

What is a qualification purpose?

Every qualification in the vocational education and training (VET) system is now built around a clearly defined goal known as a qualification purpose. The purpose ensures that qualifications are structured logically and contain the exact mix of skills and knowledge that real-world workplaces need.

By focusing on the purpose first, we ensure that before a training product is written or updated, we have clear answers to two essential questions:

1. What is this qualification actually for?
2. Who is going to use it, and how?

Qualifications sit on a spectrum or 'continuum' spanning three main purposes:

- **Occupation-focused (Specific):** Built for distinct job roles that often involve specialised industry standards, licensing, or regulatory safety requirements (e.g., traditional trades).
- **Industry-focused (Related):** Broad-based qualifications focused on transferable skills that prepare people for multiple related roles across a wider sector or industry cluster.
- **Pathways/foundational (Broad):** Designed to support initial entry-level learning, cross-sectoral skills, and pathways into further education or career exploration.

These are not rigid categories or isolated silos. Because modern industries are dynamic, a qualification will often sit on a continuum and can span across multiple purposes. Mapping this overlap gives us the insights we need to design qualifications that are as flexible and adaptable as the workforces they support.

How we determine the purpose:

The five consideration areas

To identify where a qualification sits on this spectrum, Skills Insight uses a Qualification Purpose Matrix. We look at a qualification from five different angles to get a complete picture of its real-world use:

Area	What it's about	Guiding questions
Occupational Outcomes	The jobs or types of work the qualification leads to.	<i>'What can someone do with this qualification?'</i>
Knowledge and skill breadth	How wide or narrow the learning is.	<i>'Does it teach deep specialist skills, or a mix of general ones?'</i>
Learner mobility/transferability	How easily can learners use what they've learned elsewhere.	<i>'Can graduates take these skills to other jobs or industries?'</i>
Licensing/regulatory requirements	Any external rules, standards, or licences the qualification must meet.	<i>'Are there laws, regulations, Awards or agreements that shape how this qualification works?'</i>
Delivery pathways and context	How and where learning happens.	<i>'Is it mostly on-the-job, in a classroom, or a mix of both?'</i>

When and how we use the matrix

This matrix is a practical tool used at different points in time to shape our design choices, guide consultation and track progress.

To get the full picture, we look to different groups across the sector for their unique, real-world perspectives:

- Employers and industry leaders: Bring essential hiring, operational, and workforce development insights. This perspective highlights the practical skills and knowledge needed to handle the job safely and effectively in a modern workplace.
- Registered training organisations (RTOs) and educators: Provide invaluable training and delivery insights. This experience demonstrates how a qualification functions in practice, how learning is best structured, and what works well in a training environment.
- Regulators and licencing bodies: Ensure that qualification design aligns seamlessly with legal requirements, formal licensing rules, and industry-wide compliance standards.

When you participate in our industry projects, you may see the matrix used at different stages:

1. A current snapshot

Early on in a project, we use the matrix to capture a baseline. We look at the current qualification and ask stakeholders how it is being used right now on the ground. This gives us an honest snapshot of what is working, what isn't, and how the qualification is actually perceived by employers and workers.

2. The future goal

Once we understand the current landscape, we use the matrix to design the future state. Stakeholders work together with a Technical Committee to map out what the qualification needs to look like to serve the industry best over the coming years. This sets our target design goals, determining how specific or broad the new structure should be.

3. Progression tracker

As the project progresses and drafts are developed, we use the matrix as a tracker that allows us to compare our current draft against our target goal to check we are staying on course. It provides a transparent, visual way to see exactly how feedback is shaping the final product, and whether adjustments are necessary.

Qualification Purpose Matrix

	SPECIFIC Occupation-focused		RELATED Industry-focused		BROAD Pathways/foundational
Occupational outcomes	Prepares learners for one clearly defined regulated job role	Strong alignment with one job role, but applicable to a small number of closely related roles	Prepares learners for multiple, related job roles across a single industry	Outcomes span multiple industries or sectors with similar functional roles	Not tied to specific job roles—supports further study, career exploration, or foundational capabilities
Knowledge and skill breadth	Focused on highly technical, task-specific skills and knowledge with limited application beyond a single job role	Less emphasis on broad skills and knowledge and a stronger focus on technical and task specific skills and knowledge	Balanced mix of job-specific and broader skills relevant across an industry	Skills and knowledge remain broad; however, some task specific skills are introduced	Emphasis on foundational, cognitive, interpersonal, or cross-sectoral skills applicable across multiple industries or further study pathways
Learner mobility - transferability of skills and knowledge	Skills and knowledge apply only to one specific job role	Some overlap with related roles in the same workplace or narrow industry area	Transferable across multiple job roles within the same industry or industry cluster	Transferable across similar roles in different industries or sectors	Broad, transferable skills used across multiple industries, or not tied to specific occupations
Licensing / regulatory requirements	Completion of the qualification is required to obtain a licence, accreditation or registration	Includes units or components required for licensing or regulatory compliance, but the qualification itself is not mandatory	Aligns with industry standards or expectations, but no formal licensing requirements apply	May include units relevant to regulated activities, but licensing is not a key driver	No licensing, regulatory or accreditation requirements apply
Delivery pathways and context	Delivered primarily through structured, regulated models such as apprenticeships or traineeships	Suitable for delivery by an Enterprise RTO and can be aligned to employee awards with union collaboration	Provides intentional pathways to further skills and knowledge in specific industries	Suited to VET in Schools programs as a career pathway	Delivered through diverse, flexible models (including in classroom or simulated settings) and commonly supports entry-level learners or broad foundational development