

Strategies for ensuring consistency in assessment



Department of Education,
Training and Youth Affairs



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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND YOUTH AFFAIRS

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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.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	iii
1. Consistency in assessment – setting the scene	1
What is consistency in assessment?	1
Why is consistency in assessment important?	4
The elements of consistency	6
Who should use the guide?	11
How to use this guide	12
2. Strategies for ensuring consistency in assessment	13
What are the options?	13
Models	19
Assessment panel	20
Lead assessor	26
Independent validator	31
Moderation meetings	36
Techniques	43
Assessor networks	44
Quality endorsement of assessment tools	49
Assessment record keeping	52
Assessment tool bank	54
Bank of assessment exemplars and benchmarks	57
Guidelines to interpret units of competency	60
Guidelines on the collection and judgement of evidence	63
Validation of assessment tools	66
Sampling	71
Candidate satisfaction study	76
Guidelines for conducting assessments	80
Assessment sign-off sheet	83
Mentoring for assessors	86
Specialist assessor	89
3. Determining your strategy	93
What do organisations need to consider when planning a strategy? ...	93
Understanding the organisation's motivation	123
Matching the organisation with the models and techniques	125
Decision making: pulling it all together	136
Glossary	141

1. CONSISTENCY IN ASSESSMENT – SETTING THE SCENE

What is consistency in assessment?

Assessment is a key component of the national vocational education and training (VET) system. The reforms to the training system associated with the introduction of the National Training Framework (NTF), especially Training Packages and the *Australian Quality Training Framework* (AQTF), have focused attention on the outcomes of the assessment process.

Consistency in assessment involves the achievement of comparable outcomes. For example, an assessment process would be considered to deliver consistent outcomes if assessors assessing candidates against the same unit of competency in different contexts made comparable assessment decisions.

Key to the drive to achieve consistency is the requirement for confidence in the assessment process. Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) need to be confident that

their assessment processes deliver comparable outcomes from assessments carried out by different assessors. Similarly, they need to be confident that the outcomes of assessments conducted by assessors within their own organisation are comparable with assessments conducted by assessors in other RTOs.

Achieving consistency starts with understanding – what is being assessed, what evidence is needed and how the assessment decision will be made.

Consistency can only be achieved when assessors share a common understanding of the unit(s) of competency which is being assessed.

While having a shared understanding is critical to the achievement of consistent outcomes, this does not imply that assessment arrangements and processes must be uniform. Clients and settings vary. Assessors must be able to employ assessment approaches that suit the candidate and the assessment context.

The development of a shared understanding is influenced by a number of factors, including the clarity of the relevant Training Package, the access which assessors have to professional development and support, and the availability and quality of materials designed to support the assessment process.

So what practical steps can assessors, RTOs and other organisations (such as industry organisations, unions and regulatory bodies) take to improve consistency in assessment? Without pre-empting other parts of this guide, some of the areas which may be addressed include:

- making sure assessors have access to the current version of the Training Package, including both the endorsed components (competency standards,

assessment guidelines and the qualifications) and the support materials (learning strategies, assessment materials and professional development materials)

- ensuring assessors meet the qualification requirements of the relevant Training Package and have experience in undertaking the assessments against the Training Package
- providing assessors with access to professional development activities and professional networks which facilitate structured discussion and exchanges of ideas about the implementation and interpretation of Training Packages
- establishing a formalised process for the development and maintenance of assessment tools
- monitoring the assessment process to ensure completeness and appropriateness to the task
- monitoring assessment outcomes to check for quality and consistency
- providing professional support for assessors which promotes critical self-reflection on practice, assists in identifying strengths and weaknesses, offers up-to-date information on assessment approaches and materials, and provides assistance in dealing with difficult or problematic assessments
- providing sound and defensible reporting and tracking processes to monitor assessments
- seeking client and industry feedback about the assessment process.

Why is consistency in assessment important?

The obvious answer is: for the sake of fairness. No individual wishes to be disadvantaged in relation to another person undertaking a comparable assessment.

The other major reason for RTOs striving to improve consistency in assessment is the need to generate and retain confidence in the training system.

Clients, whether individual, enterprise or industry, must have confidence in the robustness, quality and reliability of assessment.

The Training Packages which are at the heart of the national VET system provide guidance about the conduct of assessment. This guidance is pivotal, and the processes that an RTO or other organisation puts in place to support the achievement of consistency should be seen as supporting the Training Packages and their delivery. Training Packages identify the outcomes but the methods or pathways used by RTOs to achieve the specified outcomes are open and not prescribed. By focusing on achieving consistency in assessment, RTOs and other interested organisations are also working to demonstrate that multiple pathways can lead to the same outcomes.

The achievement of consistent assessment outcomes is critically important to the successful implementation of the NTF. Without consistent assessment outcomes, national mutual recognition, the portability of qualifications, and credit transfer and articulation arrangements may be undermined.

For these policies to operate effectively there must be confidence that all RTOs are delivering consistent outcomes.

Make sure you are familiar with the latest news about the AQTF.

Check the ANTA web site at www.anta.gov.au

This will be enhanced by the development and implementation of validation processes. Under the revised AQTF, all RTOs are required to establish processes for validation, specifically:

- 9.1
 - a *The RTO must develop and implement strategies for training delivery and assessment for each Training Package qualification and accredited course within the RTO's scope of registration.*
 - b *The assessment strategies referred to in sub section 9.1(a), must be developed in consultation with enterprises/industry.*
 - c *The delivery and assessment strategies referred to in sub section 9.1(a) should identify proposed target groups, delivery and assessment modes and strategies, assessment validation processes and pathways.*
 - d *The RTO must document the strategies referred to in 9.1(a) on application for registration and on extension of scope.*
- 9.2 *The RTO must validate its assessment strategies by:*
 - i) *reviewing, comparing and evaluating the assessment process, tools and evidence contributing to judgements made by a range of assessors against the same competency standards, at least annually; and*
 - ii) *documenting any action taken to improve the quality and consistency of assessment.*

The establishment of processes for validating assessment tools, processes and outcomes will strengthen consistency, ensure assessors work within a sound framework and build the confidence of clients.

While RTOs are required to ensure consistency in assessment, they are joined by other groups such as enterprises, industry, community groups, professional associations, employers, unions and industry regulators that have an interest in ensuring the consistency of assessment outcomes.

The elements of consistency

Introduction

The delivery of consistent processes and outcomes in any organisation depends upon elements which impact on how that organisation operates. Consistency should not be the result of one person's efforts in an organisation. It should be part of the structure and processes of the organisation. Consistency should be a direct result of the organisation's quality arrangements and processes and not an incidental by-product.

The elements within an RTO which impact on the delivery of consistent assessment are the same elements which impact on the consistency of outcomes of any organisation – whether it be a manufacturer of goods or a provider of services.

The '5Ps' to ensure consistency in assessment

A number of external factors impact on the achievement of consistency in assessment outcomes. These include the quality of the competency standards that provide the benchmarks for assessment, enterprise policies and practices, the regulatory environment and the participation of key stakeholders (such as unions and employers) in the design of assessment policy. The quality of the assessment policy and procedures adopted by RTOs is another major influence on the delivery of consistent assessment outcomes.

This guide attempts to support organisations, including RTOs, industry bodies and regulatory agencies, that are concerned with promoting consistency in assessment both within and across RTOs.

The approaches described in this guide focus on five main aspects of the assessment system:

- **the people** includes assessors, managers and other staff associated with the assessment process
- **the process** describes the planning, conduct and review of assessment
- **the products** are the items used in planning, conducting and reviewing assessments
- **the perspective** ensures that the assessment service addresses the requirements and expectations of industry, employers and candidates
- **the policy** is the stated intention about how the assessment process will be managed and implemented.

People

The people within any organisation are integral to how it operates.

Assessors contribute directly to the assessment process. However, there are many others who either directly or indirectly contribute to the process. These include:

- managers
- administrators
- candidates
- industry experts
- industry regulators
- union and employer representatives
- members of professional associations.

Consideration needs to be given to how all these people contribute to the consistency of assessment processes and outcomes.

In doing this organisations need to consider the following questions:

- Do staff have appropriate skills and knowledge in relation to the assessment process?
- Do the assessors have the qualifications specified in the relevant Training Package?
- Are appropriate professional development opportunities provided for assessors?
- Are assessors and other staff given opportunities to contribute to decision making about the assessment process?
- Are assessors linked in with appropriate assessor networks and other professional support services?
- Are assessors given the opportunity to discuss the relevant Training Package with a view to developing a shared understanding of the requirements of the Training Package?

