AQFs 5 & 6: Debating the future of mid-level qualifications in Australia

25-26 October 2012
RMIT Design Hub, Melbourne
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Plenary Session 3: Purposes and merits of intermediate qualifications

Concurrent Session 4:

4.1 Patterns in mid-level qualification enrolments and outcomes in different fields over the last decade

4.2 Greater openness in the national tertiary education provider market: student perspectives study

4.3 Championing the value of AQF 5 and 6 Qualifications

4.4 Reimagining vocational competence: knowledge, capabilities and competencies in mid-level qualifications

Concurrent Session 5:

5.1 Conceptual differences between competency-based and capabilities-based education

5.2 Associate teachers: Closing or widening the gap?

5.3 Beyond mid-level qualifications: “Look at me now!”

5.4 Professional body accreditation of competency based engineering education programs at AQF 6 level

Plenary Session 4: The future for VET diplomas & equivalent qualifications – what our modelling & consultations have told us

Panel Session 1: Intermediate qualifications – industries' aims

Panel Session 2: Intermediate qualifications – educational responses
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.

ABOUT THE ORGANISERS

This conference is being organised by the LH Martin Institute and RMIT University. 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 three year project commenced in 2011 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 the LHMI Institute and RMIT University as part of Strand 2.

ABOUT THE NCVER

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) is Australia’s leading provider of high-quality, independent research and statistics on vocational education and training (VET) to governments, the education sector, industry and the community. NCVER’s work contributes to improvement in Australia’s education and training system by ensuring that policy and practice are based on sound evidence. For more information on NCVER visit www.ncver.edu.au.
Please note: the green area above is an open air balcony.
# Pre-Conference Workshop Program

25 October 2012  
RMIT Design Hub, City Campus, Melbourne

## Thursday, 25 October

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<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.45</td>
<td>Workshop Registration</td>
<td>Level 10, foyer near lift (area 307)</td>
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| 9.00  | **Workshop 1: Developing associate degrees by consulting stakeholders to define needs and graduate capabilities**  
*Professor David Dowling, University of Southern Queensland* | Level 10, Room 003                 |
|       | **Workshop 2: Developing associate degrees’ curriculum and pedagogy to meet stakeholders’ needs**  
*Dr Helen Smith, RMIT University* | Level 10, Room 006                 |
| 10.30 | Morning tea                                                             | Level 10, area 307                 |
| 10:45 | **Workshop 1: Developing associate degrees by consulting stakeholders to define needs and graduate capabilities**  
*Professor David Dowling, University of Southern Queensland* | Level 10, Room 003                 |
|       | **Workshop 2: Developing associate degrees’ curriculum and pedagogy to meet stakeholders’ needs**  
*Dr Helen Smith, RMIT University* | Level 10, Room 006                 |
| 12:15 | *Lunch (for workshop participants only)*                                | Level 10, foyer                    |
## Conference Program

### Day 1: Thursday, 25 October 2012

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<tr>
<td>12.15</td>
<td>Registration (outside Level 1, Room 001)</td>
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<td>13.00</td>
<td>WELCOME TO COUNTRY</td>
<td>Level 1, Room 001</td>
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<td>13.15</td>
<td>WELCOME TO CONFERENCE&lt;br&gt;Professor Margaret Gardner AO, Vice Chancellor and President, RMIT University&lt;br&gt;Chair: Dr Gavin Moodie</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.30</td>
<td>PLENARY SESSION 1: THE FOUNDATION DEGREE: A MODEL FOR ENGLAND AND AUSTRALIA?&lt;br&gt;Professor Gareth Parry – Professor of Education, University of Sheffield, United Kingdom&lt;br&gt;Chair: Dr Gavin Moodie</td>
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<tr>
<td>14.25</td>
<td>CONCURRENT SESSIONS 1 (LEVEL 10)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.1 Resolving the mid-level qualifications messiness, Margaret Mazzolini, Victoria University, <em>Chair: Martha Kinsman</em></td>
<td>Room 003</td>
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<td>1.2 Addressing the gap between VET and university qualifications in the Australian mining industry, Brendan Donelly, Central Queensland University, <em>Chair: Nick Fredman</em></td>
<td>Room 004</td>
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<td>1.3 Direction, connections and flow: reading and applying AQF descriptors to program and course design, David McLean, RMIT University, <em>Chair: Christine Hepperle</em></td>
<td>Room 005</td>
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<td>1.4 Numbers don’t tell the whole story: A tertiary diploma pathway course widens access to higher qualifications, David Potter, Avondale College, <em>Chair: Fleur Goulding</em></td>
<td>Room 006</td>
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15.00  CONCURRENT SESSIONS 2 (LEVEL 10)

2.1 Associate degrees at NMIT: A case report of curriculum design for vocational outcomes, John Grech and Con Nikakis, NMIT, *Chair: Matt Brett* Room 003

2.2 The impact of national policy on the design of mid-level qualifications, or, the AQF is the solution not the problem! Diane Booker, AQF Council, *Chair: Jim Davidson* Room 004

2.3 Horses for courses, or courses for horses? Questions and issues arising from diploma holders transitioning into the Bachelor of Early Childhood Education at Holmesglen Institute, Estelle Irving, Holmesglen Institute, *Chair: David McLean* Room 005

2.4 Challenges and models of teaching diplomas in vocational education and training: Transformations and critical pedagogy, Jennifer Miles and Jane Court, Chisholm Institute, *Chair: Nick Fredman* Room 006

15.30  Afternoon Tea Level 10, foyer

16.00  CONCURRENT SESSIONS 3 (LEVEL 10)

3.1 Mid-level qualifications in Australia: tensions in the construction of academic achievement as the gateway to professional careers, Catherine Burnheim and Stuart Levy, Monash University, *Chair: Sherridan Maxwell* Room 003

3.2 Alternate Models of associate degrees: Action research in the United States, Damien Pearce, University of Southern Queensland, *Chair: Helen Smith* Room 004

3.3 Middle ground and mid-level qualification’s, Mark Doran and Alicia Toohey, Southbank Institute of Technology, *Chair: Pauline Porcaro* Room 005

3.4 Why Upskill? Examining AQF 5, 6 and 7 level qualifications in construction, Patricia McLaughlin and Jane Carnegie, RMIT University, *Chair: Mary Leahy* Room 006

16.35  PLENARY SESSION 2: THE CONTRIBUTION OF DIPLOMAS TO SKILLS AND PRODUCTIVITY Level 1

Dr Tom Karmel – Managing Director, NCVER
*Chair: Associate Professor Leesa Wheelahan*

17.30  NETWORKING DRINKS Level 7, foyer

18.30  End of Day 1
# Conference Program

## Day 2: Friday, 26 October 2012

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<td>8.45</td>
<td><strong>PLENARY SESSION 3: PURPOSES AND MERITS OF INTERMEDIATE QUALIFICATIONS</strong></td>
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<td>Associate Professor Leesa Wheelahan – Associate Professor, LH Martin Institute, <strong>Chair: Dr Helen Smith</strong></td>
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<td>9.40</td>
<td><strong>CONCURRENT SESSIONS 4 (LEVEL 10)</strong></td>
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<td>4.1 Patterns in mid-level qualification enrolments and outcomes in different fields over the last decade, Nick Fredman, University of Melbourne, <em>Chair: Tricia McLaughlin</em></td>
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<td>4.2 Greater openness in the national tertiary education provider market: student perspectives study, Peter Noonan, The Allen Consulting Group, <em>Chair: Mary Leahy</em></td>
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<td>4.3 Championing the value of AQF 5 and 6 Qualifications, Kathy Rankin, TAFE NSW, <em>Chair: Kira Clarke</em></td>
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<td>4.4 Reimagining vocational competence: knowledge, capabilities and competencies in mid-level qualifications, Martha Kinsman, Australian National University, and Sue Maslen, Canberra Institute of Technology, <em>Chair: Margaret Mazzolini</em></td>
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<td>10.10</td>
<td><em>Morning Tea</em></td>
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<td>10.40</td>
<td><strong>CONCURRENT SESSIONS 5 (LEVEL 10)</strong></td>
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<td>5.1 Conceptual differences between competency-based and capabilities-based education, Mary Leahy, University of Melbourne, <em>Chair: Robert Sheen</em> (tbc)</td>
<td>Room 003</td>
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<td>5.2 Associate teachers: Closing or widening the gap? Claire Bartlett, Charles Darwin University Claire Kilgariff, Batchelor Institute and Sue Reaburn, Department of Education NT, <em>Chair: Kira Clarke</em></td>
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<td>5.3 Beyond mid-level qualifications: “Look at me now!” Wayne Miller, Avondale College, <em>Chair: Chris Corbel</em></td>
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<td>5.4 Professional body accreditation of competency based engineering education programs at AQF 6 level, Noel Miller, Australian Engineering Accreditation Centre, <em>Chair: Nick Fredman</em></td>
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<td>11.20</td>
<td><strong>PLENARY SESSION 4: THE FUTURE FOR VET DIPLOMAS AND EQUIVALENT QUALIFICATIONS – WHAT OUR MODELLING AND CONSULTATIONS HAVE TOLD US</strong>&lt;br&gt;Mr Robin Shreeve – CEO, Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency&lt;br&gt;<em>Chair: Professor Leo Goedegebure</em></td>
<td>Level 1, Room 001</td>
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<td>12.15</td>
<td><strong>Lunch</strong></td>
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<td>13.00</td>
<td><strong>PANEL SESSION 1: INTERMEDIATE QUALIFICATIONS – INDUSTRIES’ AIDS</strong>&lt;br&gt;- <em>Alan Bradley</em> – Accreditation Consultant, Australian Engineering Accreditation Centre&lt;br&gt;- <em>Michael Hartman</em> – CEO, ForestWorks Industry Skills Council&lt;br&gt;- <em>Megan Lilly</em> – Associate Director, Education and Training, Australian Industry Group&lt;br&gt;- <em>Gavin Lind</em> – Executive Director, Minerals Tertiary Education Council&lt;br&gt;<em>Chair: Cheryl Underwood, RMIT University</em></td>
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<td>14.15</td>
<td><strong>Afternoon Tea</strong></td>
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<td>14.45</td>
<td><strong>PANEL SESSION 2: INTERMEDIATE QUALIFICATIONS – EDUCATIONAL RESPONSES</strong>&lt;br&gt;- <em>Ross Chambers</em> – Deputy Vice Chancellor &amp; Vice President (Academic), Charles Sturt University&lt;br&gt;- <em>Pam Christie</em> – Deputy Director General (TAFE and Community Education), NSW Department of Education and Communities&lt;br&gt;- <em>David Dowling</em> – Faculty of Engineering and Surveying, University of Southern Queensland&lt;br&gt;- <em>Helen Smith</em> – Senior Research Fellow, School of Global Studies, RMIT University&lt;br&gt;<em>Chair: Cheryl Underwood, RMIT University</em></td>
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<td>16.00</td>
<td><strong>CLOSING REMARKS</strong></td>
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PRESENTER BIOGRAPHIES AND ABSTRACTS

