



Assessment in the VET sector

2nd edition 2016

First published 2015

2nd edition 2016

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TITLE: Assessment in the VET sector

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Assessment in the VET sector

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Introduction

The purpose of this publication is to provide practitioners and other stakeholders in the vocational education and training sector in Western Australia with information on the processes and practices involved in an assessment system.

This information has not been referenced to specific regulatory standards; however, it is based on current standards and reflects good practice. The information applies to training package qualifications and accredited courses with a vocational outcome.

While the regulatory standards do not specify any particular documentation for assessment systems, the documents in this publication are examples that a registered training organisation can consider and adopt as required.

This publication consists of the following:

- an introduction to developing strategies for assessment and the concepts around competency-based assessment;
- a guide to the development of assessment tools;
- information about how to cluster units of competency for assessment;
- a guide to planning and conducting assessment process for employers and assessors involved in competency-based assessment;
- how to adjust assessment processes and tools for inclusive practice;
- a guide to conducting RPL;
- information about assessor competencies;
- a guide to validation and evaluation of assessment systems and processes;
- a list of resources for assessors, including websites, organisations and materials on assessment; and
- a glossary of terms.

A series of exemplar materials and templates for adaptation and use by trainers/assessors is provided throughout.

Chapter 1

Developing strategies for learning and assessment

Registered training organisations are tasked with developing learning and assessment strategies, processes and materials that meet the needs of their clients and maximise outcomes. This can include learning and assessment that lead to the award of a statement of attainment or a full qualification.

In order to meet clients' needs and maximise outcomes, RTOs need to develop processes and products that focus on the quality of the learning and assessment experience. It is well established in research that effective strategies involve learners:

- making sense of new knowledge and skills, and developing understanding rather than simply learning sets of facts and information to be reproduced when required;
- looking for what is significant, such as key concepts and principles, relationships between ideas, and lines of reasoning;
- relating new ideas to previous knowledge and experiences;
- finding the link between conceptual knowledge and real-world applications; and
- employing higher order thinking skills through examining issues, clarifying problems, producing their own ideas and thinking critically.

The learning and assessment strategy provides a clear picture of the learning and assessment delivered to the learner and how and when this will be achieved. It is the blueprint for the delivery of the qualification or skill set. To be able to develop an effective strategy, the RTO needs to consult and consider the following information when developing a learning and assessment strategy.

A training package is endorsed by the Skills Service Organisation or its delegate in accordance with the *Standards for Training Packages*. The endorsed components of a training package are:

- units of competency;
- assessment requirements (associated with each unit of competency);
- qualifications; and
- credit arrangements.

The endorsed components form part of the requirements that an RTO must meet under these Standards. A training package also consists of a non-endorsed, quality-assured companion volume which contains industry advice to RTOs on different aspects of implementation. The companion volumes can be found on the SSO websites.

Training package qualifications are designed to allow customisation to meet the needs of a range of learners. This is achieved by choosing a combination of units of competency that meet the needs of both the learner and the industry, as well as the packaging rules for the qualification. The RTO will consult with industry and potential learners to discuss and decide which units to include in the qualification.

The following factors may influence the choice of units:

- the type of work undertaken in the workplace;
- the availability of machinery/equipment and staff to support the learning and assessment;
- any conditions imposed by licensing authorities or regulatory requirements;
- any competency already held by the learner; and
- any seasonal or shift requirements that may restrict the opportunity for learning and assessment.

This list is not definitive and the RTO's discussions with industry and the learner will uncover other opportunities or restrictions that may need to be considered in deciding the qualification packaging. RTOs need to be aware of any delivery requirements specified in legislation or regulations. Any concerns that an RTO may have in this regard should be discussed with the appropriate governing body.

Once a decision has been made about the units of competency to be included in the qualification, the delivery and assessment schedule and methodologies can be determined. The following factors will influence these decisions:

- any prerequisites stipulated by the training package;
- the most logical order for delivery and assessment of the units of competency (or clusters of units);
- the integration of on the job and off the job training (if appropriate);
- the qualifications and experience of the staff delivering or supporting learning and conducting assessment;
- the accessibility and availability of any resources needed, including equipment, machinery and supervisory staff;
- the requirement for simulation (if any);
- the arrangements for access to workplaces (if required);
- the most appropriate methodology for delivery and assessment, both on and off the job, subject to legislation or regulations which may include national recognition or recognition of prior learning; any special arrangements for training and/or assessment that need to be made for learners with special needs; and
- the expected duration of the qualification, including determining the amount of training the learners require.

Decisions relating to these factors should be recorded in the strategy, or the strategy should refer the reader to this information if it is recorded in other supporting documents. Learners also need information about the support and administrative services offered by the RTO. This information is normally provided before a learner enrolls and may influence the learner's decision to engage with the RTO. For example, if the learner needs numeracy support and the RTO does not have the capacity to provide that support, alternative arrangements would need to be made or the learner may choose to use another RTO that can provide the support. Administrative information such as fees, refunds, accessing RTO resources, and complaints and appeals must also be provided at this time.

What is competency-based assessment?

Competency-based assessment is the process of collecting evidence and making judgements on whether an individual has achieved competence. This confirms that an individual can perform to the standard expected in the workplace as expressed in the nationally endorsed competency standards (where they exist), on competency standards developed by relevant industry, enterprise, community or professional groups, or on outcomes of accredited courses, if there are no relevant nationally endorsed competency standards.

How do you know if an individual is competent?

You know whether an individual is competent after they have completed an assessment that verifies that all aspects of the unit of competency are held and can be applied in an industry context. Just as learner drivers must demonstrate that they can drive a car by taking the examiner for a drive, so too must learners demonstrate competence by undergoing an assessment process. Assessment may involve a variety of methods.

Individuals can be assessed during their training, at the end of their training, or without undertaking any training – for example, if they believe that they are already competent. Those being assessed are often called 'candidates'. The method and timing of assessment will vary depending upon the assessor, the candidate and the competency being assessed.

Against which standards are learners assessed?

Learners are judged against competency standards (often called units of competency) developed by industry to assess whether they are competent. A competency standard comprises individual units of competency that include the essential information needed to assess a learner.

Some enterprises have developed specific competency standards for their businesses and, in some cases, these have been nationally endorsed in enterprise training packages or used in state accredited courses.

To gain a formal qualification, for example, a Certificate II or a diploma, individuals have to be competent in a specified group of units of competency. Information on the qualifications and relevant units of competency are outlined in accredited courses or training packages.

What sort of evidence is collected?

Evidence collected may be:

- direct – such as observation of workplace performance;
- indirect – such as formal testing; or
- supplementary – such as references from employers.

Evidence is used by an assessor to make a judgement about whether a learner is competent. It is the responsibility of the assessor to determine what and how much evidence is required to make the assessment judgement. Training packages provide guidance on the types of evidence required, and further advice may be gained through comparing, and industry consultation.

What is an assessment tool?

Assessment tools – also called evidence-gathering tools – contain both the instrument and the instructions for gathering and interpreting evidence in an assessment process. They form part of the bank of resources used for effective and safe assessment practice in a sector where assessment is conducted within a quality assurance framework.

An assessment tool is made up of the following components:

- the context and conditions for the assessment;
- the tasks to be administered to the learner;
- an outline of the evidence to be gathered from the learner;
- the evidence criteria used to judge the quality of performance, for example, the decision-making rules; and
- the administration, recording and reporting requirements.

The tasks to be administered to the learner, the outline of the evidence to be gathered from the learner and the evidence criteria used to judge the quality of performance are often referred to as the **assessment instrument**.

The principles of assessment

When developing assessment tools and conducting assessment, trainers/assessors need to ensure that the principles of assessment are met. This is not only good practice but also a requirement of the regulatory standards. The principles of assessment require that assessment is **valid**, **reliable**, **flexible** and **fair**.

<p>Valid</p>	<p>Any assessment decision of the RTO is justified, based on the evidence of performance of the individual learner.</p> <p>Validity requires that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assessment against the unit(s) of competency and the associated assessment requirements covers the broad range of skills and knowledge essential to competent performance; • assessment of knowledge and skills is integrated with their practical application; • assessment is to be based on evidence that shows that a learner can demonstrate these skills and knowledge in other similar situations; and • judgement of competence is based on evidence of learner performance that is aligned to the unit(s) of competency and associated assessment requirements.
<p>Reliable</p>	<p>Evidence presented for assessment is consistently interpreted and assessment results are comparable, irrespective of the assessor conducting the assessment.</p>
<p>Flexible</p>	<p>Assessment is flexible to the individual learner by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reflecting the learner’s needs; • assessing competencies held by the learner, no matter how or where they have been acquired; and • drawing from a range of assessment methods and using those that are appropriate to the context, the unit of competency and associated assessment requirements, and the individual.
<p>Fair</p>	<p>The individual learner’s needs are considered in the assessment process.</p> <p>Where appropriate, reasonable adjustments are applied by the RTO to take into account the individual learner’s needs.</p> <p>The RTO informs the learner about the assessment process and provides them with the opportunity to challenge the result of the assessment and be reassessed if necessary.</p>

The rules of evidence

Well-designed assessment tools will help to ensure that the evidence collected is:

Valid	The assessor is assured that the learner has the skills, knowledge and attributes described in the module or unit of competency and associated assessment requirements.
Sufficient	The assessor is assured that the quality, quantity and relevance of the assessment evidence enable a judgement to be made of the learner's competency.
Authentic	The assessor is assured that the evidence presented for assessment is the learner's own work.
Current	The assessor is assured that the assessment evidence demonstrates current competency. This requires the assessment evidence to be from the present or the very recent past.

Chapter 2

Designing assessment tools

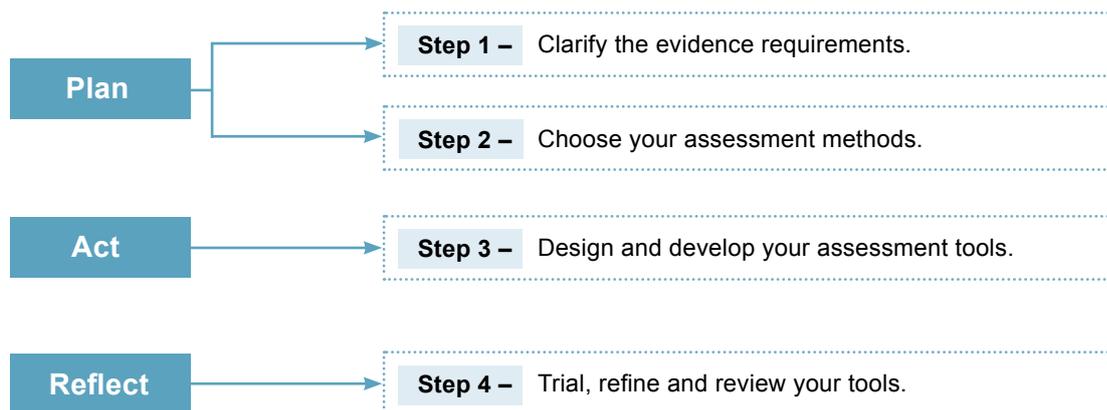
Four steps to quality assessment tools

As with the design of all products, the quality of an assessment tool will depend on the time and effort that go into the research and development phases of its construction, and the ongoing testing and refining of prototypes.

There are four steps in the design process.

- Step 1 – Familiarising yourself with the mandatory requirements of the assessment task(s);
- Step 2 – Using your understanding of the specified competencies to choose appropriate assessment method(s);
- Step 3 – Getting down to business and devising the assessment tool(s); and
- Step 4 – Trialling and refining your tools to help you maximise confidence that the tool(s) can be used flexibly and help you to make valid, reliable and fair judgements.

The following four-step process will help you to design assessment tools that produce quality outcomes.



Step 1 – Clarify the evidence requirements

Picturing competence

Many guides for trainers/assessors recommend that you start by testing your own understanding of the requirements of the units of competency by visualising a competent person at work.

When you are clear about the tasks that such a person will perform and manage, the contingencies that might arise, and in what contexts they are likely to apply their skills, you are ready to design a training program and select an appropriate assessment methodology.

Your picture may be recorded as a competency profile, written in accessible language that is familiar to a learner and/or workplace as in the following example.

*Competency profile for the unit **MSL922001 Record and present data***

The activity is recording and presenting data in testing of construction materials.

A laboratory assistant is given 20 soil samples and asked to test their moisture content by weighing each sample, placing them in an oven for 24 hours and then reweighing them. The assistant performs the tests in accordance with the standard method and then calculates the percentage of water content by dividing the weight loss by the wet weight and multiplying by 100.

The assistant checks the results and notices that they are consistently less than previous results recorded for soils at the same site. The assistant identifies the discrepancy and confirms that the oven operated at the required temperature, but also notes that the previous computer calculation of the moisture content divided the weight loss by the wet weight instead of the dry weight. The assistant recognises this and so recalculates the moisture content for the 20 samples and notes that the results are now consistent with previous results of other samples and is accurate. The assistant then enters the correct results into the laboratory information management system.

Once you have developed your competency profile and examined the sum total of the activities undertaken by a person doing that job, you will be in a better position to identify opportunities to cluster units of competency to reflect actual workplace practices.

Examining the benchmarks

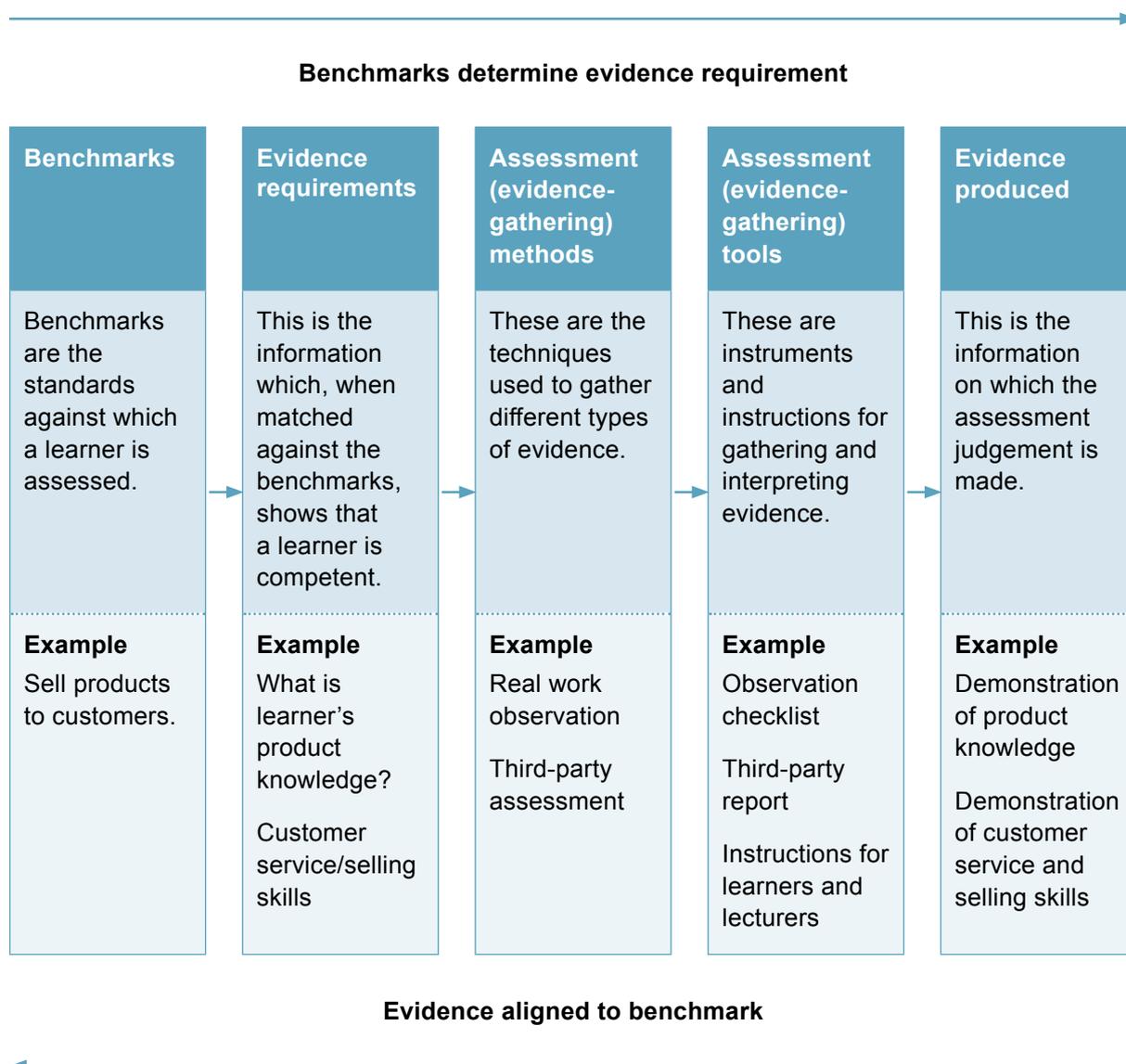
To decide whether a person is competent, you need a set of criteria or benchmarks against which to assess their competencies. In the VET sector, national competency standards – the smallest of which is a unit of competency – are the

usual benchmarks against which a learner is assessed. Other benchmarks might include assessment criteria or evidence requirements from accredited courses, the requirements of international or Australian standards, and organisational benchmarks such as operating procedures, WHS standards and product specifications.

The following diagram broadly illustrates the relationship between:

- benchmarks;
- evidence requirements;
- assessment methods and tools; and
- the evidence produced.

Figure 1: From benchmark to evidence collection



Confirming the evidence requirements

Evidence is the information that, when considered against a unit of competency, enables you to confidently judge whether or not a person is competent. Unlike other forms of assessment, competency-based assessment does not involve comparisons between learners. Learners are assessed against standards which are clearly defined and articulated.

In order to decide what evidence you need to collect, you must be absolutely sure of the competency requirements by examining a number of sources of essential information including:

- the elements of the unit(s) of competency, the performance criteria, the foundation skills, the performance evidence and knowledge evidence, and the assessment context information;
- the dimensions of competency – the task, task management, contingency management and job/role environment skills;
- the employability skills, if relevant;
- the relevant Australian Qualifications Framework descriptor; and
- related workplace processes, procedures and systems that help you to contextualise the activity you are required to assess. Be sure to include any legislative, WHS or legal requirements that may need to be considered when conducting assessment.

Once you have examined/revisited the available information sources, and consulted with relevant industry or workplace personnel, you should be in a position to list the evidence requirements using the following simple table.

Table 1: Evidence requirements (checklist)

Unit of competency	
Evidence needed:	As specified in/by:

Understanding what evidence is required for each unit is essential for the RTO to make valid judgements for each unit, but also to determine whether there is an opportunity to cluster units and use common evidence for assessment decisions. Chapter 3 discusses clustering in detail.

Identifying your learners

The learners your assessment methods and tools need to cater for might be broadly based or come from a clearly defined target group, such as an enterprise or an industry sector. They may be employees with a particular job profile or a group defined by funding body requirements. Where possible, it is important that you identify your learner group in order to design appropriate tools that meet their needs.

Summary

Being absolutely clear about the standards or criteria against which you are assessing, the evidence requirements, and, where possible, the characteristics of your learners, are essential requirements of the design process. The time you spend deciding what evidence is required will pay dividends when you design your learning program and your assessment plan and tools.

Step 2 – Choose your assessment methods

When choosing the assessment methods, you are going to use for particular unit(s) of competency, you need to refer to the specific unit(s) of competency and use them as a guide. With your profile of a competent worker in mind and knowing what knowledge and skills you require your learners to demonstrate, you are now in a position to determine which methods you will use to gather that evidence in collaboration with learners as well as colleagues/trainers/assessors and industry/enterprise representatives.

Real work does not usually fall into categories that reflect individual units of competency. In general, a real work activity draws on a number of units of competency at the one time.

A good assessment task may involve clustering a number of competencies to reflect a real work task or particular job role. The degree to which a number of units can be clustered together to reflect a real work activity will vary across all training packages. Training packages can contain skill sets identifying groups of units of competency that meet specific work roles or regulated/licensed activities which may be clustered for good practice assessment.

Clustering should take account of the work activity, the assessment context, the training and assessment arrangements for the qualification, and the time, resources, facility and personnel available. Trainers/assessors are required to have a thorough knowledge of the training package they are working with and the relevant workplace environment.

Appropriate clustering is a key way to ensure that assessments are holistic in that the assessor can gather evidence and cross-reference it across a number of units of competency. Clustering, where appropriate, may also result in reducing the time and cost of assessment.

How will you gather the evidence?

Selecting an appropriate assessment/evidence-gathering method is part of the fun and challenge of professional practice. It usually involves weighing up a range of assessment methods in order to decide upon 'best fit' techniques, which may include those in the following table.

Table 2: Assessment methods

Methods	Examples of methods
Direct observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real work/real-time activities at the workplace • Work activities in a simulated workplace
Structured assessment activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simulation exercises/role-plays • Projects • Presentations • Activity sheets
Questioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written questions • Interviews • Self-evaluation • Verbal questioning • Questionnaires • Oral or written examinations (may be applicable at higher AQF levels)
Evidence compiled by the learner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portfolios • Collections of work samples • Products with supporting documentation • Historical evidence • Journals/logbooks • Information about life experience
Review of products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Products as a result of a project • Work samples/products

Methods	Examples of methods
Third-party feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Testimonials/reports from employers/supervisors • Evidence of training • Authenticated prior achievements • Interviews with employers, supervisors or peers

The following two examples list the evidence required and possible assessment methods for assessing two different units of competency. The first is in a manufacturing context and the second is in a business context.

