

The Credit Matrix – Building Bridges Between Qualifications

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Abstract

The Victorian Qualifications Authority (VQA) is currently working on a credit-based framework – the credit matrix – that would be designed to apply across all the post-compulsory qualifications available in Victoria. Designed to work with, and enhance the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), the VQA believes that such a system could provide the basis for improving linkages between qualifications in the school, adult and community, vocational and higher education sectors. In this way, the credit matrix could, among other things, improve credit transfer and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) processes and overall make it easier for people to re-enter education and training and acquire qualifications throughout their lives.

Introduction

This paper explores the need for cross-sectoral linkages in the education and training system in Victoria in order to help meet the needs of learners. Currently, there are signs of increasing demand for flexible learning options that allow individuals to study parts of qualifications, and across education sectors. There has also been a growth in the number of students wishing to undertake qualifications that contain components from different education sectors.

Given its legislated objectives to ensure and support linkages between qualifications, and to make it easier for people to enter and re-enter education and training and acquire qualifications throughout their lives, the Victorian Qualifications Authority (VQA) has a role to play in addressing students' needs for better linkages between qualifications. The VQA is responsible for all post-compulsory qualifications, except Higher Education qualifications.

Under the guidance of a Board which draws its members from across all stakeholder sectors, including Higher Education, the VQA is investigating the possibility of developing a credit-based framework, the credit matrix, to facilitate better linkages between qualifications, thereby helping ensure students' learning achievements are recognised across sectors, and making it easier for people to enter and re-enter education and training throughout their lives.

The need for cross sectoral linkages

Student movement is increasingly cross-sectoral, with more students obtaining qualifications or parts of qualifications from a range of different sectors. The movement of students from Higher Education to Vocational Education and Training (VET) and vice-versa is a case in point and has increased over the past decade. For example, the proportion of 33-44 year olds who are degree qualified with a VET qualification grew from 4.7 per cent in 1993 to 11.4 per cent in 2001, and those VET qualified with a degree grew from 2.7 per cent to 7 per cent over the same period. In fact, all age groups showed an increase in the proportion of people with qualifications

from several education sectors over this period.¹ Overall, the number of people enrolled in VET who had a degree or higher qualification has grown from 3.4 per cent in 1995 to 4.8 per cent in 2001.²

The decision to study courses and subjects from both TAFE and university is a deliberate one on the part of many individuals, with university graduates citing a need to build industry specific skills as their main reason for study at TAFE.³ Indeed, the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee, in its submission to the Higher Education Review, wrote that:

“The imbalance in qualification linkages needs to be addressed... *Varieties of Learning* is strangely hesitant about this issue, listing a number of difficulties that, as it acknowledges, equally apply to VET as to university pathways. An effective set of pathways has to operate on the basis that movement in all directions is worthwhile, overcoming assumptions of a necessary path ‘upwards’ to university.”⁴

VET qualifications or modules are increasingly being combined with senior secondary school study, with an increasing number of students choosing to either study VET subjects as part of their Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), or to undertake the new Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) which incorporates curriculum that can be drawn from a number of education sectors. For example, the number of students who chose to study one or more VET subjects as part of their VCE grew by 230 per cent from 1996 to 1999.⁵ The new VCAL has also enjoyed a growth in student uptake, from 5300 students enrolled in 2003 to an estimated 6800 in 2004.

Further, the move towards incorporating work-placements and VET into Years 11 and 12 has helped improve retention rates. A survey in 2003 showed that 30 per cent of students in the Geelong region felt that a VET program as part of their schooling helped them decide to stay on at school.⁶ The more flexible curriculum of the VCAL has also played a part in retention, with “33 per cent of [VCAL enrolled] students surveyed saying they would have left school if VCAL were not available to them.”⁷

¹ Tom Karmel and Nhi Nguyen, (2003) *Australia's tertiary education sector: paper presented to the Centre for Economics of Education and Training 7th National Conference* National Centre for Vocational Education Research

² Department of Education, Science and Training (2002) *Varieties of Learning* http://www.backingaustraliasfuture.gov.au/publications/varieties_of_learning/3.htm

³ National Board of Employment, Education and Training (1995) “Cross-sectoral collaboration in Post-Secondary Education and Training” http://www.dest.gov.au/nbeet/publications/pdf/95_15.pdf Accessed 27 January 2004, p. 46

