Guidance on Qualification Purpose

Introduction and Purpose

The Training Package Organising Framework (TPOF) requires every qualification to have a **clearly stated purpose**[1]. The Purpose should be determined early in workforce planning discussions and prior to initial product development. It must be supported by evidence about learner needs, industry needs, occupational outcomes, pathways and delivery considerations.

Training package developers must identify the Qualification Purpose for every new **and** updated qualification. This means, *every* training package development project must include the intended Purpose in the Annual Training Product Development Plan (ATPDP) and include a rationale for the statement of Purpose in the Companion Volume Implementation Guide (CVIG).

This guidance is designed to promote clear decision making and consistency in the way the Qualification Purpose is defined and described in relevant documentation.

Why it's important

The TPOF requires the Qualification Purpose to be determined before product development commences because it is the foundation for all subsequent design decisions.

The 'qualifications first' approach to training package development supports more stable and sustainable training packages by focusing on Qualification Purpose, learner outcomes and transferable capabilities.

Once the Qualification Purpose is clear, training package products can then be designed to support that overarching Purpose rather than individual components being developed independently and later packaged together.

The TPOF Qualification Development Quality Principles require qualifications and units to:

- minimise duplication (Principle 6)
- serve multiple occupations where possible (Principle 1, Principle 3)
- use cross-sector units where appropriate (Principle 6)
- include only the minimum level of prescriptive detail necessary (Principle 7)
- be designed with an appropriate level of specificity that allows flexible training and assessment while minimising the need for frequent updates (Principle 7).

The TPOF states that understanding the Purpose of a qualification supports decisions about how the Qualification Development Quality Principles are applied. Qualifications designed for a single occupation may require greater specificity, particularly when safety, licensing or trade integrity must be protected. While qualifications designed for multiple occupations or pathway purposes should place greater emphasis on transferability, flexibility and reducing duplication.

[1] The word 'Purpose' has been capitalised in this document when referencing the TPOF Qualification Purpose in order to differentiate between the Qualification Purpose required by the TPOF and any other typical use of the word 'purpose'.

By identifying Purpose first, JSCs can decide, through consultation:

- how prescriptive units need to be
- whether specialised or transferable skills are required
- how much flexibility should be built into packaging rules
- the extent to which common units can be shared across qualifications.

The Purpose provides the strategic rationale that shapes the qualification design, its units, its assessment requirements and its long-term relevance within the VET system.

How to determine the Purpose

The TPOF describes the process for defining the Qualification Purpose at Step 1.1 of the Process Requirements. It lays out 4 key questions to guide JSC's consideration.

- What is the purpose of the qualification?
- How will learners use it?
- How will employers use it?
- How will RTOs deliver it?

You should carefully consider the results of workforce planning research, occupational and skills analysis, enrolment and completion data, stakeholder consultation, and evidence about labour market and learner needs when defining the Qualification Purpose.

When describing the Qualification Purpose in the Annual Training Product Development Plan (ATPDP), JSCs should avoid referring to "Purpose 1", "Purpose 2" or "Purpose 3" qualifications. While those labels were used in the Qualification Reform Design Group work as archetypes, the TPOF adopts a broader continuum approach that focuses on the intended use of the qualification.

Describing the Purpose of the qualification in plain language, rather than by using generic labels, assists stakeholders to engage with the statement of Purpose. For example[2]:

> "This qualification prepares learners for a specific licensed occupation..."
>
> "This qualification supports employment across a range of related occupations within the [specified] sector..."
>
> "This qualification provides transferable vocational skills and knowledge that support entry to multiple industries and future learning pathways..."
>
> "This qualification builds foundational and applied capabilities that support pathways to further study..."

The TPOF also requires that the Purpose is justified in the Training Product Submission and a rationale for the Purpose is provided in the CVIG. More information discussing the CVIG Rationale is included in the next section.

[2] These examples are provided as guidance and are not exhaustive. They should not be interpreted as a definitive list of approved Purpose statements. JSCs should use language that best reflects the context and needs of their sector or sectors.

The difference between 'Purpose' and 'Description'

It's critical to understand that the statement of Purpose and the Qualification Description are separate things with a distinct function. They are developed at different times for a different reason and a different audience.

The **Statement of Purpose** (documented in the ATPDP) explains why the qualification exists and how it is intended to be used in the VET sector. It is **strategic** and **system focussed** and **informs qualification design**.

The **Qualification Description** (documented in the qualification itself) describes the knowledge and skills outcomes of the qualification relevant to the AQF level criteria for the qualification type. It is **learner** and **outcome focussed**.

Developing a CVIG Rationale

Reading the TPOF Product Requirements item 3.2.3 together with the Qualification Reform Design Group[3] reform intent, the rationale for the statement of Purpose should be much more than a brief explanation of "why this qualification exists". It should explain **why the chosen qualification Purpose is the right design choice** and demonstrate how the qualification aligns with the purpose-driven design model, the Qualification Development Quality Principles, workforce evidence, learner needs and training pathways.

The rationale should cover 3 key questions:

1. **Why** does this qualification exist?

- What need is being addressed? *(not an exhaustive list)*
    - Emerging skills need?
    - Industrial relations needs e.g. trades?
    - Regulatory or licensing needs?

2. What is the **Purpose** of the qualification?

- Does it prepare a learner for a single, defined occupation?
- Does it prepare a learner for multiple related occupations, supporting transferability?
- Does it support learners in broad vocational capabilities, cross-industry mobility, or pathways to further learning?
- Or is it a combination of these things?

3. How does the **design** of the qualification **support** the Purpose? *(not an exhaustive list)*

- Why are the packaging rules designed as they are?
- How does the balance of core and elective units support the Purpose?
- Are specialisations included to support the Purpose?
- How do the constituent units support the designated Purpose?
- Are there clearly articulated pathways into and between qualifications?
- How did the design of the qualification avoid/remove duplication across qualifications?

[3] Unlocking the potential of VET, Advice from the Qualification Reform Design Group, Final report, December 2024 – Section 3. A new model of VET qualifications

An example of a rationale for the statement of Purpose could be:

> "This qualification has been designed to prepare learners for a range of related occupations in the {xxxx} industry. Workforce analysis evidence demonstrates that learners move between several related occupations with similar skill requirements. A broader qualification improves transferability, reduces duplication across qualifications, supports workforce mobility and provides stronger career pathways while retaining industry relevance. The packaging rules, unit outcomes and elective structure have, therefore, been designed to support multiple occupational destinations rather than a single job role."

It is important that the rationale for the statement of Purpose is carefully considered and included **with intention** in the CVIG. There are no rules about where and how the rationale for the statement of Purpose must be included in the CVIG, however, you are strongly encouraged to ensure it is easily accessed by users of the document. The same CVIG rationale may be used for a group of qualifications where it is relevant. Adding the rationale to other existing requirements, such as mapping information, is strongly discouraged as it risks the detail being overlooked or perceived as an afterthought.