

# FORUM TO DISCUSS THE 2019 EVALUATION OF ASPECTS OF THE AMEP

*co-sponsored by*  
the Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA)  
Sydney School of Education & Social Work (University of Sydney)  
*and*  
the School of Education at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS)

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# Item 1: the ACSF

## *The AMEP Evaluation:*

- 1) the appropriateness, effectiveness and practicality of utilising the ACSF as a benchmark in initial, progressive and exit assessments
- 2) the use of the ACSF in aligning the AMEP and SEE Program through a common assessment framework for English proficiency
- 3) utilising standardised Key Performance Indicators to enhance accountability requirements of Service Providers

## *Underlying issues:*

- 1) use of the ACSF to facilitate pathways to the wider VET system
- 2) the validity and reliability of using data based on any assessments of student progress as a benchmark or Key Performance Indicator.

# KPIs in Business/the AMEP

## Effective KPIs

- ▣ A KPI is only effective if it is **aligned to company goals & objectives**



*What are/should be the goals & objectives of the AMEP?*

## Selecting KPIs

- ▣ Before deciding on KPIs each department should have access to the company's short and long term objectives and the plans in place for achieving them. **This collaborative process is key and highlights the importance of communication at all levels.** It also positively encourages employees, management and senior management to all face in the same direction.



*What collaborative processes are/should be in place to determine the goals of the AMEP?*

# BEST PRACTICE CRITERIA: A KPI/ benchmark based on *assessments of learner progress?*

BEST PRACTICE CRITERION <a href="https://www.targetdashboard.com/site/guide-to-kpis">https://www.targetdashboard.com/site/guide-to-kpis</a>	“LEARNER PROGRESS” KPI
<p><b>Specific</b> - It has to be <u>clear what the KPI measures</u>. There should be <b>one widely-accepted definition of the KPI</b>. This will make sure different users interpret it the same and come to the same conclusions which they can act upon.</p>	<p><i>Given the variables that affect/determine learners' progress in the AMEP:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• what does <i>any</i> assessment of learner progress in English <b>actually measure?</b></li><li>• is it clear <b>what is measured</b> using the ACSF?</li></ul> <p>i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• is the current “learner progress” KPI based on <b>clear &amp; specific data?</b></li><li>• could/ does <u>any</u> current English language assessment tool generate <b>clear/specific “learner progress” data</b> (as distinct from <b>learner levels</b>) suitable to underpin a KPI in the AMEP?</li></ul>

A KPI/ benchmark based on  
*assessments of learner progress?* (cont.)

BEST PRACTICE CRITERIA	LEARNER PROGRESS KPI
<p><b>Measurable</b> - The KPI has to be measurable <b>to define a standard</b> - time, cost, quantity etc. This will make it possible to measure the actual value and to make the actual value comparable to the targeted value.</p>	<p>Given that there are <b><i>no evidence-based standards for progress</i></b> in the AMEP, what has determined <b>the standard</b> on which the current “learner progress” KPI rests?</p>
<p><b>Achievable</b> - It is really important for <b>the acceptance of KPIs</b> and performance management within the company [sic] <b>that this norm is achievable</b>. Nothing is more discouraging than striving for a goal that you will never obtain.</p>	<p>Given the <b><i>length of tuition entitlements</i></b> in the AMEP, is it possible to determine a <b>standard and achievable</b> “learner progress” KPI?</p>

A KPI/ benchmark based on *assessments of learner progress?*  
(cont.)

BEST PRACTICE CRITERION	LEARNER PROGRESS KPI
<p><b>Relevant</b> - The KPI must give <b>further insight into the performance of the company in order to achieve its strategy.</b> If a KPI is not measuring a part of the strategy, acting on it is irrelevant.</p>	<p><b>What <i>are</i> the goals of the AMEP?</b> The ACIL Allen Review (2015): Rec. 1: The AMEP's longstanding objective of <u>settlement</u> for migrants into Australia (through the <u>development of English language proficiency</u>) is clear, and should continue to be its primary goal.</p> <p><b>Is use of the ACSF as an assessment tool/framework in the AMEP relevant to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• migrant <b>settlement</b> goals</li><li>• developing <b>English language proficiency</b>?</li></ul> <p><b>SO:</b> <b><i>why is the AMEP Evaluation <u>not</u> directed to answering these questions?</i></b></p>



A KPI/ benchmark based on *assessments of learner progress?*  
(cont.)

