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Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

Comparisons of International Quality Assurance Systems for Vocational Education and Training

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THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT
AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS

The views and opinions in this document are those of the author/project team and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government and state and territory governments.

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Executive summary

Project purposes and methodology

This project examined the quality assurance mechanisms for the vocational education and training (VET) sector used in five nations: Canada (Ontario), Germany, New Zealand, Singapore and the United Kingdom (UK). The mechanisms used by these nations have been compared with those in Australia to identify best practice.

Personnel in each of these countries who are working in or have worked in VET and who have a comprehensive knowledge of their national systems were either contacted to assist in the development of a system overview or commissioned to provide a report. These reports were supplemented with email communications and telephone consultations. Reports for each of the nations have been provided as appendices to the report. In the case of the UK, this includes separate reports for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and for Scotland.

Quality assurance systems

The report notes that quality assurance systems are a key feature of national VET systems with their active and heterogeneous training markets. There are developmental processes for and dialogues on VET quality assurance across several of the study nations. Those across European Union (EU) have been especially active and have been stimulated by the Bologna and Copenhagen processes, the development of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), associated developments in credit transfer and the validation of non-formal learning. They also include the establishment of a common quality assurance framework.

Quality assurance in VET has multiple purposes including those of probity and financial accountability, health and duty of care, user protection, quality improvement and system effectiveness, and the quality status of VET products, providers and systems.

Broadly quality assurance mechanisms can be described as front-end input mechanisms or back-end output mechanisms. Front-end systems are designed to ensure the quality and authenticity of VET programs, and the quality, effectiveness and integrity of training providers. Output mechanisms concentrate on the quality of the training product. Responsibility and authority for quality assurance mechanisms can be located in industry partners, government and its agencies, providers and other agencies including awarding bodies.

National context

The quality assurance systems used across the six nations (including Australia) are influenced by the constitutional and administrative structures and processes of government. Three of the nations are federations and one is a unified nation state. The distribution of policy and administrative policy between two levels of government is different in each of these four nations. This variance includes the responsibility for education and training, and as a consequence the distribution of quality assurance functions.

Nations also have different governance cultures that are the product of their different histories and their geo economic contexts. These cultures are also influenced by traditions of state—civil society relationships—which in VET include the role of the industry partners. In all nations, industry bodies have some role in quality assurance, mostly in standard setting.

The constitutional structure of Canada locates all responsibility for education and training with the provincial governments. Therefore Canada does not have a national VET system and this study has concentrated on Ontario, which is the largest of the provinces with 40 per cent of Canada's population. Within the UK, Scotland has long had separate responsibility for education and this has been consolidated with the establishment of the Scottish parliament. Therefore, Scotland is treated as a separate nation and case study within this report.

VET systems

There is considerable variation in the characteristics of VET systems across the six nation states. Variables that influence the character of systems include the extent to which initial VET is located in the schools sector, the existence and strength of apprenticeship systems, and the relationship between VET and tertiary education.

The Australian VET system is among the most consolidated of all national VET systems with nationally consistent governance arrangements, including those for standard setting, qualifications and quality assurance systems. It also has a relatively high level of separation from the schools and the higher education sector.

These differences in VET systems influence the distribution of governance responsibilities, including those for quality assurance, between education and training agencies, and different types of quality assurance for different elements of VET systems.

National qualifications frameworks

All six nations have invested in or have begun developmental processes for national qualifications frameworks (NQF). Australia, New Zealand and the UK (England, Wales and Northern Ireland and Scotland separately) were among the first nations to establish NQFs. Germany has begun to develop an NQF in response to the establishment of the EQF.

The purpose of NQFs includes, to varying degrees, the objective of quality assurance for qualifications, especially VET qualifications. This regulatory aspect of NQFs varies across the seven nations, including Scotland. The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) is essentially a regulatory framework as it designates nationally recognised qualifications. The particular characteristics of the AQF, including its separate categories of three sets of sector qualifications and its high degree of stability since its establishment in 1995, are reflections of the structure and governance characteristics of the Australian VET system.

Analysis of quality assurance arrangements

Processes

Standard sets of processes for quality assurance are available on the public domains in Australia, New Zealand, England, Wales and Northern Ireland, but not for the other countries.

Quality assurance of providers

The quality assurance of providers is essentially a front-end process of registration or accreditation. These processes vary by the degree of scrutiny and the parameters for registration. The requirement to be registered can depend on the delivery of the types of courses and their accreditation, and whether delivery is publicly funded or subsidised. The registration function can be located in one or more agencies.

The parameters for registration also vary across nations and across different categories of provision. They relate to finance, personnel, records, admissions and awarding, reporting and accountability. They can also cover procedures, such as self evaluation and continuous improvement strategies. In countries where elements of the quality assurance processes are located within or delegated to sub agencies, such as awarding bodies in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, there are registration and authorising procedures and parameters.

Teachers/trainers

Quality assurance parameters include those for teachers and trainers, both individually and collectively. They include qualifications, experience and capacities such as expertise and ability. Qualifications and capacities include those related to assessment and in some cases to instruction or teacher training.

Course and qualifications accreditation

The accreditation of courses and qualifications is a common feature across quality assurance systems. Australia and Singapore have nationally consistent systems in comparison to the other countries. Variations to the central agency development and accreditation model include provider, awarding body, and industry/social partner development and in some cases accreditation.

Monitoring

All nations include some type of auditing as part of the ongoing quality assurance processes, which is conducted by a contracted or delegated agency. The timing and processes for audits vary and most systems have some form of risk rating to minimise the audit burden. The risk rating could influence the timing, frequency and the nature of the audit.

All audit processes are designed to ensure a minimum standard and in some cases they include continuous improvement strategies. Rating scales against audit criteria are used by some agencies, and the results of audits are publicly available in the internet in some countries. In those countries that use sub agencies, such as awarding bodies, there are quality assurance procedures, including auditing procedures, for these bodies.

Other activities

Other quality assurance procedures used or required by agencies include self evaluations, including student and user surveys, making data generated through quality assurance processes available to the public, and internal and external assessment validation and moderation procedures.

The application of quality assurance systems to transnational education is becoming increasingly important across many countries. In the broad area of VET, countries are addressing the complex question in different ways, ranging from its encompassment within arrangements for domestic courses to explicit guidelines and procedures for cross border or transnational courses.

Implications

A review of quality assurance models across various nations highlights a range of strategies that are different to those employed by the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF). In many respects, these strategies are good practice examples, however it must be remembered that any quality assurance strategies implemented in other nations reflect the context within which they are employed and may not be suitable for implementation within an Australian VET context.

Some areas of useful comparison include:

- an apparent movement towards continuous improvement and an associated emphasis on review rather than or along side auditing processes
- an interactive processes between the regulating or auditing/reviewing agency and the training organisation, including the exchange of information including self assessment
- public availability of results from, and information generated through, the quality assurance processes, including audit or review processes
- the high degree of independence of the auditing agency from the regulator or regulating agencies
- a range of strategies outside any auditing processes for the quality assurance of assessments, including internal and external verification or moderation procedures
- the inclusion of requirements for, or processes to, encourage teachers and trainers to invest in education training.

It also is suggested that the European quality assurance reference framework for vocational education and training could be used as a basis for evaluating the AQTF.

Project overview

The AQTF was introduced in 2001 and the framework's current version was introduced in July 2007. The AQTF is the national set of standards which assures nationally consistent training and assessment services for Australia's VET system, both in Australia and overseas.

This research project was undertaken at the request of the Australian Government through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. The request required the project team to explore and gather data on quality assurance mechanisms used by five other countries for the VET sector and to assess and identify best practice for consideration by Australia. These nations¹ were:

- Canada
- Germany
- New Zealand
- Singapore
- United Kingdom.

The project aimed to identify common features, innovative approaches and effective strategies in quality assurance mechanisms used by these countries to ensure confidence in operations for delivery in Australia and overseas. The project aim was also to review international practice against the AQTF 2007.

Methodology

The methodology consisted of three distinct stages:

- desktop research
- teleconference interviews with in-country contacts and other identified personnel (if required)
- validation of findings and evaluative comments from in-country contacts.

The national contacts were recruited through official agencies, including the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, the Singapore Workforce Development Agency, the Scottish Qualifications Authority and through other networks. These contacts have a comprehensive knowledge of their VET systems and access to official documentation.

For almost all countries, desktop research was undertaken to identify the:

- quality assurance processes used by these countries for in-country VET provision
- mechanisms used by these countries to quality assure their VET delivery outside their own countries.

Teleconferences were undertaken with key country contacts to discuss the desktop research as well as:

- the efficacy of quality assurance processes
- any innovative practice
- issues with quality assurance processes including implementation.

Although teleconferences were to focus on the above items, much time was spent trying to come to a common understanding of key terms, for example, programs and program standards versus qualifications, as well as teasing out and clarifying what Australian VET calls accreditation and registration processes.²

¹ From here on the term 'nations' is used instead of 'countries' as it allows for the separate nations of the United Kingdom and the focus on Ontario, Canada.

² As much as possible accreditation was used in relation to approval of courses, and registration for the approval of training organisations.

Any comments related to the evaluation of effectiveness of the mechanisms were included in the country overviews, if the contacts included them. Otherwise discussions around effectiveness have been dealt with in the analysis section of this report.

Each nation overview was reviewed by the in-country contacts to ensure that the technical details were accurate and reflect practice. These contacts did not review the findings and analysis of the research.

For Canada, a brief overview was documented but the focus was on Ontario rather than Canada as a whole. Because Canada has no identifiable and consistent national education or training systems it was necessary to concentrate on the VET systems at a provincial level. Ontario, with 44 per cent of Canada's population, is by far the largest province and also has some of the most prominent system characteristics, such as a qualifications framework.

Quality assurance systems

Definitions

The OECD (2006) defined a qualifications system as including:

All aspects of a country's activity that result in the recognition of learning. These systems include the means of developing and operationalising national or regional policy on qualifications, institutional arrangements, quality assurance processes, assessment and awarding processes, skills recognition and other mechanisms that link education and training to the labour market and civil society. Qualifications systems may be more or less integrated and coherent.

Within this definition, it is the aspect of quality assurance to which this report relates.

Quality assurance is a component of quality management and is 'focused on providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled' (AS/NZS ISO 9000:2006: Quality management systems—fundamentals and vocabulary, June 2006, p.9).

In relation to educational services, quality assurance refers to planned and systematic processes that ensure confidence in educational services provided by training organisations under the remit of relevant authorities or bodies. It is a set of activities established by these relevant authorities or bodies to ensure that educational services satisfy customer requirements in a systematic, reliable fashion. However, quality assurance does not guarantee the quality of educational services—it can only make them more likely.

The Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials defines quality assurance as the achievement of educational-program standards set by institutions, professional organisations, government, and standard-setting bodies established by government (Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials, fact sheet 5) <http://www.cicic.ca/510/fact-sheet-no-5.canada>

International developments in VET quality assurance

In 2001, the European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training set out a policy agenda for quality assurance in VET within the process of promotion of enhanced European cooperation in VET. As such, a Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF) was developed. This framework was designed to support the development and reform of the quality of VET at system and provider levels while fully respecting the responsibility and autonomy of member states to develop their own quality assurance systems³. This framework was endorsed in 2004 but it was recognised in 2006 that there was a need to progress from the CQAF to that of a 'culture of quality improvement'.⁴

³ European Commission, 2005, p.3.

⁴ Commission of the European Communities, 2008, p.3.

In 2008 the framework was proposed as a recommendation to the European parliament and of the European Council. This paper notes that quality assurance ‘should be seen as an instrument for continuous improvement of VET, based on a quality cycle establishing the appropriate interrelation between planning, implementation, evaluation/assessment and review of VET’.⁵ In addition, it notes that quality assurance ‘implies a systematic approach to quality...should also include ways in which the performance of VET can be monitored, and use measurement to support review and improvement of VET at system and provider levels’⁶.

This framework links with other strategies to support continuous improvement in quality assurance and governance of VET, including:

- the European Qualifications Framework
- the European Credit System for VET (ECVET)
- common European principles for identifying and validating non-formal and informal learning.⁷

This framework outlines general principles for quality assurance in education and training. It comprises:

- evaluation, assessment and review of VET supported by common quality criteria, indicative descriptors and indicators
- monitoring processes, including a combination of internal and external evaluation mechanisms, to be defined by member states to identify the strength of systems, processes and procedures, and areas for improvement
- the use of measuring tools to provide evidence of effectiveness.⁸

Quality indicators for member states include:

- planning that reflects a strategic vision shared by the relevant stakeholders and that includes explicit goals, objectives, actions and indicators
- implementation plans which are devised in consultation with stakeholders and include explicit principles
- regular and measured evaluation of outcomes and processes
- review.

⁵ Commission of the European Communities, 2008, p.3.

⁶ Commission of the European Communities, 2008, p.3.

⁷ Commission of the European Communities, 2008, p.4.

⁸ Commission of the European Communities, 2008, p.9.

Context: what influences the nature of national VET quality assurance systems?

Introduction

Any comparative international study is always hampered by differences in national characteristics and context. These differences create the problem of the applicability of innovations in one country to the different contexts in another. This problem does not negate the usefulness of comparative studies but acts as a reservation on any crude adoption of overseas innovations.

Of more importance however, is the capacity of the comparative study to provide deeper analyses of policy fields and their associated governance systems. This deeper analysis should allow for an understanding of the particular characteristics of different policy and administrative systems, and how they have evolved to meet the particular needs and cope with different national circumstances.

We have prefaced this report with a brief exploration of the different governance characteristics of the six countries (including Australia) and their education and training systems. We argue that the different approaches to VET quality assurance have been shaped by these different governance and education and training system contexts.

These contexts influence the purposes, characteristics of the mechanisms used for quality assurance, and the factors that mediate the selection of and relationships between these mechanisms. We begin, therefore with an exploration of purposes, mechanisms and mediations.

Purposes

Quality assurance systems for VET have a number of purposes, including:

- *Probity and financial accountability*: assurance that public and private funds for VET are being spent appropriately, in a reasonably efficient and transparent manner.
- *Health and safety and duty of care*: assurance that the health and safety of participants are not threatened through the training processes.
- *User or client protection*: assurance that VET is accessible, of the type, and of the standard specified, and that the processes are consistent and transparent to agreed or common standards.
- *Quality improvement*: means of improving instruction, provider facilities and resources, administration, program design and assessment systems.
- *Effectiveness of the system*: means of improving participation in and outcomes of the VET system, including completion rates.
- *Social and economic objectives for a VET system*: these typically include access and lifelong learning, human capital and stronger and more open education and training pathways.
- *Quality of the qualification and training outcome*: some qualifications and types of training, such as that for traditional apprentices, have strong reputations for quality that quality assurance processes protect.
- *Recognition of the quality of a VET provider or sector and its products*: particular providers and industries or occupational communities may impose extra quality requirements to meet their organisational and industry standards.
- *Recognition of the quality of a VET system and its products*: countries seek to protect the reputation of their VET systems through quality assurance systems.

Mechanism

Quality assurance mechanisms can be broadly described as input or front-end, and output or back-end processes.

Input mechanisms include:

- Mechanisms to assure relevance and coherence and standards of VET qualifications and programs. This can apply to the needs of:
 - industry
 - participants
 - the country and the community.

This is typically achieved through the accreditation of standards and training programs and qualifications. Accreditation can be at system, sub system or provider levels. It may include inspection or audit of providers to ensure the delivery of appropriate VET products.

- Mechanisms to ensure consistency and transparency in the standards or qualifications across VET systems, and the capacity of VET qualifications to articulate with other qualifications.

This is typically achieved through:

- integrated standards setting systems including qualifications and credit frameworks
- qualifications registers and skills or qualifications passports or supplements.
- Mechanisms to ensure that training providers have the capacity to deliver the relevant programs to the required standards. This capacity is judged on the basis of provider facilities, management and quality systems, and instructor capacities.

This is typically achieved through a processes of provider registration or accreditation which may include inspections, including financial audits.

- Market based and purchasing mechanisms. These mechanisms can be located with:
 - the funding agency that can allocate funding for requirements such as delivery hours, instructor qualifications and assessment systems. Competitive tendering processes can be used
 - employers, through a choice of training providers and programs
 - participants, through such mechanisms as training vouchers or learning accounts.

Output mechanisms include:

- Control over the awarding of VET qualifications. This can be conducted through:
 - direct control over the assessment and awarding of qualifications, including the use of tests and examinations
 - accreditation or licensing of providers or centres to conduct assessments and issue awards
 - assessment moderation mechanisms
 - assessment audits.

- Evaluations and other mechanisms to ensure the quality of VET programs and qualifications.

These mechanisms are typically supported through:

- student satisfaction surveys
- user or industry surveys
- other mechanism for participant appeals and client complaints.

Systems

The characteristics of these quality assurance systems will obviously be influenced by the characteristics of the VET systems. The systems can be relatively integrated as in the case of Australia, or highly dispersed as in the case of the USA or Canada.

Broadly, a coherent and effective VET quality assurance system requires:

- Clarity and consensus about the location of the authority for quality assurance. Location is typically with:
 - *Industry or occupational communities.* These communities can be strongly organised, as in the case of the German industry chambers, or weakly organised as in the case of Australia where formal organisation has often depended on state sponsorship such as state-established and supported industry training councils. Industry authority is typically needed to endorse the relevance and standard of VET programs and qualifications.
 - *Government.* Governments tend to play a role of an objective guarantor of the probity of quality processes, including assessments and awarding. They will typically use industry and provider participants as a means of ensuring the relevance of program and qualifications content and the appropriateness of assessment and awarding processes.
 - *Providers.* Major providers of VET are likely to seek to protect their market brand through internal quality assurance mechanisms. The principle of ‘self regulation’ is (or has been) strong in liberal market economies and governments have attempted to build cultures of industry self-regulation and professional and occupational standard setting and regulation, as exists to varying extents across professional occupations. Providers with strong track records for quality can be delegated degrees of self-regulation in both inputs and outputs.
 - *Awarding and international quality assurance agencies.* Major awarding bodies such as the Cities and Guilds and Cisco have established their own quality requirements for the award of their qualifications. International agencies such as ISO are used across many national VET systems (including the Australian system) and have a formal role in the quality assurance processes in the German VET system.
- Sets of integrated mechanisms to deliver the required level of quality assurance. The main mechanisms are:
 - Setting standards and accrediting VET programs and qualifications.
 - Registration of provider accreditation.
 - The processes for awarding of qualifications, including assessment systems.
 - Auditing and inspecting providers.
 - Evaluating the quality of programs and qualifications and their delivery.
- Separation of functions. There are obvious process and probity advantages in the separation of audit and regulatory functions.

Mediations and restraints

The location and particular characteristics of, and relationship between, these mechanisms differ between all countries. These differences relate to four sets of variables:

- The governance structures, mechanisms and cultures of the nation state. The nature of the nation state can vary on the basis of:

- levels of government: international (as in the EU), single and multiple levels of government
- the relative influence of different levels of government and the allocation of policy and administrative responsibilities between them
- the capacity for and degree of national integration of governance and policy fields such as education and training
- political cultures such as the degree of authority given to or assumed by the state and the tendency towards or against centralism
- the strength and role played by civil society and its relationships with government, especially in VET
- governance cultures that range from minimal state intervention to high levels of state sponsorship
- the existence of and degree of crisis in economic and social policy.
- The structure, processes and cultures of education and training systems. These include the:
 - degree and nature of the location of initial VET within the school sector
 - existence and relative strength of apprenticeship systems and their degree and nature of integration into the wider VET system
 - institutional relationships between VET and other education and training sectors, including student traffic
 - relationships between initial and continuing VET and the distribution of governance responsibilities for VET across levels of government, industry and providers
 - degree of distribution of responsibilities for VET between government, social partners (industry), providers.
- The location of the ‘ownership’ of VET and industry and occupational standards between occupational communities, government and other agencies.
- Perceptions of crises (or lack of) in education and training system.

Intrinsic restraints

Finally it should be noted that there are intrinsic constraints within an idealised VET quality assurance system. These include:

- Costs, which must be borne by government, providers, participants and industry, or various combinations of these stakeholders, as is the case across most systems.
- Imposition on providers and other stakeholders. Over recent decades most national and regional governments have sought to reduce regulations, which can be a heavy and at times costly burden on industry and which can reduce innovation. In Australia for example, the 2006 Act that established the Victorian Qualifications and Registration Authority specified that it should use ‘light touch’ regulation in its role as the registration body for education and training providers.
- Principles, including those of:
 - Subsidiarity—locating the quality assurance processes as close to the users and providers as possible without compromising quality or assurance
 - transparency and consistency—making the processes transparent to all participants and ensuring confidence in their consistency

- quality improvement—linking the quality assurance processes to improvement processes for all elements of the VET system.

Principles and frameworks

Quality assurance can range from basic compliance mechanisms to systems that are designed to promote overall national VET system improvement, and to advance broad social and economic objectives that are attached to the VET system. The most expansive example of such a framework is the CQAF, adopted by the European Union (Appendix 1).

Governance

Nation states

The quality assurance systems for VET in each of the sample countries are located within the structural and governance arrangements for education and training and the broader political and administrative systems and cultures for each of the countries. These are diverse and dynamic, and also influenced by each country's geo-political and labour markets contexts.

The most obvious examples of these contexts are those of Germany and the UK as members of the EU, and the associated development of systems that have a direct impact on their VET sectors. The Copenhagen processes and the EQF are designed to strengthen the articulation and consistency in quality assurance between member country VET qualifications. The characteristics of VET qualifications in Canada are influenced by the highly porous labour boarder with the USA and the high degree of economic separation between the east and west coast provinces. Within the UK, the autonomy of Scotland in VET has increased with the establishment of the Scottish parliament, and Wales is now beginning to establish a degree of independence for its VET system.

Countries have different types and degrees of political maturity. The British state and the UK political system and culture have matured over centuries and have developed complex relationships with civil society. The German state was formed more recently and has a more turbulent history than the British state. However its civil society has a deep and long history that remains manifest in German social and economic life. Both Germany and Scotland have national identities that include education and training traditions and that are independent of the constitutional construct of their nation states. Singapore has a short history as a nation and like Australia, Canada and New Zealand, has a population formed mostly through relatively recent immigration. However its geo-economic context has contributed towards a different state culture to that of these other countries. The characteristics of the Canadian state are deeply influenced by its concentrations of Anglophone and Francophone populations and their respective histories.

VET systems and government

In most countries, and especially the older countries of Britain and Germany, education and training initially formed independently from government. For example, elements of the German VET system date from the middle ages and this is manifest in the central role of the industry chambers in initial VET. Across the liberal democratic states the processes of political formation of the modern nation states were the basis for the intervention of government into education (Green, 1990). This intervention was motivated by the need to provide the educational and cultural foundations for the emerging liberal democracies.

The responsibility for VET across most countries has traditionally been located with employers and workers, rather than government. Hence a voluntarist principle has tended to underpin national policies towards VET. State intervention in the VET sector has consistently been provoked through economic and military crises and through a perception of market failure within 'VET systems'. The crises have included war, where governments look towards VET as a means of strengthening the capacity of war economies, recessions, where VET is seen as a means of increasing the employability of workers, and more recently ongoing economic competitiveness in the more globalised economy.

As a consequence the role of government in VET can be regarded as a constant tension between the location of VET in industry, its different occupations, and their communities and organisations of employers and workers and the perceptions of government of the failure of VET systems to meet national economic needs and to contribute to the social objectives of employment in an optimal manner. This tension has been especially manifest in the UK where over recent decades the continuation of the voluntarist principle and the principle of a more contestable training market, have been accompanied by a continued pattern of government interventions. In Germany VET policy has been dominated by the need for state intervention to underpin the failure of industry to provide enough employment places for the school leavers who want to enter the dual system of apprenticeships. In Singapore, VET is seen in part as a type of ‘social wage’ that acts as a substitute for the absence of state regulated wages.

In Australia, the most recent and formative period for the VET system was prompted by a sense in the mid 1980s of economic crisis and market failure in VET. Because of the depth of the perception of market failure, the particular Australian arrangements for the governance have become relatively government centric. Skill standards, qualifications, provider registration and quality assurances are all conducted through state or state sponsored agencies. Even industry participation in the Australian VET system is government agency supported and brokered.

VET and education systems

The Australian VET system is arguably the most separate from the education sectors among all OECD countries. In comparison to all other OECD countries, in Australia more school age students in education and training are at school and undertaking a generalist course (OECD, 2007). While VET in schools is being undertaken by about 36 per cent of students, it is mainly in the form of one subject at Year 11. The Australian VET sector is also relatively separate from the university sector (Moodie, 2008). The governance of Australian VET therefore is highly autonomous from the wider education system. Furthermore, the particular federalist structure of VET governance in Australia has increased this autonomy (Keating, 2009), although recent developments through the Council of Australian Governments and the Bradley Review of Higher Education (2008) may weaken this effect.

This high degree of separation is not the same in most other countries. Germany represents the most obvious case of the location of most initial VET in schools. In Singapore, initial VET, or really technical and vocational education and training (TVET), is located in the schools sector, and a large element of continuing TVET is located in the tertiary sector under the administration of the Ministry of Education. The relative lack of national governance in Canada has reduced VET’s isolation from the schools and higher education sectors in Canada because of the tendency to locate governance for all education and training in single agencies.

These contexts need to be considered within the comparative study. Without such understandings there is a considerable danger of simplistic comparisons and possibly of inappropriate imports.

Political and administrative systems

There also are differences in characteristics of the entity of a nation and a nation state. The UK nation state contains four nations, and in the case of Scotland the national identity is closely linked to its education system. This has had a direct impact on the nature of the UK VET system, including its regulatory and quality assurance systems. Canada also accommodates Anglophone and Francophone nations that have a high and strongly defended degree of autonomy through their respective provinces and provincial governments.

Four of the six sample countries (including Australia) have two levels of government across which their VET systems are located. Three are federations—Australia, Germany and Canada—and the UK has formally devolved significant elements of its VET systems to regional governments. As a consequence the legislative and administrative bases of VET across each country are different. Singapore and New Zealand are small states with single levels of government (apart from local government in New Zealand), but differ in their economic and geopolitical contexts.

As well each of the countries has different histories and cultures of political administration and economic policies. These cultures have an influence on the nature of their VET markets and regulatory systems.

Australia

Australia is a federation with a specified set of powers allocated to the national government and the residual to the states. The governance structures based on the British model at both national and state levels have encouraged adversarial and party based politics, and the constitutional goal of having state advocacy through the Senate has not been realised.

These features together with the significant shift in financial and legislative power to the national government have meant that the original objectives of a *collateral* and *cooperative* federalism have been weakened in favour of a more *competitive* federalism. More recently however, there are signs of a growing degree of *coordinate* federalism with a more prominent role for intergovernmental and ministerial councils. This development is especially relevant to the VET sector as it has effectively shaped the curriculum and governance structure of the sector over the past two decades. However, the tendency towards centralism in VET governance has been demonstrated in the recommendations of the Bradley Review of Higher Education (2008).

