



**Research project report for
Department of Human Services (Victoria)**

**Articulation between the
Vocational Education and Training (VET)
and the Higher Education (HE) sectors**

Including a consideration of
recognition of prior learning (RPL) and
recognition of current competency (RCC)

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1. Executive summary

1.1 The primary objectives of this research project were to identify:

- identify barriers to successful articulation between Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Higher Education (HE) courses and examples of successful articulation arrangements
- possible models and strategies effective, efficient and sustainable approaches to articulation
- possible models and strategies to improve uptake of RPL in the health and community services sector

1.2 It was found that Australia had been considered a leader in articulation and recognition of prior learning (RPL), however, the introduction of Training Packages in the VET sector had reduced the significance of this role.

1.3 A primary difficulty was found to be that Training Packages in the VET sector which specify graduate outcomes in terms of industry competency standards whereas HE specifies graduate outcomes in terms of learning objectives and curriculum.

1.4 Generally, HE students moving to the VET sector find the transition easier than VET students moving to the HE sector.

1.5 Most articulation agreements are arranged individually between interested parties in the VET and HE sectors. The processes generally involve complex mapping of a VET provider's training program contents against HE curriculum content. The mapping is not against the Training Package competencies. This may occur at the institutional level or at the individual student level when RPL is being sought. In most cases, VET has to accommodate the needs of HE.

1.6 In general terms, there is a need for:

- a. articulation being considered as part of the design of health and community services Training Packages, not an after thought
- b. access to clear, consistent, accurate promotional material in VET and HE health and community services schools and faculties.
- c. easier and fairer processes of articulation and RPL that match the promotional material
- d. HE staff to understand VET, and *vice versa*
- e. common language – does RPL include credit transfer and mutual recognition?
- f. up skill trainers and educators in RPL/RCC assessment techniques
- g. common costing for RPL
- h. student assistance to gather evidence and negotiate for RPL

1.7 This report identifies four major strategies to improve articulation in the health and community services sector for consideration of the Department of Human Services that relate to: health and allied health professional associations, the Training Package review implementation, a cross-sector health and community services board, and the State Credit Matrix project.

2. Project scope

Under contract to the Department of Human Services (Victoria), the consultants were asked to conduct desktop research and report on:

- articulation between the VET and HE sectors, including barriers to successful articulation and examples of successful articulation arrangements
- uptake of recognition of prior learning in the community services and health sectors in Victoria
- possible models of effective, efficient and sustainable approaches to articulation
- possible models and strategies to improve uptake of RPL in the health and community services sector

3. Project methodology

This desktop based project was conducted over a specified six week period. The literature search component included use of:

1. The Google Search Engine.
2. The University of Melbourne Library Catalogue.
3. Electronic research databases: UNESCO, NCVER, VOCED, ProQuest, Expanded Academic ASAP and Emerald
4. The Community Services and Health Industry Training Board, Victoria, Inc., Private Library

All of the literature searches were aligned to the health and community services sector, nationally and internationally, but also included broad consideration of articulation and RPL arrangements.

Strategic literature materials were selected from the bibliography and summarised specifically to highlight key barriers and successful strategies relevant to the objectives of the report.

A practical example of successful articulation arrangements in each of a dual sector university and an autonomous institute of TAFE were researched.

Group processes involving the project staff were adopted to determine the key strategic approaches that could contribute to the improvement of articulation between the VET and HE education sectors in the health and community services sector in Victoria.

4. Background and definitions

The Department of Human Services, Victoria has identified improving opportunities for articulation between the Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Higher Education (HE) sectors as an important strategy to improve career pathways, make optimal use of training resources and improve workforce recruitment and retention.

Definitions

Haas (1999) describes 'articulation' as it applies to the education context and provides a useful framework for the topics of, and outcomes of, this report:

The key feature of articulation in an educational sense is the existence of pathways which allow graduates of one course of study to progress, or 'articulate', to another.

Articulation is usually thought of in a context of provision of pathways 'upwards', especially from TVE [technical and vocational education] to university, but 'reverse articulation' also applies to traffic between higher education and TVE.

The possibility of articulation arrangements between related courses at the same level, is a further example of educational articulation, but may not be perceived as such.

Articulation is important because it is related to opportunity. Articulation is related to status, because 'dead end' courses which do not have pathways to further study opportunities, have less status than programs which do provide further options.

Articulation is significant on the broader scale, and at the national level.

Nations which have structured or encouraged their educational system to provide effective articulation arrangements, are better placed to capitalize on opportunities that advance economic growth, particularly when technological change or other forces demand a response. A workforce educated in an open ended system will more easily make the transition to new types of employment as they emerge...

Credit transfer arrangements through the granting of course credits for recognised studies previously undertaken, are frequently an important facet of articulation arrangements. Credit transfer may occur when institutions agree to formally recognize studies undertaken by students in a sending institution, with the granting of an agreed amount of credit in a particular course, or courses, by the receiving institution.

Recognition of prior learning [RPL] may be granted to an individual seeking advanced standing in a course. Such recognition may be accorded on the basis of previous studies, or nonformal learning gained through a variety of means, or is a mixture of formal and nonformal learning.

(Haas, 1999, pp. 4-5)

Recognition of current competency (RCC) is the acknowledgement of competencies currently held by a person, acquired through training, work or life experience. RCC is more commonly known as recognition of prior learning¹ as described above.

Credit transfer arrangements which are formalised between vocational education and training courses and universities are termed 'Pathways'.

National Training Packages

The Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) was established in 1994 to oversee the directions of the VET system nationally.² The National Training Framework is the framework in which ANTA and the state and territory training authorities oversee the VET system. All publicly funded courses in the Australian VET system must be based on Training Packages where they exist, and industry endorsed standards where they do not. Training Packages are sets of industry competencies designed to support competency based training and assessment. Training Packages are usually developed by Industry Skills Councils³ with the involvement of employers, government and employee organisations. Teachers and other educators have been excluded from training package development (Wheelahan, 2001).

A high level review of Training Packages was conducted during 2004 to see how they could better meet current and future skill needs. The review also examined how the capacity of the vocational education and training (VET) system could be strengthened to deliver Training Package outcomes with a particular focus on teaching, learning and assessment.

The review found that:

- *industry should have a pre-eminent role in defining work outcomes*
- *the Training Package model has widespread support*
- *the model has the flexibility to serve a range of purposes to facilitate good labour market and educational outcomes.*⁴

The Training Package review identified six major areas for action to better meet current and future skill needs, and to better support teaching and learning:

¹ Glossary: <http://www.anta.gov.au/gloRtoT.asp>

² ANTA will disband at the end of June 2005. Its responsibilities will be assumed by the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST).

³ Previously known as Industry Training Advisory Bodies

⁴ <http://www.anta.gov.au/highLevel.asp>

- *A new 'settlement', to ensure confidence and trust in the capacity of the model, and reaffirming expectations about what it can and cannot, deliver*
- *Better design – and in particular relying more on good design than on rules – and putting the issue of generic skills 'front and centre'*
- *Rigorous and inclusive development and review, drawing on a broader range of evidence as to skill needs, and acknowledging the need for industry, educational and equity expertise to be brought together in the development of Training Packages*
- *An effective qualifications framework – holding tight to the importance of full qualifications, and at the same time give more weight to 'skill sets' – and including a review of the adequacy of the AQF [Australian Qualifications Framework] and the flexibility of the descriptors*
- *Supporting quality teaching, learning and assessment. Training Packages assume a high level of competence within an RTO [Registered training Organisation] to facilitate valid training delivery and assessment, and more development is needed*
- *Improving pathways to better provide for the full range of potential learners and their individual needs*

(Schofield, and MacDonald, 2004, p. 13)

Benefits of articulation pathways

Formalised articulation arrangements between vocational education and training courses and universities can provide substantial benefits to individuals, employers and providers. Where credit is given for previous study the pathway between courses or educational institutions is easier. With formal recognition of prior learning a course timeline is made shorter resulting in either a lighter study load or a faster completion time. Repeating study that has already been completed, whether in VET or HE, is generally boring and unnecessary. It is also a waste of time, finances and teaching resources. RPL also increases career and education options through recognised skills and knowledge and provides for fairer access.

