

# COLLABORATION AND ARTICULATED PATHWAYS IN TERTIARY EDUCATION

Research Project Report  
for GSA Industry Pathways





# CONTENTS

<b>Executive summary</b> .....	1
<b>Literature review</b> .....	4
Current pathways between VET and Higher Education.....	5
Current interest in collaboration between VET and Higher Education.....	6
The role of Industry Skills Councils.....	7
<b>Scope of report</b> .....	9
Methodology.....	9
<b>Survey results</b> .....	10
Survey description.....	10
Classification of training providers and overview of qualification delivery.....	10
<b>Delivery of specific qualification levels</b> .....	12
Key findings 1.....	13
<b>Current collaboration</b> .....	15
Key findings 2.....	15
<b>Reasons for current collaboration</b> .....	17
Key findings 3.....	18
<b>Barriers to collaboration</b> .....	19
Key findings 4.....	20
<b>Interest in future collaboration</b> .....	21
Key findings 5.....	22
<b>Suggested role of Industry Skills Councils in developing and/or supporting collaborative pathways</b> .....	22
Key findings 6.....	22
<b>Recommendations and points for consideration</b> .....	23
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	25

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In April 2011, Government Skills Australia (GSA) commenced research to analyse and identify the current status of articulation arrangements between Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Higher Education (HEd) providers for the GSA industry-linked qualification pathways. These pathways relate to the delivery of the Corrections, Local Government, Public Safety, Public Sector, and Water Training Packages and the Higher Education undergraduate and postgraduate degrees that may offer broadening or extension of these qualifications.

A further aspect of this research is to investigate and identify labour market and skills needs at a national, state and regional level, with the aim of developing an industry-driven articulation model for building sustainable qualification pathways. This model will be based on establishing dialogue with industry representatives and tertiary sector stakeholders around qualification pathways, while keeping in mind the national, metropolitan and regional skills shortages and training needs of each industry.

For the purpose of this report, the term *pathway* subscribes to Raffe's (2003) interpretation of the relationship between qualifications and their work placement outcomes, and so a *qualification* or *learner pathway* refers to one that may be linked to an individual's learning aspirations, but more importantly, to a potential work outcome.

The term *articulation* in respect to learner pathways refers to the presence of a logical connection and sequence from and between the content of courses and qualifications delivered by institutions within the Australian tertiary sector. These may be formal or informal arrangements that allow for smooth transition from one institution to another.

The impetus of this research project can be attributed to:

- Recommendations of the Bradley Review (2008) driving change towards a greater interconnectedness between the tertiary education sectors (VET and HEd).
- Projected qualification shortfalls by 2025 leading to COAG setting qualification and participation targets for all Australians of working age.
- An increased focus on *lifelong learning* and subsequent need to establish multi-directional pathways to meet learner needs and their vocational aspirations.
- National tertiary education reforms and regulatory changes in both VET and HEd which will promote clearer articulated pathways.

GSA recognises that meaningful collaboration between sectors, institutions and industry is the key to establishing successful and sustainable learner pathways. Consequently, through this heightened interest in tertiary pathways, GSA has resolved to establish the current status of collaborative partnerships between those Australian training providers delivering GSA industry-linked qualifications. This four-stage research project aims to collect data to enable GSA to understand the issues affecting collaboration and pathway-building, as well as develop strategies for the support of future institutional relationships.

The focus of this report will be the two initial stages of research—which includes a survey and web-search—to assist in clarifying the formal and informal articulation arrangements

currently in place for GSA industry-linked pathways. It has become clear that without a comprehensive knowledge of the current state of pathway-related collaboration, GSA cannot effectively implement strategies to establish and nurture future cross-sectoral partnerships that may enhance pathways for its industries.

The initial collection of data for this project has been through the use of an online survey tool. The targeted sample of 322 VET and HEd institutions were invited to complete an online survey around Tertiary Sector Collaboration and resulted in a 36.3% response rate. The 114 respondents supplied an acceptable representational perspective on current collaboration issues in the tertiary sector.

The majority of respondents identify themselves as *VET providers*, with many also describing their function as *enterprise RTOs*. This large proportion of enterprise RTOs reflects current intelligence on the profile of GSA-related RTOs or organisations which are linked to the delivery of qualifications to those in the service of the government and community safety sectors. Amongst others, these industries include Police, State Emergency Service, Defence, Public Service and Corrections, and therefore, more typically the enterprises which would deliver their own qualifications as non-core business.

Survey recipients were identified as providers whose scope includes at least one of GSA's industry qualifications. The survey, however, revealed that approximately 12% of survey respondents stated they do not currently deliver a GSA industry qualification. The industry qualification most widely delivered by respondents is the Public Safety Training Package with the Public Sector Training Package being the second. An expected result in relation to the Local Government, Corrections and Water Training Packages is that there is limited delivery coverage, and consequently a smaller number of respondents. The most utilised qualification levels for each of the five industries are as follows:

Industry qualification	Most utilised qualification level
Correctional Services	Certificate IV
Local Government	Certificate IV
Public Safety	Certificate III
Public Sector	Certificate IV
Water	Certificate II

**Table 1: Most utilised qualification level per GSA industry**

Survey results reveal that a great deal of collaboration between institutions is already taking place, with nearly 72% of organisations stating they are currently engaged in either formal or informal collaborative partnerships. The respondent organisations' current collaborative partners are most likely to fall in the *industry* category, with *VET private and public providers* also being prevalent. Many identify their current collaborative partners by name but to a lesser degree are willing to identify the type of collaboration in relation to the formality or consistency of the arrangements.

The most prominent reason for the respondent to be involved in collaborative partnerships is that it is believed to be 'important to their organisation or institution'. The fact that collaborative partnerships also 'provide a broader knowledge and skills base' to

an institution's offerings and 'provide for more tailored qualification in niche study areas' are similarly confirmed as major contributing factors.

The survey results also substantiate that there are a number of aspects that create barriers to developing collaborative partnerships between institutions within the tertiary education arena. The most notable inhibitors are the 'lack of interest shown by other institutions or organisations', the fact that collaboration is not always seen as 'financially viable' or that there is 'a lack of knowledge of the other sector, industry or institution'.

Most of the responding institutions believe that collaboration should be featured highly as part of their organisation's strategic direction; however, only 58% confirm their interest in establishing further collaborative partnerships. Perhaps deterred by their adverse view driven by the identified obstacles or previous difficult experiences, 32% also say they are 'undecided' about establishing further collaborative partnerships.

Of those that validate their interest in future collaboration, the majority identify their desire to explore partnerships with HEd institutions. As the majority of respondents are private and public VET providers and therefore aware of the marketing edge that partnerships with HEd institutions can generate, perhaps this is a predictable response. There appears to be a widely held view that learner pathways are important and that by establishing more seamless articulation arrangements through collaborative networks, there will be enormous benefits for students who wish to traverse those pathways.

