CREDIT MATRIX

REPORT ON THE OUTCOMES OF TESTING AND TRIALLING

Victorian Qualifications Authority
February 2005
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The credit matrix is a key initiative of the VQA (Victorian Qualifications Authority) Board. By providing a common way of describing and comparing achievement in all the post compulsory qualifications available in Victoria, the credit matrix is designed to support improved linkages and pathways between qualifications, and make the qualifications system easier to understand and use.

A common approach to describing achievement - in the form of a model of levels, level descriptors and points - was developed for the credit matrix in June 2004.

This report outlines the findings from seven trialling projects that were established to test the usefulness and useability of that model. Each project focussed on using the model to assign levels and points to units drawn from a range of post compulsory qualifications.

In addition to the Gippsland Education Precinct (GEP) project (a longer term project first established in 2003), projects were established in collaboration with the IT Skills Hub, Transport and Distribution Training Victoria, the Victorian Business Services, Finance and Property Industry Training Board, the Engineering Skills Training Board and the Process Manufacturing Training Board, the NZQA (the New Zealand Qualifications Authority) and Victoria University.

The VQA also commissioned The University of Melbourne Assessment and Research Centre to conduct an analysis of the degree to which judgements made in the Business trial were consistent from expert to expert.

The VQA would like to thank the opportunity to thank the coordinators and the many experts who took part in each of the above projects project for their contribution of time and expertise. The projects have in all instances provided extremely valuable feedback on the model.

Whilst there are a number of aspects requiring further refinement, the outcomes overall are positive, both in terms of the usefulness and useability of the model, and the interest and enthusiasm that has been generated by those responsible for coordinating the projects.

The next step will be for the trialling outcomes to be combined with feedback from the 2004 state-wide consultation. With the assistance of experts involved in the trialling projects, as well as the Board’s credit matrix advisory groups, work will then be undertaken on refining the model and guidelines, with the aim of producing a final, revised version in early 2005.
INTRODUCTION

This report outlines the findings from seven trialling projects that were established to test the model of levels, level descriptors and points developed for the credit matrix in June 2004.

BACKGROUND

The credit matrix provides a common way of describing and comparing learning successfully achieved that would be applicable across the range of post compulsory qualifications available in Victoria. The need for a system like the credit matrix was first identified in 2002 as part of VQA Board discussions on ways of improving the links and pathways between qualifications.

Consultation

State-wide consultation on the concept of a common system of levels to describe complexity of learning, and points to describe volume, took place between June and September 2003. Over 1,200 responses were received with approximately 80% indicating strong in principle support.

Initial design

Building on this support, a team of external experts was commissioned in October 2003 to design a detailed model of levels and points. Based on extensive research, and consultation and discussion with other national and international experts in the field, a draft design was developed in April 2004.

Initial testing and trialling

Between May and June 2004, feedback from stakeholder groups, some initial trialling and a broad scale survey indicated that, whilst there were some aspects requiring further work, the draft design was overall sound.

One aspect requiring further work was the finalisation of the number of levels in the model. Feedback indicated that either a six or an eight level model would be feasible. A six level model would generate higher levels of consistent judgements, but would be likely to rely more heavily on volume as a differentiator. An eight level model would be likely to generate lower levels of consistency, but would rely less on volume as a differentiator. As the eight level model was the preferred model, consistency was identified as an area that should be investigated further.

Others areas identified as needing further work included the clarity of some of the definitions and wording, the role and format of specific and overall level descriptors, and the process to be used for assigning levels and points.
Further trialling and consultation

In June 2004 the VQA Board endorsed a refined draft model and a program of further and more extensive testing and trialling that would run from August 2004 to November 2004.

Trialling outcomes would be combined with broader feedback from a second state-wide consultation planned for the end of 2004, with the aim of ensuring the delivery of a robust and fully tested model in early 2005.

THE TRIALLING MODEL

The key features of the June 2004 model are described in the documentation that was provided to the trialling projects. Copies are attached in Appendix 1 on page 15, and Appendix 2 on page 20.

THE TRIALLING PROJECTS

Projects established in August 2004

In addition to the already established Gippsland Education Precinct (GEP) project, four trialling projects, covering the Engineering and Manufacturing, Information Technology, Transport and Distribution, and Business fields of study and training, were established in August 2004.