Recognition of prior learning process

Recognition of prior learning is regarded as a form of assessment. VET students applying for RPL in a VET course initially compare their own knowledge, skills and attitudes to the course competency standards/learning outcomes before deciding to submit an RPL application. Students are considered competent if they can demonstrate the skills and knowledge specified in the course competency standards. Some skills may require refreshing after only one or two years (e.g., information technology), other skills are retained for life (e.g., riding a bike). Hence, the knowledge and skills to be used as evidence must be relevant to an industry today.

Students provide evidence to support an RPL claim to demonstrate they have acquired the knowledge and skills. Such evidence may include:

- a resume
- certificates of completed courses and qualifications
- awards
- references from employers outlining responsibilities
- letters from clients
- evaluations from supervisors
- job descriptions

On submission, the RPL application is reviewed by an assessor.

RPL for students moving from VET to HE the process can be more complex. Training Packages do not specify curriculum or learning outcomes. In contrast, HE courses are based on a curriculum and learning outcomes model which poses significant problems in determining the extent to which VET articulating students share the same knowledge base. The result is that RPL (or credit transfer to use the HE language) is negotiated individually at the student, course, department or institution levels, i.e., there is significant discretionary power in the recognition of prior learning in the self accrediting universities, not a systematic and common approach.

The reverse also applies, HE students moving to VET may find it difficult to obtain credit transfer because they have not been assessed directly against the competencies in a Training Package. However, there is evidence, which is referred to later in this report, that indicates that generally HE students articulating to VET programs have less difficulty than the reverse.

Credit matrix concepts

The term 'credit matrix' in the education context is used to describe concepts or models that provided a common and uniform approach to describing qualifications and the recording of achievements in them. Broadly, the main objectives are to:

- facilitate study and course pathways guidance for students, employers and course providers
- ensure learning already successfully achieved does not need to be repeated

Report structure

This report first considers articulation in the international context to provide a global framework on which articulation arrangements in Australia may be compared. The later sections in the report consider the common barriers to articulation, some examples of successful articulation arrangements and finally some strategies to improve articulation in the health and community services sectors for the Department of Human Services, Victoria to consider.

5. International perspective

Examples of good off-shore articulation arrangements are not strong. In the past, Australia was considered a leader in the international scene, however, the introduction of the Training Packages has somewhat set this leadership role backwards (Haas, 2005). The primary reason for this is that Training Packages do not stipulate curriculum or learning outcomes. They contain only the competencies deemed to be required in the workplace by the relevant Industry Skills Council. As many higher education courses are based on a curriculum model, this imposes difficulties in determining the extent to which articulating students have the same knowledge base. (Australian Vice-Chancellor's Committee, 2001, Wheelahan 2001). A Training Packages pathways chart is available.⁵

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) has an important role in encouraging articulation. On a global basis it has encouraged change at the national level in many countries. A comprehensive reference on the UNESCO position on articulation is detailed in proceedings of 2nd International Conference on Technical and Vocational education held in Finland in 1999.⁶ UNESCO and the ILO (International Labour Organisation) are beginning to work more closely at the operational level and they are both committed to encouraging effective articulation processes.

The following brief examples of the international scene serve to provide a basis for comparison to the Australian perspective presented later in this report.

EUROPE

In Europe there is a system of streaming into higher education in place. If a student is unsuccessful within the streaming procedures the possibility of moving up through vocational education is limited. Cross-border mobility of vocational education is being encouraged, but this has proved not to be without complications.⁷

USA AND CANADA

USA and Canada Community Colleges, which are essentially set up to run 2 year programs ex-secondary school, offer the possibility of 'transfer' to an undergraduate program at a university and this constitutes a significant part of the work of Community Colleges. Although the community college model has been in place for many years, the upwards articulation from the basic vocational level is much more fragmented (Haas, 2005).

⁵ Training Package Pathways Chart <http://www.voced.edu.au/cgi-bin/get-iso8.pl?off=55171200&db=voced&patlist=keywords%3Apathways>

⁶ (See 'New Challenges in the Cooperation Between Education and Training and Working Life', www.unevoc.de/congress/pdf/reco-e.pdf).

⁷ See 'The Europass System in Germany 2002', www.minedu.fi/julkaisut/newchall.pdf

SINGAPORE

Singapore, applies highly selective streaming at the schools level, so that the brightest are identified and facilitated through a high quality secondary/university system. However, it also makes ample provision for the rest of the school population to be directed to a range of other possibilities from industry based training through to 2 year Diploma programs offered by polytechnics.

Superimposed on this system are broad arrangements for all levels of vocational education to articulate to higher levels, with an interesting innovation, i.e. most polytechnic graduates desiring to undertake a degree program do so part-time at one of the commercial outposts of off-shore universities and pay their own way. The Singapore model is particularly interesting because the Government integrates all levels of education to a 10 - 15 year plan.⁸

UNITED KINGDOM

The United Kingdom (UK) educational system is similar to that in Australia. In fact, the current Australian model largely reflects developments that occurred in the UK. The UK has an industry standards framework that provided the basis for the training packages approach in Australia.

Massie (2004) discusses the intangible barriers to articulation between Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) in Scotland. He stresses the need for managing the transition process from FE to HE because of the ethos and cultural differences between the sectors. From the author's own experience, he says there is no guarantee that the generally supportive environment in FE will exist in higher education institutions. While many FE practitioners tend to see themselves engaged in bridging a gap between colleges and universities, Massie suggests many university lecturers see themselves as subject specialists and researchers. Some suggestions he provides to overcome intangible barriers to articulation are:

- transition to HE courses, not necessarily attached to formal assessment but taught in a wider context of subjects
- practitioners in both sectors observing learning processes in each others' institutions
- greater awareness of university practitioners to pedagogy training and teaching methodologies.

In Massie's view, an example of good practice is the Glasgow Caledonian University FE-HE Partnership Board, which has a membership of key college and university staff with special interests in promoting wider access. The significance of Massie's article is that even if suitable articulation arrangements are in place, students moving into a university environment may find the transition overwhelming and not proceed.

⁸ See 'Trends in Articulation Arrangements for Technical and Vocational Education in the SE Asian Region', www.unevoc.unesco.org/publications/pdf/rmit99.pdf. (Haas, 2005)

The UK has a Credit Equivalence Development Project in train. The Project is a partnership of national and regional organisations aiming to provide consistent agreed credit equivalences for a range of qualifications in use across the UK. According to the Project web site, 'the primary beneficiaries of this work will be learners, who will be able to see more clearly the value of their achievements in relation to other awards/qualifications. In addition, other beneficiaries will include credit consortia, awarding bodies, providers, including colleges, training organisations, regulatory bodies, employers, and national, regional and local funding bodies.' Credit Equivalences will be published later this year and made available on the Project web site.⁹

Credit matrix projects are underway in New Zealand (www.nzqa.govt.nz), Scotland (www.sqa.org.uk), Wales (www.elwa.ac.uk), Ireland (www.nqai.ie), European Union (www.europa.eu.int/comm/education) and South Africa (www.saga.org.za). A number of Australian States, including Victoria, are engaged in credit matrix projects. The Victoria context is considered later in this report.

