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ABSTRACT

This document explains the objectives, principles, standards, and protocols of the Australian Recognition Framework (ARF), which is a comprehensive approach to national recognition of vocational education and training (VET) that is based on a quality-assured approach to the registration of training organizations seeking to deliver training, assess competency outcomes, and issue qualifications. The following items are included: preface detailing the ARF's key objectives, principal mechanism for recognition, and transition arrangements; nine principles underpinning the ARF (mutual recognition of qualifications and statements of attainment by registered training organizations [RTOs]; mutual recognition of registration decisions by state training authorities/state recognition authorities [STAs/SRAs]; mutual recognition of RTOs by other STAs/SRAs; mutual recognition through primary recognition authority; provision of information by primary recognition authority; authority to issue qualifications; monitoring/audit; complaints management; and information management); standards (national core standards for registration; national product/service standards for training delivery; national product/service standards for skill recognition services; and national standards for registration as a training organizations recognized as quality endorsed to self-manage training recognition); protocols (national operational protocols for external review processes, marketing of recognized training, and fees for registration); and glossary. (MN)

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Australia's National Training Framework

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Purpose

The Australian Recognition Framework (ARF) is a comprehensive approach to national recognition of vocational education and training (VET). It is based on a quality assured approach to the registration of training organisations seeking to deliver training, assess competency outcomes and issue qualifications.

Objectives

The key focus of the ARF is to establish a more streamlined and responsive system of national recognition underpinned by strengthened quality assurance. The new recognition arrangements have been developed by the National Training Framework Committee (NTFC) of the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) in conjunction with States and Territories, the Commonwealth and industry in response to a number of reforms over the last eighteen months. These include the demand for a reduction in the points of regulation, the need for greater diversification in the Training Market, including the capacity to expand recognition to organisations offering assessment services only, and as a means of providing a nationally agreed mechanism to underpin the operation of recent initiatives such as Training Packages, New Apprenticeships and User Choice.

The key objectives of the ARF are to:

- support Mutual Recognition arrangements between States and Territories, Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and industries;
- enable implementation of Training Packages and the introduction of more flexible, client oriented delivery arrangements;
- increase the capacity of recognised organisations to take responsibility for their operations by moving decision making processes to where client-supplier interactions take place;
- enable User Choice and New Apprenticeships to operate in the Training Market;
- integrate VET recognition systems with wider State and Territory quality arrangements; and
- strengthen the currency of competencies as the basis for recognition within VET.

The ARF represents an evolution in national recognition arrangements, providing a framework which incorporates the strengths of the existing National Framework for the Recognition of Training (NFROT) and extends these to meet the current and emerging needs of the VET system. In accord with its functional responsibilities, the NTFC will be responsible for coordinating advice at a national level on the effective operation of the new framework.

Operation

The principal mechanism for recognition under the ARF is registration of a training organisation. The quality assurance cycle for registration comprises four elements - initial registration, self-assessment and evaluation, compliance audit and re-registration. These processes will vary depending on the nature of registration.

Organisations can be registered for two product/service areas:

- the provision of training delivery, assessment and the issuance of nationally recognised qualifications and Statements of Attainment; or
- the provision of skill recognition services (assessment only) and the issuance of nationally recognised qualifications and Statements of Attainment.

RTOs can also receive defined delegations from a State Training Authority/State Recognition Authority (STA/SRA) to self-manage the scope of their registration and/or self-manage accreditation functions. Such organisations are Quality Endorsed.

The ARF comprises three components:

- **National Principles** for:
 - Mutual Recognition
 - Registration
- **National Standards** for:
 - Registration
- **National Operational Protocols** for:
 - External Review
 - Fees for Registration
 - Marketing

The National Standards for Registration comprise four sets of Standards and Evidence Requirements which give effect to the National Principles. These Standards and Evidence Requirements contain:

- a core which all organisations seeking registration must meet;
- product/service standards for organisations seeking to deliver training, assess and issue nationally recognised qualifications and Statements of Attainment;
- product/service standards for organisations seeking to provide skill recognition services (assessment only) and issue nationally recognised qualifications and Statements of Attainment; and
- separate standards for Quality Endorsement which provide for organisations to self-accredit courses and/or self-manage the scope of their registration, and which will operate in conjunction with the quality assurance systems of each State and Territory.

Transition Arrangements

All existing registered providers will be deemed as RTOs under the ARF, based on their current registration scope. This will include a deemed capacity to deliver and/or assess equivalent qualifications within relevant Training Packages.

