

SKILLS IMPACT FAQ



We get asked a lot of questions about vocational education and training (VET) in our work with industry, training providers and government to review and improve the national qualifications and skills standards. Listed below are some of the more common questions, but please feel free to contact us if you have any others. [Our team](#) have a wealth of knowledge and experience working in the VET sector and are happy to answer any queries you have. Not sure who to ask? Email inquiry@skillsimpact.com.au or call 03 9321 3526 and we will do our best to address your query.

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Training Packages and the Project Process

What is a training package?

Training packages are a collection of documents (such as units of competency, skill set and qualifications) that describe the skills required to perform certain job roles. Training packages are used by registered training organisations and industry as a framework for developing training. They are industry's way of telling trainers what skills and knowledge students need to perform particular job roles and to what standard. The advantage of training packages is that they offer a national and industry-led approach to training and assessment, giving workers access to skills standards that are recognised across Australia. You can view these at training.gov.au.

Training packages also include one or more quality assured **Companion Volumes**, to assist RTOs with the implementation of units, qualifications and skill sets.

Why are they important?  Training packages are national skills standards, aligned to job roles

Training Packages help deliver

 Development, training, assessment

 Productivity

 Safety for workers and the public

A training package is comprised of



Training Packages are used in

 **Registered Training Organisations**
Formal training and assessment

 **Workplaces**
Informal on-the-job learning and assessment

Individuals progressing their careers can visit myskills.gov.au

[Download full infographic](#)

What are units, skill sets and qualifications?

- **Qualifications** support job roles within industry. They are available from Certificates I, II, III and IV, to Diploma and Advanced Diploma.
- **Units** of competency are the building blocks of qualifications. They define the requirements for effective performance in a discrete area of work, work function, activity or process.
- **Skill sets** are combinations of units of competency that cover skills required for specialist industry needs (which sometimes can link to a licence or regulatory requirement).

How are training packages used to deliver training?

Registered training organisations (RTOs) use training packages to help design their curriculum or training programs. Training packages do not prescribe how an individual should be trained.

RTOs are responsible for assessing whether an individual meets the skills standards specified by industry and described in a training package, and for issuing a nationally recognised unit of competency, skill set or qualification where appropriate.

What process is involved in updating or developing training packages

Each project progresses through six stages – Project Need, Project Plan, Development, Drafts Available, Validation, and Finalisation. The need for each project is identified out of research and industry consultation undertaken by Skills Impact and the Industry Reference Committee (IRC) as part of an IRC Skills Forecasts. These documents are submitted to the Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC) who approve the projects to go ahead.

Each stage involves thorough industry consultation to first identify the skills gaps and then define the skills standards for that particular industry sector or job role(s), and to check whether they have been captured accurately in draft units, skill sets and qualifications. These documents are then prepared for submission to the AISC and State and Territory Ministers as part of the finalisation stage. Once approved, the units, skill sets, and qualifications will be published on training.gov.au and made available for use.



Project Need

The AISC approves future projects out of an IRC Skills Forecast or a Case for Change.

Project Plan

Subject Matter Experts and other stakeholders are consulted to develop a greater understanding for which qualifications, skill sets and units need to be reviewed and developed.



Development

Draft units, skill sets and/or qualifications are developed in consultation with Subject Matter Experts.

Drafts Available

These drafts are made publicly available for further feedback.



Validation

The drafts are updated to reflect feedback and made available for validation, to check whether they are accurate.

Finalisation

A Case for Endorsement is prepared for the AISC, providing a rationale for approval of units, skill sets and qualifications. Once endorsed by the AISC the units, skill sets and qualifications are published on training.gov.au.



[Download full infographic](#)

What role does Skills Impact play in this process?