BEST PRACTICE	LEARNER PROGRESS KPI
<p><b><u>ANSWER:</u></b></p> <p><b>Relevance (cont.)</b> - The KPI must give further insight into the performance of the company <i>in order to achieve its strategy</i>. If a KPI is not measuring a part of the strategy, acting on it is irrelevant.</p>	<p><b>What is DET'S corporate strategy in mandating use of the ACSF as an assessment tool/framework in the AMEP?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>aligning the AMEP to the SEE Program</i></li></ul> <p>by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• utilising <i>the same compliance mechanism</i></li><li>• incorporating the AMEP into the VET sector's (narrow) <i>focus on employment outcomes</i>.</li></ul> <p>i.e.:</p> <p><b><u>settlement &amp; learning English</u></b> <b>have become subservient</b> <b>(irrelevant?)</b> <b>to DET's "New Business Model"</b></p>

## ACTA Survey: *Comments about what this means in practice*

- ▣ *The ACSF, with the idea of individualized assessment, is very impractical and unfeasible in the current context where there are **two assessment systems in place** (ASCF and CSWE at my workplace) **with totally different criteria and requirements**. On top of that, there is the **KPI of 80% of one indicator up after 200 hours in the ACSF, multi-level class, poor attendance, doing coversheets, no clear instructions on what is considered verified by auditors**, that add to the craziness of teachers having to make sure their students have achieved the ASCF indicators, the administration related to keeping track of who has achieved what, of grabbing a low-attending but the due-ACSF client the moment they come to class to give a test before touchdown of 200 or 400 hours while juggling with teaching the other students (and couple that up with a class of two [part-time] co-teachers).*
- ▣ *There was never enough time for the above but the last two years at TAFE has seen **a significant drop in time for all areas**. I have just raised this point again with management, including HR, as with the current timetable and curriculum many 'basic' aspects of the AMEP are not being addressed given the pressures to have large classes and meet KPIs etc. It is applying how we have lost the plot of **providing a quality language/settlement program for our migrants and refugees**. It falls onto the dedication of teachers to try to do the impossible. However, this is coming at a cost to the health and wellbeing of such dedicated teachers.*



- ▣ *Too much time taken up by constant assessing with too strong a focus on work regardless of the student just having got off a plane to come to this country unable to even say their names*
- ▣ *I think we have lost sight of the purpose of the AMEP program with the focus on indicators, assessment and employment.*
- ▣ *The new contract limits the resources we can devote to real settlement incl. guest speakers, excursions etc. We used to have a fantastic and extensive settlement program but with the new emphasis both on ACSF and (through ASQA) on curriculum compliance and quality, we haven't time, money or energy for Settlement focus and special activities anymore.*
- ▣ *I don't think the current system is pedagogically sound at all. It does not allow nearly enough time for teachers to address individual learner's needs or provide creatively enriching activities or settlement information and support. I am noticing a disturbing change in the staff environment and dialogue. We talk about box ticking. We are irritated.*
- ▣ *Excursions used to be an integral part of our teaching program, but the risk assessment is now so ridiculously complex and time-consuming that we don't even have time to fill out the forms.*
- ▣ *Amount of time spent on ACSF indicators can be overwhelming.*

A KPI/ benchmark based on *assessments of learner progress?*  
(cont.)

BEST PRACTICE	LEARNER PROGRESS KPI
<p><b>Timely</b> - It is important to state the value of the KPI in time. Every KPI only has meaning if you know <b>the time frame in which it has to be achieved.</b></p>	<p>See the “achievable” criterion above:</p> <p>Given the <i>length of tuition entitlements</i> in the AMEP, is it possible to determine a standard “learner progress” KPI that is <b>achievable in a set period of time?</b></p>

# Best Practice in Assessment

*In order for assessments to be sound, they must be free of bias and distortion.*