Existing providers will be notified by STAs/SRAs of the new arrangements under the ARF and are required to give an undertaking that they can produce evidence of operating in accordance with these requirements within eighteen months. Under the External Review Protocol, all providers can expect to be audited within the registration cycle. In the case of existing providers, the initial audit will be conducted within three years of the introduction of the ARF on 1 January 1998. This audit may occur as part of a regular audit cycle involving re-registration, audit to achieve Quality Endorsement, as part of a random audit or, if not undertaken through these means, as a specific purpose audit to ensure compliance with the new arrangements.

All new applicants for registration will be expected to comply with the new requirements following introduction from 1 January 1998.

The National Principles, Standards and Protocols set out herein and agreed by the ANTA Ministerial Council on 14 November 1997 establish the national quality assurance requirements for registration administered by individual States and Territories.

The Australian Recognition Framework - National Quality Assured Registration of Training Organisations

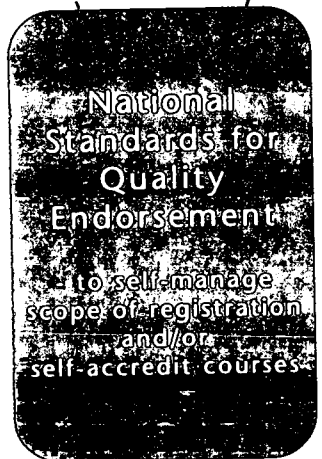
Registration in accordance with



and



and for training organisations seeking Quality Endorsed status



NATIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR MUTUAL RECOGNITION

These Principles underpin the operation of Mutual Recognition processes by State and Territory Recognition Authorities in the context of the ARF. They should be read in conjunction with the National Principles for Registration, the National Standards for Registration and the National Operational Protocols.

Mutual Recognition is applied within the context of the particular legislative, occupational licensing, reporting and accountability requirements of each State and Territory. RTOs offering services for overseas clients also need to meet the requirements of the Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 1991.

Principle 1 Mutual Recognition of Qualifications and Statements of Attainment by RTOs

An RTO must accept and mutually recognise the decisions and outcomes of any other RTO or body in partnership with an RTO, thereby ensuring the mutual acceptance throughout Australia of the qualifications and Statements of Attainment awarded by RTOs.

Principle 2 Mutual Recognition of Registration Decisions by STAs/SRAs

Each State and Territory will always mutually recognise the decisions of all other States and Territories in registering a training organisation, thereby ensuring the mutual acceptance throughout Australia of the qualifications and Statements of Attainment awarded by the RTO.

Principle 3 Mutual Recognition of RTOs by other STAs/SRAs

Mutual Recognition enables an RTO to operate within other States or Territories within the original scope of registration without a further formal recognition process or payment of additional fees.

Principle 4 Mutual Recognition through Primary Recognition Authority

RTOs wishing to operate in more than one State/Territory should generally only be required to communicate with a single Recognition Authority, the Primary Recognition Authority, unless they wish to do otherwise. The Primary Recognition Authority will usually be the one in which the organisation was first registered and/or in which it has major locus of operations. RTOs may elect to change their Primary Recognition Authority.

Principle 5 Provision of Information by Primary Recognition Authority

When an RTO wishes to operate in other States/Territories, within the scope of its original registration, the Primary Recognition Authority will supply the Recognition Authority(ies) in these States/Territories (the Reciprocal Recognition Authority(ies)) with the following information:

- the RTO's name and legal status (company and trading names) exactly as shown in the primary registration;
- the RTO's full street address (and postal address if available) and telecommunications address(es) - e-mail, facsimile and telephone;
- the name, position or title, telephone and facsimile numbers (and address if different from the RTO's registered address) of a contact for day-to-day dealings; and
- the defined scope of primary registration, expiry dates and full address(es) of permanent site(s). This includes products/services which the organisation is registered to provide and the areas of operation - Training Package(s), industry or course based information (including course titles, codes, national codes and accreditation expiry dates).

The Primary Recognition Authority will advise the Reciprocal Recognition Authority(ies) promptly of any subsequent changes to the above information and enter the information on the National Training Information Service (NTIS). (This Principle will take full effect when the NTIS is fully operational.)

Principle 6 Authority to Issue Qualifications

Qualifications and Statements of Attainment awarded by an RTO operating in other States and Territories are issued under the authority of the Primary Recognition Authority and are 'nationally recognised'.

Principle 7 Monitoring/Audit

The monitoring/audit of RTOs is managed by the Primary Recognition Authority which may come to working arrangements with the Reciprocal Recognition Authority(ies) to undertake monitoring/auditing functions.

