

Quality assurance guide for assessment



Department of Education,
Training and Youth Affairs



*The Training Package Assessment Materials Project is an initiative of
the Australian National Training Authority with funding provided by
the Department of Employment, Training & Youth Affairs.*

*The project has been established to support high quality and consistent assessment
within the vocational education and training system in Australia.*

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND YOUTH AFFAIRS

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Project management and
editorial support
provided by Vocational
Education and Training
Assessment Services
(VETASSESS).



*This project was
managed by the
Australian National
Training Authority
on behalf of the
Department of
Education, Training
and Youth Affairs.*

*Published on demand by Australian Training Products Ltd (ATP)
Level 25/150 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne, VIC, Australia, 3000
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Printed by Document Printing Australia, Melbourne, Australia

ATP Stockcode: 1700110R

ISBN: 0 642 25446 X

First published in July 2001

FOREWORD

This guide is one of a suite of ten guides developed in the *Training Package Assessment Materials Project*. The project was one of several initiatives managed by the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) and funded by the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) to facilitate the implementation of Training Packages and in particular New Apprenticeships.

The guides in this *Training Package Assessment Materials Project* aim to provide assessors and managers of assessment processes within the vocational education and training (VET) sector with a range of practical tools and resources for improving assessment practices in both on- and off-the-job situations. The ten guides are:

- Guide 1: Training Package assessment materials kit
- Guide 2: Assessing competencies in higher qualifications
- Guide 3: Recognition resource
- Guide 4: Kit to support assessor training
- Guide 5: Candidate's Kit: Guide to assessment in New Apprenticeships
- Guide 6: Assessment approaches for small workplaces
- Guide 7: Assessment using partnership arrangements
- Guide 8: Strategies for ensuring consistency in assessment
- Guide 9: Networking for assessors
- Guide 10: Quality assurance guide for assessment.

Each guide is designed to cover a broad range of industries and VET pathways, with relevance to workplace assessors as well as those working in off-the-job and VET in Schools programs.

The *Training Package Assessment Materials Project* was completed prior to the review and redevelopment of the Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training. The project managers and writing teams worked closely with National Assessors and Workplace Trainers (NAWT), a division of Business Services Training, to ensure that the material

contained in these guides is in line with future developments in the Training Package. Consequently the guides do not make direct reference to the units of competency in the Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training.

The project managers and the writing teams would like to thank all the individuals and organisations who generously provided advice, case study materials, assessment tools and their time to review and pilot these materials.

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PART 1: INTRODUCTION TO THIS GUIDE

Since the introduction of the National Training Framework and its initiatives (nationally endorsed Training Packages and the *Australian Quality Training Framework [AQTF]*), the consistency with which competency based assessments are conducted in a range of contexts has become increasingly important. The introduction of Training Packages and their role in the recognition of competence and the issuing of qualifications and/or Statements of Attainment has led to an increased focus on assessment.

Critical to a nationally consistent vocational education training system is the process of mutual recognition, which is a key principle underlying the AQTF. It ensures that decisions in relation to vocational education and training have national effect. Under mutual recognition, each State and Territory has agreed to recognise Training Packages and accredited courses and it is a requirement for registration that Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) agree to recognise the AQF qualifications and Statements of Attainment issued by other RTOs. This ensures the mutual acceptance throughout Australia of AQF qualifications and Statements of Attainment. For the process of mutual recognition to work effectively there needs to be confidence from all stakeholders regarding assessment decisions.

With the New Apprenticeship programs, assessors are required to work in different ways, in new locations and sometimes in partnership with others. In implementing these changes, it is important for assessment to be monitored to ensure that it remains valid, consistent, fair and credible. It is widely acknowledged that there is scope to significantly improve the quality of current assessment processes and practices.

What is quality assurance in the context of assessment?

Quality assurance of assessment is defined as:

'A planned and systematic process of ensuring that the requirements of the assessment system, competency standards and any other criteria are applied in a consistent manner. Quality assurance mechanisms or procedures are an integral part of an assessment system.'
Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training BSZ98 (ANTA 1998)

In recent years the quality assurance of assessment has focused on the conduct of assessments. However, assessment activity should also be supported within a quality management system which is concerned with continuous improvement. Therefore there are two major factors driving the demand for assuring the quality of assessment:

- the need to comply with the AQTF requirements
- the philosophy of quality management.

Assuring the quality of assessment will have other benefits for the organisation. Improving the quality and consistency of assessment will help assessors to be more confident about their judgements, candidates to believe that they have been treated fairly, and employers, community and other RTOs to value the qualification issued. A focus on quality in assessment can easily form part of an organisation's overall approach to and management of quality processes.

Who is this guide for?

This guide has been written for people within RTOs who are either responsible for or involved in evaluating and maintaining a vocational education and training assessment system (the guide assumes that the training organisation is already registered with a State/Territory Registering Body and that the basic requirements for registration and audit are in place). This guide will assist managers, assessors and others involved in training and assessment by providing resources and information that are designed to support the requirements of the AQTF and other quality assurance strategies.

The guide contains:

- a general overview of quality assurance
- an explanation of the key assessment components that need to be quality assured
- a set of strategies for RTOs and assessors to use in monitoring and evaluating the key assessment aspects (an explanation is given as to how each strategy might be applied, its particular benefits and the things that need to be considered prior to making any decisions about adopting it)
- some guidance on where else to look for further advice and resources
- a series of proformas, examples and templates to assist in building a quality assessment system within the RTO.

PART 2: THE CONTEXT OF QUALITY ASSURING ASSESSMENT

RTOs and regulatory requirements

The key objective of the AQTF is to provide the basis for a nationally consistent, high quality vocational education and training system.

A training organisation that provides recognition (Statements of Attainment and/or qualifications) within the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) must become registered with a State or Territory Registering Body. To gain and maintain registration an RTO must meet the *Australian Quality Training Framework Standards for Registered Training Organisations (AQTF Standards for RTOs)*. Information regarding the *AQTF Standards for RTOs* can be obtained from the ANTA web site: www.anta.gov.au.

Organisations can be registered either for training delivery and assessment or for assessment-only services. In both cases, registration authorises the RTO to issue specific AQF qualifications and/or Statements of Attainment. This is its scope of registration. All training and assessment services relating to this scope, and therefore the issuance of a related AQF qualification and/or Statement of Attainment, are bound by the requirements of the *AQTF Standards for RTOs*.

The *AQTF Standards for RTOs* outline the requirement to have written policies and procedures for ensuring quality. The system needs to be consistent with the level and breadth of assessment services provided by the RTO. These Standards also outline the roles and responsibilities of the RTO and its Chief Executive Officer (or nominated person) in regards to:

1. systems for quality training and assessment
2. compliance with Commonwealth, State/Territory legislation and regulatory requirements
3. effective financial management procedures
4. effective administrative and records management procedures

5. recognition of qualifications issued by other RTOs
6. access and equity
7. the competence of RTO staff
8. RTO assessments
9. Learning and assessment strategies
10. issuing AQF qualifications and Statements of Attainment
11. use of national and State/Territory logos
12. ethical marketing and advertising.

It is the RTOs responsibility to ensure that it complies with these Standards.

RTOs may need to meet additional requirements beyond those of the *AQTF Standards for RTOs*. For example, if they wish to provide vocational education and training to overseas students in Australia they will have to meet the requirements of the *National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students*. This Code of Practice places obligations on registered providers and is a legally enforceable instrument with sanctions attached.

RTOs must also refer to the State or Territory Registering Body with which they are registered for any additional requirements to which they must adhere.

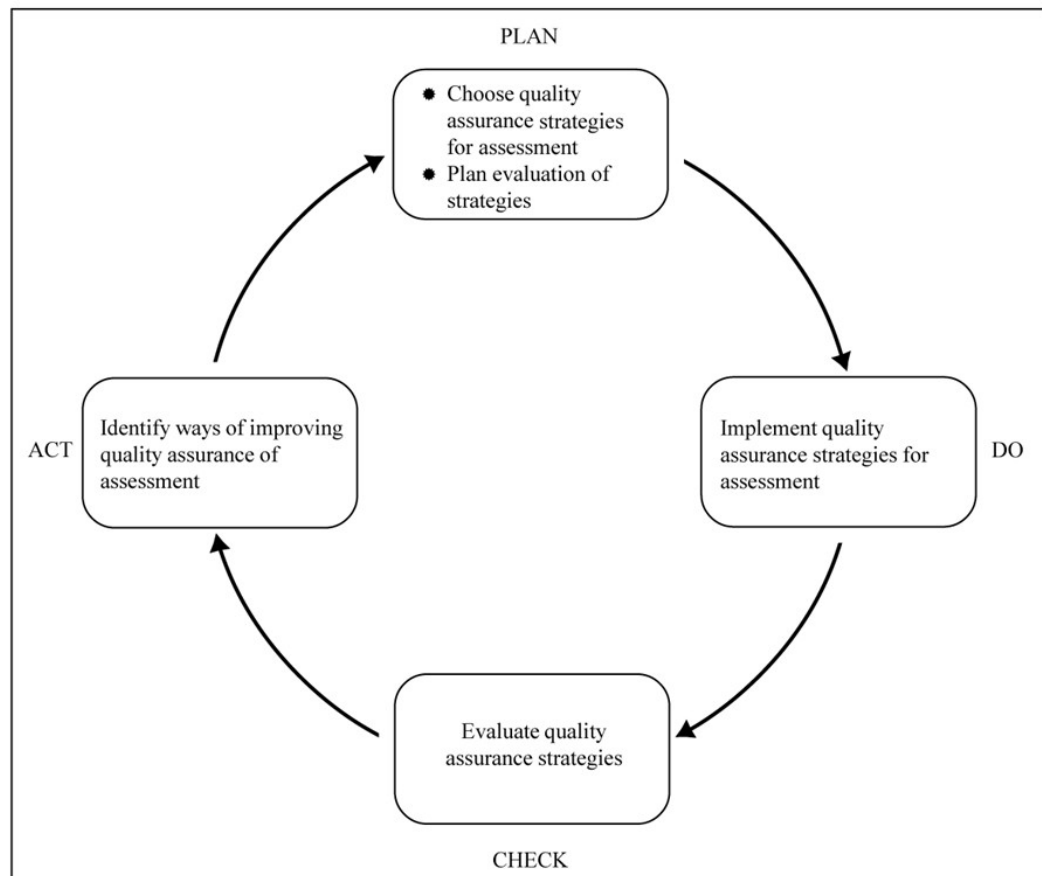
The roles and responsibilities that assessors undertake in a quality assured assessment system are critical. Assessors should be aware of their obligations in working within this system. They must support their RTO by complying with the requirements of the system. Strategies for continuous improvement of assessment as well as maintenance of vocational currency and assessment skills form part of this compliance.

The requirement for a quality management system

Regardless of any regulatory requirements for providing a quality management system, an organisation should be committed to providing the best possible training delivery and assessment services that are within its scope of registration. Within a training organisation, the purpose of a quality management strategy is premised on the belief that an organisational system specifically supports its assessment services – a core business of the RTO. Therefore the assessment system forms part of the framework of the organisational system.

Quality assurance focuses on a systematic approach to improvement that recognises and responds to the needs and expectations of all stakeholders in the enterprise. Stakeholders in the VET sector expect quality training and assessment conducted in a systematic environment that also assures its processes and services. Quality assurance processes support staff, enabling them to provide an efficient and effective service that is appropriately focused on the needs of clients and customers.

Quality assurance is about continuous improvement. The cyclical 'plan, do, check and act' approach emphasises the need to implement processes, evaluate their effectiveness and act to initiate further improvement. The quality assurance of assessment should follow a similar pattern.



Key aspects that need to be quality assured

Regardless of the form it takes or the context in which it is undertaken, assessment that leads to an AQF qualification and/or Statement of Attainment needs to be quality assured.

Therefore Recognition processes, such as Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), Recognition of Current Competency (RCC) and on-and off-the-job assessment all need to be monitored and continually improved.

The key components of assessment that need to be quality assured are:

- the assessment system
- the assessment process
- the assessors
- collecting the evidence
- making the judgement.

These components of assessment are further explained below.

The assessment system

An assessment system is a controlled and ordered process designed to ensure that assessment decisions made in relation to many individuals, by many assessors, in many situations are consistent, fair, valid and reliable.

An assessment system exists within an RTO and includes:

- policy relating to the conduct of assessment and to the professional development of assessors
- procedures and other relevant documentation relating to record-keeping arrangements and to the issuing of qualifications
- resources to support the assessors, candidates and assessments
- quality management and evaluation systems.

The assessment system in its broadest sense encompasses the processes, documentation, people and resources that support assessments. It also includes the assessment processes, assessors, evidence collected and the judgements made.

The assessment process

The assessment process is the agreed series of steps that the candidate undertakes within the enrolment, assessment, recording and reporting cycle. The process must not only suit the needs of all stakeholders. It must also be simple to run and cost-effective.

The assessors

The competence of people carrying out the assessment is a critical factor in ensuring that competency based assessment is effective and meets the required quality criteria.

Assessors must meet the requirements as set out in the *AQTF Standards for RTOs*, as well as meet (and continue to meet) any additional requirements that may appear in the relevant Training Packages.

As the maintenance of the competence of assessors is an issue in assessment, it is important to continually monitor and review that competence. Assessor competence consists of:

- assessment expertise
- current knowledge of industry practices
- interpersonal skills and an ability to be fair and reasonable.

The processes of selection, initial training and ongoing professional development of assessors are critical in a quality management assessment system.

Collecting the evidence

Assessors are required to collect evidence that is drawn from a range of sources. The evidence may be collected by the assessor only, or the assessor and the candidate, or a third party such as a workplace supervisor. It can be a mix of current and past evidence. Whatever the approach, the focus should be on gathering quality evidence that is valid, sufficient, current and authentic. Quality evidence is crucial to the assessment process and the judgement made. It is important to ensure that the evidence requirements of the relevant Training Package are met and this should be monitored in an ongoing way.

Making the judgement

Establishing ways to improve the validity and reliability of assessment judgements is the goal of a quality assured assessment system. The implications of inconsistent and poor judgements are that:

- confidence in the process of mutual recognition of qualifications and/or Statements of Attainment between RTOs will be undermined
- employers and employees will not readily accept AQF qualifications and/or Statements of Attainment.

Ensuring valid and reliable judgements will improve the consistency of outcomes, building confidence and credibility, which underpin the vocational education and training system.

However, to infer or make a judgement of a candidate's competence can be a complex process. It requires assessors to have:

- current skills and knowledge of the broader industry practice (or access to another person with those skills and knowledge, such as an industry expert, who will agree to assist with the design and/or conduct of the assessment)
- a common understanding of the assessment requirements as set out in the relevant Training Package
- a common interpretation of the unit(s) of competency being assessed.

Assessors then need the ability to interpret the evidence collected and make a confident judgement of competence.

The most important strategy in ensuring valid and reliable judgements is to establish a process of validation. This will provide the opportunity for checking, confirming and discussing to ensure a high degree of comparability.