Economic policy in Australia has been market oriented. Australia has among the highest levels of private investment in education and training among OECD countries and the rates of increase in this investment over the past two decades has been the highest among OECD countries (OECD, 2008). However, the levels of private investment in formal VET have been moderate and relatively stable. Nevertheless Australia was among the first countries to adopt policies of an open and competitive training market and to encourage the establishment of private training providers.

Canada

Canada is a federation of 11 provinces with a significantly weaker central government in comparison to Australia. The limited role of the national government has not required any direct (see Germany) or indirect (as in the Australian Senate) representation of the regions within the central government. The reasons for the limited role of the national government are due to the cultural independence of the English and French speaking provinces and the economic differences between the industrial eastern and resource rich western provinces. Differences in the links between provinces and the USA and several constitutional crises have also acted as break on centralism.

Canada therefore has a type of collateral federalism and until recently, a federalism that has had virtually no impact on education and training. There is no federal department of education or training and no national VET system. While Canada has tended towards the relatively free market approach of most Anglophone countries, there is a degree of variation across the provinces. As a consequence the strength of the private training market is variable.

Germany

Germany also is a federation. The role of the national government is relatively strong, and unlike most other federations this was a deliberate construct. However the German Landers have a direct role in the central government through formal representation in the upper house, the Bundesrat, where the members are appointed by the Lander governments rather than being elected through popular vote. Furthermore the upper house has relatively equal power to that of the lower house.

The governance system in Germany locates the policy making role with the national government and the administrative role with the Landers. As a consequence of these constitutional and administrative characteristics, Germany is a strong example of *coordinate* federalism. This coordinate characteristic is strengthened by the role of the stranding conferences of Lander ministers, including that of ministers for education. Recently governments have decided to devolve all responsibility for school education to the Landers and locate responsibility for VET at a national level. As a consequence, the responsibilities for much of the initial VET, which is located in schools, and continuing VET are located at different levels of government. However, both of these roles are mediated by the role of the industry partners (business and unions) and their industry and occupational chambers.

Germany shares with several other European communities the strong tradition of the role of the social partners in social and economic policy. This is especially strong within the VET sector where the industry chambers have been the core agencies in the large German apprenticeship system—the dual system.

New Zealand

New Zealand has a single level of government and has not devolved any responsibility for education and training to local government, as has happened in the UK. It shares similar governance and political structures and cultures with Australia, including a relatively adversarial party political culture. However, the introduction of a proportional representation electoral system has weakened this culture with governments needing to be formed through alliances of parties and independent members of parliament.

New Zealand made early investments in open market economic policies in the 1980s and these have continued, perhaps in a slightly diluted form. As in Australia, they have had an impact on the VET sector and encouraged private investment in and provision of VET. On the other hand, a relatively centralised approach to VET governance has been taken, especially through qualifications and a large central qualifications authority.

Singapore

Singapore has a unitary government and has been dominated by a single party since gaining independence from Britain. It has maintained a relatively high level of state intervention in social and economic policy including recent investments in export oriented industry hubs. It also has a relatively high level of intervention in the labour market through immigration, wages policy and other forms of regulation. The country has a strong national development agenda and given the absence of natural resources, investment in human capital is a priority. Despite the political dominance of the Peoples' Action Party, which has a trade union base, Singapore has minimal industrial regulations including wage regulation. Rather it has adopted a strategy of increasing worker skill levels as a means of giving them greater wage bargaining capacity.

The traditional concentration of VET provision on state agencies has been moderated with the establishment of the Workforce Development Agency and its agenda of demand led VET. However, this leadership is located with the workforce rather than enterprises.

United Kingdom

The UK is a unified state with significant levels of devolution of sovereignty to regional governments in the three nations of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The patterns of devolution are not consistent historically or in the structures of legislative and administrative authority of the regional parliaments and assemblies. However, the re-establishment of the Northern Ireland assembly and the establishment of the parliament in Scotland and the assembly in Wales have been within the past decade.

In comparison to many of its European neighbours, the UK has had a tradition of limited state intervention in the economy, albeit with the establishment of a welfare state and a degree of nationalisation and subsequent privatisation of key industries. This has been expressed in the maintenance of a strong tradition of voluntarism in VET, especially in England. Over the past three decades there has been a greater centralisation of policy making and administrative authority, including the reduction of the role of local government in education and training. More recently there has been some rebuilding of this role.

Table 1: Context summary

	Australia	Canada	Germany	New Zealand	Singapore	United Kingdom
Constitutional structure	Federation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - states with residual power - strong central government - shared responsibility for VET. 	Federation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provinces with specific powers - weak central government - dependence on ministerial committees - strong breaks on central powers. 	Federation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - strong central government, but - Lander appointment of strong upper house - and through Lander approval. 	Unitary	Unitary	Unitary: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - historical devolution of education and training in Scotland - recent establishment of three regional parliaments and assemblies.
Political culture	Relatively liberal—limited role of governments. But some trends towards centralism and expectations of state intervention.	Liberal. Strong resistance to centralism, and strong regional cultural and economic identity.	Liberal, but traditions of a welfare state and the social partners. High degree of coordinate policy and administration.	Strong liberal economic policies. Government powers mediated by voting system changes.	Tendency towards statism but built around economic and social policy consensus, development and planning.	Strong liberal traditions but within welfare state. Recent tensions between central direction and innovation and liberal/voluntary traditions and political and program devolution.
Economic and geo-political context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sense of economic crisis in the 1980s led to major VET restructure. - Central theme of human capital in economic policy. - Strong productivity and skills shortage focused agenda. 	Complex economic policy context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - different economic bases of east and west provinces and Anglo and Francophone provinces - links with west and boarder provinces with the USA - impact of NAFTA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong manufacturing traditions. - Founding member of the EU. - Ongoing economic crisis since unification, in comparison to position as international leader through the 70s and 80s. 	Major free market economic innovations from the 1980s.	High degree of economic planning, including sector priorities. High degree of integration of economic and social policies.	Sense of economic crises from the late 1970s that has driven economic and related social policy. Drive for economic improvement in some tension with traditions of localism and voluntarism.

VET systems

Australia

The Australian VET system has a high degree of integration and separation from the higher education sector (Moodie, 2008). It is among the most integrated across OECD countries, and especially among federalist countries,⁹ with its national set of standards-based qualifications, integrated apprenticeship system and common rules for the registration and quality assurance of provision.

Australia was among the first countries to encourage a strong and diverse private training provision and the evolution of its national quality training framework has paralleled and complemented this development. The highly academic school sector and its state-based qualifications system has provided some pressure for inconsistency in the characteristics and quality assurance of the VET awards within this sector. However the mainstream VET sector remains among the most nationally integrated and sector autonomous of all OECD VET systems, and one in which national and nationally coordinated state agencies have a central role. The recent Bradley Review (2008) recommended an intensification of its national coordination.

Canada

Canada shares with Australia a relatively strong degree of differentiation between its generalist secondary school sector and VET, but has a more diversified tertiary education sector. This sector includes universities and degree granting institutions, tertiary colleges and institutes, career colleges, multi and special purpose colleges, and adult education providers. Canada also has an apprenticeships system with the number of apprentices fluctuating between 140 000 and 195 000 over the past two decades.

The Canadian provinces are almost entirely autonomous in their education systems. There are commonalities in some aspects of provision and the capacity for intergovernmental liaison (Hueglin and Fenna, 2005), including cooperation among government, industry and labour on interprovincial certification to increase worker mobility and economic growth.

Because of the virtual absence of the national government it is not possible to identify a single Canadian VET system. However VET in Canada has depended to a considerable extent on federal funding, and this is a pattern that has been familiar in Australia.¹⁰

There has been a recent agreement among the provinces to establish a national qualifications framework. However with some provinces having already decided to establish their own qualifications frameworks it seems likely that the Canadian framework will be designed to allow the regional frameworks to interlink and so perform a similar role to that of the EQF.

Germany

Germany has possibly the strongest VET sector of all developed countries, if not all countries. It effectively begins in the first years of secondary education that locates about 60 per cent of all students within a preparatory route for the dual system of apprenticeships that still provide for about 50 per cent of all young people. Tertiary education in Germany is also relatively diversified with providers that deliver qualifications that range from para degrees to those provided through the apprenticeship system.

The university stream is small by OECD comparisons, as many occupations that would be delivered through the universities in other countries (such as nursing) are delivered through the dual system in Germany. The various training institutions that provide initial and continuing vocational training are essentially built around the participation of young people in the dual system.

⁹ Other OECD federations are Germany, Canada, Spain, Belgium and the USA.

¹⁰ The first Commonwealth funding in Australian education and training was in the VET area.

Although the German federal government is relatively strong (in part because its structure gives real influence to the Landers and hence an internal cooperative capacity) the governance role of the social partners through the chambers is paramount. The training system is effectively in the hands of industry through the 480 chambers, and the government role is limited to funding the institutional based training and setting regulations. The governance structure for post school education and training does not have a strong regional flavour. It is highly networked, but these networks are relatively formal. So while it is planned, this is mainly through industrial and occupational structures, rather than through a consistent set of competency or qualifications standards. The national BIBB plays an active coordination and support role, but its activities are essentially at the behest of the social partners. The employer organisations are central and have a considerable investment through the chambers. These bodies effectively approve the training programs, conduct the assessments and issue the qualifications. The unions also have a significant role.

Technical Vocational Education and Training is highly regulated and there is a complex process that involves the Lander governments and social partners in establishing apprenticeships, as well as the associated qualifications and regulations related to duration and processes for apprenticeships. There has been reluctance within Germany to move towards more competency of outcomes based qualifications (Young, 2008). The construct of competence appears to be different to that in the competency based training (CBT) systems in the UK, Australia and New Zealand, and the associated developments in core skills and competencies.

The periodic crises faced by the dual system and the need for state based providers to play a supplementary role have increased the pressure for central coordination, and there are inconsistencies between the levels and types of qualifications issued through the apprenticeship and the provider based systems. The perception of crisis has been deepened by Germany's persistently poor results in the OECD Programme for School Assessment (PISA) results, with many policy makers locating the early streaming of students into vocational schools as a prime cause of these poor results.

Germany along with the vast majority of European countries has decided to establish a national qualifications framework. Whether this is an attempt to provide a more consistent standards benchmark for awards or just a compliant response to the EQF is unclear.

New Zealand

New Zealand, like Australia and Canada, has a relatively generalist secondary education but a more diversified tertiary sector. The tertiary sector includes universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, institutes of technology, indigenous colleges and private colleges and training schools. The Tertiary Education Funding Commission has a funding role across the range of tertiary provider types including the polytechnics.

The integration of the VET sector has been provided through the national qualifications framework and its authority together with the industry training councils.

Singapore

Education and especially tertiary education is seen as a key investment in Singapore. The educational investment at both family and government levels is intense and highly competitive. There is an objective to have the bulk of school leavers undertake tertiary studies, and this aim is informed by international benchmark countries such as Finland. Post school education in Singapore is built on the highest standard of secondary education among all countries.

The country is moving towards another stage of development with an emphasis on knowledge intensive industries and the location of the high-end elements of transnational companies in Singapore. These strategies also are cluster based and Singapore typically has invested in institutional forms with local and overseas technical institutes and universities. It is planned to build a high level education and training capacity that will both serve the high-end skill needs of the new industries and

build an international skills market.¹¹ This strategy has two purposes: apart from establishing another industry, it builds a base capacity for the knowledge economy that is different from the former (although to an extent continuing) current centrally directed approach.

The skills programs were also directed by central agencies (Standards, Productivity and Innovation Board) in consultation with leading employers and employer groups (Kuruville et al, 2002). More recently a Workforce Development Agency (WDA) has been established, which funds a large number of centrally designed and tightly targeted programs for employers and workers (WDA, 2006). The WDA has encouraged the diversification of the training market through the provision of funding and the establishment of a set of national VET qualifications and a VET based qualifications framework. The Singapore model therefore, has been built on a more traditional workforce planning approach, which in turn has been built on an economic development model that has a high degree of planning.

It is a highly competitive system with students being allocated between the universities, the polytechnics and the Institute of Technical Training. There are state supported private schools, international colleges and private tertiary providers, some of which have used international qualifications. The accreditation and quality assurance of these providers, and their curriculum and qualifications, is largely through self-accreditation and quality assurance, but under the careful supervision of the Ministry of Education.

The Workforce Development Authority (WDA) is also chartered with strengthening worker training and access to qualifications. As the industries shift towards the high skills, which are more difficult to predict, there is a need to allow more flexibility and innovation to develop across the education and training system. Typically, however, this is being achieved through measures such as the implementation of quality systems that are linked to licenses for the enrolment of students, including foreign students.

United Kingdom

The UK has two distinct education and training systems (England and Scotland) and two partially integrated systems (Wales—England and Northern Ireland—England). The Welsh—English system is a work in process as the Welsh Assembly Government attempts to establish distinctive Welsh elements, including some Welsh qualifications.

However, there is a degree of consistency in VET qualifications across each of the nations and the industry lead bodies that are responsible for establishing the standards for VET qualifications are common across the country. Diversity is expressed through the formulation and awarding of multiple VET qualifications across the non-state based and multiple awarding bodies. Furthermore, the Scottish Qualifications Authority has an awarding role in contrast to its English counterpart.

The English and Welsh VET sector is highly diverse with the further education colleges playing a major role in school age provision across a range of course and qualifications types. These include the new national (vocational) diplomas, which are partially industry developed, and which the education secretary of state hopes will eventually supplant the A level qualifications.

This contrasts with a less diverse Scottish system in terms of both provision and qualifications. On the whole the system is user-led, mainly through patterns of student enrolments and the subsequent course offerings of the 43 colleges (21 universities), which are funded mainly through bloc grants or broad purchasing agreements rather than profile funding. Most of the colleges have a local market, although there is a degree of competition between them. The system can be described broadly as a governance approach built around enterprise networks.

¹¹ The Straits Times (24.3.07) reported that Singapore's 'Global Schoolhouse' had reached 80 000 foreign students, halfway to its target of 150 000 by 2015.

There has been a strong emphasis on a contestable VET market in England and this has been reiterated in both the recent Leitch (2007) and Foster (2007) reports. The emphasis on contestability has never been as strong in Scotland and the Welsh Assembly Government has indicated its degree of autonomy by also qualifying the contestability principle. The local education authorities in Scotland have maintained a role in VET provision, although Scotland has also invested in the voucher like individual learning accounts. The Welsh government also has incorporated the further education colleges in 15 to 19 provision planning processes.

National qualifications frameworks

The OECD (2005) noted that one feature of a qualifications system may be an explicit framework of qualifications. It defined a qualifications framework as:

An instrument for the development and classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria for levels of learning achieved. This set of criteria may be implicit in the qualifications descriptors themselves or made explicit in the form of a set of level descriptors. The scope of frameworks may be comprehensive of all learning achievement and pathways or may be confined to a particular sector, for example, initial education, adult education and training or an occupational area. Some frameworks may have more design elements and a tighter structure than others; some may have a legal basis whereas others represent a consensus of views of social partners. All qualifications frameworks, however, establish a basis for improving the quality, accessibility, linkages and public or labour market recognition of qualifications within a country and internationally.

Therefore a qualifications framework is a formal or classification arrangement.

Australia

The AQF was formally established by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs in 1995 following agreement of ministers in 1994. The AQF comprises national qualifications issued in the post compulsory secondary sector, the vocational education and training sector and the higher education sector. Qualifications range from certificate I through to doctoral degree.

The basis of the AQF is the qualification type descriptors. These descriptors act as guidelines for the development and accreditation of qualifications within the three sectors, each of which has their own set of quality assurance processes for awarding qualifications that are also accepted as part of the AQF.¹² There are no explicit levels within the AQF, although there are implicit ones with greater scrutiny of the descriptors.

The AQF can be described as regulatory because it includes nationally recognised qualifications. However, it also is light touch (Young, 2005) and plays a role in guiding and providing a platform for cross-sectoral agreements and articulation. It does have a generic accreditation function in that it has had the capacity to adopt and modify descriptors for types of sector-based qualifications.¹³

The framework is described diagrammatically in the following table.¹⁴

Table 2: AQF

AQF Qualification by Sector of Accreditation

Schools Sector Accreditation	Vocational Education and Training Sector Accreditation	Higher Education Sector Accreditation
Senior Secondary Certificate of Education		Doctoral Degree
		Masters Degree
	Vocational Graduate Diploma	Graduate Diploma
	Vocational Graduate Certificate	Graduate Certificate
	Advanced Diploma	Bachelor Degree
	Diploma	Associate Degree, Advanced Diploma
	Certificate IV	Diploma
	Certificate III	
	Certificate II	
	Certificate I	

¹² Keating J, Bateman A, Noonan P, James R, Coles M, Dow Kwong Lee, Simmons V, Meek L, Clarke K, 2008, p.32.

¹³ Keating et al, 2008, p.53.

¹⁴ AQF Council at www.aqf.edu.au/AbouttheAQF/TheAQF/tabid/108/Default.aspx

A consultation paper has been released by the Australian Qualifications Framework Council to inform a revised and enhanced AQF.

Canada, Ontario

Canada is a federation of 10 provinces and three territories, but unlike Australia there is no ministry or department of education at the national level. Under the Canadian constitution (*Constitution Act 1867*) the provincial governments have exclusive responsibility for education across all sectors. The territories do not have the same status but essentially are responsible for managing their own education system. As such, the provinces and territories have developed their own educational systems and there is no national qualifications framework. However, the basic structures of provincial and territorial education systems across Canada are similar. Each has three sectors—elementary, secondary and postsecondary.¹⁵

Ontario has developed its own qualifications framework, which includes:

All postsecondary certificate, diploma and degree programs offered under the auspices of the Province of Ontario, including apprenticeship certificates, the qualifications to be phased in for private career colleges, the qualifications awarded by public colleges of applied arts and technology, and degrees offered by public universities and institutions authorised to award degrees by a ministerial consent.¹⁶

The Ontario qualifications framework identifies the main purposes of each qualification, outlines the learning expectations for graduates who hold each type of qualification and shows the relationship between the different qualifications. Qualifications are described by:

- overall program design and outcome emphasis
- preparation for employment and further study
- typical duration
- admission requirements
- provider
- qualification awarded.¹⁷

Each qualification can be seen as a benchmark or reference point along a continuum.¹⁸ The constructs which the continuum covers includes:

- depth and breadth of knowledge
- conceptual and methodological awareness/research and scholarship
- communication skills
- application of knowledge
- professional capacity/autonomy
- awareness of limits of knowledge.¹⁹

Germany

There has been some reluctance in Germany to establish a national qualifications framework. This has been related to the differences in the construct of industry and occupational competence and the processes for the development of training programs and qualifications and the award of qualifications. However, with the agreement to establish the EQF, Germany also moved towards the development of a German qualifications framework for lifelong learning (DQR, 2009).

¹⁵ Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials, www.cicic.ca/421/an-overview.canada

¹⁶ Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/postsec/oqf.html

¹⁷ Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/postsec/oqf.pdf

¹⁸ Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/postsec/oqf.html

¹⁹ Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Ontario Qualifications Framework, www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/postsec/oqf.pdf

The draft framework matches the EQF with an eight level framework but uses two broad domains of *professional competence*—which has two sub domains of *knowledge*, and *skills* and *personal competence*—which also has two sub domains of *social confidence* and *self confidence*. The concept of competence used in the proposal is described as:

The ability and readiness to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and methodological, competences in work or study situations and for occupational and personal development. Competence is understood in this sense as action skills (DQR, 2009, p.3).

This concept of competence appears to be a broader, more knowledge based and more socially oriented than those used by Anglophone countries.

New Zealand

New Zealand has in place a national qualifications framework that spans all sectors. The qualifications framework was agreed in March 1995 and was initially comprised of eight levels. This was extended to 10 levels in 2001,²⁰ with one being the least complex and 10 being the most complex. The NQF is designed to provide nationally recognised, consistent standards and qualifications, and to provide recognition and credit for all learning of knowledge and skills.²¹

Within the framework, the levels depend on the complexity of learning. Levels 1 to 3 are of approximately the same standard as senior secondary education and basic trades training. Levels 4 to 6 approximate to advanced trades, technical and business qualifications. Levels 7 and above approximate to advanced qualifications of graduate and postgraduate standard.²² The levels are determined by three domains or scales of complexity: process, learning demand, and responsibility.

NQF qualifications are based on ‘units of learning’ with a standard format and a national catalogue—these are known as unit standards. Qualifications are described through their profile, based on register criteria, which set minimum credit and level requirements for each type of qualification.

When a learner enrolls in a program that leads to NQF credits, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority is notified and learners are registered on the NQF for a record of achievement. Records of achievement contain both units of learning and qualifications. When a learner has completed a national certificate or national diploma, they (or their provider) must notify the authority in writing so their qualification can be included on their record of achievement.²³

Singapore

Singapore does not have a qualifications framework that spans all sectors, but a qualifications framework that addresses the VET sector—Singapore Workforce Skills Qualifications (WSQ). This framework spans seven levels, including graduate diploma, graduate certificate, specialist diploma, diploma/professional diploma, advanced certificate, higher certificate, and certificate. Its focus is on worker qualifications.

Under WSQ, the seven levels of qualifications have corresponding learning outcomes. The different outcomes provide a general understanding of and broad comparisons between each level. The qualifications are issued by the Singapore Workforce Development Agency.²⁴

²⁰ New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2005, www.nzqa.govt.nz/news/featuresandspeeches/docs/nqf-background.pdf

²¹ New Zealand Qualifications Authority, www.nzqa.govt.nz/framework/about.html

²² New Zealand Qualifications Authority, www.nzqa.govt.nz/framework/about.html#nqf

²³ New Zealand Qualifications Authority, www.nzqa.govt.nz/framework/rol/index.html

²⁴ New Zealand Qualifications Authority, <http://wsq.wda.gov.sg/AboutWSQ/HowItWorks/>

Qualifications and competency units are described by the following constructs:

- the kind of knowledge and skills involved
- the kinds of issues or problems that the knowledge and skills are applied to
- the amount of accountability, independence, self organisation or organisation of others that is required to solve problems or complete tasks
- the occupational levels and range and depth of the knowledge and skills required of the jobs which the qualifications relates to.²⁵

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom has been among the earliest investors in national qualifications frameworks. As with other aspects of education and training, Scotland has developed a separate NQF to those for the rest of the country. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland there have been separate frameworks developed for higher education and VET, followed by an integrating framework, and now followed by a credit framework.

The Scottish credit and qualifications framework has 12 levels and incorporates both level descriptors and qualification types descriptors. It has been developed in a relatively sequential manner and responsibility for its maintenance has now been delegated to an authority that is partially separate to the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

England and Wales have moved from separate and relatively basic frameworks for VET and higher education qualifications to a qualifications and credit framework that incorporates a unit-based qualifications framework and a credit framework based on a system of credit accumulation and transfer. It is an 8 + entry-level framework that allocates credit points across different types of qualifications.

²⁵ *Singapore Workforce Skills Qualifications: qualification design guide*, 2006, p.4.

Analysis of quality assurance arrangements

The European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training outlines general principles for quality assurance in education and training which can be applied to the regulator level and to the provider level. It outlines three key strategies:

- evaluation, assessment and review of VET, which includes common quality criteria, indicative descriptors and indicators
- monitoring processes, including a combination of internal and external evaluation mechanisms to identify the strength of systems, processes and procedures as well as areas for improvement
- measuring tools to provide evidence of effectiveness.²⁶

In various ways the quality assurance systems reviewed included aspects of this framework.

Quality assurance processes—regulator

Both Australia and New Zealand have a strong emphasis on standards for regulators and accrediting bodies.

The AQTF 2007 itemises its requirements for both registration and accreditation of courses in a suite of documents that are publicly available:

- AQTF 2007 Standards for state and territory registering bodies
- AQTF 2007 National guideline for risk management
- AQTF 2007 National guideline for audit moderation
- AQTF 2007 National guideline for managing non-compliance
- AQTF 2007 National guideline for industry regulator engagement
- AQTF 2007 National guideline for responding to complaints about vocational education and training quality
- AQTF2007 National guideline for conducting audits of the interstate operations of an registered training organisation
- AQTF 2007 Audit handbook
- AQTF 2007 Standards for state and territory course accrediting bodies
- AQTF 2007 Standards for accredited courses
- AQTF 2007 User's guide to standards for accredited courses
- AQTF 2007 Template for course documentation for accreditation.

Of interest is that all information of the AQTF 2007 is located together at www.training.com.au and the website includes links to the relevant state/territory authorities which have responsibility for registering and accrediting courses.

New Zealand has also outlined its regulator requirements both for registration and for accreditation of courses in *The audit standard for inter-institutional quality assurance bodies with delegation from the New Zealand Qualifications Authority*. This standard sets out the expected requirements for quality assurance functions of both the New Zealand Qualifications Authority as a quality assurance body and those functions delegated to other quality assurance bodies.

In the UK, for England, Wales and Northern Ireland there are explicit requirements for awarding body organisations. These requirements are documented in *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2004)* found at www.ofqual.gov.uk/487.aspx and to be read in conjunction with the National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) code of practice (revised 2006) found at http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/files/qca-06-2888_nvq_code_of_practice_r06.pdf

²⁶ Commission of the European Communities, 2008, p.9.

Regulatory monitoring and reporting (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority 2007) includes a section on the review process of the regulator in regard to awarding bodies monitoring arrangements. In Scotland, again there are explicit requirements for awarding body organisations, documented in the awarding body criteria (2007).²⁷

For other nations, there were no explicit standards or requirements documented and found in the public domain. However, this may not mean that they do not exist but that they may be in another form. In the case of Ontario for example, the Private Career Colleges Act explicitly covers the process for registration and course approval (accreditation) and the role of the supervisor in this regard.

Quality assurance of providers

A recent report on mapping the qualifications frameworks of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) economies highlights the importance of a quality assurance framework and its link to a qualifications framework—a qualification framework is only as strong as the quality assurance system supporting it.²⁸ Quality assurance addresses the ‘assurance of qualifications as meeting the requirements of the descriptors in the framework and of the providers awarding the qualifications’.²⁹

This report summarises the quality assurance of qualifications into three regulatory elements: accreditation, awarding and audit of providers:

- Accreditation may rest with a single or multiple agencies, including self-accrediting providers. Some national qualifications frameworks have brought the accreditation of most groups of qualifications into a single qualifications authority or agency. In other national qualifications frameworks the accreditation functions remain distributed across multiple agencies and providers.
- Award of qualifications can be carried out in various ways. In some countries a centralised agency awards groups of qualifications and in others awarding remains the responsibility of different awarding bodies and providers. There are no countries where all qualifications are awarded by a single central agency or authority.
- Audit of providers typically involves some oversight of learning provision and assessment. This also can be located in a central qualifications agency or distributed across multiple agencies. Where these functions are distributed, qualifications frameworks can be used as benchmark tools for the standards to be achieved in quality assurance.³⁰

However, this approach does not tease out other various regulatory functions in terms of:

- approving organisations as suitable for providing training and assessment
- approving these organisation to deliver specific programs
- ongoing monitoring of these training organisations (in addition to audit)
- strategies that may be employed to manage non-compliant training organisations.

