

Themes, notes and quotations from focus groups

This document represents the responses to *Making Connections-Working Together* paper gathered from focus groups and online respondents during March-April 2015.

1. Foundation Skills definition and recognition

English language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) – listening, speaking, reading, writing, digital literacy and use of mathematical ideas; and

employability skills, such as collaboration, problem solving, self-management, learning and information and communication technology (ICT) skills required for participation in modern workplaces and contemporary life.

Foundation skills development includes both skills acquisition and the critical application of these skills in multiple environments for multiple purposes. Foundation skills are fundamental to participation in the workplace, the community and in adult education and training. P2 NFSSA 20122

Awareness in Australian Population

There was a feeling that national literacy programs within the education sector (especially schools) are more broadly understood than a broader notion of foundation skills among the Australian population.

It's the single hook we can hang our work on but people need to know about it.
Sydney focus group member

We need a campaign to explain it. Work with our professional associations to promote it. Explain that it is not just the FSK. But we need be consistent with its use, from the Reading Writing Hotline through to Training Packages.
Brisbane focus group member

Understanding of definition

When the term 'foundation skills' was first discussed in the scoping study in 2013 there was considerable resistance to the term with concern by many that it narrowed down the scope of language literacy and numeracy to employment based applications only.

The current research and focus groups indicate a growing acceptance of the term by those operating within and outside of formal education and training environments. In comparison to the perceptions gathered in 2012 greater understanding of its application with community and VET delivery contexts and its potential in policy albeit with ongoing discussion about the needs for the social and emotional aspects of the term being recognised within the definition.

People are coming with no self-esteem or self-worth, to think about LLN or employability they need to feel good about themselves and that it's possible to change their life. Self-management doesn't really cover it because it's more about operating independently in life...the workplace, (the definition) doesn't cover the emotional intelligence/maturity aspect.
Adelaide focus group member

There was a pragmatic acceptance that the policy discourse is focused on human capital outcomes and that programs that have such a focus are those that attract funding. For those working outside of accredited VET e.g. libraries, community/social services there was a stronger perception that the definition lacked a social and emotional capability aspect.

Social and emotional learning – looking at foundation skills development is a journey, sometimes people aren't ready to look at those other foundation skills until they have that self-confidence.
WA focus group member

For those delivering integrated foundation skills support within vocational delivery in the VET sector, the term 'foundation skills' was seen as an accepted common language to describe the way these skills are embedded within applied vocational learning – practitioners felt it gave them a way of talking to vocational trainers about skills that are often taken for granted, e.g. filming schedules for media-type studies where trainer had said there is no numeracy involved but the FS trainer was able to identify and unpack the time-based numeracy underpinning creating filming schedules.

I spend quite a lot of time talking to people about the definition of foundation skills. I didn't like this definition to start with but I've come to like it more because it includes the term 'such as' and allows room to move and flexibility to adjust it to fit.
Melbourne focus group member

Foundation skills at all AQF levels

Others emphasised the importance of the paragraph in the Strategy directly underneath the dot-point definition (see shaded box page 1) that states:

Foundation skills development includes both skills acquisition and the critical application of these skills in multiple environments for multiple purposes. Foundation skills are fundamental to participation in the workplace, the community and in adult education and training. P2 NFSSA 20122 (my underline)

This paragraph was perceived as critical to develop understandings that foundation skills are not confined to low level skills only and can be seen to encompass broad educational notions beyond functionally learning to read and write or being able to fulfill a task.

There was recognition that the definition of foundation skills expands the responsibility of building and or addressing the skills beyond one set of practitioners and that there are implications for both the traditional LLN teacher/trainers and vocational trainers.

Whereas the audience for this project has been those individuals who identify as being foundation skills practitioners, there was a view that concerted work to promote and 'sell' the term to the vocational practitioners to ensure commitment and engagement.

The problem is also the teachers in the mainstream course because they think that once you have foundation skills you don't need to continue to develop them, you already have them, they don't need to be developed at higher levels.
SA focus group member

Amongst vocational trainers working in specialist areas there was acknowledgement that being able to address these skills is critical in a program but that trainers may not feel equipped to do so.

