

Quality Apprenticeships: Positioning employers at the centre of quality

The quality of apprenticeships is an ongoing focus of governments and sector organisations in Australia and internationally.

In 2023, the International Labour Organization (ILO) published their [Recommendation for quality apprenticeships](#), ending a 2-year process involving the ILO, International Organisation for Employers (IOE), and Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

The Australian Government voted in favour of adopting the ILO Recommendation at the International Labour Conference. In their [submission report](#), the Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations noted that the recommendation “aligns with work underway to address skilled workforce needs in Australia.”

Recommendation for quality apprenticeships

The ILO Recommendation provides, for the first time, a framework for quality apprenticeships that can be applied across countries and industries, regardless of the developmental maturity of their apprenticeship system. It can support enhancements in apprenticeship systems and help focus activities toward agreed best practice.

Rationale for an Australian accreditation model

The GAN Australia accreditation model takes learnings from a number of industry-led voluntary accreditation schemes that have supported local, national and international priorities. These accreditation schemes have gained support over time by demonstrating the quality of accreditation to businesses who are able to use their accreditation as a benefit when applying for contracts or grant funding.

Accreditation provides confidence to industry and governments that employers are able to demonstrate a level of compliance and quality against the accreditation principles. In the case of Quality Apprenticeships employer accreditation, this is mapped and can be measured against the ILO Recommendation and related Australian standards and legislation.

Over time, data will support understanding of employer strengths and weaknesses by business size, industry, and region. This will assist GAN Australia to provide targeted resources to employers that will improve their apprenticeship practices and create better quality employers. Reporting on this data will assist governments and industry to identify challenges facing employers, and ultimately impact on apprenticeship completion outcomes.

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GAN Australia support of the recommendation

GAN Australia participated in the development of the ILO Recommendation, with representatives attending the International Labour Conference to provide expert advice on the final Recommendation.

Since the publication of the final ILO Recommendation, GAN Australia has been working on two major projects to support the Recommendation in Australia and internationally.

Quality Apprenticeships research

The Australian apprenticeships system is well-developed and highly regulated, however is often considered to be underperforming particularly regarding completion rates, and diversity and inclusion within industries and occupations.

With the ILO Recommendation providing a framework for understanding quality apprenticeships, the Australian system can be positioned more broadly within this context of quality.

This multi-stage research project aims to:

- Develop a comprehensive map of Australian and targeted international apprenticeship models against the ILO Recommendation for quality apprenticeships.
- Understand what individuals perceive as 'quality apprenticeships' and how this aligns with or differs to the ILO Recommendation. This includes understanding differences between groups, for example, is the concept of 'quality apprenticeships' different for employers vs industry vs apprentices?
- Collate existing data about the quality of apprenticeships in Australia and identify gaps in data. Use the Quality Apprenticeships employer accreditation model to supplement data and identify where employers are performing strongly.

As part of the mapping exercise, this project will identify stakeholder groups who are relevant to each clause within the ILO Recommendation. It will also identify publicly available data related to each clause, as an initial analysis of performance. This will allow targeted recommendations for stakeholder activities that can support improvement of a quality apprenticeships system in Australia.

Initial mapping of the ILO Recommendation against the Australian model is now available. A full version will be used to collect apprenticeship stakeholder feedback as part of this project. To follow progress of this research project, please visit the GAN Australia website: gan-australia.org/research-quality-employment/

Putting the employer at the centre

Using the first stage of mapping from this research project, GAN Australia has identified where employer activities contribute towards quality apprenticeships.

Putting employers at the centre of quality apprenticeships allows committed employers to identify their strengths and weaknesses and improve their programs.

Quality Apprenticeships employer accreditation

Quality Apprenticeships is an accreditation system that recognises leading employers in apprenticeships.

Accreditation is designed to acknowledge best practice in the employment of apprentices, focused on five key principles. This accreditation allows businesses to highlight the positive impacts of their apprenticeship programs and encourages continued improvement.

Developed by GAN Australia in collaboration with international partners, the accreditation system has been designed by experts in apprenticeships. Employers can be confident that the requirements of accreditation are based on international quality frameworks while being customised to the context of their country.

Employers must meet minimum requirements to become accredited, providing evidence of their commitment to quality apprenticeships. Accreditation rewards positive and proactive behaviours and commitments.

This is not a regulatory process and should not be used to replace any requirements within employment and apprenticeship systems.

Benefits of accreditation

An accreditation model has benefits for employers who apply for and gain accreditation, and for industry and governments through associated benchmarking and improvements in quality.

Employers can showcase their accreditation as evidence for meeting quality principles. With an approved accreditation, employers will receive access to their Certificate of Accreditation and use of the Accreditation Seal.



Enhanced reputation

Enhances an employer's reputation and credibility in the industry. It serves as a signal that the employer is committed to quality apprenticeships.



Attracting talent

Demonstrates an employer's commitment to investing in apprentice and staff development and providing a supportive work environment.



Access to resources & feedback

Access resources that explain how to meet each requirement and receive direct feedback on your apprenticeship programs.



Promotions

Promote your business as a Quality Apprenticeships employer and receive cross promotion of your accreditation.

Australian Quality Apprenticeships accreditation principles

Five principles underpin Quality Apprenticeships accreditation. They are based on the International Labour Organization (ILO) Recommendation for quality apprenticeships.

Employers must show commitment to the principles through their application to be eligible for accreditation.



Supporting employment

Utilises apprenticeships as a means of creating entry level pathways, and supports apprentices from the start of their employment.



Equality & diversity

Apprenticeships are non-discriminatory and used to increase workforce diversity, and apprenticeship vacancies are promoted to a broad audience.



Wages & conditions

Processes support apprentices to understand their workplace rights and ensure that all apprenticeship conditions are met.



Health & safety

Safety and health are prioritised for a workplace that supports employee physical and psychosocial wellbeing.



Staff development

Learning and development of apprentices is ensured through supervision and mentoring by appropriate and trained staff.

International accreditation

The Quality Apprenticeships accreditation model has been designed around the ILO Recommendation. The underlying principles are relevant for all countries implementing or aiming to improve their apprenticeship systems.

The accreditation platform allows international partners to join Quality Apprenticeships and implement the system in their country.

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We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional owners of the lands on which we live and work, and recognise the long history of cultural and educational practices of Australia's First Nations people.

All information within this paper is the property of the Group Training Association of Victoria trading as Apprenticeship Employment Network and GAN Australia.