased participation by under-represented groups and from 2011 will provide performance based funding to support a low SES student target 20 per cent of by 2020. The 5% increase in low SES participation in universities is also likely to draw students away from VET. Although this change threatens the sustainability of higher level VET qualifications, it also offers opportunities particularly drawing on the UK experience with foundation degrees and these will be discussed later.

The Federal Government has also made progress towards establishing the single national regulator for VET and higher education proposed by the Bradley Report. The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) will be in place in 2010 and is planned to cover VET from 2013. A separate national VET regulator will operate from 2010 to 2013. Currently Victoria and Western Australia do not support the national VET regulator. However all RTOs which enrol international students or operate in more than one state are required to register with the national body. The advent of a single national regulator is likely to affect the future of higher

level VET qualifications. As we see in Section 4 below, universities are reluctant to agree to credit transfer at a system, as opposed to an individual provider level, because they do not consider that all providers deliver higher level VET qualifications to an equal quality standard. This is a complex issue and a new shared regulator may give universities more comfort regarding the registration of RTOs.

3.6 Higher Level VET Under Siege

We have now seen ample evidence that higher level VET qualifications, in their current forms, are vulnerable. Table 2 is based on AVETMISS data and shows participation in AQF courses from 2004 to 2008. As many have commented previously participation in diplomas is static or declining.

Table 2. Participation in AQF courses: Students X 1000

AQF	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	%	2007-2008 % change
diploma or higher	176.0	173.1	167.7	166.0	171.2	10.1	3.1
Cert IV	189.6	179.1	177.6	188.7	189.2	11.2	0.3
Cert. III	408.1	437.7	463.5	476.8	519	30.6	8.9
Cert. II	249.3	249.3	292.6	281.6	286.4	16.9	1.7
Cert. I	85.2	96.7	98.3	100.1	91.4	5.4	-8.7

Stanwick's careful analysis has demonstrated that students undertaking diploma and advanced diploma studies fall into groups...young new entrants, mostly studying full-time, and older workers, many with prior qualifications mostly studying part-time. Many graduates from both groups use the VET qualification as 'a stepping stone to a degree' even if that was not their initial intention.

Current course design and articulation arrangements mean that cross-sectoral pathways are more like 'crazy paving' than a straightforward trajectory (Harris & Rainey 2006). Peter Karmel from the NCVET emphasised the vulnerability of higher level VET qualifications when he said:

In looking forward, the future of diplomas and advanced diplomas is not assured. Even in associate professional occupations, they do not dominate and could easily lose share to degrees. The policy challenge is to ensure that the position of diplomas and advanced diplomas is consolidated, by building up articulation arrangements with degrees where

appropriate, and by improving the attractiveness of diploma and advanced diploma graduates for employers. Growth in numbers, arguably, should not be the focal point of policy (Karmel: 2009).

Over the last two years there has been significant public discussion highlighting the vulnerability of the VET system and its higher level qualifications. For example Professor Glyn Davies, Vice Chancellor of the University of Melbourne, has repeatedly advocated the view that Australia needs a new type of post-secondary institution, a community college offering associate degrees, as preparation for further study in universities. Similarly, Professor Ian Young, Vice Chancellor of Swinburne University, has argued for a new cost effective approach to mass higher education based on TAFE delivering associate degrees rather than diplomas (Young:2007).

The following section provides a basis for planning a new future for higher level VET qualifications; a future that leverages off the strengths of the VET sector and affirms its place for in the tertiary landscape.

4. KEY EVIDENCE

This section summarises the insights and perceptions presented by the key informants, relevant to the development of higher level VET provision and pathways in the Innovation and Business Skills industries, under three headings:

- The purpose of higher level VET qualifications,
- Issues with pathways, and
- The future for higher level VET qualifications.

The discussion will raise many issues relevant to the development of higher level VET provision and pathways in the Innovation and Business Skills industries.

4.1 The Purpose of Higher Level VET Qualifications

The key informants considered that higher level VET qualifications should prepare learners equally for work and further study particularly at higher education level. They stressed that VET qualifications must prepare graduates for jobs that have not yet been invented in an unpredictable future labour market as well as for jobs that have already been defined. In this context they regarded the *retrospective* nature of Training Packages and their development process as problematic. Whilst all advocated for the value of a distinctive VET system and for distinctive VET qualifications, most of our respondents felt that the architecture of Training Packages and CBT had increased the gulf between VET and higher education courses. For example they claimed that Training Packages have led to the atrophying of participation in higher level VET by failing to specify key underpinning and foundational disciplinary knowledge.

Some provider informants described Training Packages as 'home brand' products that do not effectively prepare people for changing work contexts with little incentive or flexibility for providers to invest in differentiating the products. Changing work and employment situations require judgement and problem solving and an increasing capacity to be flexible and adjust to new and unknown situations. It was felt that Training Packages and the higher level VET qualifications contained in them did not meet this requirement. Several key informants indicated that private providers are moving more to Higher Education products including associate degrees, emphasising that in higher education there '...is more autonomy for

providers...there is also higher trust and more appropriate levels of respect of providers' capacities to do the right thing, educationally.' In this respect Australian providers echoed the views of British further educators mentioned earlier.