Front-end processes—registration

All nations reviewed in terms of their quality assurance systems have a process for gate keeping the approval or registration of training organisations. However these processes varied in terms of:

- the level of scrutiny
- parameters reviewed, for example program design, program materials, program facilities, complaints processes and refund policy.

Level of scrutiny

In all nations, there is a line drawn between those who do not require approval or registration and those that do. In almost all nations the line is very similar.

²⁷ SQA, 2007, www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/AccreditationAwardingBodyCriteria.pdf

²⁸ Burke G, McKenzie P, Shah C, Keating J, Vickers A, Fearnside R and Bateman A 2009, p.10.

²⁹ Burke et al, 2009, p.10.

³⁰ Burke et al, 2009, p.10–11.

In the case of Germany, the training organisations do not have to be registered unless they are undertaking programs for the Federal Employment Agency.

In Ontario, providers who provide training of less than 40 hours or cost less than \$1000 for a student to enrol are not required to be registered with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. There are some other exceptions such as single skill training (that is, not a whole occupational outcome), those delivered to a corporate or third party, and a few specific national occupation groups.

For New Zealand, private training organisations are required to be registered if they wish to:

- receive government funding through Vote: Education
- enrol international students
- access standards on the national framework.

In Singapore, any organisation wishing to deliver programs under the WSQ system needs to be formally recognised as an approved training organisation, and may also need to be registered with the Ministry of Education if they are delivering school-type programs and issue foreign institutions' qualifications.

In the England, Wales and Northern Ireland the regulatory arrangements apply to organisations that operate within, and the qualifications that are accredited into, the qualifications and curriculum framework (QCF).

In Scotland, the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Accreditation, which is an autonomous arm of SQA, has the statutory role of approving awarding bodies, including SQA, to offer specific Scottish vocational qualifications. It is also responsible for approving centres, such as:

- private training providers whose sole purpose is the delivery of training and the assessment of candidates
- private and public sector companies who offer training to their employees
- other organisations, including those outside Scotland, who wish to offer SQA qualifications.

In Australia, all VET training organisations need to be registered if they wish to provide educational services and issue statements of attainment and qualifications in any programs that fall under the AQF.

Approach

The greatest variation in terms of gate keeping processes is the approach or areas scrutinised for approval purposes.

The AQTF 2007 Essential Standards for example, focuses on the continuous improvement processes to be employed, and on teaching learning and assessment services to be provided. The focus on business processes and viability is not high, even though the conditions of registration are to be met.

On the other hand other systems, such as Ontario's in relation to private training organisations, have an approach that is focused more on consumer protection such as:

- insurance (public liability)
- trust account for international student fees
- college administration and record keeping (student contracts, student transcripts, student complaint procedures, record keeping procedures)
- keeping the ministry informed (substantial changes to approved programs, changes to student complaint procedures, changes in ownership)
- instructors
- marketing requirements
- admission requirements

- financials
- protection of student interests (requirements pertaining to refund policy, fee collection complaints process).

This focus on consumer protection is indicative of the accreditation processes in place, as in many instances the approval to conduct courses lies with bodies that accredit colleges within their profession and jurisdiction, for example, dental nursing. Alternatively a third party assessor is used to assess programs and private career colleges.

In Germany, organisations wishing to provide training for the Federal Employment Agency are required to be registered with the agency. However the registration process requires them to apply a systematic instrument for quality assurance and quality development. This means that the organisation can use a range of methods, including:

- self-evaluation
- quality and approval seals
- certificate of ISO 9000ff
- regional quality system
- approval of the federal employment agency³¹
- participation in competitions
- European Foundation for Quality Management
- Lernerorientierte Qualität in der Weiterbildung
- others

This approach is indicative of their accreditation and exam setting processes. For example in Germany's dual system, it is the responsibility of the chambers to set the criteria and the exams (which are generally both theoretical and practical) for their trade segment.

In New Zealand, private training organisations are required to meet Quality Assurance Standard One (QAS1) which consists of policies and criteria that the New Zealand Qualifications Authority has established. Key aspects of QAS1 include:

- The provider has measurable goals and objectives for education and training.
- The provider puts into practice quality management systems to achieve its goals and objectives including:
 - governance and management
 - personnel
 - physical and learning resources
 - learner information, entry and support
 - development, delivery and review of programs
 - assessment and moderation
 - notification and reporting on learner achievement
 - research (degree programs).
- The provider is achieving its goals and objectives, and can provide assurance that it will continue to do so.

The New Zealand approach has a strong continuous improvement focus and also emphasises the role that the training organisation has in its own quality assurance and ongoing compliance.

In the UK, quality assurance applies to both awarding body organisations and also to centre approval.

1. *Awarding body organisations:* in England, Wales and Northern Ireland awarding body organisations are only allowed to submit qualifications for inclusion in the relevant NQF if it has

³¹ Anerkennungs- und Zulassungsverordnung Weiterbildung (Approval and Accreditation Regulations for Further Education).

already been recognised by the regulatory authorities as being capable of offering qualifications of the required quality. Applicants for recognition need to demonstrate against the following key criteria for awarding body's procedures:

- plan of provision
- corporate governance
- administration, including resources, equality of opportunity, expertise, centre registration/approval, data requirements, reasonable adjustments and special consideration, awards outside England, Wales and Northern Ireland, issuance of certificates, enquiries and appeals procedures, dealing with malpractice, customer service statements, monitoring and evaluation, use of languages.³²

2. *Centre approval*: awarding body organisations are responsible for centre approval. Different processes will apply to each awarding body organisation, however the *Statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2004)*³³ outlines in the recognition process of an awarding organisation body the requirements for approving centres:

Each centre:

- a) Identifies a single named point of accountability for the quality assurance and management of the qualifications.
- b) Has the resources and systems necessary to support the qualifications.
- c) Undertakes to use buildings for assessment purposes that provide access for all candidates, in accordance with relevant legislation.
- d) Undertakes to use staff and/or associates who have the necessary competence in the subject matter of the qualifications, assessment procedures and language(s) used for assessment; and has the systems that ensure consistency of standards and support equality of opportunity.
- e) Documents the respective roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of each partner, with clear lines of communication between the partners, where a centre is a partnership arrangement between organisations.
- f) Agrees to provide the awarding body and the regulatory authorities with access to premises, people and records, and to cooperate with the awarding body's monitoring activities.

For Scotland, processes are similar however SQA Accreditation undertakes the approval process for awarding body organisations and for approval of centres.

1. *Awarding body organisations*: SQA Accreditation, which is an autonomous arm of SQA, has the statutory role of approving awarding bodies. Criteria are documented in the *Awarding Body Criteria (2007)*³⁴ and include:

- Statement of Excellence 1—Governance and leadership
- Statement of Excellence 2—Quality enhancement
- Statement of Excellence 3—Administration and support
- Statement of Excellence 4—Qualification development and design
- Statement of Excellence 5—Assessment and verification.

2. *Centre approval*: There are two types of approval:

- Approval as an SQA centre—to ensure that the centre has the management structure and quality assurance systems to support the delivery, assessment and internal verification of SQA qualifications.
- Approval to offer specific qualifications—which relates to approval to offer specific qualifications, that the centre has the staff, reference and learning materials, assessment materials, equipment and accommodation needed to deliver and assess the specific qualification. Also checked is the internal verification system to ensure that it meets SQA quality requirements.³⁵

³² QCA, 2004, at www.ofqual.gov.uk/487.aspx

³³ QCA, 2004 at www.ofqual.gov.uk/487.aspx

³⁴ SQA, 2007 at www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/AccreditationAwardingBodyCriteria.pdf

³⁵ SQA, 2000.

For Singapore, approval criteria comprise two aspects of quality dimension: organisational and course.

1. *Organisational* - looks into the practices the organisation adopts to ensure quality and professionalism in its delivery of training and assessment services. Including:
 - management responsibility
 - financial practices (for public providers only)
 - learner support and services
 - administrative practice: review and monitor training and assessment on regular basis, establish procedure to handle customer complaints, grievances and appeals, and establish effective administrative system to maintain training and assessment records.
2. *Course review* - includes:
 - course design and development
 - trainer and assessor qualifications
 - facilities and equipment.

This approach appears the most closely aligned to that of the AQTF in terms of addressing both course requirements including physical facilities as well trainer/assessor qualifications and management and continuous improvement processes.

Key minimum requirements - teacher/trainer qualifications

One of the cornerstones of the AQTF 2007 Essential Standards for Registration is that of trainer/assessor qualifications, specifically relating to Standard 1.4, but also embedded in Standard 1.3. The quality of trainers and assessors is accepted by the sector as being critical to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and critical to quality outcomes in the VET sector. As this research project evolved, this area of quality assurance became of interest to the team.

The trainer/assessor requirements are addressed at AQTF 2007 level but assessor requirements also appear in the relevant training package or state accredited course. In the AQTF 2007 Standard 1.4, the following applies:

Training and assessment are conducted by trainers and assessors who:

- a. have the necessary training and assessment competencies as determined by the National Quality Council or its successors
- b. have the relevant vocational competencies at least to the level being delivered or assessed
- c. continue developing their vocational and training and assessment competencies to support continuous improvements in delivery of the registered training organisation's services.

The National Quality Council (NQC) notes that trainers/assessors are required to hold either one of two certificate IV qualifications in training and assessment,³⁶ and be able to demonstrate vocational competencies at least to the level of those being delivered.

The AQTF 2007 therefore sets a minimum requirement for trainers and assessors in the VET sector, supplemented by any additional advice in the training packages or accredited course documentation. The emphasis is on both the training and assessment skills, and on vocational competence including a requirement to demonstrate currency.

In Singapore, the Workforce Development Agency takes a similar approach to Australia. The agency considers that the trainer and assessor have a direct impact on the learning outcomes, and therefore they are expected to meet three criteria:³⁷

³⁶ For those only undertaking assessment, only the assessment units from these two qualifications are required.

1. relevant working experience as specified by the industry (where industry does not specify, a minimum of two years is required)
2. relevant technical qualifications meeting at minimum the same level of the competency standard they are training or assessing
3. demonstrated competencies as a trainer or assessor.

WSQ trainers are to hold:

- CU1:³⁸ interpret Singapore workforce skills qualification framework
- CU2: apply adult learning principles and code of ethics relating to training
- CU4a: prepare and facilitate classroom training or cu4b prepare and conduct on-the- job training.

WSQ assessors are to have CU6 conduct competency-based assessment.

In Germany, the focus is on training competence, as the chambers are responsible for examination and testing. The regulations for the qualification of the instructors (ausbildereignungsgesetz³⁹) basically state the underlying requirements for becoming an instructor in the initial training system and focus on the ability to autonomously plan, implement and control training concerning the:

- scope
- professional and pedagogical aptitude
- qualifications
- rules for the examinations, certificates, other evidence
- rules for transitions and applicability of these regulations.

All of these aspects are differentiated further (see the Germany overview in the appendices).

For New Zealand, the quality assurance standard for private tertiary education providers, government training establishments and Wānanga (QA Standard One) (NZQA, 2006), the focus is on the provider ensuring that they use appropriate recruitment and selection practices to make sure it has enough personnel with teaching and subject knowledge, and assessment and moderation expertise.

In addition, the provider must demonstrate that they provide fair conditions of employment, undertake staff performance appraisal and provide ongoing staff development. No greater specificity as to the minimum requirements is available in this standard. However, this reflects the New Zealand approach to quality assurance and emphasising the role of the provider in ensuring quality training and assessment provision.

In Ontario public sector training organisations, teaching staff involved in the program:

- meet the needs of the students and facilitate the achievement of the program learning outcomes;
- possess the combination of experience and credentials appropriate to, and required by, the program of study;
- have the level of expertise and ability to provide the advertised learning experiences; and
- are oriented, coordinated and evaluated.⁴⁰

³⁷ The Workforce Development Agency also requires developers to hold specific competencies in addition to those related to trainers and assessors. These include CU3a Design and Develop, a WSQ facilitated training program and/or CU3b Design and Develop OJT. Developers are those who develop the courseware and assessment plan.

³⁸ Competency Unit

³⁹ www.bibb.de/dokumente/pdf/ausbilder_eignungsverordnung.pdf.

⁴⁰ Ontario College Quality Assurance Service 2008, www.ocqas.org/pdf/PQAPA%20Manual%20-%20Revised%20Novembe%2008.pdf, p.14.

In Ontario's private career college sector, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities indicates on its website⁴¹ that instructors are to:

- hold a bachelor degree from an Ontario university or an equivalent degree
- be a graduate of a college of applied arts and technology or equivalent
- be a graduate of a registered private career college or equivalent
 - be the holder of a certificate of qualification under the Trades Qualifications and Apprenticeship Act or the Apprenticeship Certification Act or equivalent Canadian certificate
 - have 24 months occupational experience in the vocation to be taught

Or

- have 36 months of teaching experience in the vocation for which instruction is given, and
- 24 months occupational experience in the vocation to be taught

Or

- have 48 months of occupational experience in the vocation for which instruction is given.

In addition, if the vocation is governed by a regulatory body that specifies the qualifications required of instructors, the instructors at the private career college also have to meet those qualifications.

The ministry also stipulates that the superintendent can also approve other instructors who are deemed to be proficient in the subject or vocation to be taught. In addition, a caveat is applied, which notes that private career colleges may employ substitute instructors that do not meet the requirements as long as the total amount of the program taught by all unqualified instructors does not exceed 10 per cent.

In the UK, the focus is very much on the assessment capability of assessors, more so than training competence. The ENTO (the national training organisation for employment) framework of standards and single unit qualifications help introduce reliability and consistency to the internal assessment processes prevalent in vocational qualifications delivered by training providers and in the workplace. These units form the basis of assessment credentials for those delivering vocational qualifications and training. The units applicable are:

- A1 Assess candidates using a range of methods
- A2 Assess candidates' performance through observation
- V1 Conduct internal quality assurance of the assessment process
- V2 Conduct external quality assurance of the assessment process.

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the learning and development standards, which are produced and maintained by ENTO, contain the assessor and verifier standards that training organisations are expected to obtain and adhere to. Training organisations are also required to work within the NVQ Code of Practice (2006) and any awarding organisation requirements with regard to centre approval and quality assurance training offered by the awarding organisations. The code of practice specifies the requirements for centres, and notes that assessors must 'have the occupational expertise specified in the relevant assessment strategy before commencing their role, and maintain the currency of this expertise for the duration of their role' (p.13). These requirements are in turn reflected in awarding body organisation documentation, such as City & Guilds⁴² which notes that 'assessors will therefore need to have occupational expertise in the competences/syllabus areas to be assessed'.

Scotland is similar to the rest of the UK. In Scotland, assessors and verifiers must have appropriate subject/occupational and assessment expertise. Subject/occupational expertise can be either through qualifications or experience, and the SQA qualification managers and verification section handles these decisions. SQA has specific requirements for assessment expertise. It recognises the teaching qualification in further education or secondary education (approved by the Scottish parliament and the

⁴¹ Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/operate.html#conditions.

⁴² City & Guilds, 2008, p.9.

General Teaching Council) as appropriate qualifications for provision with the exception of SVQs. These assessors and verifiers are required to hold the assessor and verifier units, the occupational standards of ENTO.

Front-end processes—accreditation

The accreditation processes of educational programs in the various nations was not a focus for this research report, however for a number of nations it is the cornerstone to their quality assurance processes or is intrinsically linked with registration processes. Following is a brief overview of information gleaned during the research.

For Australia training programs are nationally recognised in two ways:

- training package endorsement processes⁴³
- course accreditation processes.

The training package development and endorsement process is a national approach to qualification recognition whereas the course accreditation process (for qualification not addressed by the training package approach) is managed by the states and territories. For course accreditation, the roles and responsibilities, the process and quality assurance of the program documentation is managed under the AQTF 2007. The relevant documents include:

- AQTF 2007 Standards for state and territory course accrediting bodies
- AQTF 2007 Standards for accredited courses
- AQTF 2007 User's guide to standards for accredited courses
- AQTF 2007 Template for course documentation for accreditation.

In New Zealand, training organisations wishing to receive government funding or enrol international students in a course must have that course quality assured, resulting in approval of the course and accreditation to deliver that course. Criteria have been developed and apply to all training organisations for all types of courses. In addition, the resulting qualifications must also meet the qualification definition for the particular qualification type, for example certificate or diploma, as part of the register. Information about the process and documentation requirements can be found at www.nzqa.govt.nz/for-providers/aaa/applications/courses/index.html.

In addition, NQF accreditation certifies education organisations to assess NQF units or achievement standards and award credits for them. An appropriate combination of credits can result in the award of a national qualification. NQF accreditation is carried out by reference to generic and industry specific criteria set out in an accreditation and moderation action plan. Information about the process and documentation requirements can be found at www.nzqa.govt.nz/for-providers/aaa/applications/nqf/index.html.

In Singapore, in a process not dissimilar to training package development, the WDA collaborates with key industry players to develop the relevant qualification titles and progression pathways based on industry and occupational needs. For each industry, an industry skills and training council is set up to drive the development and validation of skills standards, assessment strategies and training curriculum. Each council is represented by key industry partners, including employers, industry associations, training organisations and unions. These councils draw up:

- an industry competency map, which captures the type of skills needed in the industry. They are classified into employability skills, occupational skills and knowledge, and industry skills and knowledge

⁴³ A training package is a set of nationally endorsed standards and qualifications used to recognise and assess the skills and knowledge people need to perform effectively in the workplace. Training packages are developed by industry through national industry skills councils or by enterprises to meet the identified training needs of specific industries or industry sectors.

- competency standards and curriculum—the competency standards list the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to perform a job task and describe the acceptable levels of performance. The resulting curriculum guides the design of the training programs and assessment plans
- qualifications that reflect the skills acquired and lay the foundation for career-based training, upgrading pathways and skills recognition. The skills standards and training modules are organised into seven levels of nationally recognised qualifications ranging from certificate to graduate diploma.⁴⁴

In Ontario, Canada, the public sector appears to have two processes for course approval:

- For programs where employment is predicated on graduating from an accredited program, the actual accreditation of programs is carried out by other external/professional bodies closely related to the field of study.
- The Ontario College Quality Assurance Service provides a validation service of programs through the Ontario College Credentials Validation Service (CVS). The CVS is consistent with the Minister of Training, Colleges and University's Binding Policy Directive, Framework for Programs of Instruction.⁴⁵ This service, along with the internal approval of programs by the local college board of governors, makes up a component of the self-regulatory mechanism for the college system. As part of the process, submissions need to demonstrate program outcomes through a vocational learning outcomes map and essential employability skills map, program description and program curriculum. If approved, the program will be given an approved program sequence number. Modifications to titles and content are also addressed through this process.

In the private career colleges sector in Ontario, a program standard applies to all similar programs of instruction offered by private career colleges across the province. Program standards are aligned to the Ontario Qualifications Framework and outline the essential skills and knowledge that a student must reliably demonstrate to graduate from the program. A program standard is developed through a broad consultation process involving a range of stakeholders with a direct interest in the program area, including employers, professional associations, universities, secondary schools, and program graduates working in the field, in addition to students, faculty, and administrators at the colleges themselves. It represents a consensus of participating stakeholders on the essential learning that all program graduates should have achieved.

However, as there is no program standard that has been released for private career colleges, the ministry rely on third party assessors to assess programs and private career college institutions. The institutions have to show that the knowledge and skills provided in their programs meet the expectations of the ministry and enable students to meet the entry level requirements for employment.

In the UK, course approval is intrinsically linked to awarding body approval. As previous mentioned the requirements for awarding bodies are documented in *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (2004) found at www.ofqual.gov.uk/487.aspx, and is to be read in conjunction with the NVQ Code of Practice (revised 2006) found at www.ofqual.gov.uk/files/qca-06-2888_nvq_code_of_practice_r06.pdf.

The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2004) outlines key criteria:

- proposal and rationale
- content of qualifications (including title, structure, subject matter)
- assessment (including design, application of assessment methods)

⁴⁴ Singapore Workforce Skills Qualifications at <http://wsq.wda.gov.sg/AboutWSQ/Process/>

⁴⁵ Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities at <http://innovation.dcuoit.ca/abc/Framework%20for%20Programs.pdf>

- determination and reporting of results (including result determination, aggregation and grading).

For Scotland, the SQA sets and revises qualifications. Its qualifications development strategy (2006) describes the various stages in developing and maintaining qualifications.⁴⁶ As a regulator, the SQA Accreditation is responsible for approving awarding bodies, and these bodies must meet the awarding body criteria (2007)—in this instance the specific criteria is Statement of Excellence 4—Qualification

⁴⁶ SQA, 2006, at www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/QualificationsDevelopmentStrategy2006.pdf

Development and Design. This criterion has four specific goals:

- The qualification and associated structure has been designed to ensure it is appropriate and meets the needs of the occupational sector.
- The awarding body has designed an assessment methodology that is fit for purpose.
- The awarding body submits timely and detailed qualification submissions.
- The awarding body's assessment methods produce results that are authentic, reliable and consistent.

Finally, in Germany the responsibility for the quality of professions as ruled in training regulations is under the influence of trade unions and employer associations which are included in the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung). In addition, the chambers control quality in the vocational training system in terms of examination results. For those accrediting bodies in VET (such as in LQW, ISO 9000ff. or EFQM), very strict and specific standards are applied dependent on the quality model.

Ongoing monitoring

Audit

In all instances audit was the strategy for monitoring ongoing compliance whether it be directly with the regulating body or through a third party. Nearly all nations included some form of risk rating to minimise the audit burden, however there are variations in methodology.

In Australia, audit processes and functions are outlined in:

- AQTF 2007 Standards for state and territory registering bodies
- AQTF 2007 National guideline for risk management
- AQTF 2007 National guideline for audit moderation
- AQTF 2007 National guideline for managing non-compliance
- AQTF 2007 National guideline for industry regulator engagement
- AQTF 2007 National guideline for responding to complaints about vocational education and training quality
- AQTF2007 National guideline for conducting audits of the interstate operations of a registered training organisation
- AQTF 2007 Audit handbook.

It is the audit handbook which describes the process for audit, and the national guidelines for risk management which outline the approach to risk rating and management of training organisations. The essential standards for registration form the basis of the audit. These standards have moved away from a purely compliance and analytical set of standards (as in previous iterations) to a more holistic approach that is continuous improvement focused. However, it is a continuous improvement approach played out within a regulatory framework and as such there are tensions with these two different demands on the audit function.

In Ontario, the public colleges are audited on a five-year cycle. The quality academic audit process is based on a self-study by the college and a site visit by an audit panel made up of professionals within the sector. The audit process aims to emphasise the continual improvement based on self-reflection rather than simply compliance the standards. The self-study report is to be no more than 20 pages, and the audit visit takes two days. The report categorises the college's quality assurance processes as falling within one of five categories of maturity⁴⁷ and also categorises the findings into

⁴⁷ The five categories of maturity are:

- Minimal effort—means there are no organised quality assurance and improvement processes in place within the college.
- Reactive effort—means the college responds to problems mostly with ad hoc methods. The quality assurance and improvement criteria and processes receive little systematic attention.

recommendations, commendations and affirmations. The executive summary is posted on the Ontario College Quality Assurance Service website, and follow-up reports on progress against the recommendations are also posted with it. The audit methodology is similar to that used by Australian Universities Quality Agency.

In terms of the private sector in Ontario, the audit methodology is less clear, but compliance against the Private Career Colleges Act and regulations are the basis for audit. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities undertakes site visits as part of the registration process to ensure that facilities meet requirements. Ongoing monitoring through audit and site visits in the past was said to be undertaken annually,⁴⁸ but is now taken on a risk management basis. Risk factors were identified as:

- newly registered private career colleges (PCCs)
- PCCs that submitted problematic audited financial statements for the Ontario Student Assistance Program
- PCCs with a large international student population
- PCCs providing truck driving/heavy equipment training
- PCCs offering dental hygiene programs
- PCCs with a high volume of student complaints
- PCCs that have a history of non-compliance.

These have now been enhanced into the next iteration of the risk framework which includes the following indicators:

- illegal operators (historical and known)
- financial viability
- chronic violators
- targeted programs
- renewal issues
- international students
- advertising issues
- information from other regulatory/government bodies.

In New Zealand, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) monitors the performance of tertiary education organisations through regular quality audits. The audit evaluates the organisation's performance in relation to a quality standard. The standard that applies depends on the type of education organisation.

The audit process takes 12 to 16 weeks and includes the following steps:

- organisation submits documents for desk audit, including quality management system documentation, self evaluation report and provider update form
- NZQA visits site
- tertiary education organisation is provided with draft report for confirmation of factual accuracy
- NZQA sends final report and possible request for action plan
- tertiary education organisation sends action plan

-
- Formal effort—means that individual initiatives and experimentations with improvements may be seen in and around the college, and these are motivated explicitly by the key quality criteria.
 - Organised effort—means that quality process initiatives begin to be planned and tracked, work methods are systematically rooted in the quality criteria, and the college has begun to develop performance metrics and norms.
 - Mature effort—means quality processes have been embedded in the college's culture, continuous improvement is a way of life, and organisational learning about and commitment to quality assurance and improvement is fully established (Ontario College Quality Assurance Service, 2008, p.21).

⁴⁸ The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2005, p.60.

- NZQA notifies and publishes outcome.

If there is a dispute over the accuracy of the report or the process, the organisation may apply for an independent review of factual accuracy. The reviewer will review the audit file and make a recommendation.

Post audit, if the standard is not met, an action plan is required to address the findings. Depending on the seriousness of the requirements not met, the auditor may:

- accept the action plan and check its implementation at the next audit
- request evidence of implementation of the action plan over an agreed time period after the audit is closed. This could involve an onsite visit to verify the evidence, and is treated as an audit with specific focus.

Summary reports are published on the organisation's page on the NZQA website. A detailed report is also prepared, but is for the organisation concerned and NZQA.

Once the audit cycle decision is made, the organisation is notified by letter of the month and year of the next audit. The letter includes a record of the basis for the decision. If the organisation disagrees with the decision, it can apply for a formal review of the audit cycle.

Managing audits is based on a risk management approach. Audit cycle decisions are made against a set of published audit cycle criteria to ensure consistency.⁴⁹ The length of cycle could be less than a year, one year, two years or three years.

However, New Zealand is moving away from the audit model which focuses on compliance with the relevant standard, and taking a review approach to monitoring and continuous improvement. This new model is due for implementation in late 2009 and is based on the premise that the provider is responsible for their own quality assurance. The periodic external evaluation will focus on how the provider has conducted their self-evaluation and how they are ensuring their own compliance to the standards. The evaluation approach will be focused on outcomes and key contributing processes.⁵⁰

In Singapore, the WDA's approach to continuous improvement review is documented in the Singapore Workforce Skills Qualifications (WSQ) system and National Skills Recognition System (NSRS) *Guide to continuous improvement review* (2009). The guide notes that all training organisations are subject to audit during their registration period and that the focus is on:

- internal quality assurance system
- adult educator management system
- outcome evaluation system
- WSQ/NSRS related administrative system
- viability of organisation
- being free from breach of terms and conditions.

