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The credit matrix is one of the most important projects that the VQA has worked on in the last three years. The project has now reached a crucial stage and again needs your input and advice.

Why is the project so important? Because we see the credit matrix as a means to enhance the portfolio of qualifications in Victoria and the uses made of those qualifications. We’ve used the analogy of a currency before; without the credit matrix, transactions involving qualifications are like a world where everything is done by barter rather than by money.

The credit matrix provides the means - the currency - by which to compare the learning outcomes of the units and modules that form the components of qualifications. That allows improvements to take place in Victoria in the design of qualifications; in the planning of learning journeys by and for students; and in the negotiation of credit transfer from one qualification into another. It also provides the basis for greater recognition for completion of programs of units and modules which meet a student’s needs but do not add up to a complete qualification.

Just as price labels are an everyday part of the world of retail, a qualifications world with the credit matrix in place would have every accredited unit and module labelled with its credit matrix level and points. Students’ statements of results, statements of attainment and transcripts would show the level and points against each unit or module successfully achieved. And discussions of level and points would become part of the normal language of course writers, qualifications designers, education and training advisors and course admissions staff.

Before we get to this qualifications world, we have to be sure that we have the right approach in place to allow for accurate and reliable allocation of level and points to each unit and module. The system of levels and points for doing this is described in this paper and we seek your comments on it.

If the approach is right and has stakeholder support, we then need an approach to implementation which moves us smoothly from the current position (a world without the credit matrix) to one where all units and modules have had credit level and points assigned and validated. We talk about implementation in this paper, too, and seek your advice on it.

We’ve had great support from a wide range of practitioners and stakeholders in getting to this stage with the credit matrix development - we thank everyone who’s been involved so far. Now, we look forward to your continued support and to your comments on whether the design of the credit matrix described in this publication is the key to open the door marked “Implementation”.

We look forward to your feedback.

Foreword

Professor Gerald Burke
Chair, Victorian Qualifications Authority Board

Dr Dennis Gunning
Director, Victorian Qualifications Authority
Executive Summary

This paper is the fifth in a series of papers developed by the Victorian Qualifications Authority (VQA) and the second consultation paper on the credit matrix.

THE CREDIT MATRIX AIMS TO:

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

Our first consultation provided overwhelming support for the concept, and for developing the outline we provided in the consultation paper into a detailed working design.

This paper provides a summation of the work to date on the development of the credit matrix, including information on its main features. There is also a section on implementation.

The credit matrix provides a common way of describing and comparing learning achieved that is applicable across the range of qualifications available in Victoria. It is enabling, rather than regulatory in focus and has been designed to assist and enhance existing policies, specifications and procedures, including the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF).

THE CREDIT MATRIX RESTS ON TWO KEY MEASURES:

• levels as a common way of describing and comparing the complexity or relative challenge of learning successfully achieved
• points as a common way of describing and comparing the volume or amount of learning involved.

Levels and points are assigned to qualification units.

A unit is the smallest part of a qualification that can be separately certified. For example a unit can be a VCE unit, a unit of competency or a module from vocational education and training (VET) or a subject from a higher education course.

A unit may be assigned any number of whole points, but only one level.

Whole qualifications are described in terms of the profile of points required at one or more levels to gain the qualification, the profile being derived from the levels and points assigned to the respective units.

OUR VISION FOR THE CREDIT MATRIX IS THAT:

• points and levels are allocated to all units
• points and levels will appear on the database of registered courses (STAR)
• points and levels will appear in all qualification guidance materials
• points and levels will appear on a student’s Statement of Attainment and Statement of Results
• the credit matrix will support the development of pathways between units and qualifications
• the design of qualifications incorporates a credit profile
• students and selection/admissions officers will routinely use the credit matrix in discussions about credit transfer.

FOOTNOTE
1 For more details about these publications refer to page 26.
RESEARCH, CONSULTATION AND TRIALLING

The credit matrix has been informed by a detailed program of research, tests and trials, and ongoing consultation. The design team has ensured that effective links were made with industry, with higher education and with other related work both in Victoria and nationally.

The trials will examine the outcomes of allocating points and levels. In particular the projects will test the degree to which the points and levels allocated are consistent from one practitioner to another and whether they yield a picture of relationships between the various units and qualifications that is useful and makes sense.

IMPLEMENTATION

Provided that there are positive outcomes from this consultation and the current trialling of the credit matrix, the VQA's next stage of the project will be to develop a strategy for phased implementation in Victoria.

Refinement of the credit matrix will occur as it is informed by practice on the ground and your views from this consultation.