(in order of appearance)
Pre-Conference Workshops

**WORKSHOP 1: DEVELOPING ASSOCIATE DEGREES BY CONSULTING STAKEHOLDERS TO DEFINE NEEDS AND GRADUATE CAPABILITIES**

*Professor David Dowling, Professor of Engineering Education, University of Southern Queensland, Level 10, Room 003*

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;
- experience in using the three key steps in the DYD process: gathering, clustering and synthesising the information from discipline stakeholder groups.

David Dowling is a Professor of Engineering Education at the University of Southern Queensland (USQ) where he has been teaching and researching for more than 30 years. He was the Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching) from 1995 until January 2009, and received an Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) Citation in 2008 for his work with graduate attributes. David was President of the Australasian Association for Engineering Education during 2005-2006 and is the lead author of the successful first year text: Engineering Your Future: An Australasian Guide.

David is passionate about helping students achieve their career goals, particularly those who mix work and study while following a pathway through two or more programs. This passion was the catalyst for his research into engineering technician education in Australia, and articulation pathways between vocational and higher education programs. This research informs his work at USQ and with Engineers Australia’s Articulation Committee.
Workshop 2: Developing Associate Degrees' Curriculum and Pedagogy to Meet Stakeholders' Needs

Dr Helen Smith, Senior Research Fellow, Global Studies, Social Science & Planning, RMIT University, Level 10, Room 006

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.

Helen Smith is a senior research fellow in the RMIT School of Global Urban and Social Studies, currently on secondment to the offices of the Director TAFE and the Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic at RMIT University as a consultant/advisor on tertiary learning and teaching quality. Helen is an Australian Learning and Teaching Council Teaching Fellow working on the development of new approaches to vocational and professional learning within associate degrees.

She is also involved in a joint project with the Centre for Research in Vocational Education and Training, University of Tampere, Finland, the SKOPE Centre at Oxford University, WorldSkills Australia and the Dusseldorp Skills Forum on vocational excellence.

Prior to her career at RMIT University, Helen occupied leadership roles in vocational and higher education as a policy developer, program designer and change agent. She brings a practitioner’s perspective to research on learning and teaching in the tertiary domain.
Conference Day 1

**Plenary Session 1: The Foundation Degree: A Model for England and Australia?**

Gareth Parry, University of Sheffield, Level 1, Room 001

Twelve years on from its introduction, the foundation degree is now the dominant qualification at levels below the bachelor degree in England. In reviewing its character and career, six questions are posed about the qualification, each with significance for the Australian context. Firstly, are the original purposes and design principles still in place? Secondly, have colleges or universities been best placed to lead its development? Thirdly, are its terminal and transfer functions equally in play? Fourthly, is the qualification a vehicle for widening as well as increasing participation? Fifthly, has the engagement of employers changed? And, finally, is a qualification with high specificity aligned to contemporary labour markets, career mobility and lifelong learning?

Gareth Parry is Professor of Education and Director of the Centre for the Study of Higher Education at the University of Sheffield. His research is addressed to system change and policy reform in higher education. He was a research consultant to the Dearing inquiry into higher education, the Foster review of further education colleges, and a board member of Foundation Degree Forward. His recent work is addressed to the role of college sectors in higher education, including a major study for the UK government on Understanding Higher Education in Further Education Colleges (2012).
**Concurrent Session 1:**

1.1 Resolving the mid-level qualifications messiness  
*Margaret Mazzolini, Victoria University, Level 10, Room 003*

In 2011, in an atmosphere of increasing institutional wariness, Victoria University enrolled 10,614 individuals in national diplomas and advanced diplomas. For years the University had steadily increased its delivery of mid-level qualifications in alignment with Federal and State government policies and in response to individual demand. Gradually we became concerned at the growing body of evidence that these higher level VET qualifications were no longer leading to their promised outcomes. Moreover as a dual sector university we could see, internally, the same looming collision between VET and higher education qualifications at AQF levels 5-8 that is evident nationally.

In many ways Victoria University students represent the widening future of tertiary education, those new participants for whom a successful experience at AQF level 5 or 6 should lead to further learning or to a promising employment outcome. Victoria University’s students are more educationally, culturally, linguistically and economically diverse than those at other universities. They include those preparing to enter the workforce as well as experienced people seeking education to support their career development aspirations. Many Victoria University students are first in family to participate in tertiary education and, as with other universities; many VU students require support to succeed.

Over the last twelve months we have created a new framework for our tertiary curriculum, developing a harmonious approach to the design of qualifications at AQF 5 and above which we believe will better prepare graduates for learning, work and life in the twenty-first century. We are discarding stand-alone qualifications at AQF 5 and 6 in favour of qualifications suites designed to give new entrants to tertiary education the support and the time they need to succeed. The application of a transitions pedagogy approach at the first AQF level 5 step in our new undergraduate suite, is one of the principles that informs our new approach. This presentation will outline the conceptual basis for our approach to tertiary qualifications and explain how we propose to resolve the AQF 5-6 messiness.

**Professor Margaret Mazzolini** joined Victoria University as Pro Vice-Chancellor Learning and Teaching in mid January 2012.

The role of PVC Learning and Teaching has been established to lead improvement in the quality of teaching at the University, as part of the Academic & Students team. Role responsibilities include the development and implementation of a fresh approach to the provision of formal qualifications of tertiary teaching to build staff capability, fostering a well-supported culture of learning and teaching scholarship, providing support to institutional curriculum renewal, and the development of innovative and effective blended eLearning strategies. Professor Mazzolini has worked in the past at the University of Melbourne, RMIT, La Trobe and Swinburne Universities. At Swinburne her roles included Chair of Academic Senate and Pro Vice Chancellor Learning and Teaching. Professor Mazzolini prioritises evidence-informed approaches to improving student learning outcomes, and frequently comments at national level on learning & teaching, quality and standards issues, particularly from a dual-sector perspective. She has recently conducted research projects in areas including internationalisation of the curriculum, the academic performance of diverse cohorts of undergraduate students, curriculum renewal and effective use of online communications strategies. In the past she has also conducted research in areas of radio astronomy and particle physics.
1.2 Addressing the gap between VET and university qualifications in the Australian mining industry

*Brendan Donnelly, Central Queensland University, Level 10, Room 004*

There are problems and opportunities associated with implementing a suite of Associate Degree programs designed to address the gap between Vocational Education and Training (VET) qualifications and University qualifications associated with roles in the Australian mining industry.

In April 2009, the Deputy Prime Minister asked the Chair of the AQF Council, Mr John Dawkins AO, to provide advice on how to improve qualifications and recognition arrangements that would lead to more seamless pathways between the vocational education and training (VET) and higher education sectors which would benefit students. (Building Better Connected Learning Through Improved Student Pathways, Pathways Report, November 2009).

Higher education envisages autonomous individuals who are co-producers of their own learning, whereas VET envisages workers who are under the direction of others (Buchanan et al., 2009: 15) from (Rethinking Skills in VET).

