

VE Program design principles and rules

Introduction

The VE Program design principles and rules have been developed to assist VE staff to clearly articulate the volume of learning and amount of training within each Training and Assessment Strategy (TAS).

The principles and rules, together with an example developed using the rules, will improve practices and provide program teams with consistent guidance ensuring quality training and assessment practices.

Definitions

- **Volume of learning** - The volume of learning (VoL) is a dimension of the complexity of a qualification and it indicates the duration of the course from enrolment until completion. It is calculated by adding together the amount of structured and unstructured activities and it is expressed in the TAS in months or years, eg. 1 year full-time.
- **Amount of training** - The amount of training is a subset of the VoL as it does not include *any unstructured activities*.
- **Structured Activities** – Structured activities are planned, teacher directed and are a required activity as part of the program or course. These include:
 - Guided learning activities such as lectures or tutorials, online tasks and forums.
 - Trainer directed workshops or activities.
 - Structured self-paced study.
 - Structured work placement or work experience.
 - Projects, assignments.
 - Prescribed set tasks.
 - Assessment activities.
- **Unstructured Activities** – These activities are not provided by the teacher and include:
 - Private study or preparation.
 - Self-initiated learning or research.
 - Guidance from a workplace supervisor.
- **Training and Assessment Strategy** – the Training and Assessment Strategy (TAS) is a document which clearly describes how a specific cohort of students will achieve competency and job readiness through completion of appropriate training and, practice and assessment, which is provided in accordance with the requirements of the training package, accredited course, skill set or unit documentation.
- **Program Duration** - The program duration is the amount of time the student has to undertake the program from enrolment to completion. This includes the teaching period but is not the teaching period alone.

RMIT Policy

RMIT policy requires approximately 720 hours of structured activities for a full-time 1 year program and approximately 360 hours of structured activities for a 6 month program.

Programs or courses that run for longer or shorter periods should calculate a pro rata

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number of hours (expressed in months or years) based on this policy principle and the number of teaching weeks per semester.

Planning Principles – Understanding the requirements

Prior to planning the training and assessment strategy, it is important to be fully informed of all requirements relating to the program. The relevant documentation provides detailed information on specific resource requirements, required/preferred assessment methods, assessment conditions and if relevant, additional trainer and assessor competencies. You can check your relevant program/course details as follows:

Training Package Requirements

- Download the relevant Training Package qualification descriptor from www.training.gov.au in order to confirm the packaging rules for the qualification or nationally recognised Skill Set.
- Additional information is provided in the quality assured companion volumes that support each Training Package. These are available on <https://vetnet.education.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx>. All Training Packages have a supporting Implementation Guide and many have additional guides on developing learning and assessment strategies, knowledge, industry placements and foundation skills.

Accredited Course Requirements

- Victorian accredited courses (include VIC at the end of the code eg: 22304VIC) can be downloaded from www.education.vic.gov.au. ASQA accredited program information can be downloaded from www.training.gov.au

Training and Assessment Strategy (TAS) Principles and Rules

- TAS information must be consistent across all program information including; program guides, course guides, delivery schedules, system information and marketing material.
- Each TAS should be completed in close consultation with the relevant industry.
- Each learner cohort must be clearly described and articulated in the TAS as this will drive the decision on the appropriate delivery mode/s and assessment methods for the relevant cohort. It is a requirement of the Higher Education Skills Group (HESG) funding agreement that a separate TAS is developed for each discrete learner cohort.
- Each individual TAS must identify an *amount of training*. The amount of training is a part of the overall VoL as only structured and/or prescribed learning and assessment activities are included in calculating the amount of training. The TAS for each program should reflect a logical and systematic approach to inform the amount of training. Some learners will require less or more training than others. The approach must be pedagogically justifiable based on the current skills and knowledge and needs of the learners. The rationale must be able to demonstrate how a specific

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cohort will have the characteristics to achieve the required rigour and depth of training and can meet all the competency requirements in a varied timeframe.

- For example; current employees may seek recognition of prior learning (RPL) or credits from previous training whilst other learners may require more training as they have language literacy and numeracy (LLN) challenges or other special needs.
- For example; if the program is to be delivered to a school leaver cohort with poor LLN skills there would be no rationale to shorten the duration of the program. If the program had entry requirements for the cohort of 5 years work experience or a successful completion of lower level qualification in the same field then a rationale could be made that the cohort would have a deep understanding of the field and is building on knowledge and skills and duration is tailored to their needs.
- Each TAS must identify the duration of the program for each cohort, utilising the VoL qualification indicators in the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). Duration for full qualifications and accredited programs must be expressed in terms of years and months (minimum 6 months) only and must consider the VoL requirements. The TAS template assists in meeting this requirement.

Volume of Learning (VoL) Principles

The VoL identifies the duration of all teaching, learning and assessment activities a typical student will require to achieve the learning outcomes specified for a particular AQF qualification type. It includes all structured and unstructured activities.

Victorian Purchasing Guides should not be used to calculate the VoL for a program. They are used to calculate funding only.

Certificate III qualifications have a nominal duration of between 1 and 2 years. However the duration of Certificate III Traineeships and Apprenticeships can vary between 1 and 4 years as the mode of delivery is a training/employment pathway and subject to State and Territory legislative requirements.

