



The Victorian Alcohol and Other Drugs  
Workforce Development Strategy  
– **Minimum Qualification Strategy**



## Department of Human Services

### The Victorian Alcohol and Other Drugs Workforce Development Strategy – Minimum Qualification Strategy

## Introduction

The purpose of this booklet is to provide information on the Victorian Alcohol and Other Drugs Minimum Qualification Strategy that will come into effect from 1 July 2006 and apply to all Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) Workers funded by the Department of Human Services Drugs Policy and Services Branch.

This booklet provides an overview of the current qualification status of the AOD workforce, details the Minimum Qualification Strategy and who it applies to, and gives information on the assistance and support mechanisms in place that will enable AOD workers to achieve the requirements of the minimum strategy by 1 July 2006.

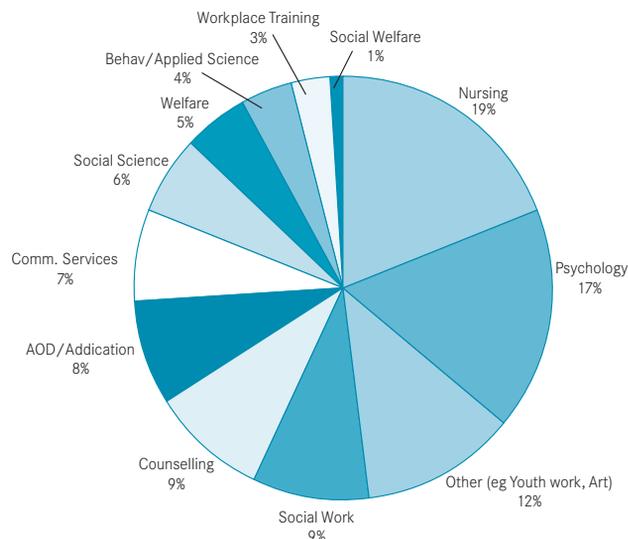
The Minimum Qualification Strategy was initiated in response to Drug Policy Expert Committee findings and recommendations, the Alcohol and Drug Specialist Workforce Development Education and Training Strategy Plan: 2003–2006, and workforce development consultations conducted in 2003/04 with the sector.

The aim of the Minimum Qualification Strategy is to ensure the development and maintenance of a consistently competent and professional AOD workforce. The Strategy's implementation mechanisms provide a consistent approach to learning and skills development based on nationally recognised minimum competency standards.

## The Qualification Status of the Alcohol and Other Drugs Workforce

Registration data collected for the 2002–03 Recognition of Current Competency (RCC) Project conducted by Geelong Adult Training & Education (GATE) shows the AOD workforce is highly qualified, with workers holding qualifications in a vast range of relevant health, science and behavioural science subject areas. The data found that 83% (618) of registrants had one or more relevant qualifications such as a TAFE or university certificate or diploma, bachelor degree or postgraduate qualification. Of workers that held relevant qualifications, 49% (301) had one qualification, 36% (224) had two qualifications, 12% (76) had three qualifications, and 3% (17) had four or more relevant qualifications.

The following chart shows qualification subject areas that are held by the AOD workforce.



## Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) Minimum Qualification Strategy

The substantial number of AOD workers who hold relevant qualifications demonstrates the extensive depth of knowledge and skills in the sector. However, while the sector is highly qualified, only 8% of qualifications held are specifically in Alcohol and Other Drugs Work or Addiction Studies. The need for AOD workers to have accredited credentials in the field of alcohol and other drugs is vital. A consistent level of sector-specific skills and knowledge base amongst AOD workers will enhance their credibility as sector professionals and experts particularly by those in related health and welfare fields who call upon them for specialist support, consultancy and auxiliary care.

The Victorian Alcohol and Other Drugs Minimum Qualification Strategy will come into effect from 1 July 2006 and apply to all Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) Workers funded by the Department of Human Services Drugs Policy and Services Branch.

The Minimum Qualification Strategy was initiated in response to Drug Policy Expert Committee findings and recommendations, the Alcohol and Drug Specialist Workforce Development Education and Training Strategy Plan: 2003–2006, and workforce development consultations conducted in 2003–2004 with the sector.

In order to build the capacity of the AOD workforce to provide high quality, responsive client services, the Department and employers must ensure, amongst other issues, that staff are appropriately and adequately trained. To ensure consistent and high-level drug and alcohol client services and to be regarded by other health sectors as competent and knowledgeable AOD professionals, training and qualifications in the specialty of alcohol and other drugs is recommended for all AOD workers.