VET students learn from experience and develop skills and abilities whilst university students learn through research how to expand their knowledge and apply it over a range of situations.

In 2008, CQU implemented several Associate Degree programs to provide students from a VET background with an opportunity to access university qualifications. The programs included mining industry competencies at AQF levels 5 and 6 and were designed to be completed externally over four years, making them attractive to people already working within the mining industry. One of the major barriers to completing these programs and attaining the qualifications was the lack of Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) able to deliver mining industry competencies at AQF levels 5 and 6. Consequently, students were encouraged to transfer to an alternative Associate Degree program which they could complete without competencies.

Since then CQU has established relationships with two Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) to develop and deliver the required mining industry competencies. However, the sustainability of all of the Associate Degree programs is threatened by the low student numbers presenting for enrolment. Conversely, feedback from graduates and students approaching graduation indicates that the qualification is well regarded within the industry, with students anticipating placement in leadership roles and achieving promotion on completion of their studies.

Proposed outcomes for this paper will include identifying the critical knowledge mining students from a VET background will need to successfully negotiate further academic learning. What are the different needs and knowledge profiles of students from a VET background as opposed to year 12 students matriculating into university studies? Do VET students require customised programs to address the gaps in their knowledge? What support do VET students require to successfully complete an academic qualification? Does their wealth of experience assist in accelerating their academic learning?
1.3 Direction, connections and flow: reading and applying AQF descriptors to program and course design

David McLean, RMIT University, Level 10, Room 005

This presentation shows how a word analysis of the two AQF 6 and one AQF 7 level qualifications have been used to construct a method for developing course content for an Associate Degree. For AQF 6 program and course design it is essential to understand the difference between an Advanced Diploma and an Associate Degree and in the case of an Associate Degree, how it both connects to, but is differentiated from, a Bachelor qualification. All have discrete textual descriptions in the AQF guidelines written to provide points of difference. By counting and comparing key defining words from the three qualification descriptors it is possible to clarify and reduce what is unique and essential to each. This information can then be applied at both the macro and micro level to develop program and course narrative. The qualification keywords can then be restructured into a course design tool for developing content and a teaching sequence that takes into account both theoretical and technical content along with graduate attributes and the essential values of either an Advanced Diploma or Associate Degree. This method was proposed in a paper delivered at the 2012 AVETRA conference, this presentation is an opportunity to show how the discussion in that paper is being applied to the development of an Associate Degree course.

David McLean is currently employed as an Industry Group Manager for Business School TAFE programs in the RMIT College of Business. He is also progressing through a PhD part time at Monash University. Before RMIT he worked at the Kangan Institute as a program manager for multimedia and graphic arts where he oversaw the design and operation of qualifications from VCAL through to Advanced Diploma level. David has written and contributed to a range of learning resources including toolboxes, the ‘Adventures in VCAL’ work book and the Cabinet Innovations interactive CD. He has a specific interest in the application of narrative structures and natural patterns to the conceptual and applied development and design of pathways and programs. He is currently writing 2 courses that will bring design and business capabilities together for the Associate Degree in Business at RMIT. David won the Early Career Researcher of the Year Award at the 2011 AVETRA conference.
1.4 Numbers don’t tell the whole story: A tertiary diploma pathway course widens access to higher qualifications

David Potter, Avondale College Level 10, Room 006

For 22 years Avondale College of Higher Education has been operating a tertiary pathway course designed to widen access to higher education for non-traditional applicants. The course, now known as the Diploma of General Studies [DGS], has been accredited as a 2-year higher education sector diploma since 1995. Thus far, 1066 students (44% male, 56% female) have spent at least one semester in the diploma. None has opted to complete the diploma. Instead students use it as a pathway to higher awards, mostly Avondale bachelor degrees in education, nursing, arts, theology, business and occasionally science. To date, 300 former pathway students have completed an Avondale degree; a further 250 are still enrolled. Diploma students commence with Year 12 ranks (UAI, ENTER, TER, now ATAR) ranging from 30 or less to around 60; many have no rank. For those who complete degrees there is no correlation between Year 12 rank and average college grade; however, higher completion rates are achieved by those with higher ranks. My research is looking at the stories of education of 12 recent school leavers who commenced the DGS in 2012. I want to learn the story of their schooling, what the DGS course contributes to their story, what my story contributes and what all these stories contribute to the clarity of Avondale’s processes. A low ATAR score does not tell an applicant’s whole story. Lack of academic potential is not the sole explanation of a student’s failure to achieve an acceptable Year 12 rank. A semester in the diploma pathway course opens a new world of academic opportunity for many DGS students. Some go on to complete graduate study.

David Potter has been responsible for a couple of Avondale College pathway courses since 1991. His first task was to establish an ELICOS program, for which he functioned as Director of Studies. In the same year he became involved in the newly-established Foundation Studies program that was replaced in 1995 by the Diploma of General Studies. He has been continuously involved with this program for more than 21 years. His background included 5 years of high school teaching in New Zealand and Australia plus 8 years as a teacher and administrator in secondary and post-secondary education in Papua-New Guinea and Kiribati. He has coursework degrees from Avondale College, Massie University, Deakin University and the University of Newcastle. He is currently undertaking doctoral study at Avondale, a narrative study of the student experience of the Dip Gen Studs.
CONCURRENT SESSION 2:

2.1 Associate degrees at NMIT: A case report of curriculum design for vocational outcomes

John Grech and Kon Nikakis, NMIT, Level 10, Room 003

This paper will examine the rationale and development of Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE’s (NMIT) associate degrees in business and accounting. The challenges and opportunities of developing these qualifications using a “green fields” approach will be discussed along with innovations in the curriculum design process.

Using a ‘green fields’ approach meant that the courses were able to be developed using both a strategic business model as well as a “holistic” approach to curriculum design. This paper will outline the extensive market research, business modelling, demographic and academic analysis used along with the use of constructive alignment principles and the scaffolding of course content and assessment. This has resulted in tight integration of learning objectives, content and assessment, not only on a subject by subject basis but across the courses, resulting in both academically rigorous and vocationally focussed courses.

The development of these mid level higher education qualifications in business and accounting during 2006 and 2007, in part, anticipated the changes that were to eventually occur in the higher education and vocational sectors. These include the adoption of a new qualification framework, the Bradley Review, differing levels of funding for Victorian TAFE courses and changes in stakeholder expectations of post secondary training and education within the fields of business and accounting.

In particular, the paper will detail the way in which NMIT’s existing approaches to industry engagement in the vocational setting has been instrumental in curriculum design of the associate degree programs. The paper will therefore illustrate the fundamental importance of industry engagement to the development of robust curricula. The success of these initial associate degrees has been reflected through student enrolments increasing by over 900% from 2008 to 2012. The paper argues that pedagogical and curriculum models focussing on vocational and academic outcomes, the use of business principles such as service management strategies and addressing the needs of NMIT’s diverse student cohort have provided points of difference to programs offered by more traditional mainstream universities.

John Grech is currently a senior lecturer and Manager - Innovation and Strategic Development in the Faculty of Business and Service Industries at Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE (NMIT). With 20 years experience in the post secondary education sector, he previously held positions in industrial and public sector marketing, advertising and business consultancy.

John has qualifications in business, education and educational leadership, with research interests in curriculum development, global education, e-learning and innovative education practice. John’s experience at NMIT includes extensive overseas teaching, development of higher education curriculum in areas such as hospitality management, accounting, international business and information technology. He also established NMIT’s business degree programs, instilling a strong student centred culture and vocationally focussed pedagogy. John is a foundation member of the Institute of Practicing Accountants Faculty of Accounting Education, and long serving member of the Australian Market & Social Research Society and the Australian Marketing Institute (past member). Having taught and managed programs across both the higher education and vocational sectors at NMIT, John is able to
bring cross sectoral expertise and knowledge to the mid level qualification discussion drawing upon his extensive experience from both a professional as well academic perspective.

**Con Nikakis** is an experienced educator, author and consultant. His work is in the business applications of information technology along with many years of education management, consulting and applied research experience in various tertiary settings. His primary research areas of interest relate to the digital divide influence on the technology acceptance model and its ability to reliably inform tertiary education administrations.

Con’s engagement in educational research has involved publications in various conferences and journals e.g. Australasian Conference on Information Systems (ACIS), Encyclopaedia of Portal Technologies and Applications.

He has been a co-author of the highly successful, multiple editions, of the Microsoft Stable, Pearson Education.

Con has also previously been on the Victorian board of the Australian Computer Society, a member of the VITTA management committee, a member of ACPHIS, AIIA, CompTIA and a member of numerous university committees and boards.
2.2 The impact of national policy on the design of mid-level qualifications, or, the AQF is the solution not the problem!

Diane Booker, AQF Council, Level 10, Room 004

The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) comprises the standards for qualifications provided in the vocational education and training and higher education sectors.

The review of the AQF was undertaken in the context of changes to national education and training policy including the move to national regulation of qualifications and providers, ambitious targets for increased qualification attainment and reforms related to funding and the international student market. Ministers requested the AQF Council to ensure that the changes to the AQF would improve the contemporary relevance and national consistency of qualification outcomes, improve cross sectoral pathways and increase the recognition and value of Australian qualifications and enable international comparability of the AQF.