⁴ Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee, (2002) *Forward from the Crossroads: pathways to effective and diverse Australian Universities - The AV-CC Submission to to the Higher Education Review*, Canberra, http://www.backingaustraliasfuture.gov.au/submissions/issues_sub/pdf/i354.pdf Accessed 1 February 2004 p. 57

⁵ Derived from: John Polesel, Richard Teese, Kate O'Brien, (1999) *Destinations of VET in Schools Programs in 1998* Department of Education, Employment and Training, Victoria, [http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/voced/research/pdf/VET_98\(txt\).pdf](http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/voced/research/pdf/VET_98(txt).pdf) p. 7 Accessed 29 January 2004

⁶ Robyn Dolheguy, Jenny Dalton, Carmel Wilde and John Henry, (2003) *Geelong Region VET Student Survey* Smart Geelong Region LLEN p. 11

⁷ Education Times, “VCAL leads path to success” October 9, 2003, Vol 11 No. 16, Department of Education and Training, Melbourne p. 1

ACE has for some young people played a part in helping keep them engaged with learning. For instance, “some ACE providers operate in partnership with schools, co-delivering programs or taking students after referral from, and in consultation with schools to ensure students stay engaged in the learning process.”⁸ The partnerships between schools and ACE are thus another tool where different approaches in delivery are able to help students stay engaged in learning.

Importantly, Adult and Community Education centres (ACE) have found themselves increasingly providing for the needs of young people in terms of building vocational and employment skills. The ACE sector in Victoria has found that its provision of Vocational programs for all age groups but especially 15-24 year olds has grown significantly, and that provision of Employment Skills programs for 15-19 year olds has more than doubled.⁹

Yet despite this growth, linkages between ACE and TAFE still leave a lot to be desired: a study conducted in 2001 found that just over half of ACE providers considered linkages in the forms of credit transfer from ACE VET to mainstream VET to be *limited* or *very limited*.¹⁰ Further, the study found that there is a lack of consistency in credit decisions (eg two people completing the same course receiving different credit), that there is an excessive need for ACE students to resort to RPL as a means of linking their completed course with mainstream VET and that there was a lack of recognition of ACE course credentials as legitimate providers of VET, with “consequent need for ACE to repeatedly justify course outcomes to mainstream VET for credit transfer purposes.”¹¹

Credit transfer is not much better between TAFE and Higher Education. In 2001, only around 7 per cent (15300) of students were admitted to Higher Education on the basis of a completed TAFE qualification. In total, only around 2.3 per cent (5000) received any credit at a Higher Education institution for prior study completed at TAFE.¹² Admittedly, the 7 per cent figure has been questioned by researchers before because of the method of data collection.¹³ According to Gavin Moodie, decisions on student admissions to Higher Education institutions are typically taken by specialist selection officers in November-January each cycle, but data on basis of admission is collected by some institutions during the enrolment period in February-March, and authorised by program coordinators, who are not the same as selection officers.¹⁴ Thus, “the statistical part of enrolment is of little interest and more of an annoyance to

⁸ Doheguy et al. *Op. Cit.* p. 21

⁹ Department of Education and Training, (2003), *Ministerial Statement on Adult Community Education: Consultation Discussion Paper*, State of Victoria p. 7

¹⁰ John Saunders, (2001) *ACE VET Linkages: provider, student and industry views*, AVETRA Conference Paper http://www.avetra.org.au/abstracts_and_papers_2001/Saunders_full.pdf Accessed 21 January 2004, p. 4

¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 4

¹² Department of Education, Science and Training (2002) *Varieties of Learning* http://www.backingaustraliasfuture.gov.au/publications/varieties_of_learning/3.htm Accessed 2 February 2004

¹³ Gavin Moodie, (2002) “VET Higher Ed Transfers and the structure of tertiary education” AVETRA Conference Paper http://www.avetra.org.au/abstracts_and_papers_2003/Moodie.pdf Accessed 2 February 2004, p. 7

¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 7

students and the staff who are enrolling them under considerable pressure of time and other circumstances.”¹⁵ In this way, then, the reliability of the data on basis for admission is questionable.