4.1.1 Problems with Process

Many of our informants associated the failure of higher level VET products to meet current market needs with the Training Package development process. They considered that, inappropriately, industry stakeholders dominate the development of higher level VET qualifications with providers – including higher education providers – ‘...left out of the loop’. Consequently, some informants concluded, higher level VET qualifications work well as standards against which to assess the credentials of existing workers; but they do not work so well as preparation for new entrants nor for existing workers wishing to upskill.

Many of the key informants knew that enrolments in diplomas and especially in advanced diplomas had decreased. They reported that undergraduate degrees are booming: ‘...there seems to be a perception that anything with the word degree in it is somehow better’.

A key informant from a university expressed the belief that TAFE institutes had stronger capability to support new entrant low SES students than universities. He argued that VET university collaboration would be the best way to respond to the need to increase higher education participation by low SES learners. In this context it should be noted that most informants considered it vital that universities be involved in the development of any new qualifications.

4.2 Pathways

Overwhelmingly our informants noted that pathways do matter yet ‘...pathways are not a key consideration in developing VET courses... as primarily the VET qualifications are developed in response to industry demands’. VET providers tend to treat pathways as a ‘value add’. However informants from universities and those with policy roles emphasised the critical importance of pathways in achieving the higher education participation goals newly articulated by the Deputy Prime Minister. Stanwick’s data demonstrates the importance of pathways for large numbers of higher level VET graduates with qualifications managed by IBSA who need pathways into higher education to achieve their career goals. Discussing pathways, all of our informants were able to

articulate the barriers to achieving more streamlined pathways between VET and higher education and strategies for overcoming these.

4.2.1 Barriers to Pathways

The barriers to seamless pathways identified by our informants can be classified as:

- Dissonant curriculum, teaching and learning practices,
- Relationship dependency,
- Lack of synchronicity in quality and governance, and
- Other bureaucratic hurdles.

Most informants identified the differing architecture and content of higher level VET and higher education qualifications as barriers to pathways. The varying *size* of units of competence makes it difficult to line units or clusters of units against units of study in degrees. Lack of flexibility in both degree architecture and VET qualifications contribute to the problem.

Our informants told us that higher level VET qualifications lack both the foundational disciplinary knowledge and the generic academic skills and knowledge required for successful progression into degrees. They suggested that there was a need to integrate the academic writing and foundation knowledge and skills that are currently not represented in Training Packages into higher level VET qualifications. It was felt that VET diplomas did not provide sufficient grounding in academic learning/preparation and that competency based training on its own was not appropriate for preparing people for degree study.

Several informants from the higher education sector also pointed out that articulating VET graduates were often ill prepared for the university culture and environment. This included lack of preparation in academic skills such as essay writing, researching information and using libraries. It also referred to inexperience with the large class sizes and different teaching styles found in universities compared with VET providers.

The informants repeatedly raised assessment as an issue, citing the differences between CBT and higher education assessment practice as both a barrier to credit transfer arrangements and a hurdle for articulating students who have to learn to cope with a new system. The fragmenting of assessment into specific job related tasks was repeatedly raised as an issue. One

single sector university informant described how his university was establishing delivery of Higher Education diplomas with a network of TAFE partners as a basis for pathways into their degrees. The University chose this option because it did not consider that competency-based VET diplomas provide sufficient grounding in academic learning to prepare students to do well in degrees. Another informant explained that his university was about to launch a new suite of higher education diplomas to be delivered by a multinational private provider.

VET providers, universities and policy based informants all nominated the exclusion of providers from Training Package development as a barrier to the inclusion of the knowledge needed for pathways purposes as well as for future work. This segued into a broader discussion of the Training Package development process and its failure to consider articulation and employment as equally valuable outcomes.

Most informants identified the dependency of pathways on relationships between individual institutions and, sometimes, personalities as a barrier to achieving widespread and long lasting arrangements. As one informant said:

...we are not as confident in saying that a diploma from this little shonky college over here is equivalent to what is done in the TAFE. It's what they put into their courses that is important such as staffing, resources, a whole range of things.

We hasten to add that another informant made a similar comment about a TAFE institute!

The idea of comparing content in qualifications and courses, whilst a mainstay of credit transfer processes was identified as confusing and unnecessarily complicated. As one key informant maintained:

...these pathways are established through traditional mapping of credit against higher education courses. This requires an enormous amount of work and is confusing to students because the same VET qualification can have with up to six different arrangements with different institutions.

Inconsistent pathways between providers cause great confusion for students. For example, Charles Sturt University offers 2 years credit for the diploma in Community Services whilst other universities offer only 3-6 months. These judgements are often unaccountable and seem to be

based on proximity, personalities and other idiosyncratic circumstances. All informants agreed that the need to negotiate each pathway individually places an unsustainable burden on VET and higher education providers.