Process

The process focuses on how assessments are planned, conducted and reviewed. Ad hoc processes tend to lead to inconsistent assessment outcomes. Formal processes are more likely to produce consistent outcomes.

Prior to establishing assessment processes, organisations need to be clear about the purpose of assessment. In addition, organisations need to consider the following questions:

- What are the roles and responsibilities of the key people involved in the assessment process?
- Is the process documented and agreed to by staff and stakeholders?
- Have the necessary resources been identified?
- Are the steps in the assessment process clear?
- How is the assessment process monitored?
- What recording mechanisms have been established?
- How is the assessment process managed?

Product

Products are the items that are used in planning, conducting and reviewing assessments. These may be developed by individual assessors, key groups such as Industry Training Advisory Bodies (ITABs) or commercial organisations.

Products include candidate information, assessor manuals, assessment tools, assessment guides, log books and professional development resources.

Organisations need to consider the following questions:

- What products are needed to support the assessment process?
- What processes are used to develop assessment products?
- What processes are used to identify appropriate assessment products?
- What strategies are used to trial and validate assessment products?
- Is professional development provided for assessors on the development of assessment products?

Perspective

The perspective focuses on whether the assessment process responds to the needs of candidates and other key stakeholders.

Organisations need to consider the following questions:

- Are there strategies in place for determining the current and future requirements of candidates and other stakeholders?
- Are these strategies adequate?
- What strategies are in place to manage relationships with candidates and other stakeholders, including customer contact, relationship management processes, customer perceptions of quality and customer feedback?
- Are these strategies adequate?

Policy

A clear policy will inform assessors, candidates and stakeholders about the purpose of the assessment process.

The policy should address the following:

- What is the purpose of the assessment process?
- Does the assessment process address the requirements and expectations of candidates and other key stakeholders, such as employers, unions and other industry bodies?
- Who are the key people involved in the assessment process? What are their roles and responsibilities?

- What structures and procedures are in place for the planning, conduct and review of assessments?
- What products have been developed and should be used in the assessment process?

The 5Ps of consistency are further outlined in Section 3 of this guide. This section includes a diagnostic tool which organisations may use to evaluate their assessment process.

Who should use the guide?

This guide is intended to be used by a range of organisations:

- RTOs seeking to ensure that assessment outcomes undertaken by different assessors within their organisations deliver comparable outcomes (this could include RTOs that operate multiple sites and have different assessors conducting assessments against the same qualifications at different locations)
- industry groups and associations wishing to promote the use of Training Packages and enhance assessment consistency within their industry
- industry regulatory bodies that use the outcomes of Training Packages to underpin licensing and registration systems
- groups of RTOs seeking to ensure comparable assessment outcomes across member organisations
- lead RTOs in partnership arrangements with non-registered organisations, such as schools and enterprises, who wish to ensure that assessment undertaken on their behalf delivers comparable outcomes.

Throughout this guide the word organisation refers to any of the above types of organisations. Where an organisation is being served by an RTO, it is referred to as a client or customer.

How to use this guide

This guide has been prepared to assist organisations to establish mechanisms for attaining consistency in assessment.

The guide is not designed to identify the 'one right' approach but rather to acknowledge that different organisations have varying needs and require different approaches.

The guide, provides a four step process for identifying the most appropriate approach. This involves:

- developing an understanding of the factors which impact on the achievement of consistent assessment outcomes
- canvassing, in Section 2, a range of models and techniques that can be used to facilitate consistency in assessment
- applying a self-diagnostic process, in Section 3, to identify major needs and requirements and to determine which models and techniques are most likely to meet those needs and requirements
- selecting the appropriate model and techniques and establishing an overall strategy for promoting consistent assessment.

2. STRATEGIES FOR ENSURING CONSISTENCY IN ASSESSMENT

What are the options?

There is a range of strategies that RTOs, industry bodies and other groups use for promoting communication and information exchanges between groups of assessors working within and across different organisations. Some are formal while others are informal. Some have been operating for many years and others are recent innovations. Examples include moderation meetings, assessor networks, meetings of RTO representatives, examination panels, online moderation groups and networks, and industry advisory groups or committees.

In some cases, such as the moderation meetings conducted among providers of the Certificates of General Education for Adults, these activities have focused on promoting consistent assessment outcomes across a diverse range of public, private, industry and community providers of vocational education and training. However, in other cases, the emphasis has traditionally been on exchanging ideas and

information about training delivery, assessment approaches, program organisation, and training and assessment materials.

With the introduction of the AQTF and the requirement that all RTOs establish procedures for validating their assessment arrangements, there is an imperative for both private and public RTOs to establish or participate in formal validation processes which include industry representation.

The validation approaches outlined in the ensuing section of this guide draw on existing practices in the vocational education and training system as well as a range of strategies drawn from consultations with assessors across Australia.

Models and techniques for achieving consistency

The strategies are divided into two main areas – models and techniques.

Models are **structures** that are already in place or which may be set up specifically to foster consistency in assessment.

Techniques are the **approaches** which are used within the various models.

The models are the durable infrastructure which is put in place to support the achievement of consistent assessment.

The four key models identified in this guide are:

- the assessment panel
- the lead assessor
- the independent validator
- the moderation group.

The techniques are the practical tools that are used within a specific model. For example, an organisation may elect to use an assessment panel as its approach to promoting consistent assessment. In undertaking its work the assessment panel may employ a variety of techniques (including suggesting that assessors use common assessment tools and standard guidelines for collecting evidence and making assessment judgements). Multiple techniques may be used within a model and may be changed as the need arises. The intent of this section is to describe a range of models and techniques which can be used to validate assessment processes and outcomes.

Characteristics of a model

Models are characterised by the following principles:

- **Organisational focus and commitment:** A model requires structures to be established or staff appointed and this necessitates thoughtful consideration by an organisation, commitment and the allocation of resources.
- **Provide a structure for the management or coordination of the assessment effort:** Models ensure that all people involved within the assessment process are working to the same ends. They provide a mechanism to formalise decision making, schedule the allocation of assessors and provide a focus for communication and coordination.
- **Relatively high level of durability over time:** To be effective, and because they require resourcing, models should be carefully considered and, when implemented, should be stable. Continuity is important to building expertise and the confidence of staff.

- **Adaptability to suit a range of contexts:** Models must be able to support any Training Package and operate in a range of organisations. An organisation should be able to use the one model to promote consistency in assessment across a variety of Training Packages and delivery arrangements.
- **Addresses the need of one or more of the 5Ps:** The people, process, product, perspective and policy of an organisation are ultimately the elements that will determine consistency. A model must support and enhance one or more of these elements.

Characteristics of a technique

The techniques are the specific tools or approaches used within the model for ensuring consistency in assessment.

Techniques are characterised by the following principles.

- **Provide support for the operation of a model:**
Although a technique could be used by an individual in isolation from the wider organisation, to be truly effective a technique should be applied within and to support a model.
- **Capable of being applied in a range of models:** A technique may be applied in a range of models. For example, sampling assessments for review may be used by either the 'lead assessor' or 'assessment panel' models.
- **Address one or more of the 5Ps:** In common with models, techniques must provide information or guidance that supports and enhances the people, process, product, perspective and policy associated with the assessment process.

- **Clearly linked to the attainment of one or more of the principles of assessment:** The practical nature of the techniques and their application to the assessment process means that they must facilitate the validity, reliability, flexibility and fairness of assessments.
- **Can be changed without causing the model to be rethought or revised:** The techniques may need to be changed as the assessment context changes or new types of assessments and Training Packages are implemented. The need to change a technique will not require the more durable model to be changed.

The techniques are practical tools that support:

- the planning and preparation of assessments
- the conduct of assessments
- the recording and reporting of assessment outcomes
- the monitoring, evaluation and review of assessment processes and outcomes.

The planning and preparation of assessments

This includes:

- assessor networks
- quality endorsement of assessment tools
- bank of shared assessment tools
- bank of assessment exemplars and benchmarks
- guidelines to interpret units of competency
- validation of assessment tools.

The conduct of assessments

This includes:

- guidelines on collection and judgement of evidence
- guidelines for process of assessment
- sign-off assessment sheets by assessor, candidate and employer
- assessment mentoring
- specialist assessors.

The recording and reporting of assessment outcomes

- record keeping processes to provide an audit trail of validation of assessment.

The monitoring, evaluation and review of assessment processes and outcomes

This includes:

- sampling of assessment for review which can be both within or across RTOs
- candidate satisfaction study.

Models

The ensuing section provides an outline of the four models.