The projects were coordinated respectively by:

- the Engineering Skills Training Board and the Process Manufacturing Training Board Victoria
- the IT Skills Hub
- Transport and Distribution Training, Victoria
- the VQA in association with the Victorian Business Services, Finance and Property Industry Training Board

Each project focussed on:

- gauging the useability and usefulness of the model of levels and points, and the process for assigning them to qualification units (credit rating)
- examining the outcomes of credit rating and in particular, the degree to which the ratings allocated yield a picture of relationships between the various units and qualifications that is useful and makes sense
- providing an indication of the extent to which the credit matrix is likely to realise one or more of its stated aims, and add value to identified aspects of strategic importance in the respective fields of study/training

The projects were required to select qualifications that spanned senior secondary, higher and vocational education and training, were relevant to aspects identified as strategically important in the particular field of study or training and that would allow,
within the time available, for levels and points to be allocated to the complete set of units required for the successful completion of each qualification.

All projects were premised on trialling being conducted on site by recognised experts in the field. Projects were also framed to facilitate feedback and discussion, and to strengthen collaboration and mutual understanding across sectors.

A focus on consistency
The Business project had a particular focus on testing the degree to which the application of the levels and points would yield consistent outcomes. The University of Melbourne Assessment Research Centre was commissioned to conduct an analysis of the data arising from this trial and to report on the outcomes in early December.

Further projects
Two further trials commenced in October 04. One involved the application of both the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) descriptors and the credit matrix descriptors to selected VQA and NZQA qualifications. The other focussed on Arts and Humanities subjects delivered at Victoria University. Interim outcomes from these two projects that were available at the date of publication have been incorporated into this report.

The credit matrix descriptors are also being used in the VQA Recognition of Informal Learning project to inform the development of a flexible, unit based recognition framework. Outcomes from this project will be published separately later this year.

OVERALL SCOPE
Trials have involved over 140 experts drawn from secondary, vocational and higher education and training, and the assignment of levels and points to a total of just under 600 units, drawn from qualifications ranging from Certificate I, VCE and VCAL to PhD. The qualifications are listed in Appendix 3 on page 22.

KEY FINDINGS
Key findings from the projects are that, whilst there is room for some refinement, and possibly also for further validation in some subject areas:

- the eight levels and the associated sets of descriptors are generally appropriate, clear and applicable across the range of qualification units
- the concepts and definitions of volume, points and average learning time are clear and generally usable
- the model yields judgements on overall level and volume that are at an acceptable level of reliability and comparability
- the process for assigning levels and points is easy and, with practice, relatively quick to undertake
- a holistic, ‘best match’ rather than ‘decision rule’ approach to making judgements on overall level is preferred, as is the retention of both overall and detailed level descriptors, and a flexible approach to the use of one or both sets
• the development and use of illustrative or ‘benchmark’ materials is recommended as is the use of a consensus approach to making judgements, at least in the early stages
• there is no conflict, either in terms of process or outcomes, with the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Qualification Guidelines
• the projects have generated high level interest, good will, and keenness for further involvement from all participants.

Issues raised include:
• the need to check the alignment of level and detailed descriptors, especially at levels three and four
• lack of confidence in estimates of average learning hours where assumptions that underpin the design of units - for example, the knowledge and skills learners will have on commencement of the unit - are unclear
• the need to revisit and improve the clarity of wording, and in some specific aspects/areas, the role and appropriateness of the descriptors and domains (in particular autonomy and contexts).

In terms of usefulness, the credit matrix is seen by the majority as having clear potential:
• to contribute to improved qualification design
• to assist in identifying duplication/credit transfer and pathways across fields/industry areas
• as a mechanism that promotes whole field, cross sectoral discussion and sharing of views.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND COMMENTS

Levels

Clarity
Several participants said that although they understood that the focus was on assigning levels to units, and that units within a qualification would not necessarily all be at the same level, they felt a need, at least as a starting point, to ‘site the world of qualifications into levels, ‘along the lines of PhD has to be 8 - simply as a useful peg.’

The need ‘to get a sense of the whole range’ was a matter raised in the Business trial where, because of the nature of the exercise, participants had little opportunity to see or discuss outcomes beyond those relating to the particular units they were assigned.