Lack of synchronicity between the VET Training Package review cycle and course review cycles in partner universities causes 'a huge amount of work'. No provider partnership is able to ensure that pathways between relevant qualifications are always up to date. Many issues of quality and governance cause these problems and, perhaps, a single national regulator may be able to improve this situation.

A range of other bureaucratic hurdles also impede pathways. The nesting of qualifications and other packaging rules can be problematic, particularly if we wish to develop diplomas as pathways for less well prepared school leavers. The new Victorian funding rules may be a disincentive for higher education graduates wishing to articulate into a VET course and for VET graduates wishing to undertake further VET study at the same level in another industry sector.

4.2.2 Strategies for Pathways

The informants provided a number of strategies for improving the development and management of pathways. These apply equally to 'reverse articulation' into VET but the informants considered upskilling to be a greater priority for strategic initiatives. They stressed the need for pathways to be built-in rather than retro-fitted with the higher education informants favouring block credit. One key informant from a university estimated that 'about 10% of our students are sourced from TAFE pathways – over 5000 students'. This university had changed its credit transfer policy to move as far as possible toward a model of block credit 'so we don't get into this appalling situation of checking curriculum on a line by line basis of does this curriculum match ours'. The university identified block credit as 'really important and one of the only ways to go to keep things simple... Otherwise you are using a huge amount of staff resources in trying to match things that don't necessarily match as the educational outcomes are essentially different'.

Informants described a range of other strategies to enable more effective management of pathways including graded assessment because 'academics *get* graded assessment'. The dual sector informants and some others mentioned the increasing trend towards 'concurrent

pathways' where students undertake a VET qualification within a degree. These scenarios were seen as attending to the development of academic knowledge along with opportunities to gain employment related skills. Other enablers included:

- Collaborative development of courses and pathways e.g. Deakin University works with a number of VET partners which deliver a Deakin diploma in Business as a pathway into a Deakin degree,
- Integration of academic writing and foundational disciplinary skills into VET diplomas,
- Development of more holistic assessment practices,
- Clustering of units of competence to build depth and breadth in learning e.g. integrating hands on practical skills in design with theoretical knowledge, and
- Reintroducing complexity into CBT, melding the conceptual and the creative with the practical, to prepare workers to be adaptable to the changing nature of work and workforce as well as for further study.

4.3 Future Qualifications Options

Almost all informants agreed that higher level VET qualifications require a new architecture to be fit for purpose in the tertiary market: to enable graduates to access employment in the short term as well as future jobs and learning; to better support pathways between VET and higher education, between higher education and VET and between VET qualifications. There was disagreement about whether or not this could be achieved through relaxation of NQC packaging rules or whether an entirely new set of qualifications should be developed to replace the current VET diplomas and advanced diplomas. The informants stressed that NQC packaging rules will make it difficult to achieve VET outcomes and higher education preparation within one award.⁶

Our informants also noted that any systemic redevelopment will be hampered by the present inconsistencies between the purpose and the robustness of diplomas and advanced diplomas in different Training Packages. For example the advanced diploma of Accounting leads to entry level employment in that industry whilst the advanced diploma in Nursing provides skills in

⁶ None of our informants had yet had the opportunity to evaluate the impact of the new packaging rules recently released by the National Quality Council.

specialist branches of nursing, such as renal care, that might be equally useful to degree and diploma graduates.

Some VET provider informants expressed concern about a new architecture for higher level VET qualifications because they feared this might detract from the intent of Training Packages to skill people for jobs and work; it would be:

...pandering to the requirements of higher education whereas it is felt that higher education should make more of an effort to be creative in understanding and accommodating VET ways of knowing.

Likewise some higher education providers preferred the development of new products such as higher education diplomas and associate degrees as an alternative to higher level VET qualifications. The informants with a policy background were best positioned to weigh these views and they claimed that the survival of higher level VET qualifications depends on changes to their purpose, structure and development. All informants realised that improved alignment of diploma and degrees will expand opportunities for people who have been historically denied higher education.

The informants identified a range of options for changing higher level VET qualifications:

- Minimalist revision of all IBSA qualifications at diploma level and above to cluster current units of competency into uniform units of study comparable with the units of designed learning time in degrees plus optimal use of any flexibility available under current package rules to support local customisation;
- A new qualification architecture designed with a core and elective structure that addresses current vocational needs, skills for future work and the capabilities needed for further study in higher education ; and
- The replacement of advanced diplomas with associate degree qualifications based on a course design similar to the foundation degrees as they operate in the United Kingdom.