In each case, the discussion of the model incorporates:

- a description of the model
- an outline of the purpose of the model
- a description of how the model may be applied
- an overview of the issues to be considered in implementing the model.

Assessment panel

Description

Snapshot Case Study

A successful national professional association delivers a range of programs from short courses through to Masters level programs. A key strategy is to partner with other RTOs and universities to deliver the training which can occur on the client's site, by distance education and in traditional classroom settings.

An assessment panel has been established which brings together representatives from the partner organisations (two universities and a commercial supplier of information technology training) together with two assessment experts working within the RTO, two industry representatives and the Training General Manager.

The assessment panel is empowered to:

- critique and authorise assessment tools and approaches. The panel oversees the piloting of the tools using a standard process, evaluates the pilot results and conducts an expert review prior to signing-off the tools for use
- finalise problematic assessments that are referred to it for consideration and determination by assessors
- plan professional development for assessors which is targeted at the provision of information about Training Packages and the enhancement of general assessment skills.

The assessment panel may include industry representatives and regulators in addition to assessors and administrators drawn from within an organisation or across organisations. The focus of the assessment panel may be on higher level strategic and policy matters or more practical and operational issues.

Assessment panels may:

- operate across a number of RTOs
- operate within a single RTO
- focus on a single or multiple Training Packages
- focus on a qualification or a range of qualifications within a Training Package.

The assessment panel may be constituted from existing bodies that have been drawn together for another purpose but which have a keen interest and experience in the assessment process, such as:

- subject/industry groups
- assessor network groups
- standing industry association committees.

Assessment panels also may be developed specifically to support the assessment process.

The membership of the assessment panel is critical and its value will rest on the bringing together of a mix of appropriately skilled and experienced people. Wherever

possible, panels should include relevant industry representatives such as employers, unions, industry organisations and industry regulators.

Purpose

The assessment panel model can build confidence and enhance the quality and consistency of the assessment process and outcome. It brings together a range of skills and expertise which cannot be readily obtained in a less structured way, or by involving an individual or a small number of people.

The assessment panel model provides a collaborative structure to achieve consensus about the planning, process, conduct and review of assessment.

Application

Assessment panels have a variety of functions, depending on the needs of the organisation(s) and the assessment process. These may include:

- reviewing assessment outcomes
- interpreting and promoting a common understanding of units of competency and Training Package requirements
- determining reasonable adjustment
- critiquing and signing-off assessment tools
- developing benchmark or assessment exemplars
- overseeing professional development for assessors
- providing a network of mentors and coaches for assessors.

An assessment panel may use a range of techniques to support its operations including:

- objective sampling to identify assessments for review
- the development of a bank of assessment exemplars
- the critiquing of the assessment process and outcomes
- the validation of assessment tools.

Issues to consider

Snapshot Case Study

A large regional TAFE college has established an assessment panel to oversee the operation of assessments within its Business School that includes Information Technology, Small Business Management and Marketing.

The RTO operates across three dispersed campuses and this make-up is reflected in its assessment panel membership. The panel, which meets bi-monthly, comprises the Head of Department for each teaching area, assessors drawn from the staff of satellite campuses (and rotated annually) and a local business representative (and client) from each of the teaching areas.

The assessment panel:

- concentrates its efforts on ensuring the assessment requirements and units of competency are consistently interpreted and implemented across the campuses
- randomly samples assessments conducted, reviews the evidence which supports the assessment outcome and provides feedback to assessors
- provides industry-focused feedback on the assessment tools which are developed.

The key issues associated with the implementation of this model are:

- having clear terms of reference
- securing appropriate membership
- accessing adequate resources including time and money
- ensuring the relevance of the work of the panel and its linkage to the organisation's assessment practices
- ensuring the commitment of staff.

A sample of a set of terms of reference for an assessment panel is provided on the following page.

Assessment panel terms of reference example

An assessment panel will work best if it is formally constituted and structured. A set of terms of reference should be developed for the assessment panel.

This example shows the agreed terms of reference for an assessment panel for ABC Training Services, a medium sized private RTO which has scope to deliver three Training Packages in the transport and distribution industry.

The hint boxes on the left hand side of the page are designed to assist organisations to develop their own terms of reference. A template for use in documenting the terms of reference is provided on the accompanying CD-ROM.

Statement of purpose

Hint

Include a short statement about the broad purpose of the assessment panel.

The assessment panel will provide high level administrative and policy advice to trainers, assessors and RTO management with the intent of fostering consistency and confidence in the assessment service.

The assessment panel will also provide operational support for the assessment service.

Role

Hint

Include a clear statement of the role of the assessment panel.

What will they do?
Is the focus strategic, operational or both?

The assessment panel will:

- establish and oversee a professional development program for assessors
- establish and monitor the record keeping system which supports assessments

- develop assessment implementation strategies for Training Packages as they are endorsed and added to the scope of registration
- establish and monitor validation processes
- establish and conduct procedures to validate assessment tools
- act as a reference point for assessment appeals
- finalise the outcome of problematic assessments referred by assessors.

Membership

Hint

Clearly define the range of expertise required on your assessment panel (eg industry representation).

Remember to specify the length of term of the membership (eg one year that is renewable by mutual agreement).

Members will serve a renewable two-year term.

The assessment panel operates within the RTO and will include both RTO staff and industry/client representatives.

The membership will comprise:

- the General Manager of Training
- three subject area assessors
- three industry practitioners.

Responsibility

Hint

Who has responsibility for constituting the assessment panel?

Are the members to be nominated by interested parties or appointed by the Chief Executive?

Are they an advisory group or do they have formally delegated powers?

What is the scope of the assessment panel's capacity to take action without reference to another person or body?

All members will serve in a voluntary capacity and will be appointed by the Chief Executive Officer on the advice of the General Manager of Training.

The assessment panel has delegated responsibility from the Chief Executive Officer of the organisation to act within the terms of reference. The assessment panel is able to undertake its designated responsibilities and, where necessary, make representation to the Chief Executive Officer to determine priorities for funding or other forms of resourcing which cannot be accommodated within the normal operations of the organisation.

Reporting

Hint

To whom does the assessment panel report?

Is there a fixed reporting process? If so, what is the timeframe and the format for reports?

The assessment panel, through the General Manager of Training, will report to the Chief Executive Officer on a quarterly basis. The report will cover areas including:

- the budgetary implication of any proposed professional development activities
- advice about resource and other issues associated with the introduction of new Training Packages
- advice and recommendations about the performance of the assessment service and potential for improvement
- advice and reports which satisfy the AQTF requirements for provision of evidence of validation processes.

Lead assessor

Description

Snapshot Case Study

A large regional public RTO with four campuses spread over 300 square kilometres has recently appointed a lead assessor to oversee the operation of the assessment process across all teaching areas.

This is a senior and critical appointment in recognition by the RTO of the need to prepare for and manage the AQTF validation requirements.

The lead assessor's duties include:

- establishing and managing the validation process
- coordinating the professional development for all assessors based on work undertaken to interpret the Training Packages
- ensuring good communication processes are established and used
- providing professional advice and guidance to assessors
- sampling assessments as part of the validation process
- signing-off assessment tools prior to use
- participating in assessor networks.

A lead assessor is appointed by an RTO, group of RTOs operating in a consortium, industry group or other organisation seeking to develop a consistent approach to assessment.

The lead assessor has responsibility for developing, managing and monitoring strategies that ensure consistency in assessment. The lead assessor may be the direct line manager of the assessors or may occupy a position with professional responsibility for fostering consistency in the assessment process and outcomes but without direct supervisory responsibility for the assessors.

The lead assessor may:

- operate across a number of RTOs
- operate within a single RTO
- focus on a single or multiple Training Packages
- focus on a qualification or a range of qualifications within a Training Package.

Purpose

The appointment of a lead assessor provides a clear organisational focus on the importance of achieving consistency in assessment. The lead assessor has responsibility for all validation processes, ensuring the development of a shared understanding and the maintenance of consistent practice by the assessors.

Application

The lead assessor may perform a range of functions including:

- ensuring the RTO's compliance with the AQTF requirements
- ensuring the assignment of appropriately skilled and experienced assessors to undertake particular assessment activities
- developing information about Training Package implementation for sharing with assessors
- acting as a reference point when there is uncertainty in the interpretation of a unit of competency or an assessment requirement
- building strong communication between assessors to facilitate consistency
- developing assessment tools
- reviewing assessment outcomes
- supporting the appeals process
- acting as a critical friend to assessors.

In providing these functions a lead assessor may use a range of techniques, including:

- coordination of peer and assessment mentor support for assessors
- the critiquing of assessment processes and outcomes
- objective sampling to identify assessments for review
- the development of a bank of assessment exemplars
- the validation of assessment tools
- the building of professional development strategies for assessors.