Evidence requirements for the unit CPCSH3001A Set out and assemble cabinets, showcases, wall units, counters and workstations

Evidence requirements	Possible evidence-gathering technique
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials are selected and prepared to design requirements for components. • Length and joint details are transferred from set-out to component material and each checked in preparation for machining. • Set-out material is marked for appropriate identification of components. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A work-related practical task in a simulated environment where a number of different cabinetry specifications are provided and the learner is required to select the necessary materials from a supplied inventory and mark them out to specification in preparation for machining components.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drawer components are assembled to specifications, with bottoms fitted and fixed. • Runner types for the drawers are determined and installed to specified dimensions and manufacturer's specifications. • Drawers are installed with specified clearances and prepared for installation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A workplace or work-related observation of performance where pre-cut components are assembled in the correct order and, with appropriate techniques, used to ensure the finished product is to specifications and fit for purpose.

Targeting evidence for the unit BSBITU303 Design and produce text documents

Evidence requirements	Potential sources of evidence
Produce a range of business documents to meet professional standards and organisational needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • View documents the learner has recently produced. • The learner produces one or more documents to specific requirements. • The learner is aware of work cycles and the employer's requirements for business documents. • Check with supervisor or other clients to verify that the work samples are the learner's own work.
Design documents to suit purpose, audience and information requirements of the task.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The learner explains how the designs for the documents were worked out. • View the documents the learner has recently produced and match them with the audience for the document. • Ask the supervisor for feedback about design efficiency of learner's work.
Use software features to develop design style sheets and automatic functions that ensure consistency of design, and accurate and consistent document layout. Name document files and store them electronically and in hard copy as required in accordance with organisational requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The learner can explain the use and advantages of specific software features. • The learner can demonstrate specific software features and use them appropriately in a variety of document layouts. • View the electronic files with document layout and embedded style features the learner has produced. • View computer and hard-copy filing systems to see how the learner organises and stores files. • Ask the supervisor for feedback about how the learner follows organisational requirements for document storage.
Exit software applications without information loss/damage and self-manage tasks with appropriate online and other help resources used for solving problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The learner closes at least two active software applications and correctly saves data from each. • The learner lists self-help resources that can be accessed, and demonstrates how they used them. • The learner demonstrates use of an online help resource for a given problem.
Use safe work practices to ensure ergonomic, work organisation, energy and resource conservation requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe the learner's workstation. • The learner describes and points out the application of safe work procedures.

Considering your learners' needs

The choice of assessment method will be influenced by a number of factors, not least of which is meeting your learners' needs. Your selection of methods needs to take into account their circumstances, while maintaining the integrity of the unit(s) of competency or cluster. For example, Indigenous learners may prefer to demonstrate rather than talk about what they know. Learners with disability may need a bit more time to complete a task. Learners returning to study or the workforce after a long period of unemployment may have lost confidence and find it difficult to perform in front of others. Whatever adjustments you make to the assessment method, you must ensure that evidence collected still addresses all the requirements of the unit(s) of competency.

This information is not always at hand at the planning stage and you will need to adapt your methodology and assessment plan to accommodate learners' needs as they become clearer to you. However, it is important to decide in advance how you determine learners' needs and how you will use this information to customise your assessment process.

The choices you make will also be influenced by your determination of the language, literacy and numeracy proficiency of your learners, and the skill levels required in the qualification.

If you are in any doubt, you may need to draw on the expertise of specialist LLN professionals to make this judgement.

To the extent that it is practical, industry representatives/employers and learners need to take an active part in the planning of the assessment process. Their involvement will be of practical value to you and may increase their ongoing commitment to, and satisfaction with, the quality of training and assessment you offer.

Who will collect the evidence?

In selecting your assessment methods, you will also be making inherent judgements about who will collect the evidence. Training package assessment requirements may provide you with some help as to who can collect evidence. It is important – whether it is the learner, the trainer/assessor or a third-party evidence gatherer – that the instrument and instructions of your assessment tools clarify what is expected and that they provide a clear structure for the evidence gatherers to follow.

Where will you gather the evidence?

Where you gather the evidence will be influenced by the requirements of the training package or course. Most will recommend the workplace as the preferred setting, where you will need to make sure that safety issues are considered and disruptions to the workplace minimised.

If workplace assessment is not feasible or appropriate, the alternative is to select settings and methods that enable learners to demonstrate their competence to the level of performance specified. Simulation is a form of evidence gathering that involves learners completing or dealing with a task, activity or problem in an off the job situation that replicates the workplace context.

Simulations vary from recreating realistic workplace situations such as the use of flight simulators through the creation of role-plays based on workplace scenarios to the reconstruction of a business situation on a spreadsheet.

Before considering a simulation:

- check the requirements of the relevant training package and industry views on the use of simulation;
- consider forming a partnership with local enterprises that may provide access to a workplace or equipment, authentic workplace documents or advice on how to create a realistic simulated environment; and
- review the whole qualification or units of competency to be assessed to build in opportunities for assessing whole work tasks or clusters of competencies.

When will you gather the evidence?

The timing of your evidence-gathering activities must take into account enterprise needs, as well as your learners' needs. For example, it would be inappropriate to schedule assessment activities that involve bakers or their premises in the week before Easter. For learners with religious obligations, it would be helpful not to schedule an assessment at prayer time. Where possible, try to avoid times that clash with typical family responsibilities, such as taking children to school.

Other practical considerations

A number of practical considerations will also influence your choice of assessment methods. Factors that will influence your capacity to manage the evidence-gathering process that you select might include:

- the mix of learners you are working with;
- the size of the learner cohort;
- the location of your learners (on/off campus);
- your/their access to equipment and facilities;
- costs and resource requirements; and
- stress placed on learners and staff by your requirements.

Your obligations

Regardless of the type of evidence you collect and examine, you are required to meet the requirements of the regulatory standards. Before you design your assessment tools, take time to consider whether the assessment methods you have selected meet the principles of assessment.

Your assessment methods must be:

- valid (assess what they say they do);
- reliable (other trainers/assessors would make the same judgement with the same evidence);
- flexible (learners' needs are taken into account in terms of the methods, the time and the place); and
- fair (allow all learners to demonstrate their competence).

Having selected your assessment methods, you are now in a position to design your assessment tools.

Step 3 – Design and develop your assessment tools

Now that you have clarified the evidence requirements and identified which assessment methods you will use, it is time to design the assessment tools.

Assessment tools contain both the instrument and the instructions or procedures for gathering and interpreting evidence. They serve the evidence gatherer's needs for objectivity and transparency as well as the learners' need for clarity and structure.

Assessment tools should provide clear guidance and support for learners so that there is no ambiguity about what is required of them or the basis on which trainers/assessors will make decisions. They can also, if well designed, be used for recording and reporting purposes.

Assessment tools generally make provision for the following practical requirements:

- the learner's name;
- the trainer's/assessor's name;
- the date of assessment;
- the title of the unit/cluster;
- the context of the assessment;
- the procedure for the assessment;
- the list of knowledge/skills to be assessed;
- the competence achieved/outcomes of the assessment;
- feedback for the learner;
- the learner's signature and the date;
- the trainer's/assessor's signature and the date;
- the instructions to the learner, the trainer/assessor or other evidence gatherer; and
- the resource requirements of the assessment.

The tools that you design must comply with the rules of evidence. For example, the tool must facilitate the gathering of evidence that is:

- valid (covers all requirements of the unit of competency);

- sufficient (enables you to make a decision about competence over time and in different situations);
- current (competent performance is contemporaneous); and
- authentic (is the learner's own work).

Fit for purpose

Your assessment tool gives shape and form to your chosen assessment method. It must, therefore, be fit for purpose, which means you need to ask yourself which tool is needed to most effectively and efficiently support your chosen assessment method. You should pay particular attention to the LLN skill level of the learners and the requirements of the units of competency when you design your tool.

Standardised tools are often a useful option, as they provide a cost-effective starting point from which you can develop your own tools. They are also useful for developing common understanding among groups of trainers/assessors. For new trainers/assessors they are important confidence-building tools.

It is important to use the skills and expertise of others, especially when dealing with aspects outside your area of technical expertise, such as LLN skills or when seeking feedback on any tools that you have developed.

Instructions for learners and trainers/assessors

Instructions for the learner and the trainer/assessor are an integral part of all assessment tools. Instructions should respond to questions regarding the 'what, when, where, how and why' of assessment processes. You might include suggestions on reasonable adjustment to accommodate diversity and/or advice on your recording requirements for the trainer/assessor/observer. These instructions – which should be written in plain English – can be included in the instrument or in a separate document.

E-Assessment

Regardless of the systems and methods in use, e-Assessment (electronic assessment) is required to meet the same standards as any other form of assessment in the VET Sector.

E-assessment should be conducted according to the principles of assessment and in conformity with the rules of evidence.

While not unique to e-assessment, challenges exist in ensuring assessment is secure, accessible, and that candidates identity can be authenticated.

Additional considerations are around the continual maintenance of e-assessment tools, and electronic feedback, record keeping, and student data retention.

To help ensure that e-assessment practice adheres to regulatory requirements, a set of e-assessment specific guidelines and case studies were created by the National Quality Council in 2011, and originally published by the National VET e-Learning Strategy.

The e-Assessment Guidelines for the VET Sector are available from the NCVER research database.

voced.edu.au

Mapping

At this point in the development process, RTOs often map the alignment between their assessment tools and the unit of competency. This process is used to check that the evidence to be gathered completely addresses all unit requirements, therefore contributing to the RTO's decision that the evidence will be valid and sufficient.

There is no single approach that an RTO has to use to map. Mapping can be as simple as notating the unit of competency through to generating mapping matrices. In general, the more detailed the mapping document, the more usable it is for both validation and any redevelopment activities as the unit is updated. The following examples have been effective within the RTOs using them.



Aim: To determine if newly created or current internal training assessment tools satisfy compliance with the assessment criteria of the nationally recognised unit of competency listed below.

Note: On completion of the mapping, the assessment tools may or may not need to have more assessment criteria added.

Unit of Competency Assessment tools/Holyoake¹ workplace training course(s)/other aligned to UoC listed below	Group facilitation skills
Unit of competency name	Plan and conduct group activities
Unit code	CHCGROUP403D
Endorsed training package name	Community Services Package
Endorsed training package number	CHC08
Evidence key	Task 1 – Questions
	Task 2 – Direct observation checklist of group skills
	Task 3 – Third-party observation report of skills at the workplace
	Task 4 – Portfolio of documents used and created

UoC Elements and performance criteria	PC covered – Holyoake course assessments or UoC assessment tool	Additional assessment required	Type of assessment			
			Q	DO	3P	PF
E1	Address resourcing issues for group activities					
1.1	Plan group activities, including consideration of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the purposes, defined according to the identified needs of the client group the human, financial and physical resources required. 	DO – p 1 3P – p 1, 2 PF – Doc 4.1 p 1 Doc 4.2		✓	✓	✓

¹ The Department would like to thank Holyoake for providing a sample of assessment mapping for use in this publication.

UoC Elements and performance criteria	PC covered – Holyoake course assessments or UoC assessment tool	Additional assessment required	Type of assessment			
			Q	DO	3P	PF
1.2	Where required resources are not immediately and readily available, make appropriate submissions to potential sources of assistance and resources.	Q – 18 PF – Doc 4.1 p 4 Doc 4.2, 4.8 3P – p 2	✓		✓	✓
1.3	<i>Ensure formal submissions meet requirements</i> of funding guidelines and organisation principles and practice.	Q – 19 PF – Doc 4.1 p 4 Doc 4.2, 4.8 3P – p 2	✓		✓	✓
E2 Coordinate a group planning process						
2.1	Actively seek opportunities for collaborative planning and promotion of group activities with clients and solicit, analyse and prioritise information about group's needs and expectations.	DO p 2 3P – p 2 PF– Doc 4.1 p 2 Doc 4.2 p 1, 2		✓	✓	✓
2.2	Negotiate the purpose of group activities with the group in a manner that gives sufficient time and space for individuals to articulate their ideas and wishes and create opportunity for input to ownership of the group process.	DO p 2 3P – p 2 PF – Doc 4.1 p 2 Doc 4.2 p 2		✓	✓	✓

Essential knowledge (*Critical aspect of evidence)

1	Dynamics of groups	Q1, DO – p 2–5	✓	✓		
2	Different styles of group leadership and decision-making	Q2, DO – p 2–5	✓	✓		

Essential skills (*Critical aspect of evidence)

1*	Support group activities for formal and informal groups.	3P – p 2 DO – p 2–5 PF – Doc 4.1, 4.2, 4.8		✓	✓	✓
2*	Participate in a variety of group activity types identified in the range statement.	3P – p 2 DO – p 2–5 PF – Doc 4.1, 4.2, 4.8		✓	✓	✓



Employability skills	ES covered – Holyoake course assessments or UoC assessment tool	Additional assessment required	Type of assessment			
			Q	DO	3P	PF
Communication	DO, third party, all questions, all portfolio documentation		✓	✓	✓	✓
Teamwork	DO, third party, PF case studies			✓	✓	✓
Problem solving	Q26, DO, third party, PF case studies			✓	✓	✓

Rules of evidence		Rules of evidence covered – Holyoake course assessments or UoC assessment tool	Additional assessment required	Type of assessment			
				Q	DO	3P	PF
1	Valid – evidence related directly to the competency.	Observes and facilitates a range of groups over a period of time. All criteria are met more than once.		✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Sufficient – enough evidence to be sure that the student can perform the task/activity correctly on a consistent basis under a range of conditions.	Facilitates a range of groups over a period of time. All criteria are met more than once.		✓	✓	✓	✓
3	Current – recent enough evidence to be sure that the student can perform competency at the time of assessment.	Direct observation and third-party reports ensure currency in facilitation skills, questions and portfolio checklist given out during training.		✓	✓	✓	✓
4	Authentic – the assessor can be sure that the evidence is the student's own work.	Direct observation by qualified assessor and declarations of authenticity for third party, questions and portfolio evidence.		✓	✓	✓	✓



Principles of assessment		Principles of assessment covered – Holyoake course assessments or UoC assessment tool	Additional assessment required	Type of assessment			
				Q	DO	3P	PF
1	Valid – evidence relates directly to the competency and is based on realistic workplace practices.	All assessment tasks relate directly to all the criteria in the unit of competency and assessment guidelines. A variety of groups are facilitated and qualified workplace assessors and third party supervisors used.		✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Fair – all students are provided with an equal opportunity to be assessed as competent.	Clear and timely information about the assessments is given. The process is open and transparent, free from discrimination and bias. All students have the right to appeal and be reassessed.		✓	✓	✓	✓
3	Flexible – the assessment process is able to be changed to accommodate the needs and characteristics of the students.	A range of assessment methods is used appropriate to the context and students' characteristics. RCC and RPL are provided for. Assessment timing, readiness and venue are up to the student.		✓	✓	✓	✓
4	Reliable – the same assessment outcome is achieved regardless of the assessor.	Clear assessment checklists and instructions are provided. Processes and tools are trialed and moderated. Regular professional development is undertaken.		✓	✓	✓	✓

Dimensions of competency		Dimensions of competency covered – Holyoake course assessments or UoC assessment tool	Additional assessment required	Type of assessment			
				Q	DO	3P	PF
1	Task skills	Plan and support a variety of group activities. Demonstrate effective communication skills.		✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Task management skills	Manage group processes. Identify and demonstrate group models and their purpose. Analyse and report on group outcomes.		✓	✓	✓	✓
3	Contingency skills	Research and use organisation's booking and referral procedures for new resources. Explain how to and/or manage conflict as it arises.		✓	✓	✓	✓
4	Job/role environment skills	Demonstrate application of organisation's policies and procedures. Develop and maintain positive relationships.		✓	✓	✓	✓



Employability skills	ES covered – Holyoake course assessments or UoC assessment tool	Additional assessment required	Type of assessment			
			Q	DO	3P	PF
Communication	DO, third party, all questions, all portfolio documentation		✓	✓	✓	✓
Teamwork	DO, third party, PF case studies			✓	✓	✓
Problem solving	Q26, DO, third party, PF case studies			✓	✓	✓

Rules of evidence		Rules of evidence covered – Holyoake course assessments or UoC assessment tool	Additional assessment required	Type of assessment			
				Q	DO	3P	PF
1	Valid – evidence related directly to the competency.	Observes and facilitates a range of groups over a period of time. All criteria are met more than once.		✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Sufficient – enough evidence to be sure that the student can perform the task/activity correctly on a consistent basis under a range of conditions.	Facilitates a range of groups over a period of time. All criteria are met more than once.		✓	✓	✓	✓
3	Current – recent enough evidence to be sure that the student can perform competency at the time of assessment.	Direct observation and third party reports ensure currency in facilitation skills, questions and portfolio checklist given out during training.		✓	✓	✓	✓
4	Authentic – the assessor can be sure that the evidence is the student's own work.	Direct observation by qualified assessor and declarations of authenticity for third party, questions and portfolio evidence.		✓	✓	✓	✓

Figure 3: Observation checklist (example)

<h2>Plan and prepare program</h2> <p>CUSMPF401A Rehearse music for group performances CUSMPF402A Develop and maintain stagecraft skills CUSMPF410A Perform music from written notation CUSMPF501A Prepare a program for performance</p>			
 			
Ensemble Diploma			
Student's name			
Assessor's name			
Workplace			
Date of assessment			
Did the student perform the following skills?	Yes	No	n/a
Understand and confirm the requirements of the semester's rehearsals. CUSMPF401A (1), CUSMPF501A (1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Understand and plan the requirements of the program and the performances. CUSMPF401A (1), CUSMPF501A (1, 2.1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify areas and strategies to develop stagecraft skills. CUSMPF402A (1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learn his/her part from written notation. CUSMPF410A (1), CUSMPF501A (2.6, 2.7)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide and set up equipment correctly. CUSMPF402A (4.1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Perform and present his/her part of the work to the required standard (reflecting thorough understanding of form, structure, dynamics and musical role). CUSMPF410A (2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Interpret correctly the intention of the songs and develop individual art accordingly. CUSMPF410A (2), CUSMPF501A (3)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Interact appropriately with other ensemble members. CUSMPF401A (3), CUSMPF402A (2.7), CUSMPF501A (3)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Did the student perform the following skills?		Yes	No	n/a
Respond according to tutor's directions. CUSMPF401A (3), CUSMPF410A (3)		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify and discuss areas that require further work. CUSMPF401A (2.5, 3.6, 3.7), CUSMPF402A (3), CUSMPF410A (3)		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contribute to the rehearsal culture as a prepared, positive ensemble member. CUSMPF401A (5)		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Incorporate feedback into performance. CUSMPF401A (3.8), CUSMPF501A (3.8)		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Set up, rehearse and perform using correct posture, safe sound levels and correct warm-ups. CUSMPF402A (4, 5)		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The student's performance was:		Not yet satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/>		Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/>
Feedback to student				
Student's signature				
Assessor's signature				

Templates and sample assessment tools

The following templates and sample assessment tool templates are made available to demonstrate the concepts that have been discussed. They are a guide only. Most have been adapted from freely available resources or provided generously by RTOs.

Figure 4: Observation checklist (example)

Learner's name	John Smith	
Trainer's/assessor's name	David Jones	
Unit of competency	BSBCUS201A Deliver a service to customers	
Name of workplace	ABC School	
Date of assessment	3 March 2015	
Procedure	Observation of learner in their workplace dealing with a range of customers with queries, problems and complaints.	
During the demonstration of skills, did the learner do the following?	Yes/No	Comment
Identify customer needs by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prioritising urgency of customer's needs; • offering a range of options; • asking open-ended questions; • using active listening techniques; and • acknowledging personal limitations and referring to another person. 		
Deliver service to customer by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • greeting the customer promptly and courteously; • smiling; • using appropriate body language; • maintaining eye contact with the customer; • acknowledging the complaint; • summarising the customer's complaint; and • resolving the customer's complaint. 		
The learner's performance was:	Not yet satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/>	Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/>
Feedback to learner		
Learner's signature		
Trainer's/assessor's signature		

Figure 5: Questions to support an observation checklist (Correctional Services)

Learner's name	Meredith Truscott	ID	
Trainer's/assessor's name	Mervyn Smoker	Mobile no	
Course	CSC12 Correctional Services Training Package	Home no	
Units of competency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSCORG202 Communicate effectively • CSCORG301 Prepare reports • CSCSAS201 Maintain security • PSPOHS301A Contribute to workplace safety • CSCORG005 Conduct interviews • CSCOFM008 Supervise offenders • CSCSAS006 Respond to medical emergencies 		
Name of workplace	Sandy Bay Facility		
Assessment date	3 March 2015		
Questions to be answered by the learner		Satisfactory response	
		Yes ✓	No ✗
Q1	What would you do if you lost contact with other officers during a critical search situation? (contingency management skills)		
Response: Immediately radio to other search team officers and supervisor informing them of my location, current situation and requesting assistance.		✓	
Q2	What are the procedures and policies for responding to a medical emergency with an offender? (job/role environment skills)		
Response: Check the offender's vital signs, assess the nature of the medical condition, attempt resuscitation if necessary then call for assistance.		✗	
Q3	What are your functions and how do you manage them when you assist with interviews and also have to report on the outcomes? (task management skills)		
Response: My primary functions are recording interview responses, cooperating with and assisting the interviewing officer with details about the interviewee as required. I simultaneously draft interview outcomes for reporting to supervisors for further action.		✓	
The learner's knowledge was:		Not yet satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/>	Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/>
Feedback to learner Task skills are satisfactory and learner is able to identify how to manage most unusual circumstances that may arise. However, the student has insufficient knowledge of the correct procedures for responding to a medical emergency with an offender and this could jeopardise her safety and wellbeing.			
Learner's signature		Date	
Trainer's/assessor's signature		Date	

Figure 6: Trainer's/assessor's instructions for hazardous spill response simulation (example)

Hazardous spill response simulation

Unit of competency

This activity is based on the following elements from the unit of competency CPPWWIT3011A Respond to waste emergency from the Certificate III in Waste Management:

- CPPWWIT3011A.1 – Identify nature of emergency;
- CPPWWIT3011A.2 – Respond to emergency;
- CPPWWIT3011A.3 – Review emergency response;
- CPPWWIT3011A.4 – Assist with clean-up; and
- CPPWWIT3011A.5 – Document and report emergency.

