

# Higher Education Diploma Supplements Among APEC Member Economies

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The original conception and overall design of this study was largely the work of the APEC Human Resources Development Working Group, and we thank the members of the working group and the project's steering committee for their support and advice. In particular, we thank Mr Zaw Naing Wynn for the advice and assistance he generously provided throughout the survey period.

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## Glossary

The following terms, used extensively in this report, might be interpreted differently in different contexts. This glossary describes the meanings associated with their use in this document. Where the usage is the same as that specified in the European Diploma Supplement (EDS) guidelines<sup>1</sup>, the explicit definition is based on that published in the EDS glossary (marked with \*).

**ASSESSMENT** (of individual students)\* – the actual testing of a student’s ability and skills within a course. Assessment may occur within units or be undertaken at the level of the course.

**ASSESSMENT METHODS** – the types of tasks and activities that students engage in and are assessed upon (e.g. examinations; assignments or projects; participation; presentation)

**AWARD\*** – used synonymously with qualification.

**COURSE** – the suite of studies that students complete in order to qualify for an award. This may be used synonymously with **PROGRAM**.

**DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENT** – an explanatory document issued to graduates and containing information about their award. The format and inclusions are likely to vary between different education systems and, often, between institutions. Typically, diploma supplements include a description of the award, the awarding institution, and the relevant education system. They also typically include information about the graduate’s achievements toward the particular award.

**DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENT MODEL** – an approach to the purpose, construction, and implementation of diploma supplements. Models typically take the form of guidelines.

**GRADE** – a measurement of an individuals’ level of achievement in an assessment. Grades may be allocated for individual assessment tasks, for completed units of study, or for the course overall.

**GRADUATE** – an individual who has completed all the requirements for an award, as determined by the awarding institution.

**QUALIFICATION\*** – any degree, diploma or other certificate issued by a competent authority attesting the successful completion of a higher education programme. Also termed as any higher education award given for the successful completion of a programme of learning; a generic term that refers to the wide variety of higher education qualifications at different levels and across different countries.

**TESTAMUR** – formal document that denotes the award and identifies the recipient. This may be used synonymously with **DEGREE CERTIFICATE**.

**TRANSCRIPT\*** – an official record or breakdown of a student’s progress and achievements. A document showing a student’s history of enrolment with the particular institution. Many credit-based education systems employ detailed transcripts that show the credits and grades for units undertaken.

**UNIT** – a part of a course that is normally self-contained and assessed. Complete courses are normally composed of multiple units. This may be used synonymously with **SUBJECT**.

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<sup>1</sup> *Outline Structure of the Diploma Supplement*, European Commission (Education & Training). Accessed 17 Sept 2010 [http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc1239\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc1239_en.htm)

## Abbreviations

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| <b>AHEGS</b> | Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement |
| <b>APEC</b>  | Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation                |
| <b>CV</b>    | <i>curriculum vitae</i>                          |
| <b>EDS</b>   | European Diploma Supplement                      |
| <b>HRDWG</b> | Human Resources Development Working Group        |
| <b>ME</b>    | Member Economy                                   |
| <b>TEQS</b>  | Tertiary Education Qualification Statement       |

## Executive summary

Around the world, higher education graduates are increasingly mobile. Students travel abroad for their university study, and then look for recognition of their qualifications at home or elsewhere. Graduating domestic students seek further study or work in other systems or economies. And economies recognise the importance of a mobile and more global work force. It is in this context that many institutions and governments are committing resources to the international recognition of qualifications and the general support of graduate mobility.

The present project was commissioned by the Human Resources Development Working Group (HRDWG) of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum. The project examined the nature and extent of diploma supplement developments in the APEC member economies (MEs). In addition, the project explored the possibilities for consensus around common elements and guiding principles for diploma supplements, and sought to identify any related capacity-building needs of MEs.

This report presents the findings of a July 2010 scoping study into the extent of diploma supplement developments across the APEC economies. The survey data collected from 16 MEs was supplemented by discussions among delegates at an October 2010 APEC event, *Conference on Higher Education Diploma Supplements*.

There was widespread support among survey respondents and conference delegates for APEC assistance in the promotion of diploma supplements. In particular, there was endorsement for the development of a voluntary, non-binding template and associated principles – an ‘APEC Diploma Supplement Model’.

The survey provided insights into diploma supplement developments among APEC MEs – in terms of potential benefits, current developments, and identified issues. As relevant contextual information, the survey also investigated existing practices in issuing other graduate documentation, including academic transcripts. The following list summarises the key survey findings:

### **Benefits associated with diploma supplements in APEC member economies**

- All respondents ascribed multiple, potential benefits to diploma supplements.
- Graduates benefit from greater clarity about their particular qualifications.
- Institutions, and systems, may benefit through the support of articulation arrangements.
- Introduction of diploma supplements can drive institutional improvement.
- Diploma supplements create impetus to greater system-wide transparency and quality assurance.
- Increased global mobility, exchange and awareness are seen as positive influences on MEs.

### **Current diploma supplement developments in APEC member economies**

- Australia, New Zealand and Russia each have a specified model for diploma supplements.
- US higher education institutions may elect to issue diploma supplements on request.
- Policies for diploma supplements are being considered in Japan and Indonesia.
- Universities in Hong Kong, China are taking institution-specific approaches.
- The Lisbon Convention has initiated diploma supplement developments in some APEC MEs.

### **Character of testamurs and transcripts**

- It is usual for institutions to issue two distinct documents – a testamur and an academic transcript.
- Testamurs are ceremonial documents while transcripts are enrolment histories.
- Testamurs and transcripts rarely describe the higher education system.
- Some APEC MEs have system-wide requirements for documentation.
- Individual institutions have responsibility for issuing testamurs and transcripts.

- All graduates receive a testamur, usually in association with a graduation event.
- Whether automatically or upon request, most graduates receive a transcript.
- There can be significant lag time between award completion and the issue of documents.

#### **Issues associated with diploma supplement implementation**

- There remains a need to convince institutions of the value of additional documentation.
- There is a close intersection between diploma supplements and qualifications frameworks.
- The timing of issue of the diploma supplement is an important consideration.

#### **The possibilities for a voluntary, non-binding APEC model**

- A model may help convince institutions in APEC MEs of the value and relevance of diploma supplements.
- Consistency in approach and presentation is encouraged through a common model.
- A model can provide a practical guide to assist implementation.

#### **Specific capacity building needs of APEC MEs**

- The development of appropriate policies is critical to the success of diploma supplement implementation. Several MEs cited ‘policy expertise’ as an area in which they would benefit from further, specific assistance.
- Student records may be held in a variety of locations across an institution. The generation and collection of this information therefore presents a challenge for student administration systems, as noted by MEs’ responses.
- A related challenge for institutions is in developing the technology necessary to efficiently and accurately generate diploma supplements for their graduates.

## **DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This project has identified clear and defined benefits from diploma supplements, both for domestic education systems and for cross border mobility. There are benefits for graduates, institutions and employers. The key to these benefits is in ensuring that diploma supplements provide meaningful information, and that this information is presented in a form that is widely recognised and trusted. To this end, models such as the APEC DS Model initiated in this project serve an important coordinating function.

A relatively small proportion of institutions across the APEC MEs currently issue diploma supplements, although this number is growing and there is widening interest. Australia and New Zealand have each taken collaborative approaches within their respective higher education systems to develop economy-specific models appropriate to their contexts. A similar, collaborative approach among APEC MEs could generate a broad, international ‘APEC’ model of direct relevance to individual institutions, and informative for the development of more specific models within MEs.

Based on international experience in developing and implementing diploma supplements, the following **principles** should underpin the development and implementation of diploma supplements among APEC MEs:

#### *The potential benefits for graduates are considered paramount*

While acknowledging a role for diploma supplements in assisting the work of governments and accrediting bodies, the primary consideration in the development of diploma supplements should be the potential benefits for graduates.

#### *A staged approach to implementation is desirable*

APEC and participating APEC MEs should encourage a staged approach to implementation, perhaps supporting a small number of high profile institutions to implement diploma supplements, rather than requiring or expecting full participation at the outset.

#### *The APEC DS Model should complement and support local models*

The proposal is to develop a voluntary and non-binding APEC DS Model. This model can be used to assist in the development of local, more specific models and implementation strategies.

In the absence of a model at the level of sector or ME, individual institutions should be encouraged to adopt the APEC DS Model as a reference for the development of their diploma supplements.

*Involving institutions in the development of diploma supplement initiatives is key to effective implementation*

Within MEs, institutional representatives should be consulted in the development of any economy-specific diploma supplement model or implementation strategy. Institutions need to ‘own’ the economy-specific diploma supplement and perceive the benefits.

There is widespread support from APEC MEs for the development of a voluntary and non-binding APEC DS Model. In particular, the delegates at the October 2010 Conference in Canberra expressed strong interest in building on existing momentum, both in terms of further development of the model and in supporting MEs to introduce and implement diploma supplements within their education systems.

APEC, by its very nature, is well-placed to support MEs in the development and implementation of diploma supplements. Through its ME networks and access to expertise, APEC can facilitate the sharing of information, and support capacity-building as appropriate. It is acknowledged that the needs of MEs differ, and that the approaches taken to diploma supplement implementation are likely to differ also. Despite this, a clear message from this project has been that an ongoing role for APEC is sought by a large number of MEs.

Having regard to the clearly expressed support by several APEC economies for the development of an APEC DS Model, the feasibility of consensus around common elements and guiding principles for a model, and the identified capacity-building needs of MEs to develop and implement economy-specific diploma supplements, the following recommendations are made:

**Recommendation 1**

That there be a further APEC project to produce an APEC DS Model, based on the draft model presented in this report. In developing the Model, the project should:

- a. undertake consultation with all APEC MEs;
- b. be coordinated by a committee of interested APEC MEs;
- c. develop an example (‘mock-up’) DS document based on the draft APEC DS Model;
- d. circulate the draft APEC DS Model, including the guiding principles and the example DS document, as the basis for feedback and consultation; and
- e. utilise relevant APEC communication tools to promote and facilitate discussion (e.g. APEC HRD wiki).

**Recommendation 2**

That the capacity building needs of MEs to support domestic adaptation and adoption of the APEC DS Model be a priority for the APEC HRDWG. This capacity building should:

- a. form part of the project proposed in Recommendation 1 (above) or a subsequent project;
- b. be delivered by means of in-economy workshops to raise awareness, support adaptation to domestic requirements, and identify implementation issues; and
- c. have regard to the principles for diploma supplement development and implementation stated above.

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# 1. Introduction

A priority for higher education, internationally, is to improve the transparency and recognition of awards. Recognising the increasing mobility of higher education graduates, universities and higher education systems around the world are reviewing the documentation available to graduates in support of their qualifications. There is a growing need for improved formal documentation.

Two forms of graduate documentation are commonly provided, internationally: ‘testamurs’ (or ‘award certificates’), and ‘transcripts’. A typical testamur names the individual as the holder of a particular qualification but says little more about the nature of that qualification, nor about the specific achievements of the graduate. It is quite common, therefore, for institutions to provide further information in the form of a transcript, listing the units of study completed and the grades achieved. Beyond this listing, however, transcripts often provide little further insight into the overall character of an award, the awarding institution, or the associated higher education sector or system.

