VQA Board members

The VQA Board is pleased to announce the appointment of two new members – Cheryl Glowrey and Leigh Hubbard, and the reappointment of three existing members – Julie Moss, Virginia Simmons and Elizabeth Ward.

Cheryl Glowrey is currently Principal of Neerim District Secondary College and has over 25 years of experience in post-compulsory education and training in schools in New South Wales, the ACT and, most recently, in Victoria. She is a member of the Blackwood Centre for Adolescent Development Committee of Management and chair of the Education Centre Gippsland.

Leigh Hubbard is the National Executive Officer of the United Firefighters Union of Australia. He has nearly 20 years experience in industrial relations as an industrial officer, solicitor, policy officer and, from 1995 until April 2005, as Secretary of the Victorian Trades Hall Council. Leigh has extensive experience in vocational educational and training, occupational health, and workers’ compensation issues and policy. He is currently a member of the ACTU Executive and the Ethical Clothing Trades Council. From 2000 until March 2005, Leigh was a member of the Victorian Learning and Employment Skills Commission and its predecessor the State Training Board. He has been a member of the Manufacturing Industry Consultative Council and the Victorian WorkCover Authority’s WorkCover Advisory Committee.

Julie Moss is the Managing Director of the Photography Studies College in Melbourne. Julie has been involved in vocational education and training for over 20 years and has served on numerous post-compulsory education and training reference groups at both state and national levels. She is Chair of the National Board of the Australian Council for Private Education and Training, as well as Chair of the State Executive Committee. She is also a member of the Victorian Higher Education Advisory Committee.

Virginia Simmons has been a TAFE Director in both the TAFE institute and dual sector university setting since 1996. She is currently CEO of Chisholm Institute of TAFE. Her career in education spans more than 20 years, mostly in the TAFE sector. Since 1993, Virginia has consulted widely internationally, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region. She serves on a number of economic and education boards. In 1995, she received the inaugural Prime Minister’s Training Award for her contribution to women in vocational education and training.

Elizabeth Ward has been Principal of Presbyterian Ladies’ College since 1998. She was a member of the Ministerial Advisory Committee for the Victorian Institute of Teaching. She has been Chair of the NSW Board of Studies HSC History Examination Committee, and supervisor of the HSC marking in History. In 1999, she was awarded a fellowship from the Australian College of Educators and in 2004 was awarded a fellowship from the Australian Council for Educational Leadership. Prior to her appointment at Presbyterian Ladies’ College, she was Deputy Headmistress at Abbotsleigh and Head of History at Ravenswood School in Sydney.

About the VQA

The Victorian Qualifications Authority (VQA) is the peak accreditation, certification and quality assurance body for post compulsory education. VQA aims to:

- safeguard the standard of Victorian qualifications
- ensure that qualifications work for Victoria’s economic future
- provide qualifications options that help Victorians achieve their career and personal ambitions.

VQA’s office is situated in the precinct of state government offices near Melbourne’s Treasury Gardens.

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Making qualifications work for Victorians

UPDATE

VCAL in 2005

This is the third year of the statewide rollout of the VCAL and there are increased numbers of providers and students participating. By the May census date, more than 10,000 students had been enrolled in the VCAL, which is now being delivered by more than 370 providers in the school (government, Catholic and independent), TAFE and ACE sectors.

This year the On Track survey, which is undertaken annually by the Office of Learning and Teaching (OLT), included VCAL students in its scope for the first time. We have worked jointly with OLT to formulate questions for these students so that appropriate pathways data for VCAL students is gathered.

The management of the VCAL is now the responsibility of the VCAA and we continue to work closely with our VCAA colleagues in our role of strategy and policy development. The VQA will continue to have responsibility for conducting the Pathway projects initiated in 2004 and now in their final phases, and through the VCAL, Vocational Pathway projects which are being planned and developed in 2005 and will be fully implemented in 2006. The VQA is also managing an extensive evaluation of the VCAL. This evaluation was specified in 2002 when funding of $47.7 million over four years was allocated to the VCAL’s implementation.

For further information go to http://www.vqa.vic.gov.au or contact Annette Whiter by phone on 9637 3865 or by email at vqa@edumail.vic.gov.au.

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Welcome to the ninth and latest edition of the VQA Update. This edition of VQA Update gives you a picture of the range of VQA activity. Our two biggest projects to date – the Credit Matrix and Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) – aim to improve student outcomes in very different ways. Our series of small-scale rangefinder projects are designed to discover whether more detailed work with a particular qualifications focus could encourage better student outcomes and pathways.