Scenario

Working in a team situation, learners are to demonstrate safe procedures for cleaning up a small hazardous spill.

Instructions to the trainer/assessor

Location: This exercise is to be carried out in a contained area designated for the simulation and with all safety equipment and facilities provided. This includes a shower designed for washing contaminants into a sealed drainage point.

Resources required

- 1 × spill response kit
- 1 × containment device such as booms
- 1 × 20 litre drum about half full of water (contents labelled as a detergent)
- 1 × 200 litre drum (unmarked, for clean-up waste container)
- 1 × drain cover
- 1 × absorbent material
- 1 × 'Hazardous waste' label
- 1 × SDS for the particular detergent
- 1 × marker pen
- 2 × sets of appropriate personal protection equipment (for example, face shield, rubber boots, gloves, apron).

Procedure

1. Explain the purpose of the simulation and remind learners of the assessment criteria.

Figure 7: Checklist for simulation – hazardous spill response (example)

Learner's name		
Trainer's/assessor's name		
Elements/unit(s) of competency	CPPWWIT3011A Respond to waste emergency	
Name of workplace		
Date of assessment		
During the simulation, did the learner:	Yes/No	
• determine the source and stop the flow of the liquid as soon as possible?		
• check safety precautions on the relevant safety data sheet for the next steps?		
• contain the spill effectively and safely?		
• cover drains that could be contaminated?		
• use the correct booms to contain spill?		
• wear appropriate personal protection equipment at all times?		
• cover the spill with absorbent material and allow sufficient time to soak up the contaminant?		
• place contaminated absorbent material in a fit-for-purpose drum or plastic bag?		
• mop area and tip liquid into the drum or bag with contaminated absorbent material?		
• dispose of waste using the established procedure?		
• complete an environmental incident investigation report?		
• work effectively in a team situation with other staff?		
The learner's performance was:	Not yet satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/>	Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/>
Feedback to learner		
Learner's signature		
Trainer's/assessor's signature		

Figure 8: Self-evaluation guide (example)

Self-evaluation guide	
Unit: CPCCPA3001A Prepare subgrade, base and bedding course for segmental paving	
Instructions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read each of the questions in the left-hand column. • Place a tick in the box if you believe that you can perform the tasks described. • Complete the column on the right-hand side by listing any evidence you have to show that you can perform these tasks. 	
Can I do the following?	Evidence
Prepare subgrade for laying segmental pavers Criteria <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Excavate subgrade to meet site conditions. <input type="checkbox"/> Identify soil types. <input type="checkbox"/> Identify services and other subterranean features and take measures to accommodate them. 	
Prepare base course Criteria <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Identify appropriate base course. <input type="checkbox"/> Install and compact base course. 	
Level bedding course Criteria <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use correct bedding material. <input type="checkbox"/> Compact bedding correctly using hand compactor. <input type="checkbox"/> Screed bedding course allowing for water run-off. 	
Learner's name	Date

Figure 9: Sample recording sheet for oral questioning

Learner's name	Jenny Ngo		
Unit of competency	CHCAC3C Work effectively with older people		
Element 1	Demonstrate an understanding of the structure and profile of the aged care sector		
Element 2	Demonstrate a commitment to the philosophy of positive ageing		
Workplace/RTO	Pennyroyal Centre		
Conditions	Questions following observation at a workplace		
Oral/interview questions			Satisfactory response
Questions on regulations and procedures	Q1	What does duty of care in the context of service delivery to aged care clients mean?	Y
	Q2	To whom do you have a duty of care?	Y
Application of underpinning knowledge	Q3	What is your understanding of the individuality of ageing?	N
	Q4	What actions have you taken over the last week that indicate that you have encouraged and supported aged care clients?	Y
Extension/probing question	Q5	Give me an example of an action that could occur in this centre that you think would not show that appropriate empowerment of aged care clients is occurring.	N
Contingency question	Q6	What would you do if you saw inappropriate attitudes by others towards aged care clients occurring at this centre?	Y
Note: Not all performance criteria in Elements 1 and 2 are covered in these questions.			
The learner's knowledge was:		Not yet satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/>	Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/>
Assessor's signature		Date	
Feedback to learner			
<p>The learner has a good appreciation and understanding of the duty of care required in an aged care environment and can recall specific actions that indicate clients are encouraged and supported.</p> <p>The learner has limited understanding of the individuality of ageing and cannot cite examples of actions that empower aged care clients to indicate underpinning for competent performance in this regard.</p>			
Acceptable answers			
Q1 Taking steps to reduce the possibility of risk or harm to a person without taking away the person's right to make an informed decision.			
Q2 Customers, self, co-workers, others around you at work, other service provider etc.			

Figure 10: Structured assessment activity – Sample workplace project

Project instructions

This project will allow you to demonstrate competence in the unit CHCFC11C Stimulate children’s development. It addresses the following three elements:

- Element 1 – Create a stimulating, positive and developmentally appropriate environment to foster development, play and leisure;
- Element 2 – Actively guide and encourage children to undertake a variety of developmentally appropriate activities; and
- Element 3 – Facilitate children’s play and leisure.

How to prepare

In consultation with your supervisor, help to set up the physical environment for a group of children in age groups: 0–2, 3–5 or 6–12. This should remain set up for one week.

You will have to consider the placement of furniture and equipment, the accessibility of toys and play materials, visual stimulation, lighting, ventilation and other relevant factors.

How to perform

Your environment, as well as your interactions with the children, must show that you can organise safe, stimulating and positive experiences which encourage them to be involved.

This project enables you to demonstrate your understanding of the issues and procedures as well as your practical skills on the job.

Evidence gathering

1. Self-evaluation

At the end of the week, evaluate the environment you have set up by answering the following questions.

- How would you determine whether the play and leisure environment was safe?
- What steps did you take to make the environment non-threatening?
- How did you make the environment stimulating for the children?
- Did the environment challenge the children?
- What would be an appropriate range of experiences sufficient for the child to make choices? How did your interactions with children support their play?

You should provide examples that illustrate your answers.

2. Observation

Your work for this project will also be observed over the week by your supervisor.

Figure 11: Evidence compiled by learner – Sample portfolio instructions

Portfolio for	BSBITU306 Design and produce business documents
Due date	3 March 2015
Description of the portfolio	a collation of relevant business documents designed by the learner
<p>General overview</p> <p>The portfolio should include samples of non-confidential business documents you have produced or edited within the last six months. You must also include supporting materials. Wherever possible, you must include both hard copy and electronic files of work samples.</p> <p>Assessment criteria</p> <p>Documents will be checked for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appropriate style and layout; • use of software features for consistency and efficient production such as font styles, text formatting, style sheets and tables; and • appropriate use of basic graphic elements including logos, rules and shading. <p>Presentation of the portfolio</p> <p>Each work sample in your portfolio will need to be supported by a statement which outlines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the purpose of the document, and the audience and organisational requirements you had to consider; • how the document relates to the requirements of the unit of competency; • how you determined the design and layout of the document; • the reasons for the specific equipment and software features you used; and • the resources you used in preparing the documents. <p>Portfolio contents</p> <p>Contents will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • paper and electronic files you have produced or edited; • related planning notes and requirements you followed for the design of the documents; • letters from supervisors or clients that verify your involvement with the production of the documents; and • work samples and/or statements of achievement from any relevant learning exercises, including computer-based tutorials and courses. <p>Progress and feedback</p> <p>This portfolio should be ongoing and include samples of work you perform over the period of this assessment, as it will be checked as you progress through this assessment. Feedback about the quality of your evidence will be given before the final due date. The final presentation will be on the agreed date.</p>	

Figure 12: Sample portfolio evaluation form – Evaluation of portfolio contents

Learner's name	Susanne Squires		
Unit	MSL916003 Supervise laboratory operations in work/functional area		
Workplace	Labskill		
Assessor's name	Mario Agento		
Requirements of the unit of competency	Yes	No	
The contents of the portfolio provided satisfactory evidence of the learner's ability to:			
• achieve outcomes consistent with plans/budgets;	✓		
• implement safe working arrangements;			✓
• contribute proposals and ideas for quality improvements;	✓		
• contribute to the company's quality system;	✓		
• revise operational plans to reflect essential variations;	✓		
• make decisions that are appropriate; and	✓		
• optimise resource usage in terms of the operational plans.			✓
Following analysis of the evidence, the following issues require clarification during interview:			
• obtain more detail on previous job role (see résumé);			
• clarify extent of involvement in QA Committee;			
• explain lower laboratory productivity in latest quarterly operational report;			
• query issue on minor safety breach noted in laboratory audit report; and			
• training plan for laboratory staff appears to have no needs analysis.			
Additional evidence is required in the following areas:			
• budgeting laboratory functions (annual and quarterly reports);			
• written communication with peers and supervisors (letters and memos);			
• implementing safe working arrangements (proposals and reports); and			
• motivating and counselling laboratory personnel (third-party report from team member).			
Assessor's signature		Date	

Step 4 – Trial, refine and review your tools

To ensure that your assessment resources are consistent with the requirements of the training package and that they maintain their currency, sufficiency and effectiveness, it is important that they are reviewed by fellow trainers/assessors and trialled before you use them.

Inviting feedback from your peers, learners and industry will confirm that the tools enable effective collection of evidence and that the level of difficulty is appropriate to the qualification level. Differences of opinion provide an opportunity to discuss and resolve any ambiguities or misunderstandings before the tools are used with learners.

Trialling your tools before they are used formally with learners will enable you to gauge the user-friendliness of the format, the appropriateness of the literacy and numeracy levels, the clarity of the instructions, and the practicality of the format for recording assessment evidence and judgements.

It will also enable you to evaluate the suitability of the times allowed for assessment tasks and the tool's overall cost-effectiveness.

During the trial, you should also assess the tool's degree of adaptability. This will be determined by its capacity to be adjusted in accordance with variations in context and learners' needs, while still ensuring valid and reliable assessment decisions.

Reviewing of assessment tools can be carried out in a number of ways, ranging from sharing with fellow trainers/assessors, through to industry-wide validation by a panel of trainers/assessors. Working with others often sheds fresh light that leads to improvements.

Chapter 3

Clustering units for assessment

Why should units of competency be clustered?

Clustering is a process that can be used when developing learning and assessment materials. It involves the development of processes and materials that meet the requirements for groups or clusters of units of competency rather than individual units for a variety of reasons, including the following:

- to meet the required competency profile of the learner;
- to reflect the workplace in the learning and assessment experience;
- to maximise the opportunities for holistic evidence gathering in the assessment process;
- to address the co-requisite requirements of the unit of competency; and
- to maximise efficiency of effort for the trainer/assessor and the learner.

Assessment is the process of collecting evidence then making a judgement about competence based on that evidence. Confidence in the judgement can be improved by collecting holistic evidence. Holistic evidence is representative of job roles and does not take a sub-task by sub-task-based approach. For this reason, holistic evidence is also known as integrated evidence.

Holistic evidence focuses on whole work activities rather than sub-tasks or components of a work activity. In collecting holistic evidence, the assessor develops an image or picture of how a competent worker would perform the activity. Holistic evidence also provides the assessor with the opportunity to see dimensions of competency and employability skills demonstrated in an integrated fashion.

To cluster or not to cluster?

The decision to cluster for delivery and/or assessment will be based on a number of considerations that relate to the needs of the learner, the needs of the workplace, the needs of the RTO and the characteristics of the units of competency. In determining whether clustering is appropriate, RTOs should consider answers to the following questions.

Figure 13: Considerations for clustering

Questions	Yes	No
Characteristics of the units of competency		
Do the units in your proposed cluster have common knowledge and/or skills and/or performance requirements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are they at the same Australian Qualifications Framework level?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do they have common application in tasks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learner		
Does the learner need to be competent in all the units or would it be better if they completed an individual unit?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the learner already have competence in some of the knowledge and skills in the cluster? If so, can this be recognised within a clustered learning program or assessment process?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
RTO		
Does the training package allow for these units to be grouped into a cluster?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If the cluster is going to contribute to a qualification, will it meet the qualification packaging rules?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the RTO have staff who are vocationally competent in the cluster?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the RTO able to effectively timetable a clustered learning program or assessment process?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Workplace		
Do the units reflect the typical tasks for this workplace?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the workplace require all the units or would it be better to offer individual units?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the workplace have staff who are vocationally competent in the cluster and able to help learners in the workplace?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the workplace have access to all the equipment and facilities required to deliver and assess the cluster in the workplace?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If the RTO answers 'no' to any of the questions above, then serious consideration should be given to whether clustering is the appropriate approach. If the RTO decides to proceed with clustering, then the risks highlighted in the checklist need to be managed to ensure that a quality product is offered to the learners and that valid, reliable judgements of competence are made.

Clustering for delivery

When clustering units, it is possible to do so for delivery, for assessment or for both. Clustering for delivery focuses on identifying the commonalities in what needs to be learned, and structuring a program to meet those needs. Consider the units of competency for Quality Auditing.

Figure 14: Clustering units for Quality Auditing

Initiate a quality audit

Performance evidence

Evidence of the ability to:

- produce documented audit plans for auditees across a variety of contexts, including:
 - the scope and objectives of the audit;
 - proposed audit methods and techniques to be used;
 - required resources and schedules; and
 - allocation of individual audit team member's responsibilities for conducting the proposed audit
- use terminology relating to quality auditing in written or oral communications.

Knowledge evidence

To complete the unit requirements safely and effectively, the individual must:

- identify the relevant auditing codes of practice or ethics;
- describe auditing methods and techniques;
- outline the requirements of auditing regulations and standards;
- identify current audit practices;
- outline quality auditing principles, techniques and systems;
- describe the requirements of house or other style manual protocols for written communications; and
- identify software applications relevant to quality auditing activities.

Lead a quality audit

Performance evidence

Evidence of the ability to:

- identify all objectives, schedules and relevant information prior to commencement of audit;
- demonstrate leadership and management of a quality auditing team;
- manage the information-gathering process by team members, and analysis, synthesis and reporting of the findings;
- encourage team members to continuously improve their performance through feedback and self-critique; and
- use terminology relating to quality auditing in written or oral communications.

Knowledge evidence

To complete the unit requirements safely and effectively, the individual must:

- describe quality auditing principles, methods and techniques;
- outline the requirements of auditing regulations and standards;
- identify current audit practices; and
- identify software applications relevant to conducting quality auditing activities.

Report on a quality audit

Performance evidence

Evidence of the ability to:

- interpret audit results and produce a detailed audit report containing detailed analysis according to specified requirements;
- negotiate follow-up actions with auditees/clients;
- determine future improvements in auditing methods; and
- use terminology relating to quality auditing in written or oral communications.

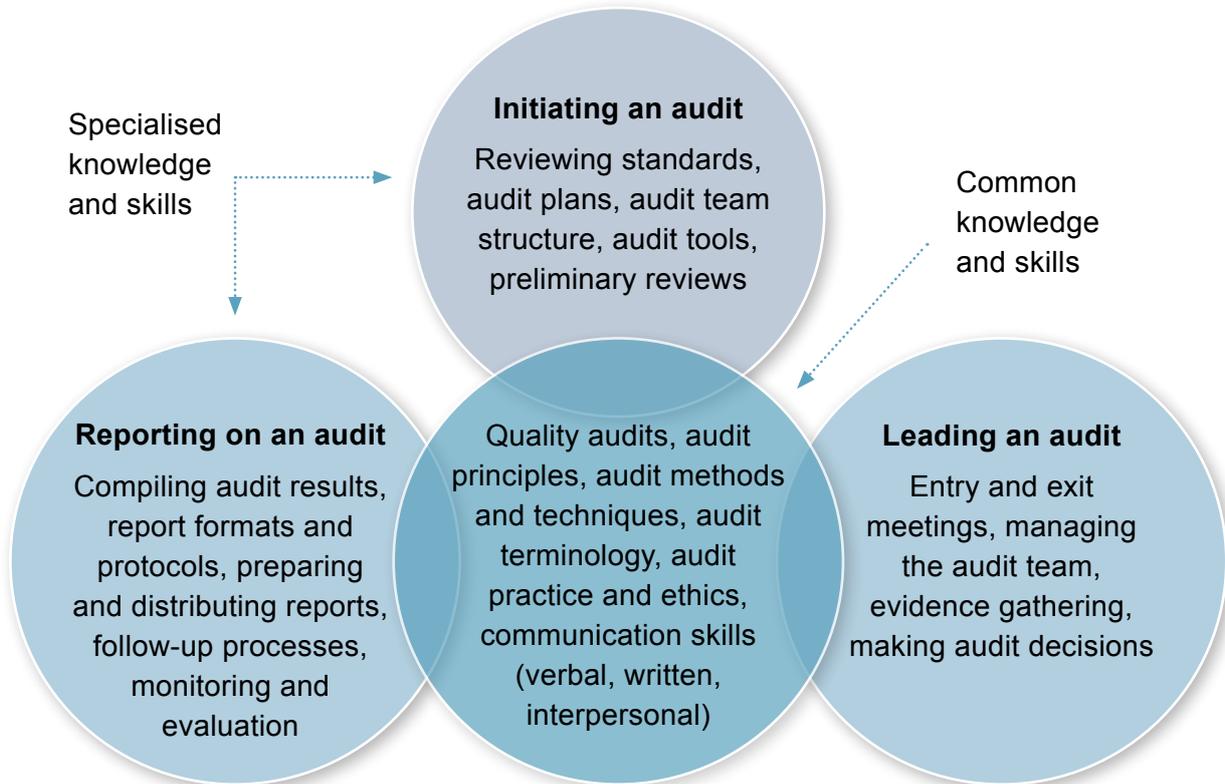
Knowledge evidence

To complete the unit requirements safely and effectively, the individual must:

- describe quality auditing principles, methods and techniques;
- outline the requirements of auditing regulations and standards;
- identify current audit practices; and
- identify software applications relevant to conducting quality auditing activities.

In this example, the common required knowledge and skills could become a single learning component that is then supplemented by specialised performance knowledge. The diagram below illustrates how a learning program for the three Quality Auditing units may be structured.

Figure 15: Clustered learning structure for Quality Auditing program



In this structure, the central area is the common knowledge and skills required by all three Quality Auditing units of competency. In addition to this knowledge and these skills, learners must develop a range of specialised knowledge and skills related to particular aspects of the auditing task. These are listed in the outer circles.

If this program were not clustered, RTOs might deliver the common knowledge and skills three times – once for each unit of competency. This would be an inefficient and ineffective approach. Once the RTO has established the areas of knowledge and skills that can be clustered, it can proceed to develop learning and assessment strategies followed by delivery plans and materials.

RTOs need to ensure that the delivery plan addresses all the requirements of the units of competency and that any opportunities for formative assessment (if appropriate) are identified.

Clustering for assessment

When an RTO clusters for assessment purposes, it is aiming to identify evidence that can be used across a number of units to help make a judgement of competence, or to identify units that should be clustered together because they form a holistic work task. This is called task-based clustering and the Quality Auditing units used as the worked example in this publication form a task-based cluster.

When designing assessment tools, the RTO must establish what evidence is required for each unit of competency in a cluster. This will require the RTO to unpack the units of competency individually, as described in Chapter 2.

The RTO will need to examine:

- the elements of the unit(s) of competency, the performance criteria, the foundation skills, the performance evidence and knowledge evidence, and the assessment context information;
- the dimensions of competency – the task, task management, contingency management and job/role environment skills;
- the employability skills, if relevant;
- the relevant Australian Qualifications Framework descriptor; and
- related workplace processes, procedures and systems that help to contextualise the activity you are required to assess. Make sure you include any legislative, WHS or legal requirements that may need to be considered when conducting assessment.

Understanding what evidence is required for each unit is essential for the RTO to make valid judgements for each unit, but also to determine whether there is an opportunity to cluster units and use common evidence for assessment decisions. In the worked example, three Quality Auditing units have been clustered, because they form a holistic work task.

Task-based clustering

The Quality Auditing units provide an example of units that are appropriate for task-based clustering. The units together form a work task, namely, conducting quality audits of organisations. RTOs can develop assessment tools around the work task which can be simulated or conducted in the workplace as part of normal business activity.

RTOs will need to have a clear understanding of the industry and the practices of a typical workplace so that they can identify opportunities for clustering and design appropriate assessment tools as a result.

When looking at the evidence required to demonstrate competence in the three Quality Auditing units, it is clear that the evidence is sequential – that is, it follows the actual sequence of planning, conducting and reporting on an audit.

The following table demonstrates the relationship between task-based evidence and the units of competency.