There is no single approach taken to either testamurs or transcripts. In both cases, the documents issued by different institutions differ in their purposes, inclusions, and implementation. The differences between institutions within a higher education system or sector can be as great as those between institutions in different economies.

In recent years, a third type of document has emerged. ‘Diploma supplements’ go by different names in different parts of the world. They share a common purpose, however – to provide enhanced information about the nature of the award a graduate has been granted, and in a form that is widely recognised and readily interpreted.

Diploma supplements are widely associated with developments in Europe. However, the commitment to diploma supplements, and to qualification recognition and graduate mobility more broadly, extends well beyond Europe and the Bologna Process. For example, the Asia-Pacific Recognition Convention<sup>2</sup>, first adopted in 1983, promotes information exchange and the development of associated documents in support of graduate mobility, and countries outside Europe, including Australia and New Zealand, are signatories to the 1997 Lisbon Recognition Convention which explicitly requires the promotion of diploma supplements<sup>3</sup>. Diploma supplement developments continue to be the subject of discussion internationally, including through the recent efforts of a UNESCO working party revising the Asia-Pacific Recognition Convention<sup>4</sup>.

The present project was commissioned by the Human Resources Development Working Group (HRDWG) of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum. The project examines the nature and extent of diploma supplement developments in the APEC member economies (MEs). In addition, the project explores the possibilities for consensus around common elements and guiding principles, and seeks to identify any related capacity-building needs of MEs.

This report presents the findings of a July 2010 scoping study into diploma supplement developments across the APEC economies. Specifically, the report presents: background information on the European origins of diploma supplements (Section 2); a summary of the current approaches to graduate documentation among APEC MEs (Section 3.1); the perceptions of key education personnel regarding the potential of diploma supplements (Section 3.2); contextual information regarding curriculum design and assessment (Section 3.3); and the capacity building needs of MEs (Section 3.4).

The study was undertaken by an independent consultancy team led by the Centre for the Study of Higher Education, The University of Melbourne. The findings presented in this report draw

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<sup>2</sup> *Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific (1983)*, UNESCO. Accessed 11 July, 2010 at:

[www.unesco.org/education/studyingabroad/tools/conventions\\_apa\\_cover.shtml](http://www.unesco.org/education/studyingabroad/tools/conventions_apa_cover.shtml)

<sup>3</sup> *The Lisbon Recognition Convention*, Council of Europe. Accessed 6 August, 2010 at: [www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/recognition/lrc\\_EN.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/recognition/lrc_EN.asp)

<sup>4</sup> Personal communication, Mr Zaw Naing Wynn, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Australian Government, 31 August 2010.

extensively on information provided by members of the HRDWG Education Network (EDNET). The report includes, as Appendix 3, a draft model for a possible voluntary, non-binding Asia Pacific diploma supplement. This draft was prepared to support the second phase on the project, consultation with EDNET members through the APEC workshop *Higher Education Diploma Supplements in APEC Member Economies*, to be held October 2010 in Canberra. The draft was subsequently revised and extended, on the basis of preliminary discussions.

## 2. Background

The European Diploma Supplement (EDS), developed through collaboration by European nations, is by far the most important recent innovation of its type. Diploma supplements provide additional, ‘third type’ documentation to higher education graduates for the purpose of enhancing the information available to other educational destinations and to prospective employers. This enhanced documentation is in a form that supports international recognition of qualifications, facilitating interpretation of the aims and content of particular awards and the achievements of graduates.

Over the past two decades, use of the EDS has spread widely throughout Europe and beyond. Many European countries have made significant progress in introduction of diploma supplements and the momentum is set to continue. At recent Ministerial meetings on the Bologna Process held in Bucharest and Vienna, European countries have confirmed their commitment that each graduate in their respective countries should receive a diploma supplement – automatically, without charge, and in a major European language. Outside Europe there has also been considerable interest and activity. Australia, for example, is in the process of introducing its own version of a diploma supplement, known as the *Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement*<sup>5</sup>. In New Zealand, the *Tertiary Education Qualifications Statement* is being introduced, following a period of economy-wide consultation and the publication of guidelines for implementation<sup>6</sup>.

### The European Diploma Supplement

The EDS consists of documentation issued to higher education graduates with the aim of improving international transparency and facilitating international recognition of higher education qualifications. The document is provided by higher education institutions and may be self-contained or attached to other documentation, such as the ‘testamur’, ‘diploma’ or ‘degree certificate’. Following a standardised format, the EDS presents information on the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies that were successfully completed by the individual named on the qualification. It thus promotes transparency about higher education qualifications and enables employers and universities offering post graduate study an additional mechanism to make fair and informed judgements about the standing and content of particular qualifications. The EDS is designed as an aid to recognition, but it is not a *curriculum vitae* or a substitute for an original testamur.

European higher education institutions produce diploma supplements according to templates agreed to by their national ministries and/or higher education associations. The original EDS template<sup>7</sup> developed jointly by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES specified eight sections of information, identifying the holder of the qualifications, the name of the qualification, its level and function, the content and the results gained, certification of the supplement, details of the national higher education system of the country of issue, and other relevant information.

Further detail on the origin and evolution of the EDS is provided in Appendix 1.

For graduates, the EDS offers:

- Documentation that is accessible and easily comparable abroad;
- A precise description of the qualification, including the key learning objectives; and
- An objective description of the student’s achievements and competencies.

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<sup>5</sup> *Guidelines for the Presentation of the Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement* (May 2010). Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Australian Government. Accessed 15 Sept 2010 [www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Programs/Quality/QualityAssurance/Pages/GraduationStatement.aspx](http://www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Programs/Quality/QualityAssurance/Pages/GraduationStatement.aspx)

<sup>6</sup> *Guidelines for Implementing a Tertiary Qualifications Statement for New Zealand*, (2009). New Zealand Qualifications Authority, Wellington.

<sup>7</sup> *Outline Structure of the Diploma Supplement*, European Commission (Education & Training). Accessed 17 Sept 2010 [http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc1239\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc1239_en.htm)

A key outcome is that diploma supplements facilitate employability and help foster the international mobility of graduates and professional personnel.

For higher education institutions, the main benefits of the EDS are: the facilitation of academic and professional recognition through the increased transparency of qualifications; the assistance with making informed judgements about qualifications completed in other educational contexts; the improved employability of their graduates, both nationally and internationally; and the reduced time spent addressing external enquiries about the nature and status of their awards.

European nations have varied in their enthusiasm and support for the EDS and in the level and type of support provided to institutions. The United Kingdom, for example, began the implementation process relatively late but has since allocated Government resources to a special Higher Education Europe Unit located in the secretariat of Universities UK. This unit produced an implementation guide for institutions and, with other institutions, developed both model diploma supplements and agreed statements about the characteristics of the higher education systems of each of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Diploma Supplement, Europe Unit. Accessed 17 Sept 2010  
[www.europeunit.ac.uk/eu\\_policy\\_\\_\\_education/diploma\\_supplement.cfm](http://www.europeunit.ac.uk/eu_policy___education/diploma_supplement.cfm)

### 3. Methods and findings

The project has sought to determine the current level of interest in the introduction of diploma supplements among APEC MEs, and the related implementation needs of these economies, including a possible role for a voluntary, non-binding Asia-Pacific diploma supplement template and guiding principles.

In preparing this paper, the project team has drawn on the following sources of information:

**EDNET contacts**, providing insights from the government and/or administrative level in each ME. As a project initiated by the APEC HRDWG, the EDNET representatives of the APEC MEs played a central role and their responses to the scoping study survey are central to the information presented in this report.

**Higher education research colleagues** in APEC MEs, drawing on their knowledge of their various economies' systems and supplementing the information provided by the EDNET respondents.

**Publicly available documents**, through a web-based search for information on diploma supplement initiatives in APEC MEs.

#### Questionnaire-based survey

Following a preliminary web search for information and documentation, a questionnaire-based survey of MEs was undertaken. The questionnaire was sent to the EDNET contacts in each ME, and to identified higher education researchers and scholars known to the project team.

The same questionnaire was used for the two groups, with the exception that two additional questions were included for the EDNET group. These related to: 1) whether or not they thought the development of a template and guiding principles for an Asia-Pacific diploma supplement would be beneficial; and 2) what form of capacity building assistance, if any, their ME would find of most benefit.

The questionnaire was distributed as an email attachment in June 2010, with an invitation to complete the survey in collaboration with colleagues, and to return it directly to the project team.

Responses were received from the following 16 member economies:

Australia; Brunei Darussalam; Canada; Hong Kong, China<sup>+</sup>; Indonesia; Japan; Korea; Malaysia\*; Mexico; New Zealand; Peru; The Philippines; Russia\*; Chinese Taipei; Thailand; The United States.

<sup>+</sup>individual responses were received from each of eight publicly-funded higher education institutions.

\*response received from higher education research contact only.

The findings from the study are presented in the following four sections.

#### **3.1 Documents currently issued to graduates from higher education**

Comparing the types of information included in testamurs, transcripts and diploma supplements, and the processes for issuing such documents.

#### **3.2 Perspectives on the introduction of diploma supplements**

Describing the potential benefits of diploma supplements to different APEC MEs, according to the perspectives of survey respondents. Possible issues associated with implementation are also discussed. EDNET member support for the development of an appropriate template and guiding principles is presented.

#### **3.3 Contextual factors for planning a broadly relevant template**

Summary background information is presented on: the various influences on curriculum design; approaches to the assessment and reporting of student achievement; and the inter-institutional movement of students.

#### **3.4 Capacity building needs of APEC MEs toward diploma supplement implementation**

Discussion of the areas in which MEs identified the need to build capacity.

### 3.1 Documents currently issued to graduates from higher education

Diploma supplements are widely associated with recent developments in Europe, yet the ‘Bologna’ model and related initiatives are set in the very specific context of higher education in Europe. Some of the drivers for development of the European diploma supplement standards simply do not apply in many APEC MEs. This project, therefore, explored both the degree to which diploma supplement initiatives were under way across the APEC economies and, as important context, the other approaches taken to documentation for graduates.

#### DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENTS

Respondents from four MEs cited examples of diploma supplements issued in their higher education systems or sectors. Australia and New Zealand have developed economy-specific approaches, while the EDS standard is the model used by some institutions in Russia and, most likely, in the US. In addition, diploma supplements are referenced in some recent policy developments in Japan, and have been the subject of discussion for several years in Indonesia. At least two of the publicly-funded higher education institutions in Hong Kong, China also have plans to introduce diploma supplements. Respondents from the remaining nine participating MEs reported that there was either no current policy development (Canada; Korea; The Philippines; Chinese Taipei; Thailand) or that they were unaware of any at the time of the survey (Brunei Darussalam; Malaysia; Mexico; Peru).

It may be that there are additional initiatives under way in MEs, beyond those reported above, including among MEs not represented among the survey responses.

#### **Australia, New Zealand and Russia each have a specified model for diploma supplements**

The only MEs to report having an established model for issuing diploma supplements were Australia, New Zealand, and Russia. Tables 1A and 1B compare the key characteristics of these three models.

In Australia, the document equivalent to a diploma supplement is called the *Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement (AHEGS)*. All accredited providers of higher education have the option of issuing the *AHEGS*. The *AHEGS* is a trademark document, and all issuing institutions are required to follow a common template regarding the type and sequence of information, and a set of principles describing how the document is to be issued. The *AHEGS* was introduced in 2008, and it is envisaged that by 2011 most graduates from higher education award courses in Australia will receive an *AHEGS*.

