The AQF Council is authorised to maintain the AQF which includes revising the AQF specifications and descriptors for the qualification types, and adding or removing qualification types from the AQF. In response to ongoing AQF stakeholder requests, the AQF Council commenced a review of the Graduate and Vocational Graduate Certificates and Diploma qualification types in 2011.

In late 2011, the AQF Council invited AQF stakeholders to consider the future direction for these four qualification types. In its consultation paper, Review of Graduate and Vocational Graduate Certificates and Diplomas in the AQF November 2011, the AQF Council put forward four possible options. Over a three month period, stakeholders were asked to consider the case for these four, or any other, options. Stakeholders in the higher education and vocational education and training sectors were specifically targeted for responses. They included institutions and their peak bodies; student associations; labour market organisations such as industry skills councils, professional accrediting agencies and peak employer and employee bodies; the regulatory and standard setting agencies for the two sectors; and governments. A significant number of responses were received, mostly from providers, however views were varied. While the outcome on the consultation was inconclusive, the need for some change was evident.

In this indecisive context and given its responsibility for maintaining a robust qualifications framework, the AQF Council sought a solution based on the principles that guided the earlier review of the AQF. It took into account that the AQF needs to support lifelong learning; be understandable in the labour market; support employer demands for a skilled workforce; be student-focused; be taxonomically sound; and not contain unnecessary qualification types. Within this framework, the AQF Council considered the issues raised and the themes that emerged from the November 2011 consultation.

The AQF Council tested its preferred solution through a second consultation which commenced in early July 2012. Through the consultation paper, Graduate and Vocational Graduate Certificates and Diplomas in the AQF June 2012, it asked stakeholders to identify any unanticipated consequences of the intended approach.

The second consultation attracted considerably more responses and, unlike the first consultation, stakeholders provided more detailed information about the uses and value of these intermediary qualification types. Stakeholders indicated a clear preference for the future of these qualifications types. Strong support for the retention of the Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma as AQF level 8
qualification types was expressed. In particular, stakeholders advised of the need for the Graduate Certificate qualification type which is used widely for the purpose of short targeted qualifications for the up-skilling of graduates. There was near unanimous agreement that the Vocational Graduate Certificate and Diploma qualification types could be removed from the AQF provided that the Graduate Certificate and Diploma qualification types are available for accreditation and issuance in both vocational education and training and higher education.

In late August 2012, after extensive consultation and consideration, the AQF Council has determined that:

- the Vocational Graduate Certificate and Vocational Graduate Diploma qualification types will be removed from the AQF
- the Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma qualification types will be retained in the AQF at level 8 and will be available for accreditation, regulation and issuance in both the higher education and vocational education and training sectors.

The AQF Council also has determined that the AQF specifications for the Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma qualification types, as set forth in the AQF First Edition July 2012, will be retained. However some modification will be made to provide clearer guidance on qualification accreditation and development requirements. The revised specifications will be available shortly.

The AQF Council’s decision on these qualification types will come into effect once the implementation and transition arrangements are finalised. The AQF Council intends that the implementation of this revision will occur within the same implementation period as for AQF 2011, that is, from 1 January 2015 all new enrolments will be in qualifications that meet the requirements of the AQF. The AQF Council also intends that the use of the revised qualification types can commence from 1 January 2013. The implementation and transition arrangements will be confirmed shortly.

The revised AQF specifications for the Graduate Certificate and AQF specifications for the Graduate Diploma and the implementation and transition arrangements will be published as an addendum to AQF First Edition July 2011 later in 2012.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this communiqué, please contact me at the AQF Council.

Ann Doolette
Executive Director AQF Council

AQF Council: a Committee of the COAG Standing Committee on Tertiary Education Skills and Employment