PART 3: CHOOSING QUALITY ASSURANCE STRATEGIES

This guide sets out a number of strategies which can be used to assure the quality of assessment. There are clear interrelationships between the strategies as they form the quality assurance framework. Some strategies are essential requirements for meeting the *AQTF Standards for RTOs* and others provide support for continuous improvement and ongoing quality assurance. These relate to:

- assessment plan
- assessment policy
- assessment system procedures
- assessment tools
- partnership assessment arrangements
- evidence collection
- exemplars and benchmarks
- third party evidence
- information for assessors
- information for candidates
- professional judgement
- professional development of assessors
- record keeping
- selection and training of assessors
- simulated assessment
- team assessments.

Other strategies directly address the monitoring and evaluation of assessments and the assessment system. These strategies focus on:

- benchmarking
- internal audit
- RTO self-assessment
- validation strategies.

Table 1 provides an overview of the 20 strategies included in this guide. For ease of reference, the guide sorts these strategies alphabetically. Each strategy is mapped against the component of assessment to which it relates. For example, an assessment plan addresses the quality assurance requirements of the assessment process, the assessors, the evidence and the judgement, while validation strategies cover all aspects of assessment.

Table 1: Strategies for the quality assurance of assessment

Quality assurance strategy	Relevant aspect of assessment				
	Assessment system	Assessment process	Assessors	Evidence	Assessment judgement
	A	B	C	D	E
Assessment plan		♦	♦	♦	♦
Assessment policy	♦	♦	♦		
Assessment system procedures	♦	♦	♦		
Assessment tools		♦	♦	♦	♦
Benchmarking	♦				
Evidence collection guidelines			♦	♦	
Exemplar and benchmark materials		♦	♦	♦	♦
Guidelines for gathering third party evidence			♦	♦	♦
Information for assessors			♦	♦	♦
Information for candidates		♦		♦	
Internal audits	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
Mechanisms to support professional judgement		♦	♦	♦	♦
Partnership assessment arrangements			♦	♦	♦
Professional development for assessors			♦		
Record keeping	♦	♦	♦		
RTO self-assessment	♦	♦	♦		
Selection and training of assessors			♦		
Simulated assessment guidelines			♦	♦	♦
Team assessment		♦	♦	♦	♦
Validation strategies	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦

Making the decision about which strategies to use

It is not intended that RTOs and assessors should implement all of the strategies provided in this guide. However, it should be a goal for RTOs to implement as many quality assurance strategies as practicable over time.

Some of the monitoring and evaluation strategies (for example internal audit and validation strategies) are prescribed by the *AQTF Standards for RTOs*. Some strategies that support ongoing quality assurance are not mandated, for example exemplars and benchmarks. However, many of these strategies will supply essential evidence for audit. It is suggested that there is a balance between supportive strategies and monitoring and evaluation strategies.

What is important is that strategic decisions are made about which strategies to use and in what ways to use them. The compliance requirements directly mentioned in the *AQTF Standards for RTOs* should be considered first. Then it is important to think about an RTO's needs in selecting a particular strategy to suit a specific requirement. The decision made about which strategies to adopt will be dictated by:

Regulatory requirements	These include <i>AQTF Standards for RTOs</i> , licencing requirements, State and/or Territory legislative requirements, State and/or Territory Registering Body requirements.
Business considerations	These include the organisation's quality systems, strategic planning processes and issues relating to client satisfaction. RTOs may be committed to compliance with broader quality management requirements (for example, ISO 9001 2000, TQM.)
Resources	Consider the people, physical resources and the time available. Also consider the cost of establishment, operation and maintenance of the system.
Context	Think about the type, size, location and complexity of the RTO and the industries/enterprises involved.

Some strategies require considerable effort and/or resources to implement, and might initially be considered to be relatively expensive (for example, conducting team assessments.) This 'cost' must be balanced against the benefits achieved by implementing the strategy. If it is highly effective in terms of increasing confidence or validity, then the cost is warranted. Remember too that while the costs of initiating a strategy may be high (such as a new record keeping system) the ongoing costs will be well covered by the long term benefits to the organisation. The cost of not pursuing specific strategies may be greater

than the cost of implementing them. Ultimately, consideration must be given to the degree of risk involved in getting an assessment judgement wrong.

If training and assessment form only a minor part of an RTOs role and responsibilities then quality assurance should be tailored accordingly. Pick the mix of strategies that will ensure compliance with AQTF and State/Territory requirements, give a sense of confidence about assessment, and provide the best value for money.

Evaluating chosen quality assurance strategies

Once a decision has been made on what strategies to use, it is important to think about evaluating how they will work when they are first implemented. In other words, plan the quality assurance of quality assurance! This does not need to be a complicated process and, to assist in planning, two evaluation planning tools have been included in Appendices A (1) and A (2). The first is a partially worked example that explains the process for setting up a review. The second is a template that can be customised to suit particular circumstances.

As each quality assurance strategy is reviewed it is also important to note where processes can be improved. This will assist in determining what actions need to be taken to put a better quality assurance system in place. This information will be evidence for the internal audit that RTOs are required to undertake as part of compliance with the AQTF Standards. Following is a worked example of a *Quality assurance strategies – evaluation outcomes form*, which explains the process for reporting the findings of an evaluation. A template of this form is included at Appendix B.



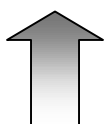
Link to:

- Appendix A (1) of this guide contains a *Planning proforma for evaluating quality assurance strategies* and Appendix A (2) contains the *Planning proforma for evaluating quality assurance strategies template*.
- Appendix B contains the *Quality assurance strategies – evaluation outcomes template*.
- AQTF Standards for RTOs – ANTA web site: www.anta.gov.au

Example

Table 2: Quality assurance strategies – evaluation outcomes form

Quality assurance strategy	Outcome of review activities	Follow-up action for continuous improvement
Information to assessors	The four assessors were asked to get together and work out how well their Assessor Kits work for the new units of competency that they were assessing. All agreed that some guidelines need to be developed for handling the portfolios of evidence.	Jo and Alex will work together with some of the workplace supervisors to put together samples of the documents being included in portfolios. Exemplar materials will be developed from these samples. Completion and trialing during the next in-service training.
Assessment tools	Some of the checklists need updating because of the changes in work practice.	Phan to complete after talking to supervisors.



Identify which quality assurance strategies were used and which were reviewed	Outline the outcomes of the review process. What did you find when you evaluated the strategies you had used to quality assure your assessment?	From the findings of your review, set out what you can improve in your quality assurance approach. What changes can you make to do it better? Who will make the changes? When should the changes be made? This form should be kept to use as evidence in your internal audit. It will also be the starting point when you quality assure your assessment again.
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PART 4: QUALITY ASSURANCE STRATEGIES

The strategies that have been outlined in the previous part of this guide are set out in alphabetical order (as presented in Table 1 in Part 3). Each strategy is presented in a similar format, which is a description and brief outline of the strategy, including a definition and its relationship to the *AQTF Standards for RTOs*.



Strategy application	An outline of how this strategy can be applied in an RTO.
Benefits	An overview of the benefits that RTOs gain from implementation of the strategy.
Considerations	Factors that may influence selection. These relate to the implementation, operation or maintenance of the strategy.
Link to	These direct the reader to other sources of information about the strategy together with templates and checklists. Customisable templates are provided in the <i>Training Package Assessment Materials Project</i> CD-ROM which accompanies this guide.
Experiences from the field	At the end of several of the strategies there are scenarios that illustrate how others have used this strategy in the quality assurance of their assessment.
Examples	At the end of some of the strategies there are examples (or extracts from examples) of the product or tool described in the strategy.

Assessment plan

An assessment plan is a document developed by an assessor that includes the units of competency to be assessed, when the assessment will occur, how the assessment will occur, the assessment methods to be used and an overview of instructions for the candidate(s).

This plan draws all the components of the assessment together as a comprehensive summary. It is useful to use in conjunction with the candidate as a planning tool. It assists the assessor to organise unit(s) of competency into tasks/jobs that reflect workplace practice.

Application

An assessor or group of assessors can develop an integrated approach to assessment of a unit or cluster of units of competency in a qualification or modules in an accredited course. In putting an assessment plan together, it is important to:

- define the purpose of the assessment
- identify the unit(s) of competency to be assessed and any specific requirements in the Training Package
- determine possibilities for clustering and document these in the plan
- identify and record the assessment context including who will assess, when and where
- determine the evidence required and record it in the plan
- determine the evidence gathering techniques and document them in the plan
- where appropriate, involve the candidate/s in the development of the assessment plan.

Benefits

The generation of an assessment plan ensures that there is:

- consistent assessment information and a consistent assessment approach
- an opportunity for sensible clustering and integration of competencies
- a clear link between the Training Package and assessment practice
- efficient use of resources and facilities
- documentary evidence related to the RTO's assessment strategy available for audit.

Considerations

The level of detail that needs to be included in an assessment plan will vary according to the number of assessors involved, the number of candidates and the complexity of the evidence collection.

It is also important that the plan is flexible, to allow for all contingencies. There should be acceptance and support from assessors for developing assessment plans and the responsibility, time and resources for developing the plan should be clearly determined.



Link to:

- Appendix C of this guide contains an *Assessment plan template*.
- Appendix D contains an *Assessment planning checklist*.

Example

Assessment Task 4 Workers' Induction Kit

Assessment type: Group project

Assessor: Jane Assessor (assessors will form a team to assess booklet)

Units of competency/elements to be assessed:

FNBF505A: Apply health & safety practices in the workplace

- Follow workplace procedures for hazard identification and risk control
- Contribute to participative arrangements for the management of health & safety
- Employ safe working practices

FNBF503A: Work as part of a team

- Participate in and cooperate with others in the workgroup
- Manage self

FNBF504A: Use technology in the workplace

- Utilise office technology
- Use appropriate software

Brief description of task:

Students work in teams of three to create an induction booklet for beginning workers in the industry detailing the OH&S practices that are to be followed in a workplace. Documents from the workplace or work placement and research are to be used to develop the booklet. Assessment will be on the content and layout of the finished product and also the teamwork demonstrated during the development of the product.

Duration: 8 weeks. Assessment in week 6.

Minimum resources required:

Access to workstation, application software, printer, organisation style guide, bank of images (eg for workstation exercises), documents containing relevant OH&S information which may be copied and pasted.

Instructions for candidates:

Students have received detailed specifications of the content to be included in the booklet and the style to be used.

Assessment policy

An assessment policy is a written document prepared by the RTO. This document sets out the principles, structures and rules that underpin assessment in the organisation. The policy should reflect the requirements of the RTO to comply with the relevant sections of the *AQTF Standards for RTOs*. The policy should also align with the RTO's Code of Practice or other requirements as determined by the State or Territory Registering Body.

An assessment policy could be quite brief, outlining the organisation's commitment to certain principles relating to assessment; for example, that candidates will be fully informed of the assessment process and that they have the right to appeal.

Application

It is expected that all RTOs will develop an assessment policy as part of their compliance under the *AQTF Standards for RTOs*. Clause 1.1 (a) relates to the requirement for an RTO to keep written policies and procedures for ensuring quality training and assessment consistent with its scope of registration and scale of operations. In addition, Clause 1.1 (b) notes that the policies and procedures are to be circulated, understood and implemented consistently throughout the RTO.

Benefits

An assessment policy:

- provides a framework under which all assessors work and all assessments are conducted
- provides a common understanding of the terms, purposes and outcomes of assessment
- provides for consistency in the assessment process by promoting adherence to the principles of validity, fairness, reliability and flexibility
- provides a mechanism to facilitate continuous improvement within the organisation
- highlights and determines the requirements for professional development
- makes the RTO's approach to assessment transparent
- identifies the roles and responsibilities of key players in assessment
- provides a framework for consultation with industry for development of assessment strategies

- provides a framework within which appeals and dispute resolution procedures are conducted and outlines the rights and responsibilities of candidates, assessors and others.
- is a requirement of the *AQTF Standards for RTOs*.

Considerations

It is important to consider:

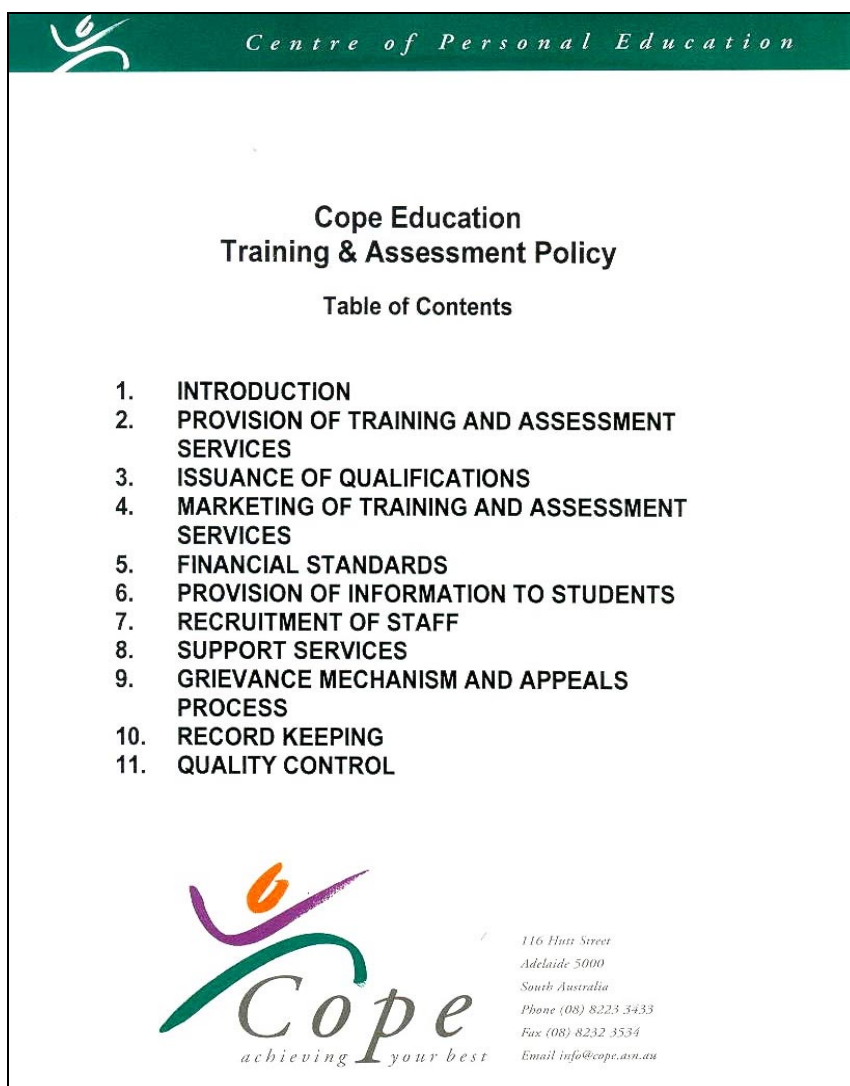
- disseminating policy to all staff associated with assessment
- incorporating information about the assessment policy into induction processes for new assessors
- ensuring that assessment policy documentation is clearly stated and readily available to all staff and candidates
- implementing procedures to ensure adherence to the requirements of the assessment policy once the system design is complete
- monitoring and evaluating the assessment policy on a regular basis, after it has been implemented.