***Reliability and validity*** are two concepts that are important for defining and measuring bias and distortion.

**Reliability:** assessments must be **consistent** i.e. *measure the same thing whenever they are done.*

**Validity:** assessments must be **accurate** i.e. *measure what they are supposed to measure.*

# International Language Testing Association Guidelines

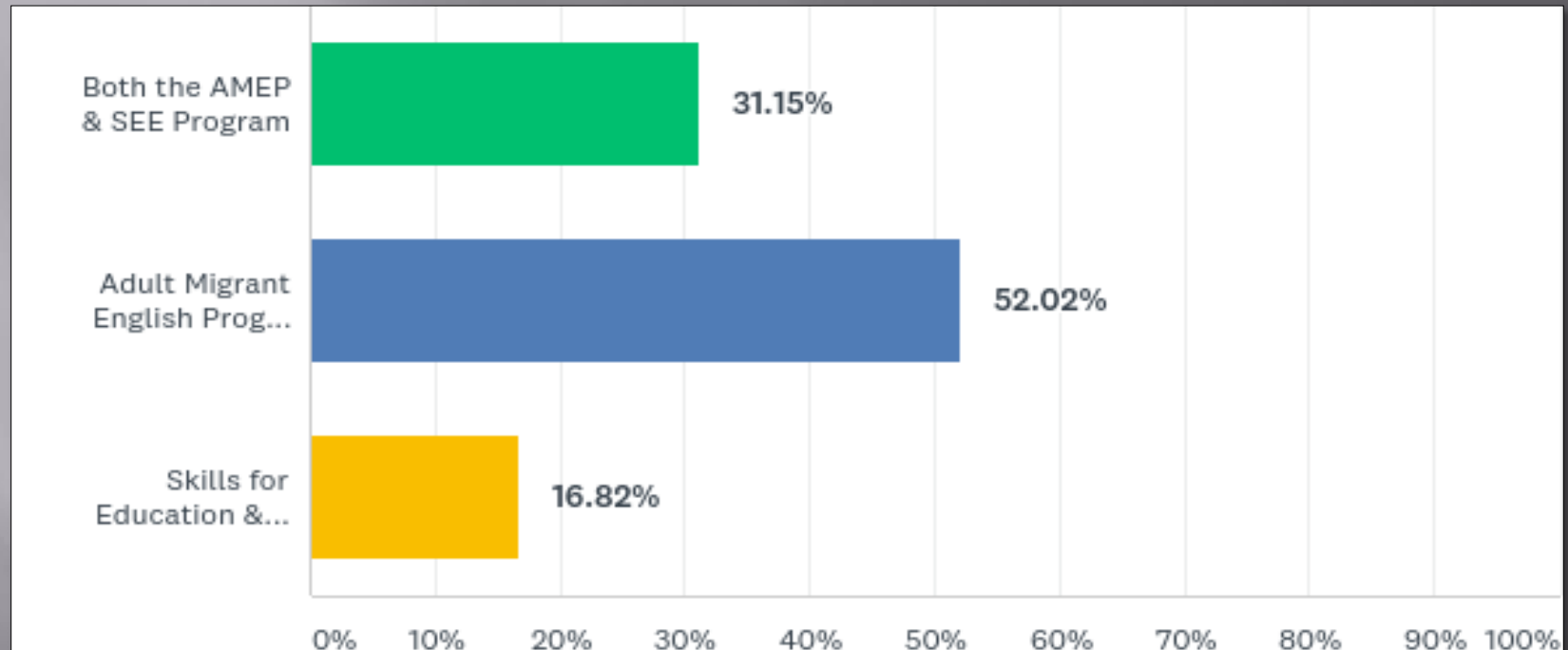
(adopted 2007):

## Basic Considerations for Good Testing Practice in all Situations

1. The test developer's understanding of just what the test, and each sub-part of it, **is supposed to measure (its construct) must be clearly stated.**
2. All tests, regardless of their purpose or use, must provide information which **allows valid inferences to be made.** Validity refers to **the accuracy of the inferences and uses that are made on the basis of the test's scores.** ... The test score inference or interpretation can be valid only **if the test construct offers as accurate as possible a picture of the skill or ability it is supposed to measure.**
3. All tests, regardless of their purpose or use, must be reliable. Reliability refers to the **consistency of the test results, to what extent they are generalizable and therefore comparable across time and across settings.**

