



AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL STATE SCHOOL ORGANISATIONS LTD

SUBMISSION TO THE DISCUSSION PAPER
DEVELOPMENT OF A SAMPLE LEARNER PROFILE

JULY 2021

Sharron Healy

ACSSO President / Board Chair



Dr Bronwyn Hinz
Director
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By email: samplelearnerprofile@nousgroup.com.au

ACSSO RESPONSE TO DISCUSSION RE SAMPLER LEARNER PROFILES

Good morning Bronwyn,

Please find attached our response to the discussion paper regarding sample learner profiles. ACSSO has long advocated for a meaningful exit credential for all young people as they transition from school.

We know too often requirements, assessments and school reports focus on the neurotypical or academic learner and don't accommodate the young person whose strengths and capabilities lie in other areas.

Thank you for the work you do – we are more than pleased to be a part of the continuing discussions.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. Healy'.

Sharon Healy
ACSSO President / Board Chair
June 2021

INTRODUCTION

The Australian Council of State School Organisations is appreciative of the opportunity to make a contribution to the work in developing a learner profile. On June 28, ACSSO representatives participated in discussions with other parent organisations and representatives of Nous and we offer this small document as an addendum to that work.

We understand that this work supports the recommendation of *the Looking to the Future: Report of the Review of Senior Secondary Pathways into Work, Further Education and Training*. ACSSO participated in the review through a dedicated session at the ACSSO Roundtable in Darwin (2019) to which Review panel member Don Zoellner facilitated. Further to that Directors attended the consultation held in Perth.

ACSSO supports the notion that young people have a better life chances in the post-secondary education years if they complete Year 12 or at least attend school until the age of 17.

We also believe that offerings in Senior Education are still not adequately supporting students of all abilities and backgrounds, their interest or post school choices for employment. Whilst we believe there have been shifts in what is offered in the senior years many students still find relevance and engagement in what is offered, although it can be a struggle. Hence a real need to ensure that the success they experience and strengths they exhibit are part of the exiting credential.

It is our belief that whilst an ATAR has its place for some University entrance, it in no way should define the achievements, skills, capabilities and attributes of any young person exiting school after thirteen years.

Identifying the content of a learner profile is somewhat problematic as the many pathways a young person can travel post-secondary education will have different expectations. As an organisation we feel that the learner profile should be universal and mobile. The language and terminology should be clear and able to be understood by a variety of audiences. Any diagrammatic representation also must not be ambiguous or prone to misinterpretation.

In addition, we include the following:

PURPOSE AND UTILITY

For the young person, the learner profile allows them to reflect on their education and identify their strengths and potential. It provides them with an understanding of their capabilities and competencies in an effort to plan their post-secondary pathway/s and enables a smooth transition to further education and employment.

For employers, the profile should provide a more comprehensive overview of the achievements and strengths the young person brings to the job.

For tertiary education institutions the learner profile will give a bigger picture in terms of capability and their suitability for a particular course. The learner profile should enable the entry requirements to be broadened beyond the ATAR or academic results.

In response to portfolios, we would see them as additional information, evidence, to support the learner profile. They would give the young person agency to include content that would be relevant to either employment criteria or fulfill requirements as requested by the tertiary institution.

As identified earlier in this response any diagrammatic representation provided must be clear in its language and provide a key where the representation of capabilities cannot be misunderstood.

CONTENT

The discussion document captures much of what needs to be included in a learner profile. The documents should be strengths based and include what a young person has done and can do evidenced not just from school-based activities but broadened to include activities external to school. Where relevant, it should reflect capabilities and skills acquired from cultural activities, community participation, completed certificates, paid and volunteer work, etc. Student reflection is key in this. For transferability, a framework should be established to enable a degree of consistency.

The General capabilities, as applied to the Australian Curriculum could provide a guide.

We would advocate that any school reports or indeed ATAR scores would be supplementary documents if required and not included as content.

In the sample learner profiles, *the Shergold* review identifies several concerns for content. We understand the intent of the inclusion of a young person reaching “minimum standards” but believe this is not strength based and could be misinterpreted. It poses a challenge also for the small percentage (whilst extremely small – does exist) who haven’t reached those standards. A more positive use of language whilst still holding true to the result would be beneficial. Identifying the capability or competency reached would be more suitable.