A major outcome from this survey in relation to the role of Industry Skills Councils (ISCs) is clarified by a number of respondents. It is felt that there is a need for ISCs such as GSA to be involved in the provision of advice and support to institutions who currently deliver their designated industry-linked qualifications. This support should include the development of guidelines and resources around establishing qualification pathways within and across sectors. In addition, there is a call for ISCs to assume the role of 'collaboration brokers' by identifying, introducing and scaffolding appropriate partners for the purpose of establishing a broader range of articulated pathways.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Skills Australia's research into *Workforce Futures* (2009) has confirmed that there will be a shortfall of more than 200,000 Australian workers qualified at the diploma level and above by 2025. The main driver of increased demand for higher level qualifications is a current and increasing trend towards demand for higher-level skills, and therefore, skills 'strengthening' or 'deepening' amongst existing workers.

Acknowledgement of this shortfall has resulted in the Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) targets to significantly increase Australian workers' qualifications (2009). The targets aim to halve the proportion of Australians aged 20 to 65 who do not have a qualification by 2020, and increase the proportion of all 25 to 35 year-olds who attain a bachelor level qualification to 40% by 2025. Of those achieving these goals, 20% should be of a low socio-economic status. These ambitious targets, first proposed in the 2008 *Bradley Review*, have already inspired unprecedented interest in collaboration amongst stakeholders of the tertiary education sectors.

The development of a more integrated tertiary sector is one of the key strategies to ensure achievement of these targets, the required growth in a more qualified workforce, and also to provide increased opportunity for disadvantaged students and workers to progress in their studies and career choices.

*Seamless movement from VET to higher education courses is an important mechanism for the promotion of lifelong learning, particularly for the social groups who are traditionally underrepresented in education and training...*

*(Chapman, B et al., 2000)*

The concept of lifelong learning as defined by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is focused on a willingness to '...create a society of individuals who are motivated to continue learning throughout their lives – both formally and informally' (OECD 1996). It needs to be emphasised that lifelong learning in the Australian context will include navigating a pathway that will most likely weave its way back and forth between sector qualifications as well as workplace and other informal learning experiences.

Most stakeholders believe that promoting a more interconnected tertiary education system is intrinsic to promoting the concept of lifelong learning, and also central to improving workforce participation. The strength of the Australian tertiary education environment in the future will rely on developing more clearly defined learner pathways traversing between VET, HE and the workplace. Improving interconnectivity and articulation arrangements between VET and HE sectors will rely on alignment and development of new curricula to meet current and projected labour market needs and increase access and support for regional and marginalised students.

## Current pathways between VET and Higher Education

In relation to current pathways from VET to HEd, Guthrie, Stanwick and Karmel (2011) predictably claim that the main pathway to HEd for young Australians is the completion of Year 12. They also confirm that large numbers of young Australians who complete a qualification at a VET institution are likely to move into university study later in their lives. They establish in a 2010 survey that the number of VET graduates enrolling in further study at universities Australia wide was substantial (34,600).

The majority of these students had previously achieved a qualification at the diploma level or higher, followed by a Certificate III level qualification delivered in a VET institution. These statistics do not, however, indicate the year the previous qualification was awarded so in some cases there may be significant gaps in the continuity of an individual's study.

It should be noted that due to a marked increase of mature-aged students entering university degree studies over recent years, alternative entry requirements may have been applied. For example, it is not uncommon for specified Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in the form of an identified depth and breadth of management experience, to be recognised as a viable entry requirement to an undergraduate or postgraduate qualification in business, management or commerce.

We know that institutional arrangements for the VET to HEd pathways vary greatly. Some articulation arrangements appear to be particularly effective in supporting a seamless pathway at some HEd institutions. Young (2006) states that at Swinburne University, 22% of bachelor degree admissions were based on VET qualifications. This institution coordinates its VET and HEd programs to facilitate seamless student movement between the two. Other institutions—for example, Southbank Institute of Technology and Griffith University—have jointly planned award structures to provide near seamless pathways from VET qualifications into related HEd awards. While there are several other institutional arrangements, such as block credit, specified credit and case-by-case credit assessment regimes (PhillipsKPA 2006), there is very little consistency between universities in the way these are allocated.

While pathways into HEd—especially secondary school to VET—have been looked at extensively in both research and data terms, those from HEd to VET have been a path less trodden and are consequently less understood.

In NCVER 2009 statistics (Guthrie, H et al 2011), it is noted that approximately 120,000 VET students for that year already had a HEd qualification prior to entering VET studies, with the largest numbers enrolling in management and commerce, society and culture, mixed field studies, and education. It is likely that the latter individuals were undertaking the Certificate IV in Training and Education which has been mandated as a prerequisite employment qualification in the majority of VET institutions for trainers and lecturers. A study by Coates and Edwards (2009) which looks at the further study activity of university students five years post-graduation, found that about 5% of these students continued on to VET studies.

This data confirms that despite having a thorough understanding of the reasons behind pathways from HEd to VET, the numbers are significant, and indeed far greater than the reverse pathway of VET to HEd.

## Current interest in collaboration between VET and Higher Education

There has been considerable interest in articulation and credit transfer between the VET and HEd sectors over the last 20 years (Centre for the Study of Higher Education 2008). Much of this interest was founded in access and equity, efficiency, the differing roles of the sectors, and how to create articulation between them. Over the same period, governments created policies to promote articulation and credit transfer arrangements, although the implementation of these was met with difficulties. The Bradley Review (2008) suggests the limited success of articulation arrangements has been due to "... structural rigidities as well as differences in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment" between institutions and sectors (Bradley et al, 2008, p.179).

The current policy drivers have seen a renewed and committed interest by stakeholders in improving the interconnectedness of the tertiary education sectors. A range of research projects and conferences have magnified the focus on this topic and helped stakeholders to understand the current imperatives driving the need for a more cohesive and unified Australian tertiary education experience. The responsibility of the ISC in this arena is resolutely on assisting stakeholders in finding ways to build cross-sectoral relationships for collaboration on articulated qualification pathways.

The newly formed Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) together with the strengthened Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), enhance opportunities for interconnectedness through harmonised changes to regulatory practices, quality and standards in both VET and HEd. It is hoped these may help to bridge the 'great divide' between the sectors.

Although many have become focused on the differences between the sectors and their associated barriers, Robin Shreeve (CEO, Skills Australia) through the recommendations for reform outlined in *Skills for Prosperity – roadmap for vocational education and training* (2011), has refocused stakeholders on the policy drivers and work-driven imperatives. Shreeve also asserts that although there has been considerable effort put into articulation and credit transfer agreements over the past 20 years, until recently the result of these initiatives has been mixed and possibly does not fully justify the effort expended.