# The ACTA survey:

## *In which Program(s) do you work?*



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Both the AMEP & SEE Program	31.15%	100
Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) only	52.02%	167
Skills for Education & Employment (SEE) Program only. (If you select this answer, you will be skipped past two questions about the AMEP.)	16.82%	54
TOTAL		321

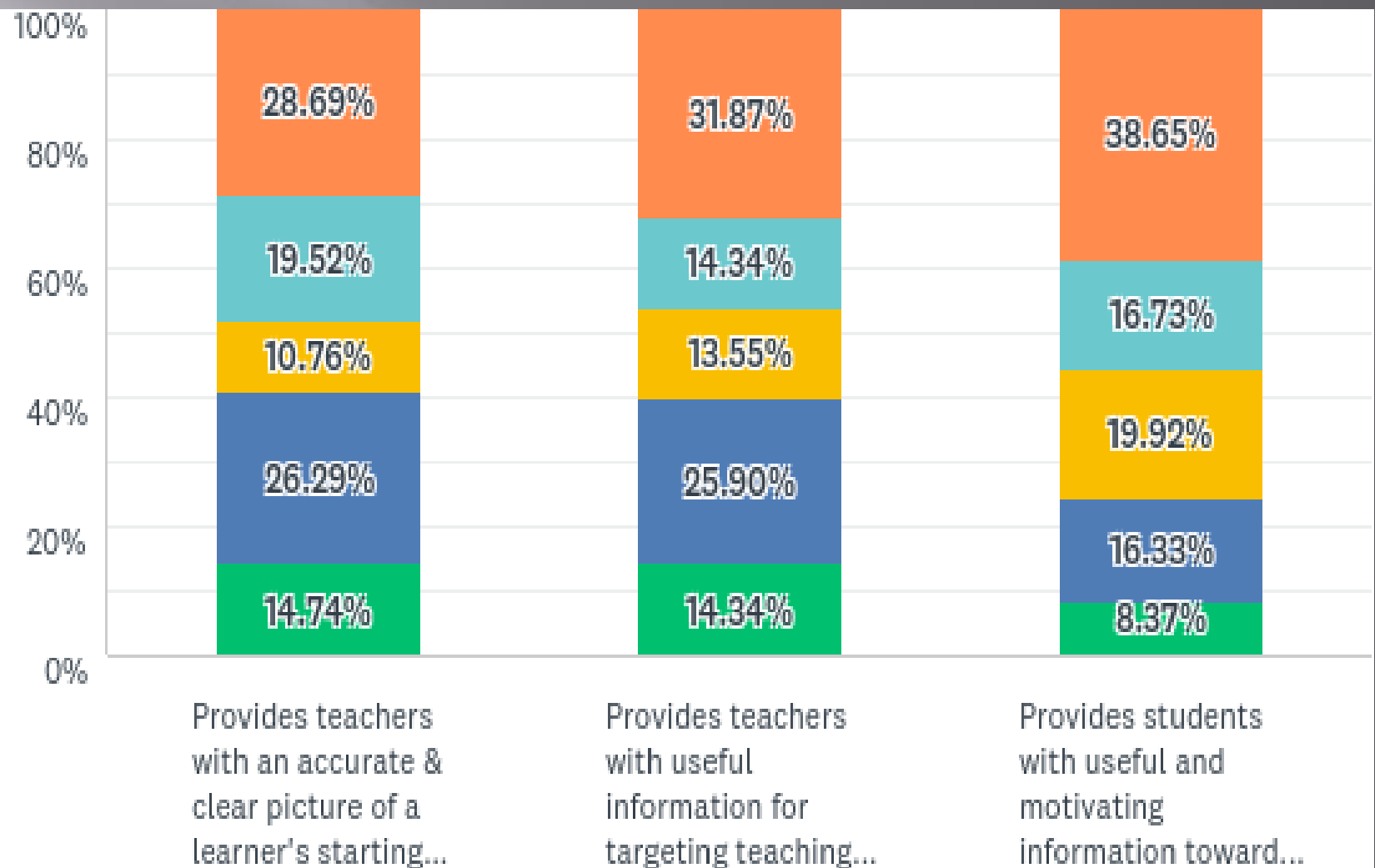
# Respondents' locations

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
ACT	7.60%	33
NSW	22.35%	97
Northern Territory	0.92%	4
Queensland	18.20%	79
South Australia	16.82%	73
Tasmania	5.99%	26
Victoria	19.82%	86
Western Australia	8.29%	36
TOTAL		434