Link to:

- Appendix E contains an *Assessment policy outline*.
- *AQTF Standards for RTOs* – ANTA web site: www.anta.gov.au

Example



Assessment system procedures

An assessment system is a controlled and ordered process designed to ensure that assessment decisions made in relation to many individuals, by many assessors, in many situations are consistent, fair, valid and reliable.

Assessment system procedures and guidelines are critical links between the assessment policy and the process of assessment. In other words, they turn policy into practice. They dictate how the policy will be implemented. Some RTOs choose to put the policy and procedures into the one document, while others maintain separate documentation.

Assessment system procedures need to be documented and widely circulated to assessors within the RTO.

Assessment system procedures are developed by RTOs, and in general contain:

- what the goal of the procedure is (purpose)
- what the procedure covers (scope)
- who is responsible for implementing the procedure (responsibilities)
- explanations of any specific terms (definitions)
- links to policy or other procedures (references)
- procedural steps (procedure detail)
- any attachments, eg guidelines or forms that are associated with the procedure (appendices).

Application

Like the assessment policy, assessment procedures are governed by Clauses 1.1 (a) and (b) of the *AQTF Standards for RTOs*.

System procedures can apply to all the functions of the assessment system. Functions or tasks that affect the assessment of candidates need to be identified. Once identified, procedures, guidelines and forms can be developed to address these.

Benefits

Major benefits of assessment system procedures are that:

- internal procedures of an organisation are documented so that people understand how particular functions are to be carried out
- responsibilities are clearly identified
- they promote consistency and build confidence
- they are a requirement of *AQTF Standards for RTOs*.

Considerations

When developing assessment system procedures, consideration needs to be given to:

- resources for development, circulation and ongoing maintenance of the procedures
- strategies for review and continuous improvement
- methods for ensuring version control.



Link to:

- Freeman, R. 1993, *Quality assurance in training and education: How to apply BS5750 (ISO 9000 Standards)*, Kogan Page, London. This provides an overview of establishing a quality assurance system for training organisations.
- *Australian Standard AS/NZS9001:2000 Quality management systems – requirements*. This document provides organisations with an overview of the requirements of a quality management system.
- *AQTF Standards for RTOs* – ANTA web site: www.anta.gov.au

Assessment tools

An assessment tool contains both the *instrument* and the *instructions* for gathering and interpreting evidence.

- Instrument – 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.
- Instructions – the information given to the candidate and/or the assessor regarding conditions under which the assessment should be conducted and recorded.

Application

The development, use and review of assessment tools is governed by Clauses 8.1 and 9.1(b) of the *AQTF Standards for RTOs*, which require assessment to comply with the principles of validity, reliability, fairness and flexibility. The validation of assessment tools is an additional requirement under Clause 9.2.

Assessment tools should be designed for all assessments conducted. They can be designed for use by individual assessors or a number of assessors, across various sites and in many contexts. RTOs may decide to:

- establish an assessment bank to provide access to validated assessment tools
- produce guidelines for developing assessment tools.

Assessment tools need to be designed carefully and ought to be developed to suit their context, for example, a specific group of candidates and purpose. Draft assessment tools should undergo peer review and be trialed prior to use. Peer review involves checking for inappropriate content and techniques. Trialing involves checking the layout, the literacy and numeracy level, the clarity of instructions and whether the strategy for recording responses is effective. It also entails evaluating the appropriateness of the time allocated and the cost-effectiveness of the tool. Information regarding reasonable adjustments can be obtained from peer review or large scale trialing and should be included in the final draft.

After use, assessment tools should undergo a validation process. Any tools used over a period of time ought to be subject to a process of evaluation and continuous improvement.

Benefits

A systematic process for planning, designing and evaluating assessment tools:

- ensures that quality evidence is collected and quality judgements are made
- avoids anomalies, inconsistencies and errors that ultimately lead to poor assessment practice
- enhances confidence in assessment outcomes
- facilitates consistency among assessors, and across an individual assessor's practice
- promotes validity and maximises reliability, flexibility and fairness of assessment
- forms part of the validation process.

Considerations

There are several considerations in regard to designing and using assessment tools.

- The RTO needs to adequately resource the initial tool development process, as well as the ongoing maintenance of any assessment tools that are going to be shared or used over time.
- Assessment tools for large scale use need to go through a validation process prior to dissemination.
- RTOs and individual assessors must implement version control and archive procedures.
- Careful modification or adaptation of existing tools for new assessment contexts can be undertaken, but only if their validity is not compromised.
- Trialing and validation processes should include feedback from candidates.



Link to:

- Appendix F contains a *Peer review checklist for assessment tools*.
- Appendix G contains an *Assessment tools, processes and evidence checklist*.
- Related strategies in this guide are: *Validation strategies* and *Exemplar and benchmark materials*.
- Related guides in this series are: *Guide 2: Assessing competencies in higher qualifications* and *Guide 1: Training Package assessment materials kit*.

Benchmarking

Benchmarking involves:

- making comparisons with other organisations to identify or create areas for improvement
- identifying superior performance and/or practices and adopting them within a specific RTO.

The two major forms of benchmarking include:

- performance benchmarking (comparison of performance between a number of organisations against a number of agreed measures)
- process benchmarking (comparison of their procedures/processes as well as performance).

Application

Organisations can undertake both procedures/process and performance benchmarking of the assessment system to not only find out what should be improved but also to determine how this can be done and what is feasible. An analysis of the findings should result in the implementation of improvements to the processes that were benchmarked.

Benefits

Performance benchmarking can:

- give clear evidence of where organisations most need to improve
- cover a wide spectrum of the organisation while measuring the performance of one process.

Process benchmarking can:

- inform organisations on how to improve and also how much improvement is feasible
- facilitate comparison between organisations
- be a change agent for groups involved in the process.

Considerations

In performance benchmarking, the partners may be competitors. Therefore, although their identities are known, confidentiality needs to be ensured.

Performance benchmarking:

- does not tell how to improve
- only compares performance
- requires a group of benchmarking partners.

In process benchmarking, on the other hand, the identity of partners and data sources are known. Therefore, either the partners must not be competitors or the available information must not be confidential.

Process benchmarking:

- requires careful selection of partners
- involves a comparison of a single process
- may require organisational visits.

It is considered useful to use performance and process benchmarking together so that organisations can find out how to improve and also how much they need to improve the assessment system.



Link to:

- The Office of Employment, Training and Tertiary Education (ETTE) in Victoria has developed customised guides for benchmarking. Information regarding organisational benchmarking is available through their web site: www.otfe.vic.gov.au
- A related guide in this series is: *Guide 8: Strategies for ensuring consistency in assessment.*

Evidence collection guidelines

Assessment should involve demonstration of competence in all dimensions of competency (task skills, task management skills, contingency management skills, job/role environment skills). Evidence is the proof required to infer a candidate's competence against the unit(s) of competency. Evidence of competence must be valid, sufficient, current and authentic. The challenge for an assessor is to design assessment tools that are effective and use a variety of methods/techniques to collect evidence to infer competence.

Application

RTOs need to ensure that clear direction is given to assessors regarding the collection of quality evidence. This should assist the organisation to comply with the *AQTF Standards for RTOs*, especially Standards 8 and 9.

Quality evidence is evidence that is valid, sufficient, current and authentic.

Valid evidence	Evidence that is valid directly relates to the unit(s) of competency being assessed. Valid evidence reflects real workplace tasks. If appropriate or possible, seek opinions from industry experts about the evidence required.
Sufficient evidence	Assessors must collect enough evidence to be confident about making a judgement of a candidate's competence. Sufficiency must be balanced by cost-effectiveness; therefore, at times thought needs to be given to applying a risk management strategy. This involves working out the critical nature of the unit(s) of competency and their frequency of use.
Current evidence	Assessors need to determine the period of currency of the evidence that is acceptable. It is acknowledged that up-to-date evidence is crucial, but where competence is determined over time a mix of current and past evidence may be acceptable.
Authentic evidence	Assessors must work out a strategy for confirming the authenticity of a candidate's evidence. The authentication process will be dependent upon the type of evidence being collected. Gathering authentic evidence may be particularly challenging when making judgements of a candidate's competence from a distance or as part of an assessment partnership arrangement.

Benefits

The major benefits of generating evidence collection guidelines are that they:

- assist in collection of quality evidence and the making of valid judgements
- build the confidence of assessors in the assessment process and the assessment judgement
- can provide a consistent approach to evidence collection
- promote validity and maximise reliability, flexibility and fairness of assessment.

Considerations

The generation of evidence collection guidelines requires an RTO to consider:

- how it will resource the initial development of the guidelines
- the need for a validation process prior to dissemination, which may involve industry experts
- how the RTO and individual assessors will implement version control and archive procedures.



Link to:

- Related strategies in this guide are: *Assessment tools*, *Validation strategies*, *Exemplar and benchmark materials* and *Mechanisms to support professional judgement*.
- Related guides in this series are: *Guide 1: Training Package assessment materials kit*; *Guide 2: Assessing competencies in higher qualifications* and *Guide 3: Recognition resource*.

Experiences from the field

System for supporting consistent evidence collection

A small team in an RTO has developed a set of exemplar forms to help assessors to design, implement, record and review their assessment in Training Packages. Simply designed, the forms cover the various aspects of assessment including an assessment plan, feedback to candidates, a self-assessment checklist, a peer assessment checklist, an assessment review checklist, an audit checklist, and other advice and documents that are required by their internal policy. Worked examples and blank templates have been developed. Now the whole kit has been placed on the RTOs intranet and assessors have ready access to the resources.

Exemplar and benchmark materials

Benchmark materials or exemplars are sample assessment tools or evidence which assessors agree are good examples. These include proformas and templates, 'model answers' for written material, lists of possible responses to verbal questions, product samples and descriptions of competent performance.

Developing and using exemplar and benchmark materials is an important strategy for RTOs to ensure that their assessments meet the requirements as stated in *AQTF Standards for RTO*, 'Standard 8: RTO assessments'.

Application

Where there are a number of assessors assessing against the same unit(s) of competency it is a good idea to collect or develop examples of quality assessment tools and/or evidence that can be used as exemplars.

Benefits

The key benefits of using benchmark materials and exemplars are that they encourage:

- the development of a common understanding among a group of assessors about the specific assessment and the standard of performance to be achieved
- improvement in the consistency in assessment judgements and practices
- assessor confidence.

Considerations

Before using shared materials, assessors need to agree that the selected candidate performances, verbal responses, checklists or 'model answers' do in fact represent the standard required for candidates to be considered competent. What is a 'good' sample? Is it an 'average' sample? A 'just across the line' sample? Or a 'best practice' sample?

Therefore, exemplars or benchmark materials need to be checked to see that:

- they do accurately assess the full dimensions of the unit(s) of competency being assessed (validity)
- instructions and decision making rules are not ambiguous and are clear for both assessors and candidates (consistency and fairness)
- all assessors agree they are of an acceptable quality.

Currency is an important issue with shared material. It is **critical** that benchmark materials are reviewed regularly to ensure their ongoing relevance and validity for the currently endorsed unit(s) of competency. Therefore version control is a major issue for the maintenance of benchmark and exemplar materials.



Link to:

- Related strategies in this guide are: *Assessment tools* and *Validation strategies*.
- AQTF Standards for RTOs – ANTA web site: www.anta.gov.au
- Related guides in this series are: *Guide 1: Training Package assessment materials kit*; *Guide 2: Assessing competencies in higher qualifications* and *Guide 8: Strategies for ensuring consistency in assessment*.

Experiences from the field

A group of assessors is working across a range of work sites. While they are all assessing against the same units of competency, some are wondering whether their assessment judgements are consistent.

We do not have the time to meet regularly. It is also hard because some of us are outside the metropolitan area. Because we cannot meet, we have decided to put together as many examples and checklists of competent performance as we can.

We are sending each other faxed copies. We are all making comments about the ones we think are good benchmarks. Some people have developed lists of possible candidate responses to some of our set questions. When we have finished this process, we will have a full set of benchmark materials for all assessors. We will review these later on and add new ones as we develop more.

With some luck we will be able to get together to do these sorts of things. It is important that we all have the same understanding about assessment and competence.

Guidelines for gathering third party evidence

Third party evidence is evidence gathered from workplace supervisors, peers and others to support the making of a judgement. An assessor cannot always observe a candidate for a long period of time and some competency standards are difficult to observe. Therefore third party evidence can be an essential piece of evidence in the assessment process.

Application

Assessors and RTOs should put in place guidelines for the systematic collection of quality third party evidence. These may be in the form of information, advice and checklists for the relevant third parties. This should assist organisations to comply with the *AQTF Standards for RTOs*, especially Standards 8 and 9.

Benefits

It is important to support the collection of quality third party evidence as it offers assessors a means of gathering authentic and valid evidence from often difficult contexts in a cost-effective way. Third party reports can be used effectively in the evidence gathering process when:

- the evidence is provided by someone who is in a position to make a valid comment on the candidate's performance, for example, a line manager or a leading hand
- the evidence is presented in written/official form, includes the name and contact details of the third party and can be easily verified
- it is difficult to gather direct evidence, for example, if a candidate is located in a remote area or is in a confidential situation
- there is a need to confirm the authenticity and currency of evidence provided by a candidate, for example, to confirm that product evidence is the candidate's own work.

Considerations

There are several things to consider when preparing guidelines for gathering third party evidence.

- A decision needs to be made about the appropriate balance between third party evidence and evidence drawn from other sources.
- The RTO needs to resource the initial development of the guidelines.
- Guidelines require a validation process prior to dissemination, and this may involve industry experts.
- RTOs and individual assessors must implement version control and archive procedures.



Link to:

- Appendix H contains a *Third party evidence form*.
- Related strategies in this guide are: *Assessment tools*, *Validation strategies* and *Exemplar and benchmark materials*.
- Related guides in this series are: *Guide 1: Training Package assessment materials kit* and *Guide 2: Assessing competencies in higher qualifications*.

Experiences from the field

A large RTO has candidates working in community agencies throughout the State. The program coordinator has organised a system for using evidence gatherers out in the field to assist in the assessment process.

We realised that to gather sufficient evidence for each candidate we needed to involve workplace supervisors and others to collect evidence of candidate performance for us. This could not be done in an ad hoc way. To make sure that the evidence could be collected in a consistent manner, we developed a comprehensive information pack for evidence gatherers. This material included:

- a description of the units of competency being assessed
- details of the types of evidence that were required
- some brief guidelines about what constituted sufficient evidence, eg how many times performances needed to be observed and over what period of time
- a set of prompt questions to be used to help determine candidate understanding, together with a listing of possible responses
- recording sheets to help in the recording process.