Nevertheless, data which is available shows that learning is increasingly undertaken at the initiative, and expense of, the individual, with studies of industry training showing that individuals are taking more responsibility for their education and learning. For instance, various studies show that casual employees undertake the same amount of external training as permanent employees, but are more likely to bear the entire cost themselves, and that businesses are increasingly acting as an education broker to individuals rather than providing direct training.¹⁶ In response to individuals taking control of their own learning, one of the strategies of the Victorian Government is to “make the [education and training] system more responsive to the needs of individuals.”¹⁷

Further, students (particularly older) choose to study only parts of qualifications to help fill specific skill gaps. Older workers who participate in structured training are more likely to undertake ‘single module’ and non-award courses.¹⁸ In 2003 26 per cent of those people who chose to complete only one or more modules rather than a whole qualification did so because “got what they wanted out of their study.”¹⁹ In other words, for many learners, it is not the qualification that is important but rather the specific parts of the qualification that can be used to update or supplement skills. However, records of the very specific sets of knowledge which individuals acquire throughout their lives are not always easily accessed: individuals may complete some whole qualifications, and/or units or modules from any number of different institutions in a number of different fields, making it difficult to keep track of achievements. Indeed, focus groups commissioned by ANTA found that employers and individuals alike “share a desire for...some central way of recognizing and recording skills and experience.”²⁰ Further, “they want much greater capacity to mix and match training products – more short courses and the ability to package a qualification from different components.”²¹

There is also a need to make it easier to recognise different types of learning, including the learning completed at work, through community-based activities or through other means. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is “virtually non-existent”²² in non-accredited, general and preparatory VET programs, so these are excluded from the national figure of 4 per cent of total students in 2001 having

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 7

¹⁶ Andrew Smith, (1999) project number cp9818, *Creating a future: Training, learning and the older person*, <http://www.ncver.edu.au/cgi-bin/gda.pl?id=1756> Accessed 27 January 2004

¹⁷ Department of Education and Training (2003) *Corporate Plan 2003-06* State of Victoria, Department of Education and Training p. 9

¹⁸ Clive Chappell, Geof Hawke, Carl Rhodes, Nicky Solomon, *Major Research Program for Older Workers: Stage 1 – the conceptual framework*, The Oval Research Centre <http://www.oval.uts.edu.au/publications/index.html> Accessed 20 January 2004 p. 10

¹⁹ NCVER, (2003) *Student Outcomes Survey 2003* ANTA, p. 15

²⁰ Quay Connection, Research Forum and Albany Consulting for ANTA, (2002) *National Strategy for VET 2004-2010: Report on Focus Group Research* p. 3

²¹ Ibid. p. 3

²² K. Bowman, B. Clayton, A. Bateman, B. Knight, P Thomson, J. Hargreaves, K. Blom and M Enders (2003) *Recognition of Prior Learning in the VET Sector*, NCVER, Adelaide p. 7

received some RPL.²³ Rob Stowell observes that RPL is costly to establish and difficult to administer, so that “in too many cases learners are either deterred or discouraged by the processes involved and do not proceed with the recognition process.”²⁴ However, the AQTF’s requirement that all RTOs offer RPL to applicants on enrolment²⁵ is a means to increase the number of students taking advantage of RPL in the VET sector.

There are other arrangements also, that help reduce the need for students to repeat learning they have already successfully achieved. For instance, mutual recognition under the AQTF involves the recognition and acceptance of qualifications and Statements of Attainment by other registered training organisations (RTOs) and it enables students to receive national recognition for their achievements. In terms of recognising learning from other educational sectors, there have been steps made, such as the development of credit transfer and articulation arrangements between particular universities and TAFE institutes, either at the institutional level, or more commonly, the faculty level.²⁶

However, as Leesa Wheelahan observes, cross-sectoral “arrangements, where they exist, are often sporadic and, as courses change or develop, require much attention to maintain them.”²⁷ A difficulty in ‘bridging the divide’ between TAFE and Higher Education is the different approach to learning, with the former dominated by competency-based training and the latter being more content driven.²⁸ The building of links between ACE and VET qualifications face a similar challenge, in that ACE delivers its courses in an informal, and less structured environment, while VET is much more driven towards helping students achieve a specific competency in a much more structured setting. However there is a lack of a common, over-arching measure to compare different types of learning, across sectors. Such a tool, the VQA contends, may provide the missing link to help bridge the divide between the education sectors.