The consultation questions are provided in a pro forma on page 27. Please complete the questions and return them by 15 December 2004 to:

The Victorian Qualifications Authority
41a St Andrews Place
East Melbourne VIC 3002

OR

Fax: 03 9637 2422
Email: vqa@edumail.vic.gov.au
Tel: 03 9637 2806
Introduction

This paper is the fifth in a series of papers developed by the Victorian Qualifications Authority (VQA) and the second consultation paper on the credit matrix.

THE FIRST CONSULTATION PAPER

In 2003, in the first consultation paper we distributed, we asked you for your views on the idea of a credit based framework, named the credit matrix, which would be designed to apply to all post compulsory qualifications in Victoria.

We explained why we thought there was a need for such a framework, and provided an outline of its main features to illustrate how it would work and what it would do.

The responses we received indicated overwhelming support for the concept, and for developing the outline we provided in the consultation paper into a detailed working design.

THIS CONSULTATION PAPER

This paper provides a summation of the work to date on the development of the credit matrix, including information on its main features. There is also a section on implementation. We are keen to hear your comments on how best to integrate the credit matrix into the Victorian education and training system.

While this paper concentrates on the specific design elements of the credit matrix, subsequent papers will focus on the application of the credit matrix by individual users.

This paper, like our first consultation paper, has been widely distributed. It seeks feedback from students, parents, teachers, trainers, employers, employees, selection, guidance and recruitment officers and each of the various institutions, bodies and associations that have an interest and involvement in the post compulsory qualifications system.

The questions we would like you to respond to are included in the text, and repeated on the pro forma at the end of this paper. You may like to detach or photocopy the pro forma and complete it as you read through the paper.

Further details about how to send your views to us, and by when, are provided on page 18.

Your views, together with the outcomes of the trials, will inform the further development and implementation of the credit matrix.

FOOTNOTE

2 For more details about these publications refer to page 26.
LEVELS

There are eight levels of complexity or challenge overall. Level one is the lowest and level eight the highest.

The level of complexity of learning outcomes is determined by the following four factors: the kind of knowledge involved (knowledge), the kind of problems or issues involved and the skills needed to address them (application), the kind of situations in which they are set (contexts), and the degree of independence and self organisation (or organisation of others) that is required (autonomy).

DESCRIPTORS

Detailed descriptors capture the main features associated with successful achievement of unit outcomes in terms of each of these factors, at each of the eight levels.

Level descriptors draw these features together in eight brief summary statements.

POINTS

Points provide an indication of the volume or amount of learning. They are calculated on the basis of estimated average learning time (in hours) divided by ten.

Average learning time is the number of hours of learning, on average, that has been incorporated into the design of the unit rather than the actual time taken to successfully achieve the outcomes of the unit. Some people may take less time, others more. 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).

Learning time can include:

- training sessions, class tutorial sessions, lectures, online learning
- private study or independent information retrieval or revision
- practice in applying and refining knowledge and skills
- planning, counselling, mentoring
- revision, assessment and feedback.

FOOTNOTE

3 Information on the Australian Qualifications Framework is available from www.aqf.gov.au
Background

THE VICTORIAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

The Victorian Qualifications Authority (VQA) is responsible for all post compulsory qualifications except higher education qualifications in Victoria.

The VQA has an important role to play in making sure that the Government’s goals and targets for improving participation and achievement in education and training in Victoria are met.

This role is captured in the three objectives that were legislated for the VQA in 2000.

They are to:

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

The credit matrix is closely linked to the second and third of these objectives. It is in essence about a common way of describing and comparing the successful achievement of learning.

RATIONALE FOR THE CREDIT MATRIX

The concept of the credit matrix was first raised in 2002 as part of the work being undertaken by the VQA on how the connections or pathways between qualifications could be strengthened.

At the time there were also a number of other important developments in Victoria. Some of these developments were about particular qualifications, such as the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) and the new degrees in specialised vocational subjects.

Other policy directions were broader and include the provision of pathway guidance and support for young people, the development of generic and employability skills, the recognition of informal learning and the development of flexible qualification pathways as individuals move in and out of work.

What was needed was a common basis for comparing learning that removed the notions of the place of learning or the sector of education. A tool was required that would enhance the operation of the nationally agreed Australian Qualifications Framework and would be enabling rather than regulatory in purpose.

AIMS OF THE CREDIT MATRIX

The aims of the credit matrix are to:

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

“I believe the idea of a common and uniform approach is a far more simple, uncomplicated method”.

JULIE COLANGELO,
MATURE AGE STUDENT AND SMALL BUSINESS OWNER
CONSULTATION

In June 2003, the VQA consulted with key stakeholders to ensure that there was broad support for the concept before any detailed development began. This was done by developing a consultation paper, which outlined a way of describing and comparing learning based on ‘levels’ (to indicate the level of complexity) and ‘points’ (to indicate the amount of learning). The paper explained briefly how the system might work and what it could do.