The aim of the Minimum Qualification Strategy is to ensure the development and maintenance of a consistently competent and professional AOD workforce. The Strategy's implementation mechanisms provide a consistent approach to learning and skills development based on minimum, nationally recognised competency standards.

The AOD workforce is a highly qualified workforce including psychologists, social workers, youth workers and nurses. There is extensive depth of knowledge and skills in the sector. However, while the sector is highly qualified, only 8% of qualifications held are specifically in Alcohol and Other Drugs Work or Addiction Studies.

A consistent level of sector-specific skills and knowledge base amongst AOD workers will enhance their credibility as sector professionals and experts, particularly by those in related health and welfare fields who call upon them for specialist support, consultancy and auxiliary care.

From 1 July 2006 the aim is to meet the following minimum qualification strategy through professional development opportunities funded by the Department of Human Services:

#### CURRENT WORKFORCE

- a) A qualification specialising in Alcohol and Other Drugs or Addiction Studies.  
The qualification must be equivalent to, or above, the Australian Qualifications Framework Certificate IV in Alcohol and Other Drugs Work.  
or
- b) A health, social, or behavioural science related tertiary qualification plus
  - Four AOD Core induction competencies which can be gained on-the-job; and
  - any other Work Specific competencies required for job role; to be agreed with the employer as part of a professional development plan.

#### NEW WORKERS (Post 1 July 2006)

- c) New workers entering the AOD sector without a qualification to obtain
  - the minimum qualification, Certificate IV in Alcohol and Other Drugs Work.
 A timeframe is to be agreed between the employer and individual through an individual training plan.
- d) New workers entering the field with a health, social, or behavioural science related tertiary qualification would be required to undertake the AOD competencies as part of an induction/orientation program, or as part of an individual training plan.  
  
A timeframe for completion is to be agreed between the employer and individual.

If a current worker does not meet the objectives of the Minimum Qualification Strategy and chooses not to comply with the Strategy, the tenure of their current position will not be affected.

The required core induction competencies are based on already published competency strategy material from the Australian Qualifications Framework for alcohol and other drugs work. They have been adopted because of the need for a set of core AOD competencies to be demonstrated by all AOD Workers, whatever their occupational discipline.

The Minimum Qualification Strategy acts as a benchmark to ensure all AOD workers have a common minimum level of alcohol and drug attitudes, skills and knowledge. Funded Agency Managers are encouraged to support this strategy to ensure the alcohol and drug sector has professional workers who are qualified and competent in the speciality area of alcohol and drugs.

## Who does the Minimum Qualification Strategy apply to?

The Minimum Qualification Strategy applies to Victorian Alcohol and Other Drugs Workers. The definition of an Alcohol and Other Drugs Worker is “a worker funded under Victoria’s Framework of Drug Treatment Service Delivery whose core role is to provide funded drug services to AOD clients.”

By definition, the Minimum Qualification Strategy applies to forensic treatment services, telephone counselling services and outreach services as well as all other DHS funded drug treatment services. It does not apply to training, research, ancillary, domestic, peer support, information and support services or management positions.

Workers who meet the Minimum Qualification Strategy will receive from the Department of Human Services a Certificate stating they meet the Minimum Qualification for AOD Workers in the State of Victoria. Workers who successfully completed the GATE project will be provided with this Certificate and other workers may make application through the Workforce Recognition Project.

## Minimum Qualification Competencies

All competencies contained in the standard are from the Community Services Training Package (CSTP). The CSTP contains the national competency standards that outline the skills, knowledge and attributes necessary to perform a job within the community services industry. A major benefit of the national competency standards is that they are portable, meaning that competency attainment gained in Victoria is recognised throughout Australia.

Each competency has a nationally recognised code and an Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) level and title. The AQF level indicates the level of qualification. For example, a competency that has an AQF level of 1/2 is at a basic entry level, whilst an AQF Level 5/6 is at a Diploma or Advanced Diploma level.

## AOD Workforce Recognition Project

The Department of Human Services (DHS) is committed to supporting managers, the existing workforce and new workers to meet the Minimum Qualification Strategy by 1 July 2006. The AOD Workforce Recognition Project follows on from the Recognition of Current Competency project and is a further statewide strategy that will recognise the skills; knowledge and experience held by AOD workers and will support and facilitate AOD workers to meet the Minimum Qualification Strategy.