# *How suitable is the ACSF for assessing adult migrants' English language learning?*

	VERY SUITABLE	SOMEWHAT SUITABLE	NEITHER SUITABLE NOR UNSUITABLE	SOMEWHAT UNSUITABLE	VERY UNSUITABLE	TOTAL
Provides teachers with an accurate & clear picture of a learner's starting point & progress in learning English	14.74% 37	26.29% 66	10.76% 27	19.52% 49	28.69% 72	251
Provides teachers with useful information for targeting teaching to meet learner's English needs	14.34% 36	25.90% 65	13.55% 34	14.34% 36	31.87% 80	251
Provides students with useful and motivating information towards improving their English	8.37% 21	16.33% 41	19.92% 50	16.73% 42	38.65% 97	251



Very suitable    Somewhat suitable    Neither suitable nor unsuitable  
Somewhat unsuitable    Very unsuitable

## Question

If **48% of respondents** (n = 121/251) believe that the ACSF does not provide:

- 1) an accurate or clear picture of a learner's starting point & progress in learning English
- 2) useful information for targeting teaching to meet learners' English needs
- 3) motivating information for students in improving their English,

***what should we conclude about:***

- ▣ whether ACSF data are *contributing valid & reliable data* to underpin a “learner progress” KPI?
- ▣ how the ACSF *aligns with the goals of the AMEP?*

*What effect has professional development had on  
your professional opinion of the ACSF?*

INCREASED MY SATISFACTION WITH THE ACSF	NO EFFECT	INCREASED/CAUSED MY DISSATISFACTION WITH THE ACSF	N/A: I'VE HAD NO PD	TOTAL
28.95% 88	28.29% 86	37.83% 115	4.93% 15	304

# Question

If training in use of the ACSF has *increased* the dissatisfaction of **nearly 38%** of the teachers trained in its use (n = 115/304) and has had **no effect** on a further **29%** (n = 86/304)

***what should we conclude about:***

- ▣ the ACSF's appropriateness, effectiveness & practicality as a benchmark in initial, progressive & exit assessments?
- ▣ acceptance within the AMEP of the ACSF in providing the basis for a valid and achievable KPI?
- ▣ the success of ACSF training in establishing the ACSF as a framework to underpin a KPI?

## *Placing students: ACSF vs ISLPR?*

MUCH MORE APPROPRIATE THAN THE ISLPR	SOMEWHAT MORE APPROPRIATE THAN THE ISLPR	NO MORE OR LESS APPROPRIATE THAN THE ISLPR	SOMEWHAT LESS APPROPRIATE THAN THE ISLPR	MUCH LESS APPROPRIATE THAN THE ISLPR	I'VE NEVER USED THE ISLPR	TOTAL
10.64% 15	7.09% 10	13.48% 19	7.09% 10	32.62% 46	29.08% 41	141



