



Australian Government
Department of Education



Australian Government
Department of Employment
and Workplace Relations

National Skills Passport

Consultation Paper





With the exception of the Commonwealth Coat of Arms, the Department's logo, any material protected by a trade mark and where otherwise noted all material presented in this document is provided under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>) licence.

The details of the relevant licence conditions are available on the Creative Commons website (accessible using the links provided) as is the full legal code for the [CC BY 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode) (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>)

The document must be attributed as the National Skills Passport Consultation Paper.

Contents

Introduction	4
How to make a submission	5
Key principle 1: Valuable and useful	6
Key principle 2: User-centred	7
Key principle 3: Integrated and interoperable.....	8
Key principle 4: Trusted and reliable	9
Key principle 5: Privacy enhancing and secure	10
Conclusion.....	10

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Department of Education and the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and Elders past and present.

Introduction

In September 2023, alongside the release of the Employment White Paper, the Australian Government announced it would consult widely to develop a business case for a National Skills Passport. The National Skills Passport could help workers promote their qualifications and help businesses find more skilled workers. The Employment White Paper expressed the Australian Government's vision for a dynamic and inclusive labour market, where everyone has the opportunity for secure, fairly paid work and people, businesses and communities can be beneficiaries of change and thrive. By better matching skilled workers with the businesses that need them, we can support better outcomes for individuals and employers.

A National Skills Passport has the potential to be a practical solution that helps individuals who choose to participate to take the next step in their education or career. They could view, share and assess their skills and qualifications across Vocational Education and Training (VET) and higher education through a trusted and integrated digital system, validated from trusted sources. It will be critical to understand and define what are considered trusted sources.

A National Skills Passport could connect with other relevant services, make life easier for employers, employees and jobseekers, and promote upskilling and reskilling behaviours to help build a culture of lifelong learning. A National Skills Passport could support personalised tailored career advice and guidance on education, training and career pathways including information on workforce demand. This supports the Employment White Paper finding that Australians will increasingly need to upskill and reskill throughout their lives to meet the needs of the labour market.

Stakeholders have long called for a tool like a skills passport. This was again backed by the interim [Australian Universities Accord](#) report. It supported the concept of a skills passport “to enable Australians to have their full range of qualifications, microcredentials, workplace experience and general capabilities recognised across the education and training system and in the employment market”. The Australian Universities Accord consultation process has captured significant and positive feedback on the concept of a skills passport.

Several other countries have introduced some form of skills passport. For example:

- Singapore has a skills passport as part of its [MySkillsFuture](#) website which launched in October 2017, incorporating skills, certificates and licences. MySkillsFuture is a portal for Singaporeans to upskill in their lifelong learning journey. Individuals can view eligible courses and claim their SkillsFuture Credit and access information about skills in demand.
- The European Union originally developed a [Europass](#) in 2004 and launched an enhanced Europass in July 2020. This incorporates skills, qualifications and experiences in a consistent way across Europe. The Europass offers a set of online tools and information, for example, the European Digital Credentials for learning.

Domestically, previous work on skills passports has covered individual sectors, jurisdictions or types of credentials. The private sector has established a range of initiatives to verify and share credentials, licences and skills and undertake pre-employment screening.

This consultation paper sets out principles to shape the design of a National Skills Passport and seeks stakeholder feedback. We are seeking views from individuals (such as learners, jobseekers and employees), businesses, unions, tertiary institutions, and state, territory and local governments to understand the needs and demands of different parties. There will be further consultation and engagement leading to the development of a business case, prior to it being considered by Government.

How to make a submission

The Department of Education and the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations are jointly leading this project and the wide consultation that is essential for the development and success of a National Skills Passport. Your submission is important to ensure a wide range of views are captured to inform the scope, outcomes, and benefits of a National Skills Passport.

The questions below offer a starting point to consider in preparing your submission. The questions are intended to capture responses from a broad audience. Therefore, your submission need not address all questions. Please respond to the questions you feel are relevant to your experience and circumstances. For example, if you are submitting on behalf of an organisation representing jobseekers, you might wish to answer from the perspective of a prospective employee. If you are an employer, you may wish to answer the question from the perspective of your organisation, and from the perspective of your current and prospective employees. We also welcome input on issues or approaches not specifically canvassed here.

