

FORUM TO DISCUSS THE 2019 EVALUATION OF ASPECTS OF THE AMEP

co-sponsored by
**the Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA),
Vic TESOL**
and
the Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne

ITEM 1: THE ACSF

The Evaluation Statement of Requirements:

- 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.

DET Statement

The 2015 ACIL Allen evaluation of the SEE program recommended **maintaining the use of the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF)**. The evaluation also recommended that **the Government consider adopting the ACSF in AMEP** to facilitate greater [sic] pathways **between the AMEP and other training programs** and the tertiary education sector more broadly. AMEP adopted the use of the ACSF from July 2017.

Dept. of Education & Training SQ18-000619, Senator Doug Cameron provided in writing, Budget Estimates 2018-2019.

2015 ACIL Allen Review

Recommendation 6: Building on the recent research mapping the ACSF to the ISLPR and the CSWE curriculum framework, the Australian Government should consider formally **adopting the mapping framework** to facilitate greater [sic] pathways between the AMEP and other training programmes, and the tertiary education sector more broadly. Similarly, the Australian Government should consider the extent to which **other Training Package units which are already mapped to the ACSF could be used alongside the CSWE curriculum framework.**

ACIL Allen Appendix A: Mapping Framework

ACSF	CSWE	ISLPR	IELTS	Canadian Language Benchmarks
Level 1	Preliminary Course in SWE (partial) Certificate I (broad)	0 Zero proficiency 0+ Formulaic proficiency 1- Minimum 'creative' proficiency	0 Did not attempt test 1 Non user 2 Intermittent user	CLB 1 Initial basic CLB 2 Developing basic
Level 2	Certificate II (broad)	1 Basic transactional proficiency	3 Extremely limited user	CLB 3 Adequate basic
Level 3	Certificate III (broad)	1+ Transactional proficiency	4 Limited user	CLB 4 Fluent basic
Level 4	etc			
Level 5	etc			

Other DET Statements

The ACSF was introduced to the AMEP in 2017 to provide a common framework for **measuring client progress across multiple teaching curricula and to provide visibility of client progression in the program**. Under previous AMEP contracts the International Second Language Proficiency Rating (ISLPR) framework was used to place a student in the program **but it could not be used to track language acquisition throughout students' participation in the program**. By contrast, the ACSF identifies and describes language level for placement in a language and literacy program, progression throughout the program and proficiency at exit. The ACSF, created in 2008, is a well-established national framework and since 2011, it has been used in a similar Australian Government funded program, the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) program.

Dept. of Education & Training SQ18-000613, Senator Doug Cameron provided in writing, Budget Estimates 2018-2019.

The ACSF Introduction

The ACSF has been broadly based on the National Reporting System (NRS), **a mechanism for reporting outcomes of adult English LLN provision** (Coates et al, 1995). However, while the NRS was primarily designed as a reporting tool, the ACSF has been designed as **a generic framework** with applications in a wider range of contexts.

Following mapping of course requirements and materials, and identification of learner strengths and weaknesses, **the ACSF can be used to:**

- ▣ *tailor curriculum, materials and methodologies to learner needs*
- ▣ *design and rate core skills assessment instruments*
- ▣ *evaluate the potential usefulness of assessment tasks by identifying the ACSF levels and Performance Features being assessed*
- ▣ *develop self evaluation tools which increase learner engagement and ownership*
- ▣ *assist teachers/trainers to provide specific feedback on performance. (p. 2)*

Indicators are statements that briefly describe performance at each level of the five core skills. There are 11 Indicators; two each for **Learning, Reading, Writing** and **Oral Communication** and three for **Numeracy**.

DET:

The ACSF is **a tool for measuring language proficiency**; it is not a curriculum.

Dept. of Education & Training SQ18-000649, Senator Sarah Hanson-Young 20 June 2018, Budget Estimates 2018-2019.

The ACSF is **the most commonly used assessment tool in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector, including the SEE Program**. The use of a common benchmarking tool strengthens client pathways between VET providers and programs, especially given that all but one AMEP provider is also a SEE Provider

Dept. of Education & Training SQ18-000612, Senator Doug Cameron provided in writing, Budget Estimates 2018-2019.

From *Generic Framework* to a *tool for measuring language proficiency*

Framework



Indicator



Task



Report



It's not that simple!

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.

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

<https://www.targetdashboard.com/site/guide-to-kpis>

Specific - It has to be clear what the KPI measures. There should be one widely-accepted definition of the KPI. This will make sure different users interpret it the same and come to the same conclusions which they can act upon.