The revision of the AQF as approved by Ministers of Education and Training in March 2011 details the descriptors for Diplomas, Advanced Diplomas and Associate Degrees and the specifications for the design and accreditation of these qualifications.

Described by this conference as mid-level qualifications, this paper will explore how application of the revised qualification specifications, including application of the range of AQF policies, enable qualifications in this range to be designed for different purposes and learning outcomes, meet the requirements of employers, industry and the professions and to provide pathways to and from the qualifications both for further learning and attainment of higher level qualifications.

Di Booker is Director (Policy) for the Australian Qualifications Framework Council. Di has been closely involved with the research, consultation and development processes for the Strengthening the AQF project as well as the day to day policy work of the AQF Council. Her role includes providing high level and strategic policy advice to the AQF Council through the Executive Director to support the development and achievement of the Australian Qualifications Framework Council’s object, terms of reference and references from national ministerial councils.

Prior to taking up this position in July 2008, she held a range of positions in TAFESA including managing international projects and student recruitment, projects related to the UNESCO VET Network and various roles within the TAFESA Library Network.
2.3 Horses for courses, or courses for horses? Questions and issues arising from diploma holders transitioning into the Bachelor of Early Childhood Education at Holmesglen Institute

Estelle Irving, Holmesglen Institute, Level 10, Room 005

In 2011 Holmesglen Institute commenced delivery of its 4 year Bachelor of Early Childhood Education (BECE). Upholding a commitment to ‘access’, provided through diploma to bachelor transition pathways for appropriate diploma holders, credits equivalent to one year of the BECE are given to these students. In providing these credits, Holmesglen is explicitly responding to the AQF objectives related to creating ‘pathways which provide access to qualifications and assist people to move easily between different education and training sectors’ and which ‘support individuals’ lifelong learning goals by providing the basis for individuals to progress through education and training and gain recognition for their prior learning and experiences’.

Now, with 3 semesters of experience to reflect upon, questions and issues have arisen. These questions relate to: the cohort of diploma entry students; the diploma standard in terms of preparation for entry into Higher Education; and the leap from an AQF level 5 (diploma) course to the level 7 of a Bachelor. An issue of particular interest is the impact on teaching and academic support of accommodating students who have achieved AQF level 5 into year 2 of the Bachelor.

This presentation will discuss these questions and issues in the context of the Bachelor of Early Childhood Education and ask: ‘Is this an example of the old adage ‘horses for courses’ or is it ‘courses for horses’?’ The AQF standards anticipate student-readiness, but the reality may be closer to an expectation of ‘institution-readiness’ with Higher Education providers needing to be ready for students and their particular abilities and needs.

Dr Estelle Irving is the Undergraduate Programs’ Course Leader at Holmesglen Institute’s Department of Early Childhood Education, a position she has held for the past two years. Her role includes academic leadership of the Bachelor of Early Childhood Education. Holmesglen Institute commenced delivery of this four year degree in 2011 in an integrated VET and Higher Education department. Estelle has worked closely with the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority in a project focused on the implementation of a new learning and development framework (VEYLDF) for early childhood education practitioners. She is also Deputy Chair of the Teaching and Learning Committee for Higher Education at Holmesglen.

Originally trained as a Primary school teacher, Estelle has many years experience as an academic in Higher Education, teaching in primary education, early childhood education and sociology. Her diverse qualifications include Primary education, an Honours degree in Anthropology and a PhD in the Sociology of Childhood.

Prior to working at Holmesglen Institute, Estelle was a senior research fellow at the Centre for Community Child Health at the Murdoch Children’s Research Institute.
2.4 Challenges and models of teaching diplomas in vocational education and training: Transformations and critical pedagogy

Jennifer Miles and Jane Court, Chisholm Institute, Level 10, Room 006

In Vocational Education and Training (VET), the minimum qualification for teachers is the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (Cert IV TAA). Much has been written about the Cert IV TAA and its fitness for purpose in preparing teachers to work within the VET sector. To achieve career progression beyond this, teachers in Victoria are subsequently required to undertake a Diploma level qualification in VET teaching that incorporates a teaching practicum. This case study, at a TAFE institute, explores the transformational benefits to individuals and the organisation through engaging in the Diploma of VET Practice (21697VIC).

The paper will explore the challenges of designing and delivering a diploma-level program for a cohort of VET teachers, typically containing a cross-section of participants with tertiary qualifications ranging from bachelor degrees to industry trade credentials.

The model, founded in critical pedagogy and transformative learning, utilises small communities of practice to support the successful navigation of the individual and the collective through the program. Through the synergistic benefits of social learning, there develops an emerging understanding of learning and learners. As they journey through the disorienting dilemmas inherent in transformative learning and reflect on and critique their own experiences, individuals’ perspectives of learning and teaching change. Practices change, openness to new learning develops, and through gaining insight into the larger story of VET, an increased willingness to become involved in higher teaching responsibilities ensues. As individuals become critically reflective practitioners they are better equipped to meet the demands of the organisation in responding to the changing VET sector.

Our paper argues for the essential place of a diploma in supporting the professional development of vocational teachers, as a bridge from the Cert IV TAA to advanced teaching practice.

Jennifer Miles is an educator, researcher and writer, passionate about storytelling and its power to change perspectives of self. She works in professional learning & development at a Victorian TAFE institute, supporting adult learners to draw on stories of learning, strengths and potential as they move towards the creation of new identities and stories as yet untold.

Jennifer recently completed a Master of Education by Research thesis that examined the process and self-articulated outcomes of five participants returning to study at a Victorian TAFE institute. Her research involved a qualitative, narrative based inquiry within the context of vocational education and training (VET), investigating the capacity of autobiographical reflection to promote perspective transformation in adults returning to study. Drawing predominantly on the work of Brookfield (2005), Mezirow (2000), Brady (1990), Nelson (1994), Cranton (1994), Freire (1972), Shor (1992), Frankl (1964) and Rogers (1980), her thesis explored the personal and social dimensions of meaning-making, examining the role of critical reflection in transforming learner perspectives on identity and potential. This research on identity continues in her commencing PhD.

Jane Court works with Chisholm Institute in staff development. She has been involved in delivery or coordination of the Diploma VET Practice and the Certificate IV Training and Assessment since 2002. She has a particular interest in developing teaching capability in Vocational Education and Training. She is completing a MEd at Monash and is a recipient of a TAFE Development Centre Fellowship.
**CONCURRENT SESSION 3:**

3.1 Mid-level qualifications in Australia: tensions in the construction of academic achievement as the gateway to professional careers

*Catherine Burnheim and Stuart Levy, Monash University, Level 10, Room 003*

The Diploma of Tertiary Studies (DoTS) is a mid-level qualification designed to assist students from low socio-economic status backgrounds with records of modest academic achievement to transition to Bachelor degrees. It is a pathway designed as an academic preparation mechanism not a vocational one. However, as a program serving marginalised learners within a research-intensive university, its location at the intersection of competing policy objectives gives rise to conflicts about the nature of vocations and knowledge economy work. Positioned within a contested national and institutional policy context, between social inclusion, viability and reputational objectives, the DoTS is a pathway for students who do not gain the ATAR required for Bachelor degree entry. It is a one-year Diploma in which students study two core academic preparation units and take the balance of their studies alongside the general first-year cohort. The DoTS is delivered at the regional and peri-urban campuses of Monash University, a research intensive university. It is important to these campuses as a source of students who could not otherwise be recruited, and to the University in meeting social inclusion goals. However, the selection of students outside standard admission criteria exposes tensions in the construction of academic achievement as the gateway to professional careers and socially powerful knowledge. Institutionally, DoTS serves to both enable and quarantine ‘risky’ learners, providing access but on a conditional basis.

From the perspective of the DoTS students, university is considered a vocational program, leading to rewarding careers and higher standards of living. The DoTS cohort is overwhelmingly ‘first-in-family’ (or first-in-generation) to attend university. With few close university educated role models, students are principally motivated to study for vocational purposes and understand higher education as a more prestigious form of workplace preparation. In preparing these students for university study, DoTS seeks to engage them in contextualising their vocational aspirations within academic disciplines and university learning. The DoTS assists students to expand their utilitarian understanding of university to incorporate a more critically reflective appreciation of tertiary learning and develop a sense of themselves as graduate professionals who will work in a knowledge society.

**Dr Catherine Burnheim** is Manager, Partnerships and Pathways in Access Monash, at Monash University. Her role includes managing TAFE partnerships and access programs for non school-leavers. Catherine has previously worked at RMIT University in policy and community engagement roles, and at La Trobe University as a policy adviser. She holds a PhD in higher education policy from the University of Melbourne.
Dr Stuart Levy is the Director of the Diploma of Tertiary Studies (DoTS) Pathway, Monash University and has been the recipient of a Gippsland campus award for Team Teaching (2008) and a Special Commendation, Vice Chancellor’s Award for Programs that Enhance Learning (2010). His research interests include International Relations, the evolution of state sovereignty, the First Year in Higher Education and pathways to higher education that address social inclusion. He has recently co-authored books on international relations (Edmondson & Levy, 2008, International Relations: Nurturing Reality, Pearson Longman) and student experiences of university transition (Levy & Earl, Student Voices in Transition: The experiences of pathways students, Van Schaik 2012).