4.3.1 Minimalist Revision

This approach would consist of a review of the architecture for higher level VET qualifications in the eleven IBSA Training Packages (See Appendix One) to ensure a consistent design for all higher level VET qualifications. It would work within existing package rules to:

- Ensure that diplomas and advanced diplomas prepare graduates for future work through developing capabilities in areas such as problem solving, critical thinking and learning to learn. This takes competency beyond existing occupations and job roles to become more focused on skills and knowledge relevant to employment contexts together with providing a firmer skills and knowledge basis for future learning opportunities;
- Better align all higher level qualifications with higher education qualifications, to provide better pathways, through strategies such as clustering units of competence, developing integrate approaches to learning and assessment;
- Providing as much flexibility as possible to allow provider customisation to meet the needs of different learners and to articulate with other qualifications – VET and higher education.

4.3.2 A New Architecture

This approach would involve developing a new approach to the architecture of higher level VET qualifications and would probably require negotiation with the National Quality Council and, perhaps with state authorities. We suggest that the new architecture would:

- Support new understandings and definitions of competency that would go beyond the definitions offered up in the *VET Products for the Twenty-first Century* (2009) and more recently by Buchanan *et al* (2009);
- Focus on three areas of competence: the knowledge and skills needed for specified jobs that currently exist, the knowledge and skills required to prepare for future work and the knowledge and skills needed to succeed at the next level of education, including both specialist pre-requisite knowledge and generic academic capabilities;
- Represent a hybrid of competence and knowledge based units; and

- Result in diplomas equivalent to one year of study and consisting of 8 units of study/competence, advanced diplomas equivalent to 2 years of study and consisting of 16 units of competence/study – these would provide credit for the whole first year and first two years of a degree, respectively.

This approach would result in higher level VET qualifications that are ‘hybrid’ in nature compared with those we have at present, addressing vocational skills as well as ensuring the development and acquisition of ability essential for future and further learning.

4.3.3 Associate Degrees

This more radical option would involve Industry Skills Councils moving into a new qualification territory by developing associate degrees to replace advanced diplomas. We would envisage the retention of diplomas as exit points from such associate degrees. These associate degrees would be curriculum based but fulfilling a similar purpose to the new look advanced diplomas described above. The advantage of associate degree products has already been identified by our private provider informants, that is the ability to design a qualification which aligns neatly with a bachelor degree. However it may not be possible for an ISC to gain approval for associate degree qualifications; certainly the NSW TAFE system failed to do so as a system. The feasibility of this option will depend on the attitude of state higher education accreditation authorities to the proposition that an Industry Skills Council develop associate degrees. It may be possible for IBSA to pursue this path in partnership with providers or, in the future, under the national regulator.

4.3.4 Graduate Certificates and Diplomas

We have not said much about the future potential of vocational graduate certificates and vocational graduate diplomas. It appears from the AQF consultation paper that these qualifications will continue to be regarded as equal to their non-vocational counterparts. We believe that a similar logic applies to the future planning for these qualifications as that we have developed for diplomas and advanced diplomas. That is that these qualifications should also provide the broad capabilities required for future work and the knowledge and skills needed for further learning. Given the relatively small number of vocational postgraduate qualifications it is feasible for an Industry Skills Council to work with representative universities to ensure that its postgraduate qualifications do provide pathways into masters degrees.

4.3.5 Implications of Change

Each of these options requires significant change to the ways in which IBSA works, to VET system norms and to relationships between the Industry Skills Council and other stakeholders. Even the minimalist approach will require a more inclusive qualification development process that involves VET providers and universities as well as industry to ensure a process that attends to vocational and further learning outcomes.

A new qualification architecture would entail a revision to the Training Package Developers' Handbook and have far reaching implication for higher level VET qualifications developed and owned by the other Industry Skills Councils and perhaps for state funding bodies.

Our informants identified a number of other repercussions likely to result from changing higher level VET qualifications. For example, all of them felt any new architecture should provide for the incorporation of graded assessment, together with having a stronger focus on academic skills such as critical thinking and analysis. They also considered that the design and description of higher level VET qualifications should make explicit the knowledge that prepares learners for their next qualification. There are no doubt many other implications that can only be identified through a careful scoping as part of any further work that arises from this project. Moving toward a new architecture would necessarily involve an overhaul, rationalization and standardization process for diplomas and advanced diplomas, as one key informant remarked 'this will cause a lot of angst for some but will ultimately benefit students'.

5. AN AGENDA FOR FURTHER WORK

The following section begins by arguing that there is, briefly, a moment for IBSA to seize; that the Skills Council has an opportunity to take a leading role in the tertiary sector with a new approach to the design and delivery of higher level VET qualifications. It then lists a series of recommendations from the project team based on our research and reflections. Finally the section presents a number of projects for IBSA to consider as a means of continuing this work.

As this paper has shown, the new tertiary qualifications market is an increasingly crowded and competitive space. However there are opportunities for VET and for IBSA as the manager of some of the most popular higher level qualifications. IBSA can grasp these opportunities by acknowledging the diversity of learner cohorts undertaking its higher level qualifications, understanding their multiple needs, and creating the products that will meet these needs.

