

Australian Government Department of Industry – Vocational Education and Training Reform

Australian Mines & Metals Association (AMMA)

July 2014



AMMA is Australia's national resource industry employer group, a unified voice driving effective workforce outcomes. Having actively served resource employers for more than 95 years, AMMA's membership covers employers in every allied sector of this diverse and rapidly evolving industry.

Our members include companies directly and indirectly employing more than half a million working Australians in mining, hydrocarbons, maritime, exploration, energy, transport, construction, smelting and refining, as well as suppliers to these industries.

AMMA works with its strong network of likeminded companies and resource industry experts to achieve significant workforce outcomes for the entire resource industry.

First published in 2014 by

AMMA, Australian Mines and Metals Association

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INTRODUCTION

1. AMMA welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Vocational Education and Training Taskforce in relation to the revised Registered Training Organisation and Vocational Education and Training Regulator Standards for public consultation.
2. AMMA provides this submission in its own right, as a Registered Training Organisation (RTO), rather than on behalf of member Companies across the resource industry.
3. AMMA appreciates the Taskforce stakeholder engagement and welcomes the draft Standards for RTOs. The new draft Standards are a step in the right direction from the former draft Standards developed by the National Skills Standards Council as they reduce red-tape, avoid onerous levels of regulation and avoid imposing unnecessary regulatory costs.
4. For example:
 - a. AMMA is committed to providing and being responsible for the quality of all training and assessment delivered to learners which is a requirement in the new draft Standards.
 - b. However, AMMA at the same time welcomes the removal of the requirement to have an Accountable Education Officer as this would have placed an unnecessary impost on our organisation.
5. AMMA has attempted to respond to the most pertinent issues from the new draft Standards for RTOs.
6. AMMA would welcome the opportunity to provide further feedback or explanation of the issues raised in this submission and continue to constructively engage in this consultative process, including meeting with the relevant officers of the Taskforce to further address the matters in this submission.

TRAINING AND ASSESSMENT

7. AMMA recommends there be a definition and guidance on the phrase “volume of learning” in the “Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2014”.
8. Standard 1.1 states that “RTOs’ training and assessment strategies and practices, including volume of learning, are consistent with the requirements of training packages and Vocational Education and Training (VET) accredited courses and enable each learner to meet the requirements for each unit of competency or module in which they are enrolled”.

9. AMMA recommends (as per the Volume of Learning under of the AQF¹) that an RTO “can exercise professional judgment to ensure that design of programs of learning leading to qualifications enables students to achieve the learning outcomes for both the qualification type and the discipline”.
10. If the intention of the new draft Standard is to apply minimum or mandatory hours to achieve “volume of learning”, this would have a profound impact on training delivery and cost and would fundamentally change the system.
 - a. AMMA strongly opposes such an approach, which would increase the compliance burden for RTOs.
 - b. Consideration would also have to be given to how the Australian Skills Quality Authority would audit the application of “volume of learning” in a consistent and transparent manner.
11. Standard 1.9 (of the Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2014) states that “for the purposes of Clause 1.8, systematic validation of assessment is to be undertaken by person/s who are not directly involved in the training or assessment delivery of that qualification...”
12. If this approach is adopted it has the potential to be both costly and logistically difficult to implement and comply with.
13. If an RTO has to employ or contract external consultants for validation of assessment purposes, this will create a direct impost on the cost of training. Additionally, few RTOs would be in a position to employ specialist staff on such a basis, which would mean external consultants would be primarily used. This however would be problematic in the market place, as suitable skilled validation consultants would be very likely to be actual or potential competitors in the area of specialisation that they were validating. It is not legitimate to ask the industry to take on and widely expose itself to such a level of commercial risk and potential conflicts of interest.
14. It is recommended that the rules of evidence² require auditable metrics.
 - a. For example, for: “Sufficiency: The assessor must be assured that the quality, quantity and relevance of the assessment evidence enables a judgement to be made of a learner's competency”.
 - b. In order to reduce interpretation, improve transparency and to provide guidance for auditing purposes, it is recommended that there is guidance that states what is acceptable and unacceptable evidence that an assessor

¹ <http://www.aqf.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Volume-of-Learning-Explanation.pdf>

² Table 1.8-2, pp.9-10 of the Standards for Registered Training Organisations 2014 -

<http://vetreform.industry.gov.au/sites/skillsreform.industry.gov.au/files/Revised%20RTO%20Standards%20for%20Consultation%20June%202014.pdf>

can rely on that assures quality, quantity and relevance of the assessment evidence that will be relied upon.

Schedule 2

15. Requiring an RTO to obtain external and independent validation when applying to extend its scope of registration, and/or applying for the renewal of its registration³ imposes new costs and complexities for RTOs.
16. Fundamentally there are two key issues of concern with Schedule 2 of the revised Standard:
 - a. There is a risk that the integrity of the independent external assessment could be compromised if there are no external monitoring controls that review the accuracy and completeness of the validation assessment.
 - b. RTOs are in competition with each other and may not want to reveal their intellectual property as part of this assessment.
17. AMMA recommends that this validation be performed by a competent internal resource within the RTO, or to retain independence, by an independent auditor.
18. If this is not the case, and the proposed independent validation proceeds, the commercial confidentiality and competition concerns will need to be properly dealt with.

Schedule 6

19. Requiring a RTO to hold a current membership of a Tuition Assurance Scheme as prescribed in Schedule 6 "All Other RTOs" (of the Standards for Registered Training Organisations 2014), adds another impost to the amount of compliance required to operate an RTO, as well as to the cost of providing services for an RTO.
20. It is recommended that the onus of acquiring such additional assurance should be placed on the individual that wishes to protect themselves from the risk that a RTO is unable to provide services for which the learner has prepaid.

³ As per the details outlined on page 20 of the Standards for Registered Training Organisations 2014 – <http://vetreform.industry.gov.au/sites/skillsreform.industry.gov.au/files/Revised%20RTO%20Standards%20for%20Consultation%20June%202014.pdf>