Candidates also had considerable information about their assessment and they were asked to discuss it with relevant people in their workplaces.

We distributed the information packs to the nominated evidence gatherers and then followed up with them on the phone. We worked through any concerns that they had at that time. We continue to maintain contact with them regularly. Already some of them have completed some evidence gathering and have made suggestions for improving our information pack.

Information for assessors

Information for assessors is material produced by RTOs to support quality assessment practice. It commonly covers the assessment policy and assessment procedures, and guidelines for various components of assessment. Part of the information for assessors may take the form of a Code of Practice for Assessors. This may be governed by the State or Territory Registering Body requirements. Information to assessors can be in print or electronic form.

Application

Assessor information is an essential part of an induction/orientation program for new or existing staff. It is also particularly important for RTOs where a number of assessors are working across different sites or in different contexts, eg a large TAFE institute, a large company RTO or a provider in a partnership arrangement.

Benefits

Providing information to assessors is a major quality assurance mechanism and an effective communication strategy between the organisation and the assessor. In particular, assessor information:

- develops mutual understanding of RTO policy and procedures
- enhances consistency and assessment practice.

Considerations

Some things to consider are:

- needs of assessors
- professional development support
- usability of the documentation
- ongoing maintenance and version control.



Link to:

- Appendix I contains an *Information for assessors outline*.
- Related strategies in this guide are: *Assessment policy*, *Assessment procedures* and *Information for candidates*.

Experiences from the field

Justin is Project Manager of a training program being delivered Australia-wide within a primary industry. Quality assurance is a key plank in their commercial operations, and they expected that the same would be the case for the assessment of their people. He explains how they assured assessment quality through quality information.

All players got together to develop an assessor's kit. This was seen to be important because our assessors are all over Australia. It is not practical for us to travel to make sure that everyone is doing the same things in the same way. The kit gives them all the information they need to assess all the four competencies. It includes the tools, a comprehensive set of possible candidate responses, guidelines for preparing candidates and giving them feedback after the event, and a checklist for reviewing assessment activities. The paperwork all comes back to us for checking and the candidates have to sign-off to say that assessment has happened as set out in their candidate's kit.

Example

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Information for candidates

There are two levels of information provided to candidates regarding assessment.

- Pre-enrolment/assessment information includes overall assessment policy, rights and responsibilities of candidates and assessors, organisational assessment procedures, and policies relating to Recognition processes, grievances and appeals. This information may take the form of a Code of Practice for Assessment and is governed by requirements in Standard 6 of the *AQTF Standards for RTOs*. RTOs should refer to their State or Territory Registering Body for any additional requirements.
- Information relating to the assessment of specific unit(s) of competency is governed by the requirements in Standard 8 of the *AQTF Standards for RTOs*.

The following information relates to the second level of information for candidates.

Application

Prior to assessment, assessors should provide candidates with information on the context and purpose of the assessment, the assessment process, and the timing and mechanism for feedback. This may be provided as a written document or may include a meeting with the candidate. For an apprentice or trainee it may include an individual training plan.

This should be seen as a collaborative exchange of information so that the candidate can have input into the assessment process and the assessor can gather relevant information. This would include information about the candidate and the candidate's work and learning context which could require adjustments to the assessment such as timing, location of assessment and catering for candidates with special needs.

Information provided to candidates after assessment should include:

- description of performance against the unit(s) of competency
- information about the re-assessment and/or appeals process
- options of pathways available to the candidate.

Benefits

Quality information to candidates:

- encourages active participation by candidates
- assists them to prepare effectively for assessment
- makes the process open and transparent
- provides accurate information for self-assessment of readiness for assessment or for a Recognition process.

Considerations

When information for candidates is developed, it must:

- be provided in an accessible format available to all candidates
- be retained for audit purposes.



Link to:

- Appendix J of this guide contains an *Information for candidates outline*.
- A related guide in this series is: *Guide 5: Candidate's Kit: Guide to assessment in New Apprenticeships*.
- AQTF Standards for RTOs – ANTA web site: www.anta.gov.au
- State and Territory Registering Bodies.

Internal audits

Under the *AQTF Standards for RTOs* Clause 1.4, RTOs are required to monitor and evaluate their compliance with the Standards and also with their own internal policies and procedures. This monitoring and evaluation process must take place at least once a year and can be done using:

- internal audit
- self-assessment of equal rigour.

Audit means a systematic, independent and documented process for obtaining evidence to determine whether the activities and related outcomes of a training organisation comply with the *AQTF Standards for RTOs*.

Application

RTOs are responsible for developing an effective strategy for evaluating their own compliance to the AQTF Standards and to their policies and procedures. RTOs should develop an internal audit planning strategy that covers a designated period of continuous improvement. This plan should take into account such things as:

- client feedback
- results of previous audits
- complaints.

Internal audits can be conducted across parts or the whole of the assessment system. They can apply to compliance with:

- internal RTO policies and procedures
- *AQTF Standards for RTOs*
- New Apprenticeship requirements
- legislative requirements, eg *Education Services to Overseas Students Act*
- performance agreements with State or Territory Registering Bodies
- other agreements as determined by the RTO or State or Territory Registering Bodies.

Benefits

The benefits of conducting audits for RTOs can include:

- promoting compliance with the *AQTF Standards for RTOs*
- providing a comprehensive action plan for continuous improvement
- supporting a quality management system
- building client and stakeholder confidence in the quality of the training and assessment system.

Considerations

When developing an internal audit system, considerations should include:

- training of personnel in the process
- resourcing implications, ie personnel, time and physical resources to conduct the process
- development of a sensible audit strategy which can be handled in the time available but also enables effective action to be taken to make improvements.



Link to:

- Appendix K contains a *Model plan – internal audit planning process*.
- Appendix L contains an *Internal audit checklist template*.
- Related strategies in this guide are: *RTO self-assessment* and *Validation strategies*.
- *Australian Standard 3911:1* provides guidance on conducting internal audits.
- *Australian Standard AS/NZS 9001 2000* outlines the requirements of a quality management system. Adherence to this Standard includes an audit strategy. This Standard promotes an approach to enhancing customer satisfaction by meeting customer requirements.
- *AQTF Standards for RTOs* – ANTA web site: www.anta.gov.au

Mechanisms to support professional judgement

Professional judgement involves an assessor making a judgement about competence based on:

- evidence gathered
- interpretation and understanding of the unit of competency
- breadth and depth of experience working with the Standards
- thorough understanding of current industry practice.

In the assessment decision an assessor is required to infer competence. This always involves an element of professional judgement. Assessors must use their professional judgement to decide what evidence to collect and what evidence is critical to the assessment decision.

Assessment is a subjective activity. To minimise errors of judgement it is wise to establish a set of guidelines or strategies to support assessors' professional judgement.

Application

As professional judgement occurs in every assessment decision, issues associated with this should be addressed in the validation process. RTOs and assessors should establish and implement strategies to ensure that the assessment decision/process is transparent and credible, such as:

- written information about common pitfalls or errors that affect judgement
- open and ongoing communication between assessors
- self-assessment
- networking
- professional development workshops for assessors
- ongoing contact with industry
- using assessment panels or teams
- mentoring and coaching
- other validation strategies.

Benefits

In a quality assessment system, RTOs should establish mechanisms to support professional judgement. Benefits can include:

- enhancing validity
- encouraging consistent understanding of assessment practices and processes
- encouraging transparency of the assessment practices and processes
- minimising errors of judgement
- increasing the confidence of assessors
- improving the efficiency of the assessment process.

Considerations

No one mechanism will work on its own. A range of mechanisms should be applied across the assessment system and this will require time and some resources to achieve. It also requires managerial support.



Link to:

- A related strategy in this guide is: *Exemplar and benchmark materials*.
- Kearney, P. 1997, *Assessing competence on and off-the-job*, Info Channel Australia, Hobart.
- Related guides in this series: *Guide 1: Training Package assessment materials kit*, *Guide 2: Assessing competencies in higher qualifications* and *Guide 8: Strategies for ensuring consistency in assessment*.

Partnership assessment arrangements

Partnership assessment arrangements are the agreements that are entered into with other organisations that provide assessment on behalf of the RTO. These arrangements enable the partners to share for mutual benefit their resources, effort, time, cost, responsibility and expertise. They are regulated by the *AQTF Standards for RTOs*, Clause 1.6. This clause outlines the requirements for a written agreement and the maintenance of a register of all agreements.

Application

These partnerships can involve RTOs and enterprises in diverse arrangements. In every case the RTO that issues the AQF qualification/Statement of Attainment is the lead RTO. The other RTOs or enterprises are partner organisations. Partnership assessment arrangements, which are carried out on behalf of the lead RTO by partner organisations, result in a qualification/Statement of Attainment being issued under the AQF.

The register

The AQTF requires RTOs to maintain a register of all agreements. The details of what it should contain and where it will be held should be consistent with any requirements of the State or Territory Registering Body and the policies and procedures of the lead RTO. The register needs to be held in a format that enables the ready retrieval of information for such purposes as State or Territory Registering Body audits.

Formal agreement

A formal agreement may take a number of formats, but whichever format an agreement takes it should cover such items as:

- details of the organisations involved in the arrangement
- terms and organisation of the agreement
- information on duration and units of competency to be assessed
- roles and responsibilities of all partners in the relationship
- strategies for quality assurance of the assessment
- resource requirements and details of provision, including financial arrangements
- mechanisms for communicating.

Quality assurance

The lead RTO is responsible for the quality of the assessments conducted on its behalf and therefore is responsible for the quality assurance mechanisms that are established. The lead RTO cannot delegate this responsibility. The lead RTO can elect to do one of the following:

- provide assessment materials and systems as well as monitor processes and outcomes
- quality assure the partner's assessment system and materials as well as monitor processes and outcomes.

Benefits

The benefits of partnership assessment arrangements are:

- the sharing of expertise, complementary skills and resources
- improved ties between enterprises and RTOs
- the opportunity to upgrade and extend the vocational and assessment competencies of personnel in all organisations.

Considerations

Many factors need to be taken into account when developing partnership assessment arrangements.

- The two partners may have differences of philosophy, culture and ways of working.
- It will be necessary to clearly define communication strategies for the partnership.
- Power and control needs to be fairly, if not necessarily equally, balanced.
- As the financial and time commitments can be considerable, it may be some time before the benefits are apparent to the partners.



Link to:

- Appendix L *Internal audit checklist template* can also be used when working in partnership with another organisation on assessment.
- For more detailed information on this topic, see *Guide 7: Assessment using partnership arrangements*, in this series.

Professional development for assessors

Professional development is the means by which assessors acquire, develop and maintain the competencies to carry out quality assessment within the VET sector. It also includes the ways in which assessors maintain knowledge of changes in policy, practice and research that may impact on their assessment process. Ongoing professional development is a key feature of any assessment quality assurance system.

Application

Assessors' skills and understanding of competence and competency based assessment are crucial to the overall assessment process. Professional development will ensure that assessors continue to conduct valid, reliable, fair and flexible and cost-effective assessments. It will also assist RTOs to meet the requirements of *AQTF Standards for RTOs*, 'Standard 7: The competence of RTO staff'.

There is a range of professional development strategies which will assist assessors to acquire, develop, maintain and extend current competencies. There are two stages in this process:

- assessor self-assessment
- ongoing professional development activities.

Assessor self-assessment

Assessors need to maintain currency of their technical competence as well as their assessment competence. Currency means being aware of the industry, workplace and job/role function of the person being assessed against the competency standards. Assessors also need to ensure that their assessment competence is current. Self-assessment is an integral strategy for an individual assessor's professional development. It involves assessors reflecting on their own skills, knowledge and attitude and determining where they are in relation to where they need to be.

Self-assessment enables:

- ownership of the professional development process
- time to reflect on relevant competencies (technical and assessment)
- improved quality assessments
- the use of information and evidence that can be used in a formal recognition process.

Ongoing professional development strategies

There are many activities that can assist assessors to develop their skills.

- *Job rotation* offers assessors the chance to learn new skills and extend current competencies.
- *Mentoring* offers less skilled assessors the opportunity to pair with more skilled individuals (mentors) to develop their competencies.
- *Coaching* differs from mentoring in that the emphasis is more formally instructional.
- *Internal validation activities* provide support for all assessors.
- *Peer review* involves assessors observing each other at work, then providing structured and specific feedback.
- *Project teams, working parties and committees* are effective in broadening assessors' professional experience and networks.
- *Workplace visits and 'return to industry' programs* provide opportunities to update technical competencies, to see and discuss practices with other assessors and to share observations and learning with peers upon return from industry.
- *RTO-structured professional development activities* include networking, short courses, workshops and conferences.
- *Formal or informal programs of further study and professional reading* enable assessors to develop new skills and refine existing ones.

Benefits

The benefits of professional development for assessors include:

- maintaining and extending the currency of their assessment and/or vocational/technical competencies
- broadening and enhancing their knowledge of current industry practice

- building their confidence and that of key stakeholders in the assessments conducted
- providing evidence for audit where documented records of assessor professional development have been kept.

Considerations

Professional development is an activity that:

- requires a commitment of time, money, personnel and physical resources
- requires strategic planning
- needs willing and experienced mentors for peer review and coaching
- can be difficult to manage in small RTOs, where opportunities may be limited due to size and other work commitments
- can be challenging in a competitive training environment.



Link to:

- Appendix M contains a *Self-assessment checklist to determine current competencies*. It has been taken from *A Guide to Professional Development: A Guide to trainers and assessors of the Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training BSZ98*, ANTA, 1999.
- Information regarding industry contacts can be found at: www.anta.gov.au
- A related guide in this series is: *Guide 9: Networking for assessors*.

Experiences from the field

An enterprise based RTO in a rural area has developed a comprehensive program to offer support to its group of ten workplace assessors.

Initial assessor training is provided through a partnership arrangement with another RTO and new assessors are teamed with a more experienced mentor for their first six months in the role. Company assessors are supported and encouraged to attend meetings of the local assessor network.

The team of assessors has regular bi-monthly meetings to deal with issues relating to the assessment system, to provide assessors with up-to-date industry information and to maintain their bank of assessment tasks through moderation exercises. Assessors also have an email group for more immediate assistance or advice from colleagues. Email is used so that assessors working on different shifts can maintain contact. As the company has plants in two other States, the training manager attends regular meetings with his counterparts from these plants to maintain standards across all the enterprise sites. There is an opportunity for assessors to take part in a job rotation program and work at one of the other plants. So far two assessors have benefited from this opportunity with two more placements planned for this year.

The company takes advantage of shutdown time at the plant for more formal ongoing training sessions. Assessors identify areas where they would like more training. A recent session involved a workplace language and literacy trainer (based at the company and funded through the WELL program) providing training on how to identify and deal with candidates needing support with literacy and numeracy.

Mentoring and ongoing validation of assessment

This example describes how a teaching section of a public sector RTO has developed a process for reviewing assessment.

Background

Ten teachers and one tutor are involved in the delivery of the Children's Services component of the Community Services Training Package. Of the eleven people involved, seven are part-time.