It is the focus on the qualifications landscape that gives our work in the VQA its particular character. That work is planned and carried out under the stewardship of the VQA Board. This edition of VQA Update welcomes two new members to the VQA Board – Cheryl Glowrey and Leigh Hubbard – who will bring valuable and very different perspectives to the Board’s discussions. We also welcome back three re-appointed Board members – Julie Moss, Virginia Simmons and Elizabeth Ward – who have each made an outstanding contribution already.

Finally, in this first edition in the new financial year, I want to look back to the last planning year and say a big thank you to the VQA Chair, Professor Gerald, and all our Board, committee and working group members, to VQA staff and to our many stakeholders for their commitment and contribution to the VQA’s work in 2004–05. We look forward to working with you on more landscape shaping in 2005–06.

From the Director

VCAL student destinations 2004

Year 12 VCAL students

The On Track 2005 survey collected responses from Year 12 VCAL students who had completed a VCAL Intermediate or Senior certificate in 2004. Of the students surveyed, 89 per cent agreed that their VCAL program was an important factor in their decision to stay on at school. The figure below shows that 40 per cent of these students succeeded in gaining an apprenticeship or traineeship in 2005 and 23 per cent were working.

On Track 2005 survey results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAFE/VET</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprentice/Trainee</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>40.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deferred</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1073</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Destinations of all 2004 VCAL students

The VQA collected data from 2004 VCAL providers on the destinations of all their VCAL students – both those who completed their certificate and those who did not. The data covers 88 per cent of students enrolled in a VCAL program in 2004 – 7158 students in total. The following figure shows that 3683 VCAL students from 2004 were enrolled in an education and training program in 2005, 62 per cent of which were VCAL programs. The most popular was the VCAL senior level program.

Education and training destinations for all 2004 VCAL students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VCAL</td>
<td>2272</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCE</td>
<td>576</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAFE</td>
<td>731</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3683</td>
<td>100*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding

VCAL is an important part of students’ decisions to stay in education and complete Year 12.

Rangefinder projects

The VQA undertakes a program of small-scale rangefinder projects each year. These projects aim to research and evaluate the potential for specific developments in ways which might enhance student pathways, improve linkages between qualifications or fill gaps in the Victorian qualifications portfolio. If a rangefinder project identifies the need for further work of greater depth and breadth, this work is then commissioned by the VQA Board.

Recently the VQA Board has received and considered reports from a number of rangefinder enquiries.

Pathways research: part-time work of senior secondary students

An initial study has just been completed by the VQA into whether or not the range of knowledge and skills acquired by students through part-time work receives adequate recognition within the senior secondary certificates of the VCE and VCAL. The study confirmed that while a large proportion of students worked part-time, only a small percentage actually sought any formal recognition. The report recommended the more active promotion of existing opportunities for recognition and the possible creation of a new approach through the development of separate units. The VQA Board has asked for further work to be undertaken in this area.

Pathways research – VET pathways for Koorie students

The VQA commissioned Melbourne University to compile a detailed account of the experience of Koorie students of recognition and pathway planning in vocational education and training. The project examined the extent to which VET qualifications have supported the achievement by Koorie students of their learning goals and employment aspirations, and sought to identify examples of good practice. The research was completed in June 2005 and the report will be posted on the VQA website. The project’s approach to pathway analysis will be considered as a possible future template for the pathways profiling of other equity groups.

In a related initiative, a catalogue of indigenous studies for Koorie and non-Koorie students is nearing completion. The catalogue will provide a reference point for teachers and trainers wishing to include indigenous studies in their vocational programs, or who are already delivering a specific Koorie program. The catalogue will aim to provide information on qualifications and culturally appropriate support materials, with links to other websites. The catalogue will be updated regularly and will provide a central point of reference and organisation for the development of new qualifications and products. The catalogue has involved an important partnership with the Koorie community through the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated, and will provide support to the Wurreker strategy. The website for the catalogue is expected to be listed shortly. Check the VQA website towards the end of September for the appropriate link.

Continued on page 7
Implementing the Credit Matrix – the proving projects

The impact of the VQA’s registration of providers and audit functions

The VQA has engaged PhillipsKPA Pty Ltd to investigate the effectiveness of the VQA’s registration and audit functions in addressing key standards of teaching, learning and assessment from a user perspective. It will also consider ways in which improvements could be achieved in outcomes and outputs, and how a more consistent approach to registration and audit could be implemented across the post-compulsory education and training system.

The views of a representative sample of providers and other stakeholders, including auditors, training recognition consultants, students and employers, are being sought in order to measure client satisfaction and to identify opportunities for improvement in outcomes and outputs. The project will cover VET and further education courses delivered by registered training organisations, and VCA senior secondary courses delivered by non-school providers.