...in the nursing area it's not well managed because there is an assumption that people are coming in at a certain level. There is not support within the system to embed that in everything we do. We (Private Provider) struggle with the foundation skills when support for vocational learners is needed at really low levels (e.g. needing to do drug calculations but don't understand even numbers)

SA focus group member

Policy settings and VET resources

Focus group members discussed a range of policy settings and VET products that were in play and impacted on widespread understandings of the term foundation skills or will force engagement and the need for accurate and widespread professional development.

New TP policy that requires that TP developers address the foundation skills built into every unit of competency in every training package at every level will require that RTOs come to terms with the learners' foundation skills support needs and the structure of their training and assessment practices.

Vocational trainers will have to identify course demands and support needs and where these can't be met draw on resources of the RTO to address skill gaps. While the inclusion of the unit TAE411 within the core of the Cert IV will go some way to dealing with this there was concern that trainers with appropriate expertise do not always deliver this unit or it is delivered quickly and without adequate engagement.

In some States funding structures and time imperatives impede 'solution-based' approaches to supporting learner's foundation skill needs and are seen to compromise the quality of learner's foundation and vocational outcomes.

Victoria's two-course rule has restricted a lot of the programs because it's no longer possible to import electives from other packages into foundation skills programs unless those electives are named in the qualification. We used to do some great programs with nursing terminology.

Melbourne focus group member

The Certificate III Guarantee and contestable funding mean that pathways pitched at the right level for some learners (Cert I and II) have dried up and the LLN support hours available for these level III programs are not accessed because of time pressures.

Brisbane focus group member

In some states there were positive links between policy settings and the growing diversity of the field

The SA state Govt has recently announced their Workready program, and that appears to be more focused on the connection between training and employers/employment - A good thing I think! Under that program foundation skills will be delivered in all sorts of environments to all sorts of people by all sorts of people.

SA Online

Core Skills for Work

Products such as the Core Skills for Work developmental Framework and the Foundation Skills Training Package were discussed in several focus group sessions. The CSFW was perceived as an opportunity to talk to learners about what they can already do and how their skills are linked to a work pathway but its status as a tool within policy settings (Such as TP design) remains unclear and it only had recognition with practitioners operating within VET.

Foundation Skills Training Package

Many expressed the view that the timing of the release of the Foundation Skills Training Package within the time frame of this research and the broader discussion of foundation skills had limited perceptions among many to the Training Package alone.

I think that anyone involved in the field of LNN needs to be aware of the Foundations Skills package and be able to situate their own practices and programs within it, or at least understand how it might connect or fit with what they are doing.

Online response hub

2. Who is delivering FS?

Purpose for project

Whilst there was acknowledgement that foundation skills are critical there were views ranging from optimistic to skeptical about the purpose for describing the field, the overarching policy settings in which the research is being carried out and the current funding made available for foundation skills delivery.

The strength of this discussion around the framework is that foundation skills is being embedded in a policy framework. So this activity is used to inform more people about what it is that foundation skills practitioners do, so people are more likely to draw on your skills when they understand what you do and you are more likely to feel supported by a system that understands and values what you do.

Melbourne focus group member 1

I don't think it's possible to talk about a foundation skills practitioner field from where I sit. The question is 'who's going to pay for it?' Is it built into the mainstream, if it's not then how am I going to get funds for it? RTOs don't want to know about it unless they can get money out of it.

Melbourne focus group member 2

This has to be about valuing the field, if diversify is about valuing skills that the people bring in then that is good. But is this about our field be devalued and dumbed down?

Sydney focus group member

Split between Cert IV and 'specialist'

A repeated concern (consistent with the 2103 scoping study) was that lowest common denominator standards (Cert IV with TAE411 unit) could be set as the basis for foundation skills expertise.

Whilst the bulk of focus group attendees were Foundation Skill practitioners delivering in stand-alone LLN programs or supplying LLN support within vocational programs there were a small number of vocational specialists who had an interest in foundation skills and who were interested in up-skilling.

