

**ACT Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug**

**Minimum Qualification Strategy**

**ACT Government Health Directorate**

Effective from 1 July 2011

[www.atoda.org.au](http://www.atoda.org.au)

This policy was developed through input of members of the ACT ATOD Executive Directors and Workers Groups; the ACT ATOD Minimum Qualification Strategy Development and Implementation Committee and allied stakeholders at the ACT ATOD Sector Consultation Workshop in May 2011. The National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction at Flinders University provided support to develop this policy.

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## **1. Background and Introduction**

In recent years, a number of Australian jurisdictions have introduced a minimum qualification strategy for their alcohol, tobacco and other drugs (ATOD) workforce. While it is acknowledged that there is an extensive depth of knowledge and skills within the Australian ATOD workforce, the recent move towards the introduction of minimum qualification strategies highlights the need for ATOD workers to have accredited credentials specific to their field. That is, that there is a consistent approach to learning and skills developed based on nationally recognised standards. In line with this, the ACT is implementing a minimum qualification strategy (MQS) for workers in services funded by Health Directorate.

The ACT ATOD MQS aims to ensure the development and maintenance of a competent and professional ATOD workforce in the ACT. It also aims to ensure that all ATOD workers in the ACT have a shared minimum knowledge and skill base.

The ACT ATOD MQS has evolved from an agreement between Health Directorate and community organisations funded by Health Directorate to provide ATOD services to introduce a minimum qualification for all workers in the ACT ATOD sector. It commenced in 2007 and is updated regularly in line with the national Community Services Training Package and other sector and policy developments.

This policy was developed through input of members of the ACT ATOD Executive Directors and Workers Groups; the ACT ATOD Minimum Qualification Strategy Development and Implementation Committee and allied stakeholders at the ACT ATOD Sector Consultation Workshop in May 2011. The National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction at Flinders University provided support to develop this policy.

The operation of the ACT ATOD MQS is overseen by the Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drug Association ACT (ATODA), which is responsible for:

- Overseeing the allocation of training places for the ACT ATOD MQS;
- Ensuring the maintenance of equity and transparency in relation to decision-making involving the operation of the ACT ATOD MQS; and
- Assisting in the development of sector wide policies in relation to the development, amendment and implementation of the ACT ATOD MQS.

This document provides a brief overview of the ACT ATOD MQS including eligibility criteria, the key components of the MQS, reporting, monitoring and evaluation requirements and policy implementation and review.

## **2. About the Minimum Qualification Strategy**

### **2.1 What is the minimum qualification?**

In order to attain the minimum qualification in the ACT, Health Directorate and community organisations funded by Health Directorate to provide ATOD services will require staff to successfully complete:

1. A First Aid qualification to a level 2 standard.

**AND**

2. A qualification in ATOD or addiction studies which is equivalent to, or above, the Australian Qualifications Framework Certificate IV in Alcohol and Other Drugs (CHC40408).

**OR**

3. A health, social, or behavioural science related tertiary qualification plus four “4 Core Competencies”:

CHCAOD402A	Work effectively in the AOD sector
CHCAOD406D	Work with clients who are intoxicated
CHCAOD408A	Assess needs of clients with AOD issues
CHCAOD411A	Provide interventions for clients with AOD issues

All training and assessment purchased and delivered through the MQS will have focus on working effectively with people experiencing comorbid ATOD and mental health issues and will include tobacco.

### **2.2 Who does the MQS apply to?**

The MQS applies to all workers employed by ATOD services operated by either the Health Directorate or community organisations funded by the Health Directorate to provide ATOD services who have contact with ATOD clients. Managers, supervisors, team leaders and coordinators will be required to attain the MQS if their work involves contact with ATOD clients.

### **2.3 What is the timeline to complete the MQS?**

Workers should either:

- Possess the specified minimum qualification; or
- Have an agreed plan and timeline with their agency to meet the minimum qualification by July 2013 or 3 years from commencement of employment.