The two COAG targets for higher level skills are a good starting point for this thinking. These targets were set separately and a number of analysts have shown that there are not enough people in Australia to achieve each of these unless many individuals achieve both higher level VET and undergraduate qualifications⁷.

The opportunity for VET exists in part because the Australian university sector has not realised the importance of upskilling existing workers. In the progress report for his review of the Victorian tertiary education system, Professor Kwon Lee Dow acknowledged that 70% of 2025 workforce is already working. However at present most universities are gearing up to attract more school leavers rather than increased participation by existing workers. In part this circumstance reflects that fact that universities would need to make radical changes to their product design and delivery to meet the needs of this market. They are still committed to the bachelor degree as an entry level qualification and to campus based learning; they see higher education diplomas and associate degrees as means to achieving enrolments in bachelor degrees.

⁷ Phillips KPA unpublished data

Given these circumstances, the cost of the projected expansion of the Australian university sector will be considerable. The UK experience with foundation degrees was driven by cost saving as well as the need to provide flexible, work-based short cycle qualifications. IBSA can learn from this. The VET system is more flexible and responsive than the higher education sector. It can deliver short cycle qualifications to existing workers as well as new entrants. IBSA should take advantage of this.

Therefore there is an opportunity for IBSA to take a leadership role and to re-design its higher level VET products to meet these emerging market needs. Previously we have argued that the capabilities that individuals need to prepare for unspecifiable future jobs are not dissimilar to those needed to participate in higher education. The IBSA product range of the future should provide younger new entrants with a sound general education foundation as well as with skills needed for employment. They should also be deliverable as the linked short cycle credentialing and learning opportunities that existing workers prefer. The new IBSA suite could consist of more substantial diplomas and advanced diplomas providing qualifications for employment, credentialing opportunities for experienced workers or credit equivalent to the first and second years, respectively, of undergraduate degrees. These VET *undergraduate* qualifications could lead into bachelor degrees or into graduate certificate/ diploma/masters sequences.

5.1 Recommended Actions

Based on our desktop research, interviews and reflections, the project team have developed a set of recommendations for action for IBSA. We recommend that the Innovation and Business Skills Council:

1. Acknowledge that all VET qualifications prepare learners for immediate work opportunities, unknown future work opportunities and for further learning in the VET and higher education sectors; that these purposes should inform the future development of qualifications;
2. Review its current range of higher level VET qualifications with the purpose of removing little used qualifications so that resources can be focused on the development and management of qualifications that are fit for purpose given that new development may be resource intensive;

3. Select an option for the future structure of all higher level VET qualifications in Training Package managed by IBSA and develop a plan for migrating to that structure;
4. Undertake the detailed work necessary to implement a new qualification architecture necessitating a broader approach to learning and consultation with a wider group of stakeholders;
5. Evaluate the new flexibilities recently provided by the National Quality Council and determine whether these will provide the flexibility required to support the future development of higher level VET qualification, or whether alternative development strategies will need to be implemented;
6. Implement a new development process for higher level qualifications that a broader group of stakeholders and enables the Skills Council to ensure that its qualifications prepare learners for present and future work opportunities and further study in VET and Higher Education;
7. Establish a network of 'IBSA friendly' universities, with membership in each capital city, as a basis for future collaborative work on qualifications and pathways development projects; and
8. Work with the single national regulator, as it is established, to develop aligned qualifications governance processes that will facilitate the alignment of vocational and higher education qualifications and pathways in the future.

5.2 Potential Projects

In this section we suggest a small group of projects that will enable IBSA to further progress work on its higher level VET qualifications. This is not an exhaustive set of projects but one that will answer questions, solve problems and provide additional data to enable the Skills Council to develop and implement a strategic plan for the future development of its higher level qualifications.

5.2.1 Project One: Towards a New Qualifications Architecture

This aim of this project would be to develop a new approach to a diploma and advanced diploma qualification set to:

- Develop a set of higher level VET qualifications that do prepare learners for current work and future work and learning,
- Test the three options described in Section 4 as the basis of this work, determining whether the desired changes can be made within the existing packaging rules or whether IBSA needs to negotiate a new system with the NQC,
- Trial a new process for qualifications development involving a wider group of stakeholders,
- Implement a design process that engages higher education and professional association stakeholders,
- Create a generic framework allowing room for customisation to enable pathways at the local level, and
- Provide 1 and 2 years of credit into a degree for the diploma and advanced diploma respectively.

We suggest the Diploma and Advanced Diploma in Accounting as suitable pilots because these qualifications do represents an occupationally distinct higher level VET qualification in IBSA's remit. They are also qualifications that result in large volumes of student traffic from VET to higher education. Such a project would involve industry stakeholders and professional bodies (e.g. CPA) together with tertiary education providers including both VET and higher education to progress a qualification design and format that supports a seamless pathway.