Approach

The team has established an ongoing process for validating all assessments they conduct. They use formal team meetings to determine the resources that they require, the delivery approach they will adopt and assessment is a standard agenda item for all meetings. During these meetings, they debate the issues and reach group consensus on how competencies will be clustered, how the assessment will be done and what the benchmarks will be.

New people who come into the team are mentored by more experienced assessors. Assessment material is shared and the processes and criteria are worked through so that there is a uniform understanding of the unit(s) of competency.

At the same time, the teachers who may be teaching and assessing similar unit(s) of competency also have informal meetings in which they continually discuss and review their assessment instruments and processes.

After the assessment has been completed, the assessment decisions are validated. Both the assessment decisions and the process are reviewed and checked against the agreed unit(s) of competency. Part of this validation process also includes a coordinated approach to addressing student issues raised by assessment. The views of students are raised by group coordinators who have the responsibility for the delivery of a cluster of units of competency. In this way, the teachers ensure that their assessment approaches are fair to all students.

Value of the approach

The strategy adopted here is a simple one. The teachers have a process of assessment review that has become an ongoing component of the formal and informal interactions between members of the team. New members are mentored by experienced people and they all regularly discuss and check their assessment approaches. This has given them a strong sense of confidence in their assessment outcomes.

Record keeping

Record keeping systems are a critical link between the delivery of training, the assessment process and the outcomes. Clear assessment records are required for the issuance of AQF qualifications and/or Statements of Attainment and for the feedback process. They also provide vital information in an appeal process.

The *AQTF Standards for RTOs* Standard 4 outlines the requirements for effective administrative and records management procedures. In addition there may be some record keeping requirements set by State or Territory Registering Bodies, particularly in the area of New Apprenticeships. RTOs should contact their State or Territory Registering Body for these.

Apart from assessment records kept at RTO level, individual assessors should maintain additional records to assist candidate feedback and clarify issues that may arise in any appeal process.

Application

There are two levels of records relating to assessment. The first includes records which relate directly to the assessment event such as assessment tools, examples of candidate evidence and assessor documentation which is kept according to the RTOs management guidelines. The second level includes the records of the assessment results. These are governed by the *AQTF Standards for RTOs* Clause 4.1, and must be kept for at least 30 years.

RTOs and assessors should keep records that include the following information:

- | | |
|---|---|
| • information provided to candidates | • assessment outcome |
| • examples of assessment tools | • documentation of Recognition process (RPL/RCC) |
| • documentation of evidence judged | • record of feedback to candidate |
| • records of time, date, location, name of assessor and candidate | • record of feedback from candidate (evaluation sheet). |

Benefits

There are several benefits attached to good assessment record keeping procedures.

- Assessment records provide critical evidence for resolution of appeals and disputes.
- The organisation is able to check for continuous improvement within the assessment process.
- They assist RTOs and individual assessors to validate that the standards being applied to assessments over time are consistent.
- They provide critical information required under audit processes and assist RTOs to meet the regulatory requirements as outlined in the AQTF.

Considerations

There are many factors to consider when establishing record keeping procedures.

- The cost of developing and maintaining recording systems can be significant.
- RTOs and individual assessors must implement version control and archive procedures.
- The issues of access and confidentiality should be discussed, agreed and documented.
- Record keeping should be covered as part of the induction process for all staff and assessors.
- Records should be cross-checked and data should be validated.
- Records should be secure from theft, fire and other environmental stresses.



Link to:

- *AQTF Standards for RTOs 'Standard 4: Effective Administrative and Records Management Procedures'* outlines the requirements for retention, compliance, access and version control.

RTO self-assessment

Under the *AQTF Standards for RTOs* Clause 1.4, RTOs are required to monitor and evaluate their compliance to the Standards and their own internal policies and procedures. This monitoring and evaluation process must take place at least once a year and can be done using:

- internal audit
- self-assessment of equal rigour.

Self-assessment is a disciplined process that identifies strengths and opportunities for improvement of the assessment system.

Application

Under the AQTF the RTO can utilise self-assessment strategies (rather than the audit process) to check compliance. The *Australian Standard AS/NZS ISO 9004: 2000* does provide organisations with guidelines for implementing a self-assessment strategy and focuses on performance improvements.

A framework for evaluating the assessment system that can be easily adapted for this purpose is the Australian Business Excellence Framework. This framework is a useful tool to assess current practice of an organisation and to inform opportunities for improvement into strategic planning processes.

The self-assessment process results in a descriptive report outlining current practices and activities as well as an evaluation of strengths and opportunities for improvement.

Benefits

Self-assessment can:

- provide an opportunity for personnel to be actively involved in the process
- encourage a quality focus in the organisation
- identify strengths and opportunities for improvement in parts or the whole of assessment systems
- pull together information and systems perhaps not known by all in the organisation

- demonstrate accountability to State or Territory Registering Bodies and other stakeholders
- allow the effective allocation of resources in the prioritising process
- establish a base for future reviews and continuous improvement.

Considerations

Self-assessment requires RTOs to consider:

- the number and mix of personnel to undertake the activity
- the varied level of understanding and commitment of the personnel to the process and the organisation
- the time and resources required to undertake the process
- ways to maintain momentum to ensure a positive outcome
- ways to establish a shared understanding of the process and terminology.



Link to:

- OTFE, 1998, *Organisational Self-assessment Guide: Adult Community Education (ACE) Providers*, Victoria. This guide provides a sample set of steps to implement this strategy in a community provider.
- Australian Quality Council, *Australian Business Excellence Framework: 2001 Framework*, NSW, 2001. This provides a suitable framework for self-assessment for RTOs.
- *Australian Standard AS/NZS ISO 9004: 2000*. This provides organisations with guidelines for implementing a self-assessment strategy and focuses on performance improvements. This Standard considers that the self-assessment approach enables organisations to determine the maturity of their quality management system and also to identify the main areas for improvement. It has a wider range of objectives, especially for continuous improvement of an organisation's efficiency and performance.
- *AQTF Standards for RTOs* – ANTA web site: www.anta.gov.au

Selection and training of assessors

The *AQTF Standards for RTOs* 'Standard 7: The competence of RTO staff', states that RTO staff members involved in assessment are competent in the functions they perform. Selection, induction and initial training and/or support for assessors are key strategies to ensure compliance with this Standard. In addition, the competence of assessors is a critical factor impacting on the quality of the RTOs assessment system.

Application

Competency requirements of assessors are explicit in the *AQTF Standards for RTOs*, subsection 7.3 (a). RTOs will need to ensure that their assessors meet any additional requirements that may be set out in the relevant Training Packages and any legislative, regulatory and licensing requirements. RTOs should also refer to their State/Territory Registering Body for any additional requirements.

Assessors' skills and understanding of competence and competency based assessment is crucial to the overall assessment process. A coordinated strategy for the selection, induction and initial training along with ongoing professional development and monitoring will ensure that assessors continue to conduct valid, reliable, fair, flexible and cost-effective assessments. It will also assist RTOs to meet the requirements of *AQTF Standards for RTOs*, 'Standard 7: The competence of RTO staff'.

Standard 7 provides guidance for RTOs in both the implementation and ongoing development and review of assessor competence. In brief, RTOs must:

- develop and implement written procedures for the recruitment, induction and ongoing development of staff
- have an induction program and information materials for new staff (the minimum information to be covered is: Training Packages, competency based training and assessment, VET requirements and policies; and requirements for New Apprenticeships)
- encourage and provide relevant opportunities for professional development, and monitor their performance.

Benefits

The benefits of a coordinated strategy for assessor competence include:

- having a documented record of assessor selection, induction, initial training and support, which can provide evidence for audit
- documenting a policy and procedure relevant to these strategies, which provides a transparent process that is clear to all stakeholders
- enhancing the competence and self-confidence of assessors
- building the confidence of key stakeholders in the assessments conducted and the judgements made.

Considerations

There are many issues to consider when developing policy and procedures for the selection and training of assessors. These include:

- a commitment of time, money, personnel and physical resources is required
- the need for strategic planning
- the cost of implementation and maintenance of an induction program and initial training and/or support needs to be determined
- monitoring of assessor performance could take the form of peer evaluations and candidate feedback which has both logistical and cost implications (RTOs may need to consider consultative committees and industry stakeholders in these processes)
- development of procedures and guidelines for team assessments are required under subsection 7.3 (b).



Link to:

- Related strategies in this guide are: *Information for assessors*, *Professional development for assessors*, *Assessment policy*, *Assessment system procedures* and *Team assessment*.
- AQTF Standards for RTOs – ANTA web site: www.anta.gov.au

Simulated assessment guidelines

Simulation is a form of evidence gathering that involves the candidate in completing or dealing with a task, activity or problem that replicates the workplace in an off-the-job situation. Simulations vary from recreating realistic workplace situations such as in the use of flight simulators, through to 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 circumstances but on creating situations in which candidates are able to demonstrate:

- technical skills
- underpinning knowledge
- generic skills such as decision making and problem solving
- workplace practices such as effective communication and compliance with occupational health and safety procedures.

Application

Assessors and RTOs should put in place guidelines to assist in the development of simulated environments in order to create the most valid, authentic environment for the generation and collection of evidence. These guidelines may be in the form of information, advice and checklists for the development of tasks. This should assist organisations to comply with the *AQTF Standards for RTOs*, especially Standards 8 and 9.

Benefits

It is important to support assessors in the development of simulations as they offer a means of gathering authentic and valid evidence in contexts which are often difficult. A simulated environment may be used to assess candidates:

- in an institutional context where access to workplace experience is limited or non-existent
- where the unit(s) of competency being assessed are not part of the employees' normal responsibilities
- where it is dangerous or expensive to assess a particular competency in the workplace.

In addition, the use of a simulated environment can be useful:

- where candidates are geographically dispersed
- to protect client confidentiality, eg case work, counselling
- where there are duty of care requirements, eg nursing, childcare.

Considerations

There are many issues to consider when developing simulated assessment guidelines.

- The RTO needs to resource the development of the guidelines.
- Guidelines require a validation process prior to dissemination, and this may involve industry experts.
- RTOs and individual assessors must implement version control and archive procedures.
- Assessors need to be aware that in some cases licensing or regulatory requirements prevent the use of simulation, eg the abattoir sector of the Meat Industry Training Package and Telecommunications Cabling.
- RTOs will need to consider the cost of facilities and equipment to undertake assessments. In some cases these factors make it logistically difficult to establish a simulation, eg mining, forestry.



Link to:

- Appendix N contains *Guidelines for simulated assessment*.
- Related strategies in this guide are: *Assessment tools*, *Validation strategies* and *Exemplar and benchmark materials*.
- Related guides in this series are: *Guide 1: Training Package assessment materials kit* and *Guide 2: Assessing competencies in higher qualifications*.

Team assessment

Team assessment involves two or more people coming together to undertake an assessment and to make an assessment decision. Team assessment is an effective strategy for checking assessments. Information in the form of a Code of Practice for assessors or clear guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the members is necessary to quality assure the outcomes of team assessments.

The *AQTF Standards for RTOs* Standards 7.3 (a) and (b) directly relate to such team or panel assessments. Regardless of the number of members in the team, together they must demonstrate the required competencies or their equivalent for assessors and the relevant technical competencies, at least to the level being assessed.

Application

- There are a number of situations in which team assessments can be used to improve the quality of assessments.
- When an assessor does not have the required technical competencies to assess in a particular industry area, a technical or subject matter expert who is competent in the particular area being assessed should be included in the team. This person may or may not be a qualified assessor.
- Where the assessor is separated by distance from the candidate, a technical or subject matter expert may provide input into the final assessment judgement.
- When an industry expert is used as a member of a team to provide advice on current workplace standards and practices and to ensure that the evidence provided matches the competency standards, this form of assessment is often called a panel assessment.

Benefits

There are many benefits in using team assessment.

- The validity of the assessment is enhanced.
- The skills and knowledge of both assessors and technical experts can be extended.
- A broader range of competencies can be assessed.
- Industry's confidence in the assessment process and the assessment judgement may be enhanced.

- Increased contact with industry enables the strengthening of working relationships.
- The confidence of new or inexperienced assessors can be built.
- Technical experts may consider this as a meaningful way to have input into assessment.

Considerations

Several factors need to be considered when setting up team assessments.

- They may involve considerable time and therefore cost for industry personnel.
- The roles and responsibilities need to be clear and communication effective.
- They require additional resources as two or more people may be involved.
- There may be occupational health and safety implications.
- Candidates and technical experts need to be well prepared so that they understand what is involved.



Link to:

- Related strategies in this guide are: *Assessment tools, Exemplar and benchmark materials, Evidence collection guidelines, Information for assessors, Information for candidates and Mechanisms to support professional judgement.*
- A related guide in this series is: *Guide 8: Strategies for ensuring consistency in assessment.*

Experiences from the field

Giorgio is a workplace trainer and assessor, currently assessing a group of trainees in an enterprise that is at the leading edge in its field.

Recent technological advances in their industry mean that one of the applications with which the trainees are now working is more sophisticated than that which Giorgio has access to in his RTO.

To ensure that his assessment of these complex units of competency is not compromised by his lack of recent experience, Giorgio invites Anna, the company's R&D manager, an acknowledged expert in this application, to work with him on this assessment.

As a team, Giorgio and Anna bring the necessary combination of assessment expertise and technical competence to the process of assessment and the assessment decision.

Validation strategies

Validation involves reviewing, comparing and evaluating assessment processes, tools and evidence contributing to judgements made by a range of assessors against the same competency standards. Validation strategies are mandated by the *AQTF Standards for RTOs* Standard 9.2.

The RTO must validate its assessment strategies by:

- reviewing, comparing and evaluating the assessment processes, tools and evidence contributing to judgements made by a range of assessors against the same competency standards*, at least annually
- documenting any action taken to improve the quality and consistency of assessment.

*These may be internal processes with stakeholder involvement or external validations with other providers and/or stakeholders.

RTOs must review, compare and evaluate their assessment processes, tools and evidence to check for consistency. This process is known as validation and can be achieved in a range of ways.

There are two common methods that fit comfortably with competency based assessment.

- A consensus process is one where assessors involved in the delivery and assessment of a particular unit(s) of competency get together to review, compare and evaluate all aspects of their assessment. This can occur in small RTOs where there may be few assessors or in large RTOs where groups of assessors come together. **Where possible, industry stakeholders should be included in this process.**
- An individual assessor can have support from a mentor (an expert in the vocational and assessment competencies) to promote the consistency of assessment. The mentor may be from within or external to the assessor's organisation.

Application

Validation can take place before, during and after assessment. It can occur at one, two or all of these times.

Validation *before* assessment concentrates on:

- assessment tool design
- the interpretation of the unit(s) of competency to be assessed
- the development of a common understanding of the standard to be achieved
- the establishment of the evidence to be required.

Validation *during* assessment concentrates on:

- the actual performance of the candidate undertaking the assessment
- the process of the assessment and the role of the assessor in it.