The aim of this project is to provide all AOD workers with advice and support to meet the requirements of the Minimum Qualification Strategy through a standardised, work-based, assessment process. This project is being conducted by the sector's own Registered Training Organisations (RTO's):

- UnitingCare Moreland Hall
- Odyssey House
- Salvation Army
- Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre
- Youth Substance Abuse Service

Every DHS funded Drug Treatment Service will be linked to one of the Registered Training Organisations listed above. Training Advisors operating in the RTO's will identify workers in each agency who do not currently meet the requirements of the Minimum Qualification Strategy and assess their skills, knowledge and experiences against the competencies the Strategy. The key role of the Training Advisor is to provide recognition of current competency assessment to individuals in the workplace against the competencies pertaining to them. Training Advisors will use methods such as self-assessment, interviewing and management input. Training needs will be identified and

### CORE/INDUCTION COMPETENCIES

Code	AQF Level	Title
CHCAOD2C	AQF4	Orientation to the AOD sector
CHCAOD6B	AQF4	Work with clients who are intoxicated
CHCAOD8C	AQF5/6	Assess the needs of clients who have AOD issues
CHCAOD10A	AQF5	Work with clients who have AOD issues

### WORK SPECIFIC COMPETENCIES

Code	AQF Level	Title
CHCAOD7C	AQF4	Provide needle and syringe services
CHCAOD9C	AQF4	Provide AOD withdrawal services
CHCAOD11A	AQF5/6	Provide advanced interventions to meet the needs of clients with alcohol and/or other drug issues

### CERTIFICATE IV IN ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS WORK

14 units of competency

Code	AQF Level	Title
CHCAOD2C	AQF4	Orientation to the AOD work
CHCAOD6B	AQF4	Work with clients who are intoxicated
CHCAOD8C	AQF5/6	Assess the needs of clients who have AOD issues
CHCAOD10A	AQF 5	Work with clients who have AOD issues
CHCCOM3C	AQF4/5	Utilise specialist communication skills to build strong relationships
CHCCS301A	AQF3/4	Work within a legal and ethical framework
CHCCS401A	AQF2/3/4	Facilitate co-operative behaviour
CHCCS402A	AQF3/4/5	Respond holistically to client issues
CHCCS405A	AQF3/4/5	Work effectively with culturally diverse clients and co-workers
CHCOHS301A	AQF3	Participate in workplace safety procedures
CHCORG5B	AQF4	Maintain an effective work environment
CHCNET4A	AQF5/6	Work with other services

Plus an additional 2 competencies to be chosen by the student

an Individual Training Plan will be created for each participant. This will be developed in consultation with management to determine an action plan for each worker to enable them to meet the strategy by 1 July 2006.

The project is to be conducted over eighteen months and will produce many benefits for the workforce and the sector. These include:

- An opportunity for AOD workers to gain recognition of their skills through nationally accredited qualifications and units of competency.
- Clarification of the roles of training providers and service managers in identifying staff learning/skill gaps and addressing these.
- Consistency across AOD services to allow for recognition of competency and portability across services and career development.
- Improved understanding of the AOD workforce and their learning needs.

The Workforce Recognition Project is available to specialist Alcohol and Drug Workers who work in the sector for at least **20** hours per week for the past **12 months**. The definition of a Specialist Alcohol and Drug Worker is “a worker funded under Victoria’s Framework of Drug Treatment Service Delivery whose core role is to provide funded drug treatment services to AOD clients.”

The Koori Workforce is not currently included in the Workforce Recognition Project, as these AOD workers have specially funded Koori training and workforce development programs in place to meet the Minimum Qualification Strategy.

For more information on this project, please contact Kate Marotta, Senior Project Officer, Workforce Development, Department of Human Services on 9637 4296 or your Workforce Recognition Training Advisor.

## Registered Training Organisation (RTO) Contacts

Uniting Care Moreland Hall Sally Coates	03 9384 8825
Odyssey House Brad Pearce	03 9412 7906 or 0438 048 843
Salvation Army Helen Brunt	03 9521 2770
Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre Kieran Connolly	03 8413 8413
Youth Substance Abuse Service Brandon Jones	03 9415 8881

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is recognition of current competency (RCC)?

Recognition of current competency is the formal acknowledgement of a person's skills and knowledge acquired through previous training, work or life experience, which may be used to grant attainment of an accredited training module, course or qualification.

### How much time will it take for me to meet the requirements of the Minimum Qualifications Strategy (MQS) if I register for the Workforce Recognition Project?

The time is dependent on how many competencies you need to achieve. As a result of experience gained from the Recognition for Current Competency Project conducted by Geelong Adult Training & Education (GATE) in 2003, the Workforce Recognition Project will apply a more streamlined, work-based assessment process using a best practice "benchmarking" tool. The Community Services & Health Industry Training Board has developed this tool. Utilising the tool, evidence collection to attain accreditation will ideally become part of your daily work, rather than additional tasks on top of your daily work, with a minimum of documentary evidence to be collected. Other practical methods such as interviewing you about your knowledge and experience and input from your manager, or a previous manager, will also be part of the process.