Issues to consider

The key issues associated with the implementation of this model are:

- ensuring that this is a clear definition of the role and functions of the lead assessor
- securing an appropriately skilled and qualified person to undertake the role
- accessing appropriate resources including time and money
- establishing appropriate administrative structures to support the model
- building the support of the organisation's staff.

A sample task description for the lead assessor is provided on the following page.

Lead assessor task description example

The following statement is a sample task description or specification for a lead assessor. In this case, the lead assessor operates within the Business and Hospitality School of a large, public, multi-campus RTO.

Responsibility and authority

Hint

Include a clear description of the level of delegated authority of the lead assessor.

The role definition should also state the link to the achievement of consistency in assessment processes and outcomes.

The lead assessor has responsibility delegated by the Head of School to develop and manage processes leading to the achievement of consistency in assessment across all campuses and qualifications within the Business and Hospitality School.

The lead assessor also has line management responsibility for the eight specialist assessors in the School and the provision of professional support for the remaining 25 trainers/assessors.

Role

Hint

Specify the role of the lead assessor.

Include line management and professional support roles. These may include:

- holding of assessor staff meetings
- managing communication flows
- managing professional development programs
- validating assessments and assessment tools
- providing appropriate and relevant advice to assessors as required.

The lead assessor will:

- manage the specialist assessors in line with RTO policy and procedures
- establish and oversee processes for the review of all assessments conducted
- act as the first point of referral for contested or problematic assessments
- establish processes which enhance communication between assessors and facilitate the sharing of experiences and best practice
- coordinate and oversee a professional development program for assessors

- develop assessment implementation strategies for Training Packages as they are endorsed and added to the scope of registration
- establish and monitor validation processes
- establish and conduct procedures to validate assessment tools
- act as reference point for assessment appeals.

Reporting

Hint

The reporting arrangements and the level and nature of the work relationship with the team of assessors should be stated.

What are the reporting processes, forms and timeframes?

The lead assessor provides formal quarterly reports to the Head of School and gives input to weekly senior management meetings on issues relating to assessment policy and practice.

Independent validator

Description

Snapshot Case Study

A large financial services company has recently established an assessment service as part of its preparation for the proposed regulation of financial advisors. It is anticipated that there will be a significant number of staff who will have to have their skills formally recognised in order to continue practicing in the industry.

To ensure the fairness and consistency of these assessments the company has contracted an independent validator to oversee the process.

It is envisaged that the independent validator will:

- check that the process complies with the requirements of the Finance Industry Training Package
- arbitrate on disputes regarding the sufficiency of evidence provided by candidates
- sample ten per cent of assessments for consistency
- finalise problematic assessments.

The appointment of an independent validator is designed to ensure the impartiality and fairness of the assessment process. The validator must be **independent** from the organisation or unit delivering the training and/or assessment service.

An independent validator reviews and validates the assessments which are performed within or across RTOs. The validation of assessment tools may also be part of the role.

Ideally the validator should have high level assessment and technical skills, industry knowledge and experience in conducting assessments within the relevant industry. The validator may be:

- an industry representative
- a consultant
- a representative from the relevant national, State or Territory ITAB
- a representative of the industry regulator
- a representative of an RTO.

Purpose

The reasons for appointing an independent validator include:

- to strengthen confidence in the consistency and accuracy of assessments through the appointment of an impartial expert to review the assessment process
- to facilitate the involvement of a key stakeholder, such as a regulator or industry association, that may need to be closely involved in determining the appropriateness of the assessment outcomes.

Application

A validator may be used in a range of settings. For example a validator may be appointed by:

- an RTO or a group of RTOs to ensure consistency of assessments conducted by different assessors in different locations
- an industry body wishing to monitor and maintain consistency in assessments conducted by a range of RTOs servicing the relevant industry sector
- a licensing or regulatory agency requiring consistency in assessments conducted by RTOs where the outcomes are recognised for licensing and registration purposes
- a professional association requiring consistency in assessments conducted by RTOs where the outcomes are recognised for membership purposes.

Issues to consider

The key issues associated with the implementation of this model are:

- cost and funding responsibility
- clarity of the role and tasks to be undertaken
- appropriate administrative structures to support the model and the achievement of consistency
- encouraging and negotiating collaboration between the assessors and the independent validator
- maintaining confidentiality for candidates.

A sample task description for an independent validator is provided on the following page.

Independent validator task description example

The following statement is a sample task description or specification for an independent validator. In this case, the independent validator works with XYZ Training, a small private RTO that delivers training and assessment services for a licensed industry.

Responsibility and authority

Hint

Include a clear description of the level of delegated authority of the independent validator.

The role definition should also state the link to the achievement of consistency in assessment processes and outcomes.

The independent validator has been contracted by the RTO and is working within a formal contract which specifies the level of delegated authority and the relationship with the RTO's in-house processes.

The independent validator has the authority to change the outcomes of assessments with reference to the General Manager of Training at the RTO.

Authority has been provided to enable the independent validator to work directly with the in-house assessors to enhance consistency by validating assessments using defined protocols.

The independent validator is responsible for providing full documentation of all activities for the in-house records of the RTO.

Role

Hint

Specify the role of the independent validator, including:

- key tasks
- sampling procedures, including sampling method and sample size.

The independent validator will:

- sample twenty per cent of assessments and validate outcomes by reviewing the adequacy of the evidence

- participate in a team assessment for a randomly selected five per cent of assessments as a means of checking assessment validity and monitoring the adequacy of the assessment tools
- review the assessment process at six monthly intervals
- act as the final point of referral for contested or problematic assessments
- conduct at least one observation of the program each time it is offered by the RTO.

Reporting

The independent validator provides formal annual reports to the General Manager of Training and participates in a debriefing exercise at the completion of each program.

The independent validator reports to the General Manager of Training.

Moderation meetings

Description

Snapshot Case Study

As part of the development and piloting of the Graded Performance Assessment System, the Western Australian Department of Training and the Western Australian TAFE colleges have implemented a moderation system.

This involves groups of assessors from different colleges working in the same industry sectors, such as building and construction, hospitality and community services and health, attending regular meetings to discuss assessment arrangements.

These meetings, which are convened by either the Department or one of the participating TAFE colleges, focus on matters such as:

- interpreting the relevant Training Package, including the assessment guidelines and competency standards
- customising the scoring criteria used to derive the graded result
- designing common assessment tools
- reaching a common understanding of the basis on which assessment and scoring decisions are made.

The moderation meetings, which are conducted twice a year, have been instrumental in ensuring consistency in assessment outcomes across the system, providing professional development for assessors and advancing understanding of the Graded Performance Assessment System.

Moderation is a process which involves assessors in discussing and reaching agreement about assessment processes and outcomes in a particular industry or industry sector. In so doing, assessors 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.

Moderation meetings may be conducted within an RTO, this is referred to as internal moderation, or across a range of different RTOs offering training and assessment services in the same industry or industry sector, this is called external moderation. External moderation meetings may be convened by a number of different organisations, including:

- RTOs
- industry organisations
- State or Territory Training Authorities

Moderation meetings may involve:

- moderation of assessment processes and procedures – this involves assessors working in the same industry or industry sector meeting to discuss practices which facilitate the consistent interpretation of competency standards and the design of comparable assessment processes and tools within the industry or industry sector

Online moderation

An online moderation system has been established as part of the assessment quality assurance arrangements within the Certificates for General Education for Adults (CGEA).

It is envisaged that eventually the moderation system will incorporate two processes:

- task moderation: through this process assessors determine whether particular assessment tasks comply with the relevant performance criteria
- learner performance moderation: through this process assessors are provided with work samples from candidates which are evaluated in terms of whether they meet the minimum level of performance required.

At this stage, the online system focuses on learner performance moderation. Assessors are able to go online and view work samples at three levels of learner performance, namely:

- exemplar performances are examples of the minimum level of performance required to meet the performance criteria
- non-achieved performances are examples of responses that have not met the performance criteria
- higher performances are examples of responses that exceed the performance required according to the performance criteria.

By viewing samples of candidate work at different performance levels, assessors are able to develop a shared understanding of the standard of work required at each performance level.

The CGEA web site is located at www.wdb.vu.edu.au/abe/cgeamod/home.html

- moderation for verification of assessment outcomes – this involves assessors meeting to ratify assessment decisions made by different assessors from within or across RTOs.