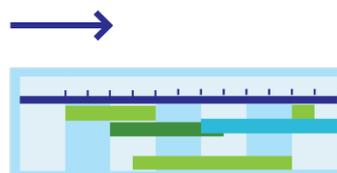
The Australian Industry Skills Committee (AISC) appoints Industry Reference Committees (IRCs) to oversee the development and review of training packages. Skills Impact is contracted by the Commonwealth to support 12 Industry Reference Committees. Skills Impact consults with industry to provide advice on potential training package projects. Skills Impact then carries out approved projects with further industry input.

Gaps and emerging skill needs are identified by Industry Reference Committees and industry.
Skills Impact captures this in Skills Forecasts.



Skills Impact submits IRC Skills Forecasts, Cases for Change, and projects to the AISC for approval.

The AISC determines the national schedule of review and development projects.
Skills Impact is contracted to carry out projects.



Qualifications, skill sets and units are reviewed and developed in consultation with subject matter experts and stakeholders, to meet current and future industry needs.
Skills Impact submits the work to the AISC.

Revised qualifications, skill sets and units are endorsed by the AISC and made publicly available at training.gov.au



[Download full infographic](#)

Getting Involved & Having Your Say

Why should I get involved in the work Skills Impact does?

Perhaps you have been contacted directly by one of the Skills Impact team members or have been sent information about a current project through one of our newsletters or by a colleague. However you have found us, your time and feedback are valuable. Here is why you should get involved with what we do:

- So that the future of your industry has access to training that is up-to-date with the most recent skills and knowledge. Which in turn will help business and the wider industry grow and become more competitive.

- So that changes happening every year in your work environment, legislation, technology, products and consumer trends are reflected in the qualifications. People working in the industry are the best to inform the skills standards for a job role because they are either knowledgeable or experienced in it.
- To have your say on the skills, opportunities and challenges of your industry. Skills Impact reviews and update a [Skills Forecast](#) each year, with advice received from Industry Reference Committees and feedback from the broader industry. This report provides advice about future skills needs and solutions and acknowledges the complexity and value of skills in your industry. It also proposes a four-year plan for reviewing and developing skills standards and qualifications. The Australian Industry Skills Committee considers this report each year to fund [training package projects](#).
- For the opportunity to meet other people in your industry and discuss common opportunities and challenges at one of our consultation events.

How can I get involved in one of the projects?

There are a range of ways to have your say on the skills standards for your industry, depending on the time you have available and level of expertise. If you are interested in getting involved, you can:

- Express interest to become part of a Subject Matter Expert (SME) group or Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for one of the projects.
- Provide feedback on the draft qualifications, skill sets and units of competency that the SME group or TAC helps draft. There will be at least two rounds of feedback for each project.
- Make sure you are [subscribed to our newsletter](#) and your preferences are up to date to receive newsletter updates on projects relevant to your industry.
- [Get in touch](#) any time with broader thoughts about the skills needs of your sector!

I see improvements for a unit or qualification. What should I do?

Provide us with your feedback!

If the qualification, unit or skill set in question is already under review as part of a [current project](#), your feedback will be considered as part of the national consultation that will already be underway for this work. [Click here](#) to read about the project stages and how the issue will progress.

If the qualification, unit or skill set in question is not part of any approved and funded project, your feedback will be captured in the feedback register and provided to the responsible Industry Reference Committee (IRC) for their consideration. The IRC will consult with their networks and consider the information collected by Skills Impact's daily interactions with industry and RTOs to consider whether there is a need to make the change. If so, they will submit a project proposal to the Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC) as part of the [Skills Forecast](#) process, or as a stand-alone [Case for Change](#).

If your feedback is to correct a minor issue an SSO may make a minor change to a training package and associated Companion Volume Implementation Guide, where that change meets one or more of the criteria outlined in Training Package Development and Endorsement Policy (TPDEP) and is authorised by a decision of the IRC (in consultation with appropriate stakeholders).

What is involved with being a Subject Matter Expert?

A Subject Matter Expert (SME) is a member of industry or an expert working for an RTO, who has agreed to contribute their time and expertise to the development of units, skill sets and qualifications. They may be knowledgeable about a particular job role, supervise it, have experience performing the role in the past or still be doing it. SMEs help to identify what practices, skills and knowledge are currently required to perform a job function.