The issue of ‘getting a clear sense of what a level means’ is linked in part to the approach taken to the development of the levels - the attempt to produce levels anchored in levels of complexity per se, rather than an existing qualification hierarchy. This necessarily places a heavy burden on level descriptors as carriers of common and consistent meaning, and is discussed further on page 10. It is important to note however, that with one exception, the outcomes of each of the projects
indicate that the meaning of the descriptors is overall sufficiently clear to generate consistent judgements.

Descriptors

Feedback overall was that the level and detailed descriptors were generally appropriate and applicable across the range of qualification units and fields of study and training.

The one exception was in units drawn from an Arts and Humanities area where the descriptors were felt to be inadequately conceptualised and too practically orientated to apply well to the area.

Other issues raised were in relation to:

- autonomy, which was found by some, at least in the early stages of assigning levels, to be challenging to understand and to apply. Several senior secondary and higher education experts linked independence solely to physically present guidance or supervision and saw it as ‘relevant only to VET qualifications/the workplace’. Others questioned the relevance of autonomy as a factor contributing to overall complexity, and suggested this should be investigated further.
- contexts, which some participants also found challenging to understand and apply. In some instances, care was needed to think about the situations envisaged in the unit outline rather than situations learners might be asked to face in the workplace. In others, raters simply found that the role of contexts in determining relative complexity, particularly in VCE and Higher Education unit outcomes, was not always readily apparent.
- while understanding the idea of ‘best match’, a common comment was that ‘much hangs on key words’. Suggested changes in wording were provided for autonomy, context, application, and (especially at levels three, four and six) knowledge descriptors.
- distinctions of the order ‘a little, some, more and a lot…’ were rightly signalled as insufficient unless supported by further definition or exemplification. As well as rephrasing, suggestions included collapsing columns (for example, combining application with autonomy or contexts, or autonomy with contexts) or more radically, folding the detailed descriptors more comprehensively into the overall level descriptors and using those alone.

Detailed versus level descriptors

There was a strong view from participants in one trial that only one set of descriptors (the level descriptors) was needed. In other trials, the general view was that having both sets is helpful, especially in instances where a decision on overall level is not straightforward.

Most, but not all participants, felt the level descriptors were the most helpful. There was a divergence of views, however, on whether it was better to use the level descriptors first and then the detailed descriptors for confirmation, or vice versa.

A further issue raised was the degree to which the detailed and summary level descriptors aligned. Lack of alignment was felt to be an issue particularly at levels...
three and four. In making an overall decision, many participants felt the summary level descriptor ‘took the overall level down’ in comparison with judgments made against the detailed level descriptors.

Decisions on level

The process used by the majority of participants was very much focussed on ‘best match’ and, whether made against the detailed or summary level descriptors, generally one of discounting (i.e. confirming outcomes were not at a level above and not at a level below).

There appeared to be very few instances where judgements were made solely on ‘AQF level’ or gut feel/personal knowledge and experience, with only fleeting reference to supporting evidence from the unit outline. In the vast majority of instances, effort was made to make sure that decisions were informed by a thorough examination of the documentation.

In making judgements about overall level, few participants did this by identifying a median, mode or mean. Final decisions were, as noted above, in most instances made on a ‘best match’ basis. Where comment was provided, it indicated wariness of hard and fast rules around means, modes or weightings.

Points

The concept of average learning time is new and needed to be explained. Once explained there was little evidence of points and average learning time being confused with nominal hours.

The absence of clearly stated assumed prior knowledge and skills was, however, a problem encountered in a number of unit outlines in a number of trials. Several raters were uncertain about whether to allocate points on the assumption that all knowledge and skills would be new, or not.

There was unease also about generating inflated estimations of the total volume of learning underpinning a qualification in instances where knowledge and skills are replicated across respective individual units.

The inclusion of volume of learning as a consideration in the design of units was felt by many to be something that could play a key role in ensuring greater clarity and transparency about expected breadth and depth of coverage.

Process

The overall view was that the process for allocating level and points was generally clear, easy to follow, and with practice, relatively quick.