The project commenced in July 2005. Submissions and comments from interested parties are welcomed prior to 15 September 2005 to either the project consultants at eccles@phillipsKPA.com.au or to the VQA at deakin.gregory.tld@edumail.vic.gov.au.

Foundation Studies programs

The VQA is representing Australian vocational education and training accreditation authorities on a Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) working group, which has met three times this year to discuss issues relating to the diversity of purpose, content, duration, nomenclature and quality assurance of Foundation Programs.

Outcomes have included an agreed definition and core criteria for Foundation Programs for international students in Australia, a detailed discussion of related matters and a listing of issues requiring further consideration.

A project brief has been drawn up by VQA and approved by the working group. Funding is being sought through the Australian Education Systems Officials Committee to commission the development of a set of auditable national standards to support the definition and core criteria, and to form the basis of assessment of Foundation Programs proposed by providers. The intention is to produce a clear set of national guidelines for use by State/Territory government authorities in approving these programs for delivery to international students.

Since 2003, the Credit Matrix concept has been the subject of wide consultation with stakeholders and the model of levels and points has been refined through trialing. Stakeholders strongly supported the development process and the evolving concept.

The VQA Board now believes it is time for the Credit Matrix to be implemented in the field through a series of proving projects. In this way a broader range of people can see the benefits of the matrix and help improve it through use.

Implementation of the Credit Matrix will:

- be in stages, and will not be rushed
- reliably, credibly and quickly allocate a level and points, particularly to senior secondary and vocational education and training units, modules and subjects
- make maximum use of current credit transfer and articulation processes, rather than develop new processes
- keep in mind possible national adoption, although implementation is in Victoria only.

Developing pathways between qualifications

The Gippsland Education Precinct comprises a university, senior secondary schools and a vocational education and training provider. The precinct aims to increase the percentage of young people (particularly in the Latrobe Valley) going from school to post-secondary education and work, and to keep them learning locally.

In this pilot project the Credit Matrix will be used to inform the qualifications available in the precinct in information technology, art and design, professional writing and editing, journalism, nursing, some business courses and the VCAL Pathway Development Pilot project.

Project staff will work with students, teachers, course advisors and administrators on initiatives to see if the level and points of the Credit Matrix make it easier to:

- plan a learning pathway from school in a student’s chosen area so that students can see how qualifications link together
- explain qualifications (and the work involved in them) to students, parents and other interested people
- design dual-award qualifications that offer students a broader range of knowledge and skills
- arrange credit transfer so that students do not have to repeat learning they have already successfully completed
- give students a useful record of their learning.

The project is in partnership with the three sectors of the Gippsland Education Precinct, and will run until December 2005.

Developing new qualifications and redeveloping existing ones

This project has two parts. The first part will assign a level and points to all VCE and VCAL qualification units and look at how levels and points can be used for VCE VET recognition and awarding block credit. It could provide a new way to define the government’s ‘Year 12 or equivalent’ target in terms of levels and points.

This part of the project is in partnership with the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA). The second part of the project will assign levels and points to VET units of competency. It will look at how the Credit Matrix can be used in the design of vocational education and training, and university and private higher education courses. It will also investigate links to other national, State and Territory initiatives, and to the review of Australian Qualifications Framework descriptors.

This part of the project is in partnership with the VCAA, the Office of Training and Tertiary Education and industry skills councils, and will run until April 2006.

Developing credit transfer and articulation arrangements

This Credit Matrix implementation project will cover similar ground to the Gippsland Education Precinct project, but will focus on pathways between vocational education and training and higher education, and between senior secondary school and higher education. It will build on the Gippsland experiences and be a larger pilot involving learners, ACE providers, schools, registered training organisations and higher education institutions, and will focus on specific industry areas.

The project is in partnership with industry and will run until June 2006.

Facilitating human resource practices in industry

This implementation project will comprise several enterprise-based activities that look at the Credit Matrix’s usefulness to enterprises in the information technology, engineering, design and electronics industries. The projects will be written up as case studies and resources will be produced to help other enterprises use the matrix.

The project is in partnership with industry skills councils, the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Business Council of Australia and the Australian Industry Group, and will run from January to June 2006.

Other activities

As well as conducting these projects, the VQA will continue to develop the information technology infrastructure necessary for the Credit Matrix, and ensure that stakeholders are kept up-to-date with developments as the matrix is implemented.

For further information go to http://www.vqa.vic.gov.au or contact us by phone on 9637 2806 or by email at vqa@edumail.vic.gov.au.
Recognition of informal learning

In late 2003, the VQA and the Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board agreed to a joint project to assess the feasibility of granting recognition for informal learning within the qualifications system administered by the VQA.