The creation of articulation arrangements and the provision of credit transfer seems to have depended on a number of factors including:

- the drive and enthusiasm of individuals within institutions
- enrolment strategies of particular universities
- achieving mutual respect between partners
- negotiating and implementing formal arrangements
- ability to 'map' equivalencies in course content and outcomes
- ability to overcome differences in funding and accountability requirements
- adequate resources to develop and implement arrangements
- ability to overcome transitional issues.

In addition, the take-up and formalisation of articulation arrangements is affected when institutions are mistrustful of the quality of outcomes of an individual's prior program of study. This is particularly the case when an individual is trying to move between sectors;

VET providers may mistrust the quality of what has been delivered by schools as higher education may do with VET.

It is also noted that universities have been more receptive to TAFE graduates, consequently dealing with VET graduates from private providers less favourably (PhillipsKPA 2009). At the root of much of this distrust is a lack of knowledge about what other providers and sectors do and how well they do it. Cram and Watson (2008) suggest that the key to overcoming this is the development of sustained relationships and feasibly including collaboration in course delivery. The development of joint or nested qualifications is another way forward.

Most stakeholders agree with the concept of lifelong learning and clearer pathways between sectors; however, the VET affiliates frequently express concerns that the HEd sector lacks accessibility and openness to discussion around articulation arrangements. It seems that industry stakeholders have traditionally seen their role as being more closely associated with the VET sector, but with HEd institutions now competing for partnerships they are feeling the pressure of addressing the needs of both sectors.

Dual and multi- sector universities also see the lack of cross-sectoral understanding within their own institutions and are endeavouring to make strategic structural changes to ensure there is a shared staffing membership who work between both sectors. They hope this strategy will ultimately help to break down some of the current barriers. It is widely acknowledged that both dual-sector and regional universities should be applauded for making significant inroads into building partnerships across sectors as well as leading the way with schools and industry partnerships.

The newly strengthened AQF, implemented from 1 July 2011, includes an Articulation and Pathway Policy which provides an added incentive for VET and HEd providers to pursue potential collaboration. Some institutions have already made progress through building sustainable partnerships and clear articulation pathways with formalised credit transfer. Others are reticent for a multitude of reasons, including lack of success in past attempts.

It is fair to say that creating a seamless tertiary experience is no small task. Steps are being taken to bridge the cultural divide between HEd and VET in Australia, although a history of division makes maintaining mutual esteem a challenge. Governance frameworks in cross-sector arrangements are very much a part of ongoing debate as sectors want to maintain differentiation whilst promoting a culture of interconnectedness. With large-scale changes currently being implemented, there is hope that the effects of these regulatory and funding changes in both sectors may smooth the way.

## The role of Industry Skills Councils

It is evident that the drivers for propelling current interest in tertiary sector interconnectedness and collaboration is involving all stakeholders in meaningful discussion; however, the role that national ISCs should play in this arena has not yet been defined.

Brian Knight, Principal Research Consultant (NCVER) and Erica Smith, Professor of Education (University of Ballarat) have both called for a broadening of the scope of

operation of ISCs to include more interaction with HEd, and act as a broker of industry pathways between sectors.

With increased activity in ISCs around the establishment of linkages between the industries they represent and the VET and HEd providers, it is not difficult to see this extended to strategies for guidance and support in the development of industry-linked qualification pathways for their workforces.

While there seems to be a mood in all sectors to try to work in an increasingly collaborative way, ISCs will need to ensure that all collaboration around articulated pathways is sustainable and maintains a clear focus on job outcomes. Partnerships need to be sustainable through formalised agreements finalised at the strategic level. There has been a tendency in the past for agreements to be negotiated at the departmental or faculty level, and so dependent upon the individuals involved in promoting and maintaining the arrangements. Sustainability of any agreement may become an issue with natural succession and attrition of those staff members.

ISCs may also take on the role of arranging networking opportunities for those organisations wishing to establish or develop collaborative partnerships. Stakeholders have also suggested that ISCs use their industry intelligence to provide advice and offer a support framework for those wishing to establish pathways between VET and HEd. It has also been suggested they may contribute to the mapping of curricula for the purpose of establishing articulation and credit transfer.

Whatever role individual councils or the combined ISC community decide to adopt in relation to tertiary sector collaboration, it is important that it is clearly defined to all stakeholders and that all collaboration and its associated risks are the responsibility of the prospective partners. Despite a reluctance to be involved in financial arrangements for promoting pathways, ISCs may choose to assume some responsibility for sourcing funding opportunities and provide support for particular pathways including those for specific disadvantaged groups.

## SCOPE OF REPORT

The data for this report is based on the results of a survey of registered training providers (RTOs) and HEd providers which deliver GSA industry-linked qualifications. The survey was conducted between April and June 2011.

The project provides an analysis of data collected and collated using the defined parameters of the methodology applied to ascertain the existence and scope of current and potential collaboration between the targeted tertiary sector institutions.

### Methodology

The methodology used for this report is an online survey of VET and HEd training providers who currently have GSA Training Package qualifications on scope. The survey of 13 questions was emailed to 322 training providers around Australia via a Survey Monkey link. The initial response deadline of 2 weeks was extended to include a third week to maximise responses (initial timeframe: 20 April to 9 May 2011, extended to 16 May 2011).

## SURVEY RESULTS

The survey results include data from 113 respondents of an online Tertiary Education Survey. This survey was emailed to 322 VET and HEd training providers around Australia who were identified as having GSA industry-linked qualifications on scope. The 113 respondents represent a 36.38% response rate.

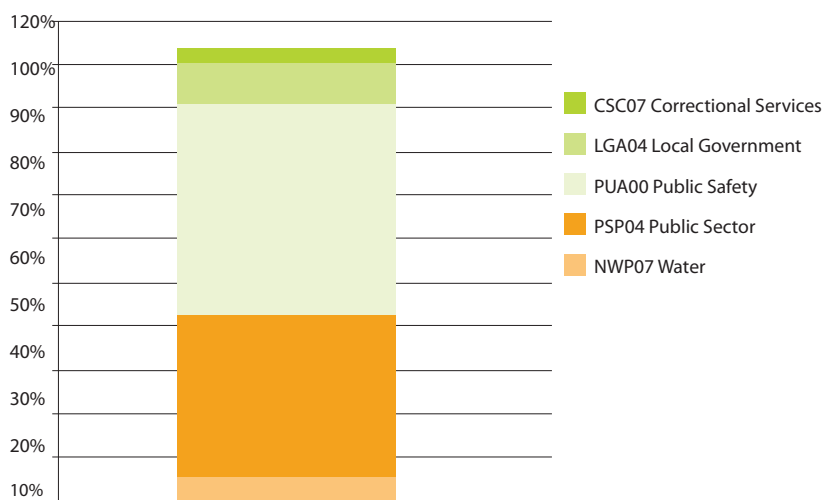
### Survey description

The survey contains 16 open, closed or multiple choice questions (see Appendix A).