The reasons for conducting moderation meetings include:

- to promote a shared understanding of the relevant Training Package(s), including the competency standards, assessment guidelines, qualifications framework and the support materials
- to foster consistency in assessment processes and outcomes either within or across RTOs operating in a specific industry or industry sector
- to facilitate assessor professional development through providing opportunities for assessors to share information, resources and views on assessment practices within a particular industry or industry sector
- to facilitate the involvement of key stakeholders, such as enterprises, industry organisations, unions and employer associations, in the assessment process
- to promote a shared understanding of the basis on which assessment decisions, including the scoring of assessment outcomes, are made.

Application

Moderation meetings may be implemented for a variety of purposes, including:

- an RTO or a group of RTOs may establish moderation meetings with the aim of developing common assessment processes among different assessors working in different locations
- an industry body may wish to foster assessment practices that produce consistent outcomes across the different RTOs servicing the relevant industry sector
- a State or Territory Training Authority may be interested in facilitating consistent assessment outcomes across private and public RTOs offering training and assessment services in specific industry sectors
- an industry regulatory body may establish moderation meetings to ensure consistent assessment outcomes across all RTOs offering training and assessment services that meet its licensing or registration requirements.

Issues to consider

The key issues associated with the implementation of this model are:

- the cost and funding of the moderation process
- ensuring that moderation meetings are purposeful and focused on the objectives of the moderation process
- induction of assessors into the moderation process

- management of the moderation process, including overall coordination, identification of people to lead the moderation process, establishment of goals and evaluation of the effectiveness of the moderation process
- the focus of the moderation process, ie moderation of assessment processes and practices or moderation for verification
- responsibility for coordination of the moderation meetings
- appropriate administrative structures to support the moderation process
- maintaining assessor involvement in the moderation process
- gaining stakeholder support for the moderation process, including enterprise, industry and RTOs.

Sample operating guidelines for a moderation group

The following is a set of sample operating guidelines for a moderation group. In this case, the moderation group has been established to support the implementation of consistent assessment arrangements across a group of public and private RTOs offering qualifications from the General Construction Training Package. The guidelines cover key areas such as the purpose of the moderation group, membership, key activities and meeting cycle.

The hint boxes on the left hand side of the page include a set of questions that may be used in developing a similar set of guidelines for a moderation group.

Purpose

Hint

This section should clearly define the scope of operations of the moderation group.

Key questions to be addressed in this section include:

- What is the purpose of the moderation group?
- Which Training Package qualifications form the focus of the activities of the moderation group?
- What are the key aims of the moderation group?

The Construction Industry Moderation Group has been established to support the implementation of consistent assessment arrangements across private and public RTOs offering Certificate I – III qualifications in the General Construction Training Package.

Specifically, the moderation group will:

- foster a common interpretation of the units of competency in the General Construction Training Package
- promote the development and use of common assessment tools across the RTOs in the moderation group
- validate assessments conducted by all RTOs in the moderation group
- provide professional development activities for members of the moderation group.

Membership

Hint

This section should indicate who is eligible to join the moderation group.

Key questions to be addressed in this section include:

- Who is eligible to join the moderation group?
- Are industry representatives included in the membership of the moderation group?
- Are industry regulators included in the membership of the moderation group?
- Is there a membership fee?

The membership of the moderation group will include:

- assessors from each of the member RTOs involved in conducting assessments against Certificates I – III in the General Construction Training Package
- representatives of key industry groups including the Building and Construction State Industry Training Body, employer and employee organisations, and industry regulatory bodies.

The members of the moderation group may seek to extend membership to individuals who have specialist expertise in assessment, moderation processes or technical areas related to the building and construction industry.

Key activities

Hint

This section should identify the main activities of the moderation group.

Which of the following activities does the moderation group support:

- identifying professional development needs?
- validation?
- assessment tool development?
- piloting of assessment tools?
- information and referral?
- staff development?
- developing common assessment processes?
- evaluation of the moderation process?

The key activities of the moderation group include:

- identifying the professional development needs of members of the group in relation to assessment and moderation
- providing information on the assessment and moderation arrangements related to the Construction Industry Training Package
- conducting staff development activities related to the operation of the moderation group, including induction training for new members
- developing common assessment processes for use in on- and off-the-job assessment
- developing sample assessment tools based on individual units or clusters of units of competency
- piloting sample assessment tools

- validating five per cent of assessments conducted by all RTOs in the moderation group on an annual basis
- reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of the moderation process.

Meeting cycle

Hint

This section should provide information on meetings of the moderation group.

Key questions to be addressed in this section include:

- When are meetings conducted?
- How often are meetings conducted?
- How is the agenda for meetings decided?
- Where are the meetings held?
- Who convenes meetings of the group?

Meetings of the moderation group are held at the State Office of the Building and Construction Industry Training Advisory Body.

The moderation group holds formal meetings three times a year. These meetings are held on the first Monday in March, July and November from 4.00pm – 6.30pm. The first meeting each year is reserved for planning the group's activities for the remainder of the year. Other meetings may be convened through the year as the need arises.

Meetings are convened by the Industry Moderator who is currently the Executive Officer of the State Building and Construction Industry Training Advisory Body.

Techniques

The following section comprises a list of the different techniques that may be used within the models described in the preceding section of this guide. The description of each technique includes an outline of:

- the purpose of the technique
- the application of the technique
- the key issues that need to be considered in deciding whether to use the technique.

In some cases, the description includes an example of a specific application of the technique.

All techniques support and strengthen one or more of the 5Ps of consistency. The link between the 5Ps and the techniques is discussed in Section 3.

Assessor networks

Description

Snapshot Case Study

A State Industry Training Body coordinates an assessor network in a key sector of the manufacturing industry. The assessor network comprises assessors from RTOs across the State, enterprise RTOs and ITB staff.

The assessor network meets every two months in a central location. The meetings last for usually two hours, with a formally structured agenda and an elected Chair.

The assessor network is currently focused on professional development but is working towards developing a wider range of activities to support quality and consistency in assessment. The current planned activities include:

- professional development activities based on the implementation of the AQTF
- discussion of the assessment requirements in the relevant Training Package.

Assessor networks are groups of individuals involved in VET assessment who come together to develop and extend their professional practice. Such networks vary in terms of focus, size, structure and level of organisation. Assessor networks contribute to consistency by providing a forum in which assessors can build a shared understanding of Training Packages (including the competency standards, assessment guidelines, qualification structure and the support materials) as well as the assessment requirements of the AQTF. When assessor networks are focused around a specific industry sector, Training Package or qualification, they offer an environment in which assessors can validate assessment practices and outcomes. This may be achieved through assessors exchanging ideas about the meaning of specific competency standards, the evidence requirements, the ways of gathering evidence and the basis on which assessment decisions are made.

Assessor networks may be organised around a Training Package or groups of Training Packages and may operate:

- within an RTO
- across a group of RTOs
- across an industry area
- at regional, State/Territory or national level.

Purpose

Assessor networks may fulfil a range of purposes, including to:

- exchange information on assessment policy and practice
- provide professional development for assessors
- develop skills in the interpretation and implementation of Training Packages
- develop and share examples of best practice in assessment
- develop and validate assessment tools.

Application

Assessor networks vary in terms of their function. However, assessor networks which have been established to facilitate consistency in the assessment process are usually focused on an RTO or group of RTOs offering a specific Training Package or group of Training Packages and:

- provide a pool of technical, industry and assessment expertise which can be drawn on by RTOs represented in the network
- develop and exchange assessment exemplars and benchmarks
- develop a shared interpretation and common approaches to assessment
- adopt a common approach to the validation of assessment processes and outcomes.

Issues to consider

HINT

Guide 9: Networking for assessors is another guide developed through the *Training Package Assessment Materials Project*. It includes comprehensive information on the establishment and maintenance of assessor networks.

The key issues associated with the implementation of this technique are:

- accessing appropriate resources including time, expertise and money
- establishing a focus on validating assessment practices and outcomes within the assessor network
- establishing a focus on specific qualifications and/or Training Packages within the assessor network
- ensuring that the outcomes of validation activities undertaken within assessor networks are adequately documented for AQTF related audit requirements
- coordination of the assessor network
- establishing a clear set of terms of reference for the network that includes a focus on validation of assessment practices and outcomes
- encouraging collaboration between members from commercially competitive organisations.

A sample set of terms of reference for an assessor network that is focused on the validation of assessment practices and outcomes is provided on the following page.

HINT

There are assessor networks which use the World Wide Web as a means of communication. Two examples are:

- www.acsa.edu.au/networks which is a web site for the Australian Curriculum Studies Association Inc and provides an online assessment issues network
- www.csu.edu.au which is the web site for the International Accounting Network.