Please use our [webform to respond](#). The closing date for submissions is 11:59pm AEDT on 18 February 2024.

IMPORTANT: The departments may publish your response and feedback on their websites or cite your feedback in future reports. If you do not wish your response and feedback to be made public, please indicate this clearly in your submission.

Key principle 1: Valuable and useful

A National Skills Passport needs to be a useful tool for learners, jobseekers, employees, businesses, unions, tertiary institutions and state and territory governments. It will need to streamline access to information and introduce time and cost savings across the economy. To achieve these goals, a National Skills Passport will need to make it easier for individuals to have their qualifications recognised and easier for employers to find well-trained and qualified employees.

There are challenges in the way that skill and qualification recognition, verification and sharing currently operate. For example, there is no trusted information source for credentials information spanning both the higher education and training systems, making it difficult to navigate, inefficient and costly. Furthermore, the current arrangements can impose transaction costs on students, employees, and employers in accessing and verifying information, particularly outside the VET system. In addition to documenting existing qualifications, a Skills Passport could potentially provide advice and guidance about skills, knowledge and experience that would be most complementary to an individual's existing skills.

This consultation paper seeks to understand the priority and interest in the community regarding the benefits a passport could bring. A National Skills Passport could also look further than formal qualifications and transcripts, mapping these to skills and competencies.

Questions to consider:

1. How would you describe the value of a National Skills Passport?
 - a. For learners?
 - b. For employees?
 - c. For employers/business?
 - d. For providers in the education and training sector?
 - e. For governments?

2. From the perspective of an employer:
 - a. Do you access and verify skills and credentials for current and potential employees?
If yes:
 - i. How do you currently access, assess and verify skills and credentials?
 - ii. Does this process differ for international skills and credentials?
 - iii. What cost and time impacts do you currently incur? If applicable, provide details around relevant processes.
 - iv. How could a National Skills Passport reduce the cost and time impacts?
 - b. Could a National Skills Passport change your current hiring or other practices? If so, what would it need to offer?
 - c. What impacts do you anticipate if your organisation started using a National Skills Passport?

3. From the perspective of a provider from the education and training sector:
 - a. Do you currently access and assess applications for course admissions, recognition of prior learning and credit transfer? If yes:
 - i. How do you currently access and assess and verify skills and credentials?
 - ii. Does this process differ for international skills and credentials?
 - iii. What cost and time impacts do you currently incur?
 - iv. How could a National Skills Passport reduce the cost and time impacts?

Key principle 2: User-centred

A National Skills Passport should be easy to use, convenient and provide a functional platform for learners, jobseekers, employees, employers and providers. We propose to prioritise user-centred design throughout the development of the business case. This includes accessible design, efforts to ensure inclusion, and functionality that can be adapted for users with limited access to network coverage or low digital literacy.

The potential users of a National Skills Passport across the community are broad and diverse, as are the functions they will value. We want to ensure we understand who the users might be and how they might use a National Skills Passport.

Questions to consider:

1. From the perspective of an individual:
 - a. How do you currently access and/or share your credentials and skills with education providers, employers and others?
 - i. What does and doesn't work well?
 - ii. How would you like to see this improved?
 - iii. Is there a different experience for individuals from different backgrounds – for example, First Nations people, people living in regional Australia or people from a non-English speaking background?
 - iv. Is there a different experience for individuals experiencing economic hardship?
 - v. Is there a different experience for individuals experiencing and managing physical and mental health challenges?
 - b. What personalised information, advice or links to services would be helpful to allow an individual to more effectively demonstrate their skills to employers, encouraging further education, upskilling, reskilling and workforce mobility.
 - c. What design and accessibility features should be considered in a National Skills Passport?
2. From the perspective of an organisation:
 - a. How do organisations access and use credentials when engaging with students, employees, apprentices, or job seekers?
 - b. What data (such as credentials, qualifications, licences, and skills) and functionality should be included in a National Skills Passport?

Key principle 3: Integrated and interoperable

A National Skills Passport could combine a person's qualifications across VET and higher education to more effectively demonstrate their skills to employers, encouraging further education, upskilling, reskilling and workforce mobility. Existing digital infrastructure and data standards can help to make this possible.