New Zealand has also developed and implemented a diploma supplement, the *Tertiary Education Qualification Statement (TEQS)*. Following economy-wide consultations in 2009, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) and the Ministry of Education published a set of guidelines describing the format of the *TEQS*, and two alternative options for implementation. Under ‘Option A’ the *TEQS* is a document that accompanies the transcript, and does not necessarily include graduate-specific information. In contrast, Option B is a ‘stand-alone document’ incorporating details of the graduate’s academic achievements. Option B is the most similar to the *AHEGS*. It is also noted in the *TEQS* guidelines that this option “most closely aligns to the European-style Supplements”<sup>9</sup>. At the time of this project, implementation in New Zealand was in its early stages, and a review of progress by the NZQA was under way. As noted in the *TEQS* guidelines, at least some institutions were planning to wait until the use of diploma supplements overseas increases before further considering implementation.

Graduates in Russia are provided with diploma supplements upon request. Universities in Russia follow the European standards for the diploma supplement. However, it was noted by the survey respondent from Russia that “most of the graduates do not apply for supplements”. All graduates

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<sup>9</sup> page 10, *Guidelines for Implementing a Tertiary Education Qualification Statement*, NZQA, June 2009.

automatically receive the equivalent of a testamur ('Diplom') and transcript ('Vkladysk k diplomu').

### **US higher education institutions may elect to issue diploma supplements on request**

Diploma supplements have not been widely, nor formally, adopted by the US higher education sector. However, it is possible for institutions to voluntarily issue diploma supplements to students or graduates on request. It was suggested by the survey respondent that such requests were most likely to come from students planning to continue studies in the European Higher Education Area. It is therefore likely that an issuing institution would follow the conventions of the EDS model.

### **Policies for diploma supplements are being considered in Japan and Indonesia**

While universities in Japan are free to issue diploma supplements if they choose to, there is currently no particular economy-wide model in place. A recent publication from the Central Council for Education Working Group on the Promotion of Globalizing Universities has, however, recommended that diploma supplements be issued to graduates from joint degree programs.

*"It is recommended that the diploma be supplemented with documents such as academic portfolio and diploma supplement, which state the outline of program and the competency acquired through completion."*<sup>10</sup>

At the time of the study, the status of this development was unclear.

Institutions in Indonesia do not currently issue diploma supplements. However, a respondent from Indonesia commented that the concept of diploma supplements had been discussed for many years, but that "no final decisions have yet been taken". This was attributed to the current focus on developing their economy's qualifications framework: "Maybe after the IQF (Indonesian Qualifications Framework) is in place a diploma supplement will follow".

### **Universities in Hong Kong, China are taking institution-specific approaches**

Respondents from two publicly-funded universities in Hong Kong, China indicated that their institutions were planning the introduction of diploma supplements. It is not clear what approach each university intends to take to the structure, content or implementation, nor what stage they have reached in introducing the document. There is no indication, however, that they intend to adopt a common model. Indeed, one respondent suggested that while a voluntary, non-binding Asia Pacific model might be helpful, it may also tend to "stifle creativity and innovation".

The information for Hong Kong, China is different in character to the information collected from most other MEs. The survey respondents represented individual higher education institutions, rather than government departments or sectoral associations. It is therefore unsurprising that the individual responses vary significantly. For example, one of the eight respondents stated that their university currently had no plans to introduce diploma supplements.

### **The Lisbon Convention has initiated developments in some APEC economies**

The *Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region* – known as the 'Lisbon Convention', and opened for signing in 1997 – has been a significant driver toward implementation of diploma supplements internationally. This international convention is a joint initiative of Council of Europe and UNESCO (see also Appendix 1).

Signatories to the convention commit to the following:

*"The Parties shall promote, through the national information centres or otherwise, the use of the UNESCO/Council of Europe Diploma Supplement or any other comparable document by the higher education institutions of the Parties."* (Article IX.3)

Among APEC MEs, Australia and Russia have each signed and ratified the Lisbon convention. New Zealand acceded to the convention, and Canada and the United States have signed, but not ratified, the convention. Respondents from each of these MEs cite the Lisbon Convention as a significant factor in their implementation of diploma supplements.

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<sup>10</sup> *Guidelines for Building Organized and Continuous Cooperation Including Double and Joint Degree Programs*, May 2010, Central Council for Education. Accessed 18 August, 2010: [www.mext.go.jp/english/koutou/detail/1294463.htm](http://www.mext.go.jp/english/koutou/detail/1294463.htm)

Two earlier, UNESCO recognition conventions are also relevant to this project: (a) the *Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean* (Mexico City, 1974); and (b) the *Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific* (Bangkok, 1983). While these conventions do not explicitly refer to diploma supplements, they do include related objectives:

(a) “*promoting the exchange of information and documentation in the fields of education, science and technology, so as to serve the purposes of this Convention*” (Article 2.6, ‘Mexico’ convention)

(b) “*establishing and improving the system for the exchange of information regarding the recognition of studies, certificates, diplomas and degrees*” (Aims, Article 2.6, ‘Bangkok’ convention)

APEC MEs signatory to these conventions are: (a) Chile; Mexico; and Peru and (b) Australia; China; Indonesia; Korea; The Philippines; and Russia. As noted by one of the survey respondents in this study, New Zealand is also considering ratifying the Asia-Pacific Convention when the current redrafting is completed. At the time of this study, the outcomes from a recent review of the Asia-Pacific Convention were not yet available<sup>11</sup>.

## TESTAMURS AND TRANSCRIPTS

Representatives from each ME were asked to list the types of information typically included in the documents issued to graduates. They were also asked about the processes for issuing such documents, including the timing of issue and the approaches taken to security and authentication.

It is important to acknowledge that within any ME there is likely to be considerable variation between individual institutions in the type of information included on testamurs and transcripts, and in the processes associated with issuing these documents. This was certainly found to be the case in Australia when a survey of academic transcripts was made as part of the project to develop the *AHEGS*<sup>12</sup>. For this reason, the survey undertaken for this current project asked participants to respond in terms of what they considered ‘typical’ in their higher particular education contexts.

The findings described below draw on the detailed data obtained for the following fourteen MEs: Australia; Hong Kong, China; Indonesia; Japan; Korea; Malaysia; Mexico; New Zealand; Peru; The Philippines; Russia; Chinese Taipei; Thailand; The United States.

### **It is usual to issue two distinct documents – a testamur and an academic transcript**

Nearly all respondents described two distinct documents currently issued to higher education graduates. The only exceptions seemed to be Indonesia, Malaysia and Peru, where there was no indication of a distinctive testamur. In these cases, either just one document was described or the two descriptions were almost identical and most like the transcripts described by other MEs.

### **Testamurs are ceremonial documents while transcripts are enrolment histories**

Most testamurs carry little information beyond the institutional name and logo, the title of the award, and the name of the graduate (Table 2). They are likely to be single page documents, designed for display. It is common in some MEs to recognise particular meritorious achievement on the testamur. For example, in the US, the Philippines, and New Zealand, testamurs for some awards may include the classification of ‘honours’ or ‘cum laude’.

In contrast, transcripts provide details of the studies undertaken by the student or graduate (Table 2). They typically include grades for individual units of study, and may also include an overall

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<sup>11</sup> It is understood that the revised convention, which will be presented at a Ministerial meeting in Japan in November 2011, recommends *parties to the convention promote through the national information centre or otherwise the use of the UNESCO Diploma Supplement and or any comparable document by the higher education institutions of the Parties.*

<sup>12</sup> Harman, G. et al. (2008) ‘Survey of Documentation Provided to Graduates and European Comparisons’ in *Proposal for an Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement*. Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Australian Government. Vol II, 89-124.

grade for the award. Transcripts are therefore highly individualised documents. Rarely, however, do they include a description of the award itself, beyond the award title.

### **Testamurs and transcripts rarely describe the higher education system**

It is unusual for certificates or transcripts to contain information about the awarding institution, beyond its name (Table 2). It is even more unusual for such documents to give any details about the wider higher education system. In some cases, such as in the US and the Philippines, the institution ‘type’ might be included, recognising – although not necessarily explaining – the differentiated nature of the sector.

### **Some transcripts include additional information specific to the student or graduate**

While it is not common, the personal details included on the transcript may extend beyond name, student identification number and date of birth. In the Philippines, for example, it is usual to include quite extensive personal histories, such as place of birth, the name of their secondary school, and parents’ names. In Russia, the basis of a student’s admission to the course may be recorded in the form of an admission test (SAT) score.

### **Some APEC MEs have system-wide requirements for documentation**

Half the responding MEs indicated that their graduation documents were based upon system-wide standards or requirements. These were: Japan; Korea; Mexico; Peru; The Philippines; Chinese Taipei; Thailand. For all except Japan, both testamurs and transcripts were regulated, although not necessarily in the same way or by the same regulations. In Japan, the requirements applied only to testamurs. The study did not seek details regarding the type of regulation involved.

### **Individual institutions have responsibility for issuing testamurs and transcripts**

Respondents to the survey stressed the central role of individual institutions in determining how testamurs and transcripts were issued. This was described as being rightly the responsibility of the institutions, and as a reflection of institutional autonomy. The only variation in this was in the response from Korea (Table 3), where the responsibility was described in terms of the student or graduate – for example, for the testamur: “When we graduate, we can issue the document whenever we want through automatic issuing machine”.

### **One copy of each document is usually provided free of charge**

Testamurs and transcripts are typically provided free of charge, although in a few MEs it is usual to charge a fee (Table 3). Even where the first copy is provided free, there may be charges made for additional copies supplied on request.

### **All graduates receive a testamur, usually in association with a graduation event**

Without exception, respondents stated that graduates from all higher education courses receive testamurs (Table 3). This is typically issued at graduation, although in some MEs it is available upon course completion.

### **Whether automatically or upon request, most graduates receive a transcript**

Most survey respondents stated that transcripts are issued to all graduates. Some stated that these are issued automatically (Australia; Peru; The Philippines; Russia; Chinese Taipei; Thailand), while elsewhere provision is more likely to be in response to requests from students or graduates (Indonesia; Japan; Korea; The United States).

### **Transcripts may also be requested before the completion of an award**

Transcripts are a copy of an enrolment history, and so it is unsurprising that in most MEs students are able to obtain a copy at various stages during the course of their studies, usually in response to lodging an individual request. The time taken to issue a transcript can vary widely, from an apparently immediate issue (e.g. Korea) to weeks or even months in some cases. It may be that some of this variation reflects differences in the security and authentication steps involved. Some institutions also restrict the issuing of transcripts to the end of a unit or study interval.

### **There can be significant lag time between award completion and the issue of documents**

The timing of document issue can be a significant challenge for graduates and institutions alike. Once a 'student' has completed all the requirements for an award, and the institutional systems have verified this, the student is – in effect – a graduate. However, the actual graduation event may be held months later, and therefore the testamur may be unavailable to the graduate for some time after completion of the award. In such circumstances it is likely that the transcript will be available although, here too, there can be significant delays.

In Australia, some institutions are intending to make the 'diploma supplement' (i.e. the *AHEGS*) available in advance of other documentation.

**The steps taken to ensure document security tend to be common to testamurs and transcripts**

Document security was described in terms of: a) hardcopy documents resistant to duplication and editing (special papers; embossing; seals); b) a legitimisation step involving the need for 'sign off' by relevant persons; and c) unique document ID numbers linked to a registry, enabling users to contact the institution or a central register to check authenticity. In nearly all cases, respondents described the same processes for all forms of documents supplied.