5.2.2 Project Two: A New Qualifications Development Process

We suggest that IBSA consider a companion project to Project One. The aim of this second project would be to capture the learning gleaned while testing the options for new structures for higher level qualifications and translating this into a reproducible process for developing higher level VET qualifications in the future.

5.2.3 Project Three: The 'IBSA Friendly' University Network

The aim of this project would be to enable IBSA to test whether it is possible for an industry skills council to overcome the individualistic and institution-bound nature of most credit arrangements and work with some universities to build block credit arrangements into its

qualifications. We suggest that IBSA work with a small but representative network of university partners (perhaps as few as 2 initially) to investigate the feasibility of achieving 'block' credit for one of its qualifications independent of provider. We suggest that one of the Vocational Graduate Certificates or Vocational Graduate Diplomas from the Business Services Training Package might be suitable for this exercise.

5.2.4 Project Four – Cross-Industry Leadership

IBSA has more investment in higher level qualifications than most industry skills councils. Stanwick showed that in 2002 Training Packages managed by IBSA represented 52.5% of diploma and 61.33% of advanced diploma VET sector government funded delivery. Most of this occurred in the business and financial service Training Packages.

If IBSA does wish to proceed with significant changes to qualifications architecture and development processes it will be important to win support from other industry skills councils with significant enrolments in higher level qualifications. We suggest that IBSA work with 1 or 2 other ISCs to develop a new approach to the development process for higher level qualifications. The aim of this project would be to:

- Identify changes that may need to occur at the national level to facilitate a new approach to higher level qualifications
- Identify implications for state funding bodies.

Community Services and Health and the Manufacturing Industry Skills councils also have significant interest in higher level qualifications and pathways.

APPENDICES

Appendix One: IBSA Training Packages

Numbers of diploma and advanced diploma Qualifications

Training Package	diploma	advanced diploma
Entertainment	4	4
Music	3	3
Business services	18	9
Financial services	15	5
Visual arts, craft and design	1	2
Training and education	1	-
Information and communication technology	9	4
Screen and media	6	1
Printing and graphic arts	5	-
Museums and library	2	2
Telecommunications	5	4
Total	69	34

Appendix Two: Key Informants

Name / Role	Institution	Category/Perspective
Robyn Tudor	ACPET	
George Brown, Director of Education Services	Think Education Group	VET/Higher Education Provider
Christine Robertson, Deputy Director TAFE Sheridan Maxwell, Senior Advisor Learning and Teaching Engineering and Health Noel Maloney, Senior Advisor Learning and Teaching- Media and Communication Victoria Versteegen, Program Director – Design Jane Mc Glashen, Senior Advisor Learning and Teaching - Design and Social Context	RMIT	Dual sector university
Robin Shreeve, CEO	Skills Australia	Policy
John Rosenberg, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (International and Future Students)	La Trobe University	Higher Education Provider
Kay O'Hara, Deputy Chief Executive –Academic Sue Mc Shane –Project Officer	Canberra Institute of Technology	VET/Higher Education Provider
Leonie Benson (Curriculum and Project Officer)	University of Ballarat	Dual Sector University
Kim Bannikoff, Director of Queensland Studies Authority Project Director, AQFC, the Deputy Prime Minister's project on pathways.	Queensland Department of Education	Policy
Pam Christie, Director Sydney Institute Martin Brown, Manager Digital Animation	Sydney Institute- TAFE NSW	Provider/Policy
Hilary Winchester, Pro Vice Chancellor - Engagement and participation	University of South Australia	Provider/Policy
Berwyn Clayton, Director	Workbased Education Centre (WERC), Victoria University	
Tess Demediuk, Director	Courses and Pathways Unit, Victoria University	

Appendix Three: Interview Guide Questions

Key informant interview questions

Existing pathways between VET and Higher Education

1. Give examples of products/course clusters that provide pathways from VET to higher education in your organisation?
2. What design elements in the qualification architecture supports and enables these pathways?
3. What do you see a barriers to achieving more seamless pathways between VET and higher education?

Future qualification architecture

4. If we could change VET diploma and above qualifications to better support pathways into degrees, what changes do you think should be made?
5. What elements in course (qualification) architecture (e.g. numbers of units, consistency of unit designed learning duration) could change if diploma level and above VET qualifications were to provide a more seamless pathway into degrees?
6. One suggestion has been that the current VET diploma level and above qualification range is changed. For example advanced diplomas could be altered to be more like the first two years of a degree or advanced diplomas or could be replaced by associate degrees. What do you think?
7. What elements in course architecture (e.g. numbers of units, consistency of unit designed learning duration, etc) could change if diploma level and above VET qualifications were to provide easier transition for people wishing to change careers by moving from one 'diploma and above qualification' to another?
8. Do you think that the content of diploma level and above VET qualifications could change to better support pathways into degrees? If so, how?