Validation *after* assessment concentrates on:

- the effectiveness of the assessment tool(s) and the assessment process
- the standard of performance achieved
- the validity of the evidence collected
- the accuracy and consistency of the assessment judgement.

Clearly, undertaking validation at all stages of the assessment may be a costly process. It is therefore important that the decision be made within RTOs where the emphasis is to be placed – before, during or after the assessment.

Commonly, the checking of assessment tools, evidence requirements and benchmarks of performance occur either before or after assessment takes place. Validation during the assessment process is less commonly used across the VET sector in Australia. RTOs will need to make a decision about whether the process will include internal personnel and/or external stakeholders (such as industry representatives and/or other RTO representatives).

Regardless of the approach it is important that RTOs maintain records of the processes involved in validation in order to satisfy the audit requirements of their Registering Body. Additionally, the records kept of the validation process provide the foundation for continuous improvement which must form part of the RTOs quality management.

Benefits

The key benefit of any validation process is that it is likely to promote the validity and consistency of assessment. More specifically, validation:

- encourages consistent understanding of the competency standards and assessment practices and processes
- allows the evaluation of the technical quality of the assessment tool(s)
- promotes discussion of issues of concern about the assessment process particularly in relation to fairness and flexibility (ie reasonable adjustments)
- provides an avenue for suggested improvements to the assessment system or processes
- fosters the development of informal networks and the exchange of information
- provides for the development of benchmark performances (examples of what competent performance looks like)
- enables assessors to keep up-to-date about what is happening in their industry.

Considerations

Validation requires:

- strategic planning that may cover an extended period of assessment
- a clear and agreed process
- a process that meets the needs of the assessors and matches the resources available
- identification of personnel who need to be involved in the process
- establishment of the type, quantity and location of evidence to be reviewed
- determination of the sampling procedure
- clarity in the use and purpose of exemplars and benchmarks
- training in validation for assessors
- managerial commitment to the concept
- effective coordination
- recognition of the reasonably high demands in relation to time, cost, human and other resources
- records to be maintained which provide evidence of validation process and outcomes
- a procedure for reviewing the evaluation process, including feedback from candidates.



Link to:

- Related strategies in this guide are: *Assessment tools* and *Exemplar and benchmark materials*.
- A related guide in this series is: *Guide 8: Strategies for ensuring consistency in assessment*.

More about sampling

Sampling in the validation process

Sampling is the process of selecting material for review in the validation process. Sampling may involve one or more of the following:

- evidence from a sample of candidates
- a sample of evidence from a sample of candidates
- a sample of assessment tools from assessors
- a sample of assessment tools by a sample of assessors
- a sample of unit(s) of competency from a sample of Training Packages.

Sampling is used as a cost-effective mechanism for quality assuring the outcomes of assessment. Rather than check everybody and everything, sampling allows RTOs to make a judgement about the overall validity and consistency of the assessments that they conduct by examining a small component.

If you are a small RTO delivering and assessing only a few units of competency, your approach to sampling may be quite simple. On the other hand, if you are delivering a large number of competencies from a wide range of Training Packages the approach may be much more complex to plan and manage. Distance, multiple sites and/or partnership arrangements may also influence sampling strategies.

It is very important to recognise that sampling (and other validation strategies) needs to be used flexibly and strategically. The focus of sampling may change from assessment cycle to assessment cycle or from year to year. Sampling decisions may vary depending on the findings of previous validation sessions.

The most important things to consider when establishing sampling procedures are that everyone supports the approach, is aware of the methodology and is supplied with quality information about how it is to happen.



Table 3: Links between the AQTF Standards for RTOs relating to assessment and the quality assurance strategies in this guide

AQTF Standard for RTOs	Relevant strategy	Relevant appendices
1. Systems for quality training and assessment	Assessment policy Assessment system procedures Internal audits RTO self-assessment Partnership assessment arrangements	E - Assessment policy outline K - Model plan – internal audit planning process L - Internal audit checklist template
4. Effective administrative and records management procedures	Record keeping	
6. Access and equity and client service	Information for candidates	J - Information for candidates outline
7. The competence of RTO staff	Professional development for assessors Selection and training of assessors Team assessment	M - Guide to self-assessment for determining current competencies
8. RTO assessments	Assessment tools Evidence collection guidelines Exemplar and benchmark materials Guidelines for gathering third party evidence Information for candidates Simulated assessment guidelines	F - Peer Review checklist for assessment tools G - Assessment tools, processes and evidence checklist H - Third party evidence form J - Information for candidates outline N - Guidelines for simulated assessment
9. Learning and assessment strategies	Evidence collection guidelines Guidelines for gathering third party evidence Simulated assessment guidelines Assessment tools Evidence collection guidelines Assessment plan Validation strategies	H - Third party evidence form N - Guidelines for simulated assessment F - Peer Review checklist for assessment tools G - Assessment checklist for assessment tools, processes and evidence C - Assessment plan template D - Assessment planning checklist

APPENDICES

Appendix A (1): Planning proforma for evaluating quality assurance strategies

Appendix A (2): Planning proforma for evaluating quality assurance strategies template

Appendix B: Quality assurance strategies – evaluation outcomes template

Appendix C: Assessment plan template

Appendix D: Assessment planning checklist

Appendix E: Assessment policy outline

Appendix F: Peer review checklist for assessment tools

Appendix G: Assessment tools, processes and evidence checklist

Appendix H: Third party evidence form

Appendix I: Information for assessors outline

Appendix J: Information for candidates outline

Appendix K: Model plan – internal audit planning process

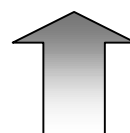
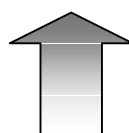
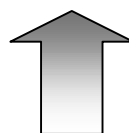
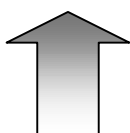
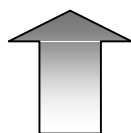
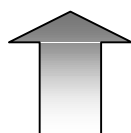
Appendix L: Internal audit checklist template

Appendix M: Self-assessment checklist to determine current competencies

Appendix N: Guidelines for simulated assessment

Appendix A (1): Planning proforma for evaluating quality assurance strategies

Quality assurance strategy	Description of activities	Timing	Responsibility	Resources required	Record keeping requirements
1.					
2.					
3.					



Write in which up-front and ongoing quality assurance strategies you will be using.	Describe how you are going to evaluate each of the quality assurance strategies.	Indicate the date(s) the review will take place.	Name the person(s) who will be responsible for evaluating the quality assurance activities.	Describe what resources these activities will need, for example people, time, physical resources.	Identify what records need to be kept of the review and what form these will take, for example recording sheets, feedback sheets, etc.
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Appendix A (2): Planning proforma for evaluating quality assurance strategies template

Quality assurance strategy	Description of activities	Timing	Responsibility	Resources required	Record keeping requirements
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					

Appendix B: Quality assurance strategies – evaluation outcomes template

Quality assurance strategy	Outcome of review activities	Follow-up action for continuous improvement
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Filing details:

Appendix C: Assessment plan template

Assessment plan
Assessment task:
Assessment method:
Assessor/s:
Date of assessment:
Units of competency/elements to be assessed:
Brief description of task:
Resources required:
Instructions for candidates:

Appendix D: Assessment planning checklist

Unit of competency/elements to be assessed:	
Date:	
1 Collect and analyse information Collect industry/training documentation, including: ☐ Training Package and/or competency standards ☐ assessment guidelines, resources ☐ curriculum ☐ other relevant documents Define industry/training requirements, including: ☐ type of enterprise ☐ partnership preferences ☐ cost structure for assessment	Comment:
2 Identify the purpose and what will be assessed Identify why candidates will present for assessment: ☐ recognition ☐ award of qualification ☐ licensing ☐ enterprise performance appraisal ☐ promotion/career development ☐ other Define what to assess, by: ☐ analysing unit(s) of competency, and module/learning outcomes requirements ☐ determining how best to cluster competencies to be assessed ☐ mapping competencies against curriculum where appropriate ☐ collecting logbooks and other documents supplied by industry	Comment:
3 Determine where assessment will take place Determine where assessment will be carried out: ☐ assessment entirely off-the-job ☐ assessment of underpinning knowledge/skills off-the-job, targeted assessment in the workplace ☐ assessment integrated on- and off-the-job ☐ assessment entirely in the workplace ☐ assessment off-site	Comment:
4 Identify how to assess Identify techniques for collecting evidence including: ☐ observation of performance ☐ questioning – oral or written ☐ (integrated) project work ☐ group work/task ☐ written tests ☐ critical incident scenarios	Comment:

☐ samples of work, log of experience, portfolio, journal, workbook ☐ certificates, documents, study records ☐ surveys, reports from others ☐ role play ☐ simulation Consider other techniques, including: ☐ self-assessment ☐ peer assessment	Comment:
5 Determine how evidence will be collected and recorded including: Determine evidence gathering tools: ☐ Training Record Book or logbook ☐ performance checklist with comments ☐ knowledge checklist ☐ checklist for integrated assessment ☐ evaluation/marking guide – for reports/projects ☐ list of questions – written and/or oral ☐ self and peer assessment reports ☐ evaluation guide and annotated models for work samples and/or performance ☐ other proformas/templates Set up administrative procedures for: ☐ recognition process (recognition of prior learning/current competencies) ☐ provision of feedback ☐ recording and reporting of results ☐ process for review and continuous improvement Determine who will be responsible for record keeping: ☐ candidate ☐ supervisor/mentor/trainer ☐ assessor ☐ other person Define the type and level of integration: ☐ integration of aspects of work performance ☐ holistic tasks, projects ☐ integration of on- and off-the-job performance Where partnership arrangements exist, set up agreements that define who will make assessment judgments: ☐ RTO alone ☐ RTO in partnership with enterprise ☐ RTO in partnership with industry ☐ RTO in partnership with school(s)	Comment:

Appendix E: Assessment policy outline

Following is a list of headings which may be included in an assessment policy. When you develop an assessment policy you will need to consider all of these. If you decide that some are not appropriate for your assessment situation, you may choose to exclude them from your policy.

Assessment policy headings	✓ or ✗
Assessment contexts and purposes	
Assessment scope	
Selection and qualifications of assessors	
Roles and responsibilities of assessors, co-assessors and coordinators	
Rights and responsibilities of candidates	
Professional development for assessors	
Documentation of the assessment process	
Assessment information for assessors	
Assessment information for candidates	
Methods of evidence collection	
Requirements for assessment tools and resources development	
Mechanism for appeals and grievances	
Fees and cost structures	
Guidelines for feedback	
Record keeping guidelines	
Confidentiality	
Credentialing requirements in line with the AQTF and AQF	
Transition arrangements including Recognition (RPL/RCC) policy	
Validation processes of assessments	
Quality assurance and continuous improvement mechanisms	

Appendix F: Peer review checklist for assessment tools

This checklist is to be completed by a peer or mentor prior to assessment being conducted. It can also be used during verification meetings to guide discussion about specific assessment tasks. If used prior to assessment, sufficient time needs to be allowed for any modifications to be made.

Unit code: _____

Unit title: _____

Assessment dates: _____

Assessment activity	Yes/No	Comment
Assessment tool instructions and assessment conditions are clearly identified.	Y/N	
Written information is worded appropriately.	Y/N	
The assessment activity addresses the evidence requirements for the competency or competencies being assessed.	Y/N	
The level of difficulty of the activity is appropriate to the competency or competencies being assessed.	Y/N	
Exemplars, benchmarks and/or assessment checklists are available for use in making assessment decision.	Y/N	

Modification required (as identified under Comment): ☐ Yes ☐ No

Assessment task is ready for use: ☐ Yes ☐ No

(Verifying peer or mentor)

Date: _____

Filed by lead assessor or verification coordinator

Appendix G: Assessment tools, processes and evidence checklist

Use this checklist to assist you to design assessment tools and strategies. Gauge your assessment against the following statements, and where you are unable to answer YES, re-work your approach.

VALIDITY	Yes/No	Comment
1. The assessment tasks are based on realistic workplace activities and contexts.	Y/N	
2. The evidence relates directly to the units of competence, or learning outcomes, being assessed.	Y/N	
3. The instrument will assess the candidate's ability to meet the level of performance required by the unit(s) of competency.	Y/N	
4. The assessment tasks have been designed to allow holistic and integrated assessment of knowledge, skills and attitudes.	Y/N	
5. More than one task and source of evidence will be used as the basis for judgement, with evidence drawn from a variety of performances over time where practical.	Y/N	
6. Different sources of evidence of knowledge and skills that underpin the unit of competency will be considered in the assessment.	Y/N	
7. The purpose, boundaries and limitations of the interpretations of evidence have been clearly identified.	Y/N	
8. The methods and instruments selected are appropriate for the assessment system specified by the industry (where applicable).	Y/N	
9. Where practical, the methods and processes for assessment have been validated by another person with expertise in the competencies being assessed.	Y/N	

RELIABILITY	Yes/No	Comment
1. Critical elements have been identified and sampling will be used to ensure that the most important aspects are assessed.	Y/N	
2. Assessment exemplars and checklists have been prepared for use by assessors.	Y/N	
3. Guides for observing and recording evidence are based on units of competency.	Y/N	
4. Clear guidelines are available to ensure that assessors make consistent decisions over time and with different candidates.	Y/N	
5. Where multiple assessors are involved in conducting parallel assessment events, the strategies used have been agreed.	Y/N	
6. Consistent instructions to candidates and procedures for undertaking assessment are available to all assessors.	Y/N	
7. Where work samples are to be used as evidence, candidates will receive specific guidelines on requirements, including information about ensuring authenticity and currency of the evidence.	Y/N	
8. Where a unit or units of competency are to be assessed in different situations, the situations are generally comparable.	Y/N	

FLEXIBILITY	Yes/No	Comment
1. The assessment approach can be adapted to meet the needs of all candidates and workplaces.	Y/N	
2. Where practical and appropriate, assessment will be negotiated and agreed between the assessor and the candidate.	Y/N	
3. Candidates will be able to have their previous experience or expertise recognised.	Y/N	
4. The assessment strategy adequately covers both the on- and off-the-job components of the training.	Y/N	

FAIRNESS	Yes/No	Comment
1. Candidates will be given clear and timely information on assessment.	Y/N	
2. Information for candidates will cover assessment methods, procedures, the criteria against which they will be assessed, when and how they will receive feedback and the mechanism for appeal.	Y/N	
3. Candidates will be included in discussions on the choice of assessment methods and timing.	Y/N	
4. Candidates will be made aware of their responsibilities with regard to assessment.	Y/N	
5. The assessment approach chosen caters for the language, literacy and numeracy needs of all candidates.	Y/N	
6. The special geographic, financial or social needs of candidates have been considered in the development and conduct of the assessment.	Y/N	
7. Reasonable adjustment can be made to the assessment strategy to ensure equity for all candidates, while maintaining the integrity of the assessment outcomes.	Y/N	
8. Opportunities for feedback and review of all aspects of assessment will be provided to candidates.	Y/N	
9. There are clearly documented mechanisms for appeal against assessment processes and decisions and these will be provided to candidates prior to assessment.	Y/N	

Appendix H: Third party evidence form**Confidential**

Name of candidate:
RTO:
Unit(s) of competency:

As part of the assessment for the units of competency, we are seeking evidence to support a judgement about the candidate's competence. As part of the evidence of competence we are seeking reports from the supervisor and other people who work closely with the candidate.