The guidelines for both the New Zealand *TEQS* and the Australian *AHEGS* state that it is the responsibility of each issuing institution to manage the certification and security of the documents.

**Table 1A: Summary of guidelines associated with the diploma supplement models currently in place in Russia (Europe), Australia, and New Zealand**

|  | <b>Russia</b>  | <b>Australia</b>  | <b>New Zealand</b>  |
|--|--|---|---|
| <b>Name of the document</b>  | European Diploma Supplement  | Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement (AHEGS)  | Tertiary Education Qualification Statement (TEQS)   |
| <b>Status and purpose of the model/guidelines</b>  | Voluntary, non-binding outline structure; guidelines state that model is “capable of adaptation to local needs”<br><br>‘Strongly recommended’ that the structure and sequence of information is followed | Single model applies for all documents issued under the trademarked name<br><br>Requirement that the structure and sequence of information is followed<br><br>Adaptable through inclusion of core and optional elements, and local decisions regarding format and issuing processes | Voluntary, non-binding structure, even if issued under TEQS name<br><br>Strongly recommended that the structure and sequence of information is followed<br><br>Two alternative models suggested; some optional elements within each broad model; name recommended |
| <b>Qualifications included</b><br><i>Note: award definitions/ levels vary between economies’ systems and sectors</i> | Higher education awards  | Higher education awards (= Bachelor and above)  | Recommended for Level 7 (Bachelor) and above; may be issued at Levels 5 and 6 (Diploma); only appropriate for qualifications requiring at least one-year equivalent full-time study   |
| <b>Scope of the document</b>   | Single, completed award; information current at the time of award completion; should incorporate a focus on learning outcomes  |   |   |
| <b>Recommended timing of issue</b>   | Automatically, ‘at the time the qualification is completed’  | As soon as possible upon completion of the qualification  | No recommendation: may be automatic or on request; may be at/from completion, or at/from graduation   |
| <b>Decision to implement</b>   | Made by individual economies and/or institutions   | Made by individual institutions<br><br>In 2008-9, Australian Government offered incentive funding to participating institutions, to support implementation  | Made by individual institutions   |

**Table 1B: Summary of the information included in the diploma supplement models currently in place in Russia (Europe), Australia, and New Zealand**

| Categories of information included  | Russia: <i>European Diploma Supplement</i>  | Australia: <i>AHEGS</i>  | New Zealand: <i>TEQS</i>  |
|---|---|--|---|
| <b>Graduate identification</b><br>(unique to the graduate)  | <b>Included</b> , in Section:<br><i>1: Information identifying the holder of the qualification</i>  | <b>Included</b> , in Section:<br><i>1: The Graduate</i>  | <b>Included in Option B, and may be included in Option A.</b> In both cases, as Section:<br><i>1: Information identifying the holder of the qualification</i>   |
| <b>Description of the qualification/award</b><br>(standard* for all graduates from this award, at this institution) | <b>Included</b> , in Section:<br><i>2 (in part): Information identifying the qualification</i><br><i>3: Information on the level of the qualification</i><br><i>4 (in part): Information on the contents and results gained</i><br><i>5: Information on the function of the qualification</i><br><i>6 (in part): Additional information</i> | <b>Included</b> , in Section:<br><i>2: The Award</i>   | <b>Included</b> , in Section:<br><i>2: Information identifying the qualification</i><br><i>3: Information on the level of the qualification</i><br><i>4 (in part): Information on the contents and results gained</i><br><i>5: Information on the function of the qualification</i> |
| <b>Description of the awarding institution</b><br>(standard* for all graduates from this institution)               | <b>Included</b> , in Section:<br><i>2 (in part): Information identifying the qualification</i>  | <b>Included</b> , in Section:<br><i>3: Awarding institution</i>                                  | <b>Included</b> , in Section:<br><i>2 (in part): Information identifying the qualification</i><br><i>6 (in part): Additional information</i>  |
| <b>Results achieved</b><br>(unique to the graduate)   | <b>Included</b> , in Section:<br><i>4 (in part): Information on the contents and results gained</i>   | <b>Included</b> , in Section:<br><i>4: Graduate's academic achievements</i>                      | <b>Included in Option B only**</b> , in Section:<br><i>4 (in part): Information on the contents and results gained</i>  |
| <b>Certification</b>  | <b>Included</b> , in Section:<br><i>7: Certification of the Supplement</i>  | <b>Included</b> :<br><i>On the first page</i>  | <b>Included</b> , in Section:<br><i>7: Certification of the Supplement</i>  |
| <b>Information on the economy's system or sector</b>  | <b>Included</b> , in Section:<br><i>8: Information on the economy's higher education system</i><br><i>6 (in part): Additional information</i>   | <b>Included</b> , in Section:<br><i>5: Description of the Australian Higher Education System</i> | <b>Included</b> , in Section:<br><i>8: Description of the New Zealand Tertiary Education System</i><br><i>6 (in part): Additional information</i>   |

\* At the time the award was completed. The details of awards are likely to change quite frequently, as curricula change. In contrast, the details of institutions and the higher education system or sector can be expected to remain more constant

\*\* Option A requires that the academic transcript be combined with the TEQS. The academic transcript includes information on the results achieved.

**Table 2: Summary of information typically included on testamurs and transcripts among 14 APEC member economies\***

| <b>Category of information</b>               | The approaches most common** among APEC member economies to the information included in testamurs and transcripts |  |
|--|---|--|
|  | <b>Testamur</b><br>This information is typically:   | <b>Transcript</b><br>This information is typically:                          |
| Name of graduate                             | <b>Included</b>   | <b>Included</b>  |
| Title of the award                           | <b>Included</b>   | <b>Included</b>  |
| Description of the award                     | <b>Not included</b><br>(except: China; Korea; Mexico; Peru)   | <b>Not included</b><br>(except: Hong Kong, China***; Mexico; Peru)           |
| Lists of units of study                      | <b>Not included</b><br>(except: Indonesia)  | <b>Included</b><br>(except: Peru)  |
| Results/grades of units of study             | <b>Not included</b><br>(except: Indonesia)  | <b>Included</b><br>(except: Japan)   |
| Overall grade or average grade for the award | <b>Not included</b><br>(except: Indonesia)  | <b>Included</b><br>(except: Russia; Australia; Japan; Malaysia)              |
| Name and/or logo of the awarding institution | <b>Included</b>   | <b>Included</b>  |
| Other information about the institution      | <b>Not included</b><br>(except: Korea; Mexico; The Philippines)   | <b>Not included</b><br>(except: Hong Kong, China***; Korea; The Philippines) |
| Description of the higher education system   | <b>Not included</b><br>(except: Peru)   | <b>Not included</b><br>(except: Peru)  |

\* Data includes the following APEC member economies: Australia; Hong Kong, China; Indonesia; Japan; Korea; Malaysia; Mexico; New Zealand; Peru; The Philippines; Russia; Chinese Taipei; Thailand; The United States. This is based on survey responses, and therefore represents the interpretation of the respondents.

\*\* Most respondents emphasised that practice varied between institutions and/or between awards.

\*\*\* Three or four of the eight responding institutions from Hong Kong, China

**Table 3: Summary of approaches to issuing testamurs and transcripts among 14 APEC member economies\***

| The approaches most common** among APEC member economies to the issuing of testamurs and transcripts              |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Testamur</b><br>This document is typically issued:   | <b>Transcript</b><br>This document is typically issued:   |
| <b>to all graduates</b>   | <b>to all graduates</b><br>(except: The United States)  |
| <b>free of charge</b><br>(except: Mexico; Peru; The United States)  | <b>free of charge</b><br>(except: Hong Kong, China***; The Philippines; Peru; Chinese Taipei; The United States)                            |
| <b>by individual institutions</b><br>(graduates are responsible: Korea)   | <b>by individual institutions</b><br>(graduates are responsible: Korea)   |
| <b>at or after graduation event/date</b><br>(available upon course completion: Indonesia; Russia; Chinese Taipei) | <b>during course and upon course completion</b><br>(only upon course completion or graduation: Malaysia; Russia; Thailand)                  |
| <b>automatically</b><br>(issued on request: Indonesia; Korea)   | <b>upon request and automatically at completion or graduation</b><br>(automatically upon completion/graduation: Malaysia; Russia; Thailand) |

\* Data includes the following APEC member economies: Australia; Hong Kong, China; Indonesia; Japan; Korea; Malaysia; Mexico; New Zealand; Peru; The Philippines; Russia; Chinese Taipei; Thailand; The United States. This is based on survey responses, and therefore represents the interpretation of the respondents.

\*\* Several respondents emphasised that practice varied between institutions.

\*\*\* Three of the eight responding institutions from Hong Kong, China

### **3.2 Perspectives on the introduction of diploma supplements**

Whether or not diploma supplements initiatives were underway in their MEs, survey participants were asked to provide their perspectives on the potential benefits of diploma supplements. In particular, they were asked to separately consider the potential benefits for graduates, higher education institutions, and the ME. They were also asked to comment on any challenges or issues they had experienced, or could foresee, in the implementation of diploma supplements.

#### **BENEFITS ASSOCIATED WITH DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENTS**

##### **All respondents ascribed multiple, potential benefits to diploma supplements**

Respondents to the survey all expressed support for the widespread introduction of diploma supplements<sup>13</sup>. Some saw this as a matter of immediate and general importance, while others expressed the view that the imperative was more for some institutions, some courses, and/or some graduates.

##### **Graduates would benefit from greater clarity about their particular qualifications**

Benefits for graduates were described in terms of clear information that graduates could use to describe their particular qualifications, with many respondents highlighting the importance for graduates moving internationally. Several respondents stressed the value of information on the graduate's institution and higher education system.

Greater clarity can be of direct benefit to institutions too. One respondent commented that diploma supplements would reduce the burden on institutions of responding to international queries from employers and education institutions about the nature of their qualifications and institution.

##### **Institutions, and the system, may benefit through the support of articulation arrangements**

Respondents from several economies, including from Canada and the US, commented on the role of diploma supplements in supporting articulation arrangements between institutions, both locally and internationally. In some MEs, such as the US, inter-institutional movement of students is a structural feature of the higher education sector, and diploma supplements may "ease the transfer of students among various parts of the educational system".

##### **Introduction of diploma supplements can drive institutional improvement**

Among the many different benefits attributed to diploma supplements, one of the strongest themes to emerge from respondents' comments was the potential for diploma supplement implementation to drive institutional improvement. The kinds of improvement envisaged included: greater clarity about individual programs; strengthened information systems and processes within institutions; and overall quality and transparency.

##### **Diploma supplements as impetus to greater system-wide transparency and quality assurance**

It was noted by several respondents that the implementation of diploma supplements in their higher education systems would ensure greater transparency, and that this would positively influence the overall quality of the system. Some respondents made reference to the role of qualifications frameworks, noting that introduction of diploma supplements might "push the member economy to define its own national qualifications framework".

##### **Increased global mobility, exchange and awareness seen as positive influences on MEs**

In various ways, many respondents linked the introduction of diploma supplements with more general, positive effects of 'internationalisation'. There was support for increasing the ability of graduates to move between economies, with some specific comments about the influence on international understanding. The role of student and graduate mobility in terms of the economies of MEs was also highlighted in some responses.

