



FACT SHEET

Using third-party evidence to assess competence

Introduction

To inform a judgement about whether a learner has achieved **competency**, a registered training organisation (RTO) must gather a range of evidence of the learner's competence. This evidence is gathered from a variety of sources in accordance with the RTO's strategies for training and assessment.

The evidence is then assessed to determine whether an individual can perform to the standard expected in the workplace, as expressed in the relevant endorsed unit of competency.

Assessments of evidence and judgements about competency must be undertaken by a person who meets the specific requirements for **an assessor** in the *Standards for NVR Registered Training Organisations 2012*.

In some cases, RTOs collect **third-party evidence** to contribute to the pool of evidence of a learner's competence. This fact sheet provides information about the use and role of third-party evidence by RTOs in assessing competence.

Relevant standards

For more information, see the *Standards for NVR Registered Training Organisations 2012*:

- Essential standards for initial registration—**Standard 4**
- Essential standards for continuing registration—**Standard 15**

Types of evidence

Evidence may be:

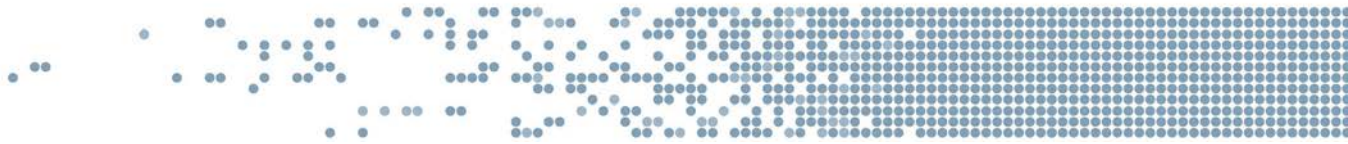
- direct (such as an observation of workplace performance by an assessor)
- indirect (such as a portfolio of evidence)
- supplementary (such as supervisor reports).

It is important to understand that 'there is no hierarchy of evidence'ⁱ. While training packages describe the outcomes of assessment and provide advice about the scope and context for assessment, neither the Standards nor training package guidelines prescribe exactly what type of evidence, or how much evidence, must be collected.

Rather, RTOs must reach an appropriate balance and ensure that, overall, the evidence collected meets the rules of evidence:

- validity—the evidence presented is directly related to the unit(s) of competency being assessed and reflects real workplace tasks
- sufficiency—the quality and quantity of evidence presented reflects that all aspects of competency have been satisfied and that competency can be demonstrated repeatedly
- currency—the evidence presented is from either the present or the very recent past, and
- authenticity—the evidence presented for assessment is the learner's own work.

It is the **quality of all evidence collected** (including any third party evidence) that is important to making a sound judgement about competence—rather than the quantity, type and form of evidence, where it was collected or who collected it.



Third party evidence

What is third-party evidence?

Evidence is often collected by the assessor. However, other people (third parties)—such as supervisors, trainers, team members, clients or consumers—can report what they see or hear to the assessor. Evidence collected in this manner is called ‘third party evidence’.

When and why might an assessor use third-party evidence?

Involving a third party in the collection of evidence allows assessors to gather authentic and valid evidence in difficult circumstances in a cost-effective way.

It is common to use a third party for evidence-gathering in cases where workplace evidence is required, but where it is not possible for the assessor to directly observe the learner at work. For example, in cases where:

- the presence of an observer may compromise workplace safety, or
- where work activities involve issues of patient confidentiality and privacy.

The use of third-party evidence is also a valuable strategy for collecting evidence of ‘everyday performance’ rather than performance carried out as part of the formal assessment process.

What is the difference between ‘co-assessment arrangements’ and ‘third-party evidence’?

Using a third party to collect evidence that will contribute to a pool of evidence is not the same as a ‘co-assessment’ arrangement, in which an assessor and another party work together to conduct assessment.

If an agreement has been reached with a third party to collect evidence to complement other evidence gathered by the assessor, it is still the role of the **assessor** to make the judgement about whether competency has been achieved.

Under a ‘co-assessment’ arrangement, a person who holds the relevant vocational competencies but does not have the appropriate assessor competencies works with an assessor in the assessment process. The judgement about whether competency has been achieved is made by **both parties** together.

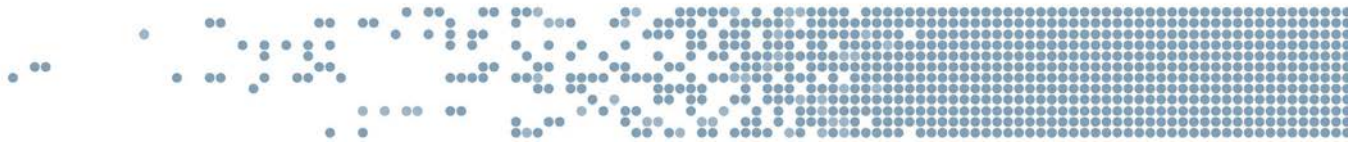
What to consider when using third-party evidence

The RTO should first determine that it is appropriate to involve a third party in the collection of evidence.

The RTO must then ensure its assessment processes lead to the collection of quality evidence.

The RTO must provide sufficient guidance to both assessors and the third party by:

- **Providing assessors with comprehensive guidance about how to select the best third party:** The appropriate person to observe or report on the performance of the learner is someone who is in a position to make a valid comment on the learner’s performance, for example, a line manager.
- **Providing quality materials for collecting evidence:** These materials must seek/solicit/allow for feedback that is directly related to the relevant unit(s) of competency on the learner’s performance.
- **Providing third parties with comprehensive information about their role in the evidence-gathering process:** This includes providing clear guidance and instruction on when, how, how often and over what period of time the evidence is to be collected. The materials must explain the form in which the evidence is to be collected—for example, a structured third party report or an observation checklist that clearly identifies what was observed or performed.



- **Obtaining confirmation that the third party understands their role in the process:** This should include confirmation that the third party has agreed to participate in the evidence gathering process and that they understand when and how to collect evidence.
- **'Interpreting' training package information to be relevant to the third party:** Training package units of competency describe work outcomes. Each of these units describes:
 - o a specific work activity
 - o the conditions under which this work activity is conducted, and
 - o the evidence that may be gathered in order to determine whether the activity is being performed in a competent manner.

Training package information is written to guide assessors in making competency judgements, and the language is sometimes complex. Therefore, the behaviours and/or knowledge that the third party is being asked to collect evidence of must be 'interpreted'.

The 'interpreted' information should describe how a competent worker would perform the task described by the unit. This may include describing how a competent worker might meet standards in effect in the workplace (for example, standards relating to the speed or amount of work to be undertaken or other quality measures).

- Setting requirements for assessors in confirming the authenticity and currency of evidence provided by a candidate: That is, setting requirements for assessors to confirm that evidence is the candidate's own work.

More information

For further information about ASQA, visit the [ASQA website](http://www.asqa.gov.au).

If you have questions about the information in this fact sheet, email enquiries@asqa.gov.au, or call the **ASQA Info line** on **1300 701 801**.

The Info line operates from 9.00 am to 7.00 pm, EST, Monday to Friday.

ⁱ *Training Package assessment materials kit*, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, 2001, p41.