Principle 8 Complaints Management

Where a complaint is made in relation to the application of the Mutual Recognition process or in relation to the operation/activities of a mutually recognised RTO, in the first instance the State/Territory in which the complaint is made should advise the Primary Recognition Authority of the complaint. Based on the nature of the complaint, the Primary Recognition Authority and the Recognition Authority to which the complaint was made will agree on an appropriate strategy and responsibilities for investigation of the complaint. However, after consultation, Reciprocal Recognition Authorities reserve the right to initiate an investigation of a complaint, take appropriate remedial action, suspend or withdraw an RTO's Mutual Recognition.

Principle 9 Information Management

The Primary Recognition Authority is responsible for maintaining relevant statistical information on the operations of RTOs except where services have been purchased by States/Territories in which the RTO is operating through Mutual Recognition. The Primary Recognition Authority is also responsible for amendments to information in relation to registration for the purposes of the NTIS.

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NATIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR REGISTRATION

These Principles underpin the operation of registration of training organisations by State and Territory Recognition Authorities in the context of the ARF. They should be read in conjunction with the National Principles for Mutual Recognition, the National Standards for Registration and the National Operational Protocols.

PRINCIPLES FOR REGISTRATION

Principle 1 Recognition

All organisations, whether public or private, seeking national recognition of their training products and services must be registered by a State/Territory Training Authority or operate in partnership with an existing RTO, which becomes the body responsible for quality assurance of recognition for the products/services provided by the partner organisation.

Principle 2 Basis of Registration

Initial registration is dependent upon demonstrating the capacity to meet the National Core and relevant Product/Service Standards and any other requirements of the relevant State or Territory. Continuing registration is dependent upon compliance measured through monitoring and audit.

Principle 3 Scope of Registration

Organisations must be registered against a defined scope which identifies recognition for particular products and services to be delivered in specific areas of operation. The products and services include:

- provision of training delivery, assessment and the issuance of nationally recognised qualifications and Statements of Attainment;
- provision of skill recognition services (assessment only) and the issuance of nationally recognised qualifications and Statements of Attainment.

The area of operation is defined by either a national Training Package and/or general area of vocational education, and by highest qualification level.

Principle 4 Period of Registration

Registration is limited to a period of up to five years. Extensions to the scope of registration do not extend the total period of registration. Re-registration is dependent on establishing compliance with relevant Standards, measured by States and Territories.

Principle 5 Quality Endorsement

Training organisations meeting the registration and quality system requirements of the State or Territory in which they are first registered may receive delegations to self-manage the extension of the scope of their registration into new qualifications within an endorsed Training Package, new Training Packages and/or new accredited courses and/or undertake course design and self-accreditation¹ of courses.

¹ The NTFC has agreed that relevant Training Packages are to be used where they exist; self-accreditation of courses only applies where relevant Training Packages do not exist.

NATIONAL CORE STANDARDS FOR REGISTRATION

These Standards represent the core requirements and codes of conduct which all training organisations seeking registration must demonstrate. Demonstration will involve scrutiny by the Primary Recognition Authority of the evidence provided and may involve site inspection.

Review, including compliance audits, forms part of the quality assurance cycle of the ARF. The Core Standards require a commitment from organisations to participate in external review and to have internal review processes in place.

Suspension or withdrawal of the registration will occur where the RTO is unable to assure the quality of products and services in accordance with the Registration Standards. This process will be in accordance with established procedures of the STA/SRA, incorporating the Operational Protocol for External Review Processes.

C1 National Principles

Core Standard	The organisation agrees to operate in accordance with the National Principles for Registration and Mutual Recognition.
Evidence Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal undertaking by the Chief Executive Officer or equivalent officer.

C2 Legislative Requirements

Core Standard	All relevant Commonwealth and State or Territory legislative and regulatory requirements are followed.
Evidence Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant personnel are aware of and implement legislative and regulatory requirements, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Occupational Health and Safety ▸ WorkCover or equivalent ▸ Anti-Discrimination ▸ Equal Opportunity ▸ Racial Hatred Act ▸ VET Acts

C3 Access and Equity

Core Standard	The organisation is committed to access and equity principles and processes.
Evidence Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentary evidence of access/equity policies. • Procedures incorporate access/equity considerations. • All personnel are aware of and implement access and equity principles and processes.