Implications for changing VET qualification architecture

9. If advanced diplomas were replaced by associate degrees how could these qualifications be 'vocational'?
10. What is necessary in developing a 'bridging qualification' between VET and Higher education, who would need to be involved in the development process? Which stakeholders? What elements would need to be included in such a qualification?
11. Should it be a diploma or a degree type qualification? (such as an associate degree)?
12. How will it be vocational? How will it support opportunities for further learning in higher education together with developing employment related skills?

Appendix Four: Credit Transfer for VET Accounting

VU B. Business (Accounting) and credit from diploma and advanced diploma Accounting

Current Credit Transfer Arrangements

Bachelor of Business (Accounting)	diploma of Accounting Credit Granted For:	advanced diploma of Accounting Credit Granted For:
First Year		
ACCOUNTING FOR DECISION MAKING	√	√
INFORMATION SYSTEMS FOR BUSINESS	√	√
ECONOMIC PRINCIPLES		√
BUSINESS STATISTICS	√	√
BUSINESS LAW	√	√
MANAGEMENT AND ORGANISATION BEHAVIOUR		√
ACCOUNTING INFORMATION SYSTEMS	√	√
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT UNIT 1		
Second Year		
INTRODUCTION TO MARKETING		
FINANCIAL ACCOUNTING		
CORPORATE ACCOUNTING		
MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTING		
CORPORATE LAW (RECOMMENDED ELECTIVE)		
TAXATION LAW AND PRACTICE (RECOMMENDED ELECTIVE)		
Other Elective		√
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT UNIT 2		
Third Year		
ADVANCED FINANCIAL ACCOUNTING		
CORPORATE FINANCE		
AUDITING (RECOMMENDED ELECTIVE)		√ (as an alternative unspecified elective)
ELECTIVE 5		√
ELECTIVE 6		√
ELECTIVE 7		√
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT UNIT 3		

Universities Australia has provided the following advice on credit levels into degrees, in the same field of study, for VET diplomas and advanced diploma:

- 50% credit for an advanced diploma when linked to a three year Bachelor degree
- 37.5% credit for an advanced diploma when linked to a four year Bachelor degree
- 33% credit for a diploma when linked to a three year Bachelor degree

- 25% credit for a diploma when linked to a four year Bachelor degree.
(Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee 2001)

However the differing learning outcomes for diplomas/advanced diplomas and degrees means that even when the suggested quantum of credit is given it is usually spread across the three years of a degree and so does not save time and money for the articulating student

Appendix Five: Characteristics of Higher Level VET Learners

This table is taken from Stanwick's 2006 NCVER report *Outcomes from higher-level vocational education and training qualifications* (Stanwick 2006). The data show the characteristics of students enrolled in the most popular Training Packages in 2002. These include three of the Training Package managed by IBSA and provide some interesting insights into the learners.

Table 16: Enrolment characteristics for most popular training packages in 2002

Training package	Age	Gender	Highest prior education level ^a	Employment status ^{ab}
<i>Diploma</i>				
Community services (human welfare studies—health and welfare associate professionals)	54% aged 25+	92% female	45% Year 12 30% cert. III+	29% full-time 40% part-time
Business services ^c (business and management—business and administration associate professionals)	56% aged 25+	62% female	48% Year 12 32% cert III+	44% full-time 23% part-time
Information technology (computer science and information systems—business and information professionals)	57% aged 15–24	81% male	51% Year 12 37% cert. III+	20% full-time 27% part-time
<i>Advanced diploma</i>				
Financial services (banking and finance—business and information professionals)	55% aged 25+	65% female	47% Year 12 41% cert. III+	32% full-time 21% part-time
Electrotechnology (electrical and electronic engineering, science—building and engineering professionals)	60% aged 15–24	94% male	59% Year 12 17% cert. III+	16% full-time 27% part-time

Note: (a) These are as a proportion of known totals.

(b) Employed full-time also includes self-employed, employer and employed—unpaid.

(c) Enrolment numbers in business services also include enrolments in the now superseded administration package.

Source: NCVER National VET Provider Collection 2002

Appendix Six: Comparison of Graduate Certificates

The following extract from the AQF website describes the characteristics and pathways to the qualification for both Vocational and Higher Education graduate certificates.

1. Characteristics of Vocational Graduate Certificates

Characteristics of competencies or learning outcomes at this level include:

- the self-directed development and achievement of broad and/or specialised areas of knowledge and skills building on prior knowledge and skills;
- substantial breadth, depth and complexity involving the initiation, analysis, design, planning, execution and evaluation of technical and/or management functions in highly varied and/or highly specialised contexts; and
- applications involve making significant, high level, independent judgements in major, broad or specialised planning, design, operational, technical and/or management functions in highly varied and/or highly specialised contexts. It may include responsibility and broad-ranging accountability for the structure, management and output of the work of others and/or functions.

The degree of emphasis on breadth as against depth of knowledge and skills may vary between qualifications granted at this level.