“LEARNER PROGRESS” KPI

Given the variables that affect/determine learners' progress in the AMEP:

- what does *any* assessment of learner progress in English **actually measure?**
- is it clear **what is measured** using the ACSF?
- could/ does **any existing** English language assessment tool generate clear/specific **“learner progress”** data (as distinct from **learner levels**) **suitable to underpin a KPI in the AMEP?**

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

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

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

BEST PRACTICE CRITERION	LEARNER PROGRESS KPI
<p>Relevant - The KPI must give further insight into the performance of the company in order to achieve its strategy. If a KPI is not measuring a part of the strategy, acting on it is irrelevant.</p>	<p>What are the goals of the AMEP? 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>Is use of the ACSF as an assessment tool/framework in the AMEP relevant to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• migrant settlement goals• developing English language proficiency? <p>SO: <i>why is the AMEP Evaluation <u>not</u> directed to answering these questions?</i></p>

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

BEST PRACTICE	LEARNER PROGRESS KPI
<p><u>ANSWER to the above question:</u></p> <p>Relevance (cont.) - 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>What <u>is</u> the strategy that DET is pursuing in mandating use of the ACSF as an assessment tool/ framework in the AMEP?</p> <p>ANSWER:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>aligning the AMEP to the SEE Program</i> <p>by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>utilising the same compliance mechanism in both Programs</i>• <i>incorporating the AMEP into the VET sector's (narrow) focus on employment outcomes.</i> <p>i.e.:</p> <p><u>settlement & learning English</u> have become subservient (irrelevant?) to DET's "New Business Model"</p>

ACTA Survey: *Comments about the ACSF in practice*

What goals are now being followed in actual practice in the AMEP - English for settlement or meeting compliance requirements?

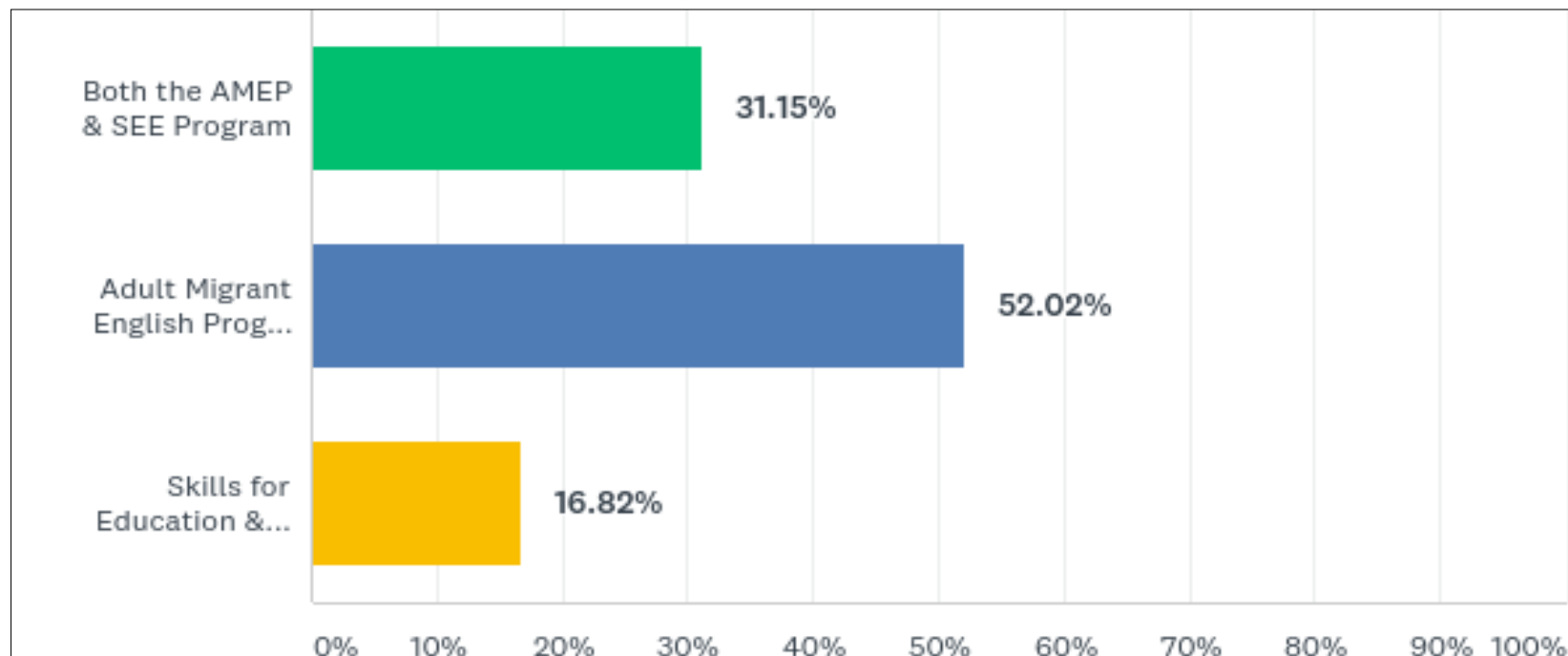
- ▣ *The ACSF, with the idea of individualized assessment, is very impractical and unfeasible in the current context where there are **two assessment systems in place** (ASCF and CSWE at my workplace) with totally different criteria and requirements. On top of that, there is the **KPI of 80% of one indicator 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).*

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

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

The ACTA survey:

In which Program(s) do you work?