⁹ See <http://www.ukcreditequivalences.org.uk/content.asp?pageno=2>

6. Australian perspective

Higher Education (HE) has a primary focus of the pursuit, preservation and transmission of knowledge, while the Vocational and Education (VET) sector primarily focuses on education and training for work. However, HE also takes into account work related learning outcomes and VET has generic skills within its training programs.

STUDENT TRAFFIC

Harris, Sumner and Rainey (2005) summarise the complexity of intersectoral student movement. Their key findings are:

- *Student movement within and between the tertiary education sectors – VET and HE – is growing and complex*
Intersectoral and intrasectoral movement of tertiary students is significant. The flow from HE to VET is estimated to be three times greater, nationally and in South Australia, than the flow from VET to HE, which has been declining over time. Student traffic is a complex phenomenon, involving students with backgrounds in multiple education sectors, various combinations of complete and incomplete qualifications, and some concurrent enrolment in both sectors.
- *Student motivation in both sectors is similar*
Students in both the HE and VET sectors respond similarly to questions about reasons for undertaking further study, both emphasizing employment prospects and personal development. Thus, greater recognition needs to be given to the different, but increasingly complementary roles that HE and VET play.
- *The transition from the HE to the VET sector is smoother than the reverse.*
The majority of tertiary students moving from one sector to another find transition easy, with one exception. Both sets of students experience difficulty in making changes in their life so that they have enough time to study. Transition to HE poses greater difficulties (particularly relating to financial issues) than transition to the VET sector, largely because those moving to VET tend to be older, more financially secure, more experienced in the workforce and more confident.
(Harris, Sumner and Rainey, 2005, p. 5)

RPL IN THE VET SECTOR

Bateman and Knight (2003) analysed the RPL and credit transfer in the VET sector for the period 1995 to 2001. The data shows that:

The incidence of both RPL and credit transfer increases with increasing Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) level:

- *of the diplomas and higher-level students, 10.6% in 1999 and 9.7% in 200 had RPL subject enrolments, with a further 6.3% and 6.5% respectively having credit transfer enrolments. The rates are also well above average for students in certificate III and IV programs*
- *for students in AQF certificate I or II programs, the corresponding proportions are 2.5% and 2.3% for RPL, and 1.6% and 1.5% for credit transfer, roughly a quarter of the rates for students in diploma and higher-level programs and well below the overall rates*

(Bateman and Knight, 2003, p. 5)

Bowman, Clayton and Batem, *et al* (2003) identify what drives and what creates barriers to effective implementation of RPL. No single barrier was identified as significantly affecting implementation of RPL. Some students choose not to apply for it, even when eligible, because they have a preference for the training itself and the experience of learning through interacting with fellow students. The processes for RPL were identified as one factor that, in some contexts, might affect its implementation. Other factors include awareness and understanding of RPL and perceptions of its relevance. How RPL is resourced is a possible barrier, as is its confusing language and its differing definitions. The key barriers identified are:

- *RPL promotion, marketing and client awareness*
The Australian Quality Training Framework standard requires that registered training organisations disseminate clear information to clients about RPL prior to enrolment. Analysis of promotional material provided by registered training organisations showed that good and relevant information was readily available for clients and written in simple English. Clients acknowledged the usefulness of the available information, although many indicated that their primary source of information on RPL was 'word of mouth' rather than the promotional material. Even though informing people early about RPL is essential, its proactive promotion was not favoured by all state training authorities. Some considered that marketing RPL sets up an artificial distinction between that and other forms of assessment. Most registered training organisations promote RPL to assessors.
- *RPL processes and client experiences*
A gap was identified between the easy-to-read promotional information provided and the RPL process itself. Some students and some registered training organisations perceived the processes used are a key barrier to RPL uptake. They found the process too daunting (the forms) and too time consuming; preparing the evidence too much work and they were often unable to locate the evidence. However, processes were not universally identified as a barrier, since 60% of students indicated their processes were reasonable and many registered training organisations thought their processes reasonable and had made

attempts to organise cost and time, although they agreed there always was room for further improvement.

Another potential process barrier commonly cited was the registered training organisations' abilities in assessment. Many registered training organisation saw RPL as a high-risk assessment pathway and that all assessments within VET were in need of continuous improvement. Students similarly require assistance with identifying and gathering evidence, in varying amounts according to their characteristics.

- *Resourcing arrangements for RPL*

The common perception among state training authorities was that the varying resourcing models and costing arrangements for RPL influence the levels of its uptake. The data collected from state training authorities confirms that there are considerable variations in resource and costing arrangements (refer table 9).

State training authorities resource registered training organisations to undertake RPL either at the same rate as the training program itself or at a rate less than the equivalent training hours. Some fund in an equivalent manner across programs and provider types, others fund differently across programs and/ or providers. As with the resourcing of registered training organisation for RPL, the costs charged by the organisation to students for RPL also vary widely, from no cost to what the market will bear as a full fee-for-service arrangement. Just over half of the students in this research considered the costs of RPL to them to be fair and reasonable.

A number of the participants at the policy engagement forum¹⁰ on RPL, conducted specifically to co- ordinate with this project, noted that any 'shortfall' between government-funded programs and the 'true cost' of RPL was funded by the registered training organisation or the client. National data shows 80% of all RPL occurs within mainstream government-funded VET and a further 15 to 18% through fee-for-service activity.

Although it proved beyond the capacity of this project to determine accurately the influence of resourcing and costing arrangements for RPL on its uptake, some funding arrangements clearly might act as disincentives and can influence the perceived parity of esteem of RPL vis-à-vis the training pathway.

- *Language and definition*

There also are language and definitional issues that hinder effective discussions on recognition of prior learning at the least, and may act as a barrier to its effective implementation. While the

¹⁰ A national policy engagement forum on RPL was convened by Reframing the Future and held in Melbourne on Wednesday, 4 September, 2002. The NCVET research team contributed to the background paper and assisted with facilitation. The forum provided the opportunity for the project team to seek feedback from approximately 40 key VET stakeholders and subject matter experts on the research issues.

Australian Quality Training Framework definition of RPL has been broadly adopted by all states and territories, this definition does not clearly determine whether credit transfer and/ or mutual recognition are included. Most states and territories consider RPL, credit transfer and mutual recognition to be different aspects of 'recognition' more generally.

The assumption, promoted by the Australian Quality Training Framework, that RPL is different from other forms of assessment and therefore requires different (and often more bureaucratic) procedures and administrative arrangements, was also seen as a key barrier to implementing a time and cost effective RPL process.

Both the Australian Quality Training Framework and the national data definition of recognition of prior learning focus on RPL that occurs upon enrolment. In reality other forms of RPL occur as well, including 'fast-track' or 'early assessment' situations shortly after tuition begins and once students have a clearer understanding of the requirements for the subject and of RPL. These situations, of which there apparently are many, are generally reported as a normal enrolment leading to a 'pass'.

(Bowman, Clayton, Batem, *et al*, 2003. pp. 8-9)

The issue of graded assessment is considered by Williams and Bateman (2003). Graded assessment is not normally associated with the VET sector because assessment is against nationally endorsed industry competency standards – i.e., the candidate is assessed as competent or non-competent (or possibly partially competent) with respect to a performance standard within a workplace.¹¹ Graded assessment may become an issue for RPL candidates and the negotiation of articulation agreements because the HE sector has traditionally used graded assessments.