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<sup>13</sup> Excluding the responses from Hong Kong, China, as no single response representing the ME was received (rather, eight diverse responses from individual institutions).

## ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH IMPLEMENTATION

Respondents described fewer challenges than benefits in the implementation of diploma supplements. The issues identified reflected, in part, the particular ME's experience with diploma supplements. In systems where there had been little consideration yet given to the use of this document (e.g. Mexico), the issues related to raising awareness about the purpose and content of the document. In contrast, where implementation was already underway, specific issues such as developing appropriate information systems were more prominent.

### **The need to convince institutions of the value of additional documentation**

As institutions are responsible for documentation, they need to be convinced of the need for diploma supplements. As one respondent from an ME without current diploma supplement initiatives in place commented, "Institutions would need to be convinced that this model would be of benefit to them and their graduates before they invested the time and energy into creating diploma supplements". In particular, for MEs with lower levels of graduate mobility, the benefits of the document might not be obvious.

### **The intersection between diploma supplements and qualifications frameworks**

Two respondents stressed the importance of having an economy-specific qualifications framework in place to underpin the specific award descriptions included on diploma supplements. However, it was also noted that the two might be developed in parallel, and that the implementation of a diploma supplement could serve as motivation to develop or refine such frameworks.

It is worth noting that while both Australia and New Zealand have economy-specific qualifications frameworks, the relationship to their 'diploma supplements' were handled differently in each case. The New Zealand *TEQS* includes a section which specifically relates the particular award to a level of the New Zealand Qualification Framework (see also Table 1B). The Australian *AHEGS*, however, does not currently require this information. The Australian Qualification Framework (AQF), which is referenced in the higher education system description of the *AHEGS*, does not currently include named 'levels', although it may in the future. The AQF was under review at the time of this study.

### **The timing of issue of the diploma supplement is an important consideration**

For some purposes, a key consideration in the utility of the diploma supplement is the timing of issue. This is particularly relevant if the document itself is to support exchange and articulation. The respondent from Canada noted that this was a particular issue for them, as the information necessary for admission into graduate studies may well be required in advance of graduation, or even completion, of the undergraduate studies taken elsewhere.

It may be, however, that some benefits to local articulation arrangements arise as a consequence of developing the institution information systems, rather than through the actual documents issued to graduates.

## POTENTIAL ROLE FOR SHARED, OPTIONAL TEMPLATE AND PRINCIPLES

The questionnaire sent to EDNET members included the following question: *Would the development of a template and guiding principles for a voluntary, non-binding Asia-Pacific diploma supplement be beneficial?* There was widespread support for this proposal, including among economies with initiatives already in place. Notably, all respondents answered with either a 'yes', or a qualified 'yes' – no one argued against such a development.

The potential value of a template and guiding principles was described in a number of ways: to help convince institutions of the value and relevance of a DS (including: Canada; Indonesia; Peru; Chinese Taipei); to encourage some level of consistency in order to ensure recognition and utility (including: some institutions in Hong Kong, China; Indonesia; Thailand); and as a practical guide to implementation (including: Canada; some institutions in Hong Kong, China; Peru).

Respondents highlighted a number of issues affecting the development of an optimal and acceptable diploma supplement model. In addition to emphasising that the model must be voluntary and non-binding, respondents noted that particular consideration would need to be given to: costs; existing

documentation, including transcripts and other more recent innovations; language and terminology differences; and timing of issue.

A draft, optional diploma supplement model for APEC MEs is presented in Appendix 3, as a base for further consideration by APEC and APEC MEs.

### 3.3 Contextual factors for planning a broadly relevant template

The project sought information on three additional aspects of the higher education environment in each ME: influences on curriculum design; approaches to the assessment and reporting of student achievement; and inter-institutional movement of students. The goal here was not to provide a detailed description or analysis of these factors, rather to identify and recognise areas in which there is either commonality or diversity in practice.

#### INFLUENCES ON CURRICULUM DESIGN

In higher education across the various APEC economies, the ultimate responsibility for curriculum design rests with individual institutions. This is largely the role of academic staff, operating within the educational policies of their institutions. The content to be covered, and the types of learning activities and assessment employed are typically determined by the staff involved in teaching and coordinating each course.

Academic decisions about the structure, content and assessment of individual courses are not, however, made in isolation. Across institutions and disciplines, staff will have shared understandings about some aspects of course structure, and the policies of each institution will provide additional points of reference.

In some MEs, different levels of award are also articulated through economy-specific or regional qualifications frameworks. Such frameworks typically define qualifications in terms of learning outcomes, and include measures of volume of learning. A 2009 APEC study mapped the development of economy-specific qualification frameworks across APEC MEs, noting that:

*“Seven APEC economies—Australia, Hong Kong SAR China, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines have NQFs. The Republic of Korea is in the process of implementing one and five others have them under development or consideration.”*<sup>14</sup> (p. 1)

Not all APEC economies have formal qualifications frameworks, and even where they do, they may not have a strong or direct influence on curriculum design decisions.

The most common external influence on curricula is from professional associations and agencies. These agencies may influence the topics covered, the mode of instruction, and/or the assessment practices. Typically, the influence is upon specific ‘entry to practice’ programs, such as medicine, engineering, law, and education. The academic requirements of professional associations within MEs may in turn be influenced by international agreements. The Washington Accord, for example, is an accreditation agreement for professional engineering that includes agencies in many APEC MEs (including: Australia; Canada; Hong Kong, China; Japan; Korea; Malaysia; New Zealand; Singapore; Chinese Taipei; The United States).

In some MEs there is also a significant role played by the government in defining higher education curricula. This is the case in Viet Nam<sup>15</sup>, where MOET prescribes some minimum requirements in terms of subject area<sup>16</sup>. Similarly, in the Philippines, the number of units and particular subjects may be mandated by the government.

The quality assurance processes for higher education can also have an influence on curricula. Whether through mandatory accreditation and monitoring processes, or through optional funding incentives, the assessment criteria used by external agencies can influence the behaviour of institutions in terms of curriculum design.

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<sup>14</sup> *Mapping Qualifications Frameworks across APEC Economies*. June 2009. APEC HRDWG.

<sup>15</sup> This is based on background information. No response to the survey was received from Viet Nam.

<sup>16</sup> Personal communication, Thao Nguyen Thi Tinh, February, 2010.

The particular interest, and influence, that accreditation and quality assurance agencies have upon curricula and assessment outcomes vary considerably. For some courses, in some institutions, the influence is likely to be considerable. For example, students' level of academic achievement is directly monitored as part of external quality assurance processes in Thailand and the Philippines. Similarly in the US, accreditation agencies are themselves accountable for ensuring that student achievement standards comply with criteria recognised by the Secretary of Education. In contrast, the autonomy of institutions with regard to course design and review was emphasised by some MEs, including institutions in Hong Kong, China.

There is a trend in quality assurance, internationally, toward more transparency in the measurement and monitoring of students' academic achievement<sup>17</sup>. This growing emphasis on 'academic standards' may, therefore, have an increased influence on higher education curricula in the future.

## **ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT**

There are many different methods used in the assessment of student learning in higher education. There are also many different approaches taken to the grading and reporting of student achievement. These variations can be as marked between different institutions – and even courses within an institution – as they are between different higher education sectors or systems.

While recognising this diversity, and as background to considering models for the development of diploma supplements, the following is a broad summary and comparison of assessment practices considered typical or widespread within APEC MEs.

Given the high degree of autonomy that institutions have in the design of curricula, the widespread use of course-specific assessment tasks is unsurprising (Table 4). The degree to which this is dominated by supervised assessment – examinations and tests – does appear to vary between MEs. The form of assessment may also be influenced by the degree level. In Mexico, for example, undergraduate courses are primarily assessed through examinations and standardised tests, while graduate assessment is usually in the form of assignments. Participation and attendance make a major contribution to assessment results in some MEs, including Japan and Korea.

Irrespective of the forms of assessment tasks used, it is common practice across APEC economies for students to receive an overall assessment result for each unit of study completed. It is these results that are commonly recorded on academic transcripts (see also Table 2). The grading schema in use, however, vary widely.

Student results may be reported within broad bands or as more fine-grained scores, such as percentage scores. The schema may be: numeric; based on text descriptors or letter grades; or on a combination of both (Table 5). The numerical scoring systems of different MEs vary widely: in Thailand and the US, pass marks are indicated in a range of 1 to 4; in Mexico, 6 to 10; and in Australia percentage scores are more common, with the pass mark often set at 50. It is worth noting that differences in grading schema are not a barrier to the introduction or utility of diploma supplements. Existing diploma supplements, including those in Australia and New Zealand, simply require that an explanation of the particular grading scheme be included in the documentation.

In addition to unit grades, in some MEs it is also common for an overall grade to be awarded (including: Hong Kong, China; Korea; Malaysia; Mexico; Russia). This grade may take the form of an overall, final average (e.g. Peru) or a broad classification such as 'credit', 'merit', or a class of honours (e.g. in many Masters, and honours courses in New Zealand). In other MEs, the award of an overall grade is rare (including: Australia; Thailand; The United States).

## **INTER-INSTITUTIONAL CREDIT TRANSFER**

Movement of students between institutions, during their course of study, is possible in most MEs. The extent of such movement, however, varies greatly. Student movement is common in Canada and the US, for example. Indeed, in these MEs the potential benefits of diploma supplements were

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<sup>17</sup> Harris, K-L. (2009). *International Trends in Establishing the Standards of Academic Achievement in Higher Education*. Australian Universities Quality Agency.

described largely in terms of supporting inter-institutional mobility. In contrast, student transfer is reported as “very unlikely” in Russia. Similarly, credit for studies at a previous institution is described as “theoretically possible” in Malaysia, suggesting again that this form of student movement is not common.

Assessing applications for credit is the responsibility of the receiving institution. While transferring students may apply for credit for previous studies, the decision rests with the receiving institution about the type of credit, if any, that might be granted. Obviously, this has relevance for both the content and the issuing processes of transcripts and diploma supplements. As discussed earlier, survey respondents identified a role for diploma supplements in supporting student mobility, raising issues regarding the timing of release of such documents (see Section 3.2). It is worth noting, however, that the assessment of credit applications may depend more on the ‘translation’ of the credit points assigned to units of study (which are, in turn, typically related to volume measures) than on information about the course or the particular subjects studied. Systems for translating credits, such as the European Credit Transfer Scheme and the University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP) scheme to which most APEC MEs subscribe, seek to facilitate this process. This is quite distinct from the role of diploma supplements as currently conceived, whether in Europe or elsewhere.

A previous APEC HRDWG study reported on the development of credit systems among APEC economies<sup>18</sup>.