Victoria’s response: the credit matrix

In response to the need to improve cross-sectoral linkages between qualifications, and to redress the lack of a common measure for learning, irrespective of provider or teaching approach, the Victorian Qualifications Authority (VQA) is currently investigating the possibility of developing a credit-based framework for post-compulsory qualifications across Victoria. Named the ‘Credit matrix’, the project aims to allocate a level (for difficulty of learning) and points (for amount of average designed learning time) to all the accredited units available within the post-compulsory system, whether offered at school, VET, ACE or Higher Education. By having a common means to describe learning, wherever it occurs, it is hoped the credit matrix could provide the basis for facilitating more flexible study options,

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Rob Stowell, (2003) *Recognition of Informal Learning – Issues and Options Paper*, VQA, unpublished

²⁵ Australian National Training Authority, (2001) *Standards for Registered Training Organisations*, Melbourne

²⁶ Leesa Wheelahan, (2000) *Bridging the Divide – developing the institutional structures that most effectively deliver cross-sectoral education and training* NCVER, Leabrook p. 17

²⁷ Ibid. p. 20

²⁸ Ibid. p. 33

better credit transfer arrangements and a single system which outlines study options across education sectors.

Similar systems to the credit matrix are in operation or being developed overseas, such as in New Zealand, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, England, the European Union and South Africa. Although the frameworks differ in approach, they all have similar objectives of seamlessness, flexibility, better course architecture, clearer progression routes and better arrangements for providing credit for prior learning.²⁹

Each of the overseas systems are characterised by level descriptors which describe the key characteristics of learning outcomes and allow broad comparisons to be made of qualifications. Although the descriptors vary from framework to framework, they often describe learning outcomes in terms of cognitive skills (for instance, evaluation and analysis), applied skills, complexity and depth of knowledge and level of accountability or autonomy. For example, the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) is based on 12 levels, spanning from level 1 for students with “severe and profound learning difficulties to doctoral level (level 12).”³⁰

The increase in complexity of learning in the SCQF relates to changes in factors such as

- “Complexity of depth of knowledge and understanding;
- Links to associated academic, vocational or professional practice,
- Degree of integration, independence and creativity required;
- Range of sophistication of application/practice;
- Role(s) taken in relation to other learners/workers in carrying out tasks.”³¹

The nature of the descriptors for the credit matrix in Victoria is currently being examined by experts commissioned by the VQA, with initial research suggesting 8 to 10 levels of complexity of learning would be appropriate.³²

The other parameter common to credit frameworks is volume of learning. Based on experience overseas, the VQA at this stage sees volume as being defined by ‘average learning time,’ meaning the time that the unit designer expects a student to take, on average, to achieve the unit. Average learning time is used in the Scottish framework, and is defined as including any practical work, information retrieval, private study, formal teaching or training, all forms of assessment including work-based activities leading to assessment, and planning and counselling.³³

Possible benefits of the credit matrix

There are a number of benefits which the VQA believes could flow from the development of a workable credit matrix model. These benefits could help education providers, career advisers, qualification designers and policy makers, but most

²⁹ Peter Noonan Consulting, (2003) *Credit Matrix Initial Design Final Report* p. 15

³⁰ Ibid. p. 23

³¹ Ibid. p. 23

³² Ibid. p. 8

³³ Victorian Qualifications Authority, (2003) *The Credit Matrix – A Consultation Paper from the Victorian Qualifications Authority*, State of Victoria p. 23

importantly, they could help individual students navigate the education and training system.

The credit matrix could enable students to search for appropriate units of study from one central system. Currently in Victoria, in order to search for Vocational qualifications or units, a central database is available to search (National Training Information Service). For Higher Education, students are able to search a different database by qualification (but not unit) through the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre. Choices about which secondary certificate, the possibility of VET and apprenticeships and traineeships are communicated through schools and various government websites. Thus there are no clear linkages between units and qualifications across sectors, making it difficult for the student to plan study pathways. A common means to describe all the units across the post-compulsory system would provide a basis for students to compare units of study from different education sectors.

The credit matrix could also support the creation of a 'bank of learning' through the development of a unique student identifier whereby students could be provided with a record of all the learning they have achieved, and accumulate 'credits' as they complete more study. Indeed, there is, as mentioned earlier, data which indicates students and employers alike see the need for some central way to keep track of a student's learning achievements.³⁴ Tasmania is already, at the commission of ANTA, doing some work in this area by examining the benefits and potential issues in developing a unique student identifier that could be used by an individual for study at a number of institutions, in a number of sectors.