The VQA consulted extensively on the concept of the credit matrix with education providers, community organisations, learners and parents, and undertook some initial exploratory work on the broad outline of a design for the credit matrix. Outcomes from the consultation are provided in the Appendix. With approximately 81 per cent of over 1200 (written and verbal) responses to the paper indicating strong support for the concept and the aims, work began on the development of the credit matrix.

RESEARCH

Initial work on the credit matrix was undertaken concurrently with the consultation, and focused on identifying the best approach to a common measure. Early work investigated the approaches used overseas, related work in Australia and how this might impact on the credit matrix design.

Work on details of the credit matrix commenced late in 2003. This work focused on the development of levels, level descriptors, the approach to determining volume and an accompanying set of definitions and guidelines. This early work was also informed by tests and trials, and a program of ongoing consultation. The design team ensured that effective links were made with industry, with higher education and with other related work both in Victoria and nationally. Practitioners were also engaged to see if level descriptors worked logically and were easy to use for units from Doctorates, Bachelor and Masters Degrees, Diplomas, the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) and Certificates I - IV.

Feedback from the education practitioners who took part in the testing, taken together with the findings from a detailed statistical analysis, indicated that the structure of the initial credit matrix was sound and that it was relatively easy to use across the complete range of units tested. Two short ‘on the ground’ trials, undertaken by the Gippsland Education Precinct and the IT Skills Hub, confirmed these findings, and also pointed to a number of ways in which the design of the credit matrix could be refined to make it work more effectively.

TRIALLING

The credit matrix is currently being trialled across a range of fields of study and training, and across a range of different qualifications.

Each project focuses on assigning levels and points to the units required for successful completion of a range of qualifications which span senior secondary, higher education and vocational education and training (VET).

The aim is to gauge the useability and usefulness of the levels, level descriptors and points per se, as well as the process we have designed for assigning them.

The projects will undertake the critical task of examining the outcomes of allocating points and levels. In particular the projects test the degree to which the points and levels allocated are consistent from one practitioner to another and whether they yield a picture of relationships between the various units and qualifications that is useful and makes sense.

The projects will also indicate 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 each field.
We are also working with our partner agency in New Zealand, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, on a project that will involve exchanging qualifications and applying both our system of levels and points, and the New Zealand system of levels of points, to a selection of both our qualifications. The aim of this project is not only to seek feedback on our credit matrix from practitioners in New Zealand, but also to see if there is a clear relationship between the outcomes of each other’s approach.

OUTCOMES TO DATE

Early evidence from our trials indicates that:

- the levels, descriptors and points are relatively quick and easy to understand and use
- the levels and descriptors seem to work across the range of different qualifications
- the overall picture that results from assigning levels and points to units within qualifications is not at odds with the intent of the AQF and the respective AQF qualification titles
- having a common language makes it much easier for practitioners, in one education sector, for example higher education, to discuss and compare learning with practitioners in another education sector, say VET
- the credit matrix looks to have clear potential for helping to make the process of designing, or redesigning qualifications easier, and for identifying pathways between qualifications in related, but different fields
- the credit matrix should make the relationships between the range of qualifications available in a field much clearer
- it appears the credit matrix may also work well if applied to learning gained informally as well as to learning obtained through qualifications accredited by private corporations.

These outcomes are encouraging and we look forward to receiving full reports from the projects in late November. These outcomes, together with your feedback will be invaluable in validating and further refining the credit matrix with the aim of providing an optimum basis for the next stage of implementation.

“As a basis for establishing greater common ground for decisions about credit transfer and comparability of achievement the matrix is a good starting point. It should also provide a useful stimulus for institutions to re-examine the requirements for individual awards to ensure that they are not overly restrictive.”

PROFESSOR SALLY WALKER, VICE CHANCELLOR, DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

OTHER ADVICE

Simultaneously, advice on the value and use of the proposed credit matrix has been provided by members of the VQA Credit Matrix Board Working Group, the VQA Credit Matrix Stakeholder Reference Group, and a VQA Credit Matrix Industry Forum. Members of these groups are listed in the Appendix.

Workshops for invited guests and practitioners from a range of state and national bodies, institutions and authorities, and feedback from an on-going program of presentations at state and national conferences and workshops have also been major sources of advice.
The credit matrix

The credit matrix provides a common measure that can be applied to units within all qualifications throughout Victoria. In essence it is like a common currency that can be applied to units of learning. Since it is a currency applied to units and modules, not to whole qualifications, it does not duplicate the AQF and is enabling, rather than regulatory in focus.