An SME will usually attend at least two workshops, the dates of which will be determined by the project management team during the project planning phase, based on advice from industry and the Industry Reference Committee (IRC). SMEs will also be required to read through draft material and provide some feedback. In total, approximately 25 hours of your time will be required, over a period of about 12 months. Being an SME is a volunteer role. More information about SMEs can be found [here](#).

Who should I talk to about an area of improvement for a training package?

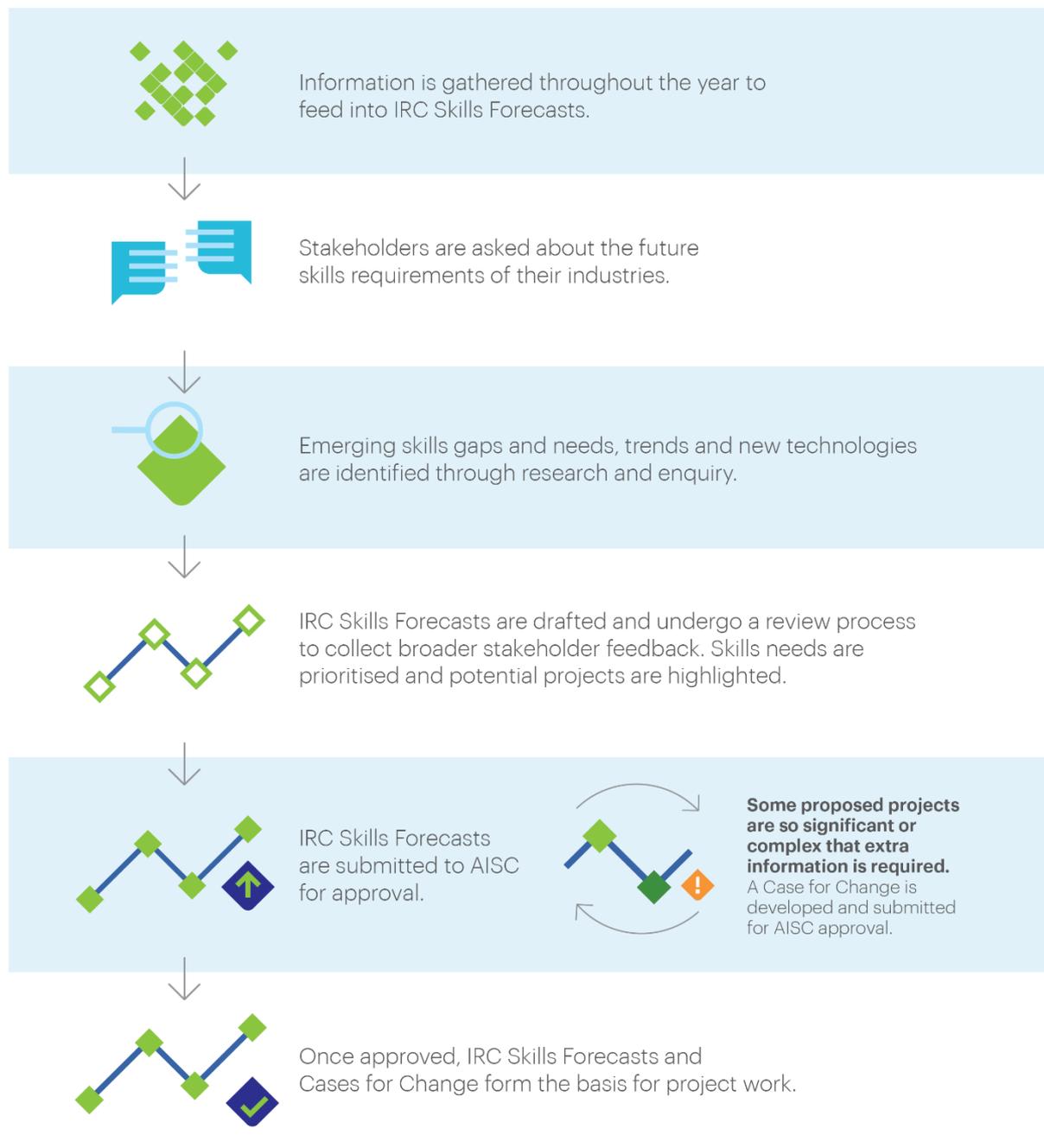
If you have something to say about the skills needs of your industry that is not currently being addressed by a project, you can get in touch at any time by emailing inquiry@skillsimpact.com.au or calling 03 9321 3526. Your input may help inform work on the [Skills Forecast](#) for your industry, which help determine the [projects](#) that will be undertaken in future.