3.2 Alternate Models of associate degrees: Action research in the United States

Damien Pearce, University of Southern Queensland, Level 10, Room 004

The literature suggests that the formation of Community Colleges in the United States recognised that vocational, developmental, community and collegiate educational foundations are interrelated. Traditionally, Community Colleges are accredited to award associate degrees in arts and science that combine general education with technical education. These qualifications are said to bridge the difference between artisan and professional occupations.

This paper, on the occasion of the mid level qualifications conference, details examples of innovative frameworks for the delivery and assessment of these mid level qualifications, which fall outside the traditional Community College where an associate degree is two years post secondary qualification. Each of these models aims to promote the self-direction of learners so they can increasingly advocate for themselves. The models described include dual enrolment where students are enrolled both in high school and college simultaneously to either receive college credits or an associate degree upon high school graduation, and pathways to associate degrees through partnerships between labour movement apprenticeships and a college that focuses on non-traditional adult education.

These frameworks were identified during a recent Fulbright project, using action research methodology, within the United States, that considered vocational education and training more broadly. This Fulbright Professional Scholarship for VET was awarded by the Australian-American Fulbright Commission and sponsored by DEEWR.

Damien Pearce is currently an EdD student at the University of Southern Queensland (USQ) where he is interested in the relationship between self-directed learning, critical thinking and contemporary professional practice. Damien is a Fulbright Scholar for VET and has a Master of Educational Leadership from the University of Canberra (UC) and a Graduate Diploma of Tertiary Teaching and Learning from the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT). Damien is a proponent of scholarship within VET at all levels and is an active member of the Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association (AVETRA).

Before entering the field of education and training, Damien ‘swung spanners’ as a Fitter and Turner working within military and law enforcement maintenance engineering specialising in firearms, munitions and specialist equipment. His previous educational leadership positions have included employment as the Associate Director of the National Youth Science Forum (NYSF) and the Education Director of the Australian Federal Police (AFP) College before moving to full time doctoral study. Damien has extensive international experience in curriculum design, teaching and evaluation within both professional and vocational education and training.
3.3 Middle ground and mid-level qualifications

*Mark Doran and Alicia Toohey, Southbank Institute of Technology, Level 10, Room 005*

The discourse in recent times around AQF 5 and 6 qualifications appears to place diplomas / advanced diplomas and associate degrees in opposition to one other. However, evidence from a VET sector provider of these three qualification types strongly suggests that they can, and should, equally have their rightful place in the educational landscape. The presenters of this paper will widen the focus of the discussion to examine the diverse purposes of the qualifications and therefore their benefits to a range of stakeholders including mainstream, marginalised and potential students, employers, industry, peak bodies, and governments.

The paper will report on established practices in areas such as Recognition of Prior Learning (which in vocational education has almost trebled in national activity in the past 7 years); articulation arrangements (where annually 40% of the provider’s students enrol in streamlined pathways from diplomas to degrees); and engineering-led HE qualifications which have the capacity to augment the industry’s stretched workforce. Rather than accept that diplomas / advanced diplomas and associate degrees are mutually exclusive, this paper will suggest that a better understanding of the qualifications’ potential, individual strengths and intersections will bring better outcomes to stakeholders.

*Mark Doran is the RPL Coordinator at Southbank Institute of Technology and has worked in the VET sector for the last 13 years including 9 years teaching Hospitality (Commercial Cookery). He is now involved in assisting clients through the skills recognition process across all industry sectors and advises on options for further formal learning which includes both VET and Higher Education opportunities. Most recently he has been one of the key organisers of two annual state conferences for TAFE Queensland RPL Assessors to develop capability and consistency with RPL assessment. Mark is interested in the impact RPL has had both on the VET sector in Queensland and on the individual especially on those who move into higher education after having attained a diploma through an RPL process. Mark along with Alicia Toohey has presented at the last two NCVER No Frills National conferences: 2012, Adelaide – “The odd couple: can skills recognition in VET cohabit with university learning”; 2011, Coffs Harbour – “The Quiet Achiever: RPL and its contribution to the social inclusion agenda”*

*For almost the past 10 years Alicia Toohey has worked in the field of inter-sectoral collaboration as the Manager of Educational Pathways (Universities) at Southbank Institute of Technology and has established a specialisation in developing articulation arrangements from VET sector to higher education programs. She has participated in federally funded projects on Integrated Articulation and Credit Transfer, and Adult Learner Social Inclusion. Alicia also has extensive experience in the higher education provision of Languages Other Than English and the Teaching of English as a Second Language. Her research interests are reflective of her practice and include: workplace-based language and literacy programs, teaching and assessment of intercultural communication in LOTE; development of AQF 8 VET qualifications; articulation pathways; student performance and labour market outcomes resulting from inter-sectoral learning.*
3.4 Why Upskill? Examining AQF 5, 6 and 7 level qualifications in construction

*Patricia McLaughlin and Jane Carnegie, RMIT University, Level 10, Room 006*

The construction industry is extremely important to the Australian economy, as the fourth largest employer with nearly one million employees and contributing $61 billion or 12% of GDP per annum (ABS, 2011). Despite its economic significance, it has one of the least qualified workforces of all Australian industries. There are significant skill gaps at the higher levels of the AQF from Diploma level (AQF 5) upwards with less than 10% of the industry possessing a higher education qualification. This is in spite of the fact that over the last decade demand for higher skilled occupations, such as construction managers, has outstripped demand for construction trades (DEEWR, 2010). Movement between the VET and HE sectors is low. Of all construction students qualifying at AQF 4, less than 11% continue on to higher education and less than 1% of all VET qualified persons in the construction workforce seek re-entry to university to gain higher level qualifications. A key workforce supply issue is the number of students at these levels and why so few students move from Vocational Education (VET) studies on to Higher education (HE) studies in building and construction. This paper examines national data in construction education pathways and explores some of the “enablers” that facilitate pathways to mid-level and higher-level qualifications in construction. Through national research in seven Australian tertiary institutions offering construction programmes at AQF levels 5-7 and selected student interviews, a number of “enablers” of upskilling were identified. The results indicate that tertiary pathway programmes in construction can attract articulating cohorts, but there are critical elements such as learner engagement, confidence, people-rich resources and collaboration that must be present to facilitate successful pathways and on-going industry upskilling.

*Tricia McLaughlin* works in scholarship of learning and teaching at RMIT University, Melbourne. She has held lecturing appointments in industrial relations, human resource management and employment. Her background includes consulting on industrial, economic and training matters for a range of organisations, associations, unions and private companies within Australia. Tricia has been employed by the Parliament of Victoria as Executive Officer and consultant to the Economic Development Committee of the Parliament. She acted as the executive officer for the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Building Industry and Security of Payments Public Hearings. Prior to this appointment, Tricia was employed as a Workplace Reform Advisor to the Federal Minister for Industrial Relations. She has been the recipient of a number of competitive research grants and teaching awards. Her current research interests include lifelong learning, tertiary pathways, skills development and construction.

*Jane Carnegie* has over twenty years work experience in undertaking significant research projects and the associated development of policy and other research-based products in vocational education and training, working in a variety of contexts including the ACTU, ANTA, VETASSESS and the Business Services ITAB. Jane initiated her own consultancy in October 2004 focusing on tertiary education. Her recent projects and research studies have examined tertiary pathways for students, pathways policy and qualifications frameworks.
PLENARY SESSION 2: THE CONTRIBUTION OF DIPLOMAS TO SKILLS AND PRODUCTIVITY

Dr Tom Karmel – Managing Director, NCVER, Level 1, Room 001

In this presentation, Tom will examine specific fields of education, particularly the ones that are important for diplomas. In addition, he will look at the relationship between wages and the distribution of employment across qualifications to estimate the contribution of skills deepening to productivity, and the role that diplomas play in this contribution.

Dr Karmel took up the position of Managing Director, National Centre for Vocational Education Research in August 2002. Prior to this position he held senior appointments in the Federal government areas of education, employment, labour market research and the Bureau of Statistics. His research interests have centred on the labour market and the economics of education, focusing on empirical modelling. He has an honours degree in mathematical statistics (Flinders), and a Masters of Economics and doctorate from the Australian National University (The impact of increasing education levels on the Australian workforce).
This presentation considers two main issues: first, the tensions over the purposes of diplomas, advanced diplomas and associate degrees – are they primarily qualifications for work, for entry to a degree, or to increase access to higher level studies by students from disadvantaged backgrounds? It discusses whether these three purposes are complementary or whether pursuing one purpose is at the expense of the others. It also compares and contrasts these qualifications in different fields of education to see whether these purposes vary by field of education and industry.