There is no clear policy on graded assessment in VET, consequently a range of practices has evolved. The key findings of Williams and Bateman (2003) are:

...that 'good' practice in competency-based assessment itself, let alone graded competency-based assessment, is still not fully understood nor universally implemented across the national training system. [It is] difficult to draw general conclusions about the nature

¹¹ 'Competence' is an intangible construct; that is, it cannot always be observed directly. The construct of competence attempts to capture the myriad of personal characteristics or attributes that underlie and enable performance in an occupation. Some of the personal attributes that underlie competence may be readily recognisable (e.g., a particular knowledge base, certain skills, attitudes etc) while others may be ill-defined, poorly understood or even unrecognised. Neither attributes (e.g., knowledge, skills and attitudes) nor performance are the same as competence. They are the means by which competence can be inferred. Consequently, issues of appropriate assessment become paramount.

and extent of grading practices because of the inconsistent and fragmentary implementation of graded assessment in the VET sector.

Nevertheless, a number of key findings can be identified:

- *Significant initiatives, such as statewide trials in Western Australia and Queensland, are under way. In spite of this, however, support for graded assessment is not universal across stakeholders*
- *A sizeable majority of respondents from all stakeholder groups considered graded assessment to be as important as, or more important than, other pathway mechanisms, such as articulation or partnership arrangements*
- *In evaluating key questions about graded assessment. Such as whether, why and how to grade, consistency in graded assessment across national qualifications was deemed to be the most important consideration for a large proportion of the respondents*
- *Few policies or guidelines exist to assist registered training organisations in implementing graded assessment in a valid and consistent manner*
- *Even where policy guidelines exist, there is variation in the way graded assessment is carried out*
- *Instances of 'good' practice in graded assessment were identified. These incorporated features such as professional development of assessors, provision of policy and / or guidelines, provision of examples of assessment tools and grading schemas as well as validation processes*
- *Limited information is available and findings are mixed regarding the additional costs that may be incurred in implementing a graded assessment system. Indeed, there appears to be little will to explore this issue at either registered training organisation, state or national level*
- *The lack of transparency in reporting is of concern. The wide variation in grading methodologies employed by registered training organisations leads to significant discrepancies in what the grades represent. Transparency in reporting is essential to make the grades meaningful to stakeholders*

Williams and Bateman (2003) propose a framework aimed at enhancing the validity, reliability and transparency of graded assessments at a national level:

- *At national level, a set of overarching principles should provide guidance on what should be graded and how, the number of levels of competency development to be assessed and for what purposes the grading may be used. These would complement*

the Australian National Training Authority principles of assessment for VET, with which it is proposed graded assessment policies and practices at state and registered training organisation levels should comply

- *At state level, policy or guideline development is needed, consistent with national principles*
- *At registered training organisation level, there should be autonomy to develop local policies, procedures and guidelines, albeit within national /state principles / guidelines, that meet local needs and support the implementation of graded assessment*

Williams and Bateman (2003)

RPL IN ENTERPRISES

The Australian National Training Authority has recently published a report on RPL as it applies in enterprises (Down and Cleary, 2005). Seven enterprises were used as case studies in an effort to gain greater understanding about the poor uptake of RPL. The purpose of the project was to establish and report on models of enterprise that work, and to identify opportunities and inhibitors of enterprises working in partnership with registered training organisations (RTOs) to recognise current competency of workers against endorsed Training Packages and accredited courses. Four key recommendations resulted from the project findings. In summary they are that:

- *enterprises are encouraged to work with vocational education and training providers to recognise the existing (and developing) skills and knowledge of their workforces through the design and application of an RPL process specific to their own organisation*
- *RTOs are encouraged to prepare appropriate processes for the delivery of enterprise RPL that can be customised for specific enterprises*
- *Future research into enterprise RPL employs an applied research methodology similar to that used in this project*
- *ANTA and DEST continue to work together with the states and territories to find funding formula for RPL assessments that will promote the uptake of RPL by enterprises*

(Down and Cleary, 2005, pp. 66 – 68)

DETAILED FACTORS INFLUENCING CROSS SECTORAL QUALIFICATION LINKAGES

An analysis from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) web site comprehensively summarises both facilitating and inhibiting factors with respect to TAFE-University pathways.¹² The complexity of the issues is demonstrated by grouping the factors into:

¹² <http://www.ncver.edu.au/files/tr12lorrimar1.rtf>

- political catalysts/imperatives for linkages
- national guidelines on cross sectoral qualification linkages
- Australian Qualifications Framework issues, competition policy
- Australian Qualifications Training Framework
- use of TER scores
- admission processes
- responsibility for endorsement,
- maintenance
- international education
- financial models
- commitment to public education
- strategic outlook
- motivation and organisational culture
- published entrance requirements
- allocated or guaranteed places
- standardised entry and credit transfer policy
- regional learning hubs
- Training Packages' issues

The facilitating and inhibiting factors are reproduced on the following pages.

Factors	Facilitating	Inhibiting
<p>Political catalysts / imperatives for linkages</p>	<p>Focus on learning opportunities for students State Government priorities Commonwealth Higher Education Review Varieties of Learning papers Senate Inquiry into Current and Future Skills needs</p>	<p>State Government focus on school leavers rather than TAFE students or graduates Focus on mature age, equity groups and international students (and not TAFE graduates as a client segment) Commonwealth Higher Education – lack of policy regulations and funding imperatives to improve VET / higher education pathways.</p>
<p>National guidelines on cross sectoral qualification linkages</p>	<p>Signatory to AVCC guidelines Evidence of implementation and monitoring mechanisms Qualifications are linked to same, similar or relevant industry areas and form defined pathways with clearly established systematic credit transfer. Evidence that qualification linkages ‘add value’ to the learning outcomes for students</p>	<p>Universities aversion to mapping qualification linkages. Some universities insist that pathways do not need to be linked to same, similar or relevant industry areas. Policy of Diploma articulation with ‘most undergraduate degrees’. Results in undefined and un-promoted pathways. Results in credit transfer that is ‘granted’ in theory but in reality is non – transferable or much less than the national guidelines</p>
<p>AQF (Australian Qualifications Framework)</p>	<p>Acceptance of framework and relative equivalencies between qualifications Evidence of parity of esteem for VET diploma qualifications compared to higher education diplomas and degrees Understanding of competency based learning</p>	<p>Assumptions of non-parity as evidenced by inappropriate measures to determine qualification equivalencies (entry level requirements, course lengths and time taken to complete course) are used Nested qualifications are not accepted</p>

Factors	Facilitating	Inhibiting
	<p>Evidence of concurrent pathways</p> <p>State legislation that affords qualifications in both VET and higher education sector</p>	<p>Universities distinguishing between Higher Ed Diplomas and VET diplomas</p> <p>Associate Degrees compete with advanced diplomas</p>
Competition policy	<p>State-wide focus on better outcomes for WA students and collaborative frameworks to implement pathways to equal interstate credit transfer benchmarks</p>	<p>Competition: Four out of 5 WA universities are closely linked with private colleges and provide those graduates with articulation and credit transfer beyond that afforded to local students.</p>
AQTF (Australian Qualifications Training Framework)	<p>Standards raise quality and consistency of VET product across the VET system</p>	<p>VET and TAFE mutual obligations may restrict universities ability to apply credit transfer when based on memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with individual institutions</p>
Use of TER	<p>TER applied to TAFE Cert IV, diplomas and advanced diplomas in transparent manner.</p> <p>Applied to ensure a majority of diplomats gain university entrance</p>	<p>TER scores, applied to TAFE diplomas and Advanced diplomas without a transparent formula</p> <p>TER applied at the lowest level to meet university entrance but not necessarily course requirement</p>
Admission processes	<p>Coordinated admission and credit transfer process and policy</p> <p>Admission arrangements are incorporated as part of agreements</p> <p>Includes direct entry</p> <p>Guaranteed number of places for TAFE graduates in certain fields</p>	<p>Poor relativity of qualifications compared to Special Tertiary Admissions Test (STAT)</p> <p>Reliance on receiving grades / additional information on qualifications prior to first round offers</p> <p>Inappropriate weightings to VET qualifications for admission purposes</p>