Emphasis is placed on training organisations to demonstrate that they practice continuous improvement in ongoing delivery of training and assessment under WSQ and NSRS. Training organisations are to undertake a self-assessment and develop an action plan for gaps identified. This self-assessment and plan is submitted and provides the focus for the site visit which takes about half a day. If further action is required, then training organisations may need to submit an additional action plan. Training organisations are risk rated from A to E according to the strength of the quality management system and level of implementation by staff.

⁴⁹ NZQA at www.nzqa.govt.nz

⁵⁰ NZQA, 2008, p.5.

In England, Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education) inspections of training organisations are undertaken using the Common Inspection Framework, which focuses on the experience of the individual learner, applies to all types of provider and can be used to compare different providers' services. The framework requires an overall judgement on how effectively and efficiently the provision meets learners' needs, and how can it be improved further.

The Ofsted *Handbook for inspecting colleges* (2008)⁵¹ provides significant detail regarding the inspection process. The handbook notes that training organisations will be audited approximately once in four years and that organisations will be given a ranking on a five point scale (outstanding, very good, good, satisfactory and inadequate). This rating, inspection history and other data (such as learners' achievements, and information from annual monitoring activities and any Ofsted survey visits) will inform the level of scrutiny in terms of frequency and duration of audit and size of audit teams. The rating also affects the number of subject areas to be audited. The process includes:

- Lead auditor preparing a briefing document on the organisation (sourced from college performance report, the previous inspection report, reports from annual assessment or monitoring activities, local Learning and Skills Councils reports and the college's self-assessment report). It also includes a brief commentary on the college's characteristics and the context in which it works, an evaluative commentary on the pre-inspection evidence, and preliminary hypotheses about the college, which are to be tested during the inspection. The report is also provided to the organisation.
- Planning meeting with the organisation.
- Provision of information prior to site visit.
- Provision of information at site visit (organised against the key questions in the Common Inspection Framework).
- Provision of a self- assessment report undertaken by the organisation to be tested at the site visit. The onus is placed on the college to demonstrate the validity of the judgements in this report.
- Inspection visit encompasses a review of the key questions:
 - college effectiveness
 - capacity to improve
 - achievements and standards
 - the quality of provision
 - leadership and management with a contributory grade for equality of opportunity.
- Grades are allocated to the key questions and a report provided within about seven working days.
- Action plan is developed by the organisation.

Monitoring activities are also conducted annually and could include desk audits and monitoring visits depending on the risk rating applied. Monitoring visit reports include progress judgements made against each theme that is inspected (grading according to no discernible progress, insufficient progress, reasonable progress, significant progress).

In England, Ofqual (the Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator) undertakes monitoring of awarding organisations bodies:

- focusing on systems and procedures against the regulatory criteria
- carrying out a risk-based program to monitor qualifications across organisations/awarding bodies (to ensure that standards are maintained and qualifications are fit for purpose).

The website includes qualification reports, and awarding body reports, as well as awarding body responses.

⁵¹ Ofsted, 2008 at www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Forms-and-guidance/Browse-all-by/Other/General/Handbook-for-inspecting-colleges

The *Regulatory monitoring and reporting* booklet (2007) addresses monitoring the performance of awarding bodies and evaluating their qualifications. The approach noted is that greater emphasis is put on the awarding bodies' quality assurance arrangements, and the regulatory authority monitoring and evaluating activities will be based on a risk assessment. Risk criteria are noted as:

- a) the extent of awarding body activity—numbers and types of qualifications offered, subjects/sectors of operation, licence to practice qualifications and certificates awarded
- b) the robustness of the awarding body's processes and procedures as identified through the accreditation system, awarding body self-assessment and previous monitoring
- c) significant changes in levels of awarding body activity, both overall and within specific qualifications
- d) the need to ensure consistency and standards within and across qualifications, particularly when new qualifications or specifications are introduced
- e) the awarding body's compliance with actions specified as a result of previous monitoring activity and through self-assessment
- f) the number of substantiated complaints received from the public about an awarding body, a qualification, a subject and/or a specification
- g) the outcomes of compliance investigations into malpractice
- h) issues for monitoring raised at the point of accreditation or through other regulatory activity
- i) concerns based on relevant and objective information raised by inspection bodies.

Monitoring activities include:

- desk audit
- awarding body visits
- audits
- additional activities, such as comparability studies, monitoring on themes
- awarding bodies are to conduct an annual self assessment and this is submitted to Ofqual.

Awarding bodies will be provided with a report on any monitoring activities, and will be required to provide an action plan.

In Scotland, the SQA Accreditation, like other regulators across the UK, has introduced self assessment into the quality assurance function for awarding bodies. It is argued that self assessment will:

- reduce the monitoring burden on SQA Accreditation auditors and the awarding body
- limit annual visits
- allow awarding bodies the opportunity to formally assess their own systems, procedures and come up with their own ideas for improvement and for ways to best meet the set awarding body criteria (2007).

Audits are generally carried out annually, depending on several factors including:

- length of time an awarding body has been approved
- perceived risks associated with an awarding body
- size of awarding body
- number of approved qualifications offered by an awarding body
- outcomes of an awarding body's centre monitoring visits.

SQA Accreditation will risk rate all of its approved awarding bodies. The risk rating is on a five-point scale from very low to very high. A full explanation of each category can be found at www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/31455.84.1406.html.

Monitoring activities include:

- scoped audit
- full audit
- data systems audit.

Finally, for Germany the process is less clear given that training organisations can use various forms of quality assurance instruments.

Other approaches

A review of each nation's approach to ongoing monitoring also elicited additional approaches.

The AQTF 2007 Essential Standards for Registration has included a set of quality indicators which have a focus on continuous improvement. It is proposed that the quality indicators will provide data for training organisations to identify areas for improvement in providing training and assessment services. This data is to be also used by registering bodies as part of their monitoring function and will inform the organisation's risk profile to assist in the scheduling and scope of audits. The three quality indicators include:

- employer satisfaction (competency development, and training and assessment quality)
- learner satisfaction (learner engagement and competency development)
- competency completion rate.

In Ontario, the public training organisations (colleges of applied arts and technology) annually submit data on:

- graduate employment
- graduate satisfaction
- employer satisfaction
- student satisfaction
- graduation rate.

The private training sector colleges are also required to provide data on student satisfaction, graduation rate and employer satisfaction, however these have not yet been implemented.

In New Zealand, training organisations assessing against unit standards must carry out internal moderation and engage with external moderation. Training organisations that are assessing learners using unit standards are moderated by NZQA or by industry training organisations (ITOs) which are responsible for industry unit standards. The actual process of moderation differs between ITOs and NZQA. However, all involve checking assessment tasks and assessor judgements against the particular unit standard. NZQA carries out the moderation process post-assessment. Standards are grouped into 'moderation systems' and NZQA selects standards for moderation, based on a three-year cycle. For each moderation system chosen for moderation, 10 per cent of the standards are selected.

In the UK, the use of internal and external verification processes is a major strategy for supporting the integrity and consistency of the occupational standards in the award. The National Vocational Qualifications Code of Practice (2006) specifies that centres must undertake internal verification processes. Centres must appoint internal verifiers who are responsible for implementation and have the required competencies. The code also specifies that the awarding body must monitor these internal processes, and include external verifier visits to centres as an integral part of their quality assurance strategy. It advises that the minimum frequency of external verification visits to centres is usually two a year (a total of two days a year) depending on the centre's performance and taking account of:

- number of assessment sites
- number and throughput of candidates
- number and turnover of assessors
- number and turnover of internal verifiers.

In Scotland, the emphasis on internal and external verification is similar. The Awarding Body Criteria (2007) requires:

- The awarding body ensures its approved centres have access to appropriately qualified personnel for the range of qualifications they are approved to deliver (this includes internal verifiers).
- The awarding body's systems and procedures for the appointment, training, registration, deployment and monitoring of external verifiers are effective and robust.
- The awarding body has systems and procedures for monitoring the quality and consistency of assessment provided at any location. These systems must ensure that assessment is uniformly systematic, valid and to the defined standard.

Information related to verification is documented in the *Verification visits: a guide for colleges, employers and training providers* (2007).

Although other approaches related to monitoring training organisations may be in place in the above nations and also other nations, they were not explicitly stated on the public website or provided by in-country contacts.

Managing non-compliance

How each nation addresses issues arising with non-compliant providers varies, as does the level of information provided to the consumer in this regard.

In New Zealand it is possible to view provider summary audit reports within the NZQA website at the profile of each provider. These are summaries and are included only if the private provider approves. The reports provide information pertaining to the background of the provider, scope of audit, and compliance level against QA Standard One. The provider profile also includes the audit cycle that the provider is on.

In Ontario, Canada, the Ontario College Quality Assurance Service and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities publish information on providers. The Ontario College Quality Assurance Service provides in relation to public providers very brief executive summary reports that include a conclusion of the findings, determination of compliance against their five criterion and, like the Australian Universities Quality Agency, reports of Australian self-accrediting higher education providers, includes commendations, affirmations and recommendations.

The determination against the five criterion are placed simplistically in a table, such as in the following example.

Table 3: Sample report

Criterion	Met	Partially met	Not met
1	X		
2	X		
3	X		
4	X		
5		X	

The reasons for any criteria not being met or partially met are explained. Follow-up reports are also posted on the website.

Again in Ontario, in relation to the ministry and private career colleges, the ministry publishes the supervisor's notices and orders on its website, along with Ontario Superior Court injunctions, and Licence Appeal Tribunal decisions and minutes, at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/notices.html. These are very explicit statements and reflect that noted non-compliances are breaches of the Private Career Colleges Act rather than non-compliance against standards or criterion, as is the case of New

Zealand, Australia and public colleges in Ontario. A key strategy for managing providers is the disclosure of information on the website, however information is only published after all appeal proceedings have concluded.

In Germany, providers can make public their compliance reports from their quality assurance agency if they wish, especially if it promotes their products and services.

In Singapore, the audit reports of providers are not made public, however⁵² there has been some discussion in regard to making the point rating (determined as a risk rating) public.

The independent auditor body Ofsted undertakes inspections of providers in England, and equivalent inspection bodies operate in Wales and Northern Ireland. Ofsted publishes its reports for all monitoring and site visits. Reports are text based and can be accessed at www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxcare_providers/list.

In England, Ofqual monitors awarding organisations bodies and:

- focuses on systems and procedures against the regulatory criteria
- carries out a risk-based program to monitor qualifications across organisations/awarding bodies to ensure that standards are maintained and qualifications are fit for purpose.

The website includes qualification reports and reports of awarding bodies, as well as the awarding body response, at www.ofqual.gov.uk/649.aspx. Reports address the key areas of corporate governance, resources and expertise, quality assurance and control of independent assessment, determination and reporting of results, and registration.

The SQA in Scotland undertakes audits of awarding bodies and centres which have been made public since July 2008. The SQA makes public:

- individual awarding body reports and their performance in meeting the requirements of SQA Accreditation's awarding body criteria (2007)
- centre monitoring visit reports which are undertaken as part of the review into awarding bodies' performance against the requirements of SQA Accreditation's awarding body criteria (2007).⁵³

These reports are text based and note non-compliances and observations. The website also includes the awarding body's response to the audit.

The AQTF 2007 does not promulgate whether regulators can or should provide consumer protection information to clients. At this stage there is no strategy in place at a national level to inform clients as to a provider's level of compliance to the standards, or whether sanctions (if they are possible under each state/territory legislation) are or have been in place. A search of the National Training Information Service (NTIS) website can inform clients of the status of provider, but only if the training organisation's name is known. This information can be found in the archive section in relation to providers that have discontinued but also include when a suspension is in place.

A function of notifications against providers does exist with providers registered with the Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS). The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations has the capacity to note conditions placed on the provider on the provider information pages within the CRICOS register. Suspended or cancelled providers cannot be accessed by the public on the CRICOS website. In the case of CRICOS providers, compliance is against the Education Services for Overseas Students Act or its National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2007, and therefore the legislative status is similar to that of Ontario's private providers.

⁵² Discussions with Tracy Lee, WDA.

⁵³ Scottish Qualifications Authority at www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/16767.84.1403.html

As this report was being prepared, the Victorian Registration and Qualification Authority had included on its website at www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/vet/cancel.htm a list of providers that have been cancelled or that are currently suspended (both in the AQTF and the CRICOS categories) and a form of consumer advice.

A dilemma associated with the AQTF 2007 is that it has a strong continuous improvement and outcomes focus, but a decision at audit needs to be made of compliance (that is, compliant or not compliant) against each element. This is especially so for a number of elements that do not sit well with the outcomes approach of Standard 1.3 (training and assessment materials, trainers/assessors, facilities and equipment), Standard 1.4 (trainer/assessors meet the requirements of the NQC) and Standard 1.5 (assessment). This dilemma reflects the tension between a quality management system based on continuous improvement but established within a regulatory framework. At the end of the day, the regulating bodies need to know the level of compliance of the provider and apply appropriate actions in relation to the provider, outlined in the AQTF 2007 National guideline for managing non-compliance and relation to each authority's relevant legislation.

Transnational application

Transnational education is driven by both demand factors (for example, students seeking an international education experience and international qualifications) and supply factors (such as the search for new markets by providers) and is becoming increasingly complex. The move towards borderless education has received significant attention in Australia and internationally, including the OECD. The OECD has researched the 'multiplicity of activities and their implications for the quality and integrity of education as programs and providers move beyond the intellectual, cultural, legislative and economic umbrellas of their home country.'⁵⁴

In Australia, it is accepted that the AQTF 2007 applies to offshore registration, accreditation, and training and assessment services related to any qualification that is under the AQF, regardless of whether it is conducted onshore or offshore. The legislative base for this assumption is unclear and the standards do not explicitly state this. However, there are no territorial boundaries stated within the standards and the AQTF 2007 applies to all training and assessment of qualifications under the remit of the AQF.

The processes employed by regulatory bodies across Australian states and territories differ in regards to monitoring this form of training and assessment provision. For example, the Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology in South Australia requires registered training organisations to provide information each year on their operations for the previous 12 months to help plan and schedule audits. Regardless of the information gained, the logistics of offshore audits has a financial burden for the authorities and are not undertaken as a matter of course.

Other nations have addressed the complex issue of cross border or transnational education in a range of ways. For some, cross border education is not explicitly addressed in formal documents, where as for others specific guidelines apply.

For New Zealand, the gazetted criteria for course approval and accreditation⁵⁵ and the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications Policy⁵⁶ apply in this situation. The first document has been developed to assist organisations designing courses that require course approval and accreditation by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. The second document outlines the parameters of NQF qualifications including the registration criteria for qualifications on the register.

⁵⁴ Cooper L, Bateman A Moran L & Eccles C, 2005, p.iv.

⁵⁵ NZQA, 2003, at www.nzqa.govt.nz

⁵⁶ NZQA, 2007, at www.kiwiquals.govt.nz/publications/docs/theregister-booklet.pdf

In Germany, the initial training system is bound to federal or state law, so it is unlikely that organisations will implement training according to that law in a different country. However, for the further education system other rules apply. Here training organisations offer their courses to customers outside of Germany. Concerning the quality assurance approaches there are three different options:

- the ISO 9000ff standards are internationally standardised norms
- the European Foundation for Quality Management standards apply for Europe
- there are many quality assurance approaches that are specifically made for certain regions, certain providers or for national providers, like the LQW. In the third case the transnational application is in most cases not given.

In the UK, for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, international settings quality assurance is controlled by and at the discretion of the awarding organisation and the local ‘partner’. The requirements of the awarding body in this regard are detailed in *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (2004), and further expanded in the NVQ Code of Practice (2006):

- Awarding bodies must apply the same level of quality assurance requirements to centres operating outside England, Wales or Northern Ireland as to those within this territory.
- The regulatory authorities reserve the right to take appropriate action if practices in approved centres outside of their territory could bring the education and training system of England, Wales and Northern Ireland into disrepute (NVQ Code of Practice, 2006, p.9).

For Scotland, the quality assurance framework is applied to all SQA qualifications, and the *Guidance for UK-based centres offering qualifications overseas*⁵⁷ applies to offshore provision. This guide provides advice to centres but also explicitly states the quality assurance arrangements. It notes that:

- SQA will continue to have a direct quality assurance relationship with SQA approved centres overseas.
- This policy does not preclude overseas sites becoming SQA approved centres in their own right. In this respect, SQA approved centres in Scotland can provide training and consultancy services to support overseas sites through the process of becoming directly-approved SQA centre.
- Approval will depend on these sites meeting SQA’s existing approval criteria.
- The cost for all quality assurance of centres and/or sites overseas will be met by the approved centre. It is not the intention of the SQA to visit every site overseas, but to use a sampling strategy based on a rigorous assessment of risk to SQA’s reputation overseas.
- The sampling strategy will be developed on the basis of the data provided by centres on their overseas assessment activities. This data will be gathered twice a year—in April and October. Failure to provide accurate data may result in a review of the centre’s existing quality assurance arrangements with SQA.

In Ontario, the public providers are expected to have policies, practices, and procedures in place that cover all programs offered by the institution regardless of where this occurs. The *Program quality assurance process audit orientation manual* (2007)⁵⁸ addresses the off site delivery of programs in criterion 3: methods of program delivery and student evaluation are consistent with the program learning outcomes. It specifically states:

Program delivery, including that which takes place off-site, is consistent with the nature of the program, the learning outcomes, and the needs of the students (p.13).

⁵⁷SQA, 2005, at www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/Guidance_for_UK-based_centres_on_providing_SQA_qualifications_overseas_WEB.pdf

⁵⁸ Ontario College Quality Assurance Service, 2008, at www.ocqas.org/pdf/PQAPA%20Manual%20-%20Revised%20Novembe%2008.pdf

For private providers in Ontario, there does not appear to be any explicit requirements in regards to cross border education provision outside Ontario.

Finally, for Singapore, the WDA does not permit offshore provision. To be able to issue a statement or qualification under the WSQ, assessment needs to be undertaken in Singapore.

Conclusion

As can be seen, the nations reviewed have used various approaches to quality assurance of training organisations. Although the specifics of each of these approaches may vary there are also similarities. For example, each had a gate keeping process in terms of registration, used audit as a form of monitoring, and reported findings. The approaches can be summarised in the following table.

Table 4: Key features

Nation	Unitary authority	Explicit standards for authorities	Basis of audit/review	Audit	Public reports	Comments	Transnational application
Australia	No. Federal and state/territory authorities (however, QA functions undertaken at each state/territory level)	Yes	Standards	Yes (continuous improvement focus)	No	Federation has agreed to registration and accreditation processes. All key documents in the public domain	Yes
Germany	No (multiple QA parties)		Standards	Yes (continuous improvement focus)	No	Chambers control exams (practical and theoretical)	Yes
New Zealand	Yes	Yes	Standards	Yes (strong continuous improvement focus)	Yes. Audit cycle (indicator of level of risk) and summary report	National moderation process of NZQA units	Yes
Ontario, Canada	No (public sector devolved to colleges Ontario)		Standards (public) Legislation (private)	Yes (compliance [private] and continuous improvement [public] focus)	Yes (format and focus vary between public and private sector)	AUQA type audit model (public sector) Explicit trainer/assessor qualifications and experience (private sector)	Not stated (private) Yes (public)
Singapore	No (two authorities)		Standards	Yes (continuous improvement focus)	No	Audit findings are ranked on a seven point scale to identify level of risk	Not permitted
UK	No (separation of registration from audit function)	Yes (as it applies to awarding bodies)	Standards	Yes (continuous improvement focus)	Yes	Focus on assessment as a component of QA Internal and external verification process Assessor and verifier qualifications	Yes

Implications

A review of the various nations' quality assurance models highlights a range of strategies that are different to that employed by the AQTF in Australia. In many respects, these strategies are good practice examples, however it must be remembered that any quality assurance strategies implemented in other nations reflect the context within which they are employed and may not be suitable for implementation within an Australian VET context.

Most nations' quality assurance systems emphasised continuous improvement as a key element of their quality assurance approach and to varying degrees emphasised the responsibility of the training organisation in managing their own continuous improvement processes. New Zealand for example, is currently moving away from an audit strategy and more towards a review approach. The current system of quality audit is a compliance focused model, but as the sector has matured, there is an increased focus on improvement of outcomes. It is anticipated that each external evaluation will conclude with two publicly available statements of confidence. One statement is about a training organisation's ability to undertake self-evaluation and the other is about its educational performance. Both the statements of confidence and the resulting evaluation report will be published. This change of focus appears to go further than what the AQTF 2007 has attempted to achieve.

Predominant across the audit methodologies reviewed were some key variances to that of the AQTF 2007. Of interest is the planning process of audits, which included the training organisations providing a range of information to the regulator. This information was often in the form of a self-assessment/evaluation. This was particularly the case with New Zealand and the UK, including Scotland. In Ontario, the public college process follows an Australian Universities Quality Agency model, but the portfolio submitted is substantially smaller than that received by Australia's agency. Currently, the audit process described in AQTF 2007 does not include a provider submission before the site audit, however such a change may put further emphasis on the responsibility of the training organisation in their own quality assurance processes.

The AQTF 2007 does not include a strategy for the regulators to make audit findings and outcomes public. However, in Ontario the public colleges have a summary report lodged on the Ontario College Quality Assurance Service website. In addition, the private career colleges that have had enforcement measures lodged against them by the supervisor have these notices loaded onto the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities website. The difference between these two reporting mechanisms however is quite disparate.

Of interest is the model used by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. Each training organisation's profile page on the authority's website includes a publicly available summary report as well as the audit cycle for organisations, determined by their risk rating. The rating scale is explained on the authority's website.

A dilemma facing all regulators is how much direction and prescriptive information is provided to training organisations or how much reliance is to be placed on the training organisation's own quality assurance processes to ensure quality of training and assessment outcomes. Certainly the variety of documentation and depth of information varied across the nations reviewed. In some respects this also reflected the variations in quality assurance approaches.

In some nations, the advice provided by the relevant authority is quite prescriptive, such as that provided to Ontario private career colleges. On the other hand in other nations, emphasis is placed on the defining standards for training organisations in regards to their quality management system and on implementation. Probably a rule of thumb is that the regulator provides information that is fit-for-purpose, in a format that is relevant to the user.

Another aspect of audit that was evident in this review was the level of independence of the audit process from that of the regulator and the registration of training organisations. Within the regulatory system in England, for example, the level of independence is high. In England, it is Ofqual that approves awarding body organisations who in turn approve centres. The audit of training centres is the responsibility of Ofsted, which also makes its reports public. This level of independence is not currently a strategy strongly evident in Australia, where the regulator holds the approval or registration function as well as the monitoring and audit functions. In some states, the legislation requires the audit to be independent from the audit decision such as in Victoria. The current newly formed national audit body, NARA, currently only functions as a delegate of the state and territory regulatory bodies and does not provide the level of independence that may be considered desirable. Whether a level of independence like that in England is something the Australian VET system could bear is a point of discussion.

The quality of assessment is seen as being one of the key processes for ensuring that the requirements of units of competency or standards are met. Strategies employed across the nations reviewed included:

- A strong internal and external verification process is evident across the UK. The process of external verification is a function of the awarding body and emphasis is placed on the training centres implementing a strong internal verification process.
- A moderation process is also in place in New Zealand in relation to New Zealand Qualifications Authority standards only. Training organisations are required to have an internal moderation function and the external moderation function is a centralised process.
- In the UK, the quality of assessors is at the forefront of quality assurance system. The qualifications and experience of both assessors and verifiers are included in key policy documents.
- Also in the UK, there is a focus on all awarding organisations being obliged to take part in formal training programs related to ensuring assessment reliability, and consistency of interpretation and application of the assessment requirements.

The AQTF 2007 requires that trainers and assessors have the relevant qualifications and currency as determined by the National Quality Council, however there is no strong educational strategy beyond that of the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment to ensure that assessors hold advanced knowledge and skills in competency-based assessment. The certificate IV is seen as the minimum requirement to meet the relevant standard, however there is no strong impetus for any training organisations to further develop or enhance assessment knowledge of their assessors.⁵⁹

Finally, the European Quality Assurance reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training provides a strong framework against which the AQTF 2007 could be evaluated.

We have stressed throughout the report the need to consider international approaches and innovations within their particular national contexts, and the need to factor in the Australian context when looking to copy or learn from these developments. The report also argues that the Australian VET system is relatively consolidated in its structure and separate from the schools and higher education sectors when compared with VET systems in most other countries. This and the strength of the federalist agreement on the Australian VET system have given it a high degree of consistency in its quality assurance systems.

A prevailing agenda through the processes of training reform and the establishment of national VET systems in Australia has been that of national consistency. The achievement of this agenda has been a significant contribution to quality assurance and the standing of Australian VET qualifications. Australia essentially has a single national process for course and qualifications accreditation, with a

⁵⁹ It is significant that none of the Australian states ventured to include VET/TAFE teachers in the registration and professional agencies that they have mostly established over the past decade. VET teacher regulation is essentially a qualifications and experience compliance system rather than a developmental system.

small degree of state supplementation, plus a single system of provider registration and auditing through the state agencies, with some recent supplementation through NARA.

There are clear advantages in these single systems. However, in comparison to the other countries two observations might be made:

- The comparative lack of a developmental and continuous improvement culture and procedures for providers and teachers and trainers improvement.
- The lack of diversity in agency and agency functions, where the state agencies can act as funding bodies, auditors and regulators.

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Glossary

ACE	Adult and community education
AMAP	Accreditation and moderation action plan
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
APS	approved program sequence
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
AQTF	Australian Quality Training Framework
AUQA	Australian Universities Quality Agency
BIBB	Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung
CBT	Competency based training
CQAF	Common quality assurance framework
CRICOS	Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students
CVS	Credentials Validation Service
CVT	Continuing vocational training
ECVET	European Credit System for VET
EFQM	European Foundation for Quality Management
ENTO	National Training Organisation for Employment
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
EU	European Union
ISC	Industry skills councils
ITO	Industry training organisations
IVT	Initial vocational training
LLL	Lifelong learning
LQW	Lernerorientierte Qualität in der Weiterbildung
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
NARA	National Audit and Registration Agency
NQC	National Quality Council
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSRS	National Skills Recognition System
NTIS	National Training Information Service
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Authority
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
QCF	Qualifications and curriculum framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
Ofqual	Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
OQF	Ontario Qualifications Framework
PCC	Private career college
PISA	Programme for School Assessment
PQAPA	Program quality assurance process audit
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
SVQ	Scottish vocational qualification
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
TVT	Technical vocational training
UK	United Kingdom
UKCES	United Kingdom Commission for Employment and Skills
TEO	Tertiary education organisations
VET	Vocational education and training
WDA	Workforce Development Agency
WSQ	Workforce Skills Qualifications System

Appendices

Appendix 1:

The European Quality Assurance Reference Framework: quality criteria and indicative descriptors

This annex provides common quality criteria and indicative descriptors to support Member States, as appropriate, when implementing the Framework.