SCOPE AND FOCUS

The credit matrix rests on two key measures:

- levels as a common way of describing and comparing the complexity or relative challenge of learning successfully achieved
- points as a common way of describing and comparing the volume or amount of learning involved.

Most qualifications have a structure that groups learning into several units. Many VET qualifications, for example, are made up of ‘units of competency’. Degrees are sometimes broken down into subjects. These elements of a qualification, for which this paper uses the common term ‘units’, are important because they are the smallest formally recognised component. However, a qualification is often made up of a large number of units. In the case of a degree, for example, these units may be different in level and volume.

The credit matrix levels and points are designed to provide a common way of describing the complexity and volume of learning in each of the units that make up the different qualifications.

Whole qualifications are then described in terms of the profile of points, or amount of learning required at one or more levels. The profiles are derived from the levels and points assigned to each of the units, as in the example below.

CERTIFICATE IV IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The points and level of each unit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mandatory units</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connect hardware peripherals</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Install and optimise system software</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connect internal hardware components</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run standard diagnostic tests</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operate computing packages</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify components of multimedia</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create user &amp; technical documentation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply occupational health &amp; safety procedures</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in a team and individually to achieve organisational goals</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use advanced features of computer applications</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operate computer hardware</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create code for applications</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elective Units</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop macros and templates for clients using standard products</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customise packaged software applications for clients</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operate system software</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide network systems administration</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administer network peripherals</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access the internet</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create web pages with multimedia</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Should be a great incentive for people to continue/upgrade their studying without feeling it had been a waste of time. Strengthens the idea of lifelong learning/ the importance of all kinds of education.”

MEGAN LANGDON, WINCHELSEA COMMUNITY HOUSE

CERTIFICATE IV IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY CREDIT PROFILE

30 points at level 2
16 points at level 3
40 points at level 4
22 points at level 2 or 3 from the elective units
Learning achieved is described in terms of level (indicating complexity of learning) and points (indicating the amount, or volume of learning).

Levels and points are assigned to qualification units. A unit is the smallest part of a qualification that can be separately certified. A unit may be assigned any number of whole points, but only one level.

Whole qualifications are described in terms of the total points required at one or more levels to gain the qualification, the total being derived from the levels and points assigned to the respective units.

“Employers are able to more easily measure educational qualifications from differing organisations. Professional development can be more easily quantified and documented for staff”
RHONDA HAWKE, DIVISION MANAGER, RECRUITNET CAREER SKILLS

There are eight levels of complexity or challenge overall. Level one is the lowest and level eight the highest.

Research and evidence from practice indicates that relative complexity of learning outcomes is determined by four broad factors, the kind of knowledge involved (knowledge), the kind of problems or issues involved and the skills needed to address them (application), the kind of situations in which they are set (contexts), and the degree of independence and self organisation (or organisation of others) that is required (autonomy).

These four factors form the basis of the descriptors which are provided in the Appendix.

The detailed descriptors capture the main features associated with successful achievement of a unit in terms of each of the four factors at each of the eight levels. The summary descriptors draw these features together in eight brief statements.

Two sets of descriptors have been developed because we think that for some purposes, a general summary may be most useful. For others, the more detailed version might be more useful. In yet others - for example, if you were formally responsible for assigning levels and points to units - it may be best to use both sets.

In all cases it is important to remember that the descriptors are intended to capture the broad characteristics that are generally associated with the complexity of the learning outcomes at each level. Not every aspect of every descriptor - detailed or general - will necessarily always be relevant, but there should always be an overall ‘best match’.

Points provide an indication of the volume or amount of learning. They are calculated on the basis of estimated average learning time (in hours) divided by ten.

Average learning time is the number of hours of learning, on average, that has been incorporated into the design of the unit rather than the actual time taken to successfully achieve the outcomes of the unit. Some people may take less time, others more.
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).

Learning time can include:

- 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.

The range of potential outcomes for users of the credit matrix are summarised in the diagram on page 16.

**CASE STUDY**

The following example demonstrates how points and levels can be used to record the learning achieved by an individual over time.

Terry completed her VCE in 2004 (Figure 1). She continued her learning by undertaking the Certificate IV in Information Technology and two units, Communicate in the workplace and Apply safe working practices, from the Retail Training Package through her part-time work (Figure 2), and then completed a Bachelor of Information Technology during 2006 to 2008 (Figure 3). Terry’s Record of Learning is provided opposite.
CONSULTATION QUESTIONS ABOUT THE DESIGN OF THE CREDIT MATRIX

As a result of the first consultation, stakeholders agreed in principle to the concept of the credit matrix, and supported the development of the outline we provided in that paper into a detailed working design.