C4 Quality Management Focus	
Core Standard	The organisation demonstrates a focus on quality and consistency in the development and provision of its services, products and operations.
Evidence Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A quality management focus, including evidence of and a means of demonstrating: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a business/strategic plan covering relevant areas of organisational activity; • established internal monitoring and review processes which regularly evaluate and adjust products and services to meet client (industry, enterprise, other) expectations; • applied client service standards; • client feedback instruments; • version control systems; and • dissemination and consistent application of relevant procedural materials within the organisation.
C5 External Review Processes	
Core Standard	<p>The organisation agrees to participate in external monitoring and audit processes, as required by the Primary Recognition Authority. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • random compliance audit; • audit following complaint; and • audit for the purposes of re-registration.
Evidence Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal undertaking by the Chief Executive Officer or equivalent officer.
C6 Management and Administration	
Core Standard	The organisation has sound financial, administrative and client/learner records management procedures in place.
Evidence Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy and practices for managing and assuring the integrity of records are in place. These must address: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • security/confidentiality • archiving • external reporting (eg AVETMISS) • access by client • Adequate insurance policies are maintained eg public liability insurance. • On request, formal assurance from the Chief Executive Officer that appropriate management and standards of probity are maintained for all financial matters.
C7 Ethical Marketing and Advertising	
Core Standard	The organisation agrees to operate in accordance with the National Operational Protocol for the Marketing of Recognised Training.
Evidence Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal undertaking by the Chief Executive Officer or equivalent officer. • Sighted examples meet requirements of Protocol.

NATIONAL PRODUCT/SERVICE STANDARDS FOR TRAINING DELIVERY

These Standards identify the national requirements for registration to deliver training, undertake assessment and issue nationally recognised qualifications and Statements of Attainment. They should be read and operate in conjunction with the National Principles for Mutual Recognition and Registration, the National Core Standards for Registration and the National Operational Protocols.

Training organisations operating in this product/service area are responsible for the design and development and/or acquisition of specific training programs to support client-responsive delivery and assessment of the endorsed components of relevant national Training Packages.

Training organisations operating in this product/service area may also be registered to provide accredited courses.

An Industry Training Advisory Body (ITAB) cannot be registered for this group of products/services.

TD1 Resources for Delivery and Assessment	
Training Delivery Standards	Resources for the delivery, assessment and issuance of qualifications, in the area(s) of recognition sought, meet the requirements of the relevant endorsed Training Package(s) and/or accredited course(s).
Evidence Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The following resources are identified and applied: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ delivery personnel with appropriate qualifications, and experience, including assessor requirements as defined in the relevant Training Package assessment guidelines (meeting this Standard includes personnel recruitment, induction and professional development practices); ▸ delivery and assessment resources (facilities, equipment and training materials) appropriate to the methods of delivery and assessment requirements; and ▸ relevant Training Package and/or accredited course documents and support materials, with necessary copyright authorisations.
TD2 Identifying Learning Needs and Designing Training Products	
Training Delivery Standards	The organisation can demonstrate its ability to identify the learning needs of diverse clients and to plan/implement appropriate learning strategies. This includes the capacity to design and adapt training products, in the area(s) of recognition sought, enabling the endorsed components of the Training Package(s) and/or the accredited course(s) to be achieved.
Evidence Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Personnel with appropriate skills and experience in interpreting competency standards and/or curriculum for training and assessment purposes.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample methodologies/instruments used to identify learning needs. • Evidence of the design/adaptation process and resulting training and assessment products relevant to different learning needs is documented.
TD3 Assessment	
Training Delivery Standards	The organisation can demonstrate its capacity to conduct or facilitate assessments which meet the endorsed components of relevant Training Package(s) and/or accredited course(s) in the area(s) of recognition sought.
Evidence Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence that assessment practice meets the assessment requirements of the endorsed components of relevant Training Package(s) and/or the assessment requirements of accredited course(s).
TD4 Client Services	
Training Delivery Standards	The organisation provides timely and appropriate information, advice and support services which assist learners/clients in achieving their identified outcomes.
Evidence Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A documented Code of Practice which is disseminated, understood and valued by personnel and clients encompassing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ admissions processes; ▸ marketing; ▸ delivery; ▸ assessment which meets the National Assessment Principles (including Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and credit transfer); ▸ appeals processes; and ▸ grievance procedures and, where relevant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ fees and charges, including fee refund policy; and ▸ student welfare and guidance services.
TD5 Issuance of Qualifications and Statements of Attainment	
Training Delivery Standards	Qualifications and Statements of Attainment are issued in accordance with the requirements of the AQF Implementation Handbook, the Guidelines for Training Package Developers and specific qualification requirements of the relevant endorsed Training Package(s) and/or accredited course(s).
Evidence Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processes/systems in place to issue and record qualifications in accordance with all appropriate national guidelines. • Demonstrated understanding of specific qualification requirements in the area(s) of recognition sought.