- Four questions were for profiling purposes and identified the institution name, sector, role and contact details of the respondent.
- Three questions relating to the specific Training Package/s delivered by the respondent's organisation.
- Three multiple choice questions asking for data related to the existence, sector and naming of current collaboration or partnerships.
- One question asking for data related to the type of collaboration currently underway, with the named partner and Training Package
- One question asking for identification of reasons or drivers behind collaboration.
- One question asking for identification of barriers to collaboration experienced.
- Two questions establishing interest in future/further collaboration and the type of institution with which collaboration was/is sought.
- One question asking for input on the type of support required from ISCs in relation to establishing a collaborative network.

### Classification of training providers and overview of qualification delivery

Of the 113 respondents, 94% describe their organisation as a VET training provider, 4% as a dual sector university and 2% as a HEd provider. This is representative of the overall profile of institutions nationwide which have GSA Training Packages on scope.



**Graph 1: Respondents related to the delivery of specific Training Packages (%)**

Some organisations deliver a range of GSA and non-GSA Training Packages. Approximately 12% of respondents state they do not currently deliver any GSA qualifications, even though they have the Training Package on scope.

## DELIVERY OF SPECIFIC QUALIFICATION LEVELS

An overview of the type of industry qualification delivered and the proportion of delivery according to AQF level amongst all respondents is represented in Table 2.

Qualification %	Cert I	Cert II	Cert III	Cert IV	Diploma	Advanced Diploma	Vocational Grad Certificate
<b>Correctional Services</b>	*N/A	22.2	66.7	88.9	55.6	11.1	*N/A
<b>Local Government</b>	0	30.8	46.2	84.6	30.8	0	7.3
<b>Public Safety</b>	15.6	51.1	62.2	35.6	28.9	20.0	2.3
<b>Public Sector</b>	*N/A **(5.1)	20.5	64.1	71.8	59.0	20.5	0
<b>Water</b>	14.3	71.4	57.1	42.9	0	*N/A	0

**Table 2: Proportion of qualification level delivery per Training Package (%)**

\* No qualification exists in the Training Package at this level

\*\* Results indicated despite non-existence of Cert I in the Public Sector Training Package

It should be noted that the number of respondents who deliver qualifications for some industries (such as Corrections and Water) is quite small and therefore the percentages used in this table are proportional only.

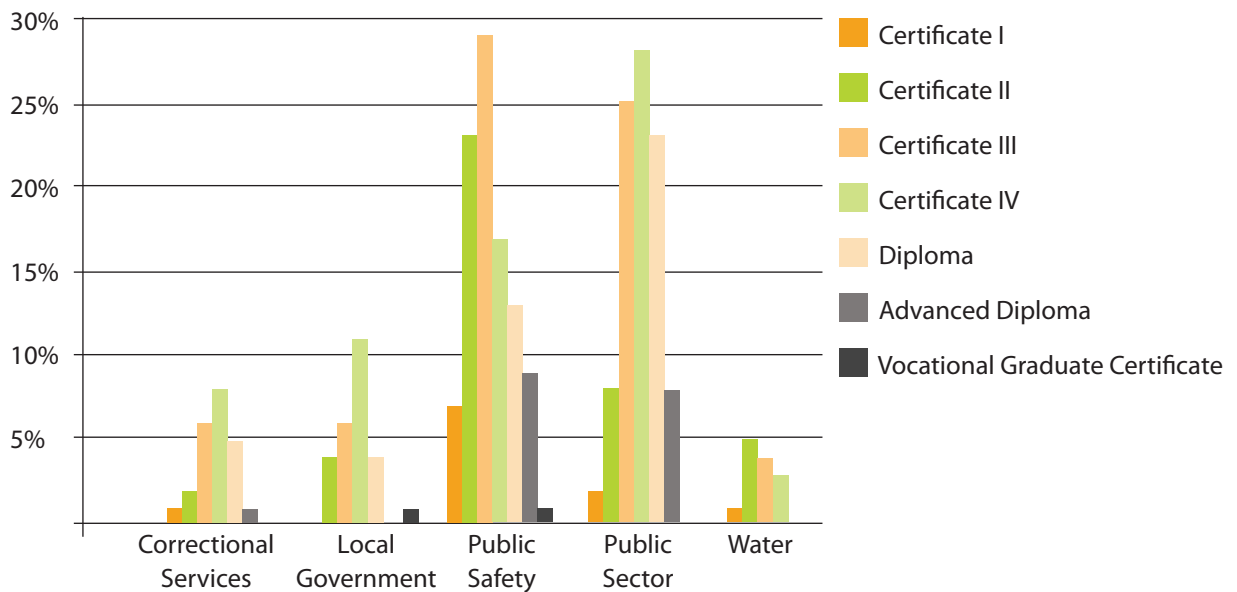
According to Corrections respondents, Certificate IV in Correctional Practice is clearly the most utilised Training Package qualification, followed by Certificate III and Diploma level.

For Local Government qualifications, Certificate II, III and IV appear to be a common articulated pathway, with Certificate IV being the qualification delivered by the majority of respondents' organisations. A significant number of learners utilise the Diploma of Local Government (Administration) or other area of specificity. A relatively small proportion of respondents deliver the Vocational Graduate Certificate in Local Government Management.

In relation to Public Safety qualifications, a small but significant number of respondents deliver the Certificate I in Public Safety, followed by a dramatic increase in the delivery of Certificate II and III. The delivery of Certificate IV to Advanced Diploma level shows a sharp decline and then very few utilising the Vocational Graduate Certificate choices.

Delivery of Public Sector Training Package qualifications peaks at Certificate IV with the Certificate III and Diploma level courses also popular. A significantly small number of respondents deliver Certificate I and II in this Training Package.

The Certificate II qualification is the most utilised of the Water qualifications with Certificate III also being widely delivered.