The second main issue is the relative merits of associate degrees, diplomas and advanced diplomas for preparing students for work and for further study.

**Leesa Wheelahan** is Associate Professor at the LH Martin Institute and at the Education and Policy Leadership Unit at the University of Melbourne. She has published widely on lifelong learning, tertiary education policy, student equity, relations between the vocational education and training and higher education sectors, and the role of theoretical knowledge in curriculum. Leesa has taught in tertiary education for approximately 18 years, which includes time as a TAFE teacher in policy development, an academic developer at a dual-sector university and as a higher education teacher in adult, vocational education and higher education teacher preparation programs. She is currently coordinating the Graduate Certificate of Tertiary Teaching in the Melbourne Graduate School of Education.
**CONCURRENT SESSION 4:**

4.1 Patterns in mid-level qualification enrolments and outcomes in different fields over the last decade

*Nick Fredman, University of Melbourne, Level 10, Room 003*

Recent research has suggested that diplomas and advanced diplomas are being supplanted as credentials in the labour market by bachelor degrees. This paper will examine the role of mid-level qualifications in the labour market by analysing patterns in enrolments and employment outcomes over 2002–2011. Qualifications that are declining in importance in the labour market should show worsening employment outcomes and perhaps after some time declining enrolments (with the recognition that diplomas may retain importance as an articulation qualification). It is found that diplomas retained their share of enrolments while associate degrees have increased considerably. This however varies markedly by field, reflecting the segmented nature of the labour market. Employment rates of recent graduates dropped noticeably after 2007, perhaps an effect of the global financial crisis. More detailed analysis of 2011 graduate outcomes data suggests that mid-level qualification retain a particular importance as an articulation qualification for young people and as a skill-enhancing qualification for more experienced workers.

*Dr Nick Fredman* joined the LH Martin Institute as a Research Fellow in 2010 and is working with Prof. Leesa Wheelahan on a number of projects exploring change within and interrelationships between vocational and higher education. Prior to this, Nick worked on projects relating to work satisfaction among higher education employees and to graduate employability, both based at Victoria University. Before moving to Melbourne, Nick undertook a doctorate investigating the social and political bases of changing expressions of Australian national identity, which was completed in 2009 at Southern Cross University, where Nick also taught in media and Asian studies.

Nick’s research interests include the sociology of class and status within education and health professions and systems and how economic restructuring and ideology affect educational practice.
4.2 Greater openness in the national tertiary education provider market: student perspectives study

Peter Noonan, The Allen Consulting Group, Level 10, Room 004

This study was conducted for the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education to understand how and why students make course and institutional choices, focusing on the following key research questions:

- how do the different funding and student support mechanisms between VET and higher education impact on students’ decisions about enrolling in tertiary education?;
- what information do students use to decide to enrol in VET or higher education and how effective is that information?; and
- are the application processes overly complex and prohibitive?

The study adds to our understanding of the choices particular student segments make about their tertiary study options and pathways.

The study comprised a literature review and primary research in four tertiary education institutes in four states involving student focus groups, an online student survey and interviews with academic and professional staff. The study was designed to identify and target those students with a genuine choice between VET and higher education. This supported closer examination of whether features of the current tertiary education system might constrain or influence the choices of prospective students.

The study’s findings have implications for the role government in supporting informed student choice, the administration of application process and the regulation of fees and the provision of subsidies and loans schemes.

Peter Noonan is the Director of the Allen Consulting Group’s education and innovation practice. Through senior executive roles in government, and as consultant and researcher, Peter has played a major role in shaping policy directions in VET, higher and post-compulsory education in Australia for over 25 years.

Peter was a member of the Expert Panel for the Review of Australian Higher Education (Bradley Review) and was an adviser and consultant on higher education to a Commonwealth Minister responsible for tertiary education.

He was a General Manager and Acting CEO of the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) where he played a leading role in the development of the National VET system in Australia. He is a former Deputy Director General (VET) in the Queensland Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, and General Manager of the State Training Board of Victoria.
4.3 Championing the value of AQF 5 and 6 Qualifications

*Kathy Rankin, TAFE NSW, Level 10, Room 005*

There is strong and continuing instrumental value in AQF 5 and 6 qualifications. The value resides in the dual outcomes they provide, or pathways they support as AQF 5 and 6 qualifications provide both employment opportunities and educational progression to further education at AQF 7 level and above.

Their value arises from the employment opportunities relating to a projected growth rate for highly skilled paraprofessional jobs. Their value is also supported by the design of the AQF, which builds on the skills/knowledge required for each progressive level.

TAFE NSW has developed an innovative, collaborative tertiary education pathway that links and defines an articulation value (outcomes) of an associate degree qualification (AQF 6) with AQF 7 qualifications, and with industry requirements. The holistic perspective on the AQF 5, 6 and 7, characteristic of this pathway model, is underpinned by the design, development and validation from the university and industry partners.

The AQF 6 component of the tertiary pathway, an Associate Degree of Accounting, is delivered by TAFE NSW over the first two years of the pathway. It prepares work-ready and university-ready graduates by developing both theoretical knowledge and academic foundation skills through the course content, and practical, deep and authentic work-based experience through an industry internship. It avoids the lengthy articulation negotiations that are often applied inconsistently – resulting in variability in the student uptake and value. This pathway model represents a new approach for students who may not initially aspire to a university qualification, or for those seeking direct employment from the diploma (exit point) or associate degree. The pathway model provides a cost and time effective option for students, and provides certainty of expectation: the rules are clear, the pathway is streamlined; provides direct entry into a specified course (credit is integral to the pathway), and provides direct employment outcomes from the associate degree and degree.

Industry professional accreditation is provided for the tertiary pathway, recognising the AQF (7) and in doing so also recognises the associate degree and confirms the value of AQF 5 and 6 as part of the pathway.

*Kathy Rankin* has extensive experience in both education and business. She has extensive experience in secondary and vocational education, and as a university lecturer. She has also the perspective of industry having established a successful retail business and managing the policy and advocacy for a significant employer association.

As General Manager, TAFE NSW Training and Education Support Kathy maintains close ties with industry. She works with TAFE NSW Institutes to ensure programs respond to evolving labour market demands and specific expectations of customers – be they individual students or whole enterprises.

Kathy’s team has recently developed a new tertiary pathway to Accounting – a TAFE NSW Associate Degree of Accounting with graduates gaining direct entry into the third year of a partnering university in a relevant degree program. The first cohort of enrolments in the Associate Degree of Accounting commenced in July this year.
4.4 Reimagining vocational competence: knowledge, capabilities and competencies in mid-level qualifications

Martha Kinsman, Australian National University, & Sue Maslen, Canberra Institute of Technology, Level 10, Room 006

The latest wave of tertiary education reform has prompted a renewed focus on the role of middle level courses and on whether the dominant VET competency-based training (CBT) model is fit for purpose in the 21st century knowledge economy. A recent study commissioned by the NSW Government argues that not only do CBT qualifications inhibit pathways to degrees but that the fragmented and knowledge-averse CBT philosophy, with its exclusive focus on job-specific tasks, is a fundamentally flawed approach to preparing students for paraprofessional and technician careers.1 We endorse many elements of this critique.

The authors of the NSW study advocate the abandonment of competence and the adoption of capabilities, aligned according to vertically integrated occupational streams, as the conceptual basis for constructing middle-level qualifications. Notwithstanding the obvious attraction this proposal holds for progressive educators, we argue that there are compelling educational and social reasons why this curriculum model would be unlikely to improve – and may actually weaken – employment and career opportunities for that majority (60% or more) of Australians who have little or no expectation of obtaining a degree level qualification.

In our presentation we consider an alternative concept of vocational competence which incorporates and makes explicit the propositional and transferable knowledge necessary for future occupational and educational mobility whilst retaining a direct and transparent relationship with specific and recognised middle-level employment outcomes. We use examples of this approach at the Canberra Institute of Technology to demonstrate that it is both educationally coherent and administratively feasible and that it has a high level of acceptance among learners, their prospective employers and universities. We acknowledge, however, that the increasingly restrictive VET environment is creating almost insurmountable obstacles to the systemic implementation of this approach.

The recent emergence of Associate Degrees, particularly those at the core of the TAFE NSW Tertiary Pathways program, offers a potential resolution to this impasse. Albeit with some reservations about student equity and access to this program, we conclude that it signals an important alternative direction for the future of middle level qualifications in TAFE.

Martha Kinsman is a Ph.D student at the ANU, researching the history of technical teachers and a part time consultant in the field of tertiary education. Martha was the Associate Director at the Canberra Institute of Technology from 1990-2000 and Director of the CEO of the Gordon Institute of TAFE from 2000–2006. She has been a member of a wide range of Boards and Committees, the most relevant to this conference being the Australian Committee on Training Curriculum (1988-1992) and TAFE Directors Australia (2003-2006). Her particular interests include teachers work, teacher education, and course development, accreditation and articulation in VET and higher education. She has written a number of conference papers, journal articles and commissioned reports on these and related topics.