It was agreed that the credit matrix should be designed to:

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

In what ways does the design of the credit matrix achieve these aims?

How will the credit matrix design help to achieve the aims that are important to you?

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS ABOUT THE LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

The results of the trials will provide us with information about the outcomes and process of allocating points and levels to units. In particular, we want to examine the degree to which the allocation of points and levels is consistent from one practitioner to the next and whether the points and levels provide a picture of the relationships between various units and qualifications that is useful and makes sense.

Do the level descriptors look capable of describing all the learning outcomes of units from senior secondary certificates to doctorates?

If not, what's missing?
OUTCOMES FOR USERS

LEARNER
- easier to understand qualifications
- flexible qualifications
- training is built on
- HR tool to assist training and development
- build link between their programs and qualifications

EDUCATION & TRAINING INSTITUTION
- build qualifications pathways
- monitor, guide, support and track progress
- support collaborative provision
- reflect different combinations of learning

SELECTION & ADMISSIONS OFFICERS
- provide connections between qualifications
- decisions guided by detailed achievement profiles
- consistency in providing credit
- support progression of learners

QUALIFICATION DESIGNERS & ACCREDITATION AUTHORITIES
- tailor qualifications for new purposes and needs
- develop qualification pathways
- focus qualifications to appropriate levels
- qualification outcomes are more reliable, valid and comparable
- widen the access to learning

EMPLOYERS
- easier to understand qualifications
- flexible qualifications
- training is built on
- HR tool to assist training and development
- build link between their programs and qualifications

EDUCATION SYSTEMS
- identify standards reflecting different kinds and combinations of learning
- support innovation
- address gaps in provision
- promote collaboration
- monitor learning and training outcomes
- increase our engagement with national work
- set learning targets

SELECTION & ADMISSIONS OFFICERS
- provide connections between qualifications
- decisions guided by detailed achievement profiles
- consistency in providing credit
- support progression of learners

QUALIFICATION DESIGNERS & ACCREDITATION AUTHORITIES
- tailor qualifications for new purposes and needs
- develop qualification pathways
- focus qualifications to appropriate levels
- qualification outcomes are more reliable, valid and comparable
- widen the access to learning

LEARNER
- easier to understand qualifications
- flexible qualification pathways that support progression
- build up records of achievement
- better basis for negotiating credit transfer
- enhance transportability into an international context

EDUCATION & TRAINING INSTITUTION
- build qualifications pathways
- monitor, guide, support and track progress
- support collaborative provision
- reflect different combinations of learning
Provided that there are positive outcomes from the consultation and the current trialling of the credit matrix, the VQA’s next stage of the project will be to develop a strategy for phased implementation in Victoria. This strategy will propose a way forward that will allow us to monitor the first phase of implementation, gather evidence of users’ experiences, and provide an opportunity for refining the credit matrix.

**OUR VISION FOR THE CREDIT MATRIX IS THAT:**

- points and levels are allocated to all units
- points and levels will appear on the database of registered courses (STAR)
- points and levels will appear in all qualification guidance material
- points and levels will appear on a student’s Statement of Attainment and Statement of Results
- the credit matrix will support the development of pathways between units and qualifications
- the design of qualifications incorporates a credit profile
- students and selection/admissions officers will routinely use the credit matrix in discussions about credit transfer.

Our implementation strategy will take into account, as a first priority, the needs of users, including learners, employers, qualification designers and accreditation authorities, education and training institutions, selection and admissions officers and the education system.

During this period of implementation we will be working closely with our partners in the Department of Education and Training and with its other statutory authorities. Within the national system we will work through the Australian National Training Authority and the Australian Qualifications Framework Advisory Board, as well collaborating with our colleagues in other states and territories. At the international level we will work through other countries that have implemented credit frameworks (see page 25 for information on developments elsewhere).

Refinement of the credit matrix will occur as it is informed by practice on the ground. We are also seeking your views on how the credit matrix could best be implemented to meet the needs of users.

**CONSULTATION QUESTION ON FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

The range of potential outcomes for users of the credit matrix is summarised in the diagram on page 16. Consider the outcomes relevant to you as a potential user of the credit matrix.

**Q** In what ways would you use the credit matrix to achieve these outcomes?

**CONSULTATION QUESTION ON SUPPORT**

In light of the uses that you have identified above, which of the following might support your use of the credit matrix?