**Graph 2: Proportion of respondents delivering specific qualification levels (%)**

## Key findings 1

- The high proportion of responses from VET training providers is consistent with the general profile of survey recipients which were targeted according to their delivery of GSA Training Packages. The higher AQF qualifications such as Diploma, Advanced Diploma and the Vocational Graduate Certificate are more likely to be delivered by VET or Dual Sector (HEd) providers.
- The profile of the respondents in relation to their delivery of specific industry Training Packages is reflective of the size of that particular industry and their training requirements. For example, the Public Safety industry is GSA's largest in relation to total number of employees and potential engagement with the Public Safety Training Package, and so this is reflected by the proportion of respondents to this survey. The Water industry is a smaller industry by comparison and this is similarly reflected by the number of respondents who deliver the Water Training Package.
- The results represented in Graph 2 affirm GSA's wider intelligence on the training needs within these industries. This suggests that the overall profile of the respondents in regard to the delivery of GSA industry-linked qualifications reflects the size of that industry's workforce and potential training needs.
- The extent of delivery can be seen to peak at the Certificate IV level for Corrections, Local Government and the Public Sector qualifications, Certificate III level for Public Safety, and Certificate II for the Water Training Package. The Certificate III and Diploma level qualifications are the next most utilised qualifications for Corrections, Local Government and Public Sector, where Certificates II and IV are the most utilised for Public Safety and Certificates III and IV for Water. It is widely acknowledged that a degree qualification in a relevant area may be a prerequisite for many new employees entering the Public Sector and to specific positions within Local Government. Dependent upon the field of employment, an employee may be required to then

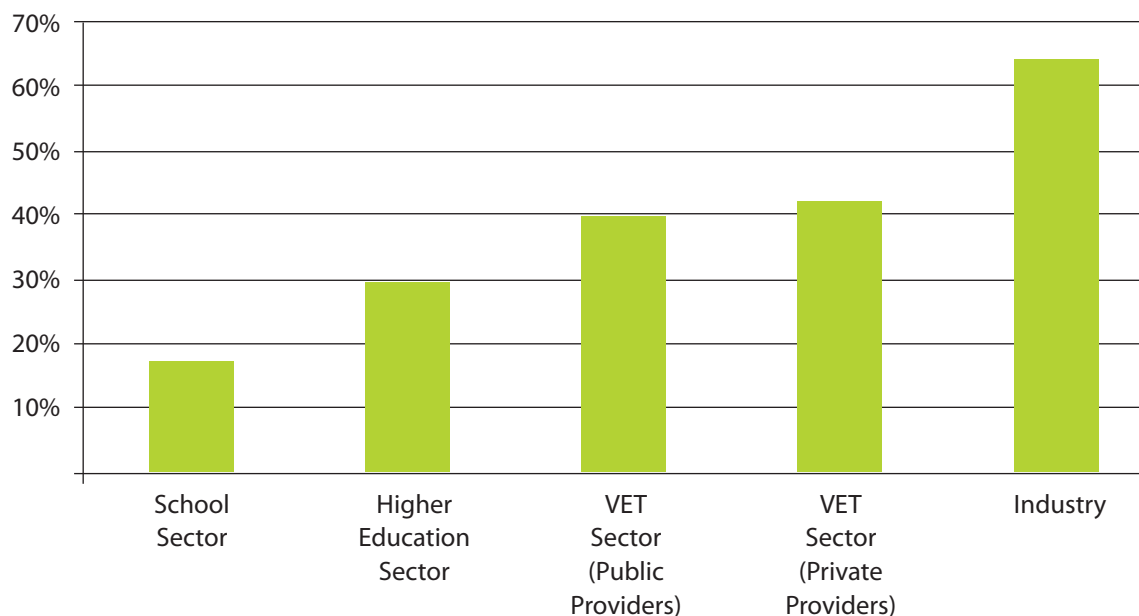
gain a Certificate IV qualification within an area of specificity. This may account for the dominance in delivery results for the Certificate IV qualification in these two sectors.

- The Public Safety Training Package has a clearly defined pathway from Certificate I to III which may indicate the predictability of career pathways within this package. For example, those enrolling in a Public Safety qualification could be specifying in an area such as Defence, Policing, Ambulance, Fire and Safety, Life Saving, Emergency Services etc, where there are a number of basic skill entry points which require a foundation qualification (i.e. Certificate I or II).
- The results also indicate that entry level and ongoing work activities for employees in the Public Sector may require a comparatively higher level of skills competency than in the other GSA industries. It seems that there is very little uptake of qualifications beyond Diploma for Corrections and Local Government and beyond Certificate IV for Water. This may indicate that there is another preferred pathway via HEd or other accredited courses. It may also indicate a 'disjoint' in the qualification pathway where the demand has not been addressed, or that the current qualification no longer meets the contextualised needs of the employer or industry.

## CURRENT COLLABORATION

Of the survey respondents, 71% state they currently collaborate on tertiary pathways with a school, or a VET or HEd institution. The remainder state they are not currently in collaborative partnerships.

Of those who responded affirmatively, 18.4% currently collaborate on tertiary pathways with the school sector, 30.6% with the HEd sector, 40.8% with the VET sector (public providers), 42.9% with the VET sector (private providers) and 63.3% with industry. The results comparisons are represented in Graph 3.



**Graph 3: Respondents current collaboration per sector (%)**

Of the 71% of respondents who state they are currently collaborating on tertiary pathways, approximately two-thirds identify specific institutions or public organisations (e.g. TAFE) with which they have some type of formal or informal arrangement. The institutions or organisations named by the respondents as being a current collaborative partner reveal a much higher proportion of HEd institutions than the data in Graph 3 suggests. HEd providers are named as the most prevalent pathway partner, followed by industry, private RTOs, enterprise RTOs and public RTOs.