### **2.4 The MQS is not an entry requirement**

The MQS is a *strategy* to ensure the development and maintenance of a competent and professional ATOD workforce in the ACT. In this policy, the MQS is not an entry requirement for employment.

### **2.5 Recognition of Prior Learning**

Processes to undertake recognition of prior learning will be articulated in each ACT ATOD MQS package.

### 3. Worker subsidies, access, priority and support through the MQS

The Health Directorate provides funding to support the development and implementation of the MQS through ATODA (see Attachment 2 for further information). The following table outlines what priority different workers have to access the subsidies and support provided through the MQS.

Priority	Workers	Subsidies and support available through the MQS
One	<p>Workers from community organisations funded by Health Directorate to provide ATOD services, in the following priority:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Workers who are involved in direct provision of ATOD treatment (e.g. counsellors, case managers, outreach workers)</li> <li>2 Other workers with client contact (e.g. administrators, receptionists, intake and assessment officers)</li> <li>3 Workers who have a key role in managing ATOD workers and services (e.g. supervisors, managers, coordinators)</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to subsidised places in training and assessment offered each year through the MQS.</li> <li>• Access to subsidised places in up to, 2 First Aid courses offered each year through the MQS.</li> <li>• Access to subsidised services from the National Drug Sector Information Services (Alcohol and other Drug Council of Australia) (optional).</li> <li>• Leadership, support, coordination and monitoring from ATODA.</li> </ul>
Two	<p>Workers from the Alcohol and Drug Program, Health Directorate, in the following priority:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Workers who are involved in direct provision of ATOD treatment (e.g. counsellors, case managers, outreach workers)</li> <li>2 Other workers with client contact (e.g. administrators, receptionists, intake and assessment officers)</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equitable access to places in training and assessment offered each year through the MQS on a fee for service basis.</li> <li>• Equitable access to places in up to, 2 First Aid courses offered each year through the MQS a fee for service basis.</li> <li>• Access to services from the National Drug Sector Information Services (Alcohol and other Drug Council of Australia) (optional) on a fee for service basis.</li> </ul>

	<p>3 Workers who have a key role in managing ATOD workers and services (e.g. supervisors, managers, coordinators).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If there are unused subsidised places for workers from community organisations funded by Health Directorate to provide ATOD services they can be made available to Health Directorate's ATOD service.</li> <li>• Leadership, support, coordination and monitoring from ATODA.</li> </ul>
Three	<p>Non-government and government workers from allied sectors (such as mental health, youth, corrections, etc) are encouraged to engage in the opportunities provided through the MQS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to places in training and assessment offered each year through the MQS on a negotiated fee for service basis. Please note that partial subsidies may be negotiated.</li> <li>• Access to places in up to, 2 First Aid courses offered each year through the MQS a negotiated fee for service basis. Please note that partial subsidies may be negotiated.</li> <li>• Access to services from the National Drug Sector Information Services (Alcohol and other Drug Council of Australia) (optional) on a fee for service basis. Please note that partial subsidies may be negotiated.</li> <li>• Leadership, support, coordination and monitoring from ATODA.</li> </ul>

## **4. Agencies' roles in supporting the implementation of the MQS**

### **4.1 Timelines and plans to attain the minimum qualification**

#### Timelines

All workers (as described in 2.2) should either possess the minimum qualification or have an agreed timeline and plan to attain the minimum qualification within three years.

For example, from 1 July 2010 all current workers who do not possess the minimum qualification will be required to successfully complete it by 30 June 2013.

#### Plans

- *New workers:* All agencies will be required to develop an agreed plan with each new worker to attain the minimum qualification within 3 years of commencement.
- *Existing workers:* All agencies will be required to develop an agreed plan with each existing worker to attain the minimum qualification by 30 June 2013 or 3 years from employment. Existing workers may choose not to develop and agreed plan with their agency to attain the minimum qualification. However; the decision not to do so would make them ineligible to apply for a transfer to a more senior ATOD workers role in their organisation.