- guidelines
- information kits for different users
- websites
- help lines
- professional development
- case studies
- an online database of points and levels for all units
- others - please list.
Have your say

As well as this consultation paper, the VQA is organising a number of consultation forums in November and December 2004 to discuss the proposed credit matrix. If you are interested in attending a forum please contact the VQA on 03 9637 2806 or email vqa@edumail.vic.gov.au

Please send written responses by 15 December to:

The Victorian Qualifications Authority
41a St Andrews Place
East Melbourne VIC 3002.

Or

vqa@edumail.vic.gov.au

In addition, if you would like a VQA staff member to attend a meeting to discuss the credit matrix, contact us, and subject to availability, we would be pleased to participate.
### SUMMARY 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>Level 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>Level 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>Level 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>Level 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>Level 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>Level 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>Level 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>Level 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>
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>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Level 8**  | • New contexts, or contexts which involve new aspects or new combinations of aspects | • Self-directed  
|  | | • High level judgement and decision-making, planning and coordination of self and/or others |
| **Level 7**  | • Changing contexts, involving a wide range and variety of significant unfamiliar and/or unpredictable aspects or combinations of aspects | • Minimal guidance  
|  | | • Substantial discretion, planning and coordination of self and/or others |
| **Level 6**  | • Changing contexts, involving a wide range and variety of significant unfamiliar and/or unpredictable aspects or combinations of aspects | • Broad guidance  
|  | | • Substantial discretion, planning and coordination of self and/or others |
| **Level 5**  | • Changing contexts, involving a range of significant unfamiliar and/or unpredictable aspects | • Broad guidance and direction  
|  | | • A considerable degree of discretion, planning and coordination of self and/or others, within broad parameters |
| **Level 4**  | • Mainly changing contexts, involving a range of unfamiliar and/or unpredictable aspects | • Broad guidance and direction  
|  | | • Discretion, planning and coordination of self and/or others, within broad parameters |
| **Level 3**  | • A mixture of stable and changing contexts, involving a range of aspects, some of which are unfamiliar or unpredictable | • Routine guidance and direction  
|  | | • Some judgement, planning and coordination of self and/or others, within defined parameters |
| **Level 2**  | • Mainly contexts that are stable, involving a range of predictable and familiar aspects | • Supervision and/or guidance  
|  | | • Limited judgement and discretion |
| **Level 1**  | • Highly stable contexts, involving a limited range of very familiar and predictable aspects | • Close supervision/guidance  
<p>|  | | • Minimal discretion |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APPLICATION</th>
<th>KNOWLEDGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Significant, complex and emergent issues are tested, formulated and addressed, resulting in a new and original contribution to theory, method or practice</td>
<td>• Creation and interpretation of new knowledge and/or techniques through original advanced research of a quality to satisfy formal, academic review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Significant, complex and emergent issues are tested, formulated and addressed, resulting in a significant contribution to existing theory, method or practice</td>
<td>• Critical awareness of current problems, or of new insights or techniques, some of which are at the forefront of a field or area of practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Complex issues are identified, tested and addressed by substantially adapting/developing new procedures and guidelines</td>
<td>• Familiarity with sources of new information, recognition of limitations of current knowledge and practice • Broad mastery of the scientific/theoretical basis of a field or area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Complex issues are identified and addressed using different/substantially adapted processes and guidelines</td>
<td>• Theoretical, technical and abstract, with significant underpinning theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Largely non-routine issues are identified and addressed using guidelines which require interpretation and adaptation</td>
<td>• Theoretical, technical and abstract, with significant depth in a number of areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Routine and non-routine issues are identified and addressed by interpreting and applying established guidelines with some variations</td>
<td>• Theoretical, technical and abstract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Routine issues are identified and addressed by selecting from and following a range of established guidelines</td>
<td>• Concrete, factual, with elements of abstraction or theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Routine issues are addressed by following established guidelines and processes</td>
<td>• Concrete, factual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RESULTS OF THE FIRST CONSULTATION

The first consultation paper sought views on how the credit matrix could contribute to:

- making the qualifications system easier to understand
- allowing for the design of more flexible qualifications that could include new and different kinds and combinations of knowledge and skills
- providing a simple and uniform way of describing qualifications and recording achievement in them
- making it easier to keep track of learning achieved and to plan ahead - for individuals, providers and employers, as well as the system as a whole
- ensuring learning already successfully achieved need not be repeated.

Views on the concept were sought from students, parents, teachers, trainers, employers and employees, selection, recruitment and guidance officers, and each of the various institutions, associations and bodies that have an interest and involvement in qualifications.

An extensive program of workshops, together with written and email responses to the consultation questionnaire, yielded feedback from approximately 1200 individuals and groups and a representative picture of the views of each of the groups targeted.

