National Skills Taxonomy Discussion Paper

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DEWR Consult hub

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8   Thank you for choosing to provide a response to the National Skills
          Taxonomy Discussion Paper.

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9   Lessons from existing taxonomies

          What are the key benefits and/or limitations with existing skills taxonomies?
          The key benefit of existing skill taxonomies is the creation of a common reference point
          for educators, industry and career development practitioners. Ideally, this would be one
          set to create a platform for ease of transition into and between the VET and Tertiary
          sector in response to industry need.
          The main limitation is their lack of agility in response to a rapidly changing employment
          market with increasingly skill sets in the digital and technical space. A suggestion is to use
          assistance from artificial intelligence, similar to the process of maintaining ESCO where
          maintenance of an occupations and skills taxonomy is a challenging and labour-
          intensive process. Limitations also include the effect of multiple education systems
          without a clear and necessarily consistent pathway between them (e.g. TAFE to Higher
          Education and vice-versa). This implies addressing the disconnect between the differing
          quality assurance agencies i.e. ASQA and TEQSA.

          What features from existing skills taxonomies are important to retain or address in a new
          NST?
          Agility. From a career practitioners' perspective, the current ASCII skills taxonomy does
          not adequately address skills in the digital space and a number of the technical skills are
          outdated in terms of contemporary demand.

10   Potential use cases for a National Skills Taxonomy

          Where could an NST best add value for individuals, employers and educators and how?
          Creating a common language to identify industry training needs. This would allow for
          greater responsive in tertiary sector education and training design. It could also enable
          more clear articulation pathways within the tertiary sector including the development of
          stackable qualifications, to allow quicker qualification paths to fill industry labour
          demands i.e. providing a clear student journey through education and into skills-based
          employment.

          What are the potential unintended consequences or challenges of an NST that will need
          to be overcome?
          A key challenge for the framework is the lag between publishing and changes within
          industry and therefore labour needs which would decrease effectiveness. A potential

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unintended consequence of a comprehensively researched NST is exposing duplication of education programs within and between institutions including between AQF levels. The NST should also be helpful in the development of VET and other vocational program Course Learning Outcomes.

What do you believe should be the overarching vision for the NST?
To provide a skills taxonomy that aligns the Australian education system and prepares graduates for work. Creating a common and responsive skills language between educators and employers across all industries. There could be the potential for the NST to reduce hiring costs and time by providing verified skills information, which can be valuable for small and medium-sized enterprises. This would be an approach supported by the National Skills Passport concept, which aims to integrate and verify skills digitally.

What guiding principles should underpin the taxonomy? Are there any non-negotiables?
Non-negotiables in terms of guiding principles should be:
- evolutionary,
- accessible,
- dynamic
- and contextualised.

How should principles be prioritised if trade-offs are required?
Those principles that enable the overarching vision of 'common and responsive' skills language should be prioritised.

11 Building a National Skills Taxonomy – design considerations

From a structure perspective, skill groupings and typologies should be nested to enable increasing levels of granularity. Each skill requires descriptive evidence and connection to current industry practice. Identification and articulation of the skill being the most critical in the first instance with connection to proficiency testing at an upper level of each nested skill group.

The new NST should be built on a digital platform that accesses AI to draw real time information from job advertisements, industry skill reports and other relevant sources to provide dynamic data including indicators of new skill development and evolution of identified skill sets. Ideally the skill terminology and descriptions would be aligned with career outcomes as described by tertiary sector Program plans.

12 Building a National Skills Taxonomy: Implementation considerations

What are the most appropriate ongoing governance arrangements for the NST?

Sitting within Jobs and Skills Australia with appropriate key stakeholder avenues / channels for input and review, including industry, education providers, and unions. This body should oversee regular updates and ensure the taxonomy remains relevant and effective.

How should the NST be updated and maintained?
Real time updates as part of a digital platform driven by AI similar in style to platforms such as the Burning Glass tool that is part of Lightcast (https://lightcast.io/)