**NATIONAL PRODUCT/SERVICE STANDARDS FOR
SKILL RECOGNITION SERVICES (ASSESSMENT ONLY)**

These Standards identify the national requirements for registration in relation to the provision of skill recognition services (assessment only) and the issuance of nationally recognised qualifications and Statements of Attainment. These standards should be read and operate in conjunction with the National Principles for Mutual Recognition and Registration, the National Core Standards for Registration and the National Operational Protocols.

A1 Resources	
Assessment Standards	Resources for assessment and issuance of qualifications, in the area(s) of recognition sought, meet the requirements of the relevant endorsed Training Package(s) and/or accredited course(s).
Evidence Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The following resources are identified and applied: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ personnel with appropriate qualifications and experience in assessment, as defined in the relevant Training Package assessment guidelines or course documentation (meeting this Standard includes personnel recruitment, induction and professional development practices); ▸ resources (facilities, equipment, assessment materials) appropriate to assessment requirements; and ▸ relevant Training Package and accredited course documents and support materials, with necessary copyright authorisations.
A2 Assessment	
Assessment Standards	The organisation can demonstrate its capacity to conduct or facilitate assessments which meet the endorsed components of relevant Training Package(s) and/or accredited course(s) in the area(s) of recognition sought.
Evidence Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence that assessment practice meets the assessment requirements of the endorsed components of relevant Training Package(s) and/or the assessment requirements of accredited course(s).
A3 Client Services	
Assessment Standards	The organisation provides timely and appropriate information, advice and support services which assist clients in achieving their assessment objectives.
Evidence Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A documented Code of Practice which is disseminated, understood and valued by personnel and clients encompassing:

- admissions processes;
 - marketing;
 - assessment which meets the National Assessment Principles (including RPL and credit transfer);
 - appeals processes; and
 - grievance procedures
- and, where relevant:
- diagnostic assessment services;
 - fees and charges, including fee refund policy; and
 - student welfare and guidance services.

A4 Issuance of Qualifications and Statements of Attainment

Assessment Standards	<p>Qualifications and Statements of Attainment are issued in accordance with the requirements of the AQF Implementation Handbook, the Guidelines for Training Package Developers and specific qualification requirements of relevant endorsed Training Packages.</p>
Evidence Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processes/systems in place to issue and record qualifications in accordance with all appropriate national guidelines. • Demonstrated understanding of specific qualification requirements in the area(s) of recognition sought.

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NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR REGISTRATION AS A TRAINING ORGANISATION RECOGNISED AS QUALITY ENDORSED TO SELF-MANAGE TRAINING RECOGNITION

RTOs may, through a process of Quality Endorsement, receive delegated powers from the relevant State or Territory Training Authority to self-manage:

- their scope of registration (extend their training delivery or assessment operations into new qualifications within an endorsed Training Package, new Training Packages and/or new accredited courses); and/or
- accreditation of their own courses and customised qualifications².

State and Territory Training Authorities/Recognition Authorities may place limits and conditions on the delegation of training recognition powers to RTOs.

An RTO can only seek self-managing status to operate in the product/service area of existing registration ie an organisation registered for the provision of skill recognition services (assessment only) cannot receive delegated powers in relation to training delivery.

Quality Endorsement also enables RTOs to self-accredit courses/qualifications where no Training Package exists³ and accredit customised qualifications within NTFC and AQF guidelines for the scope established by Quality Endorsement.

A key requirement of self-managing status is that the training organisation meets the quality system requirements of the relevant State or Territory in which it seeks delegated training recognition powers.

The following standards establish the national requirements:

- Organisations seeking to receive delegated powers to self-manage scope are required to meet QE1, QE2 and QE4
- Organisations seeking to receive delegated powers to self-manage accreditation are required to meet QE1, QE3 and QE4
- Organisations seeking to receive both delegations must meet all Standards.

These standards apply in addition to the National Core and specific Product/Service Standards of the ARF.

QE1 Quality Management System	
National Standards	The organisation has a quality management system in place applicable to the education and training environment, which meets the requirements of the State/Territory quality framework.
Evidence Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A documented quality system relevant to the delegated powers sought and/or exercised by the organisation covering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • purpose, function and activities of the quality system; • procedures and standards; • strategic plan; • performance strategies/targets;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ management responsibilities; ▸ human resource management; and ▸ internal monitoring and review. ● Personnel involvement in the quality system and mechanisms for seeking client feedback. ● Documented processes for obtaining stakeholder support/industry consultation arrangements. ● Compliance with data and information transfer protocols for the SRA and the NTIS within 10 working days of exercising their delegated powers.
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QE2 Self-Managed Extension of Scope

National Standards	The quality management system of the organisation incorporates and defines the capacity and ability to extend the scope of registration.
Evidence Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Processes in place to identify Training Package(s) and accredited course(s) appropriate for use by the organisation. ● Documented processes for undertaking self-assessment in relation to proposed extensions to the scope of registration.