Pathways to the Qualification

Candidates may enter the qualification through a number of entry points demonstrating potential to undertake study at graduate level, including from:

- a relevant advanced diploma or diploma, or a relevant Certificate IV or Certificate III together with significant relevant vocational practice;
- relevant extensive vocational practice, without formal qualifications;
- a Bachelor Degree; or
- other Higher Education qualification, often with relevant vocational practice.

Where a Vocational Graduate Certificate is in a directly related field, or is part of a program which includes a Vocational Graduate diploma the Vocational Graduate Certificate would normally provide up to 50% credit towards the Vocational Graduate diploma.

2. Characteristics of Higher Education Graduate Certificates

Characteristics of learning outcomes at this level cover a wide range of specialised needs following an undergraduate program or relevant prior work, ranging from initial and ongoing professional development to preparation for further postgraduate study. The learning outcomes reflect a standard appropriate to advanced study and primarily include

the acquisition and application of knowledge and skills in a new discipline or professional area, which may also involve extending knowledge and skills already gained in an undergraduate program or relevant prior work.

Pathways to the Qualification

Candidates may enter under various arrangements, such as:

- from a Bachelor Degree, sometimes with relevant professional practice required;
- from an advanced diploma, diploma or higher-level vocational Certificate together with extensive relevant work experience; or
- on the basis of extensive relevant work experience demonstrating potential to undertake work at this level.

Although the duration of programs may vary, courses at this level typically require six months of full-time study.

Upon completion, depending upon their level of results, candidates may be admitted to a relevant Graduate diploma with credit for up to half of the longer program, often within an articulated program leading to a Masters Degree.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allen Consulting Group (2006). World class skills for world class industries: Employers' perspectives on skilling Victoria: report to the Australian Industry Group. Melbourne 151.
- AQF Council (2009). Strengthening the AQF: An Architecture for Australia's Qualifications. Consultation Paper
- Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2009), Curriculum *Design*, (June 2009) URL, http://www.acara.edu.au/verve/_resources/Curriculum_Design_Paper_.pdf accessed October 20th 2009
- Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee. (2001). 'AVCC Policy Guidelines on Cross-Sector Qualification Linkages.' Retrieved 3 January 2010, from http://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/content.asp?page=/policies_programs/teaching_learning/credit_transfer/index.htm.
- Bradley, D., P. Noonan, et al. (2008). Review of Australian Higher Education: Final Report.
- Brown, P. and A. Hesketh (2004). The mismanagement of talent: Employability and jobs in the knowledge economy. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Buchanan, Yu, Marginson, and Wheelahan (2009) Education, Work and Economic Renewal: An issues paper prepared for the Australian Education Union, June 2009 AEU National Conference
- Burke, G. & Shah, C (2006) Qualifications and the future labour markets in Australia, Centre for economics of education and training, Monash University
- Department for Business Innovation and Skills (2009). Higher Ambitions: the future of universities in a knowledge economy. London.
- Gillard, H. J. M. P. (2009). Speech. Big Skills, Darling Harbour, Sydney.
- Greenwood, M., B. Little, et al. (2008). Report to Foundation Degree Forward on the Impact of Foundation Degrees on Students and the Workplace. London, Centre for Higher Education Research and Information, the Open University.
- Harvey, L. (2008) Review of research literature focused on Foundation Degrees
- Hoechel, K., Field. S., Justesen., T., and Kim, M. (2008) *Learning for Jobs; OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training, Australia*, OECD, Paris
- Kelly, A., L. Wheelahan, et al. (2009). Betwixt and between: Higher education teachers in TAFE. Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association Conference: 12th Sydney, AVETRA.
- Kosky, L. (2006). Maintaining the advantage: Skilled Victorians. Education and Training.
- Marginson, S. (1993) Education and Public Policy in Australia, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press
- Moodie, G. (2008) *From Vocational Education to Higher Education*, Berkshire, England, Open University Press.
- Parry, G. (2006). 'Polic-Participation Trajectories in English Higher Education ' Higher Education Quarterly **60**(4): 392-412.
- Shreeve, R. (2008) *The Vocational- Higher Education Interface, The view from England* Paper for the L H Martin Institute Conference on Charting New Terrain: Creating and maintaining a

diversified tertiary education sector in Australia, The Langham Hotel, Melbourne; 27-28 November 2008

Skills Victoria (2008). *Securing Jobs for Your Future* Melbourne, Victorian Government

Stanwick, J. (2006). *Outcomes from higher-level vocational education and training qualifications*. Adelaide.

Young, I. (2007) *Building better pathways to Higher Education*, paper presented at Australian financial Review Higher Education Summit, April 3-4, Melbourne.

Young, M. (2005) *Bringing Knowledge Back In: Theoretical and Applied Studies in Sociology of Education*, London, Routledge Falmer, (e-book downloaded in July 2007 through Monash University Library).

Wheelahan, L. (2009). What kind of access does VET provide to higher education for low SES students. Not a lot. . Student Equity in Higher Education: What we know. What we need to know: National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education. Launch and Forum. University of South Australia.