Introduction: Reporting of student achievement in VET

This year the VQA commissioned a set of projects on the reporting of student achievement in VET. Three projects were devised and contracted by the VQA and completed in May 2005. The project reports were presented to the VQA Board and provided sufficient grounds for the Board to agree to further work, particularly on the possibility of developing principles and exemplars to guide VET providers. The project outcomes have also been shared with interstate colleagues because other states and territories also have an interest in this issue. The possibility that the principles and exemplars could be developed collaboratively with interstate colleagues is being explored.

The VQA’s interest in the area emerged from a Board meeting held in 2004 in Gippsland. During a forum with stakeholders, some employers and higher education personnel made the point that the VET assessment reporting approach using “competent” and “not yet competent” did not provide adequate information on which to base recruitment or selection decisions. The Board decided to investigate the issues concerned, one of which is the use of graded assessment to supplement the assessment used to make the “competent” or “not yet competent” decision.

The projects are:

- **An employer survey of the information needs of VET student performance**, by the Group Training Association of Victoria. This report is of a survey of two hundred employers, and five focus group discussions identifying the information requirements from certification and reporting of associated student results. This work also considered whether or not employers perceive these requirements as being addressed adequately under current arrangements.

- **Current policy and practice in Higher Education institutions on assessment of VET outcomes**, by a consortium led by the Department of Learning and Educational Development, University of Melbourne. This is a report of current policy and practice in seven Victorian and four interstate Higher Education institutions on the use made in selection decisions of student information derived from Registered Training Organisations’ assessment practices;

- **Reporting of student achievement in vocational education and training** by Learning Australia Pty Ltd. This discussion paper canvasses a range of issues and options underlying information requirements of VET reporting and certification.

**Main findings**

The information needs of employers of apprentices and trainees were found to be reasonably pragmatic. Employers scan certification and results reporting to see – the highest level of schooling achieved; whether any subjects or units are relevant to the job; and if there have been any practical elements to the learning - for example, a
work placement. Employers were largely ambivalent about the usefulness of grade assessment. The employers research also suggested that the senior secondary certificates may need to show results in a clearer or simpler way.

The report of policy and practice in Higher Education institutions conveyed a sense of the great multiplicity of practices and policies across and within institutions. In that diversity, scores and grades matter more in particular situations; for instance, where there was a high level of demand for a course, faculties tended to place additional demands, such as high grade-point averages, on the VET applicants.

The policy development paper appraised particular assessment and reporting practices to present three options for policy action:
- improved compliance with current AQF certification requirements
- a statement of principles for Registered Training Organisations on supplementary reporting of learner achievement
- a systemic approach to supplementary reporting on learner achievement

**Considerations for further work**

Several considerations are informing further work. These are that:
- there is already an established practice of using grades in assessment in various forms in a range of public and private RTOs.
- a framework or protocols and/or set of principles could provide a guide to good practice in this area.
- there is a need for, and desirability of, working with interstate partners to fill the current national vacuum.
- the actual statements of results and certification could be reviewed in terms of consistency and complexity for users – learners, employers and higher education providers.

In developing any future initiatives in this area, it is important that our work is informed by current experiences of stakeholders. With that in mind any comments or feedback on the considerations outlined could be sent to Dr Carmel Brown at the VQA through email: brown.carmel.c@edumail.vic.gov.au.