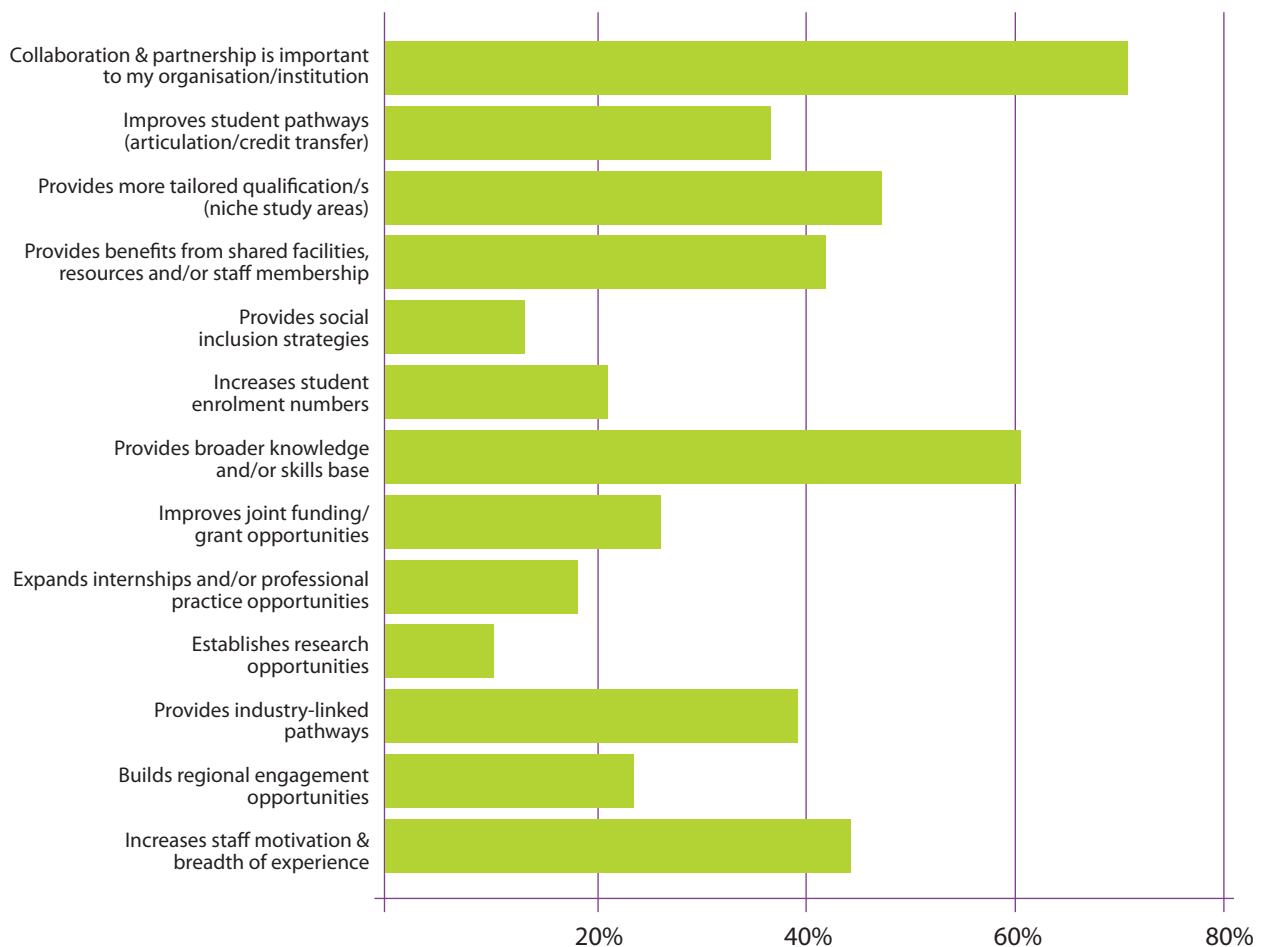
### Key findings 2

- In relation to the percentage of respondents who identify themselves as VET providers it is interesting to see the high proportion which indicates current collaboration with other VET sector providers (both public and private). This suggests there is significant inter-sectoral collaboration which may reflect the need for many VET providers, and typically enterprise RTOs, to provide a broader skills delivery platform when it is not feasible or viable to deliver it themselves.

- The fact that 63% of respondents indicate they currently collaborate with industry is not unexpected, as the majority of respondents are VET training providers and this group traditionally work closely with industry on their training needs. This result also reflects the significant proportion of enterprise RTOs involved in the delivery of GSA-linked industry qualifications.
- Nearly 31% of respondents indicate an involvement in current collaboration with the HEd sector which is a positive result, although there continues to be a significant deficit in collaborative networks in this space. This may also indicate a disjoint in fully articulated pathways into HEd degrees and vice versa.
- Identification of collaboration with the school sector is quite low at 18.4%; however, this may be related to the lack of engagement with GSA industry qualifications by students at the high school level compared with qualification pathways to the traditional trades, hospitality, and tourism, etc.
- Of the two-thirds of respondents who chose to name the institutions with which they are currently in collaboration, there is an overwhelming identification of HEd institutions. This seems to conflict with earlier results which suggest that approximately 31% (of 71% of respondents) have any collaboration with HEd but may merely reflect a satisfaction with the achievement of this partnership. Thirty-three respondents state the names of HEd institutions with which they have current collaboration.
- Collaboration with industry and private RTO partners was the next most prominent with public RTOs and schools showing fewer collaborative partnerships. This could be attributed to the fact that there was a significant number of public and enterprise RTOs in the profile of respondents and consequently they were less likely to indicate partnerships within their own sector.

## REASONS FOR CURRENT COLLABORATION

When asked to pinpoint one or more of the reasons for their current collaboration, 71% of respondents identify 'Collaboration and partnership is important to my organisation/institution' (73%) as their main imperative. Other important reasons are 'provides broader knowledge and/or skills base' (61.5%), 'provides more tailored qualifications (i.e. niche study areas)' (45.5%), 'increases staff motivation and breadth' (43.5%), 'provides benefits from shared facilities, resources and/or staff membership' (41.5%), 'provides industry-linked pathways' (38.8%) and 'improves student pathways' (37.8). Other responses are represented in Graph 4.



**Graph 4: Reasons for current collaboration (%)**

Other reasons stated for current collaboration are

- cost (presumably 'cost saving')
- 'provides an efficient way of delivering courses to volunteers' and allows an Enterprise RTO to partner with another institution when it does not have a specific qualification on scope'
- 'provides a context for practical work experience to provide evidence of competence'