Issues raised included:

- the importance of induction into the concepts, definitions, and the key points in the process
- the value of ‘walking the process through’ and showing how the descriptors apply to pre-rated, sample units, and of doing practice units
• the importance of opportunities to identify, clarify, revisit and confirm queries and issues

• the value of a process that allows for multiple rating of units by a small group of experts, both as a means of ensuring public confidence, but also for generating shared understanding and a consensus view, ‘especially in the early stages when benchmarks and exemplars are necessarily few and far between’ (IT trial participant).

**Consistency of outcomes**

Findings from the analysis conducted by The University of Melbourne Assessment Research Centre on outcomes of the Business trial indicate that:

• ratings assigned by individual experts independently - with no discussion or moderation - will be at an acceptable level of consistency

• averaging level ratings assigned by small groups of experts will yield very high levels of consistency

• detailed descriptor ratings across domains are highly correlated (for example, a high rating in the knowledge domain is very likely to be associated with high ratings also in the context, application and autonomy domains). This contrasts with the findings of the analysis undertaken on the initial draft model and may be due to the focus in this exercise (which was absent in the previous exercise) on generating an overall level.

• there is a ‘tendency towards the mean’ with the lowest and highest levels least used. Whilst this could indicate a need to refine the relevant descriptors, there is no strong evidence of this occurring in other trials. It could also simply reflect a paucity of units, or lack of detail in units that were at those levels in the trial.

Findings to date from the rating undertaken with the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) indicate similar patterns* of rating by both groups of expert raters against selected NZ and Victorian qualification units in Engineering, using both NZ and credit matrix descriptors. Data available at this stage indicates more variation in the assignment of points than levels, with raters at this stage suggesting this may be due to lack of detail in the relevant unit outlines.

Findings from projects overall indicate that acceptable and in some instances very high levels of consistency are achievable (Session two of the Engineering trial yielded judgements that were approximately 90% consistent across detailed and level descriptors and points).

Higher levels of consistency appear to be associated with unit documentation that is comprehensive and clear, and raters who are experts in the field and have a close knowledge of curriculum, assessment and the range of delivery contexts.

*There are ten levels of complexity in the NZQA framework as opposed to the eight credit matrix levels. It is not expected that levels allocated will be identical but that there will be a consistent relationship between them. A formal correlation exercise is yet to be completed. The approach to calculating points is similar in both systems.
Induction, group discussion and the use of benchmark/practice units to generate common understanding (and, as noted in the IT Skills Hub recommendation, effectively ‘translate’ the credit matrix descriptors into the context of the particular field of study or training), were further factors that participants felt were significant in contributing to high rater confidence and consistency.

**Overall usefulness**

Each project pointed to the timing of the exercise (over a holiday and the end of year examination period) as having impacted on the scope and in some instances, the quality of the outcomes. In most instances the number and range of qualifications involved had been fewer than initially planned. Nonetheless, with the exception of one subject area, projects reported that the outcomes were both useful and made sense.

At no point in the process was there seen to be any conflict, either in terms of the process or its outcomes, with the AQF qualification guidelines.

There is further work to be done to ensure the model is comprehensively applicable, but in the majority of instances there was a clear view that the credit matrix could add value, particularly in the area of qualification design. Many participants felt the credit matrix would assist in improving the clarity and overall quality of unit documentation. Other areas identified included:

- the credit matrix as a means of improving transparency and consistency across fields of study and training, as well as across sectors
- the credit matrix as a tool to provide the basis for the identification of duplication/credit transfer and pathways across fields/industry areas
- the credit matrix as a mechanism that facilitates productive whole field, cross sectoral discussion, and sharing of views
- the credit matrix as a useful tool for clarifying qualification requirements and for pathways planning and counselling.

**Other general comments**

All participants felt that linking the trials to fields of study made good sense. Field of study is the prime point of reference for learners and teachers and, as noted in the concluding comments from the Engineering Skills Training Board report, it must necessarily be taken into account in the context of the primary purpose of the credit matrix - building qualification pathways.

In terms of the trialling exercise overall, all projects indicated greater levels of understanding of the credit matrix, as well as enthusiasm and interest in undertaking further work.
CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

Whilst, as noted on page 11, the findings from the trial projects indicate that there are some aspects requiring further refinement, the outcomes overall are positive, both in terms of the usefulness and useability of the model, and the interest and enthusiasm that has been generated by those responsible for coordinating the projects.