Name of supervisor:
Workplace:
Address:
Phone:

Have you read the units of competency that you are commenting on? Yes ☐ No ☐

Has the assessor explained the purpose of the candidate's assessment? Yes ☐ No ☐

Are you aware that the candidate will see a copy of this form? Yes ☐ No ☐

Are you willing to be contacted should further verification of this statement be required? Yes ☐ No ☐

What is your relationship to the candidate?	
How long have you worked with the person being assessed?	
How closely do you work with the candidate in the area being assessed?	

What is your technical experience and/or qualification(s) in the area being assessed? (Include any assessment or training qualifications.)	
--	--

Does the candidate:	perform job tasks to an acceptable level?	Yes	☐	No	☐
	manage job tasks effectively?	Yes	☐	No	☐
	implement safe working practices?	Yes	☐	No	☐
	solve problems on-the-job?	Yes	☐	No	☐
	work well with others?	Yes	☐	No	☐
	find it easy to move to new tasks?	Yes	☐	No	☐
	cope with unusual or non-routine situations?	Yes	☐	No	☐

Overall, do you believe the candidate performs to the standard required by the units of competency on a consistent basis?	
Identify any further training needs for the candidate:	

Any other comments:

.....

.....

.....

.....

Supervisor signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix I: Information for assessors outline

To ensure improved consistency in assessment, RTOs can develop a standardised approach to provide information for assessors. Following are some suggestions for what this information might contain:

- the RTO assessment policy, including the responsibilities of assessors
- roles and responsibilities of assessors in relation to the National Training Framework, *Australian Quality Training Framework* and Training Packages
- information on assessment requirements of the specific Training Package(s) or accredited course(s) they are assessing against
- current information on vocational competence and assessor qualification requirements and information on professional development opportunities including assessor networks, mentoring programs, etc
- guidelines on designing an assessment plan, developing assessment tools and conducting assessments; also, any RTO assessment templates used for gathering evidence, recording outcomes, etc
- guidelines on what information should be provided to candidates and how it should be provided
- information about the RTO requirements for assessment validation
- information on RTO appeals processes
- information on any specific assessment partnership agreements in which the assessor may be involved.

Appendix J: Information for candidates outline

RTOs can also develop a standardised approach to providing information for assessment candidates. Outlined below are some suggestions of what you should tell candidates before assessment:

- how to apply for a Recognition (RPL/RCC) process including cost and other details
- the time, location and number of assessments planned
- what resources the candidates are expected to supply
- which units of competency will be assessed
- the proposed method of assessment
- the range of evidence they will need to provide
- any issues of reasonable adjustment
- who will carry out the assessment
- responsibilities of assessors and candidates in collecting evidence
- how and when feedback will be provided
- the candidates' rights to appeal/review, including what can they do if they are not satisfied with their results.

Appendix K: Model plan – internal audit planning process

The following outlines a planning process for setting up an internal audit in your organisation. Some of the critical activities you will need to undertake are:

- provide training for potential auditors
- maintain a register of auditors and their audit activity
- ensure that the auditors comply with the AQTF Code of Practice
- establish a lead auditor who is responsible for all phases of the audit process
- establish clear description of roles and responsibilities of all personnel in the audit process
- encourage audits to be conducted in teams to:
 - enable effective mentoring to occur between experienced auditors and inexperienced auditors
 - ensure that teams provide the mix of expertise required
- develop suitable documentation to support the audit process
- conduct feedback sessions for auditors annually to review the audit process
- conduct audits using personnel who do not have direct responsibility for the area being audited
- establish an audit plan that is:
 - approved by all stakeholders
 - flexible, to enable changes in emphasis and resources
- develop an audit plan that includes:
 - clear objectives and scope
 - identification of procedures to be audited
 - identification of audit team members
 - identification of personnel contacted in the audit
 - date and place of audit
- develop an audit observation form to enable the summary of the audit event; include such information as:
 - identification of policy, procedure or aspect of AQTF being audited
 - date of audit
 - observation notes
 - recommendations for improvement
 - names and signatures of audit team.

Appendix L: Internal audit checklist template

On the following pages you will find an internal audit checklist that can be used by an RTO to check whether it complies with the assessment requirements as set out in the *AQTF Standards for RTOs*.

It is important for the RTO to establish how the audit will be conducted. Consider:

- when and who will undertake the audit
- the sample to be audited
- action to be taken.

Use this checklist to monitor whether the RTO complies with the *AQTF Standards for RTOs*. Use the Yes/No column as a process of self-evaluation/audit to identify areas for improvement within the assessment system. It may be that the Yes/No column could be adapted using three categories (ie Yes, No, Needs Revision/Review). Use the Action column to record the personnel responsible for actioning the identified areas for improvement.

This checklist is a guide only. It is important that each RTO seek clarification regarding compliance with their State or Territory Registering Body.

Internal audit checklist

RTO name:	<i>Insert the name of the RTO.</i>
Partner organisation(s): (if relevant)	<i>Insert the name of the partner organisation(s).</i>
Qualification(s):	<i>Insert the scope of the sample audited, ie title of qualifications.</i>
Units of competency:	<i>Insert the scope of the sample audited, ie title of units of competency reviewed.</i>
People interviewed:	<i>Insert the names of people interviewed in the process. This may be contact staff, assessors and/or candidates.</i>
Sites visited:	<i>Insert the names of the sites visited.</i>
Date(s) of audit:	<i>Insert the dates on which the audit was undertaken.</i>

Audit summary:

Use this space to summarise the review, eg areas for improvement, the possible action to be taken (recommendations), the person responsible for action and the possible timeline.

Reviewer(s): _____ Date: _____

Evidence to be provided	Yes/No	Action
Partnership arrangements		
Are arrangements entered on register?		
Are arrangements documented?		
Do they include: • clear roles and responsibilities of the partner organisations? • quality assurance arrangements?		
Policy related material		
Evidence of the following policy document(s) and procedures to ensure quality of assessment services, including: • Code of Practice or policy for assessment (including review mechanisms) • policy for Recognition processes (RPL/RCC) • grievance/appeals policy • business plan • risk management strategy • compliance with State/Territory laws, and Commonwealth and State legislation • protection of student fees and/or refund policy.		
Procedure/Guideline information		
Evidence of information to assessors (eg process, roles and responsibilities).		
Evidence of information to candidates (eg process, rights and responsibilities) is: • clear and unambiguous • accurate • provided prior to enrolment/assessment.		
Assessment		
Evidence of: • relevant copies of Training Package/accredited course • assessment plans (evidence of industry/enterprise consultation, adherence to principles of validity, reliability, fairness and flexibility) • copies of assessment tools (evidence of industry/enterprise consultation) • samples of evidence provided (where feasible) • details of assessment outcomes recorded.		
Validation		
Evidence of policy and procedure for validation • regular validation activities (eg minutes, summary of outcomes, action taken) • evaluation of feedback from candidates • industry/enterprise participation (if required).		

Evidence to be provided	Yes/No	Action
Assessor qualifications		
Profiles of assessors that include: • assessment qualifications • industry/technical qualifications • relevant current industry experience • relevant unit(s) of competency they are assessing • records of professional development.		
Access and equity		
Evidence of: • access and equity issues being addressed in assessment documentation/strategies • support available in the assessment process.		
Record keeping		
A secure system that includes: • enrolment details • assessment outcomes • information on appeals/grievances • qualifications/Statements of Attainment issued.		
Adequate procedure for the transfer of data to relevant authorities to ensure integrity of the information (eg partnerships arrangements, State/Territory requirements).		
An appropriate procedure for archiving data		
Marketing information		
Marketing material is accurate and ethical		
Statements of Attainment/Qualifications		
Statements of Attainment/qualifications: • issued regularly • accurate.		
Evidence of mutual recognition		
Resources		
Appropriate assessment: • resources • equipment • facilities.		
Compliance with relevant occupational health and safety and legislative requirements.		
Documentation of quality assurance strategies		
A process and evidence of action of: • monitoring assessment outcomes • results of surveys/evaluations • annual audit or self-assessment of assessment system.		

Appendix M: Self-assessment checklist to determine current competence

The following checklist is taken from the *Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training BSZ98*. You can quite easily modify it to suit contexts other than the one for which it was designed, ie assessing assessors and workplace trainers.

Having confidence in assessment decision making hinges very much upon the current competence of the assessor(s) making the decisions. Assessment guidelines in Training Packages detail what is required by assessors to undertake assessment and it is important for assessors to maintain and further develop their skills and knowledge. The following checklist is a useful means of evaluating current competence. Clearly, the more times you are able to answer 'Yes' the better.

1. Relevant work history

How many assessors, workplace trainers have you trained/assessed in the past 12 months? In your view, is this a sufficient number to maintain currency?	Yes	No
---	-----	----

Have you evaluated your training and assessment practice? How?	Yes	No
--	-----	----

Have you discussed your training and assessment practice with others?	Yes	No
---	-----	----

Have there been any assessments that you have found particularly challenging? What would you have done differently?	Yes	No
---	-----	----

Have you been doing anything else which is relevant to your role as a trainer/assessor of assessors and workplace trainers? What?

Yes

No

2. Attendance at professional development activities focusing on best practice in assessment and/or workplace training, colleague/peer support and participation in professional networks

Do you sit in periodically on a colleague's training/assessment activities and vice versa?

Yes

No

Have you benchmarked your competencies against someone who is recognised as a 'professional trainer/assessor'? How do they maintain their current competencies?

Yes

No

Do you belong to any networks or associations? When was the last time you attended?

Yes

No

Do you maintain a log book or diary summarising the professional seminars/activities you attend and what skills and knowledge you acquire?

Yes

No

3. Knowledge of current practices in assessment and workplace training

Have you read anything in the last 12 months about assessment and workplace training practices in Australia and abroad? What?

Yes

No

Do you subscribe to magazines, periodicals or services in order to keep abreast of developments in assessment and workplace training? What are these?

Yes

No

Do you talk to others about workplace training and assessment practices both in and outside the organisation? Who?

Yes

No

Are you aware of current occupational health and safety requirements and legislation?

Yes

No

4. Participation in moderation, validation processes

Are you doing anything to ensure your assessment decisions are valid and reliable? What?

Yes

No

Do you participate in internal moderation processes? This involves internal monitoring of the assessment/training process to ensure that the specific criteria are being met.

Yes

No

Do you have regular verification of your assessment by an external 'assessor'? In your view how often should this be done?

Yes

No

Have you made any suggestions on how to improve the assessment system in your organisation?

Yes

No

5. Knowledge of language, literacy and numeracy (LL&N) issues in the context of assessment and workplace training

Do you find out if there are LL&N needs among those persons you train/assess as assessors and workplace trainers? How?

Yes**No**

Have you ever had to review your training/assessment resources for LL&N needs?

Yes**No**

Can you name LL&N contacts for assistance? What are they?

Yes**No**

Are there any other characteristics of participants/candidates that should be addressed? What are they?

Yes**No**

Appendix N: Guidelines for simulated assessment

Before making a decision to use simulation, consider:

- Training Package requirements and industry views on the use of simulation
- the benefits and limitations of using a simulation
- learner characteristics and needs
- available workplace opportunities
- the cost of establishing and using simulated environments
- how the simulated assessment can be combined with other forms of evidence gathering such as logbooks, portfolios or work placements.

Preparing the assessment event

- If you are assessing within a VET training institution, 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.
- Review the whole qualification or units of competence to be assessed to build in opportunities for assessing whole work tasks or clusters of competencies. Where appropriate include opportunities to assess relevant generic competencies such as teamwork, communication, occupational health and safety and leadership.
- Include contingencies as part of the assessment design. For example, candidates might be required to deal with the pressures of telephones, time constraints and interruptions to workflow.
- Focus the assessment activity on processes as much as product.
- Apply operational procedures and occupational health and safety requirements as they would be in a real work setting.
- Validate methods, context and concepts with industry/workplace representatives to ensure the accuracy of the assessment approach.
- Prepare an observation checklist that clearly outlines the critical performance criteria.

Preparing the physical location

- Consult with workplace/industry experts on what should be included.
- Check real workplaces to get ideas about current practice and ways of setting up work spaces.

- Where practical, alter the training environment so that it reflects a real workplace.
- Use equipment and other facilities that are as close to those used by industry as possible.

Preparing the candidate(s)

- Give candidates a pre-assessment briefing outlining the assessment method, process and tools.
- Discuss the criteria against which their performance is to be assessed.
- Give candidates adequate information about the role they are to undertake and the significance of the event.

Conducting the assessment

- Where practical, involve industry experts in the assessment process and the decision making.
- Where appropriate, videotape the performance of candidates.
- Use a checklist of critical performance criteria to focus on the observation of candidate performance.
- Use self-assessment, peer assessment and debriefing activities to add to the evidence gathered and help candidates develop reflective skills.

GLOSSARY

This glossary was compiled for use in the *Training Package Assessment Materials Project*. Where definitions have been sourced from particular documentation they have been noted. Other definitions in this glossary were developed for use in this Project.

Accreditation

Accreditation means the process of formal recognition of a course by the State or Territory course accrediting body in line with the AQTF Standards for State and Territory Registering/Course Accrediting Bodies.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Accredited course

Accredited course means a structured sequence of vocational education and training that leads to an Australian Qualifications Framework qualification or Statement of Attainment.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Appeal process

A process whereby the person being assessed, or other interested party, such as an employer, may dispute the outcome of an assessment and seek reassessment.

From Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training

Assessment

Assessment means the process of collecting evidence and making judgements on whether competency has been achieved to confirm that an individual can perform to the standard expected in the workplace as expressed in the relevant endorsed industry/enterprise competency standards or the learning outcomes of an accredited course.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Assessment context

The environment in which the assessment will be carried out. This will include physical and operational factors, the assessment system within which 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.

From Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training

Assessment guidelines

Assessment guidelines are an endorsed component of a Training Package which underpins assessment and which sets out the industry approach to valid, reliable, flexible and fair assessment. Assessment guidelines include the assessment system overview, assessor requirements, designing assessment resources, conducting assessment and sources of information on assessment.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Assessment judgement

Assessment judgement involves the assessor evaluating whether the evidence gathered is current, valid, authentic and sufficient to make the assessment decision. The assessment judgement will involve the assessor in using professional judgement in evaluating the evidence available.

Assessment materials

Assessment materials are any resources that assist in any part of the assessment process. They may include information for the candidate or assessor, assessment tools or resources for the quality assurance arrangements of the assessment system.

Assessment method

Assessment method means the particular technique used to gather different types of evidence. This may include methods or techniques such as questioning, observation, third party reports, interviews, simulations and portfolios. Also see Evidence gathering technique.