Quality criteria	Indicative descriptors at system level	Indicative descriptors at VET provider level
<p><i>Planning reflects a strategic vision shared by the relevant stakeholders and includes explicit goals/objectives, actions and indicators.</i></p>	<p>Goals/objectives of VET are described for the medium and long-terms, and linked to European goals.</p> <p>The relevant stakeholders participate in setting VET goals and objectives at the different levels.</p> <p>Targets are established and monitored through specific indicators (success criteria).</p> <p>Mechanisms and procedures have been established to identify training needs.</p> <p>An information policy is devised to ensure optimum disclosure of quality results/outcomes subject to national/regional data protection requirements.</p> <p>Standards and guidelines for recognition, validation and certification of competences of individuals have been defined.</p>	<p>Ongoing consultation with relevant stakeholders takes place to identify specific local/individual needs.</p> <p>Responsibilities in quality management and development have been explicitly allocated.</p> <p>There is an early involvement of staff in planning, including with regard to quality development.</p> <p>Providers plan cooperative initiatives with other VET providers.</p> <p>The relevant stakeholders participate in the process of analysing local needs.</p> <p>Providers have an explicit and transparent learner charter and a quality system is in place.</p>
<p><i>Implementation plans are devised in consultation with stakeholders and include explicit principles.</i></p>	<p>Implementation plans are established in cooperation with social partners, VET providers and other relevant stakeholders at the different levels.</p> <p>Implementation plans include consideration of the resources required, the capacity of the users and the tools and guidelines needed for support.</p> <p>Guidelines and standards have been devised for implementation at different levels.</p> <p>Implementation plans include specific support towards the training of teachers and trainers.</p>	<p>European, national and regional VET policy goals/objectives are reflected in the local targets set by the VET providers.</p> <p>Explicit goals/objectives and targets are set and monitored.</p> <p>Resources are appropriately internally aligned/assigned with a view to achieving the targets set in the implementation plans.</p> <p>Relevant and inclusive partnerships are explicitly supported to implement the actions planned.</p>

Quality criteria	Indicative descriptors at system level	Indicative descriptors at VET provider level
	<p>VET providers' responsibilities in the implementation process are explicitly described and made transparent.</p> <p>A national and/or regional quality assurance framework is devised and includes guidelines and quality standards at provider level to promote continuous improvement and self-regulation.</p>	<p>The strategic plan for staff competence development specifies the need for training for teachers and trainers.</p> <p>Staff undertake regular training and develop cooperation with relevant external stakeholders to support capacity building and quality improvement, and to enhance performance.</p>
<p><i>Evaluation of outcomes and processes is regularly carried out and supported by measurement.</i></p>	<p>A methodology for evaluation is devised, covering internal and external evaluation.</p> <p>Stakeholder involvement in the monitoring and evaluation process is agreed and clearly described.</p> <p>The national/regional standards and processes for improving and assuring quality are relevant and proportionate to the needs of the sector.</p> <p>Systems are subject to self-evaluation and external review.</p> <p>Early warning systems are implemented.</p> <p>Performance indicators are applied.</p> <p>Relevant, regular and coherent data collection takes place to measure success and identify areas for improvement.</p> <p>Appropriate data collection methodologies are devised, for example, questionnaires and indicators/metrics.</p>	<p>Self-assessment/self-evaluation is periodically carried out under national and regional regulations/frameworks or at the initiative of VET providers.</p> <p>Evaluation and review covers processes and results/outcomes of education including the assessment of client satisfaction as well as staff performance.</p> <p>Evaluation and review includes adequate and effective mechanisms to involve internal and external stakeholders, such as managers, teachers, students, parents, employers, social partners and local authorities.</p> <p>Benchmarking and comparative indicators are used for mutual learning and performance improvement.</p>
<p><i>Review</i></p>	<p>Procedures, mechanisms and instruments for undertaking reviews are defined at all levels.</p> <p>Processes are continuously reviewed and action plans for change devised. Systems are constantly being developed.</p> <p>Benchmarking to support mutual learning between VET providers is encouraged and supported.</p>	<p>Procedures on feedback and review are part of a strategic learning process in the organisation.</p> <p>Results/outcomes of the evaluation process are discussed with relevant stakeholders and appropriate action plans are put in place.</p>

Quality criteria	Indicative descriptors at system level	Indicative descriptors at VET provider level
	<p>Information on the outcomes of evaluation is made publicly available.</p> <p>Learners' feedback on their learning environment and experience is gathered and used to inform further actions.</p> <p>Information on the outcomes of the review is widely and publicly available.</p>	

A reference set of quality indicators for VET

This annex provides a comprehensive set of indicators to support the evaluation, monitoring and quality improvement of VET systems and providers. The set of indicators will be further developed through European cooperation on a bilateral or multilateral basis, building on European data and national registers.

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Type of indicator</i>	<i>Policy rationale</i>	<i>Applicable to</i>
Overarching indicators for quality assurance			
No 1. Relevance of quality assurance systems for VET providers: a) share of providers applying internal quality assurance systems defined by law/at own initiative b) share of accredited VET providers.	<i>Context/input indicator</i>	Promote a quality improvement culture at VET-provider level. Increase the transparency of quality of training. Improve mutual trust on training provision.	IVT CV
No 2. Investment in training of teachers and trainers: a) share of teachers and trainers participating in further training b) amount of funds invested.	<i>Input/process indicator</i>	Promote ownership of teachers and trainers in the process of quality development in VET. Improve the responsiveness of VET to evolving demand of labour market. Increase individual learning capacity building. Improve learner's achievement.	IVT CVT
Indicators supporting quality objectives for VET policies			
No 3. Participation rate in VET programs: Number of participants in VET programs according to the type of program and the individual criteria.	<i>Input/process/output indicator</i>	Obtain basic information at system and provider levels on the attractiveness of VET. Target support to increase access to VET, including socially disadvantaged groups.	IVT38 CVT LLL (Lifelong learning): percentage of population admitted to formal VET programs.

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Type of indicator</i>	<i>Policy rationale</i>	<i>Applicable to</i>
Overarching indicators for quality assurance			
No 4. Completion rate in VET programs: Number of successfully completed/abandoned VET programs, according to the type of program and the individual criteria.	<i>Process/output/outcome indicator</i>	Obtain basic information on educational achievements and the quality of training processes. Calculate drop-out rates compared to participation rate. Support successful completion as one of the main objectives for quality in VET. Support adapted training provision, including for socially disadvantaged groups.	IVT CVT (when relevant)
No 5. Placement rate in VET programs a) destination of VET learners in six, 12 and 36 months after completion of training, according to the type of program and the individual criteria b) share of employed learners in six, 12 and 36 months after completion of training, according to the type of program and the individual criteria.	<i>Outcome indicator</i>	Support employability. Improve responsiveness of VET to the changing demands in the labour market. Support adapted training provision, including socially disadvantaged groups.	IVT (including information on destination of dropouts) CVT
No 6. Utilisation of acquired skills at the workplace: a) information on occupation obtained by individuals after completion of training, according to type of training and individual criteria b) satisfaction rate of individuals and	<i>Outcome indicator</i> (mix of qualitative and quantitative data)	Increase employability. Improve responsiveness of VET to changing demands in the labour market. Support adapted training provision, including socially disadvantaged groups.	IVT CVT

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Type of indicator</i>	<i>Policy rationale</i>	<i>Applicable to</i>
Overarching indicators for quality assurance			
employers with acquired skills/competences.			
Context information			
No 7. Unemployment rate: according to individual criteria	<i>Context indicator</i>	Background information for policy decision making at VET system level.	IVT CVT
No 8. Prevalence of vulnerable groups: a) percentage of participants in VET classified as disadvantaged groups (in a defined region or catchment area) according to age and gender b) success rate of disadvantaged groups according to age and gender.	<i>Context indicator</i>	Background information for policy decision making at VET system level. Support access to VET for socially disadvantaged groups. Support adapted training provision for socially disadvantaged groups.	IVT CVT
No 9. Mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market: a) information on mechanisms set up to identify changing demands at different levels b) evidence of their usefulness.	<i>Context/input indicator</i> (qualitative information)	Improve responsiveness of VET to changing demands in the labour market. Support employability.	IVT CVT
No 10. Schemes used to promote better access to VET: a) information on existing schemes at	<i>Process indicator</i> (qualitative information)	Promote access to VET, including socially disadvantaged groups. Support adapted training provision.	IVT CVT

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Type of indicator</i>	<i>Policy rationale</i>	<i>Applicable to</i>
Overarching indicators for quality assurance			
different levels b) evidence of their usefulness.			

Source: Commission of the European Communities (2008) *Recommendation of the European parliament and of the council on the establishment of a European quality assurance reference framework for vocational education and training*, Brussels, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0179:FIN:EN:PDF>

Appendix 2: Australia

Overview	<p>There are three overarching quality assurance strategies related to vocational education and training in Australia:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian Qualifications Framework, which specifies the outcomes of all nationally recognised qualification types achieved in post-compulsory education • training packages, which are a set of nationally endorsed standards and qualifications used to recognise and assess the skills and knowledge people need to perform effectively in the workplace • Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF). <p>The AQTF is the national set of standards established to quality assure nationally recognised training and assessment services for the clients of Australia’s VET system. The AQTF was established in June 2001. The AQTF 2007 is the current version of the framework.</p>
Scope	<p>The AQTF 2007 applies to registering and accrediting bodies and authorities, and also to registered training organisations.</p> <p>The AQTF 2007 provides a suite of interrelated regulatory and accreditation functions and includes associated documents as a basis for managing VET in the eight jurisdictions within Australia. All these documents can be accessed at www.training.com.au.</p>
Registering bodies	<p>State and territory registering bodies are responsible for registering training organisations and for quality assuring the training and assessment services they provide, in accordance with the AQTF 2007 and relevant legislation within each jurisdiction. The standards and supporting guidelines provide a national operating framework.</p> <p>www.training.com.au/portal/site/public/menuitem.cc082fa4fbe6abea3771b51017a62dbc/</p> <p>The AQTF also includes the following range of documents that underpin the regulatory functions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AQTF 2007 Standards for state and territory registering bodies (which include three standards, quality indicators [consistency, effectiveness, proportionality, responsiveness and transparency] and operational protocols) • AQTF 2007 National guideline for risk management • AQTF 2007 National guideline for audit moderation • AQTF 2007 National guideline for managing non-compliance • AQTF 2007 National guideline for industry regulator engagement • AQTF 2007 National guideline for responding to complaints about vocational education and training quality • AQTF2007 National guideline for conducting audits of the interstate operations of a registered training organisation • AQTF 2007 Audit handbook.
Accrediting bodies	<p>State and territory accrediting bodies are responsible for accreditation of courses not promulgated through the training package endorsement process. These bodies are to meet the requirements of AQTF 2007 Standards for state and territory course accrediting bodies.</p> <p>Support resources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AQTF 2007 Standards for accredited courses

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AQTF 2007 User's guide to standards for accredited courses • AQTF 2007 Template for course documentation for accreditation.
Training organisations	<p>Training organisations must meet the essential standards (AQTF 2007 Essential standards for registration) to deliver and assess nationally recognised training and issue nationally recognised qualifications. The essential standards include three standards, a requirement for registered training organisations to gather information on their performance against three quality indicators, and nine conditions of registration.</p> <p>The three essential standards have a strong focus on continuous improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systematic approach across provision of quality training and assessment. • Adherence to the principles of access and equity and maximising outcomes for clients. • Robust and responsive management systems. <p>These standards include minimum qualifications for trainers and assessors, quality of training and assessment, facilities and equipment, information provided to prospective students, support provided to students, records management and quality management systems.</p> <p>The three standards are accompanied by nine conditions of registration which are considered non-negotiable and relate to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • governance • interactions with registering bodies • compliance with legislation • insurance • financial management • certification and issuing of qualifications and statements of attainment • recognition of qualifications issued by other registered training organisations • accuracy and integrity of marketing • transition from superseded qualifications and courses. <p>Associated documents include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AQTF 2007 Essential standards for registration • AQTF 2007 Users' guide to the essential standards for registration. <p>www.training.com.au/portal/site/public/menuitem.1b0e231889399bea3771b51017a62dbc/</p>
Quality assurance approach	<p>In terms of registered training organisations, the quality assurance approach is based on an external audit model managed by the registering bodies.</p> <p>However, to streamline regulation and reduce the regulatory burden, the risks of the operations of registered training organisations are assessed as a process of registration and audit. Registered training organisations with a low risk rating and high-quality outcomes against the standards can expect less regulatory monitoring by registering bodies.</p> <p>Advice pertaining to this risk management approach can be found at: www.training.com.au/documents/AQTF_National%20Guideline%20for%20Risk%20Management.pdf</p> <p>To assess an organisation's compliance, a registering body conducts an outcomes-</p>

	<p>focused audit against the AQTF 2007 Essential standards for registration and the relevant legislation within each jurisdiction.</p> <p>The audit approach is described in the AQTF 2007 Audit handbook at www.training.com.au/documents/AQTF%202007%20Audit%20Handbook.pdf</p> <p>Audits are conducted for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • application for registration • potentially once in during the five year registration period • once for re-registration • potentially for extensions to scope (list of courses the training organisation is eligible to deliver/assess). <p>Audit reports are not made public.</p>
Transnational application	<p>The AQTF 2007 applies to offshore registration, accreditation and training and assessment services related to any VET qualification that is under the Australian Qualifications Framework regardless of whether it is conducted onshore or offshore.</p>
Comment	<p>The AQTF 2007 provides a platform from which all jurisdictions can work.</p> <p>The AQTF 2007 quality indicators form part of the AQTF 2007 Essential standards for registration for training organisations that wish to deliver nationally recognised vocational qualifications and competencies. The AQTF 2007 quality indicators have been designed to help registered training organisations conduct evidence-based and outcomes-focused continuous quality improvement, and assist registering bodies assess the risk of an organisation's operations. Registered training organisations are required to collect and use data on three quality indicators which have been endorsed by the National Quality Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learner engagement • employer satisfaction • competency completion. <p>This has as not yet been fully implemented, but start of implementation is 30 June 2009 with full roll out in 2010.</p>

Appendix 3: Canada, Ontario

Canada—overview

Overview	<p>Canada is a federation of 10 provinces and three territories. There is no ministry or department of education at the national level. Under the Canadian constitution (<i>Constitution Act 1867</i>) the provincial governments have exclusive responsibility for education across all levels or sectors. The territories do not have the same status but are essentially responsible for managing their own education system.</p> <p>In essence the provinces and territories have developed their own educational systems. An overview of the variations in the education system can be found at www.cicic.ca/421/an-overview.canada</p> <p>A diagrammatical view is provided at www.cicic.ca/444/provinces-and-territories.canada</p> <p>There are no national quality assurance agencies that monitor the standards of community colleges, public colleges, private career colleges and institutes offering technical and vocational programs. An overview of the quality assurance approaches for Canadian postsecondary education is provided at www.cicic.ca/695/quality-assurance-an-overview.canada</p> <p>An overview of the quality assurance approaches for each province and territory can be viewed at www.cicic.ca/420/quality-assurance-in-canada.canada</p> <p>This overview is also replicated in a fact sheet, <i>Quality assurance practices for postsecondary institutions in Canada</i> (fact sheet 5), Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials, www.cicic.ca/510/fact-sheet-no-5.canada</p>
Quality assurance approach	<p>The following information is summarised from the fact sheet.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Legislation. In each of Canada's provinces and territories, legislation is used by governments to establish, govern, recognise, or ensure the quality of postsecondary educational programming. 2. External and internal review. External reviews vary but may include accreditation visits conducted by external panels (usually academic peers). Self-assessment and conducting internal reviews of quality of specific programs or of the institutions as a whole may be undertaken. The results of these reviews may be provided to government and may be considered in determining eligibility for direct (such as grants) or indirect (such as government-based student loan revenues) public funding. 3. Provincial/territorial registration/licensing. Private postsecondary education and training providers may be required to register their institutions, programs, or instructors with authorities. Most registration processes require these providers to meet certain requirements. There is focus on consumer protection. 4. Accreditation of professional programs. Programs that relate to certain occupations have professional regulatory bodies to which institutions and their programs must meet their requirements, for example, nursing or engineering. <p>Reference: <i>Quality assurance practices for postsecondary institutions in Canada</i>, fact sheet 5, Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials, www.cicic.ca/510/fact-sheet-no-5.canada</p>

Ontario—overview

Overview	<p>The scope of tertiary vocational education organisations in Ontario include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • colleges of applied arts and technology (CAAT) • private career colleges (PCC) • institutions providing apprenticeship training (can also be a CAAT or PCC institution). <p>The Ontario Qualifications Framework (OQF)</p> <p>The OQF includes all postsecondary certificate, diploma and degree programs offered under the auspices of the Province of Ontario, including apprenticeship certificates, the qualifications awarded by PCCs, the qualifications awarded by public colleges of applied arts and technology, and degrees offered by public universities and institutions authorised to award degrees by a ministerial consent.</p> <p>The OQF identifies the main purposes of each qualification, outlines the learning expectations for graduates who hold each type of qualification and shows the relationship between the different qualifications. Each qualification can be seen as a benchmark or reference point along a continuum.</p>
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Ontario—public sector

Overview	<p>In Ontario, there are 24 colleges of applied arts and technology, including two French language colleges established under the <i>Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act, 2002 (revised)</i>. These colleges receive public funding from the Ontario government and must also meet governance and accountability, finance and administration and program requirements through minister’s binding policy directives.</p>
Scope	<p>The Ontario College Quality Assurance Service (OCQAS) operates within the administrative structure of the Colleges Ontario⁶⁰ and is responsible to a separate management board. The board operates independently of government and of any individual college or the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. It develops policy and oversees the implementation of related processes within its specific mandate.</p>
Registering bodies	<p>This Ontario College Quality Assurance Service (OCQAS)⁶¹ is not a registering body, it works as a quality assurance service for the publicly funded colleges.</p>
Accrediting bodies	<p>While there are certain program areas in the colleges—mainly in the health sciences and technology area where employment is predicated on graduating from an accredited program, the actual accreditation of programs is carried out by other external/professional bodies closely related to the field of study.</p> <p>The role of the OCQAS is one of validation. Validation of programs through the Ontario College Credentials Validation Service (CVS) became operational in 2005. This service was created as part of the self-regulatory mechanism for the colleges of applied arts and technology in Ontario. The CVS is consistent with the Minister of Training, Colleges and University’s Binding Policy Directive, Framework for Programs of Instruction.⁶² This service, along with the approval of programs by the</p>

⁶⁰ Colleges Ontario is not established by Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, but is an advocacy/coordinating organisation of the 24 CAATs.

⁶¹ www.ocqas.org/index-en.html

⁶² <http://innovation.dc-uoit.ca/abc/Framework%20for%20Programs.pdf>

local college board of governors, makes up a component of the self-regulatory mechanism for the college system. The mandate of the CVS, as spelled out in the binding policy directive, is to:

- provide reasonable assurance that all postsecondary programs of instruction leading to one of the Ontario College credentials (certificate, diploma, advanced diploma, or graduate certificate), regardless of funding source, conform to the credentials framework and are consistent with accepted college system nomenclature/program titling principles
- maintain the integrity of the credentials offered by the system and protect the interests of students and employers who require a reasonable guarantee of consistency and quality in postsecondary programs of instruction offered by the colleges of applied arts and technology in Ontario.

The process appears to be a validation of the college's internal process for developing programs. Supporting documents include:

- application instructions
- application documents.

As part of the process, submissions need to demonstrate program outcomes (via a vocational learning outcomes map and essential employability skills map), program description and program curriculum [syllabus]. If approved, the program will be given an approved program sequence (APS) number. Modifications to titles and of content are also addressed through this process.

Framework for programs of instruction/provincial program standards

This binding policy directive applies to all colleges of applied arts and technology and defines expectations for all programs of instruction offered by colleges regardless of the funding source. The binding policy directive does not apply to ministry-funded apprenticeship programs, except for the postsecondary component of the co-op diploma apprenticeship program.

A program standard is a document produced by the ministry that sets out the essential learning that a student must achieve before being deemed ready to graduate. A program standard applies to all programs of instruction in an identified category regardless of the funding source and, for most programs, consists of a vocational standard, an essential employability skill standard, and general education requirements. Prior to graduation, students must achieve all three parts of the program standard.

Program standards are listed on the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities website⁶³ and are essentially qualifications at the certificate, diploma, advanced diploma and graduate certificate level. These programs are within the Ontario Credentials Framework.⁶⁴

It is expected that when a college chooses to deliver a program of instruction for which a Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities program standard exists, the program must meet all the requirements of the program standard.

⁶³ www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/college/progstan/intro.html

⁶⁴ The government first developed and published the credentials framework as part of the minister's binding policy directive. Later, it developed the Ontario Qualifications Framework to show the greater/bigger picture of 'qualifications' gained through postsecondary education institutions in Ontario. As a result the major component of the credentials framework (which is a stand-alone document for the use of the colleges of applied arts and technology) is found within qualifications framework.

	<p>Colleges submit new programs to the ministry for funding after they are approved through the college's process, including CVS validation.</p> <p>The ministry leads the development and review of program standards in consultation with faculty, employers, industry, professional associations and graduates.</p>
<p>Training organisations</p>	<p>As part of the program quality assurance process audit (PQAPA), requirement 2 has been expanded into a five quality criteria/characteristics set of quality indicators which in turn are outlined as a 'requirement' with an 'explanation'.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criterion 1. Admission, credit for prior learning, promotion, graduation, and other related academic policies support program development and student achievement of program learning outcomes. • Criterion 2. Programs conform to the framework for programs of instruction and the credentials framework, are consistent with accepted college system nomenclature/program titling principles, and maintain relevance. • Criterion 3. Methods of program delivery and student evaluation are consistent with the program learning outcomes. • Criterion 4. Human, physical, financial, and support resources to support student achievement of program learning outcomes are available and accessible. • Criterion 5. Regular program quality assessment that involves faculty, students, industry representatives, and others as appropriate for the purpose of continual improvement is in place and happens. <p>Of interest is criterion 4 which outlines trainer/assessor qualifications:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Teaching staff involved in the program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meet the needs of the students and facilitate the achievement of the program learning outcomes • possess the combination of experience and credentials appropriate to, and required by, the program of study • have the level of expertise and ability to provide the advertised learning experiences • are oriented, coordinated and evaluated. <p>Support materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The criteria are outlined in the <i>Program quality assurance process audit: orientation manual</i> at www.ocqas.org/pqapa-orientation-en.pdf • QUESTION AND ANSWER, www.ocqas.org/pqapa-qanda-en.pdf <p>The entire process is built to be a continuous improvement model and as such it is not the expectation that institutions will meet every criterion in the first round. What is expected is that institutions will look at their own processes and practices in quality assurance and know where they meet and where they do not meet the criteria in such a way as to be able to identify plans to move them towards full achievement. The other aspect/consequence is that the executive summaries of each audit report (including a rating of how the college did against each criteria) is posted to the OCQAS website and in that sense is made public. As OCQAS is just ending the first complete round of audits and a major service review is in the pipeline for the next year, it remains to be seen what will happen if colleges continue to not meet (or conversely to meet) the criteria.</p>

<p>Quality assurance approach</p>	<p>Ontario College Quality Assurance Service (OCQAS)⁶⁵ includes the Program Quality Assurance Process Audit (PQAPA), which has been developed and implemented as the second component of the self-regulatory mechanism for the colleges of applied arts and technology.</p> <p>As a co-requisite to colleges gaining greater authority over their own programs, the need for a provincial standard for college postsecondary program quality assurance was identified. PQAPA supports the responsibility of each college and its board to manage the quality of their own programs. The PQAPA requires the following actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The establishment of an independent, arms-length oversight body to coordinate the PQAPA. 2. The implementation of program quality assurance processes by, and internal to, each college. 3. An academic quality audit of each college’s program quality assurance processes to be conducted by an external panel. 4. A review of each audit report by the oversight body to ensure that the panel’s process has conformed to the approved guidelines and the report has treated each college fairly and consistently. 5. The provision of an appeal process prior to the release of the final audit report. <p>These actions appear to apply to both the OCQAS plus the colleges.</p> <p>Requirement 3 indicates that the academic quality audits are based on a five-year cycle.</p> <p>It appears that the audit methodology is similar to the AUQA model.</p> <p>The panel chair and the panel members are selected from a defined pool and also undertake training. It is a requirement that the panel chairs (and panel members) have experience with college roles and responsibilities, and are familiar with the operation of colleges and have experience in the quality audit process. Much of the time this means they are former/retired senior academic/administrative staff from the Ontario college system or some similar college system. The panel is generally made up of three members.</p> <p>The academic quality audit begins with a self-study by the college and a subsequent site visit by an audit panel. The self study report (no more than 20 pages) is accompanied by a completed quality criteria form, which is part of the package of information forwarded to the external audit panel prior to the site visit. The panel may request more information before the visit of approximately 1.5 days, and an audit report is prepared.</p> <p>The panel categorises its overall findings of the colleges’ quality assurance processes as falling within one of the following five categories of maturity. In each case the panel may reach a unanimous or a majority decision. The five categories of maturity of the college’s quality assurance processes can be defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal effort—means there are no organised quality assurance and improvement (QA&I) processes in place within the college. • Reactive effort—means that the college responds to problems mostly with ad hoc methods. The QA&I criteria and processes receive little systematic attention. • Formal effort—means that individual initiatives and experimentations with
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⁶⁵ www.ocqas.org/index-en.html

	<p>improvements may be seen in and around the college, and these are motivated explicitly by the key quality criteria.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organised effort—means that quality process initiatives begin to be planned and tracked, work methods are systematically rooted in the quality criteria, and the college has begun to develop performance metrics and norms. • Mature effort—means quality processes have been embedded in the college’s culture, continuous improvement is a way of life, and organisational learning about and commitment to QA&I are fully established. <p>Similar to AUQA audits, there are recommendations, affirmations and commendations. The draft report is forwarded to the college and it has 30 days to respond. A final draft is then prepared. The executive summary is posted on the OCQAS website, and follow-up reports (as to progress against the recommendations) are also posted with it.</p> <p>The follow-up reports are self-reports and meant to serve as an interim status report on how the college is doing with the implementation of its plans. It will serve the next round of audits as a starting point (along with the initial audit report). In cases where the board may believe there is not a demonstrated movement towards implementation of the plans or recommendations, it has the right to send in another panel (that is, to have the college undergo another audit before the full five-year cycle. This has not been the case to date).</p> <p>An appeals process is also in place, and the appeal can be raised within 30 days of receiving the draft final report.</p> <p>Provided in the <i>Program quality assurance process audit: orientation manual</i>, at www.ocqas.org/pqapa-orientation-en.pdf are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • site visit agenda • final report template • sample audit checklist/form.
Transnational application	The institution is expected to have policies, practices, and procedures in place that cover all programs offered by the institution. In addition, one of the quality criteria (criteria 3) specifically addresses ‘off site’ delivery of programs.
Comment	<p>Other monitoring strategies include: <u>key performance indicators</u> CAATs are required to annually submit data on five indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • graduate employment • graduate satisfaction • employer satisfaction • student satisfaction • graduation rate. <p><u>Multi-year accountability agreements (MYAAs)</u> Each CAAT has a MYAA with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and submits an annual report on its performance that monitors the use of government funds against government goals of access, quality and accountability.</p>

Ontario—private sector

Overview	As of December 2008, the province of Ontario had 421 registered private career colleges, with 544 campuses, and catering to 28 000 students who were enrolled in 3500 approved programs.
Scope	Private career colleges operating in Ontario must be registered, and have their programs approved by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. The Act that governs private career colleges is the <i>Private Career Colleges Act 2005</i> . This Act contains requirements for registration, program approvals, fee collection, tuition fee refunds, student contracts, financial security, instructional staff, advertising and compliance measures.
Registering bodies	<p>The Superintendent of Private Career Colleges registers institutions under the <i>Private Career Colleges Act 2005</i>. Before programs can be delivered, the institution must be registered and the program approved.</p> <p>To register a private career college, applicants must complete a three step registration process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Registration pre-screening</i>—this is conducted online and is used to assess whether the programs proposed by an organisation require approval under the <i>Private Career Colleges Act 2005</i>.⁶⁶ This process generally takes between four to six weeks. • <i>Application for registration, including application for program approval</i>—the website indicates that registration process and course approval process may take between six and eight months. Applications are completed online, reviewed by the ministry and a two week period from notification is allowed if any additional information is required. If the timeline is not met, the application and supporting information is returned and a new application is required. • <i>Site visit/inspection</i>—inspections are undertaken for all new private career colleges to ensure that the facility meets the requirements of registration.
Accrediting bodies	<p>There are no accrediting bodies to oversee the sector, however there are regulatory bodies which accredit programs and colleges within their profession and jurisdiction. Institutions accredited by these bodies have to maintain their standards to remain accredited.</p> <p>The ministry considers accreditation as part of its risk assessment of the quality of service provided by private career colleges.</p> <p>Each regulatory body has its own quality standards and components usually cover program content and delivery, resources used and instructors' qualifications.⁶⁷</p> <p>The training manual, under the program approval section, notes that in future the ministry will develop a credentials framework for private career college programs that will define the criteria a program must meet for it to lead to a given credential.</p>

⁶⁶ There are some exceptions. See www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/factsheet1.pdf. Exceptions are single skill training (that is, not a whole occupational outcome), those delivered to a corporate or third party, and a few specific national occupation groups. The training manual notes that courses under 40 hours or \$1000 do not require approval.