The next step will be for the trialling outcomes to be combined with feedback from the 2004 state-wide consultation. With the assistance of experts involved in the trialling projects, as well as the Board’s credit matrix advisory groups, work will then be undertaken on refining the model and guidelines, with the aim of producing a final, revised version in early 2005.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information about the credit matrix, refer to the VQA credit matrix publications listed on the next page. All the VQA publications listed can be downloaded from the VQA website (www.vqa.vic.edu.au). If you would like copies mailed to you, telephone (03 9637 2422) or email vqa@edumail.vic.gov.au.

Regular updates, new publications, and notices of any workshops will be posted on the VQA website (www.vqa.vic.edu.au).

If you took part in the trialling projects, we will make sure you receive hard copies of any new information or items of interest. If you are new to the credit matrix and would like to be added to the mailing list, or if you have any queries, comments, or suggestions, contact the VQA by telephone (03 9637 2806), by facsimile (03 9637 2422) or by email (vqa@edumail.vic.gov.au).
REFERENCES

Documents


Websites

http://www.anta.gov.au
http://www.aqf.edu.au
http://www.dest.gov.au
http://www.det.vic.gov.au
http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au
http://www.vqa.vic.gov.au
Appendix 1: Guidelines used by the trialling projects

GUIDELINES FOR ASSIGNING LEVELS AND POINTS

LEVELS AND DESCRIPTORS

- There are 8 levels covering units in all qualifications from Certificates I through VCE and VCAL to PhD. Level 1 is the lowest, level 8 the highest.

- Levels are about the relative complexity of the knowledge and skills acquired on successful completion of the unit.

- Complexity involves consideration of
  - the kind of knowledge involved (e.g. whether it is factual or highly theoretical)
  - the kind of issues/problems involved (e.g. whether they are routine or complex) and the kind of processes/strategies needed to address them (e.g. following a given set of established guidelines, or developing and selecting from a range of possible solutions)
  - the degree of autonomy/independence/direction involved (e.g. high level of guidance or direction, versus high level of judgement and discretion)
  - the kind of contexts or situations involved (e.g. whether they are always familiar and change very little, or are highly changeable, with many unfamiliar, unpredictable or unexpected aspects)

- The detailed descriptors outline the key characteristics in terms of each of the above (knowledge, application, autonomy and contexts) at each level.

- The level descriptors draw the detailed descriptors together in a summary statement for each level.
• The detailed descriptors and the level descriptors are designed to apply to all kinds of learning involved in all kinds of post compulsory qualifications. They are necessarily **broad** and the focus in the process of assigning a level to a unit is very much on deciding **best, rather than precise or exact fit**.

• The approach is therefore one of **confirmation**, which recognises the key role of expert judgement. It operates on the basis that the process should be relatively quick and easy and that you don’t move to intense thought on fine levels of detail unless necessary.

**KEY POINTS ABOUT LEVELS**

• The process is about assigning **levels to units**, not whole qualifications. There is no assumption that the units within a qualification will all be at the same level – there is good reason why they might not. A unit in the first year of a degree might be designed for beginners in Japanese, for example. It will be at a much lower level than the other units in the first year which happen to all be designed to build on five years’ previous study.

• Decisions on level must be based on what is intended and described in the accredited documentation (VCE study design, Training Package, course outline) – not what you think should be achieved, or extra’s that might be achieved. Factors such as good/bad teachers, student ability, teaching method, delivery in class, on the job, by distance must be set aside.

• It is vital to keep in mind what is needed for **satisfactory completion** – a bare pass.

**POINTS**

• Points are an indication of the amount or volume of learning involved from the start to the successful finish of a unit

• Points are derived from a reasonable, common-sense, practised-eye estimate of average learning time (in hours).

• Average learning time includes all the learning relevant to the unit, including, for example:
  - Training sessions, class/tutorial sessions, lectures, online learning
  - Private study/independent information retrieval/revision
  - Practice in applying and refining knowledge and skills
  - Planning, counselling, mentoring
  - Revision, assessment and feedback

  1,200 hours in a year, or 20 hours over three days is a useful yardstick.