The responses received and the comment provided indicated that approximately 81 per cent of respondents supported the concept of the credit matrix, 10 per cent were unsure about the idea, and 9 per cent were not in favour.

With the exception of a consistently high level of support from students and parents, there was no significant difference in the pattern of responses received from different stakeholder groups.

There were also no significant differences in the level of support expressed in response to each question (the lowest being 74 per cent and the highest 83 per cent).

Aspects that received the highest levels of support (83 per cent in each case) related to the role of the credit matrix in:

- making the qualifications system easier to understand
- making it easier to keep track and plan ahead
- making it easier for people to re-enter education and training and acquire qualifications throughout their lives.

Aspects that received less support (79 per cent and 74 per cent respectively) related to the role of the credit matrix in:

- making it easier to design more flexible qualifications
- helping to ensure learning already achieved would not have to be repeated.

The lower level of support for the credit matrix as a way of making it easier to design more flexible qualifications was linked in large part to concerns expressed about the respective roles of the credit matrix, the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and the Australian Qualifications Training Framework (AQTF).

The lower level of support for the credit matrix as a way of ensuring learning already achieved need not be repeated, was linked in many cases to comments acknowledging that, whilst the credit matrix would help, it would be only one of several factors affecting credit transfer and recognition of prior formal and informal learning.
Many respondents, while indicating support for the concept in principle, pointed to challenges and issues that they felt would need to be addressed in further work. Those mentioned most frequently included:

- establishing and maintaining effective collaboration, engagement and support from all key stakeholders
- the design of levels and level descriptors that will work effectively across the range of different kinds of learning in different qualifications
- the definition of volume of learning in a way that is inclusive of all learning in all contexts.

CREDIT MATRIX BOARD WORKING GROUP

The credit matrix project is steered by the Credit Matrix Board Working Group, a small sub-group of the VQA Board. Members of the Working Group have a detailed knowledge of the project and are therefore able to provide a full picture to the Board when presenting recommendations for action.

Membership of the Credit Matrix Board Working Group is as follows:

- Ms Virginia Simmons, Director, Chisholm Institute of TAFE (Chair)
- Mr Stuart Hamilton, Chief Executive, Open Learning Australia
- Ms Linda Heron, General Manager, Coles Myer Ltd.
- Ms Julie Moss, Managing Director, Photography Studies College
- Ms Elizabeth Ward, Principal, Presbyterian Ladies’ College.

CREDIT MATRIX STAKEHOLDER REFERENCE GROUP

The Board Working Group acts on advice provided by members of the Credit Matrix Stakeholder Reference Group, whose membership includes a number of highly respected individuals with a wealth of experience in a range of different areas.

Membership of the Credit Matrix Stakeholder Reference Group is as follows:

- Professor Iain Wallace, Former Vice-Chancellor, Swinburne University of Technology (Chair)
- Mr Andrew Blair, President, Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals
- Mr Richard Carter, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Victoria University
- Dr Paul Balnaves, Director, Demographics and Lifelong Learning, Department of Education, Science and Training
- Ms Louise Doolan, President, Victorian TAFE Students’ & Apprentices’ Network
- Ms Judy Douglas, Learning and Development Manager, Qenos Ltd.
- Mr John Firth, Assistant General Manager, Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority
- Mr Mark Frankland, Senior Project Officer, Australian National Training Authority
- Ms Pat Forward, Federal President (TAFE Division), Australian Education Union
- Mr Ian Marshman, Senior Vice-Principal, The University of Melbourne
- Ms Gail McHardy, Executive Officer, Parents Victoria
- Ms Valerie Hazel, Senior Policy Officer, Department of Education & Training
- Dr Robert Pargetter, Principal, Haileybury College
- Ms Helen Reeves, Pathways Project Officer, Gippsland Education Precinct
- Ms Julie Ryan, President, Career Education Association of Victoria
- Ms Maria Tarrant, Director, Policy, Business Council of Australia
- Ms Anna Vlass, Assistant Principal, Box Hill Senior Secondary College.
CREDIT MATRIX INDUSTRY FORUM

Facilitated by Ms Pam Jonas, of Group Training Australia, Victoria, the Credit Matrix Industry Forum is our key source of industry advice. The Forum was established in March of this year, and two very successful meetings have been held to date. The members, listed below, represent both large and small industries and businesses, and bring with them a wealth of experience and expertise. They are all very busy people and we much appreciate the time and energy they are devoting to the credit matrix.