1 Wheelahan, Leesa and Gavin Moodie, 2011, Rethinking Skills in Vocational Education and Training: From Competencies to Capabilities, Sydney: Board of Vocational Education and Training, NSW Department of Education and Communities.
Martha holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Economics, a Graduate Diploma and Masters Degree in Education and a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. She is a Fellow of the Australian College of Educators, a member of AVETRA and a current Board member of the Australian National Museum of Education.

Sue Maslen is currently the Centre Director, CIT Education Excellence at the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT). She started with TAFE in Adelaide in 1989 as one of the first Lecturers Assistants, before moving to Canberra and taking up a teaching position at CIT in 1991. Her roles at CIT have included teaching across business, communication and teacher education qualifications, recruitment of international students to CIT, curriculum development, liaison officer between the University of Canberra and CIT, and more recently in CIT Education Excellence supporting the delivery of quality education services across CIT.

Sue has a Graduate Diploma of Education (Adult Education) from the University of South Australia and a Masters of Educational Leadership from the University of Canberra. Sue is passionate about implementing qualifications that not only meet the needs of industry but also the individual, equipping them to become independent lifelong learners.
CONCURRENT SESSION 5:

5.1 Conceptual differences between competency-based and capabilities-based education

Mary Leahy, University of Melbourne, Level 10, Room 003

The shift to competency based training in Australia was, in part, designed to provide greater opportunities for people with no formal qualifications. The skills and knowledge required for a particularly job or occupation were identified and divided into units of competence. The promise was that this would make it easier to offer recognition for skills developed in the workplace or the community. It would also provide a way of engaging people in formal education and training with the potential for progression to higher-level qualifications and more highly skilled jobs. This vision is seductive. However research, conducted for the NCVER Vocations project, shows that flows within education and between education and employment are weak.

There are problem with underlying assumptions about the relationship between educational and occupational progression and the potential to change labour market dynamics with initiatives in education and training. Questions about the nature of vocational education are also raised. The skills and knowledge described in competency standards correspond to a series of discrete work tasks, resulting in a fragmentation of knowledge. This is particularly acute at the intermediate level. The risk is that students will not have the opportunity to develop the conceptual knowledge underpinning and informing their area of practice. This then limits their capacity as employees to deal with new situations, respond to changes in work practices and to identify more effective ways of working. Although there are excellent vocational courses but they are developed in spite of the inherent limitations of competency based training.

In response to these types of concerns, Wheelahan and Moodie (2011) proposed an alternative paradigm, the idea of underpinning qualifications with the capabilities approach developed by economist Amartya Sen and the philosopher Martha Nussbaum. This paper examines the differences between competency based and capability based education. The primary focus is on the ideas, assumptions and values that shape each approach and on the implications for vocational education.

Mary Leahy joined the LH Martin Institute as a research fellow in 2011. She has a background in research and policy on education, training and employment.

Since joining LH Martin, Mary has worked on a number of projects including: a major NCVER funded project investigating pathways in education and from education to work; an issues paper for the OECD on higher education governance and institutional management for development in middle and low income countries; and a research project funded by the NSW Board of Vocational Education and Training (BVET) which is assessing the feasibility of underpinning VET qualifications with the capabilities approach instead of competency based training.

Mary’s research interests include: access to education, training and employment; women and work; pathways; the interface between higher education and vocational education and training (VET); the philosophical underpinnings of policies in education, training and employment; Nussbaum and Sen’s capabilities approach; and theories on choice, preference formation and decision making.
In addition to her research, Mary is course coordinator for Master of Education Policy (International) (MEPI) and subject coordinator for Education Policy Reform in Australia (MEPI) and for Tertiary Training in Practice (Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Teaching).

5.2 Associate teachers: Closing or widening the gap?

Claire Bartlett, Charles Darwin University, Claire Kilgariff, Batchelor Institute, and Sue Reaburn, Department of Education NT, Level 10, Room 004

The Northern Territory is far from the eastern seaboard and suffers the consequences of constant turnover of staff in both public and private sectors with negative impacts on the quality and continuity of service delivery. In Territory schools, 44.8% of the students are Indigenous with over 70% living in remote and are very remote locations. To increase the quality of teaching programs, particularly in remote schools, the Northern Territory Department of Education in partnership with the Commonwealth, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education and Charles Darwin University provides dedicated supports to maximise the number and level of completions of relevant accredited certificate, diploma and degree qualifications. This work includes a suite of strategies to meet a target of 200 more Indigenous teachers in Northern Territory schools by 2018. Recognising the knowledge and skills that Indigenous staff bring to classrooms, this paper focuses on the planned extension of the competency based career pathway for the Department’s paraprofessional workforce of Indigenous Assistant Teachers. In remote Northern Territory, this is the historical pathway to teaching and as with their counterparts across Australia, there is an unacceptably high attrition rate, particularly in the second year of teacher education study. Just as enrolled nurses are to registered nurses, the Associate Teacher role is envisaged as a role working under the direction and supervision of a trained teacher. The Associate Teacher classification will enable Assistant Teachers who wish to complete further study an opportunity to be remunerated on their journey while developing the higher level skills to further contribute to the their schools and communities. It will also enable other Indigenous Territorians who wish to become teachers another entry and exit point should access and participation issues prevent timely completion of a four year higher education qualification. In the development of an Advanced Diploma and or Associate Degree, firm ground on either side is needed to bridge the gap between vocational education and higher education.

Claire Bartlett is a consultant and a PhD Candidate, Charles Darwin University, Northern Territory.

Claire Kilgariff is the Head of Faculty of Education, Arts & Social Sciences. at the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, Northern Territory

Sue Raeburn has lived and worked in remote, rural and urban Northern Territory as a classroom teacher, adult educator, lecturer, tutor trainer and program manager for over 35 years. She is currently Director, Indigenous Workforce Development in the Northern Territory Department of Education. A key priority of Sue’s team is to increase the number of Indigenous teachers working in classrooms throughout the Northern Territory.
5.3 Beyond mid-level qualifications: “Look at me now!”

Wayne Miller, Avondale College, Level 10, Room 005

The experience of graduates who attain qualifications at levels 5 & 6 of the Australian Qualifications Framework can contribute to the discourse about the future of these awards. This presentation will present two such experiences. First that of a graduate who found employment on the strength of a Diploma award and second a graduate who found employment from a Certificate IV award and then transitioned into a Bachelor’s degree program. I will touch on element of their journeys that shed light on both the positive and negative aspects of the mid-level qualification pathway. These elements will include how entry into Vocational Education and Training (VET) was attained; reflections on their experience as students within the VET sector; and whether the skills and competencies attained in the VET qualification provided a measure of preparedness for work and further study respectively.

The academic environment where these mid-level qualifications were attained is Avondale College of Higher Education, a dual sector provider in Lake Macquarie, New South Wales. For many years Avondale provided VET level qualifications in clerical and business studies and in aviation. In 2000, prior to the release of the first Training Package for the Outdoor Recreation Industry, Avondale added an accredited Certificate IV in Outdoor Recreation to its scope. In 2012, and in the context of all programs needing to demonstrate financial viability, training package-based Certificates III and IV and Diploma awards in outdoor recreation are now the only VET qualifications offered at Avondale. While a credit transfer agreement with Charles Sturt University offers Diploma graduates one-year of credit towards their three-year Bachelor of Applied Science (Adventure Ecotourism) degree it is Avondale’s education and arts degrees that are attracting a growing number of graduates from the Diploma of Outdoor Recreation.

Wayne Miller lives on the Central Coast of New South Wales where the coastal waters provide abundant opportunity to paddle sea kayaks. He and his wife Jenny have four children and eight grandchildren. A health, physical and outdoor education lecturer in teacher education at Avondale College of Higher Education for 27 years he has degrees from Avondale, the University of Queensland and the University of Wollongong. However his most prized testamur in spite of it being in need of an upgrade is his Diploma of Training and Assessment Systems. Wayne’s involvement with Vocational Education and Training began in 1998 during a 3 year period of secondment to the South Pacific Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church during which he coordinated a project to establish an industry-recognised corporate approach to the delivery of outdoor adventure activities sponsored within the organisation’s church and school programs. During this time he was a member of the steering committee responsible for the development of the inaugural National Training Package for the Outdoor Recreation Industry and served as President of the Outdoor Recreation Council of Australia. The introduction of Avondale’s Outdoor Recreation program in 2000 is an extension of his work in this area.
5.4 Professional body accreditation of competency based engineering education programs at AQF 6 level

Noel Miller, Australian Engineering Accreditation Centre, Level 10, Room 006

This presentation outlines the process of accreditation of AQF 6 engineering programs. Engineers Australia is the peak body for the engineering profession in Australia, representing all disciplines and branches of engineering, and is recognised by government and industry as the national authority for competency assessment in the domain of engineering practice.

Engineering work is undertaken by individuals trained in either universities or through the VET sector. As a group these engineers form the ‘engineering team’. Some 70% of the engineering team members in Australia are identified as professional engineers, 25% are in the engineering associate category and a further very small minority practise as engineering technologists.