ACSSO agrees with the inclusion of completed VET Certificates and we would also consider a statement of attainment for partially completed so as to support advanced standing or recognised prior learning for continuing tertiary studies.

The demonstration of capabilities for employment and active citizenship would provide a guide to enable to young person to identify the achievement of general capabilities. We also support the inclusion of work, caring and community experience. Both these areas are also a great tool for constructing a resume.

With the *LaTrobe Valley Authority’s* rosette diagram there could be a level of inconsistency in judgement in each of the levels.

The inclusion of “real world” experience in the *Big Picture Learning Credential* is positive and should be included – however the terminology used suggests that young people are not currently part of the “real world” and we would recommend that another descriptor be considered – suggestions include “authentic”, “external” or “relevant” experience.

In reference to *Beenleigh State High School Learner* Profile whilst understandable we consider the descriptors (Sound, High Achievement etc) to be subject to variations in teacher judgement.

Attendance is an admirable inclusion however for the student who has a chronic illness or who has fallen on challenging times this can be problematic and not indicative of engagement in their studies. We would suggest that it not be included.

The various diagrammatic representations of capabilities, whilst presenting a visual representation, could be inaccessible to many employers. The format used by Big Picture (not the diagram) appear easier to interpret and have a level of consistency with several core descriptors.

Whilst students should have agency in this process, we recognise the reality that it has to have “buy in” across the nation therefore we would suggest some consistency in features. Core features we feel should be included are:

- Student’s name

- Student’s personal statement
- School awards
- VET certificates or statement of attainment
- Work experience (paid, voluntary or part of a work experience program)
- Volunteering, caring or community experience
- Other awards, certificates and micro credentials (achieved at school or externally)
- Testimonial – rather than reference

We have excluded academic results and the ATAR as this profile should be applicable to all young people exiting compulsory education. The profile should present the young persons capabilities, strengths and skills. The excluded areas can be presented as a supplementary document where it is applicable e.g. some University or Tertiary Institution entrance requirements.

FAIRNESS AND INCLUSION

Consistency would be a key design feature to ensure a level of equity – hence our preference for the exclusion of the ATAR and academic results.

Language used around items such as “minimum standards” could be better addressed with a more positive approach.

Difficulties surrounding access to opportunities (physically and financially) for students in disadvantaged and challenging communities are problematic, this in itself is an equity issue – the student’s skills may present in a less structured way and they will need additional support from multiple agencies in identifying and articulating them.

RECOGNITION AND ASSESSMENT

ACSSO supports the inclusion of student self-assessment in the learner profile – this exercise is a great reflection tool and is possibly something that could be introduced in earlier years of schooling and further developed as they move through to the senior years. Participating in the self-assessment would develop the learner’s ability to realise their strengths, celebrate their achievements / competencies, setting goals and identify areas for further improvement.

Assessment would depend on the competency being assessed, who assesses it again would relate to the competency being assessed. For example, students participating in Marine Studies must hold a First Aid Certificate – this would be assessed by the instructor (St Johns Ambulance). An employer in a student’s part time job may give a testimonial regarding their leadership as a crew trainer or teamwork. Teachers can assess against the General Capabilities as provided by ACARA. Vocational Education subjects are often competency based. Young people attending dance or circus skills also have capabilities to be assessed against.

It is important that the young person has a number of trusted adults who can assist in the identification of skills acquired that aren’t necessarily part of a specified course.

Again, consistency within reason is key.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

This process is a more comprehensive, strengths-based approach. Therefore, a few things would need to be considered:

- Time to collate and gather the information

- Who is responsible for holding the information or compiling the profile?
- What professional learning or support needs to be given to contributors?
- What barriers with staff need to be overcome?
- Consult with community
- Discuss with the tertiary institutions
- Collaborate with employers
- Format for the school and / or sector
- Support for the student with their self-assessment / reflection
- A 2-3-year time frame to develop, pilot and implement

ACSSO has confidence in the development of a learner profile as a positive step to ensuring young people have a more comprehensive exit credential from secondary education. We also believe if we commence the self-assessment process in the earlier years young people will have a more positive picture of their learning and capabilities, essential for promotion of self-confidence and well-being.

We thank you once again for the opportunity to be a part of this discussion and would be happy to continue the conversation as the work progresses.