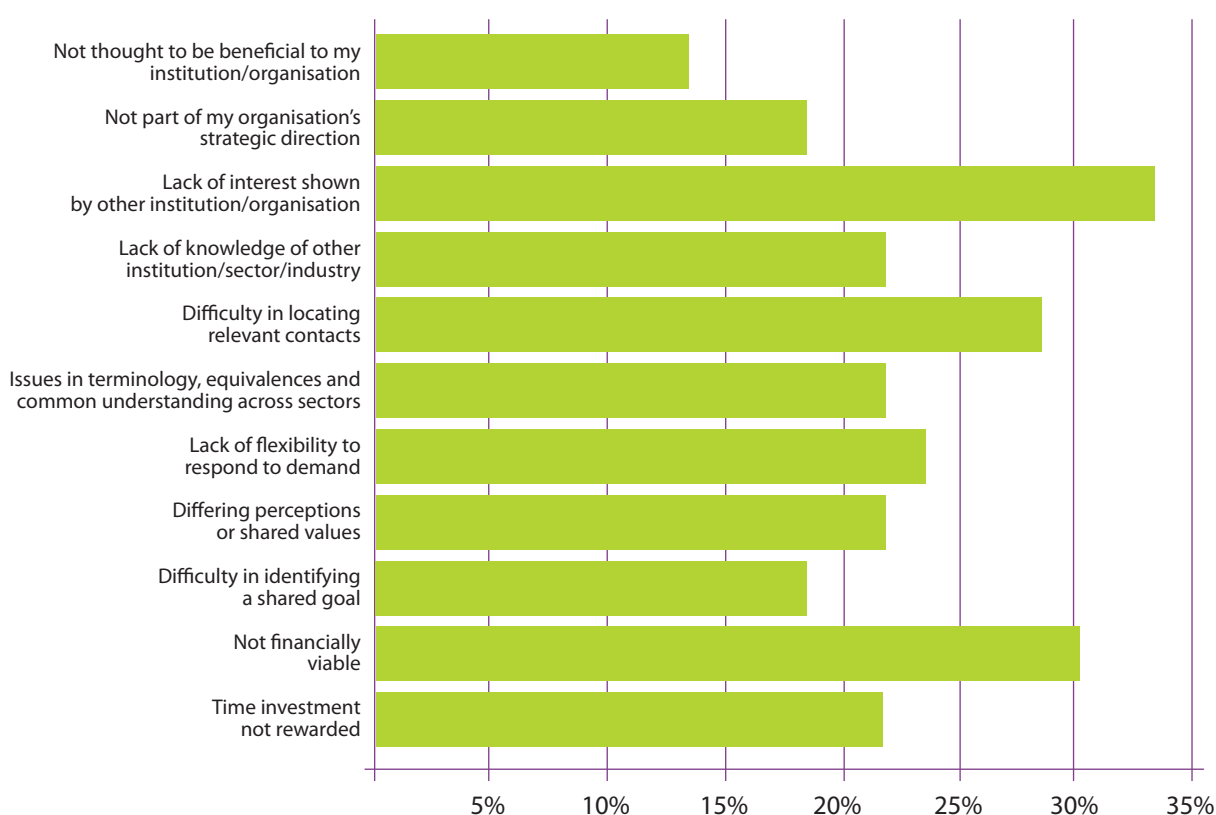
### Key findings 3

- Approximately 73% of respondents indicate one reason for their current collaboration as being “Collaboration and partnerships are important to my organisation”. This is noteworthy; there have been a number of significant drivers over recent years to highlight the need for educational organisations to consider the benefits of collaboration and partnerships. Both VET and HEd regulators have identified the lack of collaboration during institutional audits as a weakness and something that should be addressed by the institution at the highest level, perhaps as part of their mission statement. This common response is most likely a testament to those regulatory imperatives.
- Although the predominant reasons stated for current collaboration are linked to the improvement of the student experience or enhanced pathways, it is important to note that they also suggest collaboration “...Increases staff motivation and breadth of experience”. This acknowledgement of the benefits to teaching scholarship that these arrangements can bring is a positive tool for promoting future collaborative partnerships.
- The significant advantages of collaboration to the institution are indicated by the common responses of “provides benefits from shared facilities, resources etc.” and “increases student enrolment numbers”. These responses may indicate that those who are currently involved in established longer-term partnerships recognise the associated financial benefits of collaboration.

## BARRIERS TO COLLABORATION

When asked to identify any barriers to collaboration that they have experienced (past or current), the responses were varied and disparate. Even though a range of potential barriers are indicated in the survey as choices for multi-selection, each barrier receives less than a 35% response rate from the respondents.

In consideration of this, the main barrier identified is 'Lack of interest shown by other institution/organisation' (33.5%) followed closely by 'Not financially viable' (29.3%) and 'Difficulty in locating relevant contacts' (27.6%). Other barriers highlighted by the respondents are 'Lack of flexibility to respond to demand' (23.4%), 'Lack of knowledge of other institution/sector/industry' (22.4%), 'Differing perceptions or shared values' (22%) and 'Time investment not rewarded' (22%). The response comparison can be seen in Graph 5.



**Graph 5: Nominated barriers to collaboration (%)**

Other noteworthy feedback in relation to collaboration barriers include:

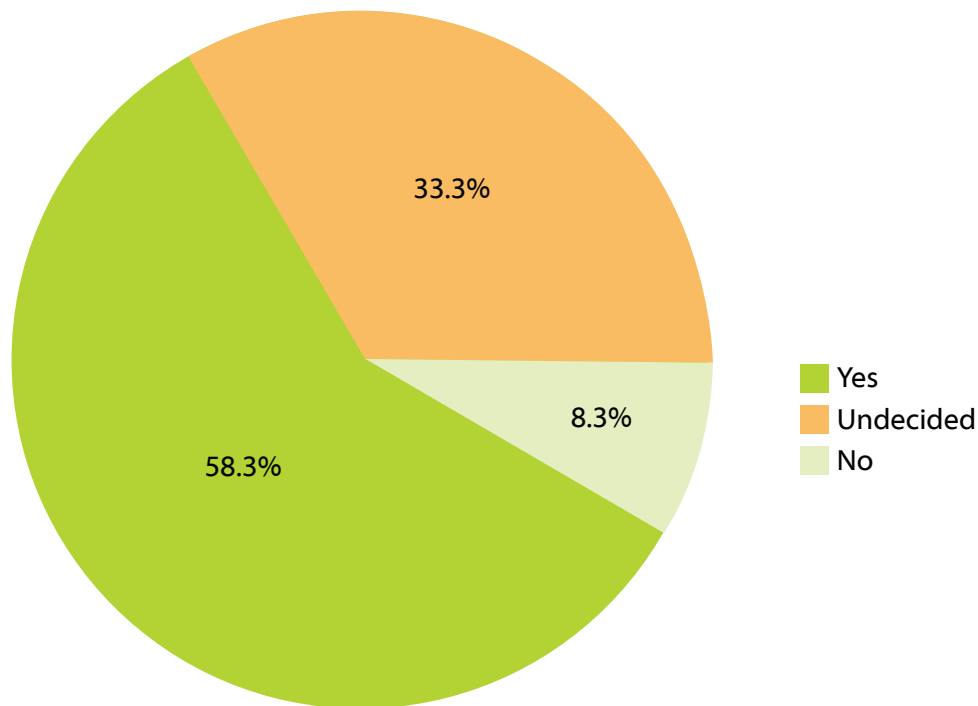
- "Literal interpretation of AQF by universities means that Dip and A/Dip graduates cannot step over Bachelor level awards to gain credit into post graduate awards even though their level of skill, knowledge and past experience should allow this. Universities also seem more willing to recognise non-AQF awards such as accredited courses from reputable institutions for credit into post graduate awards as they can be judged on merit rather than their AQF level"
- "Occasional withdrawals from the collaboration by participants due to work commitments"
- Collaboration "...requires careful contract management and project management"