One such vocational trainer did not see herself as part of 'the foundation skills field' although she is interested (e.g. 'I took home the ACSF book'). Within this group valuable discussion took place regarding the collaboration between vocational and foundation skill practitioners and the mutual understanding that evolves where *'the partners view their partnership/relationship as working with the more knowledgeable other'*.

Adelaide focus group member

Amongst other groups there were strong views that vocational trainers cannot deal with LLN issues alone e.g.

... a lot of vocational trainers have LLN issues. The idea that the trainer can deliver LLN is a fantasy world.

Melbourne focus group member

...the problem is that all these people with the Cert IV unit think they are LLN specialists and that dilutes down the skills of LLN specialists.

Perth focus group member

or those that believed that many vocational trainers are committed to upskilling and should be acknowledged for doing so.

There are a lot of professional development groups around Australia where vocational trainers are building the skills and the support to deliver in a more holistic way, the vocational skills as well as the underpinning LLN.

Melbourne focus group member

Inter-disciplinary Collaboration

There was valuable discussion several sessions about collaborative models of delivery and the factors that contribute to their success. There was acknowledgement that is a lot of time and commitment outside the scheduled delivery hours to make these models work.

We have used the FSK certificates at AQF I and II as a fully contextualised preparatory pathway into the Certificate III in Beauty. It creates a nice pathway and provides time to develop FS before getting to the vocational qualification delivered by the straight vocational teacher. The program has involved a lot of collaboration to create the appropriate preparation course that will complement the vocational program and be completely contextualised. To do this we (foundation skills) negotiated with each program area (not individual lecturers). We run either through SEE or other funding models if available.

Adelaide focus group member

Team teaching approaches are used – both working together in the classroom, although (one teacher) has quals to deliver both the FSK and beauty units. In the cleaning operations program she works with a vocational trainer to deliver the program.

Where the models of delivery involve withdrawal of learners to external LLN support, certain issues of understanding and capacity for shared responsibility for the issues were raised.

The specialists are almost doing a disservice for themselves by saying that we have these magic little rooms where people come in to be fixed. Instead we should be inviting people in to see what we do. We need to shift from gate keeping, to demystifying it so that others can start to understand what we do and how they can with it.

Melbourne focus group member

For those providing support within Training Package delivery there was often a frustration based on the tensions arising from the nominal time to complete the vocational competency and the lack of nominal learning time to develop an underpinning foundation skill. Several practitioners indicated this as a critical issue impacting on signing a learner off as competent. Pressures are to get completions in course due to funding implications.

We need to make people aware of the limitations that we as practitioners are working with so that they don't expect too much from us, but we can make suggestions to improve what is a bad situation. Perhaps that should be part of our definition. We are always so constrained by time limits – and that is the point about training packages, having it written in doesn't mean that it is going to be possible to deliver to the learners within the funded program.

Melbourne focus group member

Cross organisation collaboration

We are providing support for learners to access a vocational program through a collaborative model with another RTO. Our main communication is with the other RTO's marketing person (who is presumably working out the types of learners they can target for inclusion in the course and the type of support they will need to get through).

Adelaide focus group member

Access to and demand for LLN specialists

For private providers without access to foundation skill practitioners there are particular issues relating to identifying pre-course competency in English and supplying appropriate support within the timing of the vocational course.

...we have previously affiliated with TAFE so that we could send some students to TAFE programs before they continue on with the nursing program. We have also used similar associations with a local library for developing life skills that are needed by some young students. More often they just fail or they defer and don't come back. We do our best but there are some students whose skills are so low that we aren't always able to support them. We do our best by researching ways of helping and providing support wherever we can. Some are just in the wrong course and we can't get them up to the appropriate level within the six weeks of the Diploma program. You can't come into a diploma with ACSF level 1 skills. We started a certificate III program to address the needs of some of these learners.

Adelaide focus group member

In TAFE systems in SA and WA there are differing mechanisms in place to fund team teaching.

We have state-wide meetings to work out how TAFE FS people can work with vocational teachers and we map against SA ESD curriculum. For us the FS program area includes interpreting and translating. This is a new resource for us and we are working out how best to use them. Because of their linguistics expertise they are coming into our classes for ESL learners – it's a new partnership that is working quite well. Also an opportunity to share expertise from the Auslan department that is now part of the FS area.