What is a Skills Forecast and how are they developed?

Skills Forecasts describe industry trends, opportunities and challenges, and identify skills gaps and emerging skills needs. They propose a four year plan for reviewing and developing relevant units, skill sets and qualifications across the training packages. They are created once every three years, but are updated annually. The Annual Updates identify any specific changes to the industry environment, and address current priority issues. Every year in April, the full Skills Forecast or Annual Update is submitted by the relevant IRC to the Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC). Every year in April, they are submitted by the relevant IRC to the [Australian Industry and Skills Committee](#) (AISC). The AISC advises Commonwealth and State Industry and Skills Ministers on the implementation of national vocational education and training policies, and approves nationally recognised training packages. The AISC draws on this information and project submissions made throughout the year to update their [AISC National Schedule](#).

The AISC requires sufficient information to approve training package projects, with this information either being within the [Skills Forecasts](#) or in more detail via a stand-alone [Case](#)

[for Change](#). View [current projects](#), which have been approved out of previous Skills Forecasts or a Case for Change.



[Download full infographic](#)

Making Changes to Units, Skill Sets or Qualifications

Why are units sometimes deleted?

A unit is deleted when the skills, knowledge and/or tasks it describes, are determined to be no longer applicable by the relevant IRC. If a unit has had low or no enrolments in recent years, it will be investigated as to whether the unit should be deleted. If industry determines that the process or job task described is out of date, the unit will be proposed for deletion. Occasionally a unit can be deleted because it duplicates the skills and knowledge covered by another unit.

What is the process for deleting a unit?

A unit may be proposed for deletion as part of an AISC approved Training Package Project. If industry indicates that the skills, knowledge or job task described within the unit are no longer relevant, and the IRC supports this view, it will be removed from the qualification/s.

A unit cannot be classified as deleted without being removed from every qualification and/or skill set it is listed in, within its host training package. For example: a unit beginning with the code *SFI* would only be considered deleted when the unit has been removed from all qualifications and skill sets in the *SFI Seafood Training Package*.

If a unit is listed in qualifications or skill sets used by multiple sectors across a host training package, all sectors that use the unit should be consulted as part of other Training Package Projects, especially if that unit appears in the core of a qualification. This happens on a case by case basis. If the unit is no longer relevant to those sector areas, the unit will be removed from those qualifications and/or skill sets as well. However, if a unit is still considered required by a sector in the host training package, the unit will remain in the relevant qualifications. It would not be considered “deleted” but would be removed from the qualifications where it was no longer needed.

If a unit is deleted from its host training package, any other training packages that use the unit will need to undergo their own reviews to determine suitable actions to remove the deleted unit. As Skills Impact is only responsible for the review of certain training packages, it is not always within our scope to consult about every qualification a unit is listed in, as these are the responsibility of other Skills Service Organisations.

What does it mean if a qualification or unit is superseded?

If a qualification or unit is superseded it has undergone major change and this is a clear indication that industry needs have changed and the previous qualification or unit is no longer the most suitable for training delivery.

See also: What is a minor update to a qualification or unit? What is a major update to a qualification or unit?