Volume of Learning Rules

Training Packages

- 1) Add together the amount of structured and unstructured activities. This time should be expressed in the TAS in months or years.
- 2) If there is a discrepancy between the proposed VoL and the AQF indicator for the qualification, consider if sufficient time has been allocated to allow students to practice the application of their knowledge and skills, reflect on their learning and have sufficient time to complete assessments. Remember: The approach must be pedagogically justifiable based on the current skills and knowledge and needs of the learners. The rationale must be able to demonstrate how a specific

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cohort will have the characteristics to achieve the required rigour and depth of training and can meet all the competency requirements in a varied timeframe.

- 3) Another consideration is the *intensity* or workload of the program. Calculate the combined number of hours for structured and unstructured learning required per week for the duration of the program and consider if it is reasonable and the learning outcomes achievable by the specific learner cohort. For example a 10 week program for a Certificate II program requiring a VoL of 48 hours a week is an unreasonable workload for this learner cohort. If the program was delivered over 6 months (17 teaching weeks) as required by the AQF VoL descriptor, then the intensity of the course is reduced to an average of 28.2 hours per week.

Accredited Programs

- 1) The *nominal duration* of a program accredited by ASQA is divided into structured and unstructured activities and are added together to indicate the VoL. The nominal duration (VoL) for an accredited course must be followed when designing the TAS for a program.
- 2) Victorian Registration and Qualification Authority (VRQA) accredited programs still use nominal hours for program duration. However the nominal program duration often does not align with the relevant AQF VoL qualification indicator for that qualification as nominal hours does not include all the hours of unstructured learning. The duration of the program must still be delivered over a period of time that will meet the minimum AQF VoL indicator eg: 12 months for a Certificate III.
- 3) Accredited short courses or skill sets are not AQF aligned; therefore VoL is not relevant to these courses. Course duration in terms of days, weeks or months is still required in the TAS.

Principles of the Amount of Training

Training Packages

The Standards for RTOs 2015 require the amount of training to be offered to meet the needs of the learner cohort, taking into account their current knowledge and skills. Some methods for assessing the current knowledge and skills of the learner cohort may be direct, such as portfolios, basic pre-tests, auditions, completion of a lower level qualification in the same or similar field, and/or LLN testing. Other indirect methods include using a student inventory of prior courses, and employment experience.

Victorian Purchasing Guides (VPG) provide the nominal hours required for funded courses and these can be located at <https://vetnet.education.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx>. These hours provide a guide to the complexity of individual units of competency and for funded training the amount of training *must be consistent* with the VPG. If the amount of training is not consistent with the VPG because of other factors, as noted above, a clear learning and teaching rationale based on the characteristics of the learner cohort must be provided.

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Activities delivered online, in the workplace and during industry placements must be *structured* to be included in the amount of training. The *total* hours for an industry placement, or whilst a student is at work, or online, cannot be regarded as part of the amount of training unless it involves structured activities prescribed by RMIT. A workplace supervisor can provide guidance and support to the student but this time should not be included when calculating the amount of training. This time, as an *unstructured activity*, is used in calculating the VoL.

Unstructured activities such as private study, research and self-initiated learning are not to be included in calculating the amount of training.

Accredited Programs

ASQA accredited programs include a nominal duration for the program including nominal hours for each unit. The nominal duration is calculated by adding together the *structured and unstructured* activities. For the purposes of calculating structured and unstructured activities, read the program accreditation document carefully as often activities such as projects and assignments which, although they may be completed by the student outside of class, as they are a structured activity under the RMIT VE program design rules.

Accredited short courses and skills sets are not AQF aligned therefore the duration of the course can be provided in days, weeks or months. The duration should be determined by adding together the amount of structured and unstructured activities for the number of units to be delivered and assessed.

Amount of Training Rules

- 1) Commence by:
 - a. Analysing the characteristics of the student cohort.
 - b. Use the analysis and the training package/accredited course documentation to determine the amount of structured and unstructured activities for each cohort.
 - c. Determine the duration of each unit by adding together both structured and unstructured activities.
- 2) The next step is to determine how you will schedule training and assessment activities to ensure students fully develop the required skills and knowledge prior to being assessed. It may be necessary to indicate variations for some cohorts and individual students due to their specific learning needs. This is used to inform your learning and teaching strategy.
- 3) For each unit or cluster of units, when calculating the amount of structured and unstructured activities required, remember to also include consideration of any specific resource requirements that were identified for the relevant delivery mode during the planning stage. For example, specialist equipment or simulated work environments may only be available at certain times and may only be able to cater

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for a limited number of students at any one time. This may impact your learning design.

- 4) Consider as part of the program design an acceptable amount of units and assessments per teaching cycle. This will be driven by the complexity of the unit/s and the learner cohort's characteristics and your schools resourcing capability.
- 5) In allocating hours to unstructured activities learning consider the learner cohort characteristics again. For example students undertaking Certificates II and I may not have the skills to undertake a large number of hours of self-directed or unsupervised activities. This consideration will inform your learning and teaching strategy.
- 6) Check the amount of training hours fall within the allocated range in the relevant VPG. If the amount of training is less than that range, this will require you to reassess and make adjustments to the amount of training and/or provide a clear rationale for the shorter duration and amount of training proposed. In developing the rationale, consider learner cohort characteristics and the delivery mode, previous qualifications required for entry, or other stipulated entry requirements and whether the purpose of the qualification is for deepening or broadening of knowledge or skills.
- 7) Your school may carry out a further step of calculating hours using the VPG. This is a financial viability check that may influence your program design. Your school will advise you of any adjustments required.