Should the Australian Government decide to implement a National Skills Passport, the Digital Service Standard enables us to leverage best practice to build using open standards and common government platforms, such as myGov, where appropriate.

In preparing the business case, the Government will also identify and assess opportunities to leverage established digital infrastructure that meets stakeholder needs. This includes existing credentialing platforms such as the [Unique Student Identifier \(USI\)](#), [VET transcript](#) and digital career platforms such as the Government's [Your Career](#) website. Existing private sector services that are relevant and widely used will also be considered.

Data standards are the rules for structuring information. At present, there is not a common data standard regarding qualifications and skills across the tertiary sector. The VET sector has mature data standards, however the National Credentials Platform project found inconsistent data collection and standards in higher education. Risks were also identified with privately owned credentialing platforms having an overly powerful role in relation to student information.

VET and higher education providers use Student Management Systems (SMS) to manage information about students including enrolment, course attendance and course completion data. SMSs are also used to submit data for state and national reporting.

A National Skills Passport may be able to leverage data already being collected through these systems. It may require changes to legislation, data standards, what data is collected, frequency of collection or data collection pathways. Should implementation of a National Skills Passport require changes such as these, the impact on the sector, including SMS providers, will need to be considered.

Questions to consider from the perspective of both individuals and organisations:

1. What systems do you operate or interact with that may be impacted by a National Skills Passport, and what systems would you like to see integrated?
2. What challenges do you currently face aligning information and qualifications across VET and higher education? What do you need to overcome these challenges, and how could a National Skills Passport assist?
3. Noting the different levels of data standard maturity between VET and higher education, would you see benefit in establishing a single data standard across the tertiary education system? If yes, what features would you expect to see in the data standard?

Key principle 4: Trusted and reliable

It is important that a National Skills Passport creates an experience and provides functionality that is trusted by all users and stakeholders and is highly reliable. For a National Skills Passport to be a practical tool, available to all who choose to participate, it is important the right information is captured and verified at the right level.

The importance and level of validation required by individuals, employers and providers may differ. Different standards may be required based on the type of qualification or skill, the nature of the interaction, and the activity and risks of the employer.

Questions to consider from the perspective of both individuals and organisations:

1. What level of validation of qualifications and skills would you expect from a National Skills Passport? Would you expect more than one level, if so, what can that look like?
2. Who would you expect to provide the validation? For example, would you expect qualifications to be validated by a university, Registered Training Organisation or regulating body, and skills verified by an employer or third party?
3. Do you see value in a National Skills Passport that includes skills and qualifications that are not verified, validated, regulated, or accredited? For example, work experience, unaccredited microcredentials, and industry or other training?
4. What do you see as the role of government in the design, implementation, and operation of a National Skills Passport?

Key principle 5: Privacy enhancing and secure

Australians expect government to use new technologies to improve services, while also protecting their personal data in the delivery of trustworthy digital services. A National Skills Passport could be privacy enhancing, given the quantity of personal information currently being shared in paper, by email and on the internet. Privacy and security must be at the heart of a National Skills Passport.

A National Skills Passport must adequately protect the privacy of those who choose to use it. It must also enable the right level of information sharing for users who consent to do so, such as a job applicant choosing to share selected qualifications with a prospective employer.

Questions for both individuals and organisations to consider:

1. What privacy, security and fraud protection features would you expect to see in a National Skills Passport? For example, multi-factor authentication, certified by a government agency and verifiable through the system.
2. How would you expect third-party access to an individual's National Skills Passport to be managed? For example, would an individual provide one-off access, permanent revokable access, timebound access or another form?
3. For individuals using a National Skills Passport, what does consent look like? At what age should people be able to obtain a National Skills Passport? For example, should it be accessible to secondary students?

Conclusion

The Department of Education and the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, welcomes feedback, ideas, and insights on the concept of a National Skills Passport. There are no minimum requirements for a response to this consultation paper. The questions offer a guide of issues to consider, however your submission should cover any aspect of a National Skills Passport that you think is important.

Please use our [webform to respond](#). The closing date for submissions is 11:59pm AEDT on 18 February 2024.