## Key Findings 4

- Each of the individual barriers identified by respondents does not exceed 35% of all responses, which is indicative of a range of perspectives and experiences. It is evident that there are a number of barriers that impede collaboration; however, there is not necessarily a particular view or response shared by the majority of respondents.
- The barrier most commonly identified as one of importance to respondents is a 'lack of interest from other institutions'. Whether this lack of interest is perceived or real, it is seen as being a major inhibitor in advancing collaboration. Although many respondents previously identified that collaboration and partnerships were important to their organisations, this response infers that respondents are struggling with locating interested partners for collaboration.
- A significant number of respondents stated that they felt a barrier to collaboration is financial viability (29.3%). This perceived barrier would clearly deter institutions from initiating and progressing partnership development. Presumably this response is linked to another common response relating to an organisation's time investment not being rewarded. This response confirms that there is concern amongst organisations that the time invested in potential collaboration will not yield financial rewards. There is also an underlying concern that developing partnerships is complex and may take time away from commitment to other core business endeavours.
- The fact that respondents identify difficulty in locating relevant contacts for initiating collaborative networks confirms that there is a need for institutions to establish roles and systems to make engagement and partnership more accessible. There is often confusion and overlap in staffing roles within larger institutions which clearly hinders access and involvement in establishing relationships. HEd and public VET providers display inconsistencies in their approach to collaboration and subsequent agreements, and need to define appropriate procedures for this type of engagement.
- The results also highlight concerns around the lack of cross-sectoral understanding, shared terminology and regulatory practices which cause apprehension when considering entering into collaboration with another institution. While changes in current VET and HEd regulatory practices are attempting to address some of these concerns, there needs to be an acknowledgment between sectors of what each does well, and therefore, how each contributes to the articulation in learner pathways.

## INTEREST IN FUTURE COLLABORATION

When asked whether the respondent's organisation or institution was interested in establishing or developing further collaborative partnerships, 58.3% state 'Yes', 33.3% are 'Undecided' and a further 8.3% say they would not be interested (Graph 6).



**Graph 6: Interest in Collaborative partnerships (%)**

Approximately one-third of respondents identified a range of institutions or organisations with whom they would prefer to develop collaborative partnerships. Universities were the favoured potential partners, closely followed by VET providers.

### Key findings 5

- One-third of all respondents say they are 'undecided' as to whether they have an interest in establishing or developing further relationships, which highlights how significant the barriers are perceived to impede a successful outcome. Considering the importance of collaboration to most respondents' organisations, this reticence may also be attributed to the lack of advice and support and the perceived lack of understanding or knowledge of the potential partner institution.
- It is moderately noteworthy to see that 58.3% of respondents state they are interested in nurturing further collaborations. Despite this response not corroborating with previous results (relating to reasons behind current collaboration) where 73% state that collaboration is important to their organisation, it shows the majority of respondents maintain a positive outlook. This lower figure could also indicate that a number of respondents may feel they are not equipped to manage any partnerships beyond what they have already established

## SUGGESTED ROLE OF INDUSTRY SKILLS COUNCILS IN DEVELOPING AND/OR SUPPORTING COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Respondents to the survey supply a number of suggestions as to how an ISC such as GSA might support institutions and organisations in the ongoing development of collaborative partnerships to enhance student pathways. The main theme in respondents' comments is that they would like to see GSA perform a centralised knowledge management role. Some of the few suggestions are for GSA to provide information and names of institutions which are open to collaboration (a possible directory); and also to guide those exploring partnerships with advice on an approach to 'bridging the gap' between sectors. The respondents also specify that they need up-to-date information on industry pathways and would like GSA to provide informal networking opportunities.

### Key findings 6

- There is a common thread in the suggestions made around the potential role of ISCs such as GSA in relation to collaborative partnerships. There is support for GSA to continue its research role in relation to developing industry qualification pathways and supporting its stakeholders with guidelines and resources. Intelligence collected by GSA could include information on current and potential partnerships and provide networking opportunities for the purpose of linking potential partners.
- There has been a call for ISCs to act as brokers of partnerships but this an area of responsibility yet to be explored and defined.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Ascertain a better understanding of the reasons behind the uptake of specific qualifications through a more focused approach to intelligence gathering. A recent GSA research project has been conducted to examine the current uptake of the Local Government Training package. This project will be expanded over coming months to include a similar examination of other GSA industry training packages. The information collected from these projects is crucial to inform the development of articulated pathways.
  - Are the most-widely delivered qualification levels a response to industry demand?
  - Are there skills gaps or articulation disjoints in specific qualification pathways within VET, as well as from VET to HEEd?
2. Use GSA intelligence to establish the projected skills and training needs of GSA industries for the development of feasible and sustainable qualification pathways between VET and HEEd.
  - What are the projected national, state and regional skills shortages pertaining to GSA industries?
  - Which areas of specificity are experiencing growth and potential for up skilling?
3. Explore and identify alternative models of articulation which address industry needs, student demand and learning or work outcomes. Seek stakeholder input to identify potential models which may include a range of linear or integrated pathways. Collect a range of case studies of successful linear and integrated articulation models.
  - Where is there potential for cross-sectoral collaboration on integrated projects linked to GSA industry training needs?
  - Which enterprises will have demand for more highly qualified workers (AQF Levels 6+) in the next 5 to 10 years?
4. Many enterprise RTOs have identified the need to collaborate with training partners who can deliver skills needs that may be outside their scope. Consult enterprise RTOs on the formality of current articulation arrangements and also to determine the need for further collaborative partnerships around training delivery.
  - Are there gaps or disjoints in qualification pathways currently delivered by enterprise RTOs?
5. Explore the type and formality of current articulation arrangements between VET and HEEd providers and illicit information from stakeholders on a preferred model or approach.
  - What types of agreements are preferred by VET and universities?
  - What are the current issues around granting credit?
  - What are the possibilities of a shared enrolment process which includes an offer and/or guaranteed entry to a higher education institution?

6. Explore strategies to promote school-based pathways to GSA industry qualifications.
  - What are the reasons for the low uptake of GSA industry qualifications as a school-based pathway to VET or HEd?
  - Which GSA industry training lends itself more favourably to school-based pathway?
7. Engage with HEd representatives to raise awareness and understanding of GSA Training Package content and establish linkages with undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. Open discourse on potential articulation arrangements and establish interest in integrated models of articulation.
  - Who are the stakeholders in HEd who will be most interested in qualification linkages?
  - What is the potential for some HEd providers in establishing integrated pathways with VET and Industry?
8. Open dialogue with the ISC community in regard to a unified approach to providing information and advice to stakeholders in relation to cross-sectoral and industry partnerships. The advice may include guidelines and other support resources for establishing pathways, including information around funding opportunities.
  - What resources have been developed by individual ISCs and how can these be extended?
  - Are there specific resources that GSA could provide to address the articulation pathways of its own industries?
9. Create a list of GSA industry stakeholders with interest in developing collaborative partnerships. Promote collaboration through GSA-hosted networking events. Explore alternative methods of introduction such as blogs and online forums.
  - What types of event would be most attractive to potential partners?
  - What are the responsibilities and risks involved with networking events?

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