⁶⁷ An example of an accreditation body is the Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada at www.cda-adc.ca/cdacweb/en/. For a more exhaustive list, go to www.regulators4access.ca/html/regbdylink.htm

	<p>The framework will distinguish between different levels of credentials offered by private career colleges (for example, between a diploma and a certificate).⁶⁸</p> <p>The training manual also indicates that programs will also be assessed against program-specific standards. Program standards will be developed in consultation with private career colleges, employers, professional associations and other interested parties. The standards will identify the basic program outcomes and competencies that students must achieve. They will be designed to reflect the skills and knowledge necessary to be employed in the vocation. A private career college program's compliance with standards will be assessed by third party program assessors who will provide an opinion on the program to the superintendent.</p>
<p>Training organisations</p>	<p>All private career colleges whose courses are more than 40 hours or cost more than \$1000 for a student to enrol, fall under the <i>Private Career College Act 2005</i> and must register with the ministry.</p> <p>Registered private career colleges and the programs they offer can be found at www.riccpcc.serviceontario.ca/pcc/CommandServlet?command=publicreport&config=pccProgram1Html.xml&parm_type_1=StrING&parm_value_1=EN</p> <p>Conditions of registration: The conditions of registration are listed at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/operate.html#conditions. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • insurance (public liability) • trust account for international student fees • college administration and record keeping (student contracts, student transcripts, student complaint procedures, record keeping procedures) • keeping the ministry informed (substantial changes to approved programs, change in student complaint procedures, changes in ownership) • instructors • fee collection and refunds. Compulsory fee rates apply unless the applying organisation discloses an optional fee in relation to a vocational program at the time of program approval, or has one subsequently authorised by the superintendent. The rules for refunds are listed at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/factsheet2.pdf. <p>Of interest is the qualification requirements for trainers, which include that they must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hold a bachelor degree from an Ontario university or an equivalent degree, or • be a graduate of a college of applied arts and technology or equivalent, or • be a graduate of a registered private career college or equivalent, or • be the holder of a certificate of qualification under the trades qualifications and apprenticeship Act or the apprenticeship certification Act or equivalent Canadian certificate, and • have 24 months occupational experience in the vocation to be taught <p>Or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have 36 months of teaching experience in the vocation for which instruction is given, and • 24 months occupational experience in the vocation to be taught

⁶⁸ Please refer to the Ontario Qualifications framework which covers the credentials framework; it is presently incomplete as the nomenclature for private career college credentials is still to be confirmed.

Or

- have 48 months of occupational experience in the vocation for which instruction is given.

If the vocation is governed by a regulatory body that specifies the qualifications required of instructors, the instructors at the private career college also have to meet those qualifications. The superintendent can also approve other instructors that are deemed to be proficient in the subject or vocation to be taught. Private career colleges may employ substitute instructors that do not meet the requirements as long as the total amount of the program taught by all unqualified instructors does not exceed 10 per cent.

The conditions are also supported by a series of requirements noted in supplementary documents:

Admission requirements (www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/requirements.pdf)

Unless a private career college is approved to do so by the superintendent, it cannot establish an admission requirement that is less than following:

- an Ontario secondary school diploma or equivalent, or
- students are 18 years of age or older and pass a qualifying test that has been approved by the superintendent, or
- meet other academic qualifications or minimum age requirements established as a condition of the superintendent's approval of the program, and
- have met all additional admission requirements established by the college for the program.

Advertising guidelines (www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/advertisingGuidelines.pdf)

The training manual listed on the ministry website provides basic information in one document for private career colleges and includes:

- student contracts
- fee collection and optional fees
- transcripts
- complaint procedure
- expulsion procedure
- student file requirements
- provision of a statement of student rights and responsibilities (supplied by the ministry)
- international student requirements
- trust accounts and fee refund for international students
- advertising guidelines
- program approval
- student admission requirements
- teacher requirements
- program changes and ministry approval
- operations of the college (keeping the ministry informed, record keeping)
- appeals.

	<p>Financials</p> <p>To be registered, a private college must provide the ministry with a required amount of financial security. There are three types of financial security that can be posted under the Act:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a surety bond guaranteed by a surety company • a letter of credit issued by a bank or financial institution that is supervised or examined by the central bank of Canada or another governmental authority in Canada • a personal bond accompanied by collateral security issued by Canada or by any province of Canada. <p>There is also a Training Completion Assurance Fund, which will replace the old financial security requirements with an insurance fund plus a reduced financial security requirement. This assurance fund appears to work similar to Australia’s ESOS Assurance Fund.</p> <p>Renewal of registration</p> <p>Private career colleges are required to renew their registration with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities annually based on their fiscal year-end date. This was a process introduced under the Act.</p>
Quality assurance approach	<p>To ensure student protection and quality in the private career college sector, a quality assurance framework is under development. Currently quality assurance approaches are included below.</p> <p>Program standards for private career colleges</p> <p>The ministry is currently developing the first program standards for private career colleges. A program standard will apply to all similar programs of instruction offered by private career colleges across the province. Program standards are aligned to the Ontario Qualifications Framework (OQF)¹. The private career college program standard consists of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vocational standards (the vocationally specific learning outcomes which apply to the program of instruction in question) • essential employability skills (the essential employability skills learning outcomes which apply to all programs of instruction). <p>Collectively, these elements outline the essential skills and knowledge that a student must reliably demonstrate to graduate from the program.⁶⁹</p> <p>Performance accountability measures</p> <p>The private career college Act stipulates that every private career college shall make public, at the times and in the manner determined in accordance with the superintendent’s policy directives, the information required by the policy directives relating to the performance indicators and performance objectives applicable to the college’s vocational programs.</p> <p>The indicators are similar to AQTF quality indicators and cover student satisfaction, graduation rate and employer satisfaction.</p> <p>New performance accountability measures are being developed for the sector after a</p>

⁶⁹ The ministry has identified priority programs for the development of standards. Following this procedure, the first standard, the “Tractor-Trailer (AZ) driver program”, has been developed and is due to be released this year together with two other program standards.

broad consultation. These replace key performance indicators that had been in use until 2008.

Audits by third party assessors

Presently there is no program standard. The ministry relies on third party assessors to assess programs and private career college institutions.

Private career colleges have to show that the knowledge and skills provided in their programs meet the expectations of the ministry and enable students to meet the entry level requirements for employment.

At the institutional level, the audit is against the requirements of the private career colleges Act. Though not formally stated in terms of standards and evidence as in the AQTF's essential standards, the requirements⁷⁰ cover the same essential elements that will ensure student protection and quality of the service to be delivered.

Risk management by the compliance unit of the ministry

A risk management strategy has been set up to monitor the sector through the ministry's compliance unit.

It relies on information received on the performance (graduation, financial situation, complaints etc) of institutions, and depending on the situation, the compliance unit will initiate more in depth investigations and take the necessary actions, which may in some cases lead to closure.

A risk-based approach to inspections was adopted for the 2006–07 and 2007–08 inspection cycles that used seven risk factors to identify high risk private colleges.

The factors were:

- newly registered private career colleges
- colleges that submitted problematic audited financial statements for Ontario Student Assistance Program
- colleges with a large international student population
- colleges providing truck driving/heavy equipment training
- colleges offering dental hygiene programs
- colleges with a high volume of student complaints
- colleges that have a history of non-compliance.

These factors were chosen based on standard risk management principles.

Results of inspections revealed that the compliance unit had chosen very appropriate indicators.

Between proclamation of the Private Career Colleges Act on 18 September 2006 and 1 April 2008, a range of enforcement measures have been undertaken.

The superintendent can pursue injunctions in superior court against institutions that disregard orders.

A key element of the strategy is the disclosure of information on the website.

⁷⁰ Refer to :

- www.edu.gov.on.ca
-

Transnational application	Nil information.
Comment	<p>A number of lessons were learnt from completing the inspections of the original risk list:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not all colleges in targeted programs required inspection • private career colleges are more of a danger to student (consumer) protection when issues of financial viability arise • chronic violators need chronic inspections • compliance issues with other regulators are a good indicator, especially in areas such as licensing • ignorance of or poor attention to regulation can be worse than wilful disregard • some indicators are symptoms of others. <p>The Private Career Colleges Compliance Unit, in concert with the Internal Audit unit of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities conducted a rigorous assessment of the results of inspections, as well as a review of college closures and other sector-wide issues.</p> <p>This review brought about the following risk factors which have been incorporated into the next iteration of the risk framework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • illegal operators (historical and known) • financial viability • chronic violators • targeted programs • renewal issues • international students • advertising issues • information from other regulatory/government bodies. <p>Private career colleges were mapped against these criteria using a points-based system that also featured weighted categories.</p>
Current developments	<p>New standards (both program and quality standards) are being developed for private career colleges in Ontario.</p> <p>The current changes brought in by the new Act consist of a progressive series of steps that escalate according to the seriousness of the infraction, the college's history of infractions and the response of the college to prior notices of non-compliance.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The first step to be taken by the superintendent to bring colleges into compliance with the new Act and regulations is education, including organised training sessions, facts sheets that provide information about the new Act and regulations in plain language, and guidance provided by program consultants. 2. Education is followed by a series of compliance steps that the superintendent may take, depending on the issue. 3. For repeat or serious infractions, the superintendent may choose to use suspension or revocation of registration or even prosecution. While employing these escalating steps, the superintendent always has the flexibility to apply a more serious response first, depending on the seriousness of an infraction. <p>Publication is another tool under the Act that aims to deter non-compliance. The superintendent may post notices at college campuses or on the ministry website of infractions and non-compliance. The superintendent can also issue notices and</p>

orders to colleges that are not conducting their business in accordance with the law. These notices and orders are listed on the ministry's website at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/notices.html. There are various types of orders, including refusal to register, suspension, restraining and compliance, interim injunction, permanent injunction, suspend and revoke, revocation, refusal to renew, cease and desist.

Economic disincentives (including full refunds to students for some violations) are also intended to discourage non-compliance.

The superintendent or their designate may meet with college students to advise them of any issues affecting the college and their rights under the Act.

Before the recent changes, the ministry conducted annual general inspections and periodic field visits at private career colleges to verify compliance with the Private Career Colleges Act. Under the new Act, the ministry is implementing a risk-based approach to inspections. This means that some colleges will be subject to fewer inspections and some will be subject to more. The new Act also extends inspection powers to institutions that are operating illegally.

The superintendent or their designate has the authority to make inquiries and conduct examinations of registered private colleges or other organisations that are required to register for the purposes of ensuring compliance with the terms and conditions of registration and the requirements of the Act and regulations. Private colleges are required by the Act to produce information and assist the inspectors. A college will not necessarily get notice of an inspection. Files must be available at all times.

In the initial phase of implementing the Act, the ministry focused on the following new obligations:

- using the right student contracts
- proper maintenance of student files
- calculating fee refunds accurately
- complying with international student protection requirements
- complying with advertising requirements
- accurate and timely reporting to the ministry
- timely resolution of student complaints according to the approved student complaint.

Ontario—apprenticeships

Overview	Ontario was the first Canadian province to introduce, in 1929, a statutory based apprenticeship system. Apprenticeship training is governed by the <i>Apprenticeship and Certification Act, 1998</i> and the <i>Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act</i> and is administered by the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.
Scope	<p>The ministry administers both Acts and funds the in-school training portion of apprenticeship programs. The ministry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • designates apprenticeship trades and occupations • develops on-the-job training standards, curriculum standards and examinations • administers certification examinations • issues statements of completion (certificates of apprenticeship and qualification). <p>There are over 150 designated trades.</p>
Registering bodies	A training agreement is signed by the apprentice and employer (sponsor ⁷¹). In line with the agreement, the sponsor ensures that the apprentice is provided with workplace-based training and is available to attend the in-school component of their apprenticeship as arranged by the ministry.
Accrediting bodies	<p>The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities is the accrediting body.</p> <p>The ministry produces training standards for on-the-job training as well as curriculum standards for in-school training and trade certification examinations.</p>
Training organisations	An organisation that wishes to deliver apprenticeship in-school training must apply to ministry. The ministry will review the application and, if approved, the organisation becomes a ministry approved training delivery agent (TDA). ⁷² The TDA must deliver the ministry approved curriculum, including appropriate facilities (equipment) and instructors.
Quality assurance approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities monitors training delivered at TDAs and at the workplace. The ministry employs approximately 200 employment training consultants who monitor the training experience. In addition, they visit TDAs to ensure proper training is being conducted. • Registered training agreements (see above). • Twenty-one trades require compulsory certification—the individual must have a valid certificate of qualification to practice the trade in the province. • Legislative and regulatory requirements are enforced by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the Ministry of Labour (health and safety inspectors).
Transnational application	There are no standards or requirements that apply to transnational delivery.

⁷¹ A sponsor is typically an employer who hires an apprentice.

⁷² The training delivery agency is typically a community college or private training institution such as a union training centre.

Comment	<p>Ontario participates in the interprovincial Red Seal program, which provides common certification examinations resulting in labour mobility to work in any province in Canada. Ontario participates in 46 of the 50 Red Seal trades. Examinations are developed jointly by the federal government and the provinces.</p>
Current developments	<p>The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities website notes the establishment of a new college of trades. This is proposed as an arms-length professional college (similar to colleges/professional schools in place for teachers, doctors and nurses) that will promote skilled trades and modernise the apprenticeship system. It is still in the planning stage and came about as a recommendation in a report commissioned by the provincial government as part of a review of apprenticeship training and skills shortages. It appears that it will reside as a separate entity and not be under the control or jurisdiction of Colleges Ontario or the OCQAS. Note that Colleges Ontario is not established by Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities but is an advocacy/coordinating organisation of the 24 CAATs.</p> <p>Legislation for the proposed Ontario College of Trades is currently under review. Passage of this bill would amalgamate the major aspects of trades training under an industry-regulated institution. If passed, implementation will commence in autumn 2010.</p>

Appendix 4: Germany

Overview	<p>In Germany, vocational education and training are separated in two different but both very complex systems: one for the initial vocational training and one for the further vocational training:</p> <p>The initial training system consists of two sectors: the dual system (with more than 300 professions) and the full-time vocational school system. In addition there is a transition system of various programs which mainly aims to integrate young people into one of the two sectors mentioned above. Initial vocational education in the dual system is regulated by standards and training regulations (ausbildungsordnungen) for vocational education as well as for the qualification of the educators (ausbildereignungsverordnung⁷³). Training regulations are implemented on a national level by law whereas curricula for vocational schools are implemented on a federal state level (16 bundesländer⁷⁴).</p> <p>The continuing vocational education and training system (CET) is much more deregulated and in most segments⁷⁵ quality is assured by the providers or their associations.</p> <p>Therefore, there is not one single overall quality approach enacted by a central accrediting or testing agency. Rather quality assurance is not just externally controlled but underlies a basic self-commitment of the different systems' parts and the involved actor's education.</p>
Scope	<p>The relevant quality dimensions in both systems refer in general to an input, process and output level. For example, in the initial training system there are standards in the structure of the job training curricula, there are tests that ensure a successful learning process during the training and there are final exams that again ensure a commonly shared theoretical and practical knowledge level within the framework of a certain profession.</p>
Registering bodies	<p>The three equal partners of the education system are the federation, the states and boards of the social partners. The boards are ultimately responsible for the operational education and final exams within the dual system, the federation for the subordinate legislation (law on vocational training) and the states for the creation of academic vocational training and the vocational school system. For school education, legislation and administration of the education system is the responsibility of the federal states. So, within the dual system, the professions follow nationally coordinated training rules. However, there is not one single national agency that accredits quality in vocational education in general.</p> <p>The registering bodies within the initial training system that ensure quality on the different levels as described in the <i>scope</i> section above are numerous and differ from state to state. The following registering bodies are examples for nationally relevant</p>

⁷³ www.bmbf.de/pub/ausbilder_eignungsverordnung.pdf

⁷⁴ In 2006, approximately 44 per cent of all school graduates entered the dual system, approximately 17 per cent entered the full-time vocational school system and about 40 per cent entered the transition system (see www.bildungsbericht.de/daten2008/bb_2008.pdf p.96). The transition system is strongly discussed because as shown in a study by the German Youth Institute, it is not as successful as necessary: some school graduates remain in the system for a longer period of time, some go back to attend school, some are without a vocational training position or work (for more information see Bertelsmann Stiftung (Hrsg.): Leitfaden Lokales Übergangsmangement. Gütersloh).

⁷⁵ One exception is distance learning.

	<p>ones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The tasks of the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung)⁷⁶ include for example, developing curricula for new professions, updating vocational training curricula, improving the quality of vocational training, life-long learning, the permeability and equivalence of training paths, and vocational training for specific target groups. • For the dual system, the chambers of industries and commerce take the final exams for those professional trainings that are within their responsibilities, for example, training for industrial sales representatives. • For the dual system the chambers of crafts take the final exams within their scope of responsibility, for example, for bakers. There are also chambers for other segments. • The Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit) finances most of the activities in the transition system.
<p>Accrediting bodies</p>	<p>On the one hand, the quality of professions as ruled in training regulations is under the influence of trade unions and employer associations, which are included in the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung). And on the other hand, the chambers control quality in the vocational training system in terms of examination results.</p> <p>For those accrediting bodies in VET (for example in LQW, ISO 9000ff or EFQM), very strict and specific standards are applied dependent on the quality model. In general, the head offices for the accreditation of a certain quality assurance approach provide lists of accredited bodies or evaluators that can lead the certification process. For example in ISO 9000, the following website provides this list www.dar.bam.de/ase.html</p>
<p>Training organisations</p>	<p>There are training regulations for each profession in the initial training system that must be followed by the training institutions.</p> <p>Further education providers must meet essential quality standards (AZWV §8, Abs. 4⁷⁷) to deliver vocational CET courses financed by the federal employment agency. Apart from this not too big segment, vocational CET field accrediting bodies vary according to the quality approach selected by the providers.</p> <p>Supporting documents are, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • initial vocational education law (Berufsausbildungsgesetz: www.bmbf.de/pub/bbig.pdf) • regulations for the qualification of the instructors (Ausbildereignungsgesetz: www.bibb.de/dokumente/pdf/ausbilder_eignungsverordnung.pdf) <p>These regulations basically state the underlying requirements for becoming an instructor in the initial training system and focus on the ability to autonomously plan, implement and control the training concerning the following aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the scope, professional and pedagogical aptitude, qualifications, rules for the examinations, certificates, other evidence, rules for transitions and applicability of these regulations. All of these aspects are

⁷⁶ www.bibb.de/en/26173.htm

⁷⁷ AZWV – Anerkennungs – und Zulassungsverordnung Weiterbildung which translates to ‘approval and accreditation regulations for further education’ www.azwv.de/

	<p>differentiated further. For example, for the professional and pedagogical aptitude, the regulations mainly focus on general principles (such as legal conditions, involved persons and organisations), regulations for the planning of the training (such as the suitability of the training organisations, the collaboration with the vocational school for the theoretical phases within the dual system, etc.), the involvement during the recruiting phases for the trainees (including recruiting criteria, training contract, etc.), training on the job (such as practical support, controlling of learning success, etc.), assistance during the learning process (including cooperation with external organisations, considering cultural differences, etc.), training within a group (such as short presentations, training of team learning, etc.) and completing training (including preparing for examinations, generating certificates, etc.)</p>
<p>Quality assurance approach</p>	<p>There is not one dominant quality assurance approach in the initial training system. As described above, there are different bodies, training regulations and test processes that ensure quality.</p> <p>In the Germany's VET system many approaches are applied. In cases when the Federal Employment Agency is financing VET courses, the providers need to be approved and they need to apply a systematic instrument for quality assurance and quality development according to AZWV §8, Abs. 4.</p> <p>According to a national representative study⁷⁸ (2005) conducted by the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training, almost all providers of further education (98 per cent)⁷⁹ assure their quality in the one or other way. The most widely used quality assurance approach among providers in further education is self-evaluation (84 per cent), quality and approval seals (46 per cent), certificate of ISO 9000ff (39 per cent), regional quality system (39 per cent), AZWV: approval of the federal employment agency (37 per cent), participation in competitions (26 per cent), EFQM (16 per cent), LQW (16 per cent) and others (12 per cent). Self-evaluation can be everything ranging from detailed quality assurance systems that are tailor-made for specific circumstances of one provider to infrequently occurring surveys. Those quality assurance approaches that are more standardised and include external validation are less frequently applied. Interestingly, providers often combine two (82 per cent), three (60 per cent) and sometimes even four (40 per cent) approaches.</p> <p>The concepts of quality assurance have regular intervals in which the quality is re-assured. These intervals have to be followed by the training organisations otherwise the quality seal is taken away from them.</p> <p>The following concepts are the most frequently used standardised quality approaches:</p> <p><u>ISO 9000ff. (International Organisation for Standardisation⁸⁰)</u> This approach is a collection of standards for quality management systems. This system was originally developed for the manufacturing industries and from the early 1990s was transferred to other branches. It is now also regarded as a valuable quality assurance certificate for VET providers.</p>

⁷⁸ www.bibb.de/en/11920.htm

⁷⁹ Source of all the data provided in this paragraph: A. Krewerth/H. Kuwan: Weiterbildungsanbieter im "Qualitätslabyrinth" - Zur Situation der Anbieter und den Wirkungen von Weiterbildungstests. In: Berufsbildung in Wissenschaft und Praxis, Jahrgang 35 (2006), Heft 6, S. 28 - 33

⁸⁰ www.iso.org/iso/about/international_standardization_and_education.htm

Overall, the system defines norms that can be described as a list of requirements. These requirements can be summarised into three areas:

- General requirements for a quality management system (responsibility of the management, quality handbook and procedures, identification of a quality manager, etc.).
- Necessity to maintain documented policies and procedures for the key processes within the organisation.
- Specific mechanisms of quality assurance, including tests, records, removal of quality defects and internal quality audits.

With the certificate, the organisation is acknowledged to be able to meet customers' needs and requirements according to a controlled plan. This does not guarantee however that the products or the work achievements are highest quality.

The certification process

A third party accredited by the German Accreditation Council⁸¹ needs to certify the fulfilment of the quality requirements and this process is costly for the VET provider. The following steps need to be taken:

- Development of a quality assurance system according to the requirements given by the norms.
- Selection of the accredited and certifying third party.
- Pre-audit, usually followed by adjustments.
- Audit by the accredited and certifying third party, award of the ISO 9000ff. certificate if the requirements are met.
- Audits in between with a limited scope within a three-year period.

The certificate remains valid for three years.

LQW (Lernerorientierte Qualität in der Weiterbildung⁸²)

The LQW process is based on the idea that education is a special product that is very different to other services and products. Thus, successful learning is not just influenced by the providing organisation but depends on the learner who has to strive for acquiring this knowledge. As stated in the LQW guidelines, "further education organisations only provide the conditions under which training takes place. Whether the adult education actually takes place or not is out of their hands".⁸³ Overall, the developmental process this quality assurance system is applied for aims at the educational provider becoming a learning organisation. Unique to this model is that it:

- was developed especially for providers of education
- focuses on the learner
- provides access to a community of like-minded practitioners
- provides a selection of quality tools.

The requirements for the development of quality including the certification are to be met in the following areas:

⁸¹ www.dar.bam.de/indexe.html

⁸² www.artset-lqw.de/cms/

⁸³ www.artset-lqw.de/cms/fileadmin/user_upload/Service_Allgemeines/LQW_Guidelines.pdf

⁸⁴ www.deutsche-efqm.de/download/Grundkonzepte_2003.pdf

⁸⁵ ww1.efqm.org/en/

- mission statement
- needs analysis
- key processes
- teacher-learner process
- evaluation of the educational process
- infrastructure
- management
- human resources
- controlling
- customer relations
- strategic development goals.

But in contrast to many other quality certification processes which provide pre-defined standards of quality, the LQW certification relies on quality criteria that are defined by the organisations themselves.

The certification and auditing process

In general, LQW is a recurring quality cycle rather than a one-time certification process. For one cycle the process is as follows:

- The above stated requirements are internally evaluated, including strengths and weaknesses, and must be proven in a self-evaluation report of the VET provider.
- A mission statement is formulated that is based on the organisation's definition of successful learning.
- Planning and implementing the required quality development measures follows and the whole process must be documented in a self-evaluation report.
- This report is then externally evaluated by trained LQW auditors during a visit in which the internal perception of the organisation and its quality measures is confronted with an external observation.
- After this report complies a final workshop is conducted in which reflection is initiated and future perspectives are developed. Then strategic development goals for the next quality cycle are defined.