Sample assessor network terms of reference

The following statement is a sample set of terms of reference for an assessor network. In this case, the assessor network has been established to service a regional cluster of RTOs in the community services and health industry. The network has a specific focus on the validation of assessment practices and outcomes.

Statement of purpose

The assessor network will provide a forum for members to develop a shared understanding of the Community Services and Health Training Package and to facilitate high quality and consistent assessment among the members of the network.

In order to recognise these aims the assessor network will support collaborative professional development activities and assessment tool development.

Role

Hint

Include a clear statement of the role of the assessor network.

What tasks will it perform?

The assessor network will:

- collaboratively develop and facilitate a professional development program for members
- develop assessment strategies for the Community Services and Health Training Package
- develop and validate assessment tools
- validate assessment outcomes on an annual basis through consideration of unidentified samples of candidate work

- build and manage a database of assessors with specialist skills that may be accessed by RTOs in the region.

Structure

Hint

How is the assessor network structured?

Is it incorporated?

Does it have office bearers and how are they elected?

Who provides the administrative support?

How is it funded?

All members will serve in a voluntary capacity. The assessor network will elect a Chair and Treasurer annually. The members will pay an annual fee of \$75.

The assessor network will meet every month for a two hour meeting with the venue rotating between the member RTOs.

These meetings will focus on specific issues identified by members that impact on the implementation of the Training Package within the region.

Quality endorsement of assessment tools

Description

Snapshot Case Study

The tourism industry has a long-standing program to provide industry endorsement of elements of the training system, including assessment tools and processes. The endorsement process supports and is based upon the industry endorsed Training Package.

Programs are established for the hospitality sector (the Australian Hospitality Review Panel) and the tourism sector (the Australian Tourism Training Review Panel).

The industry recognition process endorses resources to ensure the product meets the requirements of the relevant Training Package. The endorsement process is for a maximum period of three years and is signified by the use of a logo.

Resource developers pay a scheduled fee for the review and endorsement process.

A quality endorsement process for assessment tools requires the existence of an authority or organisation to confer endorsement. Assessment tools are evaluated against a pre-determined, standardised and publicly available set of criteria. The tools can be identified, perhaps through the use of a logo. Endorsement may confer preference for the tools to be used within an industry, industry sector or enterprise.

Purpose

A quality endorsement system is established by a key stakeholder to ensure the quality of assessment tools and their capacity to support the achievement of consistent assessment outcomes, to raise the profile of the assessment process and to build the confidence of employers, employees and other stakeholders in the assessment process.

The establishment of a quality endorsement process is most likely to be undertaken by an industry group, industry regulator or professional association which is attempting to develop industry-wide standards.

The technique would be equally applicable when used by an assessor network or an assessment panel.

An individual RTO or group of RTOs may also choose to establish benchmark quality standards for assessment tools used within the organisation(s).

Application

Hint

The National Training Quality Council (NTQC) endorses Training Packages and follows a notation process for evaluating Training Package support materials against a set of quality criteria. Any material that has a 'noted' logo has been through this process and meets the NTQC quality criteria. Information on these materials is available from the National Training Information Service (NTIS), AEShareNet and Australian Training Products.

The decision to undertake the relatively resource intensive process of establishing a quality endorsement system is most likely to occur in areas where assessment is high-risk, has a history of inconsistent performance or there is a lack of customer confidence.

Alternatively, the decision may be taken in a crowded marketplace where the provision of assessment services is strongly competitive and an RTO is seeking a point of product differentiation and value adding.

A clear application for the establishment of a quality endorsement system is within a regulated or licensed industry. Where vocational education and training is an integral part of the licensing arrangements, the regulator may establish an endorsement process as a means of meeting procedural requirements and providing confidence in the process.

The quality endorsement process should ensure that:

- the tools are benchmarked against the current version of the relevant Training Package(s)
- the tools have been developed in consultation with industry and have been effectively trialed
- the tools facilitate assessment practices that are reliable, valid, flexible, consistent and fair
- the tools provide clear, concise and accurate advice to assessors on how they should be used
- the tools take into account the need for reasonable adjustment in the assessment process
- the tools support assessment processes that are inclusive and non-discriminatory

- the tools represent good value for money
- the production quality of the tools ensures that they are durable, attractive to the candidate and assessor, and fit for purpose.

Issues to consider

The key issues associated with the implementation of this technique are:

- establishing the bona fides and authority of the organisation which establishes the endorsement process
- the cost and perceived benefit of establishing an endorsement process for assessment tools
- identifying criteria for endorsement which are sustainable over a period of time and are relevant in different industry, Training Package and delivery contexts
- the positive and negative impacts which the endorsement process may have on the availability of assessment tools, the quality of assessment tools, the price of assessment tools and how effectively the tools are implemented by assessors
- the positive and negative impacts which the endorsement process may have on innovation with regard to the design and development of assessment tools
- the need for assessor professional development to support the release of endorsed assessment tools
- the maintenance of endorsed assessment tools.

Assessment record keeping

Description

Effective assessment record keeping is a critical feature of any assessment system.

RTOs must establish and maintain record keeping systems to support their internal administrative processes and the external audit requirements of State and Territory Registering Authorities.

Record keeping mechanisms must be able to track the outcomes of assessment and validation processes.

Purpose

The record keeping system employed by an RTO should reflect the assessment and validation processes established by the organisation. Regardless of the type of system used, it should:

- provide a mechanism for the RTO to administer and record the assessment and validation process
- record the outcomes of assessment and validation activities
- provide an audit trail to support both internal reassessment, grievance and appeal processes, and external audit requirements.

Application

The specific content and form of the record keeping process that is used by an RTO will be significantly determined by the organisation's existing records management system, the practicality and cost of making changes to the system and

the requirements of the relevant State or Territory Registering Body. However, the information which should be recorded includes:

- the candidate's details
- the national code and title of the unit(s) of competency assessed
- the assessment tool used
- the time, date and place of assessment
- the name of the assessor
- the outcome of the assessment and any associated reassessment or appeals process
- the validation technique used to monitor the assessment
- the outcome of the validation process.

Issues to consider

The key issues associated with the implementation of this technique are:

- the costs involved in establishing, operating and maintaining the system
- the capacity of an existing record keeping system to be used in tracking assessments and validation activities
- the need to reconfigure an existing record keeping system to meet the requirements of the relevant State or Territory Registering Body
- the need for assessors and validators to be trained in the use of the record keeping system and the need for effective, ongoing management of the record keeping system.

Assessment tool bank

Description

Hint

You may like to visit some web sites to see how other organisations have developed banks of assessment tools:

- www.pseta.com.au which has support materials for the Public Services Training Package
- www.rtca.farmwide.com.au which has assessment tools for the Agriculture and Horticulture Training Packages.

An assessment tool bank is a collection of evidence gathering tools and techniques that are developed and shared among a group of assessors and/or RTOs. The assessment tools would normally incorporate:

- a set of procedures or instructions which give the assessor direction on how to implement the assessment tool
- a set of materials which may be used by either or both the assessor and the candidate in undertaking the assessment activity (these materials may include observation checklists, question sheets, case studies, role cards, instruction outlines for a practical task, guidelines for a simulation or specifications for a model).

The assessment tool bank may be made available in paper-based or electronic form via the Internet or an Intranet.

The assessment tool bank may be commercial in that it is owned and operated by a provider, with access being provided on a fee for service basis. Alternatively, the tool bank may be a collaborative venture, in which assessors, RTOs or industry groups jointly develop tools and make them freely available to assessors.

Purpose

The development of assessment tools is costly and time consuming. There are great benefits to be gained by the collaborative development and sharing of tools through the creation of an assessment tool bank.

The establishment of an assessment tool bank:

- supports the achievement of a fundamental requirement of consistency, that is, the development of a shared understanding of the Training Package and in particular the specific unit(s) of competency being assessed
- encourages collective development of assessment tools which will tend to produce higher quality assessment products
- facilitates the critiquing of assessment tools
- ensures that a quality control procedure is applied to the selection of assessment tools for inclusion in the bank
- reduces cost, minimises waste and avoids duplication of effort with regard to the development of assessment tools.

Application

A bank of assessment tools can be developed within an RTO, across RTOs or within an industry, sector or region.

Assessment tools selected for inclusion in the tool bank should:

- be benchmarked against the current version of the relevant Training Package(s)
- be developed in consultation with industry and have been effectively trialed
- facilitate assessment practices that are reliable, valid, flexible, consistent and fair
- incorporate clear, concise and accurate advice to assessors on how they should be used

- take into account the need for reasonable adjustment in the assessment process
- support assessment processes that are inclusive and non-discriminatory
- represent good value for money
- be of a production quality which ensures that they are durable, attractive to the candidate and assessor, and fit for purpose.