• The hours are then divided by 10 to convert them to (whole number) points.
KEY POINTS ABOUT POINTS

- Learning time is not the same as teaching/delivery time (which is the basis for the calculation of nominal hours in the VET sector for funding purposes). A PhD, for example, can involve a large volume of learning but little teaching contact time. This distinction is critical - the credit matrix is designed to work irrespective of learning context. Points cannot therefore just be a reflection of classroom instruction time.

- Average learning time is not required learning time - some learners will learn more quickly, others will take longer.

- As with levels, assignment of points must be based on what is intended and described in the accredited documentation (VCE study design, Training Package) – not what you think should be achieved, or extra’s that might be achieved. Factors such as good/bad teachers, student ability, teaching method, delivery in class, on the job, by distance must be set aside.

- It must take into account where the unit starts from – a unit on flying a passenger jet in bad weather may be based on the assumption that basic flying skills and knowledge have already been achieved at the start of the unit. It would be wrong to calculate average learning time in this instance on the premise of starting from scratch, having never climbed into an aircraft at all.

- It is important also to keep volume separate from complexity. A unit can involve highly complex learning but be small in quantity, and vice versa - and combinations in between.

- Lastly, it is vital, as with levels, to keep in mind the volume of learning associated with satisfactory completion – a bare pass.
THE PROCESS: ASSIGNING LEVEL

It is important, from the point of view of consistency, that every rater uses the same process. The process outlined below is not the only one which could be followed - and we would appreciate comments on it - but for the purpose of the exercise, unless you are advised otherwise, please follow the steps as outlined below.

Step 1
Refer to the documentation for the unit and reacquaint yourself with the expectations underpinning successful completion/competence.

Note: The focus is on the knowledge/skills students can be expected to have, if they are successful at the end of the unit – thinking of yourself as an assessor may help. Remember not to take into account good or bad delivery….the assumption must be that what is intended in the training package/syllabus is delivered and AQTF requirements are met.

Step 2
Refer to the detailed descriptors and select a best match descriptor for each of the four categories (knowledge, application, autonomy and contexts)

Note: A qualification does not necessarily contain units that are all at the same level.

Step 3
If all the descriptors you have matched fall within the same level, or if there is some spread across one or more different levels, but you still feel confident that overall, the balance tips in favour of one level rather than another, check your judgment against the overall level descriptors to make a final confirmed ‘best match’. Then proceed to step 7.

Note: This is not precision – not all elements of all descriptors may be relevant or particularly significant - but you do need to feel that the judgement is on balance ‘right’.

Step 4
If there is a spread you feel undecided about, or there just isn’t a sense of an overall clear-cut level, refer first to the level descriptors to see if a confident on-balance judgement can be made against them. If so, proceed to step 7.

Step 5
If a confident on-balance judgement still can’t be made, compare the unit with one or more of the benchmark units - or units you have previously rated that you do feel sure about - which are at the level, above and/or below. If after comparison you can still find no best match, go to step 6.

Step 6
Document on the record sheet why, in this instance, a valid decision on overall level is not possible.

Step 7
Document your decision, and any relevant comments in support of it, on the record sheet.
THE PROCESS: ASSIGNING POINTS

It is important, from the point of view of consistency, that every rater uses the same process. The process outlined below is not the only one which could be followed, and we would appreciate comments on it, but for the purpose of the exercise, unless you are advised otherwise, please follow the steps as outlined below. A useful benchmark is the idea of 1,200 hours approximating one year of learning time, or 20 hours over three days.

Step 1
Refer to the documentation for the unit and reacquaint yourself with the requirements and expectations.

Step 2
Start from the premise that any outcomes that the unit builds on have already been successfully acquired.

Note: It is vital to quantify learning time in terms of the time needed, on average, to meet the particular unit outcomes - not the outcomes for the unit and all the learning outcomes of units that may have preceded it.

Step 3
Calculate the number of hours of learning, on average, which will underpin successful completion of the outcomes, taking into account for example:

- Training sessions, class/tutorial sessions, lectures, online learning
- Private study/independent information retrieval/revision
- Practice in applying and refining knowledge and skills
- Planning, counselling, mentoring
- Revision, assessment and feedback

Note: This is not just about teaching time, but the total hours of learning needed by learners, on average, to successfully achieve the outcomes. Some qualifications e.g. the VCE are designed so that every unit involves the same volume of learning. In other qualifications, units may vary considerable in volume.