Figure 16: Quality Auditing cluster evidence requirements

Evidence	Evidence relationship to BSB units
Clustering for delivery: Formative evidence (used during the learning process to determine if the session has been effective and provide the learner with an opportunity to practise skills)	
Preparation of two audit plans during the initial training	BSBAUD501
Conducting two trial audits during the initial training	BSBAUD501, BSBAUD503
Reporting on the findings of two trial audits during the initial training	BSBAUD504
Clustering for assessment: Summative evidence (used during the assessment process to make judgement of competence)	
Preparation documents and audit plans for three audits	BSBAUD501
Working notes from the three audits	<p>An extract from the audit project is described.</p> <p>An extract from the observation report is provided.</p> <p>An extract from the interview questions is provided.</p>
An audit report for each of the three audits	
Three satisfactory observation reports from the audit observer (a qualified auditor)	
Reflection activity for the audit project	
Interview with the assessor	BSBAUD501, BSBAUD503

Task 1 – Audit project

As part of the assessment requirements for the auditor’s training course, you will be required to participate in an audit project. The project will give you the opportunity to practise, reflect and improve upon your auditing skills.

The project will start after the initial training period and should be completed within 12 weeks. The project will provide evidence for all three units of competency within the course:

- BSBAUD501 Initiate a quality audit;
- BSBAUD503 Lead a quality audit; and
- BSBAUD504 Report on a quality audit.

A copy of each of the units has been attached to this information. You should review the units so that you are aware of the scope and depth of performance required to be deemed competent.

The audit project will require you to lead an audit team from within your organisation. Your team will be required to plan, conduct and report on a series of three audits for a specified area of your organisation. The audits will contribute to your organisation's internal audit program. The details for your audits are:

	Audit 1	Audit 2	Audit 3
Audit team members			
Area to be audited			
Area contact person			
Contact number			
Audit observer			
Audit observer's contact number			
Audit dates			
Qualification/activity to be audited			
Standards to be audited			

Please do not contact the area until you have been advised to do so.

Follow these steps for each of the three audits.

Audit preparation

- Do the preparatory work to determine the audit objectives and scope.
- Conduct an initial meeting of the audit team to determine roles and responsibilities.
- Develop a draft audit plan.
- Contact the area/auditee to discuss the audit and gather any information required for the completion of the audit plan.
- Distribute the audit plan to the area/auditee and the audit team.
- Conduct a documentary review to prepare for the audit, listing all documents reviewed and any comments/preliminary observations as part of your working notes.
- Prepare the audit tools, including any meeting checklists.
- Contact the area/auditee to confirm audit arrangements.

Conducting the audit

- Conduct the opening meeting with area/auditee using the opening meeting checklist.
- Conduct the audit on the specified qualification and standards using the audit tool.
- Discuss the audit with your team members and formulate the findings for the area/auditee.
- Conduct the closing meeting with the area/auditee using the closing meeting checklist.

Reporting

- Prepare a draft full report for submission to the area/auditee.
- Provide the report to the assessor and make any changes required by the assessor before distribution.
- Distribute the final report to the area/auditee in accordance with the audit plan.

Task 2 – Reflective report

Follow these steps for each of the three audits.

- Discuss the audit with the audit observer and obtain feedback from the area/auditee, the audit team and the audit observer about your performance.
- Prepare a reflective report of your audit experience, concentrating on what you have learned during the audit, what you consider to be your strengths and weaknesses, and what actions you propose to take to improve your skills before the next audit.
- Submit the reflective report to the assessor.

Audit observation report

Auditor's name: _____

Audit date: _____

During the audit in the workplace, did the auditor ...		Comments	
B1	allocate roles utilising strengths of team members?	The report is used by the audit observer to record comments about the auditor's performance leading the audit. The list of behaviours (a sample only) is a prompt for the audit observer. These behaviours should be demonstrated at each audit. The report also provides feedback from the area/auditee and summary comments from the audit observer.	
B2	provide an effective opening meeting? (use opening meeting checklist?)		
B3	proceed at an appropriate pace?		
B4	stay focused on the audit?		
B5	provide time for questions and answers?		
B6	synthesise data from team members to formulate findings?		
B7	provide clear, concise and open feedback?		
B8	reinforce strengths and opportunities for improvement?		
B9	establish rapport with the auditees?		
B10	use a variety of investigative techniques?		
B11	appear relaxed and pleasant?		
B12	keep notes that are effective for formulating findings?		
Feedback for the auditor from the area/auditee			
This feedback will be collected by the audit observer and provided to the auditor as part of the debriefing process.			
Feedback for the auditor from the audit observer			
This feedback provides an overall summary of the auditor's performance when leading the audit and may contain suggestions about areas that need improvement or particular strengths of the auditor.			
Audit observer's name		Audit observer's signature	
Auditor's name		Auditor's signature	

Quality Auditing interview questions

Auditor's name: _____

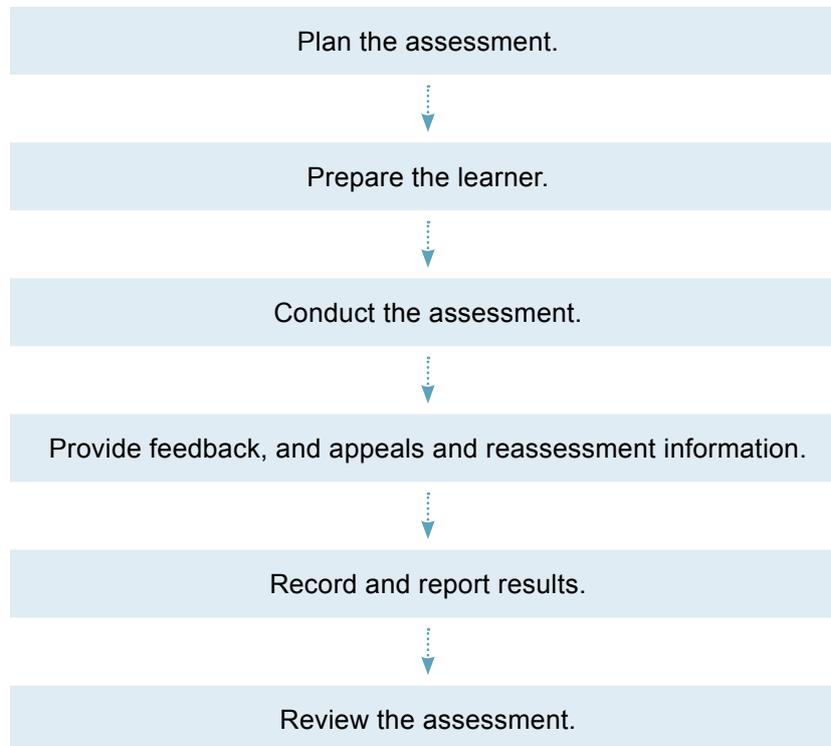
Audit date: _____

Primary questions		Key points in response	
Q1	How did you determine the audit objectives and scope?	<p>A sample of the questions that may be asked for initiating a quality audit. These questions are used to establish that the auditor has an understanding of the required knowledge and can apply the knowledge in a range of contexts.</p>	
Q2	Who did you consult with when preparing for the audit?		
Q3	How did you use the information from these people to inform the audit objectives and scope?		
Q4	What factors did you consider when allocating responsibilities to your audit team?		
Q5	What risks did you identify during the planning process?		
Q6	What actions did you take to manage the identified risks? Were they effective?		
Q7	What information was provided to the audit team as part of their pre-audit brief?		
Q8	What process did you use to determine the audit findings?		
Feedback for the auditor from the audit observer			
<p>This feedback provides an overall summary of the auditor's performance when initiating the audit and may contain suggestions about areas that need improvement or particular strengths of the auditor.</p>			
Auditor's name		Auditor's signature	
Assessor's name		Assessor's signature	

Planning and conducting assessment

With the development work done, the assessor can now plan and conduct the assessment activity. The following figure shows the keys steps in the process.

Figure 17: Steps in planning and conducting an assessment



When planning an assessment activity, the assessor needs to ensure that:

- the learner is prepared for the assessment and understands the process to be applied; this is often achieved by providing the candidate with an assessment plan (see proforma below).
- the assessment tools or materials have been checked and trialled with an appropriate sample of people or reviewed where trials are not undertaken;
- assessment procedures have been reviewed to ensure that the tasks to be performed reflect workplace requirements with appropriate personnel in the industry/workplace or RTO;
- the time and place for assessment have been agreed upon with the learner and other relevant parties;
- the needs of the learner have been determined and any reasonable adjustments have been made to the assessment. (Reasonable adjustment is discussed in detail in the following chapter.); and
- all appropriate personnel have been advised of the assessment.

Below is an example of what an assessment plan might look like.

Figure 18: Recording evidence – Assessment plan proforma

Name of RTO	
Learner's name	
Assessed on	
Assessed by	
Against the following units of competency (code and title of each unit)	
has been assessed as having acquired the skills and knowledge for the following qualification/statement of attainment	
on the basis of the following evidence:	
Portfolio of evidence	Comment
Skills demonstration	Comment
Video/audio	Comment
Certificates	Comment
Reference	Comment
Other	Comment
Assessor's signature	
Date	

The following is a sample of a completed assessment plan for the Business Services Training Package.

Figure 19: Assessment plan sample

Assessment plan	
Assessment task	Produce a workplace OHS induction kit
Assessment method	Group project
Assessor(s)	Jane Assessor (working with others to assess the kit)
Date of assessment	3 March 2015
<p>Units of competency/elements to be assessed</p> <p>BSBINM301 Organise workplace information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather information on OHS requirements/practices for the kit from appropriate sources. • Determine suitability of information for induction kit purpose. <p>BSBITU303 Design and produce text documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design user-friendly kit documentation suited to the intended audience. • Produce final documentation proofed and reviewed. <p>BSBCRT402 Collaborate in a creative process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work collaboratively with others in the kit design and production. <p>Brief description of task</p> <p>Learners work in teams of three to create an induction kit for beginning workers in the industry, which details the OHS practices to be followed in a workplace.</p> <p>Documents from the workplace or work placement and research are to be used to develop the kit. Assessment will be on the content and layout of the finished product and also the teamwork demonstrated during the development of the product.</p> <p>Resources required</p> <p>Access to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • workstation; • application software; • printer; • organisation's style guide; • bank of images, for example, for kit illustration; and • documents containing OHS information which may be copied and pasted. <p>Instructions for learners</p> <p>Learners receive detailed specifications of the content to be included in the induction kit and the style to be used.</p> <p>When preparing the learner for assessment, the assessor needs to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the scope, context and purpose of assessment have been agreed upon with the learner; 	

- the learner has understood the assessment plan and any other appropriate documentation;
- the relevant performance requirements have been provided and explained to the learner; the assessment procedure and expectations of the learner have been clarified and agreed upon by both the learner and the assessor;
- any legal or ethical responsibilities associated with the assessment have been explained to the learner and other relevant parties;
- the appeals process has been explained to the learner;
- information has been conveyed using appropriate language and techniques to communicate effectively with the learner and other relevant parties; and
- the need for any additional evidence gathering has been identified and the learner has been informed.

When conducting the assessment activity, the assessor needs to ensure that:

- the assessment is conducted in accordance with the assessment plan;
- evidence specified in the assessment procedure is gathered using the agreed tools or materials;
- evidence is gathered in accordance with reasonable or allowable adjustments (where applicable);
- evidence is evaluated in terms of validity, sufficiency, currency and authenticity;
- evidence is evaluated according to the unit(s) of competency, the relevant dimensions of competency, the facets of employability skills, and the ability to transfer and apply skills and knowledge to new contexts (if appropriate);
- if appropriate, assistance from more experienced assessors or industry experts is sought;
- the assessment decision is made in accordance with the specified criteria; and
- the decision is recorded appropriately, in accordance with RTO and other regulating processes.

When providing feedback, the assessor needs to ensure that:

- clear and constructive feedback is given to the learner, and appropriate language and strategies are used;
- feedback includes guidance on overcoming gaps in competency, or further goals or training opportunities (if appropriate);
- the learner is given information on reassessment opportunities and the appeals process; and
- any assessment decision dispute is reported to the appropriate personnel within the RTO.

Guidelines for assessing distance learners

Many assessors believe that the methods of assessment for distance learners are very limited. However, this is not necessarily the case. Distance learners, whether learning through online training or some other form of learning, can undertake many of the assessment activities undertaken by other learners. However, assessors will need to develop a number of strategies to make this work, including using third-party evidence, authenticating evidence more carefully, and enlisting the support of workplace assessors where appropriate.

The following table notes assessment methods suitable for distance learners and the issues to consider when assessing them.

Table 3: Assessment methods for distance learners

Evidence-gathering techniques	Issues to consider for distance learners
Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve third party in undertaking observation using observation tool. • Supplement with oral questioning (by phone) or other forms of evidence. • Assessor can travel to learner for observation/verification and feedback on a range of evidence collection. • Use information and communications technology, for example, webcam, blogs.
Simulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide written case study for short-answer responses and oral questioning. • Use video camera or video internet technology (if available) for role-plays or simulations.
Questioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use computer technology, written answers or phone. • Authenticate written answers through use of third-party and/or phone discussions.
Review of products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work samples or products can be posted to assessor. • Draft versions can be sent in advance to help with authentication.
Portfolio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portfolio evidence can be posted or emailed to the assessor. • Proposed content and layout can be sent in advance to assist with authentication.
Third-party feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be obtained through phone, post or email with third-party.
Structured activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations can be made to workplace or community and then video sent to assessor. • Learners can negotiate with workplace supervisor to undertake specified project team activities.
Knowledge-based tests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These can be undertaken online with additional evidence collected to establish authenticity. • Third party can be involved to establish authenticity and ensure that learner completes test in appropriate time and environment. • Short-answer 'open book' tests can be undertaken and supplemented by other forms of evidence to show consistency of competence over time.
Self-evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased use of formative assessments, such as online self-evaluations can be used to better establish the learner's readiness for assessment and to enhance the assessor's ability to establish authenticity of evidence collected for the assessments.

Appeals and complaints process

RTOs should have an appeals and complaints process which allows learners to challenge an assessment decision and enables them to be reassessed. The process should facilitate effective resolution of complaints and appeals. Some questions for RTOs to consider when developing appeals processes are as follows.

- Has the learner been clearly informed in a timely way about how to complain or appeal?
- Does the learner have an opportunity to present their case?
- Does the learner have access to an independent arbiter (if necessary)?
- Is the learner clearly informed of the outcomes of the complaint or appeal?
- Does the RTO have complaints and appeals resolved within realistic and fair timelines?

A reasonable, non-refundable fee may be charged by the RTO to discourage frivolous appeals, but it should not be so high that it prohibits appeals altogether. A frivolous appeal is one where there is no factual basis. They are usually lodged as a delaying or frustrating tactic rather than as a serious request for a review of an assessment decision.

When recording results, the assessor needs to ensure that:

- assessment results are recorded accurately and follow RTO record-keeping policies and procedures;
- confidentiality of assessment outcomes is maintained; and
- appropriate documentation is completed.

When reviewing the assessment activity, the assessor needs to ensure that:

- feedback on the assessment activity is sought from the learner;
- both positive and negative features experienced in conducting the assessment are conveyed to those responsible for the assessment procedure;
- suggestions for improving the assessment process are made or changes are made to the assessment process and materials; and
- appropriate validation processes are implemented.

Chapter 4

Reasonable adjustment and inclusive practice

Introduction

Decisions about making reasonable adjustment should focus on the needs of the individual learner. You may need to consult with a range of people, such as trainers/assessors, support people and/or technical experts, as well as the learner to decide what is reasonable in any particular case.

Reasonable adjustment does not mean that all learner requests are granted. It is about consultation and negotiation. However, learners with disability are often major sources of information on the reasonable adjustment that would be appropriate for them. Adjustments should be based on the ability of each learner to participate, and achieve outcomes.

Planning and preparation are very important in making reasonable adjustment and sufficient time should be allowed for appropriate arrangements to be put in place.

The guiding principle underlying the concept of reasonable adjustment is inclusive practice. Such practice includes the following.

- It recognises differences among learners.
- It caters for differences in individual interests, experiences, learning styles and preferences.
- It develops learners' ability to take control of their own learning.
- It uses authentic tasks that require thought and allow time for exploration.
- It emphasises the development of meaning and understanding, rather than simply the completion of tasks.
- It involves cooperation, communication and negotiation.
- It ensures that no learner is excluded.
- VET trainers/assessors, disability practitioners and managers make 'reasonable adjustment' in teaching, learning and assessment to:
 - ensure that learners with disability can access and participate in training on the same basis as learners without disability;
 - increase access to, and participation in, training of learners with disability; and
 - reduce the impact of disability on achievement of a vocational qualification.

Reasonable adjustment defined

'Reasonable adjustment' is a term used in the education, employment and VET sectors to refer to any modification made to the learning environment, certification requirements, training delivery or assessment method to help learners with disability access and participate in education and training on the same basis as those without disability.

RTOs are obliged by law to make reasonable adjustment to ensure maximum participation of learners with disability in teaching, learning and assessment activities. This includes:

- ensuring that course activities are sufficiently flexible;
- providing additional support where necessary; and
- offering a reasonable substitute within the context of the course where a learner cannot participate.

Reasonable adjustment is defined in section 4(1) of the Employment and the Disability Discrimination Act as follows:

An adjustment to be made by a person is a reasonable adjustment unless making the adjustment would impose an unjustifiable hardship on the person².

There is no list in the Act of the types of adjustments needed to remove discrimination against people with disability. Each case needs to be assessed on its own circumstances and merits. The nature of the reasonable adjustment will vary from case to case. The Explanatory Memorandum, Disability Discrimination and Other Human Rights Legislation Amendment Bill 2008 at page 9 explains:

... the question of whether the person has made 'all reasonable adjustments' takes into account the circumstances of the parties involved, including what is or is not possible for the person making the adjustments.

© Australian Human Rights Commission.

Section 3.4 of the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*³ defines reasonable adjustment as follows.

3.4 Reasonable adjustments

- (1) For these Standards, an adjustment is **reasonable** in relation to a learner with a disability if it balances the interests of all parties affected.

Note Judgements about what is reasonable for a particular learner, or a group of learners, with a particular disability may change over time.

- (2) In assessing whether a particular adjustment for a learner is reasonable, regard should be had to all the relevant circumstances and interests, including the following:
- (a) the learner's disability;
 - (b) the views of the learner or the learner's associate, given under section 3.5;
 - (c) the effect of the adjustment on the learner, including the effect on the learner's:
 - (i) ability to achieve learning outcomes; and
 - (ii) ability to participate in courses or programs; and
 - (iii) independence;
 - (d) the effect of the proposed adjustment on anyone else affected, including the education provider, staff and other learners;
 - (e) the costs and benefits of making the adjustment.

2 Sourced from *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, legislation.gov.au/Details/C2016C00763, © Commonwealth of Australia 2015. Viewed 31 August 2015. Licensed under [Creative Commons CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/).

3 Sourced from *The Disability Standards for Education 2005*, legislation.gov.au/Details/C2016C00763, © Commonwealth of Australia. Viewed 3 September 2015. Licensed under [Creative Commons CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/).

Section 3.3 of the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*⁴ defines adjustments as:

- (a) a measure or action (or a group of measures or actions) taken by an education provider that has the effect of assisting a learner with a disability:
 - (i) in relation to an admission or enrolment – to apply for the admission or enrolment; and
 - (ii) in relation to a course or program – to participate in the course or program; and
 - (iii) in relation to facilities or services – to use the facilities or services; on the same basis as a learner without a disability, and includes an aid, a facility, or a service that the learner requires because of his or her disability;
- (b) an adjustment mentioned in subsection 7.2 (4);
- (c) if a change is made to an adjustment mentioned in paragraph (a) or (b) – the adjustment as affected by the change.

The purpose of reasonable adjustment

Reasonable adjustment aims to make it possible for learners with disability to participate fully in education and training. It is not to give a learner with disability an advantage over other learners, to change course standards or outcomes, or to guarantee success.

Reasonable adjustment to teaching, learning and assessment activities needs to be justifiable and uphold the integrity of the qualification.

The *Disability Standards for Education 2005*⁵ provide the following explanations of reasonable adjustment on pages 15 and 16.

3.6 Deciding on an adjustment to be made

In deciding whether to make a particular reasonable adjustment for a learner, the education provider must:

- (a) assess whether there is any other reasonable adjustment that would be less disruptive and intrusive and no less beneficial for the learner; and
- (b) assess whether the adjustment may need to be changed over the period of a learner's education or training.

3.7 Adjustments to be provided in reasonable time

- (1) The education provider must take reasonable steps to ensure that any adjustment required to be made is made within a reasonable time.
- (2) Whether the time is reasonable depends, in particular, on whether and when the learner, or his or her associate, has provided:
 - (a) in a timely way, any relevant information in the possession of the learner or associate about how the disability affects the learner in relation to education or training; and
 - (b) the learner's or the associate's opinion about the matters mentioned in paragraphs 3.5 (a), (b) and (c).

Note The requirement for a provider to consult a learner with a disability, or an associate of the learner, about how the disability affects the learner in relation to education or training is set out in paragraphs 4.2 (3) (a), 5.2 (2) (a), 6.2 (2) (a), 7.2 (5) (a) and 7.2 (6) (a).

4, 5 Sourced from *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015*, comlaw.gov.au/Details/F2014L01377, © Commonwealth of Australia. Viewed 31 August 2015. Licensed under [Creative Commons CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/).

