

FOUNDATION SKILLS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Scoping a foundation skills professional standards framework – Consultation Kit

August 2013

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This kit should be filled out after participants have read the *Scoping a foundation skills professional standards framework* consultation paper.

Group Feedback Form

Workshop session date:	10 October 2013
Organisation:	NSW Adult Literacy and Numeracy Council
Number of participants:	11 including teachers, teacher educators, policy managers from TAFE, Corrections, private providers and higher ed
Location:	Sydney, NSW
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Please select the most accurate description of the way in which this feedback represents the views of your workshop participants.

This feedback represents:

☒ the consensus view of participating individuals

Diagram 1: Possible extent of the foundation skills workforce



Diagram 1 is a rough sketch of the possible extent of the foundation skills workforce. It is created as a starting point for talking about the diverse environments for foundation skills delivery in Discussion Point 1.

Responses to workshop discussion questions:

Discussion questions	Summary/key points
Discussion point 1: <i>scoping the foundation skills field</i>	
Where are the boundaries of the foundation skills field?	<p>We are not convinced that 'foundation skills' can be described as a field; we believe it is more appropriate to think of it as a program context related to a particular policy context at a particular point in time, since 'foundation skills' is a recent coinage. Foundation skills are defined LLN (or as the Strategy calls) 'core skills' teaching roles.</p> <p>'Employability skills' do not constitute a separate set of teaching roles because these skills are at least nominally embedded in Training Package specifications and sound pedagogy that takes account of the contexts in which learners are or will be working means that employability skills will be meaningfully embedded in the teaching and learning processes.</p> <p>We believe it would be more productive to consider standards - or in the first instance, guidelines to be field-tested, for RTOs in approaches to establishing and supporting quality 'foundation skills teams', i.e. teams of experts including LLN teachers, vocational teachers, disability support teachers, community outreach coordinators, counsellors, job services professionals who provide the wholistic learning and in many cases job preparation program for learners.</p>
Does the field include only occupations that are	For the purpose of developing professional standards, the clearly defined

Discussion questions	Summary/key points
that have some responsibility for, or interest in, foundation skills development?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TESOL • Adult Literacy • Adult Numeracy • There are already established tertiary qualifications in the above three areas; in some cases the qualifications combine two or three of these areas. There are also minimum tertiary qualifications for employment to deliver programs in these areas. • We believe that all tertiary educators - eg vocational teachers, should have an awareness of LLN as critical resources for learning, even if they do not have a primary role in LLN delivery.
Are there domains, programs or occupations that are missing from diagram 1 (above) – or some that should be excluded?	<p>The diagram conflates learner groups, programs and roles. It is not very helpful. Perhaps separate diagrams that describe these different dimensions are needed.</p> <p>Some groups with different learning needs have been identified as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • early school leavers (14 yrs+) • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples • migrants and refugees • prisoners • people with disabilities.

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	<p>It appears when analysing the Foundation Skills strategy, Foundation Skills Training Package and the Core Skills for Work that their scope extends beyond programs that focus on the lower levels of the ACSF. This poses some difficulties in understanding the relationship between the intended scope of this current exercise and programs outside the Commonwealth funded LLN programs – such as ELICOS programs or indeed university programs. ELICOS has its own standards and accreditation body (NEAS), and universities are self-accrediting, and overseen by a separate regulatory body to VET.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similarly, it would be difficult to talk about standards and qualifications in community volunteer based programs such as family literacy programs organised in libraries and other community settings. • It may be more productive to focus the discussion on those programs delivered by the VET sector using nationally accredited training.
Is there a need to define and agree upon what is meant by a foundation skills practitioner?	<p>As stated above, we do not believe there is such a role as foundation skills practitioner.</p> <p>We do believe it useful to focus on developing guidelines or models to ensure the formation of effective foundation skills teams, particularly if this helps to legitimise appropriate levels of funding for the team-based 'best-practice' in the delivery of foundation skills programs.</p>