Adelaide focus group member

Every day I go into the VET classroom as the foundation skills practitioner working collaboratively with the vocational specialist and I see immense value in it for the students.

Perth focus group member

But from a private provider in WA a concern that expertise in LLN was not in demand due to funding and time restrictions so,

...no-one seeks out a specialist.

Perth focus group member

Adult and Community Education

Representation of practitioners from the community sector suggests less constraints and acknowledgement that people are working with learners in different ways. The bulk of the work is not based on Training Packages. Practitioners expressed their view that although community work is important is not visible and is not invested in by government because it often emphasises social capital outcomes.

I would hope this means we have a wide range of practitioners able to deliver in a broad range of contexts, and that we could draw on all these backgrounds to apply delivery in better ways, - particularly when a certain type of delivery is failing or ineffective.

NSW Online respondent working in community not for profit

...the context under which foundation skills are applied varies from client to client; class to class; and this is what is not always understood.

Tas Community based provider

Volunteers

The role of volunteers in several States (TAS, QLD and WA) were deemed as critical.

There are a great number of players in the field, there is a great deal of variety depending on the setting in which programs are delivered. For example at the library, literacy and numeracy programs are delivered by volunteers who have done their basic Volunteer Tutor Training course at TasTAFE. These volunteers are supervised by literacy co-ordinators with various professional qualifications.

TAS Online respondent

Assessment- teaching-learning cycle

After a needs analysis of the client group, the practitioner would tailor a program to suit. In this area of delivery, it is important to be flexible & multi skilled.

Online respondent

Specialisations

There was acknowledgement that most practitioners have strengths in particular areas of delivery e.g. lower level of language and literacy, or just on numeracy, or on higher levels of literacy or numeracy. But some perceived this was a self-limiting and there was a need for practitioners from traditional LLN areas to be more flexible and embrace these skills in relation to employability skills.

An interesting view came from a vocational practitioner who recognises the need for foundation skills to be seen as more than LLN.

LLN teachers are still locked into the LLN mentality instead of a more holistic picture. Learner assessments focus almost exclusively on LLN rather than big picture employability skills focus.

Adelaide focus group member

Specialisation is not necessarily a negative trait but there is definitely a need for people to have more formal skill development in numeracy.

Trend is coming through again that it's necessary to be more generalist across all foundation skills, rather than only specialising in a particular area.

Adelaide focus group member

Qualifications

I was in literacy for 20 years before I got my TESOL qualification because the number of learners with ESL needs gradually grew in the literacy classes.

Adelaide focus group member

Qualifications are so highly valued now; when I started you could volunteer to help teach/tutor literacy without any qualifications. You can't do that now.

Adelaide focus group member

I worked in Japan with a lot of people who were teaching English without any qualifications at all but who developed a lot of skills. Also some in Australia who didn't have proper ESL teaching qualifications, but sometimes they can have an innate ability to interact with the students, develop logical lesson plans – you don't necessarily acquire those organisational skills through a qualification. We have very long qualifications now for TESOL but maybe they don't need to be so long.

Melbourne focus group member

There shouldn't be one qualification that says you are qualified to teach all of these things – it might be L, L or N, not necessarily all of them. There is a set of skills that people need to learn so that they can move forward (e.g. teaching of numeracy) and so I won't just let anyone who says they can do it teach numeracy. I have a lot of primary teachers and the ones who have a leaning toward numeracy are very good numeracy teachers, probably better than the maths teachers. So the credential doesn't necessarily cover the skills that are being looked for.

Melbourne focus group member

It shouldn't be one level of qualification because the field is so diverse. But the notion of expertise kicks in at around AQF 7 or 8 where you have to pull together theoretical knowledge and make it practical. Concepts involved in specialisations take time to develop.

Perth focus group member

Experience

Appreciate the diversity of the background of where practitioners have come from (e.g. I'm 34 and have a social science background). I covered the department requirements for qualification and 100 hours delivery then had a week of handover/mentoring into the job, taking over from an ex-secondary teacher who worked in a completely different way (very worksheet based) my way of working is more one on one with the learner (disadvantaged learners). As an emerging professional it was difficult to understand that what I was doing was OK because it was different from what the other more experienced trainers were doing. I look at it more as a case management model (social science background) dealing individually with learners.