The kinds of reasonable adjustment that can be made

Reasonable adjustment as it applies to participation in learning and assessment activities may include:

- customising resources or activities within a training package or accredited course;
- modifying a presentation medium;
- providing additional support;
- providing assistive or adaptive technologies;
- making additional information accessible both before enrolment and during the course; and
- monitoring these adjustments to ensure that the learner’s needs continue to be met.

Many organisations have developed guidelines to help trainers/assessors determine the impact of specific disabilities on the teaching, learning and assessment process, and the types of adjustment to learning and assessment strategies that may be appropriate.

Polytechnic West, for example, has developed a Disability Services Toolbox to help staff identify training and assessment methods suitable for a range of recognised disabilities. The toolbox provides a brief description of each disability, along with recommended assessment methods for overcoming the barriers associated with it. It is accessible to Polytechnic West staff through the learning management system Moodle. For those without access to Moodle, a copy of the assessment methods table from the toolbox is included below.

Table 4: Disability and areas of impact

Disability	Areas of impact
Attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder	Individuals with this disorder: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are likely to have learning difficulties; • may also have other barriers to learning; • may be inattentive, impulsive, disorganised, forgetful restless and/or reactive; • may have difficulty controlling their responses to situations; and/or • may intrude upon and interrupt others.

Disability	Areas of impact
Autism spectrum disorder	<p>Individuals with this developmental disorder:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have difficulty understanding what they see, hear and sense; • find social interaction and communication difficult; • may have delayed speech development; • may avoid eye contact; may have difficulty understanding long verbal instructions; • may develop repetitive behaviours; • may follow strict routines; • may not be able to empathise; • may dislike changes in routine; and/or • may exhibit inappropriate behaviours.
Deafness/hearing impairment	<p>Individuals with this impairment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may use other forms of communication such as lip reading and sign language (Auslan); • may sit at the front of the lecture theatre where they can see the lecturer clearly; and/or • generally have Auslan as their first language and English as an additional language.
Dyscalculia	<p>Individuals with this disability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have difficulty understanding basic mathematical principles, such as number recognition and number manipulation; • are not able to perform arithmetic operations such as addition, subtraction, multiplication or division; • cannot grasp mathematical concepts and rules; and/or • have difficulty conceptualising time.
Dysgraphia	<p>Individuals with this disability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have persistent difficulties with handwriting, often writing illegibly; • may lack coordination skills and have poor dexterity (motor dysgraphia); • find it difficult to get their thoughts in order then on to paper; • may also have dyslexia.

Disability	Areas of impact
Dyslexia	<p>Individuals with this disorder:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have difficulties with reading and writing; • may daydream or ‘zone out’; • may find it hard to pay attention; • may have low self-esteem; • have difficulties decoding and interpreting information; and/or • have slower reading rates than their peers.
Dyspraxia	<p>Individuals with this disability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have difficulties with coordination; • have difficulty planning, sequencing and executing correct movement; • struggle to plan and manage tasks; • can find it challenging to conceptualise information and interpret messages; and/or • may have delayed speech development.
Mental health	<p>Individuals with mental health issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may suffer from disorders such as anxiety or depression which can have long-lasting and negative effects on their daily lives; • may be over-sensitive to authority or criticism; • may find it difficult to concentrate and motivate themselves; • may be withdrawn and unwilling to participate in class activities; and/or • may experience increased irritability and frustration.
Tremors	<p>Individuals with this condition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • experience uncontrollable and involuntary shaking in their hands, possibly as a result of an acquired brain injury; and • are generally aware of their safety and limitations and come up with coping strategies to minimise the impact of the tremors on their learning.

Table 5: Examples of adjustments to assessment

If a learner has difficulty with:	You might adjust assessment by:
concentration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • breaking the assessment into appropriate components that can be undertaken separately; • providing rest breaks during lengthy assessment sessions; • providing a separate assessment venue if the learner is distracted by others' movements or noise; • providing additional time; • providing alternative assessment methods, such as recording devices for oral testing, or telephone assessments for off-campus testing; and • allowing the learner to provide evidence of having completed the assessment task at another venue; for example, an employer could verify satisfactory demonstration of competence.
expressing knowledge in writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allowing oral assessment; • providing a digital recorder or similar; • providing a scribe; • providing a sign language interpreter; and • providing additional time.
spelling and/or grammar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allowing oral assessment; • providing a digital recorder or similar; • providing a scribe; • providing a sign language interpreter; • providing additional time; • providing a computer with a generic spelling and grammar checker, dictionary and thesaurus (such as those included in Microsoft® Word) or specialised literacy software (such as Spell Master or Read and Write Gold); • providing models and practical examples for the learner to demonstrate what they mean; and • providing alternative assessment methods, such as recorded interviews, slide presentations, photographic essays or models.
numbers and numerical concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allowing additional time; • allowing the learner to use a calculator; and • providing other assistive technology, such as a talking calculator.

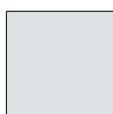
If a learner has difficulty with:	You might adjust assessment by:
understanding spoken information or instructions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allowing additional time; • providing written information or instructions to complement the spoken version; • providing a sign language interpreter; • allowing rest breaks or split sessions; • using simple, direct language (plain English); • providing step-by-step instructions; • repeating information given; • paraphrasing to check for understanding, and asking the learner to repeat what they are required to do; and • demonstrating what is required.
examination-related stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing additional time; • allowing rest breaks; • providing a separate examination venue; • allowing online assessment; and • providing alternative assessment methods, such as completion of an assignment or provision of third-party evidence.
English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing a computer with spelling and grammar checker, dictionary and thesaurus; • allowing additional time; and • providing an interpreter.
maintaining writing posture for any length of time, or writing quickly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing a digital recorder or similar; • allowing oral assessment; • providing a personal computer (if using a keyboard is more comfortable than writing); • allowing rest breaks; • providing a scribe; • providing other assistive technology or equipment; and • allowing additional time.
reading standard-sized print or handwriting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing technology such as magnifying devices to enlarge print, or screen readers; • providing Braille examination papers (with tactile diagrams, maps etc); • providing specialised writing pens; • providing oral assessment or recorded questions;

If a learner has difficulty with:	You might adjust assessment by:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing a reader; • allowing additional time; • providing models, graphics or practical examples to illustrate questions; and • providing heavily lined paper.
hearing verbal information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • facing the learner and speaking clearly (if the learner lip-reads); • producing information in writing; • providing assistive technology or equipment; • providing a sign language interpreter; and • allowing additional time.
physical tasks such as personal care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing a disability support worker; • agreeing to a carer provided by the learner; and • allowing additional time.
physical tasks such as turning pages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing a disability support worker; • agreeing to a carer provided by the learner; • allowing alternative methods of competence demonstration, such as oral assessment or third-party evidence; • providing assistive technology or equipment; and • allowing additional time.
oral communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allowing additional time; • providing an interpreter; • providing a computer with voice synthesiser; and • providing a reader of the learner's work.
certain physical environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing appropriate lighting and eliminating glare (for learners with low vision or epilepsy); • providing suitable furniture; • providing adequate space for equipment and support personnel; • providing access to PowerPoints for equipment; and • using a separate examination venue to eliminate distractions by others (and by others using equipment/support personnel).

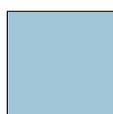
Table 6: Polytechnic West Disability Services Toolbox: Assessment methods summary table

For ease of interpretation, the assessment methods are highlighted as follows.

Method of delivery or assessment	Disability									
	Dyspraxia	Dyscalculia	Dysgraphia	Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder	Depression	Autism/Asperger's syndrome	Schizophrenia	Deafness/hearing impairment	Tremors	Dyslexia
Knowledge-based test	Good	Good	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Good	Moderate	Good	Moderate	Moderate
Verbal delivery	Good	Moderate	Good	Moderate	Good	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Good	Good
Assignment	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Good	Good	Moderate	Good	Good	Moderate	Moderate
Diary or journal	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Good	Good	Moderate	Good	Good	Moderate	Moderate
Case study	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Good	Good	Good	Good	Moderate	Moderate
Observation	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Recorded interview	Good	Good	Good	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Good	Good
Portfolio	Moderate	Moderate	Good	Good	Good	Moderate	Moderate	Good	Good	Good
Workplace evidence	Good	Moderate	Moderate	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Third-party statements	Good	Moderate	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good



Good methodology



Moderately effective methodology



Not very effective methodology – to be used with caution, taking the particular barrier/disability into consideration.

The Commonwealth Government also provides information to help organisations make appropriate workplace adjustments for people with disability. Their job access website jobsaccess.gov.au/employers/available-support/196 provides a range of information to assist people with disabilities and employers to make a wide range of adaptations suitable for specific disabilities. Some of these modifications may also be appropriate for competency based training and assessment.

Preparing to make reasonable adjustment

Making reasonable adjustment does not need to be expensive or complex, but you do need to allow sufficient time for planning and preparation. This includes sharing information, making decisions collaboratively and following relevant frameworks and guidelines.

Practices that facilitate making reasonable adjustment include:

- encouraging early disclosure of learner's disability;
- gathering relevant supporting information (including evidence of need);
- considering each learner individually; and
- consulting with the learner and others.

Sharing information

Both the learner and the RTO need to be involved in order to make an appropriate decision about any reasonable adjustment.

It is crucial that learners are provided with all relevant information before they enrol so that they can select the right course and prepare their home or work environment to enable them to best meet course demands.

Providing information in a range of formats – such as both in print and electronically – allows for flexibility and optimum accessibility to learners. Relevant information includes:

- course structure, core requirements, literacy and numeracy levels required, delivery methods, including distance or e-learning options, facilities and resources available to learners, assessment methods, any relevant industry licences or professional association requirements, relevant legislation and occupational health and safety requirements for the industry;
- reasonable adjustment options for learners with disability, including the learner's responsibilities and how to access Disability Services; and
- how the learner can disclose information about their disability.

Disclosure of disability

Disclosure of disability is the learner's choice; it is not a requirement for participation in a VET course or program. However, encouraging learners to share information about the impact of their disability on their learning early in their engagement with the RTO helps the RTO to make any reasonable adjustment required.

Learners should be made aware that the RTO is prepared to make reasonable adjustment, but the RTO must not force any learner to engage in this process, as some learners may feel uncomfortable at being 'singled out'. The RTO can reduce the risk of such discomfort by providing clear information about:

- the opportunity for all learners to have the assessment process tailored to meet their needs; and
- the processes involved in working with each learner to develop a suitable assessment strategy.

The RTO must obtain the learner's written/signed consent before sharing any of their disclosed information.

Making decisions about reasonable adjustment

According to the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*, the RTO is required to consult with the learner or their associates about the nature of the disability and its effects, if any, on the learner's ability to participate in the course or program, and about any reasonable adjustment that may be made to facilitate participation. This process depends on the learner providing timely information about the effects of their disability. The key word in the process is consultation. The learner may already have a clear idea of what they need.

Once a learner has shared information about having a disability, any decisions to be made about making reasonable adjustment should be made collaboratively with the learner, their trainers/assessors, appropriate support people, disability practitioners and external experts as required.

If the learner seeks support, the following steps may be considered in consultation with the learner.

- Identify the challenges, needs and barriers involved – a disability support specialist or the workplace adjustment tool on the JobAccess website may help by providing information about the disability and some strategies that you can apply.
- Suggest adjustments that could be made to meet the learner's needs.
- Discuss whether these adjustments are reasonable.
- Provide written confirmation to the learner of all discussions and decisions, and specify a date for final confirmation of course enrolment by the learner.

There are a number of specific issues to consider in the decision-making process. These include but are not limited to the learner's needs with respect to:

- reading and writing;
- hearing;
- communicating with others or getting ideas across;
- sitting still for long periods;
- moving around the learning environment;
- moving or manipulating objects;
- paying attention and staying focused;
- remembering or retaining information; and
- dealing with frustration.

The RTO may also need to consult with other agencies, industry and/or work placement employers before being able to make a firm commitment to the learner. If the RTO is able to accommodate the learner, reasonable adjustment must be made to ensure that there is a clear and continuing commitment from all parties to improve the likelihood of course completion.

The following case studies demonstrate how RTOs can make reasonable adjustments for learners with disability.

Case study 1 – Jody

Jody is currently completing Certificate III in Applied Art. She has a learning disability and attention deficit disorder. As a result of her learning disability, she is not a fluent reader and experiences difficulty understanding some subject-related terminology. Because of her ADD, she has difficulty with her short-term memory, is often disorganised and frequently loses her notes and learning plans. She also has difficulty planning and maintaining a routine. Consequently, her class notes are poor, her files disorganised and she finds it difficult to meet assessment deadlines.

She feels anxious and overwhelmed because of these issues, and has started to miss classes. This is unfortunate because Jody is an intelligent and competent artist with good hand–eye coordination and spatial awareness.

The DSO at her RTO has been made aware of Jody’s situation, and consults with Jody and her lecturers, and implements some strategies to support her learning. These include:

- providing clarification of new terms and key concepts introduced in lectures;
- ensuring that lectures include a mixture of theory, group discussion and practical activities to maintain attention and interest;
- allowing lead time and preparation for assignments and assessments;
- allowing oral presentation of assessments;
- allowing extra time for theoretical assessments;
- providing tutorial sessions to clarify new information and help with organisation;
- encouraging the use of assistive technologies such as electronic organisers; and
- making learning plans and course notes available on the learning management system to ensure accessibility.

Jody is now catching up on her notes and assignments. As she now finds these tasks more manageable, her anxiety has decreased. She understands that she must achieve the inherent requirements of the course, and now feels more confident about this because she has the support of her lecturers and of disability services staff.

Case study 2 – Errol

Errol is a plumbing apprentice who is deaf. His deafness is hereditary and both his parents are deaf. At school Errol had an Auslan interpreter. Even with the interpreter, Errol struggled with written assignments because of the differences in syntax and grammar between written English and Auslan.

Errol is managing his apprenticeship reasonably well. He has an interpreter during block release to communicate the underpinning knowledge of the course. His lecturers have attended a deafness awareness course and make reasonable adjustment wherever possible to accommodate Errol's deafness.

These adjustments include:

- notes for the Auslan interpreter to familiarise them with industry terminology;
- extra time with the interpreter and/or lecturers to clarify concepts;
- visual aids to supplement oral presentations;
- captions for videos;
- handouts containing visual information;
- help with written assignments; and
- classes that work cooperatively and are inclusive of all students.

Errol's employer has also been made aware of these issues and provides Errol with support in his on-the-job training component. The support from both the RTO and the employer give Errol the best opportunity to complete his apprenticeship successfully.

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Case study 3 – James

James has paraplegia and uses a wheelchair. He wanted to take a qualification within the timber trades area.

It was immediately evident that some parts of the training would present barriers due to issues of physical mobility, predominantly in the workshop environment. It was decided that a meeting would be held to determine James' abilities and individual requirements in relation to training and assessment in this area.

The meeting involved a number of relevant stakeholders and was held in the workshop of the timber trades area. The workshop was the perfect place to hold the meeting, as it allowed James to physically demonstrate what he could and could not do in the environment in which he would undertake his training.

He was given the opportunity to have a 'test run' of the equipment that he would be required to use. He did this in the presence of those best qualified to determine whether he was able to do so in a way that would not present a risk to himself or other students.

Some of the equipment was not a problem for James. Other equipment presented occupational health and safety risks that could be overcome with modifications, and some equipment was just not an option as it could not be adjusted to eliminate unacceptable risk to James or other students.

The stakeholders worked together over a period of time to establish the modifications that could be made to enable James to enrol in as many of the units in the qualification as possible. During this process it was discovered that some modifications that would have allowed James to participate in a number of units would in fact have introduced a range of duty-of-care and OHS issues for the other students in the class. It was decided that the RTO's duty-of-care to the other students in the training environment outweighed the benefits of the proposed modifications, thus making them unreasonable.

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Chapter 5

Recognition of prior learning

Introduction

Recognition of prior learning is an assessment process aimed at determining credit and recognising the competencies learners have obtained in formal and informal education and the work environment.

RPL assessment enables individuals to forego training and move directly to having their competencies assessed, thus avoiding the need for unnecessary training which brings with it additional cost, time and effort.

Although it is not necessarily a quick or simple process, RPL aims to provide learners who do not require learning with a flexible and faster way of having their skills and knowledge assessed against the competencies stipulated in training packages and vocationally accredited courses. Mature-age job seekers or existing workers with accumulated life and work experiences are seen as primary candidates for RPL.

RPL can be used in two ways:

- as an alternative mechanism for gaining access to a course or qualification. A learner may gain entry to a course or qualification using RPL as an alternative to possessing the prerequisites for entry based on formal education and training, for example, learners who obtain places in a diploma course using RPL based on life or work experience when they have not completed the relevant prerequisites; and/or
- for the award of unit(s) of competency that form part of a qualification, leading to the partial or full completion of the requirements for that course or qualification.

The quality of RPL assessment must match the quality of other assessment procedures. RPL may use different assessment methods, but they should be just as rigorous as conventional methods of assessing competence in the VET sector.

RPL assessment processes

To recognise prior learning, trainers/assessors must:

- ensure that learners know that RPL provides an alternative pathway to course attendance;
- determine in consultation with learners, the learning, skills and knowledge that they are able to demonstrate against the learning or competency outcomes of the course or qualification for which the learner is seeking entry or the award of credit;

- determine whether any further evidence is needed to support the claim of competence and arrange for appropriate additional learning experiences or gap training where appropriate; and
- conduct an assessment that confirms competence.

In the past, many RPL processes have followed a fairly predictable pattern. Learners, having been given written information about the evidence needed to have their skills recognised, have gone away and collected evidence, which they have then put together into a portfolio. To prove that their portfolio satisfied the evidence requirements, learners themselves often mapped their portfolio against the unit(s) of competency.

Many RTOs have come to realise that this methodology is both isolating and excessively demanding. In some cases, the language, literacy and analytical skills involved in these processes may have exceeded the knowledge and skill requirements of the modules/units being assessed or the AQF level of the qualification.

Streamlined approaches to RPL encourage assessment methods that reduce the reliance on paper-based evidence and give learners the opportunity to gather evidence of their competence in a range of ways that better match the requirements of the unit(s). Increasingly, methods being used to gather evidence for RPL mirror assessment methods that are used in a training program. These include self-evaluation, interview processes and/or direct observation either on the job in the workplace or in a simulated environment.

Another important shift has been the introduction of far more interactive processes between the RTO and learners, so that RPL practices can be personalised to meet the needs of learners, many of whom have had limited or distant experience of formal learning systems and their requirements. Mature-aged applicants, particularly labour market re-entrants and migrants, frequently need additional support to rebuild their confidence. Arms-length processes, such as evidence gathering for a portfolio, are isolating and do not always build confidence in people making tentative steps towards learning and work.

To make RPL a user-friendly assessment pathway, trainers/assessors need to adopt a flexible and interactive approach, and provide information, advice and feedback to RPL learners in the same way that they provide support and assistance to all learners seeking to have their skills developed and assessed.

It is particularly important when learners are not engaged in a structured learning program that they receive advice about what is required of them and that they not be constricted by inappropriately applied paper-based or knowledge-based assessment methods. The nature of the support provided may differ from that made available to other learners, but the level and quality of that support will influence outcomes for learners seeking RPL in the same ways as it influences other learners.

In summary, the streamlined processes, which vary in shape and form, all apply the principles of assessment to RPL and do not necessarily base their assessment on evidence contained in a portfolio. They also provide structured support for learners to provide them with an experience of assessment that has been ‘done well’ and to meet the requirements of the regulatory standards. These elements of effective practice and others are contained in the following general principles for RPL.

General principles for RPL

The following principles are intended to assist RTOs to implement and maintain good-quality RPL and assure the quality of assessments delivered through RPL processes. They should also help RTOs to demonstrate the quality of their service provision as indicated by the three quality indicators included in the regulatory standards, namely:

- employer satisfaction;
- learner satisfaction; and
- competency completion rate.

The principles draw upon the relevant regulatory requirements for assessment and our understanding of quality assessment practice. All RTOs and practitioners operating under regulatory standards and the AQF should strive to work within these principles, which are a distillation of the requirements regarding the provision of assessment.

Table 7: General principles for RPL

General principle	Comment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about RPL should be actively promoted and accessible to a diverse audience of learners. 	RPL should be actively promoted to all learners enrolled in VET courses. Where possible, it should also be promoted as widely as possible through industry and community channels to tap into the adult learning market.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RPL should recognise learning acquired in any context. 	The learning must be relevant to the competency outcomes stated in a training package and still current.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RPL assessment should be conducted according to the principles of assessment and in conformity with the rules of evidence. 	The principles of assessment and rules of evidence of RPL are no different from those that apply to regular assessment processes, even if they are pursued through adapted methods. The principles of assessment are validity, reliability, flexibility and fairness. The rules of evidence are validity, sufficiency, currency and authenticity.