These plans should to be in writing and signed by the worker and their employer and incorporated, where relevant, with individual worker's existing professional development plan.

Annually, each Chief Executive / Executive Director of all ATOD services funded by Health Directorate will be required to complete a template provided by Health Directorate to indicate the progress of workers towards attaining the MQS. This will support planning, monitoring and development of the ACT ATOD MQS.

### **4.2 First Aid**

A current First Aid qualification to a level 2 standard is an essential requirement of the minimum qualification.

All workers who have contact with ATOD clients are required to have a current First Aid qualification to a level 2 standard.

It is the responsibility of Health Directorate and community organisations funded by Health Directorate to provide ATOD services to ensure their employees who have contact with ATOD clients have a current First Aid qualification to a level 2 standard.

Some subsidies and support are provided to achieve this, see section 3 for further information.

### **4.3 Worker payment to participate in the MQS and backfill**

As part of agencies' commitment to a continuous learning culture, the Health Directorate expects:

- That subsidies for training and assessment places through the MQS will be available to agencies who pay their workers to participate; and
- Backfill costs where incurred by ATOD services for workers participating in the MQS to be met from within ATOD services operational budgets.

## **5. Governance of the ACT ATOD MQS**

### **5.1 Governance and Decision-Making**

The following governance arrangements have been established to oversee the ACT ATOD MQS.

The Health Directorate funds the ATODA to conduct the ACT ATOD MQS with the ATOD sector. The Health Directorate makes the final decisions relating to the operation of the ACT ATOD MQS. These decisions are based on advice from the ACT ATOD MQS Implementation and Development Committee:

- Which has a public terms of reference, which includes ensuring training and assessment opportunities are equitably distributed across the sector;
- Has its membership open to all interested individuals and services from Health Directorate funded ATOD services; and
- Is provided with secretariat and project management support by ATODA.

An information package regarding the ACT ATOD MQS will be:

- Developed every six months by ATODA with support from the ACT ATOD MQS Implementation and Development Committee, which will describe what funded training and assessment opportunities are available; how workers and agencies can access the funds available;
- Provided to Health Directorate and Health Directorate funded ATOD services; and
- Then distributed to the ACT ATOD and allied sector.

### **5.4 Monitoring, evaluation and review**

The MQS will be evaluated annually by ATODA with stakeholders by using a combination of quantitative data (e.g. number of successful completions) and qualitative data (e.g. seeking stakeholder perspectives both at the individual and agency level).

This policy:

- Will come into effect on 1 July 2011;
- Document will be provided to all Health Directorate funded ATOD services (government and non-government) as part of the continued implementation of the ACT ATOD MQS.
- Is accessible from [www.atoda.org.au](http://www.atoda.org.au)
- Will be reviewed throughout 2011/12 in line with agreements to review the qualification strategies for the ACT ATOD sector.

## **Attachment 1: Funding provided by the Health Directorate to support the implementation and development of the MQS**

ATODA is funded by the Health Directorate to take leadership of, including developing, implementing and monitoring, the ACT ATOD MQS. This includes:

- Providing leadership, support, coordination and monitoring;
- Identifying and purchasing training and assessment opportunities (including recognition of prior learning) to support workers to attain the MQS;
- Purchasing and providing up to two First Aid courses for the sector per annum; and
- Purchasing and coordinating participating worker membership to the National Drug Sector Information Services at the Alcohol and other Drug Council of Australia (ADCA) (this is optional for participating workers).

The Health Directorate will annually fund ATODA \$84,870 (GST exclusive) to conduct the ACT ATOD MQS with the sector. Of this, approximately \$64,000 of the available funding will be allocated annually to develop and implement the MQS and other workforce development opportunities for the sector. Commencing 1 July 2010 and indexed annually.