What is a minor change or update to a qualification or unit?

Minor changes to units of competency include:

- Correcting errors (including to ensure the training package on training.gov.au accurately reflects the relevant AISC decision)
- Updating outdated references (for example to licensing and regulation arrangements)
- Providing clarification without changing the requirements

Minor changes to existing qualifications:

- Adding elective units of competency to a qualification
- Updating elective units of competency in a qualification that do not form part of a specialisation
- Adding, updating, or removing groups of electives (without adding or removing units of competency to or from the qualification itself), where this does not change the number of units of competency required to be completed

What is a major change or update to a qualification or unit?

Major changes to existing units of competency include:

- Adding or removing a pre-requisite to a unit of competency
- Updating a pre-requisite to a unit of competency
- Updating a unit of competency in a way that does not meet the criteria for a minor change

Major changes to existing qualifications include:

- Adding or removing units of competency to or from the core of a qualification
- Removing units of competency from the electives within a qualification
- Revising units of competency in the core of a qualification
- Changing the total number of units required to complete a qualification
- Creating a new specialisation or removing an existing specialisation
- Adding or removing units of competency to or from a specialisation within a qualification

A unit that is marked as superseded in one qualification is still included in another qualification - why is that?

A unit often appears across several qualifications, and these qualifications can be across several industry training packages. When a unit is superseded all qualifications that include the unit will need to be updated, but the timing of when this occurs may be different for each qualification. To update a qualification, a new version of the whole training package must be created, so often changes are strategically bundled together to reduce the number of updates to training packages within a short space of time. Every time there is a change to a qualification the RTOs delivering it need to spend considerable resources to transition to the new standards. We keep this in mind when planning updates.

Updating superseded units within a qualification happens on a case by case basis, following key considerations:

1. Whether the unit is listed as a core or elective in a qualification: this will determine whether updating the unit in the qualification would result in a major (core) or minor (elective) change. Other changes which are considered major can include if the unit is not considered equivalent to the one it is superseding and it appears in a specialisation within the qualification.
2. Whether a project is already underway to update qualifications and units within the training package: this would allow the changes to be made with minimal impact to the training package.

If the change to the qualification is considered minor and there is a project underway in that training package, the unit will usually be updated. If there is no project underway, it is likely the qualifications would not be updated, even if the change is minor, as making the changes will create a new version of the training package.

If the change to the qualification is considered major, further consideration will be given to the best time to update that qualification. If the training package is already being updated, the superseded unit might be added to the update, especially if it is the only change being made to the qualification. Other times it will be held off for when the qualification is being reviewed in full, so that all of the units within the qualification and their learning outcomes can be considered together. The original unit is still able to be taught until such time as the qualification is updated (See [the Standards for RTOs 2015](#) for more information on this).

How long does it take for qualifications to become available for use?

From the project planning stage to publication, it typically it takes about 12 months to update qualifications, skill sets or units as part of a training package project. All together the research and consultation phase of each project takes 3-4 months. Then, once industry has validated the final qualifications and skills standards, they must go through a thorough edit and equity and quality assurance process. This is to make sure they meet the necessary standards and regulations and that there are no unintentional barriers to entry and components are free of errors. This process takes approximately 2-3 weeks to complete.

The drafts also have to be reviewed and approved by the relevant Industry Reference Committee (2 weeks), the State/Territory Training Authorities (2 weeks), the Australian Industry Skills Committee (at least 6 weeks) and State and Territory Ministers (3-4 weeks).

Following approval by the Australian Industry and Skills Committee and endorsement by Skills Ministers, the revised or new training components are published by the SSO on the National Register on Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Australia, training.gov.au.

The skills standards are now available for use, but Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) need time to prepare to deliver them.

Publication of new and revised training components on training.gov.au triggers notifications to RTOs that have the qualifications on scope and alert them that a minor and/or major change has occurred to qualification/s being delivered, requiring revisions to their Training and Assessment Strategy (TAS).