General principle	Comment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no single RPL model that is suitable for all qualifications and all situations. 	<p>The model of RPL that is implemented must be aligned with the outcome, goals and objectives of the qualification.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RPL processes should be timely, fair and transparent. 	<p>The delivery of RPL should be as expedient and well signposted as regular assessment processes, and learners should be kept informed of their status at reasonable intervals.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RPL assessment processes should be quality assured to the same level as training-based assessment. 	<p>The quality indicators included in the regulatory standards apply to RPL as well as to any other assessment procedure.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RPL policies, procedures and processes should be explicitly included in quality assurance procedures within institutions. 	<p>Quality service means that all learners receive services that meet their needs, which involves the delivery of training/assessment appropriate to learners' skill levels. Identifying learners' skill levels should be part of the quality measures of training services.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RPL decisions should be accountable, transparent, and subject to appeal and review. 	<p>The outcomes and decision-making process of RPL assessments should be clearly explained to learners, and mechanisms for appeal made available throughout a learner's enrolment in a qualification.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RPL assessment should be structured to minimise cost to the individual. 	<p>Costs for RPL processes should take into account the particular resources, labour and time allocations required for each learner, and be consistent with the current VET fees and charges policy.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutions and providers should develop advice and information about RPL for employers of learners/potential learners to promote RPL among employers. 	<p>Those who have gained skills through experience in the workforce should be made aware of the opportunity to have their skills recognised through RPL. The benefits of this should be promoted to employers.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutions and providers should include RPL in access strategies for disadvantaged groups. 	<p>RPL should be considered part of a wider strategy for appraising and accrediting the skills of those who have been marginalised by the traditional training and assessment model, for example, migrants, people with disability, women returning to the workforce, and the unemployed returning to the workforce.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding models should not impede the implementation of RPL. 	<p>RPL needs to be recognised in funding policies to acknowledge its role as a growth area in VET provision.</p>

A task-based model for RPL

Preparation/information provision to learners

In planning for any assessment, trainers/assessors need to provide adequate information before, during and after a training and assessment experience. They need to be fully aware of the needs of the learner, any relevant workplace personnel and the requirements of the training package, unit of competency or qualification.

Information is to be provided to learners about the assessment process. It will give particular advice regarding how learners can demonstrate their competence and any documentary evidence learners may wish to gather to support their application. Each industry has unique documents that can provide evidence of experience and competence.

The focus of the new streamlined holistic assessment process is, however, on demonstrated skills and knowledge, and not on documentary evidence as the main source of evidence.

Some examples of documentary evidence that can support the process include:

- licences;
- brief résumé or work history;
- certificates/results of assessment;
- tickets held, for example, forklift, crane;
- photographs of work undertaken;
- diaries;
- task sheets/job sheets;
- logbooks;
- site training records;
- pay slips;
- membership of relevant professional associations;
- references/letters/third-party verification reports from previous employers/supervisors;
- industry awards; and
- performance appraisals.

These items may be used to support learners' claims to competency throughout the RPL process. However, they must not be seen as a sole or sufficient determinant of competence, which is more properly and effectively assessed through interaction, dialogue and the practical demonstration of tasks.

The task-based requirements for RPL are just as rigorous as the requirements for regular assessment. It is therefore essential that the methods and tools developed for implementing assessment meet the requirements of the training package, the principles of assessment, the rules of evidence and any industry-specific workplace requirements.

It is first necessary to extract from the training package the job tasks involved in the demonstration of competence, and then to group these job tasks into clusters or 'skill sets'. These will form the basis of the content of the assessment templates to be used throughout the different steps in the assessment process (as set out below).

It is usually appropriate to cluster competencies into more holistic assessment tasks or task-based clusters to generate accurate evidence. Competencies that are conceived as separate in the training package might, for some learners, be intimately connected in practice, and thus not easy to separate from one another. An approach that clusters units of competency where there is commonality in content prevents duplication of assessment and can provide for a more realistic demonstration of competence. This requires looking at a whole picture of a particular job role as it happens in industry, and assessing holistically. This approach saves valuable time in the assessment process.

After reviewing all the information, the learner may then decide not to progress with the formal RPL assessment process and not apply for RPL.

The steps

Once the preparatory stage has been completed, the following four steps towards RPL are recommended:

- Step 1 – Learner's self-evaluation;
- Step 2 – Interview with trainer/assessor;
- Step 3 – Demonstration/observation of tasks; and
- Step 4 – Provision of further supporting evidence.

Step 1 – Learner's self-evaluation

When learners first apply for RPL, they are given a self-evaluation tool – such as a checklist or proforma – with questions/criteria based upon real job tasks written in plain English (not training package terminology) as interpreted from the training package unit(s) of competency. The self-evaluation tool gives learners the opportunity to determine their level of experience and knowledge in the relevant industry. It also provides trainers/assessors with an overview of the level of the learner's background experience to help them determine if the learner is likely to be a successful in the RPL process. It is also an important first step in identifying where the learner may have gaps in training skills and knowledge. Information on sample self-evaluation tools can be found later in this publication.

If a written self-evaluation form is not appropriate for the task, or does not suit the particular needs of the learner, they should be given the option of providing a verbal self-evaluation before a qualified trainer/assessor. In some cases, a support person may also be used.

Step 2 – Interview with trainer/assessor

If, according to the information provided in the self-evaluation, the learner demonstrates potential for RPL, the next stage involves undergoing further evidence gathering via an interview. The purpose of this step is to determine whether the learner is entitled to skip the training process and ready for assessment.

This component of the RPL assessment process provides an opportunity for the learner and the trainer/assessor to have a professional conversation about the learner's required knowledge and skills. It may comprise a series of direct questions or could be a list of topics for discussion drawn from the list of required skills and knowledge. Discussion around topics may provide an opportunity for learners to demonstrate a broader area of knowledge and experience, and may elicit more information than direct questioning. Appropriate responses to questions or topics to be covered in the conversation should be included, as these will support the trainer/assessor in probing for more specific information.

It is preferable to conduct this interview in a workplace or work-related environment so that the learner can refer to examples or draw upon their environment to further support the verbal expression of their competence. Trainer's/assessor's instructions should indicate which questions/topics are critical to the assessment. An appropriate recording mechanism should be included – such as a purpose-built form and/or a digital recorder – to create a reliable record of the interview for future reference.

Step 3 – Demonstration/observation of tasks

If the interview demonstrates the learner's verbal and theoretical knowledge to a sufficient standard, the next stage is to observe and assess the learner's performance in practice through the observation of practical tasks performed either in the workplace or in a simulated workplace environment.

Practical tasks give the learner the opportunity to demonstrate their application of skills and knowledge of a qualification. These practical assessments must be designed to reflect job tasks and developed using the units of competency. Developers will need to refer to the training package for specific industry requirements.

To assess in actual workplace situations, processes will need to be put in place to enable trainers/assessors to gain permission to access workplaces. A list of resources required for the practical tasks also needs to be included. Observation and questioning on the job will speed up and streamline the assessment process.

In some cases it might be more effective to group competencies into certain task-based clusters. For instance, in assessing a learner for the hospitality package, the trainer/assessor might cluster the following competencies into a single, multi-stage task, such as the preparation of a banquet:

- work with colleagues and customers;

- work in a socially diverse environment;
- follow health, safety and security procedures;
- follow workplace hygiene procedures;
- organise and prepare food; and
- present food.

Observation checklists should be used to provide a record of the practical assessment. Checklists must provide opportunity for sufficient detail of the on the job assessment to be recorded. This documentary evidence provides sources of evidence to external sources, for example, auditors, and fellow trainers/assessors who support the trainer's/assessor's judgement.

Step 4 – Provision of further supporting evidence

To complement Steps 1–3, learners might provide further documentary evidence to support their competency profile as demonstrated in the prior stages of assessment. The types of documentary evidence that may be provided to further support the learner's claim to competency are the same as those listed at the preparatory stage above, for example, third-party verification reports, job logs or photographs of work undertaken.

Examples and templates which may be useful for trainers/assessors of the task-based RPL model in this publication are available from the Department of Training and Workforce Development at vetinfont.dtwd.wa.gov.au/Resourcesandlinks/Pages/RecognitionofPriorLearning.aspx.

Chapter 6

Assessor competencies

Introduction

The VET sector has long required its practitioners to be dual professionals, specifically to be trainers/assessors, as well as industry specialists. This requirement has been consistently supported by the sector's governing bodies, ensuring that the 'right person' provides the training and assessment to the learner. These requirements ensure that quality training and assessment is delivered.

The current regulatory requirements⁶ are:

- 1.13. In addition to the requirements specified in Clause 1.14 and Clause 1.15, the RTO's training and assessment is delivered only by persons who have:
 - a) vocational competencies at least to the level being delivered and assessed;
 - b) current industry skills directly relevant to the training and assessment being provided; and
 - c) current knowledge and skills in vocational training and learning that informs their training and assessment.Industry experts may also be involved in the assessment judgement, working alongside the trainer and/or assessor to conduct the assessment.
- 1.14. The RTO's training and assessment is delivered only by persons who have:
 - a) prior to 1 January 2016, the training and assessment qualification specified in Item 1 or Item 2 of Schedule 1, or demonstrated equivalence of competencies; and
 - b) from 1 January 2016, the training and assessment qualification specified in Item 1 or Item 2 of Schedule 1.
- 1.15. Where a person conducts assessment only, the RTO ensures that the person has:
 - a) prior to 1 January 2016, the training and assessment qualification specified in Item 1 or Item 2 or Item 3 of Schedule 1, or demonstrated equivalence of competencies; and
 - b) from 1 January 2016, Item 1 or Item 2 or Item 3 of Schedule 1.
- 1.16. The RTO ensures that all trainers/assessors undertake professional development in the fields of the knowledge and practice of vocational training, learning and assessment including competency-based training and assessment.

Most VET practitioners now hold training and assessment competencies. However, there are an increasing number of questions around vocational competence and industry currency, and how to prove vocational equivalence in particular.

Vocational competence in the VET sector in a particular industry consists of broad industry knowledge and experience, usually combined with a relevant industry qualification. A person who has vocational competence will be familiar with the content of the vocation and will have relevant current experience in the industry.

6 Sourced from *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015*, comlaw.gov.au/Details/F2014L01377, © Commonwealth of Australia. Viewed 31 August 2015. Licensed under [Creative Commons CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/).

Vocational competencies must be considered on an industry-by-industry basis and with reference to the guidance provided in the assessment requirements of the relevant training package.

In most situations, trainers/assessors will hold the qualifications and/or units of competency that they deliver or assess, but where this is not the case, equivalence needs to be established. Equivalence is most commonly demonstrated by an individual through mapping their past training, experience and ongoing professional development against the unit of competency. This process may or may not identify gaps that require to be addressed. Recognition is at the discretion of the employing RTO and is subject to audit.

Many practitioners question why this needs to be done at a unit of competency level rather than at a qualification level. The structure of most training packages encourages flexibility, and, as a result, a qualification can be made up of a wide range of units. People can hold the same qualification, but in reality have a completely different set of knowledge and skills.

Is the demonstration of equivalence the same as RPL?

Demonstration of equivalence is not the same as RPL. RPL is an assessment process, while the demonstration of equivalence is not a formal assessment process and therefore cannot be used as the basis for the award of a qualification or statement of attainment. As no certification is awarded, this judgement of equivalence can be made by any RTO.

Deeming equivalence

It is expected that RTOs making judgements about demonstration of equivalent competencies will have a documented process for arriving at those judgements that are validated. Judgements should be in accordance with the rules of evidence and should be able to be upheld through peer or independent review.

Industry currency

Industry currency is the maintenance of a trainer's/assessor's vocational technical skills and knowledge. Put simply, it is keeping up to date with current industry knowledge, skills and practice. Industry currency enables trainers/assessors to deliver and assess vocational training relevant to industry and is central to the concept of being a dual professional. There are many benefits to maintaining industry currency for the RTO and industry.

These include:

- the delivery of training that is relevant, based on real world examples and more tailored to industry needs;

- improved confidence and an up-to-date and best practice image of trainers/assessors for learners, industry and peers;
- improved reputation of the RTO among employers;
- enhanced industry confidence and goodwill, through being ‘seen’ in industry; and
- improved industry ownership, valuing and understanding of training.

Given the importance and increasing focus on industry currency, there is very little formal guidance available to help RTOs establish an approach that will work for them. Some training packages provide advice about what currency means in that industry. For example, the CPC08 Construction, Plumbing and Services Training Package states on page 361 that, ‘assessors delivering qualifications from this CPC08 Construction, Plumbing and Services Training Package should have the following minimum competency, recognition and industry experience, that is, workplace experience within the last two years in the competency area being delivered⁷.’ This statement provides very clear guidelines as to what is considered current by that industry. Most training packages, however, are silent on the issue of currency, so currency decisions are often to be made by the individual RTO.

How to determine the currency period for your scope

This seems simple, but the vastly different nature of various industries means that it is complex. There are a number of factors that influence currency periods. These include, for example:

- technological innovation;
- changing legislation and regulatory requirements;
- changes to industry practice;
- new and emerging skills and specialisations as work practices change; and
- technical skill degradation through periods of non-use.

This means that each RTO has to consider the factors that are relevant to them and, in consultation with industry, determine what an appropriate currency period is. There will not be one consistent currency period. It will depend on the factors that are relevant to what the individual trainer/assessor is required to deliver.

The kinds of activities that could contribute to maintaining industry currency

Just as there is no one currency period, there is no single specific activity or group of activities that represents the best way to maintain industry currency. The reality is that there are a range of activities that may work for the individual assessor/RTO. The activities that the individual uses need to be chosen to suit the kind of knowledge and skill they have to maintain. The challenge for RTOs is determining which combination of activities will work. Depending on your industry, the approaches will differ.

⁷ Sourced from *CPC08 Construction, Plumbing and Services Training Package Release 9.1*, training.gov.au/Training/Details/CPC08, © Commonwealth of Australia 2015. Viewed 7 September 2016. Licensed under [Creative Commons CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/).

Do I need to take a unit-by-unit approach?

As with demonstrating equivalence, consideration of currency needs to be undertaken at a unit level. The RTO will need to consider which range of strategies will ensure that trainers/assessors are current across the range of units they deliver and assess against.

Chapter 7

Validation and evaluation

Introduction

Although as trainers/assessors, we do our best to develop effective, high-quality assessment strategies and practices, we always need to be open to the possibility of further improvement. All aspects of assessment need to be regularly monitored, reviewed and improved. This is driven partly by our need to improve as professional trainers/assessors, partly due to changes and improvements in our understanding of assessment processes, partly to meet changes in outcome standards, and partly to respond to changes within industry itself.

Evaluation and improvement are about applying good business practices to ensure the best outcomes for our clients, namely: learners, industry and the community. Our vigilance must extend beyond our own appraisal of the assessment systems we have established. We must therefore seek and incorporate feedback and advice from industry, employers, other assessment professionals and the people we assess.

Evaluation and improvement is based upon assessment validation⁸ which is defined as:

The quality review of the assessment process. Validation involves checking that the assessment tool/s produce/s valid, reliable, sufficient, current and authentic evidence to enable reasonable judgements to be made as to whether the requirements of the training package or VET accredited courses are met. It includes reviewing a statistically valid sample of the assessments and making recommendations for future improvements to the assessment tool, process and/or outcomes and acting upon such recommendations.

The purpose of an improvement process

The quest for improvement is a defining characteristic of professional practice. There are many reasons why trainers/assessors need to engage in the improvement of assessment systems as professionals in the VET sector. These include:

- confirming the credibility and recognition of certification;
- supporting the industry and community recognition of VET graduates;
- providing the best service for VET clients – learners and industry;
- ensuring assessments reflect changes in current industry requirements;
- improving the validity, reliability, flexibility and fairness of assessments;
- providing greater justice for learners for assessment with improved relevance, transparency and support in assessment processes;

8 Sourced from *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015*, comlaw.gov.au/Details/F2014L01377, © Commonwealth of Australia. Viewed 31 August 2015. Licensed under [Creative Commons CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/).

- ensuring more meaningful feedback and guidance for learners after they have been assessed;
- supporting ongoing RTO quality assurance;
- enhancing the reputation and recognition of the RTO and its services;
- minimising risks associated with the assessment process;
- improving the management of assessment systems; and
- informing trainer/assessor selection and guiding professional development.

Improvement processes refer to the enhancement of an RTO's performance so that the changing needs of clients and industry continue to be met. Improvement does not relate to actions to achieve compliance as such actions are considered rectifications. An effective quality system includes processes that encourage and achieve improvement. For RTOs, this means developing a planned and ongoing process to systematically evaluate and improve policies, procedures, products and services through analysis of relevant information and collection of data from clients and other interested parties, including staff. Data from quality indicators provides a key tool for improvement.

The value for RTOs of adopting an improvement cycle is in its potential to create a stronger, more sustainable business that meets the needs of clients and stakeholders. Such a cycle also enables RTOs to adapt quickly to changing external environments, such as economic factors and skills needs.

Types of improvement processes and tools are not prescribed and RTOs have the flexibility to consider their own business context and make improvements based on feedback from their clients and stakeholders.

Systematically collecting and analysing data

Systematic approaches that support improvement include:

- planning where data will be collected from, how it will be collected, the form it will take, how often it will be collected, and how it will be collated, analysed and used;
- ensuring that data collection and analysis confirm good practice and show where improvements need to be made;
- making improvements where analysis demonstrates that they are needed;
- regularly reviewing data collection to assess its usefulness for improving products and services; and
- giving feedback to those who have contributed to the data.

Ensuring that data is relevant and sufficient

The focus of qualitative data collection, for example, feedback from assessment validation meetings, and quantitative data collection, for example, records of assessments undertaken and judgements made, could be informed by:

- prior continuous improvement activities;

- feedback from stakeholders such as learners, employers, industry;
- quality indicator data;
- assessing the relevance of the collected data to the trainer's/assessor's training and assessment outcomes; and
- deciding which aspects of training delivery are most critical to the trainer's/assessor's quality training and assessment.

Data sources relevant to improving training and assessment could include:

- client satisfaction surveys/questionnaires;
- interviews, focus groups, and/or other data from consultation with learners, enterprise clients, industry organisations and licensing bodies;
- records of staff/planning meetings and agreed actions;
- records of complaints and appeals, and their resolution;
- internal audit reports and organisational self-evaluation; and
- staff performance appraisal reports.

Demonstrating improvements

Improvements to training and assessment could be demonstrated by changes to:

- quality, currency, relevance and sufficiency of training and assessment resources, including reasonable adjustments made to meet the needs of learners with disability or other valid reasons for adjustment;
- professional development activities and outcomes; and
- validity, reliability, flexibility and fairness of assessment processes.

For continuous improvement, revised practices are analysed in light of further data collection. Ways of identifying opportunities for the improvement of assessment strategies could be through assessment system validation and the systematic improvement of the processes set out above. Opportunities for improvement may also be identified through collaborative partnerships and risk management processes.

Aspects of assessment to be monitored

Which aspects of assessment need to be monitored for improvement? The following five targets for validation can be identified:

- assessment systems;
- assessment processes;
- assessment methods and tools;
- assessment evidence; and
- assessment judgements.

Assessment systems may include but are not limited to:

- grievances and appeals processes;
- assessment processes;
- validation systems and processes;
- administrative procedures such as reporting/recording arrangements;
- quality assurance mechanisms;
- risk management strategies;
- acquisition of physical and human resources;
- identifying roles and responsibilities; and
- establishing partnership arrangements.

Assessment processes may include but are not limited to:

- providing RPL;
- dealing with appeals, complaints and grievances;
- managing resources and partnership arrangements;
- designing assessment methods/tools;
- selecting, managing and monitoring trainers/assessors and providing them with professional development;
- managing the gathering of evidence, including third-party evidence, workplace assessment, simulation and record keeping;
- making and recording judgements;
- providing learners with information;
- providing learners with feedback and guidance; and
- ensuring validity and reliability, flexibility and fairness.

Assessment methods and tools are used to gather assessment evidence, and may include but are not limited to methods such as:

- observation of performance through normal work activities or simulated workplace activities;
- examining workplace products produced by the learner;
- questioning and/or conducting interviews;
- seeking third-party reports;
- structured activities, for example, role-plays, projects, presentations;
- examining portfolios; and
- tools such as:
 - observation checklists, for example, workplace and/or simulation;
 - knowledge tests, for example, written and/or oral;
 - third-party questionnaires; and
 - instructions provided to learners and instructions for evidence gatherers.

Assessment evidence is information that has been gathered, which, when matched against the unit of competency requirements, provides proof of competence.

Evidence can take many forms and be gathered from a number of sources. Trainers/assessors often categorise evidence in different ways, for example through:

- direct, indirect and supplementary sources of evidence;
- evidence collected by the learner or evidence collected by the trainer/assessor;
- historical and recent evidence collected by the learner; and
- current evidence collected by the trainer/assessor.

Quality evidence is valid, sufficient, current and authentic evidence that enables the trainer/assessor to make the assessment judgement. Assessment judgements involve the trainer/assessor evaluating whether the evidence gathered is valid, sufficient, current and authentic in order to make the assessment decision.

The assessment decision will require using professional judgement in evaluating the evidence available about:

- the quality of evidence gathered using the assessment methods/tools; and
- the competency achievement of the learner based upon that evidence.

Quality standards in assessment

Where do trainers/assessors find the quality standards that tell them what they should be looking for in their assessment systems, processes, methods/tools, evidence and judgements?

The regulatory standards and the TAE10 Training and Education Training Package provide considerable guidance.

Assessment systems are the controlled and ordered processes designed to ensure that assessment decisions made in relation to many individuals by many trainers/assessors in many situations are valid, reliable, flexible and fair. Systems should have well-understood components such as validation processes, assessment appeal mechanisms, and recording and reporting processes.

Assessment processes need to:

- be recorded;
- involve consultation with industry during development;
- be equitable and meet the needs of a diverse range of learners;
- be regularly validated and improved;
- be efficient and effective, for example, clustering units of competency;
- be negotiated, integrated and monitored where a workplace is used;
- be negotiated, agreed and monitored where partnership arrangements are used;
- be appropriately resourced with, for example, staff, facilities, equipment, assessment materials;
- ensure that all participants in the process are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities;

- comply with the assessment guidelines of training packages or assessment requirements of accredited courses;
- lead to an AQF qualification or a statement of attainment (including for skill sets);
- be valid, reliable, fair and flexible;
- provide for reassessment on appeal;
- be explained to all learners on enrolment; and
- minimise time and cost to learners.