Adelaide focus group member

Most of the practitioners I am aware of have a TESOL background and focus their efforts in language and literacy areas. Numeracy is ignored too often! The little that numeracy is taught, it is by trainers with mathematical expertise but not specific training in numeracy teaching. Delivery methods definitely and course structure definitely vary from trainer to trainer and even from class to class. The context under which the foundation skills are taught and the needs of the group are what triggers the variation.

NSW Online

Mentoring

I have been mentoring someone new into the field from a vocational area to help them adopt the vocabulary of the LLN/FS field. People in the field have a shared language – we value diversity but we want everyone to be able to speak the same language. It can lead to feeling excluded from the main group; we need to be better at accepting that people talk about these things in different ways.
Adelaide focus group member

3. Professional development

Support for Continuous Professional Development program

In the main focus groups indicated support for a mechanism that could be linked or categorised to allow recognition of PD and use a portfolio skill approach to build credentials incrementally.

For teachers who had to provide evidence of Continuous Professional Development for teacher registration bodies there was concern that any additional framework might result in additional onerous compliance and reporting.

There was support for a mechanism that would allow foundation skills practitioners to record their 'industry currency'.

I believe a formalised PD program is needed, and to encourage achieving different levels of capability, determined by workplaces or individual needs, then a system of recognition, such as points or other rewards would certainly be worthwhile.

ACT online respondent

Sometimes a requirement of CPD might step up the professionalism of the field – it has to be recognised at a national level rather than a state level. There has to be some form of outcome (what did you take away from it?) maybe there should be some requirement at the end to state what you got out of the session. It's not just turning up, you have to get something demonstrable out of it.
Adelaide focus group member

Funding is an issue, it's inequitable between participants in that some do PD and are on a salary, some are having to do it on their day off but some get paid for the day. We need the PD to be seen as important enough that people are paid to attend as part of their work.

Melbourne focus group member

I wouldn't like a more systematic system for PD to be separate for foundation skills from teaching more broadly. It would need to be for teaching/education across the board.

Melbourne focus group member

It comes back to the point that if you have a qualification it gives you validity in the industry. But that qualification doesn't necessarily give you the practical ability to do things, you need the PD for all of those things. I think there is an industry there but it doesn't take into account all of the extra things you might have done beyond your qualification.

Melbourne focus group member

Maybe that everyone in the field needs to demonstrate a common understanding of Foundation Skills Frameworks and ACSF assessment, so that even though there is diversity we are aiming for a

common language.

TAS online respondent

Use existing associations to ensure PD is beyond attendance. That it has to be about doing something. Mapped back to ASQA Standards, TAE quals or Grad Dip quals or other underpinning knowledge to allow for portfolio approach to evidence gathering.

Brisbane focus group member

PD needs to be consistent across Australia so all practitioners working at whatever context or level the training is aimed at, have access to the same learning. PD needs to be available in remote and regional areas as easily as in metropolitan areas. Any system would be better accepted if used to demonstrate strengths rather than used as a gatekeeper.

Remote NSW online

Identified professional development topics

Discussion about PD ranged across a wide variety of topics (summarised below).

Practitioners indicated the individual professional needs of practitioners and the need for flexibility to recognise and then be able to fill an identified skill gap with an appropriate offering.

Identified topic	Comments
Leadership	Skills to recognise needs of others (designing PD Programs) Change management – futures thinking around employment and changing nature of literacy Self-care – health and well-being of the individual practitioner, work-life balance
Learner-centered	Socio cultural learning theories /Cultural awareness /Cultural competency Workplace culture – different expectations and different dominant groups that people need to understand how to interact with. Respect within the learning environment (working to create harmonious classroom culture)
Mentoring/ collaboration	Collaboration between different types of practitioners – Many agreed this focus group was only time this would happen apart from annual conferences – often not as broad Tacit knowledge of professionals - how to pass it on to new comers?
Working with multidisciplinary field	A peer review process - you learn things about your own practice that you hadn't realised you were doing or why you were doing them or where you learned them. A national community of practice of foundation skills experts in various topics (on a register to draw upon for PD?)
Research	Research about learning – 'innovations in andragogy', neuroplasticity- How do you enrich the brain for an adult in a learning context?
VET Integration	Integrating LLN into a VET context. Something that could be done in collaboration between LLN and VET practitioners. The TAE LLN skill set has potential to be rolled out as a PD option Clearer understanding of the LLN requirements of industry- job profiles
Learner characteristics	Working with specific learners group, eg disability, mental health issues
Regulatory	Innovation with funding