Publication of a major change to qualifications on training.gov.au also alerts the Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET) and triggers the development of an updated Victorian Purchasing Guide for the Training Package.

Publication of the Victorian Purchasing Guide is subject to analysis of the training products, consultation and approval processes managed by Victorian DET and the time to develop will vary. When completed, the Victorian Purchasing Guide provides nominal hours for units of competency and maximum payable hours for qualifications. The Guide is distributed, to other jurisdictions and stakeholders.

Victorian Purchasing Guides are available at education.vic.gov.au.

If the units, skill sets and/or qualifications are on scope for the RTOs and have had either minor or major updates that have been deemed as equivalent, ASQA will automatically put these updated components on scope. When units, skill sets and qualifications are either new or updated and deemed not equivalent, RTOs will have to apply to put these components on scope. However, each RTO will still need to consider their return on investment: i.e. what is the overall cost of development and delivery versus enrolment earning potential? If it is deemed financially viable, the RTO will develop the appropriate training and assessment materials and apply for the components to be put onto scope. All of this can take up to 18 months from the time of publication on training.gov.au for an RTO to be ready to teach the updated or new skill standards.

Who Decides What Goes into a Qualification?

Industry participants work with Skills Impact so that we are able to write documents that describe how work is done. These skill standards documents then go into national qualifications, units of competency and skills sets.

If you want to be involved in this work, we would love to have you involved. All you need is knowledge about how work needs to be done in specific parts of the industry, and be willing

to contact us and give us your views.

TAFEs and other registered training organisations (RTOs) design their training programmes based off the skills standards industry defines.

The work to update or develop a qualification is carried out as part of a [national project](#). Each project is overseen by an Industry Reference Committee (IRC), who determine project outcomes including making sure consultation is representative of the sector as a whole. With help from the IRC, industry experts with relevant experience are identified and contacted to help develop each draft qualification, skill set or unit. Broader industry is then given the opportunity to contribute feedback. Industry representatives at either of these stages can include people with experience working or training in the industry, or from associations, unions, registered training organisations (RTOs) and Government departments.

Once the final drafts have been developed, the relevant IRC/s, State/Territory Training Authorities (STAs/TTAs), Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC), and State and Territory Ministers are also given the chance to raise any issues, with industry consulted again if required.

Delivering the Updated Qualifications, Skill Sets or Units

What is a Companion Volume?

Companion Volumes assist industry and registered training providers (RTOs) to deliver the units, qualifications and skill sets within a training package. Companion Volumes include information to help trainers adapt to any new changes in a training package, as well as additional information about the impacts of regulation and licensing implications and workplace health and safety on their training. As part of each project a Companion Volume Implementation Guide is produced to convey this information, but some updates to the training package may require additional Companion Volumes to assist in delivery. Companion volumes are available for download on our [resources page](#).

How can I see what has changed in a training package?

Changes to a training package can affect the units, skill sets, or qualifications currently being used by registered training organisations and industry. There are a number of ways to find out how a training package and the units, skill sets and qualifications within it have changed.

First, search for the unit, skill set or qualification in question on [training.gov.au](#). Go to the middle of the page and find the 'Content' heading and click the link to compare. This will

take you to a page where you can select the previous release to compare with the updated one. This will give details of any changes that have been made, highlighting the exact wording in a way similar to track changes.

If you would prefer more of an overview you can access a detailed mapping table for the training package via the Companion Volume Implementation Guides or a mapping table for the individual unit at the bottom of the unit page on training.gov.au.

What Are Nominal Hours?

Nominal hours refers to the anticipated hours of supervised learning or training deemed necessary to conduct training and assessment for activities associated with a particular program of study. They are determined by each State/Territory Training Authority. Many states base their nominal hours on the Victorian Purchasing Guide for each Training Package. These are available at education.vic.gov.au.

The total nominal hours for a qualification may vary depending on the units of competency selected. Nominal hours are often used as a mechanism to determine funding allocation.