The credit matrix could facilitate more advanced standing arrangements – some such arrangements are already in place, such as the 'Block and mutual credit arrangements for VCE/FE and VCAL qualifications in the VCE.'³⁵ These are arrangements which are published and enable students to know in advance what units count towards what qualifications. There are also examples at the local level where providers develop articulation arrangements between, for instance, a TAFE and university faculty in the same field,³⁶ however they are often subject to change. By providing a common measure, it is hoped the credit matrix could help make it easier to develop more of these types of arrangements.

If indeed more advanced standing arrangements are put in place, the possibility of a unique student identifier, combined with the ability to search for appropriate courses of study with a common means for comparison means that a student is better able to see and plan study pathways. For instance, *The Credit Matrix – A Consultation Paper from the Victorian Qualifications Authority* provides an example of a student who left school early to work in the family business, and studied a Certificate IV in Small Business Management. The student then decided to go on and study the Diploma, where he might have, on the basis of pre-arranged agreements, received 30 points at level 3 and 30 points at level 4 credit from the Certificate IV towards the Diploma.

³⁴ see footnote 17: Quay Connection, Research Forum and Albany Consulting for ANTA, (2002) *National Strategy for VET 2004-2010: Report on Focus Group Research* p. 3

³⁵ Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (2004) *VCE and VCAL Administrative Handbook* State of Victoria, Melbourne, p. 134

³⁶ Leesa Wheelahan, (2000) *Op. Cit.* p. 18

Knowing that, the student could see that he had to gain 10 more points at level 4, 20 points at level 5 and 10 at level 7.³⁷

The credit matrix also aims to make the process of Recognition of Prior Learning easier. Much of the literature and the findings from the VQA's recent statewide consultation on the credit matrix concept indicate that RPL processes are in many cases not working as well as they could.³⁸ Although the credit matrix will not remove the need for verification and professional judgement on whether and how much learning can be credited towards a qualification, it does aim to provide a starting point by providing a common base measure from which to judge. Another example is outlined in the VQA's consultation paper, where an education provider who had an individual come seeking RPL for some experience gained through voluntary work, would, knowing that the particular unit in the relevant qualification in this field was 50 points at level 2, have a good starting point for deciding whether or not, on the basis of evidence provided, credit could be granted to the individual.³⁹

The VQA believes the credit matrix may also help with qualification design – by providing a common means to describe learning, it may make it easier for qualification designers to design qualifications which draw on elements and curriculum from various education sectors to meet a specific skill gap or which meet the needs of a specific set of students. This is particularly the case given that students are increasingly choosing to study qualifications or parts of qualifications to give them the mix of applied and cognitive skills required in a competitive job market.

Finally, the credit matrix could enable cross-sectoral data capture, in that there is potential for a central database to record (using a common measure) the participation of individuals in education and training. It may better enable policy-makers to understand the extent of cross-sectoral movement, the overall educational attainment of the population and therefore better target programs to where they are needed. It may also enable the creation of a standard to be set in terms of points and levels that works across different qualifications and kinds of learning. A target standard could be defined for young adults requiring, for instance, the achievement of 80 points at level 2 and 100 points at level 3. Setting a standard like this means that it could be met in a number of different ways, whether through achievement in units of qualifications or achievement in whole qualifications such as VCE, VCAL, VET Certificates (including those in General Education for Adults) and university extension studies.⁴⁰

Overall, the credit matrix's potential to provide a central means to search for learning options, and to describe learning successfully achieved in the one place, regardless of where it was studied, is conducive to meeting the changing needs of individual learners, who, as discussed, are increasingly needing to study parts of qualifications, from a number of education sectors, and to undertake qualifications that contain units from different education sectors.

³⁷ Victorian Qualifications Authority, (2003) *The Credit Matrix – A Consultation Paper from the Victorian Qualifications Authority*, State of Victoria p. 16

³⁸ Victorian Qualifications Authority (2004) *Qualifications and Pathways – Emerging Themes and New Directions* State of Victoria p. 13

³⁹ Victorian Qualifications Authority, (2003) *The Credit Matrix – A Consultation Paper from the Victorian Qualifications Authority*, State of Victoria p. 18

⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 16

Challenges in developing a model

Nevertheless, there are a number of challenges in developing and implementing a workable and effective credit-based framework. Firstly, the VQA has jurisdiction for all post-compulsory qualifications except in Higher Education, and in Victoria only. Thus, the development of a credit matrix in which Higher Education participates will depend on cooperation and extensive consultation.