Discussion questions	Summary/key points
Discussion point 2: <i>considering the purpose of a professional standards framework</i>	
Should a professional standards framework focus only on foundation skills education specialists or should it also include related occupations where a level of knowledge and skills in foundation skills is an addition to the required core skills and capabilities?	<p>A professional standards framework should focus on LLN specialists initially. Other workers in the vocational training and adult education sectors may wish to work towards developing the specialised dispositions, knowledge and skill that LLN specialist teachers require to be effective teachers.</p> <p>There is real danger in failing to recognise that substantial professional knowledge and skills is required to teach LLN.</p> <p>There is a need to identify the purpose of a Framework. Under current national VET regulations standards and at audit, RTOs have to demonstrate that teachers (including LLN teachers) of specific qualifications/units of competency have the required qualifications, skills and experience to teach the specific qualification/unit. The development of any professional skills framework should complement this process not duplicate it.</p>
How can the diversity of the foundation skills field be accommodated in a professional standards framework?	<p>It cannot be accommodated at this time. There is a debate that has to be had properly once initiatives under the NFSS and the roll out of the Foundation Skills Training Package have been field tested, and there are practices and data from which standards may be contemplated.</p> <p>There would be advantages in recruiting specialist literacy and numeracy teachers from a wider range of socio-economic and cultural and linguistic</p>

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	<p>groups and developing the profession so that that it more closely reflects the student demographic and range of language practices.</p> <p>As stated earlier, ensuring high quality experiences for foundation skills learners requires effective teams of practitioners including LLN specialists, vocational specialists, etc. The minimal threshold qualification for VET teachers (Cert IV TAA) will not serve learners in foundation skills programs well. All practitioners involved in supporting these learners ought to have sound pedagogical knowledge and skills, and the intellectual resources to exercise professional judgement and autonomy to devise strategies that meet the diverse and unanticipated needs of learners. For foundation skills teams to be effective communities of practice, all team members need to feel they bring with them sound pedagogical knowledge and the capacity for critical reflection. Any initiative aimed to improve the outcomes for foundation skills learners need to critically interrogate the range of factors that can limit the capacity of RTOs to deliver quality programs – including the qualification levels of practitioners.</p>
<p>What components of a professional standards framework will be critical for ensuring that it is useful and sustainable?</p>	<p>Professional standards would be useful if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they are based on scholarly practice-based research • there is a legitimate body that can manage and implement the standards; • there are real jobs and career paths where the standards carry meaning in terms of career advancement; • relevant professional organisations and other relevant stakeholder groups

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	<p>have ownership of the Standards and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they facilitate clarity and improvements in the industrial standards for those working in the profession. (changed a bit of formatting here)
<p>What management mechanisms would need to be put in place to implement and maintain a professional standards framework for the foundation skills field?</p>	<p>Formal arrangements must be established and maintained linking specification in LLN and other curriculum documents, teacher training in a range of tertiary organisations, industrial agreements, commonwealth and state policies and programs. For standards to be effective, they must have legitimacy in the eyes of those in the professions, first of all, and the other stakeholders. It must also be durable – not one that has to be rewritten every time there is a new policy.</p>
<p>What role could existing membership organisations play in the implementation and maintenance of a professional standards framework?</p>	<p>Membership organisation endorsement would be necessary as a first step. (See for example ACTA's Standards for TESOL Practitioners)</p> <p>Information about what standards/qualifications are required for different job roles could be posted on websites. See for example http://www.victesol.vic.edu.au/careers-in-tesol.php</p> <p>If the professional organisations are to have a substantial role in providing advice, monitoring, registration of teachers etc then the issue of appropriate levels of funding must be raised.</p> <p>We reiterate the need for there to be clear purpose in setting standards – if only casual low-paid jobs are available for LLN teachers working in foundation skills program, a standards framework would be an overkill.</p>

Discussion questions	Summary/key points
Discussion point 3: <i>identifying knowledge and skills for the foundation skills field</i>	
Could a matrix or framework of knowledge and skills be developed to describe the range of capabilities needed in the foundation skills field?	<p>As well, it would be worthwhile revisiting the practitioner competencies identified in the DEET project report Scheeres et al (1993) <i>The Adult Basic Education Professional and Competence: Promoting Best Practice</i>, and examining whether in fact the competencies needed are substantially different.</p> <p>See also ACTA's Standards for TESOL Practitioners.</p> <p>These frameworks could be adapted to be inclusive of competencies for teaching Digital Citizenship.</p> <p>An adapted/ modified framework could then be validated against existing good practice through a well-designed research project.</p>
Are some areas of knowledge and skills essential for everyone in the field?	<p>No. A single field does not exist. There is also a grave danger in specifying a lowest common denominator since this might easily be interpreted as the 'standard'. There is some evidence already that the Cert IV TALLN unit, having been made compulsory, now qualifies graduates to claim specialist skills in LLN.</p> <p>The field needs to be clearly defined and differentiated for standards to be meaningful and applicable.</p>