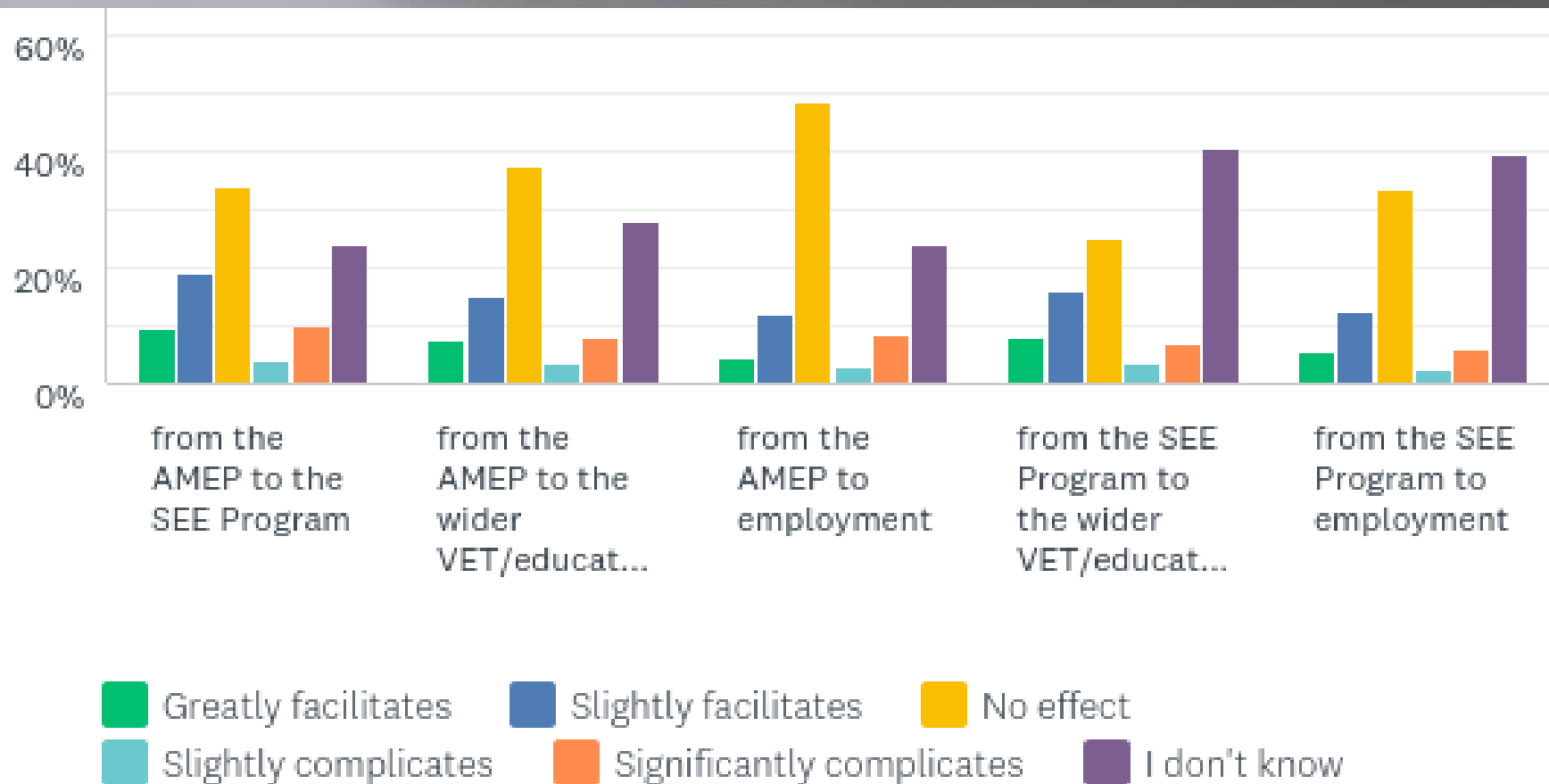
## Question

If 39% (56/141) of those using the ACSF to determine client eligibility for the AMEP believe that it is *somewhat or significantly less appropriate* than the alternative they used previously,