Factors	Facilitating	Inhibiting
Responsibility for endorsement	Peak committee with representatives from TAFE and university sector in partnerships with accreditation authorities and training package developers	Faculty level at the university Or university committee without TAFE or other VET agency(s) representation
Maintenance	Cross –sector peak committees Cross-sectoral advisory groups in industry areas Regular up-dates on websites Commitment to public information	No coordination mechanism across agencies Unilateral decision making on reviewing pathways and credit (usually to the detriment of the VET graduate)
International education	State-wide focus and collaborative frameworks to implement pathways to equal interstate benchmarks for international education strategy Same admission and credit transfer arrangements apply to local and overseas diploma students in TAFE and higher education colleges. Cross sector partnerships publish pathways and course information in joint brochures	Agency focus only (not state interests) Different admission and credit transfer practices apply to international students compared to local students.
Financial models	Encourage flexibility to ensure TAFE graduates can move into 2 nd and 3 rd year of programs with credit	Reluctance to exceed quotas Increased retention rates in university provides disincentive to increase number of TAFE graduates moving into university courses

Factors	Facilitating	Inhibiting
Commitment to public information	<p>Information on pathways and credit transfer are published and promoted collaboratively between the TAFE and university sector in publications and brochures (see Joondalup Education Precinct brochure)</p> <p>Information for TAFE graduates is located prominently in university handbooks, publications and websites.</p>	<p>Information is restricted to faculty and not collated on a central data base.</p> <p>Information is not publicised in easily accessible and multiple forms. Websites do not show TAFE to university pathways nor the credit for each. Difficult to download information. Credit is difficult to understand.</p>
Strategic outlook, motivation and organisation culture	<p>Academics and administrators are convinced of the benefits (profits) of cross sector partnerships, pathways, RPL and credit transfer and collaborate to put in place the structures to make it work</p> <p>A cultural acceptance by the universities of the value of vocational qualifications as equivalent to Tertiary Entrance Examinations (TEE) studies, university diplomas and part of degrees.</p>	<p>Academics are not motivated to initiate cross sectoral pathways and see it as doing VET a favour that is more in TAFE interests than the universities.</p> <p>Some WA universities actively discourage people trying to enter with a vocational course and recommend Tertiary Entrance Examinations (TEE) studies or the Special Tertiary Admissions Test (STAT). They do not promote TAFE to university as a pathway.¹³</p>
Published entrance requirements	<p>Published entrance requirements reflect the true situation with entry. (i.e. A diploma is required for competitive entry to most courses)</p>	<p>At present the 4 out of 5 WA universities publish that eligibility can be gained with a completed Certificate IV. In reality a Cert IV will not get a person into most undergraduate degrees.</p>

¹³ Since this table was compiled WA has embarked on strategic coordination of existing services to overcome barriers to RPL.

Factors	Facilitating	Inhibiting
Allocated or guaranteed places	A number of places for TAFE students with completed vocational qualifications (which meet entrance requirements) are allocated.	Policy of allocated places for TAFE graduates is theory rather than practice. Universities give guaranteed entry and priority to the students who come through private Higher Education or affiliated institutions. Students from “full fee” higher education diploma courses receive a higher level of exemption.
Standardised entry and credit transfer policy	Entry based on a completed vocational qualification is standardised across the state. Advanced standing, credit transfer and exemptions are standardised across the university system	Universities equate TAFE qualifications differently and provide varying levels of exemption. Students have to “shop around for entry and exemption”.
Regional learning hubs	Focus on regional development developing cross agency partnerships Publications are developed and published cross sectorally within regions or educational precincts Focus on developing new models	Regional development strategy is underdeveloped

Factors	Facilitating	Inhibiting
Training Packages	<p>Agreed relativities and content interrelationships</p> <p>Whole course focus</p> <p>High Level Review of Training Packages includes articulation issues¹⁴</p>	<p>Differences in diplomas cause lack of faith</p> <p>Individual competencies as key instrument to identify equivalence</p> <p>Radical reviews ignore principles of articulation</p> <p>Focus on course flexibility / in consistency across the state stymies state based arrangements</p>
Standardised entry and credit transfer policy	<p>Entry based on a completed vocational qualification is standardised across the state.</p> <p>Advanced standing, credit transfer and exemptions are standardised across the university system</p>	<p>Universities equate TAFE qualifications differently and provide varying levels of exemption. Students have to “shop around for entry and exemption”.</p>

NATIONAL INITIATIVES FOR IMPROVING RPL

A national strategy has been drafted by the Australian National Training Authority and the Queensland Department of Employment and Training. Consultations are currently taking place with state and territory jurisdictions and the National Training Quality Council. The aim is to improve the quality and rate of implementation of RPL. Two states are reported to be leading the way:

- **Queensland** has recently launched Skilling Solutions Queensland (visit www.skillingsolutions.qld.gov.au). Among other innovations, it encourages best practice by inviting registered training organisations to tender for preferred supplier status for recognition of prior learning referrals.

¹⁴ Since this table was compiled, the High-level review of Training packages was recently completed: The report says, “Action is needed on a number of fronts to better provide for the full range of potential learners and their individual needs: RPL, entry level (including prevocational), VET in Schools, and higher education. The needs of new entrants and of mature and existing workers are significantly different, and greater flexibility within Training Packages should be pursued to accommodate these differences. Some additional flexibility might also be helpful in international markets—for example, by increasing the capacity to contextualise Units of Competency to suit international conditions”. (Schofield and McDonald, 2004, p. 5).

- **Western Australia** is embarking on strategic coordination of existing services within the department to overcome the barriers to recognition of prior learning. A project officer will coordinate the project, and use close links with Western Australian TAFE colleges for product development, professional development and integration of career development centres.

(Training Packages@work, 2005)

VICTORIAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY (VQA)

The Victorian Qualifications Authority (VQA) is responsible for all post-compulsory qualifications except HE qualifications in Victoria. The legislated objectives of the VQA are:

- *develop and monitor standards in education and training normally undertaken in, or in the years after, Year 10*
- *ensure and support appropriate linkages between qualifications*
- *make it easier for people to re-enter education and training and acquire qualifications throughout their lives*

(Victorian, Qualifications Authority. 2004)

It is important to note that the VQA is working on a credit-based framework – The Credit Matrix – which is intended to apply across all post-compulsory qualifications (Dunn and Joseph, 2004; Victorian Qualifications Authority, 2004). The VQA has embarked on the project in an effort to provide the basis for improving linkages between qualifications in schools, adult and community education, vocational and higher education sectors.

The aims of the Credit Matrix are to:

- *Make the qualifications system easier to understand*
- *Make it easier to design more flexible qualifications that combine new and different mixes of knowledge and skills*
- *Provide a common and uniform approach to describing qualifications and recording achievement in them*
- *Make it easier to track and plan ahead for individuals, providers and employers, as well as the system as a whole*
- *Ensure learning already successfully achieved does not need to be repeated*

(Victorian, Qualifications Authority. 2004)

It is anticipated that the matrix may improve credit transfer and RPL processes in all education sectors by providing a common basis for comparing learning irrespective of the place of learning, levels of learning and taking into account formal and informal learning. The challenges involved in developing a credit matrix have caused the VQA to adopt an incremental development process; no-one can deny the difficulties inherent in the project.