The benchmark qualification for engineering associates is the AQF 6 level, two-year competency based advanced diploma of engineering which is normally delivered within the VET sector. An alternative curriculum-based educational framework is provided through associate degree in engineering, which has generally been university-based although some VET providers have commenced delivering this qualification.

Accreditation is voluntary but there is a long history of consistent subscription to the process at the professional and technologist level. Additionally, all existing university associate degree programs are now either provisionally or fully accredited. In the VET sector, Engineers Australia has more recently embarked on establishing a fully-fledged accreditation management system for competency based two-year advanced diploma programs. There has been a long history in Australia of this level of program offering in the VET sector, but accreditation has only been considered over the past five years.

Noel Miller, Accreditation Consultant - Vocational Programs, Australian Engineering Accreditation Centre, Engineers Australia, MEd, GradDip Ed (T&D), Dip MechEng, FIEAust CPEng, Cert IV in Training & Assessment.

Prior to his retirement from Ford Australia, Noel worked for the company in management across a range of activities including manufacturing plant and program engineering, manufacturing research and development projects and strategic human resource development specialising in corporate technical education and training. Since his retirement, Noel has been working part time with Engineers Australia as an Accreditation Consultant for Vocational Programs. In this role, Noel has played a key role in the development of two sets of accreditation management system documentation for (a) use with competency based programs in the VET sector and (b) use with curriculum based programs in the Higher Education sector. Both sets of the above documentation are aligned with engineering programs at AQF level 6, in the occupational category of Engineering Associate. Noel has also been working with RTOs nationally, to facilitate the accreditation of their AQF level 6 engineering programs with Engineers Australia’s accreditation management system criteria.
**Plenary Session 4: The Future for VET Diplomas & Equivalent Qualifications – What Our Modelling & Consultations Have Told Us**

*Mr Robin Shreeve – CEO, Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency, Level 1, Room 001*

The Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency (AWPA - formerly Skills Australia) is responsible for developing a National Workforce Development Plan. We use different scenarios to model possible workforce futures to develop policy that is flexible enough to deal with a range of potential outcomes. This talk indicates what those scenarios might mean for diploma level qualifications and builds upon other work undertaken by the agency over the past two years.

Robin Shreeve has worked in the skills sector for more than 30 years in Australia and England. He is currently the Chief Executive of Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency. The AWPA is an independent advisory body advising the Australian Government on workforce development and workforce skill needs.

Prior to this appointment Robin was Principal of a Central London College of Further and Higher Education. From 1989 to 2005 Robin worked for the Department of Education and Training in New South Wales Australia. There he was Deputy Director-General for Technical, Further and Community Education (TAFE). From 1995 to 2000 he was Director (Principal) of the North Coast Institute of Technical and Further Education in northern New South Wales. Robin was foundation Chair of the Board of TAFE Global Pty Ltd an international project management company set up following TAFE NSW’s success in as the official training partner for the Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games.
**Panel Session 1: Intermediate Qualifications – Industries’ Aims**

Professor Alan Bradley was appointed to the position of Engineers Australia – Associate Director Accreditation in February of 2002, following a 30-year career at RMIT University, holding the positions of Associate Dean and Head of Department of Communication and Electronic Engineering. His academic career included leadership of the Signal Processing Research Group within the Centre for Advanced Technology in Telecommunications.

On behalf of the Engineers Australia Accreditation Board, Professor Bradley managed the systems and processes of accreditation for engineering education programs implemented by Australian educational institutions both in Australia and internationally. Professor Bradley was also influential in the affairs of the Washington Accord and other education accords under the International Engineering Alliance. As well as representing Engineers Australia at accord meetings and workshops, Professor Bradley contributed to the development of policy and guideline documents, the development and maintenance of exemplar graduate outcome statements, periodic monitory of signatory accreditation systems and the mentoring of new jurisdictions seeking admission to the accords.

Professor Bradley retired from the Associate Director role in November of 2007, but continues as Accreditation Consultant to Engineers Australia.

Michael Hartman has spent more than 25 years in the field of adult education, learning, and vocational education training systems (VET). Michael is the CEO of ForestWorks which has, under his leadership, significantly increased its national role and capacity, enhanced and expanded its programs, and continues to increase industry’s access to skills development and training.

With a diverse educational background in OH&S, road traffic safety, industrial relations, manufacturing economics and productivity, Michael also holds a Diploma in Management (Community Services) Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment and trade qualifications. Michael is Director of CLSC, a charitable organisation, which raises funds to builds schools to provide alternatives to child labour in third world countries. Contact Michael Hartman: mhartman@forestworks.com.au

Megan Lilly is Associate Director, Education & Training for the Australian Industry Group (Ai Group). Megan has responsibility for the public policy development relating to education & training of the Ai Group. Prior to this, Megan was the CEO of Business Services Training Australia - the national industry training advisory board for the business services and related industry sectors.

Megan has held several senior management positions in various Victorian TAFE institutes and was the Manager of the Australian Competency Research Centre.

Megan is currently a Director of Manufacturing Skills Australia, a Member of the National Quality Council, a Board Member of Reengineering Australia, a Member of the National Skills Shortage Committee, and a Member of the Victorian Learning & Employment Skills Commission. Megan
holds a Bachelor of Arts, Diploma of Education, and a Masters of Educational Policy & Administration, all from Monash University.

Gavin Lind is a mining engineer with early career experience in both the deep level gold mines and underground coal mines in his native South Africa. With a keen interest in financial and operational risk management, Gavin pursued and completed his Ph.D. in this topic at his alma mater, The University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), Johannesburg, in 2004, before joining the ranks of the academic world at the universities of Pretoria, Wits and most recently Curtin University (at the Western Australian School of Mines in Kalgoorlie). Following various professional roles in industry, academia and government in both South Africa and Australia, Gavin joined the Minerals Council of Australia (MCA) in 2010, first as its Assistant Director of Higher Education, and now as its Executive Director of the Minerals Tertiary Education Council (MTEC). As of September 2012, Gavin was additionally appointed as the Director, Education and Training for the MCA’s policy development and advocacy on careers, vocational education and training, higher education, workforce skills and participation and skilled migration related to the minerals industry.

Panel Session 2: Intermediate Qualifications – Educational Responses

Professor Ross Chambers was Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) at Charles Sturt University from 2002 until his retirement in June 2012. From 1992 until 2002 he was Dean, Faculty of Arts at CSU. In these positions, Professor Chambers played a major role in the expansion of CSU’s course profile, including the introduction of university education for "new professions" such as policing and paramedics. Professor Chambers also led the development of CSU’s cross-sectoral programs and its rural and remote and indigenous education strategies. He was a member of the council of Riverina Institute of TAFE NSW from 2002 to 2012 and of the Steering Committee for the development of the TAFE NSW Associate Degree in Accounting. Professor Chambers’ academic interests are modern Russian history and the history of social and political thought.
Pam Christie is the Institute Director for TAFE NSW – Sydney Institute, one of the largest and most respected vocational education and training providers in Australia. First established in 1891 Sydney Institute now enrolls more than 74,000 students annually including over 3,500 international students.

Pam has extensive experience in the vocational education and training sector in a range of leadership roles. Over recent years Pam played a major role in shaping national and state policy directions including leading reforms in the apprenticeship and traineeship system and establishing quality and regulatory frameworks in the vocational and higher education sectors.

Pam is a member of the NSW Vocational Education and Training Accreditation Board and TAFE Directors Australia Board. Pam commenced her career as a teacher and has worked overseas in Zambia, Nigeria and Malaysia.

Pam has a keen interest in leadership and strategic relationship building. She has a strong commitment to strengthening relationships with industry and the broader tertiary education sector.

David Dowling is a Professor of Engineering Education at the University of Southern Queensland (USQ) where he has been teaching and researching for more than 30 years. He was the Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching) from 1995 until January 2009, and received an Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) Citation in 2008 for his work with graduate attributes. David was President of the Australasian Association for Engineering Education during 2005-2006 and is the lead author of the successful first year text: Engineering Your Future: An Australasian Guide.

David is passionate about helping students achieve their career goals, particularly those who mix work and study while following a pathway through two or more programs. This passion was the catalyst for his research into engineering technician education in Australia, and articulation pathways between vocational and higher education programs. This research informs his work at USQ and with Engineers Australia’s Articulation Committee.

Helen Smith is a senior research fellow in the RMIT School of Global Urban and Social Studies, currently on secondment to the offices of the Director TAFE and the Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic at RMIT University as a consultant/advisor on tertiary learning and teaching quality. Helen is an Australian Learning and Teaching Council Teaching Fellow working on the development of new approaches to vocational and professional learning within associate degrees.

She is also involved in a joint project with the Centre for Research in Vocational Education and Training, University of Tampere, Finland, the SKOPE Centre at Oxford University, WorldSkills Australia and the Dusseldorp Skills Forum on vocational excellence.

Prior to her career at RMIT University, Helen occupied leadership roles in vocational and higher education as a policy developer, program designer and change agent. She brings a practitioner’s perspective to research on learning and teaching in the tertiary domain.