AQFs 5 & 6: DEBATING THE FUTURE OF MID-LEVEL QUALIFICATIONS IN AUSTRALIA

This conference will consider the role mid-level qualifications play in preparation for work, as a transition to higher qualifications and in widening access to higher-level qualifications.

www.lhmi.edu.au
Conference overview

The Australian Government plans to double completions for diplomas and advanced diplomas from 2009 to 2020 to increase skills and productivity and to improve social inclusion by providing students from disadvantaged backgrounds with pathways to higher education. Enrolments in diplomas and advanced diplomas have increased in some fields of education in recent years, while they have declined in others, particularly in advanced diplomas. However, their value has been questioned because more jobs require degrees as the entry level qualification, and diploma graduates are more likely than others to report that their skills are under-used at work.

In contrast, while overall numbers are still small, enrolments in associate degrees have grown by 627% since they were first listed on the Australian Qualifications Framework in 2004. Associate degrees are at the same level on the AQF as advanced diplomas. Associate degrees are higher education qualifications, whereas most diplomas and advanced diplomas are vocational education and training qualifications. Are associate degrees likely to replace advanced diplomas in the labour market, and would this be due to their intrinsic differences or because of the different curriculum, quality assurance or funding of vocational and higher education?

This conference will debate and discuss the future of diplomas, advanced diplomas and associate degrees in Australia. It will consider the role they play

- in preparation for work;
- as a transition to higher qualifications; and,
- as a mechanism to widen access to higher level qualifications.

Date and location

25-26 October 2012,
RMIT University, Melbourne.

Who should attend?

This conference will be of interest to:

- Policy makers in government and statutory bodies
- Institutional leaders, managers and teachers in VET and higher education
- Tertiary education and labour market researchers
- Skills Councils and industry training advisory boards
- Professional and occupational bodies
- Employer peak bodies and unions

Conference themes and call for presentations

You are invited to submit an abstract for a presentation on one of the following themes:

- The future of mid-level qualifications such as diplomas, advanced diplomas and associate degrees.
- The purpose of mid-level qualifications – to enter work, to transition to degrees, to widen participation in higher level qualifications, or all of these?
- The relation between mid-level qualifications, the labour market and mid-level jobs (paraprofessional and technical level jobs).
- Mid-level qualifications and under-use of skills.
- Whether associate degrees will replace diplomas and advanced diplomas.
- Models of mid-level qualifications.
- Challenges in developing mid-level qualifications.
Workshops

**Workshop 1: Developing associate degrees: Consulting with stakeholders to define needs and graduate capabilities**

Led by Professor David Dowling, Professor of Engineering Education, University of Southern Queensland.

This action learning workshop will address the ‘what’ questions of associate degree development. That is, what do we teach and what does industry want? These questions can be answered by using a tool, such as the Define Your Discipline (DYD) stakeholder consultation process, to connect teachers with practitioners, and other discipline stakeholders, to develop a set of Graduate Capabilities for the program.

Participants will be provided with:
- an overview of a program design cycle;
- an overview of the ten steps in the DYD Stakeholder Consultation Process; and
- experience in using the three key steps in the DYD process: gathering, clustering and synthesising the information from discipline stakeholder groups.

Those registering for the workshop will receive pre-workshop kit which will include a background information sheet and suggestions on preparing for the workshop.

**Workshop 2: Developing associate degrees: stakeholder needs, curriculum and pedagogy**

Led by Dr Helen Smith, Senior Research Fellow, Global Studies, Social Science & Planning, RMIT University.

This action learning workshop will complement the first workshop on the Define Your Discipline (DYD) stakeholder consultation process by addressing the ‘how’ of associate degree development. That is: how to turn a statement of graduate capabilities into a curriculum structure and a set of pedagogical practices which will enable graduates to develop the skills and knowledge required for paraprofessional work and further study.

Participants will be provided with:
- an overview of an associate degree curriculum and pedagogical model designed to achieve these outcomes by promoting independent learning and informed decision making about graduate destinations; and
- the opportunity to test this model against their own industry and disciplinary orientation.

Those registering for the workshop will receive pre-workshop kit which will include a background think piece and suggestions on preparing for the workshop.

**Day and Date**

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<tr>
<td>Thursday, 25 October</td>
<td>9:00am - 10:30am</td>
<td>Workshop 1</td>
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<td>11:00am – 12:30pm</td>
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<td>Conference – Day 1</td>
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<td>5:30 – 6:30pm</td>
<td>Networking drinks</td>
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<td>Friday, 26 October</td>
<td>9:00am – 4:00pm</td>
<td>Conference – Day 2</td>
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Full conference program is available from the LH Martin Institute website.

Conference speakers

**Keynote speakers**

Robin Shreeve (CEO, Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency)

Tom Karmel (Managing Director, NCVER)

Gareth Parry (Professor of Education, University of Sheffield, UK)

Leesa Wheelahan (LH Martin Institute)

**Industry panel**

Alan Bradley (Accreditation Consultant, Engineers Australia)

Michael Hartman (CEO, ForestWorks)

Megan Lily (Associate Director, Education and Training, Australian Industry Group)

Gavin Lind (Executive Director, Minerals Tertiary Education Council)

**Educational institutions panel**

Ross Chambers (Deputy Vice Chancellor and Vice President (Academic), Charles Sturt University)

Pam Christie (Deputy Director General, TAFE and Community Education, NSW Department of Education and Training)

David Dowling (Faculty of Engineering and Surveying, University of Southern Queensland)

Helen Smith (Senior Research Fellow, School of Global Studies, RMIT University)

**Fees**

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<td>Workshop 2</td>
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<td>Conference</td>
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**Enquiries and registration**

Please direct enquiries to Anita Wong on +61 3 8344 0906 or via e-mail address waiyw@unimelb.edu.au.

To register please go to the LH Martin Institute website: www.lhmi.edu.au

Registrations close 28 September 2012
This conference is being organised by the LH Martin Institute at the University of Melbourne and RMIT. It is part of a National Centre for Vocational Education Research funded project entitled Vocations: the link between post-compulsory education and the labour market. The project commenced in 2011, is over three years and consists of three inter-related strands:

- **Strand 1**: entry to vocations, focusing on VET in schools as pathways to work or further study;
- **Strand 2**: the role of educational institutions in fostering vocations, focusing on VET and higher education institutions;
- **Strand 3**: understanding the nature of vocations in work today and their potential improvement.

This conference is being organised by Strand 2.

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