VICTORIAN CASE STUDIES OF RECENT SUCCESSFUL ARTICULATION ARRANGEMENTS

Victoria University of Technology (dual sector university)

Articulation from TAFE to Higher Education (HE) appears to be highly successful for most students at Victoria University (VU) according to Pearce,

Murphy and Conroy (2000). They report on the 'Smoother Pathways Project' which investigated the reasons for the diversity in student experiences of articulation at VU. The project focused on one particular pathway where articulating TAFE students were having difficulty in the business field. Following interviews with students and staff and an examination of the TAFE and HE courses, the factors affecting the ease of transition were investigated. The areas of difficulty were found to be the:

- sudden changes in the depth and detail of subject knowledge
- pedagogical approach and assessment
- level, genre and independent nature of academic research and writing

The authors suggest that:

...students with minimal levels of competence in TAFE and those with fewer personal resources may be unable to adjust to these changes sufficiently quickly, particularly in difficult subjects...

(Pearce, Murphy and Conroy, 2000, p. 1)

Pearce, Murphy and Conroy conclude the important areas of difficulty for students articulating are due to the distinction between the TAFE and Higher Education sectors. For example, articulating students were confronted by the combination of length, technical nature and conceptual complexity of the assessment tasks in comparison to those in TAFE, and also the lack of on-going assessment and access to lecturers. The authors suggest that more consideration needs to be given to the needs of articulating students.

Chisholm Institute of TAFE and Monash University

Chisholm Institute of TAFE has been successful in negotiating articulation agreements with Monash University in the disciplines of nursing, justice and children services (Peters, 2005). The agreements were individually negotiated and involved VET and HE heads of department. Though they found the use of competencies, and the lack of graded assessment in VET were hindrances, the negotiations were possible when graded assessment was included and underpinning knowledge and skills were mapped against the HE curriculum. The success of VET graduates entering the programs is subject to the number of students who apply for the courses through the normal channels.

Further negotiations were enhanced by a record of good VET graduates being sent to Monash University, so much so that Monash developed a bachelor degree program in early childhood studies specifically aimed at graduates of the VET Diploma of Children Services.

The success of the articulation agreements between Chisholm Institute of TAFE and Monash University are largely attributed to the 'relationships' developed between the two sectors (Peters, 2005).

COMMUNITY SERVICES AND HEALTH INDUSTRY TRAINING BOARD (CS&HITB), VICTORIA – RECOGNISING COMPETENCY: A COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

The CS&HITB, Victoria has developed a community development approach to recognising competency. The recognising competency approach is reported to:

- value and empower candidates
- generate evidence
- build on strengths
- implement an individual training plan
- include validation and developmental pathways
- minimise the paper chase
- be cost effective.

It is candidate focussed, assessor facilitated and Australian Qualifications Training framework (AQTF) compliant. THE RCC model represents an approach that is focussed on recognising an employee's skills and experience through a structured interview process and direct observation by workplace assessors. The key distinguishing features of the model are:

- its focus on generating evidence as opposed to collecting historical evidence, and
- the acceptance of a validation pathway and development pathway which allows a candidate to bridge the small gaps between partial and full competency

Implementation and trialling for alcohol and other drugs (AOD) workers and in children's services and the disability work sector has been highly successful.

Alcohol and other drug workers

A Certificate IV level course is mandatory in the alcohol and other drug worker (AOD) sector. A key agency initially adopted the traditional RPL/RCC model with the intention to benefit their staff. The process was deemed too bureaucratic (and too demeaning for HE candidates) by approximately 80% of the prospective candidates and they refused to engage in the traditional RPL process. Of those that did proceed, approximately 50% dropped-out part way through.

The AOD agency requested the Community Services and Health Industry Training Board to train five assessors in the community development approach to recognising competency in AOD facilities. The feedback since implementation is that there is virtually a 100% uptake of the process and only 5% dropout.

Children's Services sector

In 2004, the Program Policy Advisor of the Early Years Program funded a project to customise the assessment model and for training providers to conduct a pilot in the Children's Services sector against the Certificate III in Children's Services competencies. Eight rural and metropolitan registered training providers (RTOs) began the pilot, working with twenty-one participants. but three decided not to continue with the assessment for personal reasons. Of the eighteen remaining participants, eleven have completed their assessment and the remaining seven will complete their assessments shortly. At least eleven candidates intend to enrol in the Diploma in Community Services (Children's Services) qualification in the near future.

Feedback has been very positive from candidates, employers and assessors. Candidates have found the process easy to understand and time-saving as it has avoided attendance at unnecessary classes. Others have found the process has built their confidence and has motivated them to get the Diploma

qualification. Employers have been happy that worker's skills are being recognised through this process. Assessors from both private and public registered training organisations found participation in the project helped build trust in each others practices. They found the model streamlined what has been a cumbersome process and facilitated retention of candidates.

The findings indicated that the initial briefing needs to be thorough so that candidates understand the competencies, tools, assessment process and expectations. It is important that the assessor empower the candidate by acting as an ally from the start and supporting the candidate to organise their evidence. Assessors concluded that the Recognising Competency model has the potential to provide a flexible and inclusive adult learning model where the candidate is empowered and guided in their projects by facilitators, mentors and peers. The structure of this model demands the integration of life and work experiences, personal reflection, interactive and self directed learning and an appreciation of learning as an ongoing process

Disability work sector

There is now a requirement that all State Government disability workers are certified at the Certificate IV level. The Manager, State Training Strategy of the Disability Learning and Development Unit in the Department of Human Services, is keen to progress this, funding a project to customise the manual for recognising competency of existing workers in the disability sector, for use by RTOs. This involved taking the core and elective competencies in the Certificate IV in Disability Work, customising tools in the manual and developing new tools. The manual underwent revision during the course of the project to take into consideration feedback from the participating assessors.

Unlike the Children's Services sector, there was no budget to fund the piloting of assessments. Nevertheless, one rural and one metropolitan registered training provider agreed to pilot the process with existing workers. The rural provider pilot was with one existing worker, who successfully completed the assessment. The metropolitan enterprise RTO is in the process of piloting the model with three of their existing workers.

Feedback has been very positive and in particular, one assessor indicated that it has allowed people who were unqualified but experienced and lacking confidence to have their skills and knowledge recognised. Where skill gaps have been identified along the way, it has allowed the candidates to take responsibility for their own learning through completing exercises set by the assessor that is allowing them to meet the assessment requirements.

7. Discussion and potential strategies for improving articulation between the VET and HE sectors

A GENERAL ANALYSIS

An analysis of the preceding information suggests that there are common, relatively standard needs that require addressing. It is also evident that VET and VET providers have to do most of the work when it comes to VET to HE articulation agreements. With the differences in the VET and university systems, it is inevitable that articulation and RPL arrangements rely on individual agreements and enthusiastic individuals in both sectors. All of the general needs are applicable to the health and community services sector. The truth is, the issues noted are probably already well known and the suggested responses are relatively obvious. This is not to down ground their significance, however, this section provides a launching ramp for the next section which embarks on four major strategies for improving articulation and RPL.