Issues to consider

The key issues associated with the implementation of this technique are:

- the establishment, operation and maintenance costs of the service
- gaining the commitment of a sponsoring organisation to host and promote the service
- establishing developmental, selection and quality criteria for the assessment tools to be added to the bank
- the need to secure copyright clearance and overcome any concerns about lessening commercial advantage by sharing tools
- facilitating the customisation and contextualisation of tools to meet the needs of different organisations
- ensuring adequate advice is provided to assessors to make sure that the tools are used appropriately and meet the requirements of the relevant Training Package.

Bank of assessment exemplars and benchmarks

Description

The development of a bank of assessment exemplars enables assessors, within or across RTOs, to access samples of candidate work that are considered to be exemplary.

The work samples may be provided in paper-based or electronic form. The bank may be developed with the input of industry groups, professional associations or industry regulators. The assessment exemplar bank may be collaborative and informal in nature or highly structured and commercial.

Purpose

The development of an assessment exemplar bank builds shared understanding of the assessment process by providing access to examples of best practice.

Assessors may access an assessment exemplar bank to:

- clarify the evidence requirements for specific units of competency in a Training Package
- develop insights into what constitutes competent performance in regard to a specific unit or cluster of units of competency within a Training Package
- identify alternative ways of collecting evidence
- inform the planning, conduct or review of an assessment activity
- provide benchmarks for supporting the operations of an assessment panel
- obtain benchmarks that may be used as exemplars in resolving conflicts over an assessment decision

- illustrate good practice in assessment
- provide candidates with guidance on the forms of evidence, the ways of presenting evidence and outcomes required from the assessment process
- illustrate different models or approaches to the design of assessment processes and materials.

Application

An assessment exemplar bank may be developed within an RTO, across RTOs or within an industry, sector or region. A clear set of criteria should be established to determine which items are included in the bank. Such criteria should ensure that the exemplars:

- are freely provided by the relevant candidates and the confidentiality and privacy of candidates are respected
- are benchmarked against the current version of the relevant Training Package(s)
- clearly illustrate a key aspect of the assessment process that is of value to other candidates and assessors
- are selected in consultation with industry
- demonstrate assessment practices that are reliable, valid, flexible, consistent and fair
- incorporate clear, concise and accurate advice to assessors on the nature of the assessment activity, the context of the assessment and the aspect of good practice that is illustrated by the exemplar
- demonstrate the need for reasonable adjustment in the assessment process, where appropriate

- illustrate assessment processes that are inclusive and non-discriminatory
- model quality and cost-effective approaches to evidence gathering.

Issues to consider

The key issues associated with the implementation of this technique are:

- the need to ensure steps are taken to preserve the confidentiality of candidates and to resolve matters of copyright and commercial confidentiality
- the cost of establishing, operating and maintaining the bank
- gaining the commitment of a sponsoring organisation to host and promote the service
- establishing developmental, selection and quality criteria for the exemplars to be added to the bank.

Guidelines to interpret units of competency

Description

Hint

Two other guides in the *Training Package Assessment Materials Project*, *Guide 1: Training Package assessment materials kit* and *Guide 2: Assessing competencies in higher qualifications*, provide detailed guidelines and approaches for interpreting the information contained in units of competency.

Guidelines for interpreting units of competency provide assessors with a means of establishing a shared or common understanding of:

- the nature of the work activity described in the unit of competency
- the context in which the work is to be performed
- the level of performance expected in the workplace
- the way in which the four dimensions of competency, ie task skills, task management skills, contingency management skills and job/role environment skills, are reflected in the unit of competency
- the way in which the key competencies are integrated into the work activity described in the unit of competency
- how the unit of competency may be applied in a real workplace situation
- the evidence requirements for assessment purposes
- the different ways in which the evidence may be collected
- the scope for reasonable adjustment of the assessment process to take into account the special needs of candidates
- the extent of customisation permitted
- the basis on which assessment decisions against the unit of competency are made.

Purpose

These guidelines are provided to ensure that different assessors, conducting assessments against the same unit of competency in different locations, have a shared understanding of the requirements of the unit of competency.

Application

Guidelines for interpreting units of competency may be developed by a range of groups including RTOs, ITABs and industry organisations. This technique may be used in conjunction with any of the following four models:

- assessment panel
- lead assessor
- independent validator
- moderation meetings.

Issues to consider

The key issues associated with the implementation of this technique are:

- ensuring that the guidelines are developed in consultation with the relevant industry and enterprises
- ensuring that the advice in the guidelines is consistent with the Training Packages, especially the assessment guidelines component
- ensuring that assessors are aware of the guidelines and have access to appropriate professional development on how to apply them

- ensuring that the guidelines are maintained so that they are consistent with the current version of the relevant Training Package.

Guidelines on the collection and judgement of evidence

Description

Hint

Three other guides in the *Training Package Assessment Materials Project*, *Guide 1: Training Package assessment materials kit*, *Guide 2: Assessing competencies in higher qualifications* and *Guide 3: Recognition resource*, provide details on the processes involved in collecting evidence and making assessment decisions.

The information in these guides could be incorporated into a set of guidelines for collecting evidence and making judgements.

Guidelines for collecting evidence and making assessment judgements provide assessors with a means of establishing a shared or common understanding of:

- the evidence requirements of a unit or cluster of units of competency, based on an examination of the:
 - elements and performance criteria
 - range statement
 - evidence guide
- the characteristics of quality evidence; that is, whether the evidence gathered by the assessor and the candidate is authentic, valid, reliable, sufficient and consistent
- the ways in which assessors can strategically target high quality evidence
- the different ways in which evidence may be gathered by the assessor
- the different ways in which evidence may be presented by the candidate
- the scope which assessors have to vary the assessment process to take into account the special needs of candidates
- the basis on which assessment decisions are made, including whether the evidence:
 - is authentic, valid, reliable, sufficient and consistent
 - indicates that the candidate can perform the task skills, task management skills, contingency management skills and job/role environment skills

associated with the particular unit of competency to the standards expected in the workplace

- shows consistent performance over time
- illustrates consistent performance in different contexts
- is corroborated and supports the candidate's claim of competency
- indicates that the candidate can transfer skills and knowledge to new situations.

The development of guidelines for collecting evidence and making assessment decisions helps to ensure that the assessment process is consistent with the unit of competency and the assessment guidelines in the relevant Training Package. Such guidelines also serve to ensure that decisions made by different assessors, assessing the same unit of competency in different locations, are comparable.

Application

Guidelines for collecting evidence and making assessment decisions may be developed by a range of groups including RTOs, ITABs and industry organisations. This technique may be used in conjunction with any of the following four models:

- assessment panel
- lead assessor
- independent validator
- moderation meetings.

Issues to consider

The key issues associated with the implementation of this technique are:

- ensuring that the guidelines are developed in consultation with the relevant industry and enterprises
- ensuring that the advice in the guidelines is consistent with the Training Packages, especially the assessment guidelines component
- ensuring that assessors are aware of the guidelines and have access to appropriate professional development on how to apply them
- ensuring that the guidelines are maintained so that they are consistent with the current version of the relevant Training Package.

Validation of assessment tools

Description

Snapshot Case Study

The Property Industry Assessment Panel of a major enterprise RTO uses industry experts to validate its assessment tools.

New assessment tools are reviewed by experienced supervisors of crowd controllers prior to being used. The supervisors are selected from a range of enterprises in the industry.

Feedback from the expert supervisors is supplemented by reports from trials conducted with at least one group of exiting trainees.

This combination of expert review and field testing is considered by the assessment panel prior to the tools being authorised for 'live' use.

The validation of assessment tools is a formal process designed to ensure that assessment tools reflect the requirements of the relevant Training Package, are able to be applied in a range of practical settings and meet the RTOs quality standards.

The validation process may include:

- expert review of the assessment tool by individuals with expertise in assessment and the relevant Training Package
- field or pilot testing of the assessment tool with groups of assessors and candidates
- peer review of the assessment tool by assessors in the relevant industry
- workshopping the assessment tool with assessors and other key stakeholders in the relevant industry sector.

Purpose

The validation of assessment tools is designed to ensure the quality and validity of the tools through trialing before application. The process builds consistency by ensuring all tools have the same process and standards applied to their development and authorisation.

Application

The key feature of any validation process is the review of the assessment tool. This may involve a number of processes,

including expert review, field testing and peer review.