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Are there identifiable specialisations that could usefully be described in a matrix or framework?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TESOL with L1 literacy • TESOL with no L1 literacy • English as second dialect • ESB with low levels of reading/writing • Numeracy from beginning levels • Digital citizenship which covers a range of technology – computer / tablets/ phones • Embedding of contextualised vocational and employability skills • Disabilities • Providing training/professional development to vocational teachers including delivery of IBSA qualifications
Could any or all of these skills be encapsulated within an existing framework such as the VET Capability Framework? (see Appendix C of the consultation paper)	<p>Much of what has happened in the VET sector under the guise of national consistency, accountability and management frameworks has actively undermined the status, qualifications and roles of qualified adult literacy and adult numeracy teachers (and vocational teachers who – at least in TAFE had the benefit of a university teaching qualification). Now is an ideal opportunity to describe what is different and valuable about the people who can teach LLN skills successfully.</p>

Discussion questions	Summary/key points
Discussion point 4: <i>using qualifications to describe professional requirements</i>	
How do historic and currently available qualifications in LLN relate to the needs of foundation skills specialists?	<p>TESOL qualifications are well established in all education sectors and help contribute to higher outcomes in TESOL courses.</p> <p>Adult literacy and adult numeracy teaching qualifications hardly had time to get established before they were undermined by the marketisation of VET and the failure to specify high level of knowledge and skills needed to teach ALN accredited curricula.</p> <p>At the very least TESOL teachers and ALN teachers should have professional parity, standing and employment conditions.</p> <p>TESOL teachers' skills and knowledge is cross sectoral.</p> <p>ALN qualifications should include theoretical frameworks of literacy and numeracy, literacy and numeracy pedagogical pedagogies and practices, adult education principles, theories of adult learning, workplace learning theories and practices, as well as approaches to critical reflective practices and tools for interpreting policies will need to be included in the qualifications that are specifically used in the adult sectors. There should be supervised teaching practicums in initial teacher training. (Quality does not come cheaply)</p> <p>Qualifications on their own will not sustain teachers' currency. The</p>

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	working environment of LLN practitioners need to be supportive of continuing education and scholarly approaches to teaching and learning.
Do any qualifications fully capture the knowledge and skills required by foundation skills specialists?	<p>The specialists and specialisations already represent a highly differentiated 'field'. No one qualification adequately specifies skills and knowledge needed, and none should try.</p> <p>Different qualifications are needed for different content specialisations.</p>
Are there any critical skills and capabilities required by the foundation skills workforce that are not covered by any existing formal qualifications?	<p>Bidialectal skills and knowledge (needed to teach Aboriginal English speakers) are not represented.</p> <p>Bilingual pedagogies where appropriate.</p>

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Discussion point 5: <i>defining on the job requirements</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counterproductive focus on decontextualised skills • Too much time spent on measurement • Mistaken belief about what constitutes LLN practice • Claims from people with no specialist knowledge to be LLN experts because they know the name of an assessment framework.
Could levels be used to describe developmental stages of foundation skills expertise and experience?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No, one's expertise moves between several 'levels' depending on the context. • We do not believe the 'associate' in diagram 1 is a professional role.
How much on-the-job experience is needed by foundation skills practitioners working in various roles or contexts?	<p>Different specifications would apply to different levels.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Entry Level Specialist, for example might be required to undertake a minimum of 100 hours practicum as part of training, and two years (full time equivalent) working with access to supervision from a Fully Competent Specialist Teacher. • For a person to move from the Embedded level to the Apprentice level, 50 teaching hours (L&N focus) working under supervision with formal study in the appropriate skill sets units from TAE. • For a person to move from Apprentice to Entry Level Specialised Teacher and enrol in a post graduate qualification, 100 hours teaching units from accredited LLN curriculum under supervision as an

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	entry requirement.
Are there, or should there be, established mechanisms for gaining the necessary on-the-job experience?	<p>Practicums, with minimum nominal hours must be included in qualifications.</p> <p>Working under supervision for a specified time could also be utilised (see above). The supervision should be provided by a professional with appropriate content knowledge who meets the highest level of a three or four component standard.</p>
Should formal or consistent methods for documenting on-the-job experience be developed?	Yes – but there is so much compliance related documenting work already required this could be the straw that breaks the camel’s back.