VET to HE articulation and RPL	
NEEDS	A SUGGESTED RESPONSE by DHS
Articulation considered as part of the design of health and community services Training Packages, not an after thought	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • seek input into the implementation of Training Package review implementation – (e.g., better articulate the essential knowledge in VET) • consult with health and community service VET schools and HE faculties • seek direct assistance of Australian TAFE Directors
Access to clear, consistent, accurate promotional material in VET and HE health and community services schools and faculties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • seek direct assistance of Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee and individual deans of health and community services faculties • seek direct assistance of Australian TAFE Directors and individual heads of health and community services schools

VET to HE articulation and RPL	
NEEDS	A SUGGESTED RESPONSE by DHS
Easier and fairer processes of articulation and RPL (that match the promotional material)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop and promote best practice models of RPL/RCC for the health and community services sector • seek process of provisional enrolment through Office of Training and Tertiary Education so RPL can occur concurrently rather than prior. Student opts out if RPL successful • consider standardised graded assessment in VET • formula for applying TER to VET applicants to HE health and community services courses
HE staff need to understand VET, VET staff need to understand HE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collaborative conferences, seminars and workshops • cross sector representation on committees, boards and accrediting authorities
Common language – does RPL/RCC include credit transfer and mutual recognition?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • seek direct assistance of Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee and individual deans of health and community services faculties
Up skill trainers and educators in RPL/RCC assessment techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop and train assessors in the health and community services sector using best practice RPL/RCC models
Common costing for RPL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in consultation with VET providers, negotiate with Office of Training and Tertiary Education (OTTE)
Student assistance to gather evidence and negotiate for RPL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • seek funding for 'articulation/career development centres'

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE ARTICULATION AND RPL IN THE HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICE SECTORS

Four major strategies are suggested for consideration and development:

1. Strategy involving health and allied health professional associations

The language of the VET sector and most of the health and allied health professional associations is generally the same, i.e., they both use the language of competency and competence. HE, in contrast, tends to use the language of curriculum, learning outcomes and qualifications in course provision.

Competency standards determined by the professions are intended to assist universities in ensuring that the courses they provide meet the needs of the profession by preparing students to enter the profession with the knowledge, skills and attributes to enable development of entry level competence for a profession. In developing competency standards, the professions aim to identify the aspects of performance in the workplace that provide the best means to infer professional competence. The concept of competency focuses on what is expected of an employee in the workplace rather than on the learning process; and embodies the ability to transfer and apply skills and knowledge to new situations and environments.

'Competence' is an intangible construct; that is, it cannot always be observed directly. The construct of competence attempts to capture the myriad of personal characteristics or attributes that underlie and enable performance in an occupation. Some of the personal attributes that underlie competence may be readily recognisable (e.g., a particular knowledge base, certain skills, attitudes etc) while others may be ill-defined, poorly understood or even unrecognised. Neither attributes (e.g., knowledge, skills and attitudes) nor performance are the same as competence. They are the means by which competence can be inferred. Consequently, issues of appropriate assessment become paramount.

Assessment of competencies and clinical competence, which in effect allow decisions to be made about fitness to practice, must be designed with respect to key issues including, validity, reliability and standard setting, as well as clarity about their formative or summative function.

As professional associations need to be convinced that graduates of a university course will enter the profession with entry level competencies, they clearly have a vested interest in the assessment processes adopted. Given that the 'competency language' is common in VET and the professional associations, it would appear that a strategy could be developed with the health and allied health professions that would facilitate the improvement of articulation and RPL into health and community service courses. Hence, Department of Human Services, Victoria could consider:

- Encouraging professional associations in their development of professional competency standards which use a common framework
- Supporting professional associations in the adoption of associate membership of the professional association for VET graduates in relevant disciplines where compatible competencies are aligned with the professional association competencies. Such recognition should be directly transferable to the HE sector given that the professional associations and HE providers have already engaged in activities that recognises courses for entry level to a profession. At the individual level, such recognition of VET graduates by professional associations would enhance their standing when approaching a university for articulation and/or RPL because their competency would be directly equated with the professional competency standards

2. Strategy involving Training Packages review implementation

As indicated above, one of the key difficulties for VET providers in negotiating articulation agreements with HE is that Training Packages do not specify curriculum or learning outcomes, only competencies. Therefore the training program provision of individual VET providers varies but they must be aligned to the same outcomes of nationally specified industry competencies. As knowledge, skills and attributes can only be inferred from competency standards, as previously described, major individual course mapping exercises usually have to be undertaken by the VET personnel, in conjunction with sympathetic HE personnel, to determine what credit may be granted to VET graduates in a particular HE course.

A strategy could be developed whereby the difficulty in arranging articulation agreements between VET and HE is highlighted within the processes being adopted in the Training Package review implementation. Consideration could be specifically given to the notion that if the underpinning knowledge that applies to VET national industry competency standards was 'spelt out' as part of their design, it would be easier for VET providers to negotiate articulation agreements and easier for students seeking RPL.

3. Strategy involving health and community services board

It may sound harsh, but the general perception is that VET has had to do most of the work in implementing and improving articulation and RPL. Moving from the individual articulation and RPL negotiation level to a more global model could be enhanced by the formation of a representative 'partnership' board that includes stakeholders from VET and HE and the professional associations. Key objectives of such a board would be to promote wider, easier and fairer access and to promote cross sector understanding. It could therefore be responsible for running cross sector conferences, workshops and seminars on the issues raised through out this paper.

A cross-sector board could also provide a platform for providing high level cross-sector representation and advice. It is noteworthy that the Community Services and Health Industry Training Board (CS&HITB), presently aligned to the VET sector, is strongly involved with Training Packages and all that this entails. With a realignment of the current membership of the CS&HITB, a cross sector of health and allied professional representation could be achieved.

Please note that this strategy has not been discussed with Community Services and Health Industry Training Board, Victoria board members.

4. Strategy involving the Credit Matrix

There is a huge investment being made into the Credit Matrix by the Victorian Qualifications Authority (VQA). As the project grew specifically from 'the need to improve cross-sectoral linkages between qualifications, and to redress the lack of a common measure for learning, irrespective of provider or teaching approach' (Victorian Qualifications Authority, 2004), it seems a more than legitimate strategy to ensure that the particular needs of the health and community services sector are addressed.

A November 2004 Consultation Paper, *The Credit matrix: making it work* (Victorian, Qualifications Authority. 2004), describes how workshops for invited guests and practitioners from a range of state and national bodies, together with

feedback from an on-going program of presentations have been major sources of advice.

Given the scope of the articulation and RPL issues raised in this report and the overall scope of the Credit Matrix project, it would appear imperative that the health and community services sector is regularly represented at such forums and that specific opportunities to engage with the VQA Credit Matrix Board Working Group, the VQA Credit Matrix Stakeholder Reference Group, and the VQA Credit Matrix Industry Forum.

The four strategies submitted here for consideration provide a framework for further discussion and development should they be deemed appropriate.

8. Conclusion

This research report set out to:

- identify barriers to successful articulation between Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Higher Education (HE) courses and examples of successful articulation arrangements
- possible models and strategies for effective, efficient and sustainable approaches to articulation
- possible models and strategies to improve uptake of RPL in the health and community services sector

The report has identified a plethora of barriers to successful articulation between VET and HE courses. However, it has also identified:

- four major approaches for consideration and further development to facilitate successful articulation and RPL arrangements in the health and community services sectors
- a trialed, successful 'community development' recognition of competence model for RPL which has been used in the health and community services sector

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10. Consultants' curriculum vitae

