National Skills Taxonomy Discussion Paper

RMIT University Response

RMIT welcomes the opportunity to provide a response to Jobs and Skills Australia's Discussion Paper on the National Skills Taxonomy (NST).

RMIT University sees the development of the NST as a valuable step toward achieving the long-term goal of a more equitable, accessible and harmonised system of tertiary education and skills.

The NST should support equitable lifelong learning

RMIT welcomes the seven principles outlined in NST Discussion Paper, which call for the NST to be Comprehensive, Interoperable, Evolutionary, Integrative, Accessible, Contextualised and Dynamic.

One aspect that is critical for meeting the outcomes outlined in the Australian Universities Accord Final Report, that RMIT would recommend adding to the outlined principles is that of being **equitable**. An equitable national skills taxonomy will not only taxonomise existing formal classifications (such as those identified on p.8 of the Discussion Paper), it will also aim to represent and recognise informal skills that have been acquired throughout a person's life and experiences, some of which will be outside of formal work and qualifications.

These are skills that may have been acquired through social or community experiences, via family and care duties, and personal life circumstances. By including skills that are gained through non-formal means, the NST will add additional value and opportunities for disadvantaged cohorts of people to see and recognise their existing skills, and aid in the validation process for Recognition of Prior Learning/Recognition of Prior Experience measures, providing more diverse and inclusive skills-based pathways and opportunities.

Employers and education providers should be able to see and realise the shared value and use of the NST

The NST should reflect the real-world jobs and activities undertaken by employees across a range of industries and skill levels, in language which reflects their use in these industries but also utilises technology to highlight similarities of skills across different sectors.

The NST needs to have real-world interoperability and value for industry, education providers at all levels including schools, and individuals, to ensure the NST is a useful tool for employers and job seekers, and ultimately for user-end tools such as the Skills Passport. Tertiary providers should be supported to validate their program offerings with the taxonomy, and to make connections and innovative pathways toward employment outcomes for their courses and curriculum.

This should not place an overly instrumentalist or reductive lens on knowledge-based programs by only focusing on functional outputs, but instead highlight more choices, outcomes and pathways across curriculum and employment opportunities.

The NST should promote the future of a harmonised tertiary system across universities, TAFE, and encourage new skills pathways and opportunities for learning

A common language of skills has the potential to promote accessible pathways for learners, demonstrating linkages between vocational education and training and higher education tertiary programs with job opportunities and highlighting gaps or opportunities for program development.

JSA has already begun to develop skills mapping tools to this end, and we believe there is a great opportunity for these tools to align with the NST. The NST could help facilitate the targeted design of new modes of learning to meet targeted skills needs, such as work-based learning or microcredentials. It should also align with harmonisation measures being undertaken, including frameworks such as a reformed AQF and the microcredentials framework.

Thank-you for considering our response, and we look forward to participating in further ongoing consultations with JSA and government around this important work.

RMIT UNIVERSITY

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