Secondly, in the consultation paper, the VQA has stated that the credit matrix “would be designed to align with the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and, with the current and future qualifications needs of Victoria in mind, enhance its operation.”⁴¹ Thus a key challenge will be to develop a model of the credit matrix that achieves just that – that provides a way to compare units and qualifications across sectors, thereby making the qualifications system easier to use and understand.

Indeed, based on the experience of other countries, the VQA believes the credit matrix should be like the Scottish model, insofar as it should be “enabling”. In other words, it should not prescribe how qualifications should be designed but rather describe the units inside them in terms of volume and level of difficulty of learning. In this way, the SCQF describes units of study, but does not regulate credit transfer – credit transfer remains the domain of the individual institutions. In terms of credit for units from different education sectors in the credit matrix, the ability, therefore, for all stakeholders to agree on the nature of the levels will be of vital importance.

How volume of learning is defined will also be an important factor for consideration. While there are no specific time requirements for VET certificates within the AQF because the emphasis is on achieving a competency, the States and Territories do assign nominal hours to whole VET qualifications and to units of competence for funding and performance reporting purposes.⁴² School and Higher Education qualifications, on the other hand, tend to consist of units which are organised around semesters, reflecting more organisational requirements rather than average learning time.⁴³ How volume is defined in the credit matrix will therefore have to balance out these different methods for measuring learning time.

Progress on the credit matrix

The VQA completed a statewide consultation on the concept of the credit matrix in September 2003. During the consultation period the VQA held over 50 workshops across the state and sent the consultation paper to over 2500 stakeholders. Views were obtained from over 1200 organisations and individuals, representing views of students, parents, schools, TAFEs, adult and community education centres, Registered Training Organisations, universities, Industry Training Boards, unions, employer groups and other State and Federal bodies. The consultation showed strong and broad-based support for the concept.

At the same time, the VQA commissioned a small group of experts (Peter Noonan Consulting) to undertake some initial exploratory work on the broad parameters of a

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 10

⁴² Noonan (2003) *Op. cit.* p. 30

⁴³ Ibid. p. 30

model. The work was undertaken on the understanding that the continuation of the work would be based on the outcomes of the consultation. The report reviewed overseas developments in credit frameworks and explored some of the technical aspects of developing a model which would work in Victoria.

The VQA also established a Stakeholder Reference Group, which provides expert advice from a variety of perspectives, including VET, ACE, schools, Higher Education and business, in providing feedback on the development of the credit matrix model.

Given the positive outcomes of the consultation, the VQA Board has agreed to continue work on the credit matrix up until June 2004, at which point a decision will be made about the nature and scale of any further development. To this end, the VQA has commissioned further work on developing a detailed model, and has also set up a number of modelling projects to provide on the ground advice. Following the advice from the statewide consultation, the VQA has also established links with key stakeholders, particularly industry and Higher Education, to inform the development of the model.

Conclusion

The credit matrix addresses a problem which has been faced by students and providers alike for a long period of time – a lack of an overarching means to describe learning, wherever it occurs. Given recent trends in patterns of student learning towards studying units and qualifications from different education sectors, it is particularly important that students' needs for better recognition of the learning they have already achieved, and better procedures to ensure that all learning counts, are met.

However, there are a number of challenges in developing the credit matrix, including the development of level descriptors and a method for defining volume of learning. Of vital importance is the need for it to be well supported and informed by the views of stakeholders. The VQA is therefore undertaking the credit matrix project through a number of small steps and is seeking feedback along the way. As mentioned above, the VQA has completed a statewide consultation on the initial concept of the credit matrix already, with the outcomes indicating strong and broad-based support.

A system like the credit matrix could solve problems for many sectors: for example, in schools it may play a part in student engagement and retention by facilitating more participation in VET and work-based learning; in vocational education and training it will assist with RPL and articulation processes; in ACE it will assist articulation to VET; and for universities, it will assist credit transfer, articulation and RPL. Most importantly, the credit matrix could help meet the learning needs of students (both young and adult) who are increasingly demanding learning from different education sectors.

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Further reading

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