Informal learning refers to personal and employment capacity building that occurs outside the formal recognition system. In Victoria, this is any learning that does not lead directly to a full qualification or credit towards a qualification accredited by the VQA or higher education providers. As such, informal learning occurs when people develop their personal and employment capacities through:

- participating in work including paid employment, voluntary work and work which leads to the attainment of meaningful community outcomes
- engaging in community activities
- pursuing activities and interests as individuals or in groups engaging in non course-based learning activities, such as discussion groups, meetings and workshops, provided in response to the expressed or potential interests and needs of individuals and communities
- taking part in non-recognised but planned and structured programs such as short courses.

The feasibility study highlighted the extent and importance of informal learning in Victoria and how effective recognition arrangements could contribute to the Victorian government’s goals and targets, articulated in Growing Victoria Together, and promote lifelong learning and develop cohesive and resilient communities.

The study also highlighted how improved arrangements for recognising informal learning might assist the groups of adult learners identified in the Ministerial Statement Future Directions for Adult Community Education in Victoria – women, culturally and linguistically diverse learners, Koories, learners with disabilities, young people, older learners – establish effective education, training and employment pathways.

Other key beneficiaries of improved arrangements would be people who are unemployed, residents of socially and economically disadvantaged areas, early school leavers, existing workers and volunteers.

In addition, the feasibility study identified the problems which many learner groups, including those listed above, have in gaining recognition for personal and employment capacities attained through informal learning.

This has been supported by a range of recent national and state-based studies that have highlighted the low levels of take-up of recognition of prior learning processes and the difficulties that many learner groups have in accessing effective and efficient recognition services.

Both the VQA and ACFE Boards accepted the report of the feasibility study and commissioned a second-stage project to examine how existing further education and adult learning qualifications might provide a source of recognition or credit for informal learning.

In doing so, the Boards acknowledged that informal learning might be recognised through:

- assessment of knowledge and skills gained through informal learning against specific units or modules
- block credit or advanced standing based on the outcomes of informal learning
- assessment of the individual’s learning skills and strategies demonstrated during informal learning against units and modules dealing with learning.

The second stage of the project, which was undertaken in mid 2004, focused on the latter approaches to recognising informal learning.

The report on this stage of the project, which was endorsed by the VQA and ACFE Boards in late 2004, outlined a proposal for the development of:

- a unit of competency that describes the volume and complexity of the ‘learning gain’ attained through informal learning
- a discussion-based assessment process for assessing learners against the unit of competency for the purpose of formal recognition.

In late 2004, the VQA and ACFE Boards endorsed a third stage of the project: to develop the unit of competency and the discussion-based assessment process.

As these various rangefinder activities demonstrate, the terrain of qualifications and recognition of prior learning is complex and requires a combination of specific industry competencies and a broad range of generic subjects. The idea is for a more open set of pathways to be created to both employment and further high-level study, either in higher education or vocational education and training. The feasibility study has been completed and documents the extent of support and interest in a qualification of this kind. Possible implementation issues have also been examined. The VQA Board has asked that a working group be established to further develop the concept along with a qualification design, and for a pilot to be established, possibly in the manufacturing industry sector.

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Qualification needs of rural and regional communities

As a result of a survey undertaken in 2004 into the potential need for qualifications developments or enhancements in support of improved learning and pathway opportunities in rural and regional Victoria, two small follow-up projects were commissioned. The first of these projects examined the extent of perceived flexibility in existing qualifications to meet the specific requirements of rural and regional industries. Seasonal variation and the more restricted nature of some regional labour markets were seen as complicating factors, possibly calling for a more flexible approach to qualifications design. The second project sought to examine the articulation and credit arrangements currently existing between formal accredited VET training and other training provided through the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and other sources. The final reports of the two projects will be posted on the VQA website. Further effort will be committed to improving existing credit and articulation arrangements through proposed collaborative work with the DPI, Office of Training and Tertiary Education, the Victorian Farmers Federation and Primary Skills Victoria.

Pathways research – dual pathway qualification

In collaboration with the Victorian TAFE Association (VTA), a feasibility study has been conducted into the idea of a dual pathway VET diploma qualification. An original proposal by the VTA envisaged a qualification that offered a distinct combination of specific industry competencies and a broad range of generic subjects. The idea is for a more open set of pathways to be created to both employment and further high-level study, either in higher education or vocational education and training. The feasibility study has been completed and documents the extent of support and interest in a qualification of this kind. Possible implementation issues have also been examined. The VQA Board has asked that a working group be established to further develop the concept along with a qualification design, and for a pilot to be established, possibly in the manufacturing industry sector.

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