Step 4
Check your estimated total hours against benchmark units or other units that you have assigned hours to, and feel comfortable about. If there are no large discrepancies and you feel comfortable about your estimate, proceed to step 6. If you are unsure or there are discrepancies, proceed to step 5.

Note: This does not have to be precise - it is a best guesstimate - and it is the total which matters - and the total will be divided by 10

Step 5
If you cannot come to a comfortable decision, note this and the reasons why on the record sheet.

Step 6
Divide the hours by 10, and record the result as points on the record sheet.

Note: Whole points must be recorded – no decimal points
### Appendix 2: Descriptors used by the trialling projects

#### Level descriptors

The table below contains a level descriptor for each of the eight levels of complexity. The level descriptors focus on the main features of the tasks/activities that would be associated with successful achievement of unit outcomes at each level. They draw together the more specific features outlined in the detailed descriptors on the following page. From a learner’s perspective, they describe the kinds of things they would be able to do if they successfully achieved the outcomes of a unit at any one of the eight levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Tasks and activities that draw on leading-edge knowledge and expertise in a highly specialised field. They require creative approaches to highly complex and/or new issues, and generally result in a new and original contribution that extends the boundaries of existing knowledge and practice. They require independent and original thinking, and very high level skills in coordinating self and/or others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tasks and activities that draw on highly specialised theoretical and practical knowledge and skills. They involve issues that are both significant and complex, and that generally result in a significant contribution being made to existing theory, method or practice. They require substantial independence and coordination of self and/or others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Tasks and activities that rest on broad, overall mastery of the theory and practice that underpins a field of study or occupational area. They involve complex issues and widely varying situations and circumstances. Any available guidelines usually need to be substantially changed to deal with them. New guidelines may need to be developed. Substantial skills in organising self and/or coordinating others are needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tasks and activities that draw on significant theoretical, technical and abstract knowledge, and involve complex issues set in varying situations and circumstances. Any available guidelines or procedures usually need to be substantially adapted or changed. Significant skills in organising self and/or coordinating others are needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tasks and activities that draw on a range of theoretical and practical knowledge and skills, with significant depth in a number of areas. Skill and judgement are needed in varying and adapting procedures and techniques for a range of different situations and circumstances. Skills in organising self and/or others are also required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Tasks and activities that draw on a range of theoretical and practical knowledge and skills, which are generally orientated to one or more broad fields of study/occupational areas. Judgement is required, for example, in varying guidelines or procedures to deal effectively with any unusual or unexpected aspects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tasks and activities that draw on a range of knowledge and skills, including some basic theory. These may be broadly orientated towards one or more broad fields of study/occupational areas. Some judgement is usually required, such as making an appropriate selection from a range of given options or guidelines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tasks and activities that draw on a limited range of basic knowledge and skills. The tasks and activities generally have a substantial repetitive aspect to them, and there are usually very clear rules or procedures to be followed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Detailed descriptors

The table below provides detailed descriptions of the kind of knowledge, the kinds of issues and ways of addressing them, the degree of independence and the kinds of contexts that are typically associated with outcomes at each level of complexity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contexts</th>
<th>Autonomy</th>
<th>Application</th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 8</strong></td>
<td>New contexts, or contexts which involve new aspects or new combinations of aspects</td>
<td>Self-directed</td>
<td>Significant, complex and emergent issues are tested, formulated and addressed, resulting in a new and original contribution to theory, method or practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 7</strong></td>
<td>Changing contexts, involving a wide range and variety of significant unfamiliar and/or unpredictable aspects or combinations of aspects</td>
<td>Minimal guidance</td>
<td>Significant, complex and emergent issues are tested, formulated and addressed, resulting in a significant contribution to existing theory, method or practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 6</strong></td>
<td>Changing contexts, involving a wide range and variety of significant unfamiliar and/or unpredictable aspects or combinations of aspects</td>
<td>Broad guidance and direction</td>
<td>Complex issues are identified, tested and addressed by substantially adapting/developing new procedures and guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 5</strong></td>
<td>Changing contexts, involving a range of significant unfamiliar and/or unpredictable aspects</td>
<td>Broad guidance and direction</td>
<td>Complex issues are identified and addressed using different/substantially adapted processes and guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 4</strong></td>
<td>Mainly changing contexts, involving a range of unfamiliar and/or unpredictable aspects</td>
<td>Broad guidance and direction</td>
<td>Largely non-routine issues are identified and addressed using guidelines which require interpretation and adaptation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 3</strong></td>
<td>A mixture of stable and changing contexts, involving a range of aspects, some of which are unfamiliar or unpredictable</td>
<td>Routine guidance and direction</td>
<td>Routine and non-routine issues are identified and addressed by interpreting and applying established guidelines with some variations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 2</strong></td>
<td>Mainly contexts that are stable, involving a range of predictable and familiar aspects</td>
<td>Supervision and/or guidance</td>
<td>Routine issues are identified and addressed by selecting from and following a range of established guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 1</strong></td>
<td>Highly stable contexts, involving a limited range of very familiar and predictable aspects</td>
<td>Close supervision/guidance</td>
<td>Routine issues are addressed by following established guidelines and processes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3: Qualifications used in the trialling projects