Digital Literacy	Supporting vocational online students Online podcasts, webinars – but aging workforce may not like this method of engagement
Assessment	Assessment practice not on the list, should it be number one on the list- may highlight misfit of FS in Training Package environment
Materials design	For use in vocational programs
Numeracy	Lower level numeracy within vocational context e.g. teaching fractions to nursing students Higher level numeracy (e.g. workplace relevant numeracy)
Literacy	<i>‘Operational literacy and functional literacy: distinguishing between the two. Operational literacy can be seen as the skills required for the particular vocation – work from conference in Canada made the vocational literacy required very explicit in their programs (vocational quals at level 3 and up)’</i> Literacy skills for trainers who do not have English as a first language.

4. Describing foundation skills capability

Attendees were asked to consider a four stage model describing set practitioner categories – embedded, apprentice, entry-level specialist and experienced specialist teacher.

The proposed model of set categories was rejected in favor of a developmental model that described capability across a number of stages. There was agreement that this could be achieved across four stages and that an individual could be at a range of stages according to their skills and experience in aspects of foundation skills.

There was acknowledgment that any categories would need to allow for entry level through to specialised knowledge and not be exclusive or alienating in order to support new entrants to the field.

Person not yet credentialed is a really important level because that’s where the coaching and mentoring comes in and where you are going to get new people entering the field.
Brisbane focus group member

What pathway is there into this field? There is no clear pathway and we don’t want to make the hurdles so huge, it needs to be viable and achievable.
Melbourne focus group member

Access to qualifications run by reputable RTOs and ease of access to practicums with adults were identified as current blockers to new-entrants or those seeking to upgrade their credentials.

I wanted to do the Grad Dip in LLN Practice so that I would have a piece of paper to demonstrate my skills and experience. I missed the opportunity because they (ProviderX) didn’t get the numbers. I would have been doing it this year if the program had gone ahead.
Melbourne focus group member

We need rigor around a practicum (many courses both in VET and HE lack rigor on adequate establishment hours with adults).
Brisbane focus group member

Adult learning is missing from HE space.
Perth focus group member

Practitioner experience

The topic of practitioner experience allowed for robust discussion about the importance of practitioners delivering foundation skills within a range of contexts and the perceived lack of recognition and value attributed to their contribution within delivery systems e.g. lack of funding, employment insecurity.

Where do we belong? The theme of the upcoming ACAL conference sums it up – endangered but full of perseverance.
Brisbane focus group member

Practitioners recognised the role that a professional standards framework might make to advocacy for the field of foundation skills practice.

We don't generate revenue but we do help with completions- more research needed to look at impacts of models of practice.
Sydney focus group member

Experience with specific delivery contexts and learner groups allows practitioners to build specialisations across time but there was unanimous agreement amongst all groups that expertise is not a quality developed entirely through 'years of experience'.

Expertise with different groups EAL/D, youth, deaf. but it is not a specialist practitioner but a specialised one.
Brisbane focus group member

I have a specialty in certain nursing areas, but I can also do a lot of things beyond the specialty area. Specialist is a value-laden term that is interpreted differently by different people.
Adelaide focus group member

Attendees raised the issue of 'the adaptive teacher', 'self-reflective practitioner' and discussed mechanisms for self-assessment of skills and knowledge and experience and the links back to professional development and credentials. For this to be possible the practitioner has to have learning self-awareness and the capacity to recognise their own strengths and weaknesses and skill gaps.