Assessment methods and tools need to:

- be valid, reliable, fair and flexible;
- be regularly validated and improved;
- comply with unit of competency requirements (one or more if clustered), including employability skills, required skills and knowledge, and critical aspects of evidence;
- comply with contextualisation requirements;
- reflect the LLN requirements of the unit(s) of competency;
- provide evidence gatherers with clear instructions about the application of the tools and assessment methods, including advice on reasonable adjustment;
- provide learners with information about the context and purpose of the assessment and the assessment process;
- provide learners with clear guidance as to the benchmarks that must be achieved in order to be judged competent;
- provide information and support to all learners, including RPL learners;
- provide information and support for online or distance assessment;
- reflect the four dimensions of competency (where relevant); and
- provide information about feedback and guidance to learners.

Assessment evidence needs to:

- meet the rules of evidence, for example, be valid, sufficient, current and authentic;
- be regularly validated;
- reflect the requirements of the unit(s) of competency; and
- be accurately recorded and reported for each unit of competency.

Assessment judgements need to:

- be regularly moderated and validated;
- involve the evaluation of valid, sufficient, current and authentic evidence to enable professional judgements to be made about whether competence has been achieved;
- reflect the requirements of the unit of competency, including any prerequisite and co-requisite units of competency;
- reflect achievement of relevant employability skills; and
- provide learners with constructive feedback and guidance.

Stakeholders in quality assessment

Now that trainers/assessors know what to look for, who will they ask? There are many stakeholders in the assessment process who can provide valuable input to the trainer's/assessor's continuous improvement process. These stakeholders include the following:

- industry – people who represent the industry as a whole and may be identified through industry associations, employee representative organisations, Service Skills Councils, industry training advisory bodies or councils, where relevant and regulatory authorities;
- employers – people who deal with learners in the workplace either through employment or work placement; may include supervisors and managers, who can be located through local enterprises or employers with whom trainers/assessors are delivering traineeships, apprenticeships, work placements or structured workplace learning;
- technical and subject matter experts – people with vocational competencies who may be identified through industry groups, employers or unions;
- learners – undertaking trainers'/assessors' programs or seeking RPL;
- trainers or teachers – people who meet regulatory standards and deliver on the job or off the job training but do not necessarily assess, who may deliver as partners or peers; they may consult trainers/assessors within their own RTO or other RTOs;
- trainers/assessors – people who meet regulatory standards and conduct on the job or off the job assessments but do not necessarily assess; who may assess as partners or peers; they may consult trainers/assessors within their own RTO or other RTOs;
- evidence gatherers – people who gather evidence on behalf of the trainer/assessor and who supervise the learner either on or off the job who may include workplace supervisors and are commonly called third-party evidence gatherers whose purpose is to gather evidence, not to make assessment judgements; and
- Government authorities – including the Training Accreditation Council, the Australian Skills Quality Authority, the Department of Training and Workforce Development, WorkSafe WA and regulatory/licensing authorities.

Some individuals may fit into a number of categories. For example, a workplace supervisor may be able to provide industry input, technical expertise and an evidence gatherer's perspective. Many individuals will fall into a number of categories. For example, most trainers are also trainers/assessors.

Strategies for improvement

There are three fundamental processes identifying opportunities for improvement. They are:

- reviewing;
- comparing; and
- evaluating.

Reviewing

Reviewing involves the inspection of processes and products to determine the ‘face validity’ of the assessment strategy. In effect, trainers/assessors ask, ‘Does it look right?’ and ‘Does it meet the principles of assessment?’ Examples of this process include:

- mapping and matching assessment methods/tools to unit of competency and training package requirements;
- opinions of industry representatives about the proposed assessment process and assessment methods/tools;
- opinions of peers about the assessment process and assessment methods/tools; and
- compliance of assessment processes and assessment methods/tools with regulatory requirements.

These processes and other relevant indicators aid reviewing and support trainers’/assessors’ professional judgement when applying an assessment strategy.

One example of reviewing

The trainers/assessors working for a small RTO meet regularly with an industry focus group to seek feedback on their assessment tools. These trainers/assessors are particularly keen to be reassured that their assessment tools reflect current industry practice, and that industry is comfortable employing graduates who have been judged competent after using these tools for assessments.

These trainers/assessors also meet as a team to review the RTO’s assessment process documentation and each other’s assessment tools to ensure that they match training package and regulatory requirements. They document opportunities for improvement identified through these internal and external reviews, along with the name of the person responsible for addressing each issue, and a date for completion. Changes made are reported at the next assessment review meeting.

Comparing

Professional judgement involves comparing assessment documentation and assessment outcomes to determine content validity, reliability, consistency and reproducibility of the assessment judgements. There is no single model for assessment comparisons; however, assessment validation is a commonly used comparison process, although it is not completely flawless. There may be variation in trainers’/assessors’ judgements, but validation works to ensure that the margins of variation are minimal.

Validation includes comparing:

- the assessment methods/tools of trainers/assessors for the same unit(s) of competency;
- the observations of evidence gatherers for the same learner’s performance;

- the judgements made by trainers/assessors based on the same evidence; and
- the assessment results of similar units of competency for the same learner.

For example, two units covering different technical activities but involving similar application of problem-solving skills can be looked at to determine that this aspect of the learner's competence is being validly and reliably assessed.

One example of comparing

Trainers/assessors from a number of RTOs meet to carry out assessments of the competence of a learner using a video recording of the learner's performance and samples of the products produced by the learner. The trainers/assessors use their own assessment tools to assess the performance and products, then compare their judgements and the evidence behind their judgements. Differences in the evidence gathered and in judgements are discussed to clarify the interpretation of the unit of competency until consensus is reached. Individual trainers/assessors then modify their assessment processes to maintain that consensus in future. Each RTO records its own participation in the meetings and the improvements made as a result of the meetings.

Evaluating

Evaluating involves gathering stakeholder feedback to determine the predictive validity, impact, effectiveness and credibility of the assessment strategy.

Trainers/assessors can evaluate the following five kinds of impact.

1	How it feels:	Does the person feel comfortable with the assessment process?
2	How it works:	Can the person apply the competency in a workplace role?
3	How it is used:	Is the assessment process properly applied?
4	How it serves:	Does the assessment process contribute to industry and RTO organisational objectives?
5	How it rates:	Is the assessment process the most time-effective and cost-effective option?

Examples of gathering feedback include:

- learners' opinions of their assessment experience;
- evidence from assessment appeals, complaints or grievances about assessment;
- feedback from employers and industry representatives about graduates' competence;
- opinions of evidence gatherers about the assessment resources and processes, and their ease of use; and
- feedback from auditors about non-compliances or opportunities for improvement.

One example of evaluating

To identify possible improvements, an RTO routinely surveys its current learners and the employers of its graduates to gauge satisfaction with its training delivery and assessment services. Learners/graduates are surveyed by written questionnaires, and employers are interviewed by telephone. Feedback relating to assessment processes is then provided to trainers/assessors and action taken.

Recording the outcomes of improvement activities

The investment of trainers/assessors in the continuous improvement of assessment needs to be recorded for a number of reasons, namely:

- to monitor and improve the continuous improvement process itself;
- to provide for version control and reflect the underpinnings of current assessment resources; and
- to maintain a record of the improvements made to guide the development of future assessment resources and provide suggested remedies to address any future assessment concerns.

It is a good idea for trainers/assessors to create a separate file for each unit of competency or cluster of units commonly assessed together, for example, skill sets, and to keep the following documents within each unit/cluster file:

- the complete unit(s) of competency;
- an assessment plan indicating how each component of the unit(s) can be assessed, including RPL;
- current assessment tools, for example, observation checklists, short-answer tests, simulations used to gather evidence, including instructions provided to evidence gatherers and to learners;
- validation surveys/questionnaires for each validation source, for example, industry, learners, other trainers/assessors;
- a schedule for the administration of validation surveys/questionnaires showing past and future activities;
- a summary of evidence gathered to date from each validation source;
- who was involved with validation; and
- a summary of improvements identified and actions taken to implement them, along with the supporting strategy documents such as the minutes of meetings confirming each decision.

If trainers/assessors maintain comprehensive documentation on the outcomes and effects of assessment validation, there is no requirement for them to keep completed surveys/questionnaires, samples of learner work or past assessment tools to be compliant with the regulatory standards. Depending upon the industry in which trainers/assessors assess, there may be other legislative or regulatory requirements for the retention of these documents, for example, high-risk work.

Gathering the evidence for continuous improvement

Just as trainers/assessors use an assessment plan to map their evidence-gathering sources in assessment, they can also plan their evidence-gathering sources for improvement using a simple table. This should help them identify what they need to ask each stakeholder group (by reading the columns in the table below) and who they need to consult for each aspect of continuous improvement (by reading the rows). In the table below, the demands upon each stakeholder group are limited to those aspects for which each is best placed to contribute.

Table 8: Evidence sources for improvement activities

Continuous improvement activity	Primary evidence sources							
	Industry	Employers	Technical and subject matter experts	Learners	Trainers and teachers	Lecturers	Evidence gatherers	Government authorities
Review assessment process.	✓	✓				✓		✓
Review assessment methods/tools.	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓
Review assessment judgement.						✓		✓
Review assessment evidence.		✓	✓			✓		✓
Compare assessment process.						✓		
Compare assessment methods/tools.						✓		
Compare assessment evidence.						✓	✓	
Compare assessment judgement.		✓	✓			✓		
Evaluate assessment process.	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	
Evaluate assessment methods/tools.			✓	✓	✓		✓	
Evaluate assessment evidence.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Evaluate assessment judgement.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			

Based on this table, following are some questions trainers/assessors may want to put to each group. It is important for them to bear in mind that 'assessment' includes assessment associated with training delivery and assessment through RPL, and to take into consideration that some stakeholder groups may not be familiar with all the VET terminology and, as a result, some questions may need to be reworded.

Industry

Suggested questions (before implementing the assessment process as part of a review process)

- Is the assessment process consistent with industry expectations?
- Do the selected assessment methods and tools reflect current industry standards and practices?
- Does the evidence meet the standards you would expect in industry?

Suggested evaluation questions

- Is the industry comfortable employing graduates who have demonstrated achievement through this assessment process?
- Do you think that this assessment process will preserve or improve workplace performance standards in your industry?

Employers

Trainers/assessors could ask questions like these of employers of graduates who are employees, trainees or apprentices or have been placed through work placement or work experience and are being assessed in the workplace.

Suggested review questions

- Will the assessment process fit comfortably within your organisation's activities and workplace culture?
- Do the selected assessment methods and tools reflect current industry standards and work practices used in your business?

Suggested evaluation questions

- Has the assessment process had a positive impact on your organisation?
- Were supervisors able to use the assessment tools effectively?
- Did the assessment tools provide your organisation with useful information about your employees/trainees/apprentices?
- Does the evidence meet the standards you would require of your employees?
- Were the judgements made about the graduates' competencies consistent with your knowledge of these employees/trainees/apprentices?
- Have the graduates assessed as competent continued to perform at the appropriate level?

Technical and subject matter experts

Trainers/assessors could ask questions like these, particularly if assessing on a team basis, pairing an assessment expert with a vocational/technical/subject matter expert drawn from industry.

Suggested review questions

- ✓ Do the assessment methods and tools reflect the performance requirements of relevant units of competency?
- ✓ Do the assessment methods and tools reflect current industry standards and workplace practices?

Suggested evaluation question

- ✓ What impact do you think the use of these assessment methods and tools will have on the future performance of these learners?

Learners

Trainers/assessors may ask questions like these through a forum, questionnaires or interview.

These are all suggested evaluation questions.

- ✓ Were you told that you had the right to an RPL assessment before you started this course?
- ✓ Were you given clear instructions about what to do in the assessment?
- ✓ Do you feel that you were given sufficient information about what was going to be assessed and how and when you were going to be assessed?
- ✓ Do you think that the assessment process was fair and equitable?
- ✓ Do you think that the person observing your performance was fair and unbiased?
- ✓ Do you think that the overall judgement about your competency performance was accurate and fair?
- ✓ Were you given adequate feedback about your performance after the assessment?
- ✓ Were you told about your right to an assessment appeal?
- ✓ Were you given useful advice about further learning after the assessment?
- ✓ Were you encouraged to monitor your own future progress?

Trainers and teachers

Trainers and teachers may also be lecturers. The following questions could be asked of trainers or teachers who are not directly involved in the assessment process other than through assessments used to monitor learners' progress.

Note: The 'assessment process' relates to assessments used to determine competence.

Suggested evaluation questions

- ✓ Was the assessment process compatible with the training delivery program?
- ✓ Did learners have a clear understanding of the relationship between the training they are receiving and the assessment processes?
- ✓ Did learners understand the difference between assessments used to monitor their progress and assessments used to determine their competence?
- ✓ Did feedback from the assessment process help learners to better direct their learning efforts?
- ✓ Was the final judgement of competency performance made through the assessment process consistent with your observations of each learner?

Lecturers

Other lecturers from within the RTO or from another RTO will be the most informed observers of lecturers' assessment systems. They can contribute to all aspects of lecturers' continuous improvement processes. It is understood that a natural reluctance to reveal good ideas or weaknesses to a competitor means that this approach has some risk, but the returns can be considerable. It is best if lecturers form a working relationship with other lecturers in their field or from other industry areas where they can ask questions like those which follow. Lecturers may want other lecturers to sign a confidentiality agreement, or a reciprocal arrangement may be established regarding sharing materials to protect the interests of each party.

Suggested review questions

The first list of suggested questions applies more to planning and development processes; the second to implementation of assessment methods/tools.

- ✓ Is the assessment process consistent with the relevant training package assessment guidelines or accredited course assessment requirements?
- ✓ Do all lecturers involved in the process meet the requirements of the training package assessment guidelines or course assessment requirements and the *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015*? If not, are they properly managed as required by the assessment guidelines and the *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015*?
- ✓ Is the assessment process compliant with the *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015*?
- ✓ Are the roles of all parties in the assessment process clearly defined?
- ✓ Is the clustering of units of competency used appropriately in the assessment process?
- ✓ Does clustering confuse or enhance the assessment process for all aspects of each unit of competency? Why or why not?
- ✓ Does the assessment plan faithfully reflect all required components of the unit(s) of competency and the critical aspects of evidence?
- ✓ Do the assessment methods/tools (either developed or adopted) faithfully reflect the assessment plan and the requirements of the unit(s) of competency?

- ✓ Is any contextualisation of the unit(s) of competency compliant with training package requirements?
- ✓ Do the assessment methods/tools reflect current industry practices and workplace context?
- ✓ Do the assessment methods/tools reflect the level of complexity, responsibility and autonomy indicated by the employability skills and the AQF alignment of the unit(s) of competency?
- ✓ Do assessment simulations reflect current workplace practices and environment, and adequately show evidence of the four dimensions of competency?
- ✓ Can reasonable adjustment be made to the assessment tools?
- ✓ Have limits to reasonable adjustment been set, and are these limits consistent with the training package assessment guidelines or accredited course assessment requirements?
- ✓ Does the judgement process reflect the required performance outcomes and critical aspects of evidence of the unit(s) of competency?
- ✓ Is a form of version control in place to ensure that only current versions of assessment method/tools are being used?
- ✓ Do partnership agreements clearly specify the assessment roles and responsibilities of both parties, including quality assurance and record keeping?
- ✓ Are all the necessary assessment resources readily accessible?
- ✓ Have evidence gatherers been appropriately selected, briefed, managed and monitored to ensure sufficient quality evidence?
- ✓ Are evidence gatherers provided with clear instructions?
- ✓ Are learners provided with clear instructions?
- ✓ Is the quality of evidence regularly reviewed for credibility and admissibility?
- ✓ Are judgements based upon sufficient evidence (a range of time, context and application)?
- ✓ Are the assessment records adequate to respond to appeals or complaints?

The following questions require lecturers to use the assessment processes and compare their results – a process usually described as ‘moderation’.

- ✓ Do different lecturers develop similar assessment strategies for the same unit(s) of competency?
- ✓ Do different lecturers record the same evidence when observing the same student’s performance? (The tools and assessment process may need to be adjusted if they do not.)
- ✓ Do different lecturers make the same judgement based upon the same evidence for a unit of competency?

Government authorities

Government authorities will from time to time audit the compliance of the RTO with various regulatory standards. For the most part, they will ask the questions, but their findings can contribute to trainers'/assessors' improvement processes.

The sort of question trainers/assessors can ask is:

- What 'non-compliance' or 'opportunities for improvement' relating to assessment have been identified?

If a trainer/assessor has been asking questions of the other stakeholders, it is unlikely that there will be any surprises, and an auditor will be impressed by the trainer's/assessor's diligence and professionalism, and by the improvements made. It is important that trainers/assessors implement their improvement processes and outcomes.

Regulatory authorities

The regulatory authorities operating in the VET sector regularly publish guidance and directions about the requirements for compliance with the standards, including the requirements for validation. RTOs should visit their regulatory authority's website on a regular basis to ensure that they have the most up-to-date information on compliance requirements.

Appendix 1 – Useful links and resources

Introduction

This section provides details of useful resources for trainers/assessors and other parties involved in competency-based assessment.

They come under the following three headings:

- Websites providing ongoing information relevant to competency-based assessment;
- Other publications and resources; and
- Organisations providing information or assistance on assessment.

Websites providing ongoing information relevant to competency-based assessment

Australian Qualifications Framework

aqf.edu.au

Australian Skills Quality Authority

The regulatory and accreditation authority for RTOs who offer or deliver training and assessment in Western Australia, New South Wales, Australian Capital Territory, Queensland, Tasmania, South Australia, Northern Territory and to overseas students.

asqa.gov.au

Department of Training and Workforce Development (WA)

Policies, information on training and professional development activities and useful links, for example, to Training Councils.

dtwd.wa.gov.au

Training Accreditation Council

The regulatory and accreditation authority in WA.

tac.wa.gov.au

training.gov.au

Provides comprehensive national training information on training packages, registered training providers, qualifications, accredited courses, skill sets and units of competency.

training.gov.au

Other publications and resources

Australian Qualifications Framework, Second Edition, January 2013

aqf.edu.au/aqf/in-detail/2nd-ed-jan-2013

Department of Education and Training

Responsible for policy, national strategies and Commonwealth funding for VET

education.gov.au/skills-and-training

TAE40116 Certificate IV in Training and Assessment

From the TAE Training and Education Training Package qualification required by VET trainers/assessors

training.gov.au/Training/Details/TAE

Vocational Education and Training Assessment Services

A provider of assessment and educational consultancy services to the VET sector, it has a range of assessment tools and publications, including guidelines for:

- observing learners;
- designing tests;
- creating practical tasks and projects;
- assessing portfolios; and
- assessing designing.

vetassess.com.au

Organisations providing information or assistance on assessment

The Ministerial Council is supported in training product development by three entities:

- the Australian Industry and Skills Committee;
- Industry Reference Committees; and
- Skills Service Organisations.

Australian Industry and Skills Committee

The AISC is the body which has oversight of the new arrangements for the VET sector. The Committee's primary role is to provide advice to the Ministerial Council to ensure that the directions taken by Ministers are informed by an industry-based perspective focused on the quality and relevance of the national training system.

Industry Reference Committees

IRCs are at the core of the new arrangements and are the key advisory bodies to the AISC. IRCs have a critical role in identifying and responding to new and emerging skills and training needs arising from industry restructuring and the impact of global markets and innovation and are the formal point through which industry requirements for skills are considered and defined in training packages. Each IRC performs the following functions (supported by their SSO as required):

- gather industry intelligence for their industry sectors to inform advice on training product development and review;
- direct the work of its SSO in the development of industry proposals, business cases and cases for endorsement;
- oversight the development and review of training package content in line with the requirements of the AISC;
- provide sign off for industry proposals, business cases, cases for endorsement and other submissions for consideration by the AISC;
- direct the work of the SSO in preparing the support materials where funding for additional activities is provided;

- report, through the SSO, to the AISC on progress of its work; and
- promote the use of VET in the sectors they represent.

Skills Service Organisations

SSOs will act as independent, professional service organisations and undertake the work commissioned by the AISC, under direction of the relevant IRC. The purpose of an SSO is to support IRCs engage with industries/employers/enterprises to identify the skills required for job roles across industry sectors and to produce nationally endorsed training packages so that skills standards and competencies align with modern work-practices. SSOs are accountable for providing technical, operational and secretariat activities to enable their IRCs to undertake their industry engagement and training product development and review activities.

aisc.net.au/content/skills-service-organisations

WA Industry Training Councils

Industry Training Councils – sometimes referred to nationally as Industry Training Advisory Bodies or ITABs) are non-government, not-for-profit, industry-driven bodies funded by the Department of Training and Workforce Development.

The 10 Training Councils engage with representatives from key stakeholders in the Western Australian VET sector, including peak employer, employee and industry organisations.

TCs provide:

- a leadership role in promoting training industry, including partnerships between industry and the training sector;
- high-level, strategic information and advice that informs the State Training Board on the training needs and priorities of industry in Western Australia; and
- market intelligence on skills supply and demand, in particular, current or emerging skills shortages and recommends training strategies to support industries skills development needs.

The links to the 10 councils can be found at dtwd.wa.gov.au/workforceplanninganddevelopment/trainingcouncils/Pages/default.aspx

(Note: All details are correct at time of printing.)