VCE Information Technology*
VCE Business Management*
VCE Legal Studies*
VCE Art
VCE Studio Arts
VCE Visual Communication and Design

Lino printing (non-accredited ACFE course)

Cisco Networking Associate
Cisco Networking Professional
CompTIA Net+ *

Certificate I in Plastics
Certificate I in Business*

Certificate II in Engineering Studies (Vic)
Certificate II in Engineering Production
Certificate II in Engineering Production Technology
Certificate II in Process Manufacturing
Certificate II in Plastics Extrusion
Certificate II in Plastics Blow Moulding
Certificate II in Transport and Distribution (Road Transport)
Certificate II in Transport and Distribution (Warehousing)
Certificate II in Transport and Distribution (Storage)
Certificate II in Visual Arts and Contemporary Craft
Certificate II in Business*
Certificate II in Finance (Retail Financial Services)*
National Certificate in Engineering (General Engineering – Mechanical), New Zealand

Certificate III in Engineering Studies (Vic)
Certificate III in Engineering Production Systems
Certificate III in Engineering Mechanical Trade
Certificate III in Engineering Fabrication Trade
Certificate III in Process Manufacturing
Certificate III in Plastics Extrusion
Certificate III in Plastics Blow Moulding
Certificate III in Transport and Distribution (Road Transport)
Certificate III in Transport and Distribution (Warehousing)
Certificate III in Transport and Distribution (Storage)
Certificate III in Information Technology (Network Administration)*
Certificate III in Visual Arts and Contemporary Craft
Certificate III in Business (Frontline Management)*
Certificate III in Business*

Certificate IV in Engineering
Certificate IV in Polymer Technology
Certificate IV in Transport and Distribution (Road Transport, Warehousing and Storage)
Certificate IV in Visual Arts and Contemporary Craft
Certificate IV in Business*
Certificate IV in Business (Recordkeeping)*
Certificate IV in Business (Administration)*
Certificate IV in Business (Small Business Management)*
Certificate IV in Liberal Arts

Diploma of Engineering (TP)
Diploma of Engineering (Vic)
Diploma of Polymer Technology
Diploma of Logistics Management
Diploma of Visual Arts
Diploma of Business (Marketing)*
Diploma of Business (Administration)*
Diploma of Business (Development)*
Diploma of Business (Recordkeeping)*
Diploma of Community Services
Diploma of Liberal Arts
National Diploma in Engineering (Mechanical Engineering) , New Zealand

Advanced Diploma of Engineering (Vic)
Advanced Diploma of Polymer Technology
Advanced Diploma of Information Technology (E-Security)
Advanced Diploma of Business (Recordkeeping)*
Advanced Diploma of Business Management*
Advanced Diploma of Business (Advertising)*
Advanced Diploma of Strategic E-Business Development*

Bachelor of Arts (Business)
Bachelor of Arts (Youth Studies)
Bachelor of Arts (Sociology major)
Bachelor of Information Systems*
Bachelor of Visual Arts
Bachelor of Visual Arts (Hons)
Bachelor of Arts (Journalism)*

Master of Visual Arts (coursework)
Master of Fine Art (research)
Master of Business Administration*
Master of Arts (Finance and Accounting)*

Doctor of Business Administration*
Doctor of Philosophy

* Levels and points were assigned to selected units only