QE3 Self-Managed Accreditation

National Standards	The quality management system of the organisation encompasses course design, development and accreditation processes.
Evidence Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Personnel with competence in course design and development in accordance with the National Accreditation Principles. ● Documented internal processes for the involvement of external expertise in accreditation in accordance with the National Accreditation Principles and SRA guidelines. ● Demonstrated knowledge and compliance with the Guidelines for Training Package Developers for the development of new customised qualifications⁴ derived from two or more endorsed Training Packages.

QE4 Monitoring / Review of Delegations

National Standards	A monitoring and review process is in place to ensure that delegated powers are exercised in accordance with all ARF requirements and State and Territory quality requirements and within the limits and conditions of delegation, if applicable.
Evidence Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Documented processes for implementing the transition to new Training Packages/courses. ● Documented review processes for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ monitoring implementation of the delegated power to extend scope of registration; and/or ▸ evaluating the operations of self-accreditation of courses.

Definition

A compliance audit represents a systematic and independent external assessment of an RTO to determine whether the organisation is operating in accordance with its registered scope.

External audit assures both the organisation and its clients that the organisation is providing consistent quality products and services. Audit also assists the organisation in identifying areas for improvement.

Basis

As identified in Registration Standard C5, part of the quality assurance cycle of the ARF is the requirement to participate in compliance audits. All RTOs will be subject to at least one external audit at some point in the registration cycle. This could occur as part of initial registration, as part of the deeming process during transition, on a random basis at re-registration and as part of the Quality Endorsement process.

Compliance audits may involve:

- monitoring of the RTO's performance against its registered operations ie compliance with National Standards for Registration;
- external investigation of specific areas where complaints have been received;
- validation of the RTO's internal monitoring/review arrangements; and
- evaluation of the delegated recognition processes granted to Quality Endorsed RTOs.

External audit operates in conjunction with ongoing internal self-evaluation and review within the organisation.

Conduct

Compliance audits are initiated and managed by the Primary Recognition Authority, unless alternative arrangements are made in respect of a mutually recognised RTO as per Principle 8 of the Mutual Recognition Principles.

Registration and compliance audits should be undertaken by individuals or groups, free from conflict of interest, who are capable of assessing compliance with all relevant ARF Standards and Evidence Requirements.

Outcomes of registration and audits should be reported on and monitored by an industry-led body under State and Territory legislation.

A full list of RTOs, including scope of registration and delegations, will be publicly available through the NTIS and STAs/SRAs. STAs/SRAs will exchange information on registration and audit outcomes.

Each STA/SRA will publish advice for the conduct of an external compliance audit. Such advice will encompass:

- notification requirements to RTOs;
- audit costs and processes;
- appeals mechanisms; and
- sanctions (which include withdrawal of registration and/or delegations).

PART B: STRATEGIC EVALUATIONS

As part of the quality assurance and continuous improvement cycle of the National Training Framework (NTF), RTOs may be asked to participate in strategic evaluations of national Training Packages and the implementation of the NTF, including the operation of the ARF.

The NTFC has an overarching responsibility to coordinate advice on the implementation of national recognition arrangements within the NTF and the initiation of strategic evaluations will form an important aspect of this function, particularly during the transition period of the ARF. STAs/SRAs and national ITABs, in reviewing Training Packages, may also initiate strategic evaluations.

Where such evaluations are initiated by either the NTFC or a national ITAB, the evaluation process will be jointly planned and developed in conjunction with the appropriate STA(s)/SRA(s).

Such evaluations may be specific to a particular industry or relate to an aspect of the NTF such as assessment or qualifications.

Participation in these processes is not mandatory, nor does it form part of the requirements of the ARF. However, RTOs are encouraged to assist these reviews, where practicable, to support quality improvement.

NATIONAL OPERATIONAL PROTOCOL FOR THE MARKETING OF RECOGNISED TRAINING

Training organisations registered under the Australian Recognition Framework will market and advertise their products and services in an ethical manner.

Ethical Marketing Practices

- A client's written permission must be gained before an RTO can use information about that individual in any marketing materials.
- RTOs will accurately represent recognised training products and services to prospective clients.
- RTOs will ensure clients are provided with full details of conditions in any contractual arrangements with the RTO.

Accurate and Clear Marketing

Where advertisements refer to the RTO status, the products and services covered by the recognised scope of registration will be clearly identified. AQF qualifications will only be advertised if the organisation is registered to issue the qualifications.