Assessment plan

An assessment plan is a document developed by an assessor that includes the elements and units of competency to be assessed, when the assessment will occur, how the assessment will occur, the assessment methods to be used and the criteria for the assessment decision. Also see Evidence plan.

From Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training

Assessment process

The assessment process is the agreed series of steps that the candidate undertakes within the enrolment, assessment, recording and reporting cycle. The process must best suit the needs of all stakeholders and be both efficient and cost-effective. The agreed assessment process is often expressed as a flow chart.

Assessment strategy

Assessment strategy means the approach to assessment and evidence gathering used by the assessor or Registered Training Organisation. It encompasses the assessment process, methods and assessment tools.

Assessment system

An assessment system is a controlled and ordered process designed to ensure that assessment decisions made in relation to many individuals, by many assessors, in many situations are consistent, fair, valid and reliable.

From Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training

Assessment tool

An assessment tool contains both the instrument and the instructions for gathering and interpreting evidence:

- instrument(s) – the specific questions or activity 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 – the information/instructions given to the candidate and/or the assessor regarding conditions under which the assessment should be conducted and recorded.

Also see Evidence gathering tool.

Audit

Audit means a systematic, independent and documented process for obtaining evidence to determine whether the activities and related outcomes of a training organisation comply with the *AQTF Standards for Registered Training Organisations*.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Auspicing

See Collaborative assessment arrangements and Partnerships.

Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)

Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) means the policy framework that defines all qualifications recognised nationally in post-compulsory education and training within Australia. The AQF comprises titles and guidelines, which define each qualification, together with principles and protocols covering articulation and issuance of qualifications and Statements of Attainment.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF)

Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) means the nationally agreed recognition arrangements for the vocational education and training sector.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Candidate

A candidate is any person presenting for assessment. The candidate may be:

- a learner undertaking training in an institutional setting
- a learner/worker undertaking training in a workplace
- a learner/worker wanting their skills recognised
- or any combination of the above.

Competency

The specification of knowledge and skill and the application of that knowledge and skill to the standards of performance required in the workplace.

From Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training

Competency standard

Competency standards define the competencies required for effective performance in the workplace. Standards are expressed in outcome terms and have a standard format comprising unit title, unit descriptor, elements, performance criteria, range statement and evidence guide. Also see Unit(s) of competency.

From Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training

Client

Client means learner, enterprise or organisation, which uses or purchases the services provided by the Registered Training Organisation.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Clustering

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

Adapted from Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training

Collaborative assessment arrangements

Formal collaborative assessment arrangements are the written agreements that are undertaken between a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) and other organisations or RTOs. These arrangements enable the partners to share for mutual benefit their resources, effort, time, cost, responsibility and expertise. These arrangements are regulated by the *AQTF Standards for Registered Training Organisations*. See also Partnerships and Auspicing.

Informal collaborative arrangements refer to assessors and candidates working together, in partnership, in the assessment process.

Customisation

Customisation is the addition of specific industry or enterprise information to endorsed national competency standards to reflect the work of a particular industry or workplace or to improve the standards' relevance to industry.

Delivery and assessment strategies

Delivery and assessment strategies means delivery and assessment strategies for each qualification, or part thereof, within the Registered Training Organisation's scope of registration.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Dimensions of competency

The concept of competency includes all aspects of work performance and not only narrow task skills. The four dimensions of competency are:

- task skills
- task management skills
- contingency management skills
- job/role environment skills.

From Training Package Developers' Handbook

Element

An element is the basic building block of the unit of competency. Elements describe the tasks that make up the broader function or job, described by the unit.

From Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training

Endorsement

Endorsement means the formal process of recognition of Training Packages undertaken by the National Training Quality Council.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Evaluation

Evaluation includes all the activities related to the registration of a training organisation to determine whether it meets, or continues to meet, all the requirements of the *AQTF Standards for Registered Training Organisations* necessary for registration. Evaluation may include review of past performance, review of complaints and other feedback, risk assessment, examination of documentation, conduct of audit, consideration of audit reports and other relevant activities in relation to the organisation.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Evidence and 'quality' evidence

Evidence is information gathered which, when matched against the performance criteria, provides proof of competency. Evidence can take many forms and be gathered from a number of sources. Assessors often categorise evidence in different ways, for example:

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

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

Evidence gathering techniques

Evidence gathering technique means the particular technique or method used to gather different types of evidence. This may include methods or techniques such as questioning, observation, third party reports, interviews, simulations and portfolios. Also see Assessment method.

Evidence gathering tool

An evidence gathering tool contains both the instrument and the instructions for gathering and interpreting evidence in an assessment process:

- instrument(s) – the specific questions or activity 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 – the information/instructions given to the candidate and/or the assessor regarding conditions under which the assessment should be conducted and recorded.

Also see Assessment tool.

Evidence guide

The evidence guide is part of a unit of competency. Its purpose is to guide assessment of the unit of competency in the workplace and/or a training environment. The evidence guide specifies the context of assessment, the critical aspects of evidence and the required or underpinning knowledge and skills. The evidence guide relates directly to the performance criteria and range statement defined in the unit of competency.

From Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training

Evidence plan

An evidence plan is a document developed by an assessor, often in collaboration with the candidate and the supervisor or technical expert. It includes the units of competency to be assessed, details of the type of evidence to be collected, information regarding who is to collect the evidence and the time period for doing so. Also see Assessment plan.

Flexible learning and assessment

Flexible learning and assessment means an approach to vocational education and training which allows for the adoption of a range of learning strategies in a variety of learning environments to cater for differences in learning styles, learning interests and needs, and variations in learning opportunities (including online).

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Holistic/integrated assessment

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

Adapted from Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training

Industry Training Advisory Bodies (ITABs)

National and State/Territory bodies comprising representation from the industry parties responsible for the development, review and implementation of competency standards in given industries.

From Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training

Internal audit

Internal audit means audits conducted by or on behalf of the organisation itself for internal purposes.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Key competency

Employment related general competencies that are essential for effective participation in the workplace.

From Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training

Moderation

Moderation is a process which involves assessors in discussing and reaching agreement about assessment processes and outcomes in a particular industry or industry sector. This enables assessors to develop a shared understanding of the requirements of specific Training Packages, including the relevant competency standards and assessment guidelines, the nature of evidence, how evidence is collected and the basis on which assessment decisions are made.

Mutual recognition

Mutual recognition applies nationally and means:

1. The acceptance and application of the decisions of a registering body that has registered a training organisation, or a course accrediting body that has accredited a course, by another registering body or course accrediting body, without there being any further requirement for a process beyond the initial process, including:
 - a. the recognition and application by the registering body of each State or Territory of the decisions of the registering body of other States and Territories in relation to the registration of, imposition of sanctions on, including the cancellation of registration of training organisations; and
 - b. the recognition and application by the course accrediting body of each State or Territory of the decisions of the course accrediting body of other States and Territories in relation to the accreditation of courses where no relevant Training Package exists;
2. The recognition by State and Territory registering bodies of the decisions of the National Training Quality Council in endorsing Training Packages.
3. The recognition and acceptance by a Registered Training Organisation of Australian Qualifications Framework qualifications and Statements of Attainment issued by other Registered Training Organisations, enabling individuals to receive national recognition of their achievements.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Nationally recognised training

Nationally recognised training means training and assessment, delivered by a Registered Training Organisation, which meets the requirements specified in national industry/enterprise Training Packages or accredited courses where no relevant Training Package exists.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Nationally Recognised Training (NRT) logo

Nationally Recognised Training logo means the logo used to signify that training and assessment products and services meet the requirements agreed under the National Training Framework.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

National Training Framework

National Training Framework means the system of vocational education and training that:

- applies nationally
- is endorsed by the ANTA Ministerial Council
- is made up of the *Australian Quality Training Framework* and endorsed Training Packages.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

National Training Information Service (NTIS)

National Training Information Service (NTIS) means the National Register for recording information about Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), Training Packages and accredited courses. Information held on the NTIS is searchable and publicly accessible via the Internet. The NTIS contains comprehensive information on endorsed Training Packages which have been approved by Ministers and includes full details of competency standards; a listing of National Training Quality Council noted support materials with contact source; details of Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) accredited courses/qualifications; and contact details and scope of registration of all RTOs.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

National Training Quality Council (NTQC)

National Training Quality Council (NTQC) means the body established by the ANTA Ministerial Council as a Committee of the ANTA Board. In relation to quality assurance arrangements in the vocational education and training system the NTQC has a role in:

- providing advice on the operation of, and any necessary change to, the *Australian Quality Training Framework* (AQTF);
- providing information and advice to State and Territory recognition authorities on the implementation of the AQTF; and
- providing to the ANTA Board, for incorporation in the Board's reports to the ANTA Ministerial Council (including the Annual National Report), information and advice on the operation of the AQTF in each State and Territory, including by providing such independent advice on State/Territory registration, audit and related processes and related Commonwealth processes as deemed necessary by the NTQC.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

New Apprenticeships

New Apprenticeships means structured training arrangements, usually involving on- and off-the-job training, for a person employed under an apprenticeship/traineeship training contract.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Non-compliance

Non-compliance means failure to comply with one or more of the *AQTF Standards for Registered Training Organisations*.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Partnerships

Formal partnership assessment arrangements are the written agreements that are undertaken between a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) and other organisations or RTOs. These arrangements enable the partners to share for mutual benefit their resources, effort, time, cost, responsibility and expertise. These arrangements are regulated by the *AQTF Standards for Registered Training Organisations*. See also Collaborative assessment arrangements and Auspicing.

Informal partnership arrangements refer to assessors and candidates working together in the assessment process.

Performance criteria

Evaluative statements which specify what is to be assessed and the required level of performance. The performance criteria specify the activities, skills, knowledge and understanding that provide evidence of competent performance for each element.

From Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training

Period of registration

Period of registration means the period for which a Registered Training Organisation is registered. The period of registration is five years (unless cancelled or suspended).

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Qualification

Qualification means, in the vocational education and training sector, the formal certification, issued by a Registered Training Organisation under the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), that a person has achieved all the requirements for a qualification as specified in an endorsed national Training Package or in an accredited course.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Quality

Quality means the ability of a set of inherent characteristics of a product, system or process to fulfil requirements of customers and other interested parties.

From AS/NZS ISO 9000: 2000 in the AQTF Standards for RTOs

Range statement

Part of a competency standard, which sets out a range of contexts in which performance can take place. The range helps the assessor to identify the specific industry or enterprise application of the unit of competency.

From Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training

Reasonable adjustment

The nature and range of adjustment to an assessment tool or assessment method which will ensure valid and reliable assessment decisions but also meet the characteristics of the person(s) being assessed.

Adapted from Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training

Reassessment

An assessment activity initiated as a result of an appeal against the outcome of a previous assessment.

From Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training

Recognition process

Recognition process is a term that covers Recognition of Prior Learning, Recognition of Current Competency and Skills Recognition. All terms refer to recognition of competencies currently held, regardless of how, when or where the learning occurred. Under the *Australian Quality Training Framework*, competencies may be attained in a number of ways. This includes through any combination of formal or informal training and education, work experience or general life experience. In order to grant recognition of prior learning/current competency the assessor must be confident that the candidate is currently competent against the endorsed industry or enterprise competency standards or outcomes specified in Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) accredited courses. The evidence may take a variety of forms and could include certification, references from past employers, testimonials from clients and work samples. The assessor must ensure that the evidence is authentic, valid, reliable, current and sufficient.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Recognition of Current Competency

See Recognition process.

Recognition of Prior Learning

See Recognition process.

Records of assessment

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

From Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training

Registration

Registration means the process of formal approval and recognition of a training organisation, by a State or Territory registering body, in accordance with the *AQTF Standards for Registered Training Organisations* and the *AQTF Standards for Registering/Course Accrediting Bodies*.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Registered Training Organisation (RTO)

Registered Training Organisation (RTO) means a training organisation registered in accordance with the *Australian Quality Training Framework*, within a defined scope of registration.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Registering body

State or Territory registering body means the body responsible under the State or Territory vocational education and training legislation and decision making framework for all decisions relating to the administration of the registration of training organisations.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Renewal of registration

Renewal of registration means the subsequent registration of a Registered Training Organisation following an evaluation, conducted prior to the expiry of a registration period, of a Registered Training Organisation against the requirements of the *AQTF Standards for Registered Training Organisations*.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

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 graded, non-graded, statistical or descriptive reporting systems.

From Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training

Risk management

Risk management means the systematic application of management policies, procedures and practices to the tasks of identifying, analysing, evaluating, treating and monitoring risk.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Sanctions

Sanctions means any action imposed for non-compliance with the *AQTF Standards for Registered Training Organisations*, including:

- a. the imposition of specific conditions on registration (which can cover any aspect of registration including the Registered Training Organisation's scope, location or type of delivery and assessment activities);
- b. amendment of registration (including a reduction in the scope of registration);
- c. suspension of registration; and
- d. cancellation of registration.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Scope of registration

Scope of registration means the defined scope for which a training organisation is registered that identifies the particular services and products that can be provided. A Registered Training Organisation may be registered to provide either:

- a. training delivery and assessment services and products and issue Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) qualifications and Statements of Attainment; or

- b. assessment services and products and issue AQF qualifications and Statements of Attainment.

The scope of registration is further defined by AQF qualifications and/or endorsed units of competency.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Self-assessment

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

Simulation

Simulation is a form of evidence gathering that involves the candidate in 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 in 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. In developing simulations, the emphasis is not so much on reproducing the external circumstance but on creating situations in which candidates are able to demonstrate:

- a. technical skills
- b. underpinning knowledge
- c. generic skills such as decision making and problem solving
- d. workplace practices such as effective communication.

Skills Recognition

See Recognition process.

Statement of Attainment

Statement of Attainment means a record of recognised learning which, although falling short of an Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) qualification, may contribute towards a qualification outcome, either as attainment of competencies within a Training Package, partial completion of a course leading to a qualification or completion of a nationally accredited short course which may accumulate towards a qualification through Recognition processes.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Strategic industry audit

Strategic industry audit means the compliance audit of Registered Training Organisations operating in a specific industry or industry sector targeted on the basis of identified risks relating to that industry or sector.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Training contract

An agreement outlining the training and assessment which forms part of a New Apprenticeship training contract and is registered with the relevant State or Territory Training Authority.

Training Package

Training Package means an integrated set of nationally endorsed competency standards, assessment guidelines and Australian Qualifications Framework qualifications for a specific industry, industry sector or enterprise.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Training plan

Training plan means a program of training and assessment which is required under an apprenticeship/traineeship training contract and is registered with the relevant State or Territory Training/Recognition Authority.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Unit of competency

Unit of competency means the specification of knowledge and skill and the application of that knowledge and skill to the standard of performance expected in the workplace.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Validation

Validation involves reviewing, comparing and evaluating assessment processes, tools and evidence contributing to judgements made by a range of assessors against the same standards. Validation strategies may be internal processes with stakeholder involvement or external validations with other providers and/or stakeholders.