**Table 4: Use of different forms of assessment in higher education in different APEC member economies**

| APEC member economy          | The extent to which each form of assessment is used in higher education* |  |   |   |
|------------------------------|--|--|---|---|
|                              | Standardised tests, and taken under supervised conditions                | Examinations and tests specific to the course/program, and taken under supervised conditions | Assignments completed in students’ own time (ie unsupervised) | Participation / Attendance as a major contribution to overall grade |
| <b>Australia</b>             | Sometimes  | Widely   | Widely  | Sometimes   |
| <b>Hong Kong, China*</b>     | (varies)   | Widely   | Widely  | (varies)  |
| <b>Indonesia</b>             | Widely   | Widely   | Sometimes   | Sometimes   |
| <b>Japan</b>                 | Rarely   | Widely   | Widely  | Widely  |
| <b>Korea</b>                 | Widely   | Widely   | Widely  | Widely  |
| <b>Malaysia</b>              | Rarely   | Widely   | Rarely  | Sometimes   |
| <b>Mexico: undergraduate</b> | Widely   | Widely   | -   | Widely  |
| <b>graduate level</b>        | Rarely   | Rarely   | Widely  | Sometimes   |
| <b>New Zealand</b>           | Rarely   | Widely   | Widely  | Widely  |
| <b>Peru</b>                  | Sometimes  | Widely   | Sometimes   | Widely  |
| <b>The Philippines</b>       | Widely   | Widely   | Widely  | Widely  |
| <b>Russia</b>                | Sometimes  | Widely   | Widely  | Widely  |
| <b>Chinese Taipei</b>        | Sometimes  | Widely   | Widely  | Sometimes   |
| <b>Thailand</b>              | Widely   | Widely   | Sometimes   | Widely  |
| <b>The United States</b>     | Sometimes  | Widely   | Widely  | Sometimes   |

\* Based on survey respondents’ estimation to each of the four categories, as described here. It should be noted that individuals’ different interpretations of ‘standardised test’ and ‘participation’ may have confounded this data.

\*\* Summary, based on the separate responses received from eight publicly-funded higher education institutions.

<sup>18</sup> *Mapping Qualifications Frameworks across APEC Economies*. June 2009. APEC HRDWG.

**Table 5: Various types of grading schemes in widespread use among APEC member economies**

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <b>Letter grade with numeric score equivalence</b>      | <i>For example:</i><br>A = 4, B = 3, C = 2, D = 1, F = 0  | <i>Commonly used in:</i><br>Korea; Thailand;<br>The United States. |
| <b>Letter grade with percentage equivalence</b>         | <i>For example:</i><br>A, B, C, D, F<br>(each with a corresponding percentage band; fail usually 0-49; band widths vary)                                    | <i>Commonly used in:</i><br>New Zealand;<br>Chinese Taipei.        |
| <b>Letter grade</b>                                     | <i>For example:</i><br>A, B, C = (pass grades), D = re-examination, F = fail  | <i>Commonly used in:</i><br>Indonesia;<br>Malaysia.                |
| <b>Descriptive grade with numeric score equivalence</b> | <i>For example:</i><br>Excellent = 5, Good = 4, Satisfactory = 3, Not Satisfactory = 2  | <i>Commonly used in:</i><br>Mexico; Russia.                        |
| <b>Descriptive grade with percentage equivalence</b>    | <i>For example:</i><br>High Distinction = 85-100, Distinction = 75 - 84, Credit = 65 - 74, Pass = 50 - 64, Fail = 0 - 50 (descriptors and band widths vary) | <i>Commonly used in:</i><br>Australia; Mexico.                     |
| <b>Score (not as percentage)</b>                        | <i>For example:</i><br>0 - 20   | <i>Commonly used in:</i><br>Peru.                                  |

### 3.4 Capacity building needs of APEC MEs toward diploma supplement implementation

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF EFFECTIVE POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

The development of appropriate policies is critical to the success of diploma supplement implementation. Survey respondents highlighted various roles and considerations for policy, including:

- The role of policies in providing direction.  
This might involve direction: for departments within an institution to ensure participation in the necessary data collection and collation; or for institutions to encourage consistency across a higher education sector or system.
- Government support in terms of both policies and funding.
- The relationship between qualifications frameworks, quality assurance, and the information presented in diploma supplements.
- The need for communication and consensus building in the development of policies.  
Indeed, this project has been designed around just such a collaborative approach to the development of guidelines.
- The role of policies and guidelines as part of ongoing communication strategies.

Several MEs cited ‘policy expertise’ as an area in which they would benefit from further, specific assistance (see also Appendix 4). In addition, in discussing the importance of an economy-specific qualifications frameworks, the respondent from the Philippines explained “... benchmarking on other systems is needed or it is best to conduct a seminar that will facilitate the development of such supplements as well as other frameworks acceptable to the different economies that will also result to mutual recognition of degrees.”

#### CHALLENGES FOR ISSUING INSTITUTIONS

Clarity about the purpose and content of diploma supplements, and deriving principles regarding implementation is simply the first step toward introduction. The next challenges commonly facing institutions relate to the collection of appropriate information, and the technology and expertise needed to support the collation and presentation in the form of a diploma supplement.

#### Locating and collecting the required information

Student records may be held in a variety of locations across an institution. This is particularly the case for large institutions, where there is likely to be a degree of devolution of administration to individual faculties and schools. In addition, some of the information needed for diploma

supplements may need to be prepared for the first time – such as descriptions of qualifications, and the records of individuals’ specific achievements, beyond their academic grades. The generation and collection of this information therefore presents a challenge for student administration systems, as noted by MEs’ responses in Table A4.1 (Appendix 4). This was also the experience of implementation in many Australian universities.

**Building or adapting the necessary information technology capabilities**

A related challenge for institutions is in developing the technology necessary to efficiently and accurately generate diploma supplements for their graduates. Such technology needs to be robust, and will usually need to be integrated with existing systems and administrative functions. This poses questions for institutions in terms of the provision of the technology itself – that is, the ‘hardware’ and ‘software’. It may also be a challenge in terms of the existing technical expertise of staff, and the time these people are able to devote toward supporting implementation. While not an issue highlighted by all EDNET respondents (see Appendix 4), this has been an area of extensive activity and discussion among universities in Australia and New Zealand. For Australia and New Zealand, the issue is in part related to diverse information systems needing to be adapted to produce comparable documents, and in part due to the particular technical solutions needed within individual institutions in order to collect data from multiple information systems.

## 4. Developing an APEC diploma supplement model

There are currently at least three distinct diploma supplement ‘models’ in place among APEC member economies: the European *Diploma Supplement*; the Australian *Higher Education Graduation Statement*; and New Zealand’s *Tertiary Education Qualification Statement* (see also Tables 1A & 1B). These models guide institutions as they develop and implement their own, specific documentation and processes.

Diploma supplement models serve two functions. First, for institutions considering diploma supplement introduction, models provide clarity about the structure and intent of this form of documentation. Second, and importantly, models encourage a level of similarity between diploma supplements from different institutions and education systems. This is critical if such documents are to assist with the recognition of qualifications and thereby support graduate mobility. To be effective, diploma supplements need to be recognisable and to have a degree of comparability.

A relatively small proportion of institutions across the APEC MEs currently issue diploma supplements, although this number is growing and there is widening interest. Australia and New Zealand have each taken collaborative approaches within their respective higher education systems to develop economy-specific models appropriate to their contexts. A similar, collaborative approach among APEC member economies could generate a broad, international ‘APEC’ model of benefit to individual institutions directly, and informative for the development of more specific models within member economies.

There is widespread support for the development, by APEC, of a voluntary, non-binding diploma supplement model (see Section 3.2). A draft of such a model is presented in Appendix 3, for further consideration and development by APEC and APEC MEs. An outline of this draft was presented for discussion at the APEC conference in October 2010, *Conference on Higher Education Diploma Supplements* (see also Appendix 2). Subsequent to the Conference, minor revisions were made to the Guiding Principles, and the template was elaborated.

The draft of a possible APEC DS Model presented in this report (Appendix 3) remains a work in progress. The HRDWG of APEC, and the Steering Group for this Project, in particular, will determine the next stages of the development of the model.

## 5. Discussion and conclusions

The documentation issued to higher education graduates across the APEC region is both highly varied and, in most cases, of limited value internationally. The task for prospective employers, professional associations, and higher education institutions in interpreting and comparing applicants' qualifications is therefore a challenging one. Most documents, including transcripts, contain little award-specific information beyond the qualification title and list of units studied. It is even less likely that graduates' documentation assists in understanding the institutional or educational context of the qualifications gained.

This challenge is, of course, not unique to APEC economies. Indeed, 'Bologna' associated developments in Europe – including the development of the European Diploma Supplement – have been in response to a higher education context in which transcripts were not commonplace, where education structures varied greatly, and yet where students and graduates were becoming increasingly mobile across national borders.

It is widely assumed that student and graduate international mobility will continue to increase, including within the Asia-Pacific region. It is likely that for many MEs this will involve both incoming and outgoing students and graduates. And such mobility does not need to cross economies' borders in order for graduate documentation to become an issue. Indeed for some MEs, the inter-institutional flow of students and graduates is the principal driver behind their interest in diploma supplement developments.

There is widespread interest among APEC MEs in the potential of diploma supplements to enhance the information provided to graduates. For this reason, this project, as part of the broader APEC HRDWG activity for developing common understandings about qualifications and skills to facilitate the mobility of students and academics, is particularly timely. There is general interest, and yet also a sense that there is time to take a considered approach and so develop the most appropriate responses.

Coordination is likely to be the key, and in two ways. First, there is the importance of the coordinated development of models, including the scope and structure of documents, and the principles for issuing and implementation. These models may be at the international level, which in some cases directly support institutional initiatives, and which can also support the development of cross-institutional or economy-specific models. The proposal for an APEC model is for an international model of this ilk. Models are critically important, as they support institutions in their implementation, and they serve to maximise comparability of the resulting documentation.

Second, there is the important coordinating function of governments or related higher education agencies as drivers of change. If diploma supplements are to produce the many benefits attributed them, they need to – ultimately – become part of the broad higher education landscape, and this is unlikely to happen without the appropriate policy support from external agencies. Such agencies will be governmental, in most cases.

The potential benefits of widespread, coordinated implementation of diploma supplements extend beyond the obvious benefits to graduates and employers. Implementation requires institutions to review and, usually, to enhance their internal information systems. Anything that encourages staff and institutions to enhance their documented explanation of the purpose of awards and the evidence of students' achievements has the potential to positively influence higher education quality more broadly.

The role of an APEC model is likely to be of most benefit in providing general support for individual institutions and MEs that currently have no identified model in place. APEC is neither currently nor potentially a single Higher Education Area. A common approach across some APEC MEs may be desirable, but consistency across all APEC economies is neither necessary nor likely.

## **List of Appendices**

- A1 Origins and implementation of the European Diploma Supplement
- A2 Summary of outcomes from the 30<sup>th</sup> APEC HRDWG conference
- A3 Draft version of an *APEC Diploma Supplement Model*
- A4 Survey responses to specific questions regarding capacity building needs

## A1. Origins and implementation of the European Diploma Supplement

The European Diploma Supplement was jointly developed by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). Under the *Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region*, European Education Ministers in Lisbon in April 1997 agreed to introduce a new form of supplementary documentation about higher education awards to be known as the Diploma Supplement. The name Diploma Supplement was chosen as the intention was to supplement rather than replace existing documentation related to degrees and other awards (commonly referred to at the time as ‘diplomas’).

As Goedegebuure and Corrigan (2008)<sup>19</sup> show, the concept of the diploma supplement can be traced back as far as 1979 when UNESCO launched the idea as part of its broader program on the international recognition of degrees and qualifications. As such, the diploma supplement had its origins in international education, and was not a European invention. However, its acceptance and widespread implementation took place in Europe, with the support of the European Commission and the Council of Europe. In combination with UNESCO, these two European organisations in 1997 convened a major meeting in Lisbon to discuss recognition of higher education qualifications. The idea of the diploma supplement received strong support in these discussions, being regarded as a useful tool to assist recognition of higher education qualifications in a region which at the time displayed not only striking variety in its higher education systems and awards, but strongly supported enhanced student mobility and the mobility of professions as part of a European economic development agenda.