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Discussion point 6: <i>creating a system for continuing professional development</i>	
<p>Could a system for continuing professional development (CPD) be created that will meet the needs of the foundation skills field?</p>	<p>One problem that the proposed standards framework could address is the requirement for LLN teachers with specialist high level qualifications needing to undertake lower level qualifications eg the TAELN Cert IV unit – over and over again as the Cert IV is revised, at great financial cost to practitioners, especially the casual teachers who have to self-fund these upgrades. It verges on the unethical.</p> <p>There should be some distinction made between in-house PD that focuses on operational/ compliance issues, and disciplinary PD that focuses on extending and giving currency to teachers’ disciplinary base. The latter is what professional organisations such as ACAL and its state affiliates can and do address. However, we are currently dealing with a highly qualified workforce – many people with Masters qualifications in adult education/ adult L&N/ TESOL. We need to ensure that a critical mass of practitioners continue to have the high level of disciplinary base to support new entrants into the field.</p> <p>The issue of a CPD framework needs to be considered as part of the work already underway in the larger VET sector. The interaction with existing ASQA requirement also needs to be considered.</p> <p>Maintenance of industry currency and vocational currency is required under NSSC Standards and has to be demonstrated by RTOs at audit. For</p>

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	LLN teachers this includes maintaining knowledge and skills relevant to the adult LLN field and being able to apply this knowledge to their own teaching practice.
How can a highly casualised workforce be accommodated in a CPD system?	It can't be adequately addressed while the casualisation is accepted as the norm. A useful initiative of a standards development project is to have a standard that mandates a quota on the use of casual labor, for RTOs seeking to offer foundation skills program. In the meantime, scholarships, mentoring, community of practice and the like can help – but the latter two should always be in place for all staff.
Who would take responsibility for managing a CPD system?	See above re two types of CPD The employer must manage the in-house operational/ compliance related CPD Unless RTOs are supported through extra funding, the necessary disciplinary CPDs would have to be provided externally. This could be a positive thing if practitioners are supported to attend. Undertaking PDs outside one's immediate workplace often enables one to engage more openly in new ideas.
Should there be one system, or many, to accommodate the diversity of the field?	Depends what is meant by system. Clearly the field is highly differentiated and may be employed under different industrial awards.

Discussion questions	Summary/key points
Discussion point 7: <i>establishing requirements for specialist areas</i>	
Can areas of specialisation be clearly identified within the foundation skills field?	See above
What is the best way to describe the unique knowledge and skills requirements of specialist areas?	See above re – revisiting existing frameworks, and validating any revision through research
Does there need to be a distinction between specialists who operate across delivery contexts (e.g. numeracy specialists, NESB specialists) and those who specialise in a particular delivery context (e.g. WELL practitioners)?	<p>The most important distinctions are between the content specialisation determined by the different needs of learners. But there should be an overarching set of principles around social justice, care and respect, as well as an understanding of teaching as a relational practice that cuts across all areas of specialisation.</p> <p>Dealing with teaching and learning is the core activity. Dealing with the delivery context is secondary.</p>

Discussion point 8: <i>determining the need for a code of practice</i>	
Are there any ethical operating principles for the foundation skills field that are not already established in the broader education and training system?	<p>There needs to be a code of practice and ethics for the providers that embrace:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholarly teaching • Industrial justice for teachers • Open and critical debates about policy and pedagogical issues affecting practitioners and learners • Respect for practitioners' professional judgement and autonomy
What does this mean for practitioners operating outside of accredited VET delivery	It is unclear if this project has or ought to have mandate to consider standards outside the accredited VET delivery areas.

Discussion questions	Summary/key points
Additional comments/issues?	Creating a standards framework presents an opportunity to raise the status of specialist teachers and create parity of recognition for professionals teaching in all the LLN fields.