### My employer knows that I am competent in all the listed competencies so why can't my employer just "sign off" that I am competent?

The AOD Core/Induction competencies and Work Specific competencies are based on a National Training Framework of standards that outlines the skills, knowledge and attributes necessary to perform a job within the community services industry. Only a qualified Workplace Assessor within a Registered Training Organisation is able to undertake assessment of competency that is formally recognised throughout Australia. If your employer signed you off as "competent" it would have no standing at an industry-wide level. Your employer's opinion will still be taken into consideration and will be an important part of the assessment process in the Workplace Recognition Project.

### I am a Registered Psychologist working for 10 years as an AOD clinician. Do I have to meet the Minimum Qualification Strategy (MQS)?

The Standard recognises that people with a wide range of tertiary qualifications and from other professional backgrounds are necessary for the sector and add important knowledge and skills to AOD work. Psychologists offer highly valued skills but unless you can demonstrate addiction studies were assessed as part of your formal training then you would still be required to obtain the four AOD Core/induction competencies as part of a work-based assessment process in order to formally acknowledge your specific skills, knowledge and experience in AOD work. With your lengthy experience in the sector and the streamlined assessment tool, it will be a relatively simple process for you to gain formal recognition of your AOD skills through the Workplace Recognition Project.

**I do not have any AOD qualifications and I don't plan to get any. Do I still have a job after 1 July 2006?**

You will still have your job, but you may need to meet the MQS if you wish to transfer to another job within your agency or transfer to another agency, if the agency's policy is to only employ workers who meet the MQS. You would then need to negotiate a timeline for when you would obtain the MQS. If you are an experienced worker with AOD skills and knowledge then you should register for the Workforce Recognition Project where you will have an Advisor who will work with you to meet the MQS.

**I am an employer and it is September 2006, after the implementation of the MQS. I have a prospective worker who does not meet the MQS. Can I employ that person?**

Yes, you can employ an unqualified person however you and that worker will need to enter into an agreement to meet the MQS. This should be within a timeframe that you think is reasonable given the applicant's individual circumstances. A useful way to do this would be to consider training in the four AOD Core competencies as part of the worker's induction to the Alcohol and Drug sector by encouraging the worker to attend free training courses. If the applicant has no relevant qualifications and needs to obtain the Certificate IV in AOD Work then a longer timeframe will be required and a clear plan identified on how the applicant is to obtain the Certificate IV in AOD Work.

**I have a Bachelor of Arts degree, do I need to do the four AOD Core competencies or the Certificate IV in Alcohol and Other Drugs Work?**

For generalist qualifications, for example Arts and Sciences, it would be dependent upon what your major is. If your major is relevant to the AOD sector, that is, in the health, social or behavioural science field, then you would be required to attain the four AOD Core/Induction competencies through recognition or training. If you wanted to, another way to meet the MQS, would be to complete a specific AOD or Addiction Studies qualification. If your major is in a non-related field, for example music, you would be required to attain, as a minimum, the Certificate IV in Alcohol and Other Drugs Work. Another way to meet the MQS would be to complete a specific AOD or Addiction Studies qualification.

**I work as a Youth Outreach Worker, do I need to do any of the AOD Work Specific competencies?**

The Work Specific competencies are based on job roles. For example, if working in a withdrawal service then it would be expected that you would be competent in CHCAOD9C – Provide AOD Withdrawal Services. A decision on what Work Specific competencies workers require is based on an agreement between the worker and employer. As a Youth Outreach Worker there is no AOD Work Specific competency, however, you may wish to attend training offered in any of the Work Specific competencies for your own professional development or career aspirations.

### **I am a manager and too busy to develop individual training plans for my staff.**

Every agency will have an allocated Project Advisor through the Workforce Recognition Project. Advisors will be available to provide information and advice on education and training issues to Managers.

### **Can I do the Diploma in Alcohol and Other Drugs through the Workforce Recognition Project?**

No. Whilst recognising the worth of workers gaining a Diploma in AOD Work it is beyond the scope of this project. The Workforce Recognition Project aims to have all our current AOD workers meet the Minimum Qualification Strategy. The Diploma in AOD Work is not part of this Strategy. If however you have completed the GATE project and still require competencies to be accredited for the Diploma in AOD Work then talk to your Advisor. We will then collate this information state wide to determine the best way to assist these workers to obtain their accreditation.