It is necessary for a thorough LQW process to document the results of the quality measure, for example in an organisation handbook. In the descriptions of the LQW guidelines a diagram of the quality development and certification model is given on p.13 at www.artset-lqw.de/cms/fileadmin/user_upload/Service_Allgemeines/LQW_Guidelines.pdf

European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM)⁸⁴ model⁸⁵

The EFQM approach (1988) was initiated and developed by European business organisations and supported by the European Commission and the European Organisation for Quality. It is a multi-dimensional and holistic quality management approach that aims at quality assurance on all activities and levels within an organisation. It is a continuous process towards improvement that focuses on the goal that says performance has to meet all stakeholders' expectations, needs and demands.

The approach covers nine criteria, which are grouped in *enablers* and *results*, fundamental concepts, a self-assessment procedure and the measurement instrument "Blue Card". Enablers cover the process, structure and the means of an organisation whereas the results criteria cover performance aspects. Since the enablers direct and

	<p>drive the results, well-developed enablers bring about excellent results.</p> <p>The nine EFQM model criteria have different weightings and are further differentiated in sub-criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • leadership (10 per cent) • policy and strategy (8 per cent) • people (9 per cent) • partnership and resources (9 per cent) • processes (14 per cent) • people results (9 per cent) • customer results (20 per cent) • society results (6 per cent) • key performance results (15 per cent). <p><i>Assessment procedures</i></p> <p>The mode of assessment in EFQM is self-assessment that refers to a comprehensive and systematic internal review of the organisation's activities and results according to the above stated criteria. The measuring instrument is the so-called Blue Card that explains the scoring procedure for the quality level of an enabler or a result criterion. EFQM high scoring companies and non-profit organisations may participate in the European Quality Award Program.</p>
Transnational application	<p>The initial training system in Germany is a “grown” system that is bound to federal or state law. Therefore it is unlikely that organisations will train their trainees according to that law in a different country.</p> <p>For the further education system other rules apply. Here training organisations offer their courses to customers outside of Germany⁸⁶. There are three different approaches to quality assurance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the ISO 9000ff standards are internationally standardised norms (www.dar.bam.de/ase.html) • the EFQM standards apply for Europe • there are many quality assurance approaches that are specifically made for certain regions, certain providers or for national providers, like the LQW. <p>In the third case, the transnational application is in most cases not given.</p>
Comment	<p>The German system of vocational education and training is very complex with many players on different levels and varying quality assurance approaches. An international comparison as suggested here is only possible in parts, for example concerning the ISO standards or the EFQM standards. The training organisations usually do not have to make public their quality audit reports but in terms of their own interests they often make public whether they are certified and which quality assurance system that is.</p>
Current developments	<p>At the moment Germany's vocational education and training systems are transformed to fit a German qualification framework that is based on a hierarchy of competences. This development is planned to be finished in 2012 and is implemented in alignment with the European Qualification Framework. In addition to that two national studies are planned. The:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • initial vocational education PISA (<i>Berufsbildungs-PISA</i> by Baethge/Achtenhagen/Arends/Babic/Baethge-Kinski/Weber) • adult education PISA (PISA für Erwachsene—PIAAC developed by the OECD). <p>These developments will make output quality more transparent and may affect quality assurance procedures in the future. But at the moment they are still work in progress.</p>
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Note: The above described systems of quality assurance are not comprehensive since the applied approaches vary strongly.

Appendix 5: New Zealand

Overview	<p>The overall responsibility for developing criteria for course approval and accreditation in the tertiary education sector lies with the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. The authority is also responsible for registration, accreditation and quality assurance of tertiary education organisations outside the university sector.⁸⁷ It delegates some of the responsibility for quality assurance within the technology and polytechnic sector to ITP Quality, which is a standing committee of ITP New Zealand, the national association for institutes of technology and polytechnics.</p>
Scope	<p>New Zealand does not have a separate vocational education and training system, and the New Zealand quality assurance framework applies across the whole of the tertiary education sector. All tertiary education organisations have the right to offer degree programs if they meet a series of set criteria and legislated requirements.</p> <p>The type of tertiary education organisations involved in vocational education and training include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • private training establishments • government training establishments⁸⁸ • wānanga⁸⁹ • industry training organisations⁹⁰ • course owners⁹¹ • institutes of technology and polytechnics • adult education providers. <p>A range of tertiary education organisations deliver vocational education and training, and both the New Zealand Qualifications Authority and ITP Quality have a quality assurance role.</p> <p>The quality assurance approach for all tertiary education organisations is four-fold and includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • upfront quality assurance of courses • accreditation of organisations • audit (being replaced by self-evaluation and external evaluation of performance at organisation or course level) • moderation of assessment against National Qualifications Framework unit standards.
Registering bodies	<p>The New Zealand Qualifications Authority is the quality assurance body responsible for registering private training establishments and recognising other organisations such as course owners.</p> <p><i>The audit standard for inter-institutional quality assurance bodies with delegation from the New Zealand Qualifications Authority sets out the expected standards for the authority's quality assurance functions as well as for those functions delegated to other quality assurance bodies. The document is divided into nine standards under</i></p>

⁸⁷ Quality assurance of the university sector is separately managed by the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee.

⁸⁸ GTEs are established by legislation and are attached to government organisations that provide in-house training for employees, for example, NZ Fire Service.

⁸⁹ Wānanga is a type of publicly owned tertiary institution that provides education in a Māori cultural context.

⁹⁰ ITOs are recognised organisations that set standards for the NQF, within their industry scope. ITOs do not deliver education and training.

⁹¹ Course owners are organisations that develop courses and related qualifications, but do not deliver them.

	<p>the following headings:</p> <p><i>Legislative requirements</i></p> <p>S1—The quality assurance body applies its legislated responsibilities, in particular the requirements of the <i>Education Act 1989</i>.</p> <p><i>Quality management system</i></p> <p>S2—The quality assurance body’s governance and management are appropriate to its delegated functions and responsibilities.</p> <p>S3—The quality assurance body has a quality management system in place that enables it to perform its delegated quality assurance function.</p> <p>S4 —The quality assurance body has the professional capability to effectively perform delegated functions and responsibilities.</p> <p>S5—The quality assurance body has appropriate and effective complaints and appeals procedures.</p> <p><i>Quality assurance functions</i></p> <p>S6—The quality assurance body performs its registration functions effectively and in accordance with legislative requirements (this applies solely to the New Zealand Qualifications Authority).</p> <p>S7—The quality assurance body effectively performs course approval functions in accordance with legislative requirements.</p> <p>S8—The quality assurance body effectively accredits organisations to deliver approved courses and National Qualifications Framework qualifications within the scope of its delegation.</p> <p>S9—The quality assurance body has appropriate quality assurance processes in place to assure and maintain ongoing quality.</p>
<p>Accrediting bodies</p>	<p>Accrediting bodies are responsible for the approval of courses and the accreditation of organisations to deliver them irrespective of whether they lead to a national qualification or not. They are also responsible for the accreditation of organisations to assess unit standards on the National Qualifications Framework.</p> <p><i>The Audit Standard for inter-institutional quality assurance bodies with delegation from the New Zealand Qualifications Authority</i> sets out the expected standards for the authority’s quality assurance functions as well as for those functions delegated to other quality assurance bodies.. See above for details of this standard.</p> <p>Supporting resources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Gazetted criteria for course approval and accreditation</i> • <i>The New Zealand Register of quality assured qualifications</i> • <i>Criteria, requirements and guidelines for course approval and accreditation</i> • <i>Gazetted national qualifications framework accreditation criteria</i> • <i>National qualifications framework accreditation and moderation action plans.</i>
<p>Training organisations</p>	<p>Registration</p> <p>Private training organisations are required to be registered as private training establishments if they wish to receive government funding or to enrol international students. Quality Assurance Standard One (QAS1) consists of policies and criteria that the New Zealand Qualifications Agency has established for the registration of private training establishments (available at www.nzqa.govt.nz/for-providers/qastandards/docs/qastd1.pdf)</p>

Key aspects of QAS1 include:

Defining goals and objectives:

The provider has measurable goals and objectives for education and training.

Systems to achieve goals and objectives:

The provider puts into practice quality management systems to achieve its goals and objectives including:

- governance and management
- personnel
- physical and learning resources
- learner information, entry and support
- development, delivery and review of programs
- assessment and moderation
- notification and reporting on learner achievement
- research (degree programs).

Achieving goals and objectives:

The provider is achieving its goals and objectives, and can provide assurance that it will continue to do so.

Support documents for registration include:

- Registration application form (includes statement of management commitment)
- Private training establishment/recognised course owner attestation (Form A)
- Chartered accountant professional attestation
- Approved student fee protection arrangement
- Financial forecasts (for applicants that have not operated before)
- Financial statements (for applicants that have been operational)
- Evidence of contact with the Ministry of Education regarding an intention to become a signatory to the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students.

The document *Quality assurance standard for course owners* has also been developed to set quality standards for course owners.⁹² It is currently used for the initial recognition of course owners.

However, on 1 September 2009 QAS1 will be revoked and replaced with guidelines for registration of private training establishments. The criteria for ongoing registration will be available in the policies and criteria for ongoing registration of private training establishments. The new guidelines, policies and criteria do not differ significantly from the current requirements.

Under the *Education Act 1989*, any provider that wishes to enrol international students in its programs must become a signatory to the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students. Compliance with the code is periodically checked by audit.

⁹² Available at www.nzqa.govt.nz

Quality assurance approach

Course approval and accreditation

Tertiary education organisations wishing to receive government funding or enrol international students in a course must have that course quality assured. This process results in approval of the course and accreditation to deliver it, and is based on set criteria. The criteria applies to all tertiary education organisations for all types of courses and qualifications.

The criteria for course approval and accreditation are:

- the adequacy and appropriateness of the title, aims, stated learning outcomes and coherence of the whole course
- the adequacy and appropriateness of delivery and learning methods, for all modes of delivery, given the stated learning outcomes
- the adequacy of the means of ensuring that assessment procedures are fair, valid, consistent and appropriate, given the stated learning outcomes
- the acceptability of the proposed course to the relevant academic, industrial, professional and other communities, in terms of its stated aims and learning outcomes, nomenclature, content and structure
- the adequacy and appropriateness of the regulations that specify requirements for admission, credit for previous study, recognition of prior learning, course length and structure, integration of practical or work-based components, assessment procedures, and normal progression within a course
- the capacity of the organisation to support sustained delivery of the course, in all delivery modes, with regard to appropriate academic staffing, teaching facilities, physical resources and support services
- the adequacy and effectiveness of the provision for evaluation and review of courses such as: monitoring the ongoing relevance of learning outcomes, course delivery and course standards; reviewing course regulations and content; monitoring improvement following evaluation and review; and determining whether the course will continue to be offered.

The resulting qualifications must also meet the qualification definition for the particular qualification type, such as certificate or diploma, as part of the register.⁹³

Further information about the process and documentation requirements can be found at: www.nzqa.govt.nz/for-providers/aaa/applications/courses/index.html

In the sub-degree area, the analysis for course approval and accreditation is by documentation only against the criteria. Once the course has been approved and the tertiary education organisation accredited, the course is listed as part of that organisation's accreditation.

National Qualifications Framework accreditation

The National Qualifications Framework accreditation process certifies education organisations to assess National Qualifications Framework unit or achievement standards and award credits for them. An appropriate combination of credits can result in the award of a national qualification.

⁹³ The New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications.

National Qualifications Framework accreditation is carried out with reference to generic and industry specific criteria set out in an Accreditation and Moderation Action Plan.

Further information about the process and documentation requirements can be found at www.nzqa.govt.nz/for-providers/aaa/applications/nqf/index.html.

Ongoing accreditation is managed through quality audits.

Quality audits

The New Zealand Qualifications Agency currently monitors the performance of tertiary education organisations through regular quality audits. These audits evaluate an organisation's performance in relation to a quality standard. The standard that applies depends on the type of education organisation. They are:

- QAS1, which applies to private and government training establishments, and wānanga
- Quality Assurance Standard for industry training organisations
- Quality Assurance Standard for course owners.

The audit process takes 12 to 16 weeks and a flowchart describing the process is available on the New Zealand Qualifications Agency website.⁹⁴ The process is:

- the tertiary education organisation submits documents for desk audit
- the New Zealand Qualifications Agency visits the site
- the Quality Assurance Body provides a draft report for confirmation of factual accuracy
- the New Zealand Qualifications Agency sends a final report and possible request for an action plan
- the tertiary education organisation sends the action plan
- the New Zealand Qualifications Agency publishes the outcome.

The tertiary education organisation submits quality management system documentation, a self-evaluation report and a provider update form. This enables the audit team to scope the audit and also leads to the desk audit. The audit visit and process is described in more detail at

www.nzqa.govt.nz/for-providers/aaa/audit/process.html

If there is a dispute over the accuracy of the report or the process, the tertiary education organisation may apply for an independent review of factual accuracy. The reviewer will then review the audit file and make a recommendation to the manager.

Post audit, if the standard is not met, an action plan is required to address the findings. Depending on the seriousness of the requirements not met, the auditor may:

- accept the action plan and check its implementation at the next audit
- request evidence of implementation of the action plan over an agreed time period after audit is closed. This could involve an on-site visit to verify the evidence. This is treated as an audit with specific focus.

Audits are carried out on a cost recovery basis. Each tertiary education organisation is charged a fee. Further special purpose audits can also be undertaken outside of the usual audit cycle, based on areas of identified risk.

⁹⁴ Available at www.nzqa.govt.nz

⁹⁵ Available at www.nzqa.govt.nz

Audits of private training establishments, government training establishments and wānanga

The final report is used by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority to decide a private training establishment's ongoing registration and accreditation status, as well as the accreditation status of government training establishments and wānanga. Reports are published on the organisation's page of the authority's website. The published report offers a summary of the findings, while a more detailed report is also prepared for the organisation concerned and the authority. These reports follow a standard format.

Managing audits is based on a risk management approach. Audit cycle decisions are made against a set of published criteria to ensure consistency.⁹⁵ The length of an audit cycle could be less than one year, two or three years.

Once a decision on the audit cycle is made, the tertiary education organisation is notified by letter of the month and year of the next audit. The letter includes a record of the basis of the decision. If the organisation disagrees with the decision it can apply for a formal review of the audit cycle.

The profile page of any private training establishment can be viewed at www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers/details.do?providerId=102266001. On page all approved sites and approved and accredited courses are shown, as well as an establishment's National Qualifications Framework accreditation, its audit report and the audit cycle it is on.

Audits of industry training organisations

Currently, audits of industry training organisations are focused on a specific element of the standard. An audit verifies the performance of an organisation, its management processes for achieving quality outcomes, and its success as an industry training organisation. Each audit usually involves a visit to the organisation and these are carried out on a five-year cycle.

The audit process will be discontinued at the end of December 2009. It will be replaced by a new quality assurance approach, which will begin in September 2009.

Quality assurance arrangements for adult and community education (ACE) providers

If a tertiary education organisation is identified as an ACE provider, the quality assurance arrangements specific to ACE providers are part of the quality audit process.

Audits of institutes of technology and polytechnics

Full academic audits of these institutes are carried out by ITP Quality on a four-year cycle against the ITP New Zealand Academic Quality Standards. If an institute has met all the requirements of a standard, it will receive a quality assured status for up to four years. However, if an institute has not met all the requirements, then further limited scope audits will apply.

There are two supporting documents:

- ITP Quality Academic Audit Processes and Guidelines
- ITP NZ Academic Quality Standards.

These documents can be found at www.itpq.ac.nz/auditDownloadsrep.html.

	<p>Institute for technology and polytechnics audit reports are published on the ITP Quality website at www.itpq.ac.nz/auditReports.html.</p> <p>Moderation</p> <p>The purpose of moderation is to ensure that assessor judgements meet the required benchmarks as described within a unit standard. Tertiary education organisations must be accredited by an accrediting body before they carry out assessment against unit standards. Once they are accredited, organisations assessing unit standards must carry out both internal and external moderation.</p> <p>Tertiary education organisations that are assessing learners using unit standards are moderated by the New Zealand Qualifications Agency or by industry training organisations who are responsible for industry unit standards. The external moderation requirements are described in the National Qualifications Framework Accreditation and Moderation Action Plans that relate to sets of unit standards.</p> <p>The actual process of moderation differs between industry training organisations and the New Zealand Qualifications Agency. However, all involve checking assessment tasks and assessor judgements against the particular unit standard. The agency carries out the moderation process post-assessment. Standards are grouped into moderation systems and the agency then selects standards for moderation, based on a three-year cycle. For each moderation system chosen for moderation, 10 per cent of the standards are selected.</p> <p>Further information on the New Zealand Qualifications Agency’s process flow can be found at: www.nzqa.govt.nz/for-providers/moderation/manual/section0/0.6.html.</p>
Transnational application	<p>Delivery of overseas courses in New Zealand</p> <p>When an overseas course is to be offered in New Zealand and approval is required, the New Zealand provider is required to provide evidence of approval by an overseas agency, with details of the approval process undertaken by that agency. If the criteria applied to the proposal are sufficiently similar to those of the New Zealand Qualifications Agency and the process applied is rigorous, the agency may be prepared to approve the proposal or to negotiate an amended approval process. In doing so, the agency will consider the potential for legal, professional or cultural requirements and concerns that impact on the acceptability of the course for New Zealand conditions.</p> <p>If the course is to be managed in conjunction with a New Zealand based organisation, a memorandum of cooperation between the partner organisations is required.</p> <p>The same considerations will inform the accreditation process. A memorandum of cooperation must specify responsibility for the delivery, assessment, moderation, resourcing and monitoring of the course.</p> <p>As well as the above considerations, the Gazetted Criteria for Course Approval and Accreditation and the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications policies apply.</p> <p>Delivery of New Zealand courses offshore</p> <p>The Gazetted Criteria for Course Approval and Accreditation and the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications policies apply in this situation.</p>

<p>Comment</p>	<p>The current system of quality audit is a compliance focused model. As the sector has matured and increased its focus on improving outcomes, the focus of ongoing quality assurance is changing.</p> <p>Over the last three years, a common framework for an evaluative approach to quality assurance has been developed in New Zealand. The framework applies to all parts of the sector, but allows for the distinctive contributions of the different parts of the sector, for example, wānanga.</p> <p>Although universities are part of the common framework, they have their own separate legislation for quality assurance and they are therefore developing their approach to the framework independently of the rest of the sector.</p> <p>There are two key components of the new arrangements for tertiary education quality assurance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ongoing tertiary education organisation self-evaluation • periodic external evaluation. <p>There are two key tools for self-evaluation and external evaluation. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • key evaluation questions which assist the organisation and QAB to focus on the organisation's evaluation of the quality and value of outcomes • tertiary evaluation indicators which provide a framework for how quality and value might be evaluated. <p>It is anticipated that effective self-evaluation and external evaluation will result in improved quality of learning and teaching in relation to courses and qualifications and improved outcomes overall.</p> <p>Each external evaluation will conclude with two publicly available statements of confidence. One statement is about a tertiary education organisation's ability to undertake self-evaluation, while the other is about its educational performance. Both the statements of confidence and the resulting evaluation report will be published. The evaluation report will be quite different from the current quality audit reports.</p> <p>Tertiary education organisations commenced self-evaluation in early 2009 and will participate in external evaluation progressively from September 2009.</p> <p>All tertiary education organisations will participate in at least one external evaluation every four years.</p>
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Appendix 6: Singapore

<p>Overview</p>	<p>In Singapore, responsibility for initial and continuing VET is divided between two agencies. What is termed preparatory education and training can begin at Year five in schools and continue through to tertiary education in the universities, the five polytechnics and the Institute of Technical Education.</p> <p>All relevant quality assurance functions for these providers and their programs are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. The different providers have different patterns of self accreditation and awarding status.</p> <p>The Singapore Workforce Development Agency has recently been established and is responsible for funding and regulating continuing education and training. It is responsible for quality assuring nationally recognised training and assessment providers and programs under the Workforce Skills Qualifications system, which is the key continuing education and training system in Singapore. The Workforce Skills Qualifications system was established in 2004.</p> <p>Continuing education and training is also provided by the public education sector and the private education sector and these are under the purview of the Ministry of Education. Public education institutes involved in continuing education and training include the Institute of Technical Education, polytechnics and universities (also known as post-secondary educational institutions). Private education providers include a range of institutions, from those offering academic programs to those that offer short corporate courses. The Higher Education department within the Ministry of Education oversees the programs delivered by the post-secondary education institutions and private education providers.</p> <p>The major programs of the polytechnics and the Institute of Technical Education are aimed at school leavers. Their full-time certificate and diploma programs are funded by Ministry of Education and the Workforce Development Agency has nothing to do with these programs. However, under the 2008 Continuing Education and Training Masterplan polytechnics and the Institute of Technical Education were given a mandate to offer continuing education and training and workforce skills qualifications credentials to people in the workforce. The Workforce Development Agency has subsequently set up agreements with them to offer a certain number of training places in particular industry sectors. This delivery is funded and quality assured by the Workforce Development Agency and credentials are also issued by this agency.</p> <p>The Workforce Development Agency has also recently established an Institute for Adult Learning which uses programs accredited by the agency and are subject to its quality assurance procedures.</p> <p>The polytechnics are self accrediting, as are the universities.</p>
<p>Scope</p>	<p>Details and guidelines on the Workforce Skills Qualifications accreditation framework administered by the Workforce Development Agency can be found at http://app2.wda.gov.sg/web/contents/contents.aspx?ContId=359</p> <p>Details and guidelines on the criteria set out by the Ministry of Education for the private education sector can be found at www.moe.edu.sg/education/private-education/. These criteria and guidelines do not underpin accreditation as such because the ministry does not accredit private education institutes and their programs. However the ministry does requires private education providers to be registered with it.</p> <p>The post-secondary education institutions are educational institutes that primarily</p>

	<p>serve pre-employment students aged between 16 and 25. They are established by an act of government and their operations and programs are governed by relevant education-institutional councils. Their programs are made available under continuing education and training when resources permit.</p>
Registering bodies	<p>There are no registering bodies apart from the Ministry of Education and the Workforce Development Agency.</p>
Accrediting bodies	<p>There are no accrediting bodies apart from the Ministry of Education and the Workforce Development Agency, as the polytechnics and the universities have a self-accreditation capacity.</p> <p>Course accreditation involves a site audit.</p>
Training organisations	<p>An approved training organisation is an organisation which is formally recognised by the Workplace Development Agency to deliver training and assessment under the Workforce Skills Qualifications regulations. Registration is based on two sets of requirements, which address organisational structure and courses.</p> <p>The organisation requirement involves the evaluation of organisational practices to ensure quality and professionalism in the delivery of training and assessment services. This covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • management responsibility • financial practices • learner support services* • administrative practice.* <p>*Effective from 1 April 2008, supporting evidence relating to learner support services and administrative practices need not be submitted for evaluation. However, the relevant systems and processes must be implemented prior to Workforce Skills Qualifications training and assessment delivery.</p> <p>The course requirement involves an evaluation of the ability to design and develop curriculum, deliver instructions, and carry out competency-based assessment according to the Workforce Skills Qualifications requirements. This covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • course design and development • trainer and assessor qualifications • facilities and equipment. <p>The registration process involves two stages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-delivery approval—accreditation is put in place to ensure that the approved course satisfies the competency requirements of the Workforce Skills Qualifications system and is accessible to workers through appropriate delivery modes and resources. It also ensures that the course is to be delivered by a quality training organisation using qualified trainers and assessors. • Continuous improvement review—an accredited training organisation is expected to pursue continual improvement to uplift the quality of design and delivery. The Workforce Development Agency will validate the internal quality assurance system and capability of an accredited training organisation

	<p>on a regular basis. This involves a continuous improvement review.</p> <p>The roles and responsibilities of the accredited training organisation include the appointment of a management representative, which is a management level staff member responsible for ensuring its training and assessment activities meet the Workforce Skills Qualifications requirements. The management representative is also the main contact point for all Workforce Development Agency audits and required responses.</p> <p>The process typically involves a training program in quality assurance, and an audit of the courses.</p> <p>For public providers, it is necessary for all staff to acquire the necessary competency based training and competency based assessment competencies through training and assessment or through assessment-only. There should be a minimum of one supervisor who is competent in CBT and CBA. This supervisor will directly supervise staff that are not yet competent in the necessary CBT and CBA competencies. The staff under supervision are required to attain the necessary competencies within 12 months from the date of course accreditation approval.</p> <p>Details and guidelines on the Workforce Skills Qualifications accreditation framework administered by Workforce Development Agency can be found at http://app2.wda.gov.sg/web/contents/contents.aspx?ContId=359</p> <p>Details and guidelines on the criteria set out by the Ministry of Education for the private education sector can be found at www.moe.edu.sg/education/private-education/. All private schools and colleges are registered by the Ministry of Education, and its registration requirements relate to programs, teachers, facilities, ownership, health and safety. Registration involves a full inspection by the ministry and payment of a fee.</p> <p>Singapore does not specifically outline the requirements for trainer qualifications. The guidelines state that they need training and assessment qualifications at the advanced certificate level as a base—although alternatives are accepted—trade or vocational qualifications and a number of years of industry experience.</p>
Quality assurance approach	<p>Details and guidelines on the Workforce Skills Qualifications accreditation framework administered by Workforce Development Agency can be found at http://app2.wda.gov.sg/web/contents/contents.aspx?ContId=359</p> <p>The accreditation approach is broadly categorised into two categories:</p> <p>Pre-delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation accreditation (management responsibility, financial practices). • Course accreditation (course design and delivery, trainer and assessor qualifications, facilities & equipment). <p>Post-delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual continuous improvement review audits look into: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the internal quality assurance system ○ the adult educator management system ○ the outcome evaluation system ○ the Workforce Skills Qualifications/National Skills Recognition System related administrative system ○ viability of organisation ○ whether the organisation is free from breaches of terms and conditions. • Training organisations are graded accordingly under Continuous Improvement Review to determine their quality level and viability under the

	<p>Workforce Skills Qualification system.</p> <p>An audit process is used and the audits look at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • internal quality assurance systems • management of courseware and course delivery • management of educators and trainers • outcomes evaluation in terms of results and improvement generated • administrative systems • financial viability • breaches. <p>Audits are graded on a seven point scale with results of five to seven requiring some action.</p>
Transnational application	Transnational assessment is not applicable, as assessment must be conducted in Singapore for a Singaporean qualification to be issued. This is based on copyright and intellectual property.
Comment	Nil.
Current developments	Nil.