Name	Brian Spencer
Title/Office Held	Executive Director
Qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diploma of Frontline Management (Chisholm Institute of TAFE) • Graduate Diploma in Adult Education and Training (University of Melbourne)
Previous Experience	<p>Brian Spencer is the Executive Director of the CS&H ITB. He has over 30 years experience in working in the public and community sectors in management and service delivery. He is an experienced project manager with high level computer and technical literacy and he is an experienced communicator. Brian is Deputy Chair of the Swinburne University Divisional Advisory Board of TAFE and a Past President of the Industry Training Board Association (Victoria).</p> <p>Brian has wide experience in managing change in both large and small organisations and speaks from direct experience of the value of strategic planning and continuous improvement strategies. He has worked as a government senior policy officer on a range of social issues including youth homelessness, long-term unemployment aboriginal affairs, crime prevention and aboriginal affairs. These positions have lead to ` his comprehensive understanding of social issues in relation to legal, education, housing, youth, older persons, health, Koori, employment and training issues.</p> <p>Brian has worked as Corporate Communications Manager with the Country Fire Authority prior to commencing with the Board in January 1995. He is widely respected for the leadership role he has undertaken in community services and health training at State and National levels, achieved by working closely with industry and vocational education and training providers. Since 1995 Brian has had direct involvement in the development of competency standards and qualifications for all sectors of the community services and health industries.</p> <p>As executive director, Brian has facilitated and dramatically enhanced the leadership role of the Community Services & Health Industry Training Board. He has overseen the development of an annual conference and a sponsored awards program.</p> <p>Brian is regularly in demand as a public speaker at conferences and seminars. His opinion and counsel is widely sought by managers at all levels of professional associations, unions, industry, education and government because he comprehends the 'big-picture' and thinks laterally within a systematic approach. It is in this regard that he is often sought to Chair committees and working parties. He is skilled at drawing together new insights and approaches through his ability to make connections between existing knowledge and new knowledge. His skill at conceptualising leads to clear frameworks to enhance understanding and implementation of strategies critical for the community services and health industry. Brian has greatly assisted the community services and health industry to take control of its destiny during a time of major changes in Government policy and funding arrangements.</p>
Role/functions to be performed	Internal Project Management and financial management; Chair, Project Steering Committee and Project Reference Group; strategic planning; and overall support and project coordination.

Name	Bruce Watson (Dr.)
Title/Office Held	Principal Project Officer (Casual)
Qualifications	<p>Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training (<i>Melbourne</i>) 2003</p> <p>Doctor of Education (<i>Melbourne</i>) 2002 Thesis: <i>Rethinking Organisational Learning</i></p> <p>Master of Educational Studies (<i>Monash</i>) 1987 Thesis: <i>A Comparison of Administration of Victorian Community Colleges of TAFE and New York State Community Colleges.</i></p> <p>Graduate Diploma in Education (<i>SCV</i>) 1980</p> <p>Bachelor of Applied Science - Applied Biology (<i>BCAE</i>) 1979</p> <p>Diploma of Applied Science - Biochemistry (<i>BCAE</i>) 1976</p> <p>Fellow, Australian Institute of Management</p> <p>Member, Australian Institute of Company Directors</p> <p>Member, Australian College of Educators</p> <p>Member, Fundraising Institute – Australia</p> <p>Associate, Centre for Organisations Learning and Leadership (COLL), The University of Melbourne</p>
Previous Experience	<p>Bruce has worked as a cleaner, groundsman, retailer, medical scientist, teacher/lecturer, relieving-manager, manager and senior executive, to name a few positions, and has wide experience on boards of management and governance, together with some 30 years of voluntary community services. Since the 1970's he has deliberately studied and continued to practice in management/leadership/governance roles.</p> <p>After formal training and an internship in secondary school teaching during 1981, Bruce accepted a secondment to a teaching/lecturing placement in the TAFE component of a large dual-sector university in Melbourne. By 1985 he was appointed Head of a Department and within six years he was appointed Head of the School. This involved successfully overseeing the development of areas such as health, information technology, community services, preparatory studies and applied science. (e.g., environment, food technology and occupational health and safety). A further initiative was the revamping of commercial operations within the School.</p> <p>As Head of School, Bruce led the state-wide development of health paraprofessional and apprenticeship education and training for the Office of Training and Further Education (OTFE) in Victoria, now the Office of Training and Tertiary Education (OTTE). Over three years (1993-1995) the field subsequently developed strongly throughout the State and the School became the major TAFE health provider under Bruce's leadership.</p> <p>From 1996 to 1999 Bruce was Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Biomedical and Health Sciences and Nursing at RMIT University. The role of Deputy Dean encompassed overall Faculty development responsibilities including working with industry, community organisations, professional associations, alumni and, fundraising and sponsorship.</p> <p>Since 1999, Bruce has been self employed in his educational and advisory small business, providing organisation development services and solutions.</p> <p>In 2002 Bruce developed an integrated competency concept for a risk management professional association. The diversity and</p>

	complexity of the numerous fields in which the particular risk managers work had caused difficulty in implementing a professional certification program. An integrated set of competencies was developed together with detailed elements and performance criteria. In 2005 Bruce was involved in the development of competency standards for Australian and New Zealand surgeons.
Tasks/aspects/scope of project to be undertaken	Due to his previous experience in the VET and HE sectors, the health professional college sector and his highly developed research capabilities, Bruce is ideally placed to undertake the role of principal project officer providing leadership to the team of project officers.

Name	Sue Picot
Title/Office Held	Senior Project Officer
Qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diploma of Professional Writing and Editing (RMIT–in progress) • Diploma of Frontline Management (Chisholm Institute of TAFE) • Certificate IV in Workplace Assessment (Statement of Attainment for BSZ401A Plan Assessment; BSZ402A Conduct Assessment; BSZ403A Review Assessment (Kangan Batman TAFE) • Bachelor of Social Work (Hons) (Monash University) • Bachelor of Arts (Monash University) • State Registered Nurse (Alfred Hospital)
Previous Experience	<p>Sue Picot's breadth of experience has been gained working in the community services, health and education sectors. She is an experienced researcher, project manager, policy and program development officer, and has undertaken management roles for state and local government.</p> <p>Since joining the ITB in 1995, Sue has been involved in a wide range of research projects. She had principal responsibility for the development of the 1997 – 2002 Industry Training Plans and the Business Plan on behalf of the Board.</p> <p>Sue has gained broad research experience during her previous employment with state and local governments and during a consultancy as principal researcher in a government tender.</p> <p>For many years Sue worked as a Division 1 nurse in acute care and community based settings.</p>
Role/functions to be performed	Sue will be involved in the review of clinical competencies. She will be involved in all aspects of the mapping exercise. Also, Sue will be involved in the examination of local and international approaches and frameworks for professional competencies and the identification of an appropriate framework for the future development of competency standards applicable across all health professionals.

Name	Rebecca Ford
Title/Office Held	Project Officer
Qualifications	Bachelor of Behavioural Science (Psychology and Clinical Psychology majors) (Latrobe University)
Previous Experience	Rebecca Ford is an experienced project/research officer having worked for two other industry training boards over a number of years where she had principal responsibility for consulting with industry and developing the industry advice to government. She

	<p>coordinated the product launch for women in small business.</p> <p>Since joining the CS&H ITB, Rebecca has been involved in a number of projects, but principally those involved with the development of resources (<i>Assist with Self Medication Training and Assessment Guide</i> and for the Out of Home Care program). Also, Rebecca has worked as a support worker in the aged and disability sectors.</p>
Role/functions to be performed	<p>Rebecca will be involved in the review of clinical competencies. She will be involved in all aspects of the mapping exercise. Also, Rebecca will be involved in the examination of local and international approaches and frameworks for professional competencies and the identification of an appropriate framework for the future development of competency standards applicable across all health professionals.</p>

Name	Kath Sheedy
Title/Office Held	Office Manager
Qualifications	Certificate III in Frontline Management (Chisholm Institute of TAFE)
Previous Experience	<p>Kath is responsible for booking venues and making catering arrangements not only for the training awards and conference, but also in relation to a wide variety of functions held at the ITB and elsewhere. She has major responsibility for various aspects of the CS&H Industry Training Awards and Conference such as coordinating registrations.</p> <p>Kath is responsible for various aspects of financial management including overseeing the work of the bookkeeper, invoicing, electronic bank transfers, and so on. She provides administrative assistance to the Executive Director, the Board and to projects.</p> <p>Prior to joining the Health Industry Training Board, Kath worked for the State Government in a variety of administrative roles.</p>
Role/functions to be performed	Administrative support