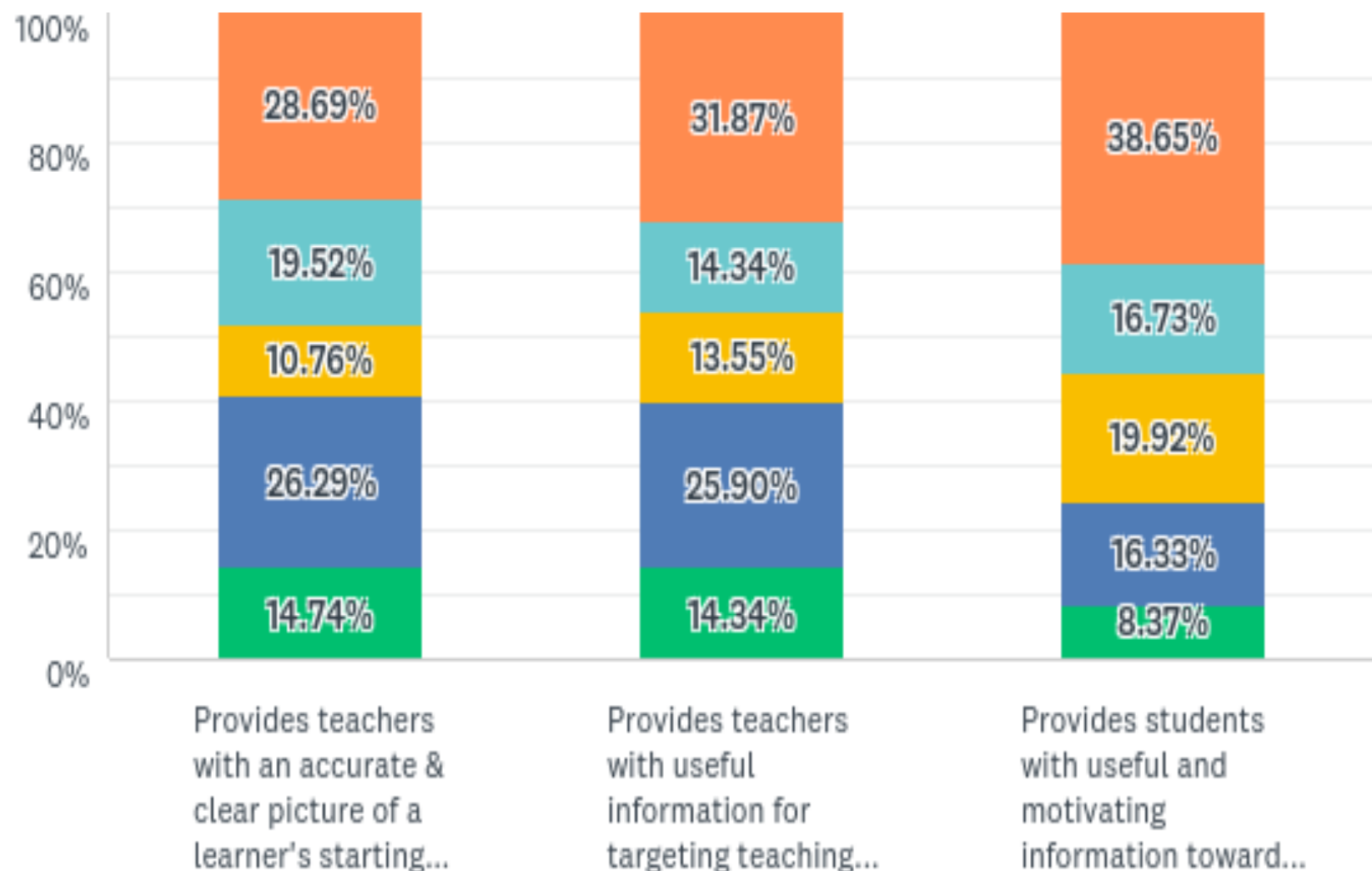
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Both the AMEP & SEE Program	31.15%	100
Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) only	52.02%	167
Skills for Education & Employment (SEE) Program only. (If you select this answer, you will be skipped past two questions about the AMEP.)	16.82%	54
TOTAL		321

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

My 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

My 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?

My 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 ISLPR,

what should we conclude about:

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

My 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!