*what should we conclude about:*

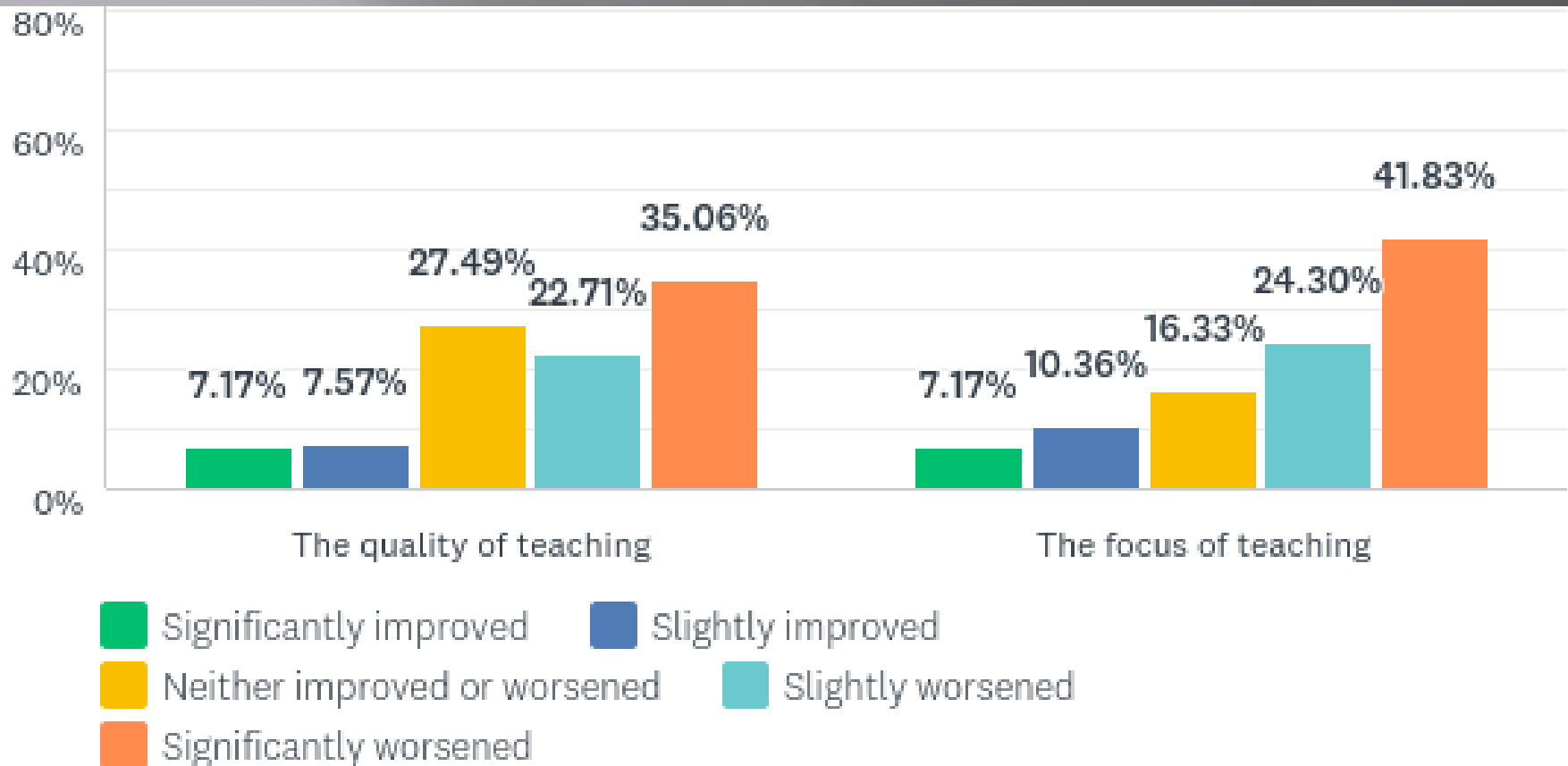
- ▣ the appropriateness & effectiveness of the ACSF?
- ▣ acceptance of the ACSF within the AMEP as a relevant benchmark?

## *To what extent does the ACSF assist client pathways?*



Total respondents: 302

## *ACSF effect on teaching in the AMEP & SEE Program?*



No. of respondents: 220

*Effect of ACSF on attention to teaching & assessing  
accredited curriculum?*

SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASED ATTENTION	SLIGHTLY INCREASED ATTENTION	NOT CHANGED NOTICEABLY	SLIGHTLY DECREASED ATTENTION	SIGNIFICANTLY DECREASED ATTENTION	N/A: I DON'T TEACH AN ACCREDITED CURRICULUM	TOTAL
14.40% 36	12.40% 31	16.80% 42	18.00% 45	37.20% 93	1.20% 3	250

## Question

If **91%** (n = 1380/1510) of responding managers/ teachers think using the ACSF **complicates pathways** to other programs and/or employment OR **has no effect** on pathways OR **don't know** if it has any effect,

AND IF

**61%** (n = 311/502) think that the ACSF has had a **negative effect on the quality and focus of teaching** in the AMEP and/or SEE program

AND IF

**55%** (n = 138/250) think that the ACSF has **decreased attention to teaching & assessing against accredited curriculum** in the AMEP,

***what should we conclude about the relationship between the ACSF and the goals of the AMEP?***

*Over to you!*