We want to make sure the practitioners are as open and self-reflective as possible so the PD needs to be somehow separated from performance management. In our RTO we have to send a continuous improvement log every month to our managers that is a kind of self-reflection on how I have improved as a teacher (the auditors love it).
Melbourne focus group member

It only happens if people are interested and curious, you can't assume that meaningful PD is happening just because you have practitioners in a room, they need to have the right attitude to ongoing development.

Often frameworks like this start out with little questionnaires that lead practitioners to reflect on their own skills and professional development needs and how they fit into the workforce. They put

the question back onto the practitioner themselves.

Melbourne focus group member

There was an interest in State and national success stories e.g. Barangaroo WELL project, that provide rich stories of professional practice and the need for a shared platform for promoting these stories.

Can there be public forum for recognition? Could professional associations play a role?

Sydney

Mentoring as a mechanism for succession planning

The capacity to work collaboratively with, and pass information onto others was discussed as a high order skill that was critical to maintaining the quality of new entrants and those building their skills in a particular delivery context.

The mentoring stuff is so important and we need to set it up wherever we can because it can be very lonely.

Melbourne focus group member

Participants were adamant that opportunities for peer review and learning from others in informal ways was critical to a practitioner's ongoing self-awareness and development.

This topic was explored in considerable detail in the Melbourne focus group.

Mentoring is a two way process. As is working with vocational practitioners in a professional partnership. They can be set up to serve the interests of both parties. I think that learning from each other needs to be respected because it is not always respected.

Melbourne focus group member

In one workplace we would rotate among the teachers who would lead each staff meeting and in that role they would have to share an example of something that had been happening in the classroom. They were definitely the best staff meetings I have ever been to. If you know you're going to have a good teaching discussion it's more attractive to go to the meeting too.

Melbourne focus group member

Mentoring is such a broad umbrella term so you would really need to have a good idea of what the skills and knowledge are that make up the profession so that you would know what it is that you need to mentor the new person in.

Melbourne focus group member

5. FS Framework potential

Support for a framework was entirely predicated on its purpose and potential use with focus groups calling for a clear rationale for the framework's use.

Overarching the framework should be a very clear idea of what the purpose of the framework is. What are we doing it for? Is it for a pathway? Is it to assist employers to employ people? Where is it going? The focus should be on pathways and inclusivity, not something that locks people in or out.

Perth focus group member

What would the development process for it be? Presumably the development process would affect what is going to be in it?

Melbourne focus group member

Any introduction of a framework needs to consider the concerns by many that it could be used to drive employment conditions.

There is no credibility in a role unless there is mandated conditions and pay.

Brisbane focus group member

But in general there was support for the development of a framework across all focus groups and the online hub responses (refer KPA evaluation data)

The focus groups allowed for aspirations and concerns to be expressed in equal measure.

A professional standards framework even if loosely in place, can guide RTOs and individuals to work towards the structures of the standards, not necessary having all structures in place at one time. In the long run, the Framework can set the expectations and standards of the field, acting as aspirational goals in the first instance.

South Australia online

The problem with frameworks is that they can constrain people. It's created an unimaginative approach to education, people feel locked in by the required skills and knowledge and that doesn't give you the individuality that I would like to see restored to the Australian education system.

Melbourne focus group member

A framework can add more credibility. It is a pivotal moment now (for the field) to be bolstered up. We are not used to pushing our professionalism forward.

Sydney

Can be valuable, but not if used for tick and flick compliance requirements for exclusive purposes, need flexibility but not for compliance, not to disadvantage new entrants.

Perth focus group member

There were strong messages about the need for an inclusive, pathways-driven model that supports both the existing range of practitioners and regeneration of the field.

We need to provide guidance to professional associations about the ways to 'grow new practitioners'.

Brisbane focus group member

Everybody is working in a different context. I think the framework would provide the opportunity to define in a particular institute the role that people have. It would help an institute to define who works in a particular area and why.

Melbourne focus group member

So the framework is built on a really clear understanding of the skills and knowledge of the field and the range of places where it is delivered/used and allows people to identify where they fit and where the pathways are. It's an empowering model too (a pathway model, bringing new people into the field in thin markets).

Melbourne focus group member