

1. Introduction

This project was undertaken for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Human Resources Development Working Group (HRDWG) Subgroup Education Network (EDNET). It has been undertaken by the Monash University-ACER Centre for the Economics of Education and Training (CEET) in a consortium with the Centre for Postcompulsory Education and Lifelong Learning University of Melbourne (CPELL) and the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA).

The request was for research and analysis to map qualifications frameworks across APEC Economies with attention to:

- Qualifications frameworks and associated recognition tools;
- The uses and benefits of qualifications frameworks;
- Implementation issues including policy constraints;
- The linkages between qualifications frameworks and qualifications recognition;
- Quality assurance;
- Reviews undertaken in the APEC region in relation to qualifications frameworks or with a qualifications recognition component; and
- The feasibility of developing an Asia-Pacific Qualifications Framework having regard to possible models.

The Joint Statement released by education ministers at the 2004 APEC Education Ministers meeting in Santiago (the 3rd meeting of APEC Education Ministers) included: ‘economies need effective governance including transparent, accountable, regulatory, accreditation, and quality assurance systems’. This project responds to this priority.

2. Background and overview of frameworks in APEC economies

This section provides an overview of qualifications and qualification frameworks. It uses the issues and concepts identified in this overview to report on NQFs in the APEC economies. The information on the APEC economies was obtained from desktop work and contacts available to the team but has been supplemented with information from the survey described in section 3 and Appendix 2.

The changing nature of work creates demands for more flexible, multi-skilled workers who are mobile across the economy and internationally. For efficiency, and fairness, this requires that a qualification or skill, however or wherever acquired, should have common meaning among employers selecting workers throughout the country. For individuals it implies they should be able to have their qualifications and skills recognised for entry into further studies or relevant forms of employment over their lifetime.

NQFs classify qualifications according to criteria for learning outcomes achieved. NQFs, backed by a system of quality assurance, can contribute to improvement in matching workers to industry needs