At the 1997 Lisbon Convention, national European representatives not only accepted the diploma supplement as a new instrument for the recognition of qualifications but also agreed on a number of key commitments concerning higher education qualifications. These commitments included the following:

- Holders of qualifications issued in one country shall have adequate access to an assessment of these qualifications in another country.
- No discrimination shall be made in this respect on any ground such as the applicant's gender, race, colour, disability, language, religion, political opinion, national, ethnic or social origin.
- The responsibility to demonstrate that an application does not fulfil the relevant requirements lies with the body undertaking the assessment.
- Each country shall recognise qualifications – whether for access to higher education, for periods of study or for higher education degrees – as similar to the corresponding qualifications in its own system unless it can show that there are substantial differences between its own qualifications and the qualifications for which recognition is sought.
- Recognition of a higher education qualification issued in another country shall have one or more of the following consequences: – *access to further higher education studies, including relevant examinations and preparations for the doctorate, on the same conditions as candidates from the country in which recognition is sought;* – *The use of an academic title, subject to the laws and regulations of the country in which recognition is sought;* – *In addition, recognition may facilitate access to the labour market* (Council of Europe 2010).

A special representative committee was set up to oversee implementation of the 1997 Lisbon Convention. This Committee, which included representatives of all countries that participated at the

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<sup>19</sup> Goedegebuure, L and Corrigan, P. (2008) ‘The Diploma Supplement: An Analysis of the European Situation’ in *Proposal for an Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement*. Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Australian Government. Vol II, 69-76.

Lisbon meeting plus several other countries and organisations including the European Community, was given authority to approve further recommendations related to the recognition of qualifications. Key decisions were thus made, for example, on a code of practice for trans-national education (2001) and recognition of joint degrees (2004)<sup>20</sup>.

In 2002, the Council of Europe together with Portuguese authorities convened a major follow-up international conference to mark the fifth anniversary of the Lisbon Recognition Convention. This meeting gathered representatives of ministries and higher education institutions from Europe and further afield, as well as intergovernmental and international organisations. A wide range of issues was discussed, including the recognition of non-traditional qualifications, and the relationship between quality assurance and recognition. A significant number of additional European and non-European countries became signatories to the original Lisbon Convention (see also Section 3.1). One of these countries was Australia. A Ministerial meeting in 2003 set the objective of ensuring that all graduating students receive this document automatically, free of charge and in a widely used European language, with effect from 2005.

One reason for the wide acceptance of the Diploma Supplement was that the Supplement became recognized as one of the key instruments of achieving the objectives of the Bologna Process, which was a plan of European cooperation agreed to in 1997 with the aim of creating a European Higher Education Area by 2010. This would be based on academic exchange and making academic degree standards and structures and quality assurance standards more comparable and compatible throughout Europe. The process was named after the Italian city of Bologna where the original Bologna declaration was signed by Ministers from Education from 29 European countries. Participation was soon widened to include other countries and at the most recent Ministerial meeting in Budapest-Vienna in 2010 a total of 47 countries participated. This meeting officially launched the European Higher Education Area<sup>21</sup>

By December 2005, over three-quarters of the 45 Bologna Process signatory countries had implemented fully or partly the Diploma Supplement, while most of the rest were planning to implement. Luxembourg and Malta were the only countries in which no date had yet been fixed for the Supplement to be implemented. In 2005, 21 countries had the Diploma Supplement fully implemented by all their higher education institutions. However, the 2009 official Stocktaking Report for the Bologna Process provided a less optimistic assessment reporting as follows:

*“It is clear from the results that the Diploma supplement (Ds), which is an important transparency instrument, is being implemented, but not as widely as would have been expected. Despite the commitment to issuing the Ds to all graduates automatically, free of charge and in a widely spoken European language by 2005, only half of the countries have managed to implement it fully by 2009.”<sup>22</sup>*

On the other hand, it should be recognized that the policy agenda of the Bologna Process has broadened considerably over the past five to seven years, with much more attention being given to major topic areas such as restructuring of academic awards, quality assurance and employability.

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<sup>20</sup> Council of Europe (2010) *Higher Education and Research*, Strasbourg, France.

<sup>21</sup> Bologna Secretariat (2010) *Welcome to the European Higher Education Area*, Brussels [www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/](http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/)

<sup>22</sup> Bologna Process (2009) *Bologna Process Stocktaking Report 2009*, Brussels.

## **A2. Summary of outcomes from the 30<sup>th</sup> APEC HRDWG conference**

The HRDWG hosted an APEC conference in Canberra, Australia, 18-19 October, 2010 (program included: pp 29-30). Titled *Conference on Higher Education Diploma Supplements*, invitations were extended to all APEC MEs through EDNET. The event was designed to both share knowledge about diploma supplement developments, including those in Europe, and to discuss the possibilities for developing a voluntary APEC model.

The conference was attended by 34 delegates from the following APEC MEs: Australia; China; Indonesia; Malaysia; Mexico; New Zealand; The Philippines; Thailand; Viet Nam. In addition, the keynote speaker based in France, Professor Stephen Adam, presented insights from the European experience of introducing diploma supplements.

There was widespread interest in the current and future potential of diploma supplements, and enthusiasm expressed for a continuing role for APEC in supporting MEs. In particular, there was endorsement of a role for APEC to assist MEs share expertise and experiences around the design and implementation of diploma supplements. A 'voluntary, non-binding APEC model' received in-principle support, as part of a broader strategy including the facilitation of communications and the support of specific MEs.

The following is a summary of some of the principal themes to emerge from the discussions over the course of the Conference. The presentations made by invited speakers are not reproduced here. Rather, the focus is upon the general responses to the 'discussion questions' used as the basis for the Conference workshop sessions.

### *What purposes do diploma supplements serve in APEC member economies?*

There was an emphasis upon the potential for diploma supplements to assist institutions and government agencies in their assessment of qualifications from other MEs, and other higher education systems. It is likely that this focus on qualification recognition reflected the specific professional roles of many of the Conference delegates.

It was also noted that diploma supplements assist graduates more generally, whether or not they are moving internationally. Such documents help graduates understand and demonstrate the character of their particular qualifications and their individual achievements. Diploma supplements assist graduates to communicate their educational experience and attainment to others, for whatever purposes.

A third function ascribed to diploma supplements was as drivers of change within higher education systems. In particular, some delegates described the potential for the promotion of diploma supplements to highlight the importance of qualification frameworks, and to thereby hasten the development and articulation of such frameworks.

### *What are considerations regarding content and structure?*

The specific information that might be included in diploma supplements was not discussed in detail. Rather, much of the discussion of content was in the context of the principles for a possible APEC model (below). However, one theme to emerge concerned the optimal approach to description of educational systems.

A 'system description' was identified as a core element in most existing diploma supplements, including in Europe, Australia and New Zealand. It was noted that the importance was in providing a frame of reference within which the reader could 'locate' the particular, issuing institution. To be effective in this way, the need for a 'centrally-agreed' description of the education system of the economy was emphasised, that is, there was a perceived need for a central organising agency to coordinate the preparation of such a statement. Ideally, all diploma supplements issued by institutions within the ME would include this specific description. The keynote speaker from the United Kingdom further emphasised this among the 'lessons learned' in European countries.

*What principles should underpin a voluntary model for diploma supplements in APEC member economies?*

There was considerable discussion of the purpose for an APEC model, particularly given the existence of other models such as the European model, and those already developed by the APEC MEs of Australia and New Zealand. The broad consensus was that there was value in a model, although the basis for this conclusion varied.

For some delegates, the purpose for an APEC model was its potential to assist graduate movement, and thereby ‘labour flow’, between APEC MEs. A widely-used model would assist in the recognition of diploma supplements from different institutions and different MEs.

A second purpose for an APEC model was in defining diploma supplements for people not familiar with them. The model could assist communications with individuals, institutions or governments. It was noted that the model should not only describe the content and structure of a diploma supplement, but also the various purposes and benefits of the document.

There was no resolution reached on the specific inclusions for the model. Delegates commented on the need for both flexibility, and yet also sufficient detail to be meaningful as a communication tool, and sufficient specificity to assist institutions in implementation. Questions were raised about how closely an APEC model should resemble the European model. A possible rationale for a distinctive approach was proposed in terms of the ‘greater system and language diversity’ of the Asia-Pacific region.

*What are the decision points for economies and institutions in designing implementation strategies?*

There was a recognised role for governments or other agencies to act in a coordinating role. This was seen as important both in terms of encouraging institutions to issue diploma supplements, and in maximising the compatibility and external recognition of such documents.

Institutional autonomy has ‘different dimensions’ in different MEs. Despite this, there was wide agreement that institutional autonomy was a key consideration in the design of any implementation strategy coordinated by an external agency.

The range of qualifications covered by diploma supplements was also raised as a decision point for economies and institutions. While the focus of the conference was higher education, there is potential for diploma supplements to benefit graduates from a broader range of tertiary qualifications. Notably, the *TEQS* of New Zealand is not restricted to higher education qualifications.

*What specific issues face member economies in terms of their capacities to implement diploma supplements?*

The most significant issue identified was the need to raise awareness, locally, within individual MEs. One delegate stressed the ‘need’, not simply the ‘desire’, for diploma supplements. It was this ‘need’ that he asserted had yet to be fully communicated to institutions within his ME.

Equally, it was generally acknowledged that only some institutions were likely to implement in the very near future, and that this was not necessarily a significant problem. The priority was to raise awareness among institutions, and to be ready to provide support for institutions, as and when it was needed.

There was some discussion about the intersection between diploma supplements and qualifications frameworks. In particular, a question was raised about whether it was possible to introduce diploma supplements in the absence of fully developed qualification frameworks. It was argued that this was possible, and that diploma supplements could and should change over time to incorporate the development or revision of qualification frameworks and other relevant information. Indeed, it was noted that the *AHEGS* issued from Australian institutions will need to be changed when the current revisions to the Australian Qualifications Framework are completed.

### *The next steps*

The concluding session of the conference focussed on discussion of the 'next steps' for APEC MEs, and the possible role for APEC in support of diploma supplement developments.

Suggestions included the future convening of local conferences and workshops, either within or between MEs, to raise awareness of diploma supplements.

It was agreed that the report from this project would be distributed, along with other materials and presentations from the conference.

There was a request that examples of effective implementation strategies be shared, particularly considering the success of Australia in achieving widespread endorsement and implementation among universities.

There was a strong commitment to building upon the outcomes of the present project and, in particular, to build upon the momentum and interest in diploma supplements demonstrated by the Conference delegates. A suggestion was made that the draft model presented in this project report form the basis of ongoing discussion and development among APEC MEs – a suggestion enthusiastically endorsed by the Conference delegates.