Advertisements will identify nationally recognised products separately from courses recognised by other bodies (eg industry bodies) or without recognised status.

The names of Training Packages, qualifications and/or accredited courses listed in advertising materials will comply with the names/titles as endorsed by the NTFC or recognised by the STA/SRA.

Acknowledgment of National/State Recognition

RTOs offering recognised products/services may use any of the following statements in advertising as appropriate:

- Nationally Recognised Training
- State Training/Recognition Authority Recognised Training
- Registered by the State Training/Recognition Authority to issue the following qualifications.

Use of National and State Logos

RTOs issuing nationally recognised qualifications may use the Nationally Recognised Training Logo on relevant qualifications or Statements of Attainment in accordance with STA/SRA requirements.

RTOs registered with a particular State/Territory may use the logo of the STA on any relevant qualifications or Statements of Attainment in accordance with the STA's/SRA's conditions of use.

NATIONAL OPERATIONAL PROTOCOL FOR FEES FOR REGISTRATION

Protocol 1

Fees for registration are based on costing and pricing guidelines established by each State and Territory and will encompass all components of associated costs involved in the registration process, including the costs of compliance audit.

Protocol 2

Information to clients on registration fees should identify the services/benefits of registration.

Protocol 3

Registration fees should relate to the scope of registration and operation, including Quality Endorsement.

Protocol 4

Registration fees apply to all RTOs.

Protocol 5

No additional fees will apply for the purposes of recognition as an RTO operating in States or Territories other than the initial State or Territory of registration.

(Note: Other fees may be applied in the context of other requirements eg occupational licensing by a particular State or Territory.)

Access and Equity

Strategies to open vocational education and training to all individuals of the community, particularly focusing on those groups that have been traditionally under-represented. In the context of the Australian Recognition Framework, the access and equity policy/process is a core requirement for achieving registration.

Accreditation

The process of formal recognition, based on National Accreditation Principles, by the State Recognition Authority or its delegate that the contents and standards of a course or customised qualification are appropriate to the qualification outcome identified; the course/customised qualification and methods of delivery fulfill the purpose for which it was developed; and the content including curriculum and assessment are based on national competency standards where these exist.

Under the Australian Recognition Framework, accreditation of courses and customised qualifications occurs only where no relevant Training Packages exist.

Appeals - Registration

The process whereby a training organisation can seek to have a registration decision of a State Training Authority/State Recognition Authority re-evaluated. Such decisions may relate to failure to achieve initial registration or to de-registration following an external review.

Assessment Guidelines

One of the endorsed components of Training Packages which sets out the industry/Training Package developer's approach to valid, reliable and fair assessment and which underpins assessment carried out by Registered Training Organisations under the Australian Recognition Framework.

Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)

A comprehensive policy framework defining all qualifications recognised nationally in post-compulsory education and training within Australia. The Australian Qualifications Framework comprises guidelines which define each qualification together with principles and protocols covering articulation, issuance of a qualification and transition arrangements.

Compliance Audit

A systematic and independent external assessment administered by a State Training Authority/State Recognition Authority to determine whether a Registered Training Organisation is operating effectively within its registered scope.

Competency Standard

The specification of knowledge and skill and the application of that knowledge and skill to the standards of performance required in the workplace, expressed as a competency standard. Competency standards define the outcomes for training delivery, assessment and the issuance of qualifications and Statements of Attainment under the Australian Recognition Framework.

Competencies are developed nationally as an endorsed component of Training Packages or, where no relevant Training Packages exist, as the basis for defining the learning outcomes of an accredited course.

Customised Qualifications

These are qualifications, devised by Registered Training Organisations, created through combining competency standards drawn from two or more different endorsed Training Packages to create a new qualification outcome. Such qualifications must meet the requirements of the Australian Qualifications Framework, the Customisation Policy of the National Training Framework Committee and the customisation advice of the relevant Training Packages.

Deemed Registration as a Registered Training Organisation (RTO)

The process applying to existing registered Training Providers which enables continuing registration following the introduction of the Australian Recognition Framework. Deemed registration will operate up to a period of eighteen months as part of transition arrangements, following which all deemed Registered Training Organisations must be able to demonstrate that they are operating in accordance with the requirements of the Australian Recognition Framework.

Endorsement

The formal process of recognition within the Australian Recognition Framework of the endorsable components of a Training Package, carried out by the National Training Framework Committee of the Australian National Training Authority.

Mutual Recognition

This encompasses Registered Training Organisations, qualifications and training products.