### **I work in a Primary Needle Syringe Program. Do I have to meet the Minimum Qualification Standard?**

Needle Syringe Program Workers are not required to meet the Minimum Qualification Strategy as they do not fall within the definition of an AOD Drug Treatment Services Worker. However, Primary Needle Syringe Program Workers are able to access any of the free training offered under the Victorian AOD Workforce Development Strategy.

### **I work in a Primary Health Service. Am I able to participate in the Workforce Recognition Project?**

If you are funded as an Alcohol and Other Drugs Worker by Drugs Policy and Services and your core role is to provide drug treatment services then you may participate.

### **I am already qualified. Do I have to obtain a Certificate stating I meet the Minimum Qualifications for working in the State of Victoria?**

No. You do not have to obtain this Certificate however by doing so you will be registered with the Department of Human Services as meeting the minimum qualification requirement and will also have this recognition to add to your portfolio of qualifications. Workers are able to register for this Certificate through the Workforce Recognition Project.

### **I have not been employed with the AOD sector for more than 12 months. Am I eligible for any programs?**

Possibly. For new workers entering the AOD workforce without any formal AOD qualifications the New Apprenticeship Scheme may offer a viable option to assist employers obtain new staff. Under the New Apprenticeship Scheme there is no upper age limit requirement and incentives are provided to organisations for the remuneration of support and training time provided to workplace trainees. Through the Office of Training and Further Education The Youth Substance Abuse Service has been approved to offer an Apprenticeship Program to deliver and assess the Certificate 1V in Alcohol and Other Drug Work.

*For further information on eligibility criteria and processes contact Brandon Jones at YSAS Head Office on 9415 8881.*

If you have any further questions about the Workforce Recognition Project or the Minimum Qualification Strategy please contact the Registered Training Organisation assisting your agency or Kate Marotta, Senior Project Officer, Workforce Development, Department of Human Services ( 9637 4296 or email [kate.marotta@dhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:kate.marotta@dhs.vic.gov.au)).

## Other Workforce Development Initiatives

### Training in AOD Competencies

If training is required to achieve Core or Work Specific competencies, training is funded through the Workforce Development Strategy and delivered free of charge to AOD Workers by Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre. Managers may like to consider utilising this training to develop an induction program for new workers without AOD qualifications.

The following AOD competencies are currently available at locations statewide:

- CHCAOD2C Orientation to AOD work
- CHCAOD6B Work with clients who are intoxicated
- CHCAOD8C Assess the needs of clients who have AOD issues
- CHCAOD9C Provide AOD withdrawal services
- CHCAOD10A Work with clients who have AOD issues
- CHCAOD11A Provide advanced interventions to meet the needs of clients with AOD issues

CHCAOD7C Provide needle exchange services will be available from September 2004.

### Flexible Delivery

“Orientation to AOD work” and “Assess the needs of clients who have AOD issues” is available for flexible delivery ie distance learning using computer technology.

*For further information about Competency Training please contact Turning Point Education and Training Centre on (03) 8413 8700.*

### Postgraduate Training

#### Graduate Certificate in Alcohol and Other Drug Studies

Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre has been funded by the Department of Human Services to develop flexible learning materials for two modules from the Turning Point Graduate Certificate in Alcohol and Other Drug Studies. This will enable workers to study online in a Virtual Campus website. The two subjects are:

- Introduction to AOD Treatment
- Drug Use in Perspective

*For further information on these and other subjects offered in the Graduate Certificate program contact Greg Logan, Program Coordinator on (03) 8413 8413.*

#### AOD Postgraduate Study Assistance Grants

Grants are available to postgraduate students of AOD/Addiction Studies, or other relevant courses of study. If you're currently doing postgraduate study or want to in the future, contact your DHS Regional AOD Coordinator for information on these grants.

## Future Training Opportunities

A comprehensive three-year Drugs Policy and Services Branch Victorian AOD Workforce Development Strategy has been developed in consultation with the Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) sector, AOD Regional Coordinators and the Workforce Development Steering Committee. As part of this strategy it is proposed that training will be offered to Alcohol and Drug workers, supervisors and managers in:

- Clinical Supervision
- Professional Development
  - AOD skills for frontline/reception staff
  - Managing difficult/aggressive clients
  - Suicide and self harm assessment and response
  - Grief and trauma
  - Cognitive Behaviour Therapy
  - Brief Interventions
- Management Training
- Forensic Workforce Training

Detailed information on this training will be available from October 2004.

## Backfill Policy

The Department of Human Services is making a significant investment in training, professional development and recognition of current competency for AOD workers. The Workforce Development Strategy will offer a range of free training and professional development opportunities as well as developing sector retention, recruitment and quality accreditation strategies. As part of agencies commitment to a continuous learning culture the Department expects backfill costs to be met from within operational budgets.

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