**CONFERENCE ON HIGHER EDUCATION DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENTS  
PROGRAM  
CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA  
18-19 OCTOBER 2010  
50 MARCUS CLARKE ST CANBERRA**

**DAY ONE: MONDAY 18 OCTOBER 2010**

| <b>TIME</b>              | <b>EVENT</b>  |
|--------------------------|---|
| <b>08.30 – 09.00 hrs</b> | <b>Arrival/Registration/Tea and Coffee</b>  |
| <b>09.00 – 09.10 hrs</b> | <b>Official Welcome Address</b><br>Ms Kathryn Campbell, Deputy Secretary, DEEWR   |
| <b>09.10 – 09.30 hrs</b> | <b>Introduction</b><br>Mr Colin Walters, Group Manager, International Group, DEEWR<br>Mr Walters will introduce the conference by highlighting the role of international cooperation in education.  |
| <b>09.30 – 10.00 hrs</b> | <b>Setting the Scene: the APEC diploma supplement project in the context of international trends</b><br><b>Presenter:</b> Professor Richard James (project consultant), Centre for the Study of Higher Education, The University of Melbourne   |
| <b>10.00 – 11.00 hrs</b> | <b>Lessons Learned: The European Experience</b><br><b>Presenter:</b> Professor Stephen Adam, Bologna Promoter   |
| <b>11.00 – 11.30 hrs</b> | Group Photo and Morning Tea   |
| <b>11.30 – 12.30 hrs</b> | <b>Diploma supplements in the APEC region</b><br><b>Presenters:</b> Professor Richard James and Dr Kerri-Lee Harris (project consultants), Centre for the Study of Higher Education, The University of Melbourne<br>Findings from the APEC survey, with discussion of participants' particular areas of interest and objectives for the conference. |
| <b>12.30 – 14.00 hrs</b> | Lunch Break   |

| <b>WORKSHOP 1: COMMON GUIDING PRINCIPLES</b> |  |
|--|--|
| <b>14.00 – 16.30 hrs</b>                     | <b>What purposes do diploma supplements serve in APEC member economies? What are considerations regarding content and structure?</b><br><b>Presenters:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr Claire Atkinson, Higher Education Group, DEEWR</li> <li>• Mr Mark Erikson, Australian National University</li> </ul> <b>Workshop Facilitator:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professor Stephen Adam</li> </ul> <p>The presentations will then lead into an interactive workshop involving participants in discussion of the possible roles for diploma supplements and the information that they might contain.</p> <p>Afternoon tea/coffee will be served during the workshop.</p> |

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| <b>16.30 – 16.45 hrs</b> | <b>Conclusion of discussions on Workshop 1 and wrap up</b><br>Mr Jason Coutts, Branch Manager, International Cooperation Branch, DEEWR  |
| <b>END OF DAY ONE</b>    |   |
| <b>18.45 – 22.00 hrs</b> | <b>Dinner</b><br><b>Skylines Restaurant, Rydges Lakeside Hotel</b><br>15 <sup>th</sup> floor, London Circuit, Canberra<br><b>Dinner Address:</b> The Tertiary and Higher Education Landscape in Australia<br>Mr David Hazlehurst, Group Manager, Higher Education, DEEWR<br>Dress Code is smart casual. |

**DAY TWO: TUESDAY 19 OCTOBER 2010**

| <b>TIME</b>   | <b>EVENT</b>  |
|---|---|
| <b>09.00 – 09.30 hrs</b>  | <b>Arrival/Tea &amp; Coffee</b>   |
| <b>WORKSHOP 2: VOLUNTARY TEMPLATE AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION</b> |   |
| <b>09.30 – 12.00 hrs</b>  | <p><b>What principles should underpin a voluntary model for diploma supplements in APEC member economies? What are the decision points for economies and institutions in designing implementation strategies?</b></p> <p><b>Presenters:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr Sam Mackay, New Zealand Ministry of Education</li> <li>• Professor Richard James, Centre for the Study of Higher Education, The University of Melbourne</li> </ul> <p><b>Facilitator:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr Kerri-Lee Harris (project consultant), Centre for the Study of Higher Education, University of Melbourne</li> </ul> <p>This interactive session will focus on building consensus on the most useful, voluntary model for APEC member economies. In addition to considering content and structure, approaches to issuing and archiving will be discussed.</p> <p>This session will also canvass the options for implementation, considering both the role of government policies and the practical considerations for individual institutions.</p> <p>Morning tea/coffee will be served during the workshop.</p> |
| <b>12.00 – 13.30 hrs</b>  | <b>LUNCH BREAK</b>  |
| <b>WORKSHOP 3: CAPACITY BUILDING NEEDS</b>                              |   |
| <b>13.30 – 15.45 hrs</b>  | <p><b>What specific issues face member economies in terms of their capacities to implement diploma supplements?</b></p> <p><b>Presenter:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professor Dr Supachai Yavaprabhas, Director of SEAMEO RIHED</li> </ul> <p><b>Facilitator:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ms Margaret Proctor, Education and Professional Recognition, DEEWR</li> </ul> <p>Working in small discussion groups, participants will explore the particular challenges they have experienced or envisage in developing and implementing diploma supplements. This will be an opportunity to share possible strategies and to describe any capacity building needs that need to be addressed.</p>   |
| <b>15.45 – 16.30 hrs</b>  | <b>Way forward and workshop conclusion</b><br>Mr Jason Coutts, Branch Manager, International Cooperation Branch, DEEWR  |

### **A3. Draft version of an APEC Diploma Supplement Model**

#### **Statement of purpose**

The diploma supplement is a document provided to tertiary education graduates of participating institutions. The document provides an explanation of the qualification, and information about the issuing institution and the relevant higher education system. It is also likely to contain details about the specific achievements of the individual graduate, although in some cases this information is provided in a separate, accompanying document.

Diploma supplements are primarily intended to assist graduates in communicating the nature of their particular qualification. This has benefits whether the graduate is moving internationally, or is communicating with prospective employers or educational institutions within the member economy.

#### **Guiding principles**

**1. Diploma supplements are qualification specific**

The diploma supplement pertains to a single, named qualification. The document is therefore specific to the qualification, the issuing institution, and to a particular point in time. It is not equivalent to a graduate's complete enrolment history with the institution, which is typically available in the form of an academic transcript.

**2. Diploma supplements are issued for completed qualifications only**

The diploma supplement is a graduation document, issued after completion of all the requirements for the degree or other qualification. Institutions may choose to make the same qualification descriptions available to currently enrolled students, but this will be accessible through a distinct mechanism. A student's enrolment history is typically available to students, upon request, in the form of an academic transcript.

**3. Diploma supplements do not replace CVs or portfolios**

Diploma supplements are a possible component of, not a substitute for, a graduate's *curriculum vitae* (CV) or portfolio. Portfolios typically include information and evidence from a range of sources and are assembled and presented by the graduate. In contrast, the diploma supplement is an official document, prepared and authorised by the issuing institution.

**4. Information in a diploma supplement is factual**

The information included is authorised by the issuing institution. The descriptions of institutions and qualifications are presented objectively, not as purely aspirational or promotional statements.

**5. There are five sections to the diploma supplement**

To maximise the utility of diploma supplements as qualification recognition tools, each should include a description of the qualification, the awarding institution, and the relevant economy's tertiary education system or sector. Ideally, the document will also identify the individual graduate and includes details of their academic achievements toward the qualification.

**6. Within each section there are both core and optional elements**

Institutions may choose to include additional, optional information in any of the following sections: graduate identification; description of the qualification; description of the awarding institution; graduate's achievements. Ideally, however, institutions will take a uniform approach to describing their higher education system or sector.

**7. Issuing institutions determine layout and style of the document**

The specific presentation style is determined by institutions, and should include their institutional logo and other style elements as appropriate. It is desirable, however, that core and optional sections be presented in uniform sequence by all institutions, to assist in the interpretation and comparability of documents. Location of the certification information is at the discretion of the institution.

8. **Diploma supplements are produced in the language of instruction and in English**  
It is appropriate for the diploma supplement to be produced in the language of instruction for the qualification. In addition, in order to be of most benefit to graduates moving internationally the document should also be available in a widely accessible language. English is proposed as a useful global language for this purpose.
9. **Institutional authority and autonomy is respected, as appropriate to the particular ME**  
Typically, individual institutions are responsible for preparing, issuing, and authenticating the document. Institutions also determine the verification procedures most appropriate for their particular systems. While the decision to issue the diploma supplement is undertaken voluntarily, government or other external support and policy may encourage participation.

## **Template**

*While the numbers indicate the overall sequence, a different numbering system may be used (e.g. by numbering subsections; use of letters)*

### **1. Graduate identification**

The graduate's name, and any other information that is helpful in identifying the graduate for the reader of the document. This might include date of birth and/or, depending upon the method of verification, a unique identification code which can be matched to institutional or external data systems.

### **2. Description of the qualification**

The name of the award, as it appears on the testamur, and other relevant information to give the reader an overview of the focus of the studies, the form of teaching and learning, and the possible outcomes from the qualification. This is likely to include the typical admission requirements, the language of instruction, and the fields or specialisations, as appropriate. It may also include a description of particular features of the program, pathways to further study, and/or accreditation by particular professions. Where an qualifications framework is in place, the location of this qualification in that framework should be clearly stated. This section should be concise. Links to additional information may be provided by URLs.

Note that this description will change over time to reflect program changes. At any given time, however, this section will be standard for graduating students awarded this qualification.

### **3. Description of the awarding institution**

A brief and factual statement describing the institution. This should enable the reader to locate the institution within the description of the system or sector presented in Section 5. It should include the founding date for the institution, and details of cross-institutional arrangements if relevant to the particular qualification.

### **4. Graduate's achievements**

A list of the academic achievements related to this particular qualification. This will typically include: all units of study completed toward the award; the grades received, and a key to the grading system used. Where appropriate, the form of examination may be described, such as in the case of research higher degrees. Institutions may also elect to include any special recognition or achievements in this section, such as prizes or professional placements completed.

### **5. The economy-wide system or sector**

A description of the tertiary education system or sectors in the ME. This will include details of quality assurance structures for institutions and qualifications. It will also include a depiction of the qualifications framework, where one exists.

### **Certification information**

In some MEs, a common form of certification is used by all institutions. In other MEs, the method used is institution specific.

#### A4. Survey responses to specific questions regarding capacity building needs

**Table A4.1 Capacity building needs of APEC MEs currently without diploma supplements, as nominated by the respective EDNET representatives**

| APEC member economy*      | Responses to the question:<br><i>What form of capacity-building assistance might be of greatest benefit? In particular, you may select from one or more of the following examples ...</i><br>(selecting from: <i>yes; no; or unsure</i> ) |                             |                            |                         |
|---------------------------|---|-----------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|
|                           | <b>Student administrative system</b>  | <b>IT system / capacity</b> | <b>Technical expertise</b> | <b>Policy expertise</b> |
| <b>Hong Kong, China**</b> | Yes   | Yes                         | Unsure                     | Yes                     |
| <b>Indonesia</b>          | Yes   | Yes                         | Yes                        | Yes                     |
| <b>Korea</b>              | Yes   | –                           | –                          | –                       |
| <b>Mexico</b>             | Yes   | Yes                         | Yes                        | Unsure                  |
| <b>Peru</b>               | Yes   | Yes                         | Yes                        | Yes                     |
| <b>The Philippines</b>    | No  | No                          | No                         | No                      |
| <b>Chinese Taipei</b>     | Yes   | No                          | No                         | Yes                     |
| <b>Thailand</b>           | Yes   | Yes                         | Yes                        | Yes                     |
| <b>The United States</b>  | Unsure  | Unsure                      | Unsure                     | Unsure                  |

\* Not all survey respondents addressed this question directly

\*\* Based on most common response from the five institutions responding to this question on behalf of EDNET