- **Registered Training Organisations**
Acceptance by a State Recognition Authority/State Training Authority of the registration decisions of another State Training Authority/State Recognition Authority enabling a Registered Training Organisation to operate within its jurisdiction on the basis of its primary registration.
- **Qualifications**
Acceptance by a Registered Training Organisation of the recognition decisions of other Registered Training Organisations/State Recognition Authorities relating to the issuance of qualifications and Statements of Attainment, enabling individuals to receive full recognition of their achievements, including credit transfer where appropriate.

- **Training Products**

Acceptance of recognised training products available in the Training Market. This includes endorsed Training Packages, training programs for Training Packages and/or accredited courses.

National Training Information Service (NTIS)

The National Training Information Service is a relational database which provides up-to-date information on recognised vocational education and training, including details of endorsed Training Packages and their components (competency standards, assessment guidelines and qualifications and any non-endorsed components) together with details of Registered Training Organisations and their scope of registration.

Primary Recognition Authority

The State or Territory Recognition Authority which is responsible for registering a Registered Training Organisation operating in other States and Territories through Mutual Recognition.

Qualification

The defined set of competencies which establishes a specified and identifiable point of achievement, relevant to industry and community needs, expressed in accordance with the titles of the Australian Qualifications Framework and recognised through endorsement as part of a Training Package or recognised through accreditation.

The credential awarded by a Registered Training Organisation which demonstrates the achievement of the defined set of competencies.

Quality

The level of satisfaction with and effectiveness of vocational education and training organisations, their products and services, established through conformity with the requirements set by clients and stakeholders.

Quality Assurance

The planned and systematic process of ensuring the consistent application of registration requirements by Registered Training Organisations. Quality assurance forms part of a quality management system/focus.

Quality Endorsement

The recognition awarded by a State Training Authority/State Recognition Authority to a Registered Training Organisation, to receive delegated powers of self-management for the scope of their registration and self-management of accreditation of own courses and customised qualifications, in accordance with the parameters set by the Australian Recognition Framework.

Quality Management

All the activities that determine quality policy objectives and responsibilities, implemented by means such as quality planning, quality control, quality assurance and quality improvement within a quality system (ISO 8402:1994).

Reciprocal Recognition Authority

The relevant State or Territory Recognition Authority applicable where a Registered Training Organisation operates in another jurisdiction through Mutual Recognition.

Recognition

The formal approval of training organisations, products and services operating within the vocational education and training sector (as defined by State and Territory legislation).

Registered Training Organisation (RTO)

Any training organisation registered in accordance with the Australian Recognition Framework providing vocational education,

training and/or assessment services.

Includes TAFE colleges/institutes, private commercial providers, community providers, schools, higher education institutions, enterprises and firms, industry bodies and any other organisation which meets the requirements for registration.

Registration

The process of formal approval and recognition of an organisation by a State Recognition Authority to provide recognised products/services in accordance with the requirements of the Australian Recognition Framework.

Scope of Registration

Defines the parameters of recognition as a Registered Training Organisation in respect of the products and services offered and the range of areas in which the Registered Training Organisation operates. Scope establishes whether the organisation is registered for training delivery and/or skill recognition services and the qualifications/Statements of Attainment it has been granted authority to issue, identified by Training Package(s) and/or accredited course(s).

State Recognition Authority (SRA)

The body responsible within the State or Territory legislative and decision making framework for all decisions relating to the administration of the registration of training organisations and the accreditation of courses where no relevant Training Package exists.

Statement of Attainment

The formal certification issued by a relevant approved body (Registered Training Organisation or State Recognition Authority), in recognition that a person has achieved some of the competencies identified for a particular qualification (within a Training Package, accredited course or customised qualification).

Training Packages

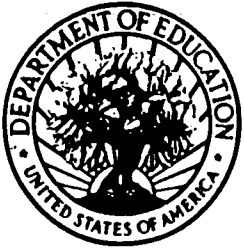
Comprehensive, integrated products which provide national benchmarks and resources for delivery, assessment and qualifications in vocational education and training.

Training Packages comprise endorsed components of national competency standards, assessment guidelines and qualifications, combined with non-endorsed components which may include a learning strategy, assessment resources and professional development materials.

ACRONYMS

ANTA	Australian National Training Authority
ARF	Australian Recognition Framework
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
AVETMISS	Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard
ESOS	Education Services for Overseas Students
ITAB	Industry Training Advisory Body
NFROT	National Framework for the Recognition of Training
NTF	National Training Framework
NTFC	National Training Framework Committee
NTIS	National Training Information Service
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
SRA	State/Territory Recognition Authority
STA	State/Territory Training Authority
VET	Vocational Education and Training

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