Appendix 2 – Glossary

Access and equity⁹	The policies and approaches aimed at ensuring that VET is responsive to the individual needs of clients whose age, gender, cultural or ethnic background, disability, sexuality, language skills, literacy or numeracy level, unemployment, imprisonment or remote location may present a barrier to access, participation and the achievement of suitable outcomes.
Accreditation	The process of formal recognition of a course by the State or Territory course accrediting body in line with the <i>Standards for State and Territory Registering Bodies</i> or <i>Standards for State and Territory Course Accrediting Bodies</i> .
Accredited course	A structured sequence of VET that has been accredited by a State's or Territory's course accrediting body and leads to an AQF qualification or statement of attainment.
Accredited short course	A course accredited by the VET regulator in accordance with the <i>Standards for VET Accredited Courses</i> that leads to an AQF statement of attainment.
Appeals process	A course of action taken by a client of an RTO or other interested party where a decision made by the RTO is disputed. This may be regarding an assessment decision or any other aspect of an RTO's operations.
AQF certification documentation	The set of official documents that confirms that an AQF qualification or statement of attainment has been issued to an individual.
AQF qualification	An AQF qualification type endorsed in a training package or accredited in a VET accredited course.
Assessment	The process of collecting evidence and making judgements on whether competency has been achieved to confirm that a learner can perform to the standard required in the workplace, as specified in a training package or VET accredited course.

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Assessment context	The environment in which an assessment is carried out, including physical and operational factors, the assessment system within which the assessment is carried out, opportunities for gathering evidence in a number of situations, the purpose of the assessment, who carries out the assessment and the period of time during which it takes place.
Assessment guidelines	An endorsed component of a training package which underpins assessment and sets out the industry approach to valid, reliable, flexible and fair assessment, including the assessment system overview, assessor's requirements, designing assessment resources, conducting assessment, and sources of information on assessment.
Assessment judgement	<p>The assessor's evaluation of whether the evidence gathered is valid, sufficient, current and authentic in order to make the assessment decision using professional judgement when evaluating the available evidence on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the quality of evidence gathered using the assessment methods/tools; and• whether, based on that evidence, competence has been achieved.
Assessment materials	Any resources that help in any part of the assessment process, including information for the learner or assessor, assessment tools or resources for the quality assurance arrangements of the assessment system.
Assessment method(s)	The particular techniques used to gather different types of evidence, including methods or techniques such as questioning, direct observation, structured activities, third-party feedback, evidence compiled by the learner, and review of products.
Assessment plan	The overall planning document for the assessment process which comprises a range of information to guide assessors which may include purpose, context, personnel, competency standards/assessment benchmarks, assessment methods and tools, the evidence plan, organisational arrangements, as well as physical and material resources and equipment, and other relevant information.

Assessment process	The agreed series of steps a learner takes within the enrolment, assessment, recording and reporting cycle which best suits the needs of all stakeholders and is both efficient and cost-effective.
Assessment strategy	The approach to assessment and evidence gathering used by the assessor or RTO, it encompasses the assessment process, methods and assessment tools.
Assessment system	A coordinated set of documented policies and procedures (including assessment materials and tools) which ensure that assessments are consistent and based on the principles of assessment contained in Table 1.8–1 and the rules of evidence contained in Table 1.8–2 of the regulatory standards.
Assessment tool	<p>A mechanism which contains both the instrument(s) and the instructions for gathering and interpreting evidence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instrument(s) can be the specific questions or activities developed from the selected assessment method(s) to be used for the assessment (a profile of acceptable performance and the decision-making rules for the assessor may also be included). • Procedures can be the information/instructions given to the learner and/or assessor regarding conditions under which the assessment is to be conducted and recorded.
Assessor	A person who assesses a learner's competence in accordance with Clauses 1.13–1.16 of the regulatory standards.
Audit	An official inspection undertaken by the VET regulator. An RTO can conduct internal audits to assess its compliance with the Standards and its own policies and procedures as part of its continuous improvement process.

Australian Industry and Skills Committee

The AISC was established by the COAG Industry and Skills Council in May 2015 to give industry a formal, expanded role in policy direction and decision-making for the vocational education and training sector.

Australian Qualifications Framework

The framework for regulated qualifications in the Australian education and training system, as agreed by the Commonwealth, State and Territory ministerial council with responsibility for higher education.

Authenticated VET transcript

An individual's record of the nationally recognised training undertaken or completed after 1 January 2015, the *Student Identifiers Act 2014* defines the format and use of the transcript.

Client

In the regulatory standards, the learner, enterprise or organisation using or purchasing the services provided by the RTO.

Clustering

The process of grouping competencies into combinations which have meaning and purpose related to work functions and needs in an industry or enterprise.

Code

The unique identifier for units of competency, skill sets, VET accredited courses, modules, AQF qualifications or training packages as required by the *Standards for Training Packages* and *Standards for VET Accredited Courses*.

Competency

The consistent application of knowledge and skill to the standard of performance required in the workplace, it embodies the ability to transfer and apply skills and knowledge to new situations and environments.

Competency-based assessment

The process of collecting evidence and making a judgement about whether or not competency has been achieved.

Collaborative assessment arrangements

Agreements between an RTO and other organisations (including other RTOs) which enable the partners to share (for mutual benefit) their resources, time, costs, responsibility and expertise in the provision of training and/or assessment services.

Contextualisation	The addition of industry-specific information to a unit of competency to reflect the immediate operating context, thus increasing its relevance, must be guided by the <i>Standards for Training Packages</i> and the relevant training package contextualisation guidelines.
Current industry skills¹⁰	<p>The knowledge, skills and experience required by VET trainers/assessors and those who provide training and assessment under supervision to ensure that their training and assessment are based on current industry practices and meet the needs of industry.</p> <p>Current industry skills may be informed by consultations with industry and may include, but are not limited to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a having knowledge of, and/or experience in, the latest techniques and processes; b possessing a high level of product knowledge; c understanding and knowledge of legislation relevant to the industry and to employment and workplaces; d being customer/client-oriented; e possessing formal industry and training qualifications; and f training content that reflects current industry practice.
Data provision requirements¹¹	The requirements for data provision as agreed by the Australian Industry and Skills Council and implemented by the VET regulator as required by its governing legislation.
Delivery and assessment strategies	A framework which guides the learning requirements and the teaching, training and assessment arrangements of a VET qualification; the document which outlines the macro-level requirements of the learning and assessment process usually at the qualification level.
Dimensions of competency	<p>These include all aspects of work performance and not only narrow task skills. The four dimensions of competency are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • task skills; • task management skills; • contingency management skills; and • job/role environment skills.

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Element

The basic building block of a unit of competency, it explains the tasks that make up the broader function or job as described by the unit and specifies the critical outcomes to be achieved in demonstrating competence.

Educational and support services

These may include, but are not limited to:

- a pre-enrolment materials;
- b study support and study skills programs;
- c language, literacy and numeracy programs or referrals to these programs;
- d equipment, resources and/or programs to increase access for learners with disability and other learners in accordance with access and equity;
- e learning resource centres;
- f mediation services or referrals to these services;
- g flexible scheduling, and delivery of training and assessment;
- h counselling services or referrals to these services;
- i information and communications technology support;
- j learning materials in alternative formats, for example, in large print;
- k learning and assessment programs contextualised to the workplace; and
- l any other services that the RTO considers necessary to support learners to achieve competency.

Evidence and 'quality' evidence

Information gathered which, when matched against the performance criteria, provides proof of competence. It can take many forms and be gathered from a number of sources. It is often categorised by assessors in different ways, for example:

- direct, indirect and supplementary sources of evidence;
- evidence collected by the learner or evidence collected by the assessor; and
- historical and recent evidence collected by the learner, and current evidence collected by the assessor.

'Quality' evidence is valid, sufficient, current and authentic, and enables the assessor to make the assessment judgement.

Evidence-gathering tool	See 'Assessment tool'.
Evidence guide	Part of a unit of competency, its purpose is to guide assessment of the unit in the workplace and/or training environment. It specifies the context of assessment, the critical aspects of evidence, and the required or underpinning knowledge and skills. It relates directly to the performance criteria and the range of variables defined in the unit.
Evidence plan	This forms part of the documented assessment plan and details the evidence requirements of the assessment information regarding who will collect the evidence and the time period involved.
Executive officer	This can be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a any person, who is concerned with, or takes part in, the management of the RTO; or b an administrator, receiver and manager, or liquidator of the organisation (other than a receiver and manager or liquidator appointed by a court); or c if the RTO is a body corporate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a person who, at any time during a period for which the organisation is registered, owns 15% or more of the organisation; or • a person who, at any time during a period for which the organisation is registered, is entitled to receive 15% or more of dividends paid by the organisation; or • the administrator of a deed of company arrangement executed by an organisation; or • a trustee or other person administering a compromise or arrangement made between the organisation and another person or other persons.
Flexible learning and assessment	An approach to VET that allows a range of learning and assessment strategies to be adopted in a variety of learning environments in order to cater for differences in individual learning interests, needs, styles and opportunities; also includes online strategies.

Government entity¹²

This can be:

- a a department of State of the Commonwealth; or
- b a department of the Parliament established under the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999* of the Commonwealth;
- c an executive agency, or statutory agency, within the meaning of the *Public Service Act 1999* of the Commonwealth;
- d a department of State or Territory; or
- e an organisation that:
 - is not an entity; and
 - is either established by the Commonwealth, a State or a Territory (whether under a law or not) to carry on an enterprise, or established for a public purpose by an Australian law; and
 - can be separately identified by reference to the nature of the activities carried on through the organisation or the location of the organisation, whether or not the organisation is part of a department or branch described in paragraph (a), (b), (c) or (d) or of another organisation of the kind described in this paragraph.

High managerial agent¹³

An employee or agent of an organisation with duties of such responsibility that their conduct may fairly be assumed to represent the organisation in relation to the business of providing courses.

Holistic/integrated assessment

An approach to assessment that covers the clustering of many units/elements from relevant competency standards, it focuses on the assessment of a 'whole-of-job' role or function that draws on a number of units/elements of competency; also integrates the assessment of the application of knowledge, technical skills, problem-solving, and demonstration of attitudes and ethics.

Independent validation¹⁴

For the purposes of Clause 1.25, that the validation is carried out by a validator or validators who:

- a are not employed or subcontracted by the RTO to provide training and assessment, and have no other involvement or interest in the operations of the RTO.

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Industry	<p>The bodies which have a stake in the services provided by RTOs. These can include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a enterprise/industry clients, for example, employers; b group training organisations; c industry organisations; d industry regulators; e Industry Reference committees and Skills Service organisations; f industry training advisory bodies; and g unions.
Industry engagement	<p>For the purposes of 1.5 and 1.6, may include, but is not limited to, strategies such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a partnering with local employers, regional/national businesses, relevant industry bodies and/or enterprise RTOs; b involving employer nominees in industry advisory committees and/or reference groups; c embedding staff within enterprises; d networking in an ongoing way with industry networks, peak bodies and/or employers; e developing networks of relevant employers and industry representatives to participate in assessment validation; and f exchanging knowledge, staff, and/or resources with employers, networks and industry bodies.
Industry regulator¹⁵	<p>A body or organisation responsible for the regulation and/or licensing arrangements within a specific industry or occupation.</p>
Industry and skills council	<p>The Commonwealth, State and Territory ministerial council established by the Council of Australian Governments or its successor.</p>
Learner	<p>A person being trained and/or assessed by the RTO for the purpose of being issued with AQF certification documentation.</p>

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Licensed or regulated outcome	Compliance with an eligibility requirement for an occupational licence or a legislative requirement to hold a particular training product in order to carry out an activity.
Mode of delivery	The method adopted to deliver training and assessment which includes online, distance or blended methods.
Module	A group of learning outcomes in a VET accredited course where it can be established that it is not possible to develop an appropriate unit of competency.
Monitoring	See 'Audit'.
National Register¹⁶	The register maintained by the Commonwealth Department responsible for VET and referred to in section 216 of the <i>National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011</i> .
Operations of an RTO	Training, assessment, administration and support services related to its registration, including those delivered across jurisdictions and offshore.
Partnerships	<p>The written agreements undertaken between an RTO and other organisations (including other RTOs) which can take a number of forms, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• memorandum of understanding;• memorandum of agreement;• service agreement; and• letter of agreement. <p>These arrangements enable the partners to share (for mutual benefit) their resources, effort, time, cost, responsibility and expertise. All partners must comply with the requirements of the <i>Standards for Registered Organisations (RTOs) 2015</i>.</p>
Performance criteria	Part of the format of a competency standard which comprises evaluative statements that specify the level of performance required to demonstrate achievement of the element.

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Person	A body politic or corporate as well as an individual.
Professional development	<p>An activity that develops and/or maintains an individual's skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics as a trainer/assessor. This includes both formal and informal activities that encompass vocational competencies, currency of industry skills and knowledge, and practice of vocational training, learning and assessment, including competency-based training and assessment. Examples of professional development activities include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> participation in courses, workshops, seminars, conferences, or formal learning programs; participation in mentoring, professional associations or other learning networks; personal development through individual research or reading of publications or other relevant information; participation in comparing or validation activities; and participation in industry release schemes.
Professional judgement	A critical element in the assessment process involving expert knowledge of the field, a deep understanding of underlying principles, accumulated experience in VET assessment practices, including knowledge of recent advances in assessment methods, and mastery of the best available techniques and tools; also includes participation in professional dialogue, critical self-reflection and the capacity to constructively critique one's own and peers' assessment practices.
Qualification testamur	<p>Formal certification in the VET sector by an RTO that an individual has satisfied all requirements of the units of competency or modules that comprise an AQF qualification as specified by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a nationally endorsed training package; or an accredited course that provides training for that qualification.
Range statement	Part of a competency standard that sets out a range of contexts in which performance can take place which helps the assessor to identify the specific industry or enterprise application of the unit.

Reasonable adjustment¹⁷

Altering the assessment process to meet the needs and characteristics of the learners being assessed, taking into account any equity requirements. Determination of 'reasonableness' requires judgement that must take into account the impact on the organisation and the need to maintain the integrity of the unit of competency.

Recognition

The term that covers recognition of prior learning (RPL) and recognition of current competency (RCC) which refer to acknowledgement of competencies held currently, regardless of how, when or where the learning occurred.

Competencies may be attained in a number of ways, including through any combination of formal or informal training and education, work experience or general life experience.

In order to grant RPL/RCC, the assessor must be confident that the learner is currently competent against the endorsed industry or enterprise competency standards or outcomes specified in AQF accredited courses.

Recognition of current competency (RCC)

This applies if a client has previously successfully completed the requirements for a unit of competency or module and is now required, for example, by a licensing authority, to be reassessed to ensure that the competence is being maintained. In this case, no extra skill or competencies are nationally recognised.

Recognition of prior learning (RPL)¹⁸

An assessment process that assesses the competencies of an individual that may have been acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning to determine the extent to which that individual meets the requirements specified in the training package or VET accredited course.

Formal learning refers to learning that takes place through a structured program of instruction and is linked to the attainment of an AQF qualification or statement of attainment, for example, a certificate, diploma or university degree.

17, 18 Sourced from *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015*, comlaw.gov.au/Details/F2014L01377, © Commonwealth of Australia. Viewed 31 August 2015. Licensed under [Creative Commons CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/).

Non-formal learning refers to learning that takes place through a structured program of instruction, but does not lead to the attainment of an AQF qualification or statement of attainment, for example, in-house professional development programs conducted by a business.

Informal learning refers to learning that results through experience of work-related, social, family, hobby or leisure activities, for example, the acquisition of interpersonal skills developed through several years as a sales representative.

Record¹⁹

A written, printed or electronic document providing evidence that activities have been performed.

Records of assessment

The information of assessment outcomes that is retained by the organisation responsible for issuing the nationally recognised qualification or statement of attainment.

Registered training organisation

A training organisation registered in accordance with the regulatory body to deliver nationally recognised training.

Registrar²⁰

The Student Identifiers Registrar – the statutory office established by the *Student Identifiers Act 2014*, it is responsible for administering the Unique Student Identifier (USI) scheme nationally.

Registration²¹

The registration as an RTO by the VET regulator, where that registration is then entered on the National Register.

Reporting assessment outcomes

The different ways in which the outcomes of assessment processes are reported to the person being assessed, employers and other appropriate personnel or stakeholders. Assessment outcomes may be reported in a variety of ways, including through graded, non-graded, statistical or descriptive reporting systems.

RTO code

The registration identifier given to the RTO on the National Register.

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Scope of registration²²

The training products for which an RTO is registered to issue AQF certification documentation. It allows the RTO to:

- a provide both training delivery and assessment resulting in the issuance of AQF certification documentation by the RTO; or
- b provide assessment resulting in the issuance of AQF certification documentation by the RTO.

Self-evaluation

A process that allows learners being assessed to collect and provide evidence on their own performances against the competency standards. It is often used as a pre-assessment tool to help learners and assessors determine what evidence is available and where the gaps may be.

Services²³

The training, assessment, educational and support services and/or any activities related to the recruitment of prospective learners. It does not include services such as learner counselling, mediation or ICT support.

Simulation²⁴

A form of evidence gathering that involves the learner completing or dealing with a task, activity or problem in an off the job situation that replicates the workplace context.

Simulations vary from recreating realistic workplace situations, such as using flight simulators, through the creation of role-plays based on workplace scenarios to the reconstruction of a business situation on a spreadsheet.

In developing simulations, the emphasis is not so much on reproducing the external circumstance but on creating situations in which learners are able to demonstrate:

- technical skills;
- underpinning knowledge;
- generic skills such as decision-making and problem-solving; and
- workplace practices such as effective communication.

Skill set

A single unit of competency or a combination of units of competency from a training package which link to a licensing or regulatory requirement or a defined industry need.

22, 23, 24 Sourced from *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015*, comlaw.gov.au/Details/F2014L01377, © Commonwealth of Australia. Viewed 31 August 2015. Licensed under Creative Commons CC BY-NC-SA 3.0.

Statement of attainment	A statement issued to a person confirming that the person has satisfied the requirements of the unit(s) of competency or accredited short course specified in the statement.
Statistically valid	For the purposes of the Standards, a random sample of appropriate size is selected to enable confidence that the result is sufficiently accurate to be accepted as representative of the total population of assessments being validated.
Student identifier²⁵	An identifier assigned to an individual by the registrar under section 10 or 12 of the <i>Student Identifiers Act</i> . It is a reference number made up of numbers and letters creating a secure online record of an individual's nationally recognised training which can be accessed anytime, anywhere and is the individual's for life.
Third party	Any party who provides services on behalf of the RTO but does not include a contract of employment between an RTO and its employee.
Trainers²⁶	People who provide training in accordance with Clauses 1.13, 1.14 and 1.16.
Training²⁷	The process used by an RTO or a third party delivering services on its behalf to facilitate learning and the acquisition of competencies in relation to the training product on the RTO's scope of registration.
Training and assessment strategies and practices²⁸	The approach and method adopted by an RTO with respect to training and assessment designed to enable learners to meet the requirements of the training package or accredited course.
Training Council	A State or Territory body comprising representation from the industry parties responsible for providing advice to governments on industry training needs.

25, 26, 27, 28 Sourced from *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015*, comlaw.gov.au/Details/F2014L01377, © Commonwealth of Australia. Viewed 31 August 2015. Licensed under Creative Commons CC BY-NC-SA 3.0.

training.gov.au

The national register for recording information about RTOs, training packages and accredited courses. Information is searchable and publicly accessible on the internet. It contains comprehensive information on endorsed training packages which have been approved by Ministers and includes full details of competency standards, a listing of support materials with contact sources, details of AQF accredited course/qualifications, and contact details, and scope of registration of all RTOs.

Training package²⁹

The components of a training package endorsed by the Industry Skills Council or its delegate in accordance with the *Standards for Training Packages*. The endorsed components of a training package are:

- units of competency;
- assessment requirements (associated with each unit of competency);
- qualifications; and
- credit arrangements.

The endorsed components form part of the requirements that an RTO must meet under these Standards. A training package also consists of a non-endorsed, quality assured companion volume(s) which contains industry advice to RTOs on different aspects of implementation.

Training product

AQF qualification, skill set, unit of competency, accredited short course, and module.

Unit of competency

The specification of the standards of performance required in the workplace as defined in a training package.

Validation³⁰

The quality review of the assessment process. Validation involves checking that the assessment tool(s) produce(s) valid, reliable, sufficient, current and authentic evidence to enable reasonable judgements to be made as to whether the requirements of the training package or VET accredited courses are met. It includes reviewing a statistically valid sample of the assessments and making recommendations for future improvements to the assessment tool, process and/or outcomes and acting upon such recommendations.

29, 30 Sourced from *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015*, comlaw.gov.au/Details/F2014L01377, © Commonwealth of Australia. Viewed 31 August 2015. Licensed under [Creative Commons CC BY-NC-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/).

VET accredited course³¹

A course accredited by the VET regulator in accordance with the *Standards for VET Accredited Courses*.

VET Quality Framework³²

This framework comprises:

- a the *Standards for Registered Training Organisations*;
- b the Australian Qualifications Framework;
- c the *Fit and Proper Person Requirements*;
- d the *Financial Viability Risk Assessment Requirements*;
and
- e the *Data Provision Requirements*.

The VET regulator means:

- a the National VET regulator; and
- b a body of a non-referring State that is responsible for the kinds of matters dealt with under the VET legislation for that State.

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