Appendix 7: United Kingdom

England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Quality assurance and VET—England	<p>The English VET framework is a complex and changing picture with 14 to 19 major vocational qualifications reform programs currently underway. At the centre of the reform agenda, there are two key non-departmental public bodies, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)⁹⁶ and the newly created Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator (OfQual).⁹⁷</p> <p>The former body, soon to be renamed the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Authority, is about to assume a more developmental role, while the latter will be regulatory and compliance focused. OfQual will be responsible for accrediting and monitoring all recognised 14 to 19 qualifications in England. Its future role in relation to national occupational standards is less clear because it has been given no responsibility for the standards themselves.</p> <p>The responsibility for developing the national occupational standards falls to the range of sector skills councils and standards setting bodies that operate within industry sectors and which are charged with creating sector qualification strategies that are built by applying the nationally set regulations to specific industry sector contexts. They are expected to work closely with the newly set up United Kingdom Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES), which in turn is responsible for monitoring progress towards a high skill economy.</p> <p>The UKCES replaces two government agencies—the Sector Skills Development Agency and the National Employment Panel. It is expected to develop an independent view of how successful and well integrated UK employment and skills systems are in meeting the competitive challenges faced by business. The commission will be funding and managing the performance of the 25 employer-led sector skills councils (see www.ukces.org.uk).</p> <p>The qualification system, now overseen by QCA and OfQual, is in a transitional phase, moving from the qualifications based National Qualifications Framework (NQF) to the credit focused Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF).</p> <p>The QCF is a new framework for recognising and accrediting all non-higher education vocational qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The framework is at the heart of the reform of the vocational qualifications system and is designed to make the whole system simpler to understand and use and more inclusive. It attempts to do this by awarding credit for qualifications and units (small steps of learning). Additionally, all national developments involved have to take account of the UK's European involvement, and the Lisbon Objectives for Employment and Training and progress towards a European Qualification for Lifelong Learning (see www.ukces.org.uk).</p>
Scope	The QCF draws in all organisations acknowledged as able to offer nationally

⁹⁶ The complementary regulatory authorities to the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority are: Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority—known via its Welsh acronym—ACCAC, which reports to the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS Wales,) and the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment for Northern Ireland. For Scotland it is the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

⁹⁷ OfQual at www.ofqual.gov.uk/

	<p>recognised, publicly funded qualifications. This includes over 100 awarding organisations and a small number of employers. The employers are part of a pilot to look at increasing the type of organisations that are permitted to offer national qualifications and accredited training.</p> <p>The QCF footprint extends to England, Wales and Northern Ireland.</p> <p>The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland 2004 includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • principles and approaches to statutory regulation • criteria for recognising awarding bodies • common criteria for accrediting qualifications to the NQF and QCF • additional criteria for different types of qualifications, including general certificates of secondary education, general certificates of education and national vocational qualifications. <p>The regulatory arrangements set out the requirements that will apply to organisations that operate within, and the qualifications that are accredited into, the QCF. They provide the basis for adding to the 600 plus qualifications already in the framework. This includes units and qualifications developed by employers who are recognised as awarding organisations. The arrangements are found at www.ofqual.gov.uk/files/Regulatory_arrangements_QCF_August08.pdf</p> <p>Before there was an NQF, then QCF, there was a vast array of publicly funded qualifications. Before the NQF came into existence there were over 12 000 qualifications within the English system.</p> <p>Flagship qualifications have additional sets of specific requirements. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the new diploma qualifications have tightly prescribed content and set features • the foundation learning tier is a further set of framework requirements over and above the QCF for all qualifications at or below level 2 • the new apprenticeship frameworks are to be governed by an apprenticeship blueprint setting out the national expectations for industry to follow.
Accrediting bodies	<p>Awarding organisations have to go through an approvals process. The recognition process is outlined in <i>The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2004)</i> found at www.ofqual.gov.uk/487.aspx. The relevant regulatory authority in England, Wales and Northern Ireland is responsible for this process.</p> <p>To become recognised, an awarding body must submit qualifications within the NQF and QCF and complete a two-stage process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recognition process (determining an awarding organisation’s suitability to offer national qualifications). • The application for accreditation of qualifications (with qualifications submitted and vetted on a qualification by qualification basis). <p>Applicants for recognition need to demonstrate against the following key criteria for awarding body’s procedures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • plan of provision

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • corporate governance • administration (including resources, equality of opportunity, expertise, centre registration/approval, data requirements, reasonable adjustments and special consideration, awards outside England, Wales and Northern Ireland, issuance of certificates, enquiries and appeals procedures, dealing with malpractice, customer service statements, monitoring and evaluation, use of languages). <p>To be accredited, a qualification must meet all of the relevant criteria.⁹⁸ The level of scrutiny a regulatory body will apply to an awarding organisation’s proposed qualifications, or groups of qualifications, at the accreditation stage appears to depend on the level of risk (depending on the ability of the awarding organisation body to demonstrate consistently the quality of its performance).</p> <p>Additionally, all awarding organisations are obliged to take part in formal training programs related to ensuring assessment reliability and consistency of interpretation and application of the assessment requirements.</p>
Registering bodies	<p>Awarding organisations bodies are responsible for centre approval—that is for a training organisation to be able to provide qualifications from an awarding body. <i>The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2004)</i> found at www.ofqual.gov.uk/487.aspx outlines in the recognition process of an awarding organisation body the requirements for approving centres (p. 11–12).</p> <p>Each centre:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) identifies a single named point of accountability for the quality assurance and management of the qualifications b) has the resources and systems necessary to support the qualifications c) undertakes to use buildings for assessment purposes that provide access for all candidates, in accordance with relevant legislation d) undertakes to use staff and/or associates who have the necessary competence in the subject matter of the qualifications, assessment procedures and language(s) used for assessment; and has the systems that ensure consistency of standards and support equality of opportunity e) documents the respective roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of each partner, with clear lines of communication between the partners, where a centre is a partnership arrangement between organisations f) agrees to provide the awarding body and the regulatory authorities with access to premises, people and records, and to cooperate with the awarding body’s monitoring activities. <p>Each awarding organisation body has its own approval process. See City & Guilds as an example at www.cityandguilds.com/documents/PCGQ_V5.2.pdf</p> <p>The regulatory authorities in England (QCA), Wales ACCAC (DELLS), Northern Ireland (CCEA) and Scotland (SQA) have been working with awarding organisations bodies to develop a common process for recognising centres that are capable of delivering accredited qualifications and units.</p>
Training organisations	<p>To enable the vocational qualifications system to meet employers' and providers' needs better, between November 2007 and March 2008 the QCA piloted a variety of ways for employers and further education providers with tailored training to be accredited. The recognition of employer and provider training program offers a</p>

⁹⁸ Criteria include: proposal and rationale, content of qualifications (including title, structure, subject matter), assessment (including design, application of assessment methods), determination and reporting of results (including result determination, aggregation and grading).

choice of approaches designed to suit organisations of all types and sizes. The options include variations on two key ways for tailored training to be accredited:

- Employers and providers can be licensed as awarding organisations, able to award qualifications themselves.
- Employers can work with other awarding organisations, either existing or newly licensed awarding organisations, to develop tailored units or qualifications and have them accredited. Options include working with:
 - existing awarding organisations to develop units or vocational qualifications for a specific employer or sector
 - trade associations, which can develop qualifications to suit their membership, which can include hundreds of small and medium size enterprises
 - other employers which have become awarding organisations—for example, suppliers and contractors working with large employers
 - providers (such as colleges) which have become awarding organisations, perhaps developing vocational qualifications for a particular sector.

Training organisations operate within a set of work and training based requirements. The learning and development standards, produced and maintained by the standard setting body ENTO, contain the assessor and verifier standards that training organisations are expected to obtain and adhere to. Training organisations also have to work within the NVQ code of practice⁹⁹ and any awarding organisation requirements with regard to centre approval and quality assurance training offered by the awarding organisations.

For training organisations, quality assurance is built around processes that aim to reduce sources of error in assessment. The ENTO framework of standards and single unit qualifications help introduce reliability and consistency to the internal assessment processes prevalent in vocational qualifications delivered by training providers and in the work place. These units form the basis of assessment credentials for those delivering vocational qualifications and training.

Unit Title

- A1 Assess candidates using a range of methods
- A2 Assess candidates' performance through observation
- V1 Conduct internal quality assurance of the assessment process
- V2 Conduct external quality assurance of the assessment process

These standards have been developed by ENTO in partnership with other key stakeholders. Typically, trainers would have A1 and A2. Staff with internal quality assurance responsibilities (overseeing the assessment of others in the delivery centre), would have the V1 unit, and awarding organisation staff visiting the centre (typically, twice a year) would be expected to have the A2 unit.

There is a range of source material, A and V specifications and guidance at www.ento.co.uk/standards/index.php

⁹⁹ Revised 2006, www.ofqual.gov.uk/files/qca-06-2888_nvq_code_of_practice_r06.pdf. The code is essentially for awarding organisations bodies but centres need to be aware of their roles and obligations. The code expands on *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (2004).

	<p>These standards are regulatory.</p>
<p>Quality assurance approach</p>	<p>The quality assurance system exists on three levels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National level—compliance with regulatory criteria. This applies to awarding organisations as well as their qualifications. The regulatory criteria for admission to the QCF is the main quality assurance filter (see above). • Sector level—where Sector Skills Councils and standard setting bodies scrutinise vocational qualifications in relation to their intended sector qualifications strategies.¹⁰⁰ • On an operational level—with each qualification having its own fit for purpose internal and external quality assurance system using assessment and verification or moderation of assessment decisions made. Surrounding this operational level of quality assurance is a national inspection framework, though this is primarily concerned with the quality of teaching and learning. <p>The basic principle is one of front-loading quality assurance, passing potential vocational qualifications through an employer/sector filter to agree its place in a sector qualifications strategy, then a regulatory filter to move it on to the QCF. If and when it is funded, the operational processes kick in.</p> <p>There is a fourth, more informal, system of quality assurance driven by the notion of what gets public funding. Having a qualification (or units) on the QCF is no guarantee of public funding. What is worthy of public funding in any one region is the responsibility of the Learning and Skills Council, soon to be replaced from 2010 by a new skills funding agency whose prime responsibility will be to channel funding to providers of VET in tune with national policy, need and provider quality.</p> <p>Underpinning all vocational qualifications are national occupational standards. This is the first step in the front-loading process. Occupational standards are based on the functional analysis done to identify and codify the competences needed in specific job roles. Vocational qualifications have to have a clear relationship with, and should be derived from, these standards.</p> <p>Vocational qualifications based on competence have a close relationship with the appropriate standards, while qualifications more focused on learning rather than competence will still be related to the standards but relate more to the underpinning knowledge and skills than the competences. This is the first stage of the quality assurance process: grounding all vocational qualifications in occupational standards and thereby building on a firm foundation of established industry/sector requirements.</p> <p>Delivery centres (colleges and training providers) intending to offer an awarding organisation’s qualifications must also undergo a vetting process. This centre approval process is administered by the awarding organisation owning the qualification the centre would like to offer.</p> <p>Once in the system, national level quality assurance is set by accreditation end dates,</p>

¹⁰⁰ All Sector Skills Councils are tasked with creating a sector qualifications strategy that, in effect, creates a mini framework of existing and required qualification provision needed to meet the anticipated needs for the sector. Awarding organisations wishing to have a vocational qualification accredited first need to gain council approval. Typically, this is done by finding a role and purpose within the council’s sector qualification strategy. The list of Sector Skills Councils can be found at www.sscalliance.org/SSCs/LinkstoSSCs.aspx

sampling to monitor standards over time, and then a reaccreditation process. At the operational/implementation level there is an inspection system (though more concerned with teaching and learning), with each awarding organisation running its own quality assurance systems based on fitness for purpose approaches.

Administration and implementation of competency based qualifications (NVQ), used as the basis for apprenticeship frameworks, are bound by the NVQ code of practice. This helps codify the vision of standards, based on strict protocols for assessment and verification processes.

The NVQ code of practice sets out the responsibilities for NVQ awarding organisations and their approved centres for the administration, assessment and verification of NVQs and NVQ units. The code of practice is primarily for use by awarding bodies. However, approved centres need to know the code of practice and understand the regulations. This publication is used in conjunction with *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland 2004*. The NVQ code of practice is available at www.ofqual.gov.uk/1511.aspx.

The culture of monitoring is relatively relaxed in vocational qualifications in comparison to the general qualifications taken by young people up to the age of 19 (GCE A Level, GCSEs). This partly accounts for the divisive perception, still strongly held in some quarters, of a lack of parity of esteem and comparability between the two types of qualification.

Awarding organisations bodies—formerly awarding bodies

The QCA, DCELLS and CCEA investigation into the burden for centres caused by awarding body monitoring (2008, p.1– 2) notes that there are three types of monitoring activity undertaken within a centre:

- Type 1: initial centre approval and ongoing post approval monitoring—relates to a centre’s overarching quality assurance processes. Centre approval refers to the initial review undertaken by awarding bodies to recognise the centre as a provider of their qualifications. Post approval monitoring refers to the continued review of centres to ensure that they continue to meet the requirements of the awarding bodies.
- Type 2: initial qualification approval and ongoing post approval monitoring—relates to a centre’s quality processes that govern the qualifications they offer. Centres have to provide assurance that they can deliver qualifications to the applicable quality and standards by proving that they employ sufficiently qualified staff to teach, assess, internally verify and moderate the work and that they have the appropriate facilities to run the courses offered by the awarding bodies.
- Type 3: external review of centres’ internal quality processes—relates to the external verification and moderation of internal assessment at the centres.

OfQual (England)

As part of its remit, Ofqual monitors awarding organisation bodies:

- focusing on systems and procedures against the regulatory criteria
- carrying-out a risk-based program to monitor qualifications across organisations and awarding bodies to ensure that standards are maintained and qualifications are fit for purpose.

¹⁰¹ Ofsted, www.ofsted.gov.uk/

The website (which is relatively new) includes qualification reports, and indicates that awarding body reports will become available.

This website also indicates that research has been undertaken to reduce the monitoring burden on centres. There has also been research and review into centre approval. Research has included England, Wales and Northern Ireland, with Scotland in one instance participating and in another acting as an observer.

Ofsted (England)

Ofsted is responsible for inspections of providers in England with equivalent inspection bodies operating in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Ofsted's main inspection method is by site visit. It inspects a wide range of education and training providers, and can compare standards across the range of publicly funded provision, including those:

- Funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families:
 - education and training for 14 to 19 year olds in a local area
 - all work-based learning (provided wholly or partly on employers' premises) for people aged 16 or over—for example, apprenticeships and national vocational qualifications
 - education for people aged 19 or over in further education colleges.
 - learning and e-learning through Learn Direct, provided by the University for Industry.
 - Adult and community learning—for example, local authority-funded evening classes.

- Funded by other government departments:
 - training for employment funded by Jobcentre Plus, including the New Deal
 - work-based and adult learning in prisons and young offender institutions at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons
 - training of service men and women from the British Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force, as well as Ministry of Defence civil servants
 - training for probationer constables (in partnership with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary).¹⁰¹

The nature of Ofsted inspections and what providers can expect during an inspection can be seen in the inspection toolkit at www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Forms-and-guidance/Browse-all-by/Education-and-skills/Learning-and-skills.

Guidance as to what inspectors look for at site visits can be found in the *Common Inspection Framework for inspecting education and training*, at www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Forms-and-guidance/Browse-all-by/Other/General/Common-Inspection-Framework-for-inspecting-education-and-training. This guide includes questions that must be asked, with the focus on:

- overall effectiveness
- achievement and standards
- the quality of provision
- leadership and management.

Ofsted publishes its reports for all monitoring and site visits. These can be accessed at www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxcare_providers/list. Reports are text-based and focus on the

	<p>experience of the learner. They require an overall judgement on how effectively and efficiently the provision meets learners' needs and how can it be improved further.</p>
Transnational application	<p>The QCF is a framework for recognising and accrediting qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. In international settings, quality assurance is controlled by and at the discretion of the awarding organisation and the local partner. A local partner may be an equivalent awarding organisation or perhaps a local or national government agency.</p> <p>The precise nature of the arrangements will reflect local circumstances and the detail of whatever contractual agreement has been signed by the participants.</p> <p>The requirements of the awarding body in this regard is detailed in <i>The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland 2004</i>, and further expanded in the NVQ code of practice (2006):</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Awarding bodies must apply the same level of quality assurance requirements to centres operating outside England, Wales or Northern Ireland as to those within this territory. The regulatory authorities reserve the right to take appropriate action if practices in approved centres outside of their territory could bring the education and training system of England, Wales and Northern Ireland into disrepute.</p>
Comment	<p>Successive UK governments fret about comparatively poor economic performance in global league tables and this has led to continual rounds of change in the VET system. The inability to establish parity of esteem between academic and vocational qualifications has plagued the system and there has been a repeated failure to establish or agree a high quality VET route for young people. The complexity of the English VET system, the array of codes and regulations that surround it, and the constant tinkering by policy makers has, at least in part, been why the academic qualifications have remained the gold standard with VET as the much poorer relation.</p> <p>In essence, the English VET system is a mixture of a pluralist approach to provision (awarding organisations) with a centralised steer on how best to provide. Governments, regardless of persuasion, have been uncomfortable managing the plurality of provision and have tried and failed to come up with their own flagship qualifications to replace firmly established brands like BTEC and City & Guilds.</p> <p>Lost in all of this is the employer. With multiple agencies purporting to speak for them, they are generally way behind the curve in keeping track of the changes made.</p>
Current developments	<p>VET provision and associated quality assurance arrangements are once again moving into a period of substantial change and reorganisation throughout the UK. Methods of and agencies for funding are also in a state of flux and there is an increasing focus nationally on the wider skills agenda and how it should fit more effectively across and within vocational and general educational provision.</p> <p>Considerable overlap and many similar underpinning processes are found across existing systems in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and even Scotland. They remain members of the same family even though the family characteristics may appear obscured at first glance. However, it is perhaps somewhat ironic that at the very moment collaborative European goals are emerging in the VET arena, UK devolution might be considered to be pushing in the opposite direction.</p> <p>Add to this the certainty of a 2010 general election, and all the uncertainty with</p>

	regard to policy that this generates, and it could be that this update will require further and possibly major revision within the next two years.
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Scotland

Overview	<p>SQA is the national body in Scotland for the development, accreditation, validation and certification of qualifications other than degrees. Qualifications are delivered in schools, colleges, workplaces and at other training establishments, and cover the whole range of academic and vocational subjects.</p> <p>SQA is the major awarding body for work related and work based qualifications of which the most significant are Scottish vocational qualifications and higher national certificates/diplomas.</p>
Scope	<p>Following is a brief outline of the VET provision.</p> <p><u>Skills for work</u> are courses for school pupils in the 14 to 16 age range which are designed to help develop skills and attitudes for employability. Learners are offered a variety of practical experiences linked to a particular vocational area and will normally spend some of their time at a local college, other training provider or employer.</p> <p><u>National certificates</u> are aimed at 16 to 18 year olds and adults in full-time education, normally at a college. They prepare learners for employment or further study by developing a range of knowledge and skills related to occupational areas.</p> <p><u>National progression awards</u> are designed to assess a defined set of specific skills and knowledge in specialist vocational areas. They are mainly used by colleges for short programs of study.</p> <p><u>Higher national certificates and diplomas</u> provide the skills and knowledge needed for employment at middle management and technician level. There are about 250 separate higher national qualifications covering a wide range of occupations. They are delivered in further education colleges. Many higher national diplomas allow entry to the second or third year of degree courses.</p> <p><u>Scottish vocational qualifications</u> are based on job competence and recognise the skills and knowledge needed in employment. SVQs are based on national occupational standards which are set by Sector Skills Councils or standard setting bodies. SVQs are available in all types and levels of occupations. Approximately 775 separate SVQs are offered and are primarily delivered in the workplace to those in full-time employment.</p> <p><u>Modern apprenticeships</u> offer those aged 16 and over paid employment combined with the opportunity to train for jobs at craft, technician and management level. Each modern apprenticeship framework is specific to a particular industry or sector but they all comprise an SVQ at level 3, core skills and an additional component.</p> <p><u>Professional development awards</u> are qualifications for individuals already in employment who wish to extend or broaden their skills.</p> <p><u>Customised awards</u> are specially designed vocational qualifications at any level to meet an organisation's needs for skills and expertise.</p>

Registering bodies	<p>As an awarding body, SQA is responsible for the approval of centres, production of guidance material, external verification and the certification of candidates. It has mandatory standards for qualifications and assessment, including a broad indication of where each qualification sits in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), which provides a national benchmark of Scottish qualifications. The way in which SQA sets and revises standards is contained in its Qualifications Development Strategy (currently under revision). This applies to any centre offering SQA qualifications but additional approval and verification criteria and procedures for SVQs may be agreed with the appropriate Sector Skill Council.</p> <p>Sector Skills Councils or standard setting bodies are government sponsored industry bodies made up of trade bodies, employers and specialists. They draw up national standards of competence, known as national occupational standards, and agree with the four UK regulatory bodies how these standards will be used in the development of vocational qualifications. They are also responsible for the qualification structure and assessment strategy. These are presented to the UK Co-ordinating Group (UKCG), of which SQA is a member, to ensure UK wide compatibility.</p> <p>Once UKCG has approved the national occupational standards, structures and assessment strategy, awarding bodies can then pick these up and prepare a submission for accreditation. The submission is judged against the awarding body criteria (2007), which involves looking at the awarding body's quality assurance arrangements, assessment methodology, assessment guidance materials and marketing information.</p> <p>SQA Accreditation, which is an autonomous arm of SQA, has the statutory role of approving awarding bodies, including SQA, to offer specific SVQs and to audit them annually to ensure consistency. It also accredits specific SVQ arrangements in relation to assessment, quality assurance, verification, marketing and support.</p> <p>National occupational standards have also become increasingly important in other vocational qualifications, such as higher national certificates and diplomas, professional development awards, national certificates and national progression awards because part of a qualification's 'fitness for purpose' is to prepare candidates for work (see using national occupational standards in the development of SQA group awards).</p>
Accrediting bodies	<p>As a statutory body, SQA is accountable to the Scottish Government's education and lifelong learning directorates.</p> <p>SQA is also an awarding body for vocational qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This provision must meet the quality standards of the regulatory body Ofqual.</p>
Training organisations	<p>Any training organisation must meet specific criteria to be an approved SQA centre. These relate to the management procedures and resources which underpin the implementation and assessment of SQA qualifications. SQA's <i>Quality framework: a guide for centres</i> describes SQA's quality framework and summarises the responsibilities of each centre. These apply to all its vocational provision, although there may be additional requirements for SVQs.</p>
Quality assurance approach	<p><u>SQA awarding body quality assurance system</u> SQA's primary role is the assessment of learning against national standards to provide individuals with worthwhile qualifications to meet their educational and</p>

training needs. It defines standards as the levels of knowledge and skills which learners must demonstrate to gain the qualification. The aim of SQA's quality assurance system is to ensure that these standards are maintained.

Approved centres must have the management structures and quality assurance systems to support the delivery, assessment and internal verification of SQA qualifications. The authority uses quality criteria to measure the effectiveness of centres.

Centres must be able to manage the internal processes which underpin the delivery and assessment of SQA qualifications. These include reviewing and updating their quality assurance system, ensuring that their staff are competent to assess in the appropriate subject or occupational area, providing accommodation and equipment as well as learning and assessment material. More information is contained in the SQA publication *Guide to approval for training providers and employers*.

SQA also checks that centres have appropriate systems for the guidance of candidates and demonstrate commitment to equal opportunities in their selection, admission, support and assessment procedures. This includes candidates' right to appeal against an internal assessment decision.

Centres must also maintain financial viability to ensure that candidates can complete their learning and training course.

Subject specialist external verifiers visit centres to check that they meet the SQA's criteria for the assessment of specific qualifications. They also check the centre's internal verification procedures as they apply to the assessment of the specific qualification. An effective internal quality assurance system is an essential requirement for all centres offering SQA qualifications as it ensures that all candidates are being assessed fairly and consistently and to the same standard. Each centre's internal verification system is monitored throughout delivery of its qualifications.

External verification ensures that national standards are being maintained consistently across time and across all centres. SQA appoints experienced practitioners and assigns them to a verification group—a grouping of similar SQA units or in the case of SVQs, to the full qualification.

External verifiers receive initial and ongoing training to ensure that they understand and apply national standards consistently. If centre assessments do not meet national standards, the external verifier will apply a "hold" which means that candidates cannot be awarded an SQA certificate until the hold is lifted. The external verifier reports to SQA and to the centre on the reason for the hold and the appropriate action which the centre must take to resolve the problem.

There are different types of external verification which are used according to particular circumstances or qualifications. In instances of computer-aided assessment, verification can be carried out online.

External quality assurance for vocational qualifications is carried out by visits to the centres in which the verifier samples candidate work across all assessors and internal verifiers. Specific external verification sampling requirements may be set by an SVQ assessment strategy. More information is contained in *Verification visits—a guide for colleges and ETPs*.

	<p><u>SQA Accreditation auditing of awarding bodies</u></p> <p>In its role as regulator, SQA Accreditation has introduced a proportionate approach to auditing awarding bodies. SQA Accreditation collects a wide range of information about the awarding bodies and the qualifications which fall within its remit: information about the awarding body's management of its quality assurance arrangements and qualifications is collected via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the awarding body audit • the awarding body's self-assessment report • centre monitoring visit reports • accreditation submissions • complaint • compliance investigations • timely responses to conditions or non-compliances • quarterly qualifications statistics report. <p>This information is used to create a snapshot about the performance of an awarding body and the degree of control that it has with regards to its quality assurance activities. Audits are, ordinarily, carried out on an annual basis, depending on several factors including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • length of time an awarding body has been approved • perceived risks associated with an awarding body • size of awarding body • number of Accreditation Unit approved qualifications offered by an awarding body • outcomes of an awarding body's centre monitoring visits. <p>SQA Accreditation presently works with around 30 approved awarding bodies, including SQA, delivering a range of approved vocational qualifications. It is anticipated that this number will grow and this has, to a degree, had an impact on the future of quality assurance activities. In future, it is anticipated that audits will be carried out on a three year rolling basis, unless it is deemed necessary that an annual audit is required. Awarding body audits can follow various designs, depending on the factors listed above and SQA Accreditation's historical understanding of each specific awarding body. Most audits will be one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • full audit • scoped audit • data systems audit. <p>Full audits examine each aspect of the awarding body criteria and record awarding body compliance/non-compliance. Full audits are usually only completed for new awarding bodies and for those that have undergone significant change, or are perceived as being high risk. Data systems audits are carried out on a rolling basis to ensure that awarding bodies are collecting, recording and submitting candidate data accurately and in the correct format. Scoped audits are designed to look only at specific areas of the awarding body criteria, but in much greater detail than would be possible during a full audit.</p>
Transnational application	The quality assurance framework is applied to all SQA qualifications. Refer to: Guidance for UK-Based Centres Offering Qualifications Overseas
Current developments	SQA Accreditation audits awarding bodies against the Awarding Body Criteria 2007. The criteria and accompanying guidance were updated recently to reflect

changes to UK regulatory practice and the extended function of SQA Accreditation to accommodate vocational qualifications other than SVQs.

SQA is currently exploring changes to the quality assurance arrangements for all SQA qualifications. This will introduce the use of risk rating and the application of a range of sanctions.

SQA has recently completed its higher national modernisation project which ensured that its HN provision is current and fit for purpose.

A curriculum for excellence providing a streamlined curriculum for 3 to 18 year olds has been developed and is being implemented. A key aim of the new curriculum is the development of skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work.