- Ms Pam Jonas, Group Training Australia Victoria
- Mr Denis Bingham, Manager Employee Development and Performance, Pacific National
- Ms Kris Botha, Human Resources Manager, Cabrini Hospital
- Mr Terry Cubley, Employee Development Consultant, Holden Learning
- Ms Judy Douglas, Central HR Adviser, Qenos
- Mr Geoff Gwilym, Manager Professional Development, Real Estate Institute of Victoria
- Mr Mark Hardy, Victorian Manager - Professionals Division, Skilled Engineering
- Ms Karon Hepner, Group Human Resources Manager, Eurest Australia P/L
- Mr Michael Russell, RTO Manager, Coles Myer
- Ms Sue Kent, Training Manager, Melbourne East Group Training
- Mr Ron Smith, National Manager, Linfox
- Ms Susan Naylor, Australian Retail Association of Victoria
- Mr Arthur Reiger, Group Manager, Human Resources Shared Services, Telstra.
DEVELOPMENTS ELSEWHERE

If you are interested in keeping up with developments in other countries where credit based frameworks are either being introduced, or are already in place, the following websites will provide information.

South Africa  www.saqa.org.za

England  www.lsda.org.uk
www.seec-office.org.uk

Europe  www.europa.eu.int/comm/education

New Zealand  www.nzqa.govt.nz

Republic of Ireland  www.nqai.ie

Scotland  www.sqa.org.uk

United Kingdom  www.ukcreditequivalences.org.uk

Wales  www.elwa.ac.uk
REFERENCES

Australian Qualifications Framework Implementation Handbook, AQF Advisory Board, Melbourne 2002


Ministerial Statement, Knowledge and Skills for the Innovation Economy: higher education, The Hon Lynne Kosky, MP, Department of Education and Training, Melbourne 2002


The Credit Matrix: In Brief, Victorian Qualifications Authority, Melbourne, 2003

The Credit Matrix: Next Steps, Victorian Qualifications Authority, Melbourne, 2004

The Credit Matrix: Towards Implementation, Victorian Qualifications Authority, Melbourne, 2004

WEBSITES

www.vqa.vic.gov.au
www.vcaa.vic.edu.au
www.det.vic.gov.au
www.aqf.edu.au
www.anta.gov.au
Consultation pro forma

Please complete and return this pro forma by 15 December 2004 to:

The Victorian Qualifications Authority
41a St Andrews Place
East Melbourne VIC 3002

Fax: 03 9637 2422
Email: vqa@edumail.vic.gov.au.
Tel: 03 9637 2806

It would help us when we analyse the responses if we know the viewpoint each response is written from (for example, a student at a TAFE college, a parent and the owner of a small business in a rural area, a lecturer in a large metropolitan university). It would also be helpful to know if the response is from an individual or a group.

Please complete the section below before you answer the questions.

This response is  □  a group response
                □  an individual response

It reflects the views of:

__________________________________________

Consultation questions about the design of the credit matrix

As a result of the first consultation, stakeholders agreed in principle to the concept of the credit matrix, and supported the development of the outline we provided in that paper into a detailed working design.

It was agreed that the credit matrix should be designed to:

• make the qualifications system easier to understand
• make it easier to design more flexible qualifications that combine new and different mixes of knowledge and skills
• provide a common and uniform approach to describing qualifications and recording achievement in them
• make it easier to track and plan ahead - for individuals, providers and employers, as well as the system as a whole
• ensure learning already successfully achieved does not need to be repeated.
Question 1
In what ways does the design of the credit matrix achieve these aims?

Consultation questions about the level descriptors
The results of the trials will provide us with information about the outcomes and process of allocating points and levels to units. In particular, we want to examine if the degree to which the allocation of points and levels is consistent from one practitioner to the next and whether the points and levels provide a picture of the relationships between the various units and qualifications that is useful and makes sense.

Question 3
Do the level descriptors look capable of describing all the learning outcomes of units from senior secondary certificates to doctorates? If not, what’s missing?

Consultation question on future directions
The range of potential outcomes for users of the credit matrix is summarised in the diagram on page 16. Consider the outcomes relevant to you as a potential user of the credit matrix.

Question 4
In what ways would you use the credit matrix to achieve these outcomes?
Consultation question on support

Question 5
In light of the uses that you have identified on the previous page, which of the following might support your use of the credit matrix?

- guidelines
- information kits for different users
- websites
- help lines
- professional development
- case studies
- an online database of points and levels for all units
- others - please list.

Thank you
Making qualifications work for Victorians by:
• safeguarding the standard of Victorian qualifications
• ensuring qualifications work for Victoria’s economic future
• providing qualification options that help Victorians achieve their career and personal ambitions

The VQA’s office is situated in the precinct of State Government offices near Melbourne’s Treasury Gardens.
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For further information visit the VQA website at www.vqa.vic.gov.au

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