Regardless of the process used, the review should provide feedback about the usefulness of the tool and any required changes. The review should ensure that the assessment tool:

- is benchmarked against the current version of the relevant Training Package(s)
- was developed in consultation with industry and has been effectively trialed
- facilitates assessment practices that are reliable, valid, flexible, consistent and fair
- incorporates clear, concise and accurate advice to assessors on how they should be used
- takes into account the need for reasonable adjustment in the assessment process
- supports assessment processes that are inclusive and non-discriminatory
- represents good value for money
- is of a production quality which ensures that the tool is durable, attractive to the candidate and assessor, and fit for purpose
- is able to be successfully implemented in the relevant enterprise or RTO, taking into account the characteristics of the candidates, assessors and the assessment context.

Issues to consider

The key issues associated with the implementation of this technique are:

- the costs associated with establishing, operating and maintaining the validation process

- the need to establish the purpose of the validation process
- the most appropriate validation techniques to use, for example expert review, field testing, peer review or workshop
- the capacity and willingness of key stakeholders to participate in the validation process
- establishing the bona fides and authority of the organisation which establishes the endorsement process
- the cost and perceived benefit of establishing an endorsement process for assessment tools
- identifying criteria for endorsement which are sustainable over a period of time and are relevant in different industry, Training Package and delivery contexts
- the positive and negative impacts which the validation process may have on the availability of assessment tools, the quality of assessment tools, the price of assessment tools and how effectively the tools are implemented by assessors
- the positive and negative impacts which the validation process may have on innovation with regard to the design and development of assessment tools
- the need for assessor professional development to support the release of validated assessment tools
- the maintenance of validated assessment tools.

A sample checklist illustrating the key things to consider in the validation of an assessment tool is provided on the following page.

Validation of assessment tool example

The following checklist identifies the key questions that should be addressed in the validation of an assessment tool.

Relationship to the unit of competency

Is the assessment tool benchmarked against the relevant unit(s) of competency?

Does it reflect the information contained in the:

- elements?
- performance criteria?
- range statement?
- evidence guide?

Does the assessment tool address the entire unit of competency?

Does it need to be used in conjunction with another assessment tool?

Assessment purpose

Does the assessment tool suit the characteristics of potential candidates?

Does the assessment tool suit the purpose of assessment?

Is it:

- practical?
- cost-effective?

Principles of assessment

Does the assessment tool conform to the principles of assessment?

- Validity – does the tool assess what is required?
- Reliability – does the tool produce consistent outcomes?
- Fairness – does the tool have an inherent bias?
- Flexibility – is the tool flexible?

Reasonable adjustment

Is the assessment tool able to be adjusted to allow for candidates with special needs?

Review

- Has the assessment tool been trialed?
- Where was it trialed?
- When was it trialed?
- Who conducted the trial?
- How many times has the assessment tool been trialed?
- What were the outcomes of the trialing of the assessment tool?
- Were any adjustments made to the assessment tool?
- Who is responsible for signing-off the assessment tool?

Sampling

Description

Sampling involves reviewing a random selection of assessments conducted in an organisation to ensure that the planning and preparation, the conduct, the record keeping and reporting, and the review and evaluation of the assessments were undertaken in line with the policy of the organisation, the requirements of the relevant Training Package and the needs of the candidate.

Sampling may be conducted both within and across RTOs.

Application

Sampling enhances consistency in assessment by providing:

- a relatively fast and cost-effective mechanism for checking that all assessors within a specific assessment system are complying with the agreed assessment process
- a mechanism for reviewing assessment activities and identifying key issues or problems with the implementation of the assessment system
- a way of gathering information on the operation of key aspects of the assessment system, such as evidence collection or the provision of information to candidates
- a way of gathering information on improvements that have been made to the assessment system so that the effectiveness of these measures may be assessed.

In designing the sampling exercise the following questions should be addressed.

- How will the sample be selected?
- What will be the sample size?
- Will the sample be selected to focus on specific aspects of the assessment process?
- Who is to undertake the sampling?
- When is the sampling to take place?
- How is the confidentiality of candidates ensured?

Issues to consider

The key issues associated with the implementation of this technique are:

- cost-effectiveness
- time to undertake the sampling
- support of assessors and their participation in the process
- maintenance of confidentiality of candidates' assessments.

A checklist for reviewing a sampling exercise is provided on the following page.

Assessment sampling checklist

The following checklist identifies the key questions that should be addressed in reviewing a sampling exercise.

Compliance with the Training Package

- Was the assessment benchmarked against the relevant unit(s) of competency from the current version of the Training Package?
- Did the assessment process comply with the assessment guidelines component of the Training Package?
- Did the assessor meet the qualification requirements outlined in the assessment guidelines component of the Training Package?
- Did the assessment comply with the procedures for reasonable adjustment outlined in the assessment guidelines component of the Training Package?

Assessment process

- How effective was the assessment planning?
- Was the assessment process documented?
- Were documented assessment tools used?
- Were all parties briefed on the assessment process?
- Was the candidate appropriately briefed?
- Was the timing and place of assessment appropriate?
- How was the candidate notified of the outcome of the assessment process?
- If used, was the appeals process appropriate?
- Was the candidate adequately informed about the assessment process?
- Was the assessment process fair and flexible?

- Were all appropriate records maintained?
- Was appropriate feedback provided to the key parties to the assessment?
- Did the assessor conduct a review of the assessment process?

The evidence

- What evidence was collected?
- What were the relative roles of the assessor, the candidate and the workplace with regard to the collection of evidence?
- What processes were established for recording the evidence that was collected?
- Was the evidence provided appropriate for the unit of competency?
- Was the evidence authentic, sufficient, valid and current?
- Was all evidence treated equally in the assessment process?

Methodology

- What was the purpose of the sampling exercise?
- Who selected the sample?
- How were the assessments selected?
- What proportion of assessments were included in the sample?
- Did the assessments included in the sample have any special characteristics, ie critical units, technical units etc?

- How was the confidentiality of candidates ensured?
- How were the assessments included in the sample analysed?
- What were the outcomes of this analysis?

Record keeping

- What record keeping processes were used?
- How are the outcomes of the analysis of the sample reported?
- Is there a fixed reporting process and if so, what are the timeframes and formats required?
- What are the reporting lines for those who undertake the sampling technique?

Candidate satisfaction study

Description

A candidate satisfaction study involves gathering information from candidates on the assessment process. Information sought from candidates may relate to any aspect of the assessment process. Some areas of inquiry may include:

- assessment planning
- provision of information to candidates
- reasonable adjustment
- evidence collection
- feedback to candidates
- assessment decision making
- reassessment and appeal processes
- provision of information on pathways following the assessment process
- participation in assessment review processes.

This information may be gathered in a variety of ways, including:

- face-to-face interviews
- surveys
- questionnaires
- focus groups
- feedback sheets.

Purpose

A candidate satisfaction study provides direct feedback to the organisation about the candidates' experience of the assessment process. This information may be used:

- in the review of the assessment system
- to increase candidate involvement in the assessment process
- to identify the positive and negative features of the assessment system
- to identify improvements that might be made to the assessment system.

Issues to consider

The key issues associated with the implementation of this technique are:

- the cost involved in conducting candidate satisfaction studies
- the quality of the feedback gathered through the study
- evaluating candidate information relative to other types of information considered in the review of the assessment process
- the relative advantages and disadvantages of the different approaches to gathering candidate satisfaction data
- the way in which the information gathered through the candidate satisfaction survey will be analysed and reported
- ways of supporting candidates, assessors and other staff involved in the study.

A sample candidate satisfaction survey checklist is provided on the following page.

Sample candidate satisfaction study checklist

The following checklist identifies the key questions that should be addressed in a candidate satisfaction survey.

Methodology

The following strategies can be used to gather the opinions and views of candidates about the assessment process:

- questionnaires
- focus groups
- interviews
- surveys
- feedback sheets.

Preparing the candidate

How did the RTO prepare the candidate for the assessment?
Issues to consider include:

- provision of candidate information
- explanation of the assessment process
- explanation of the role of the workplace supervisor in the assessment process
- explanation of the evidence required for the assessment
- information on the evidence gathering process.

Conduct of the assessment

How did the RTO conduct the assessment? Issues to consider include:

- timing of assessment

- location of assessment
- role of assessor
- assessor conduct
- relative responsibilities of assessor and candidate for evidence collection
- role of workplace supervisor and other key staff in the assessment process
- range of evidence and evidence gathering methods
- fairness of the assessment process
- reasonable adjustment for candidates with special needs.

Provision of feedback to candidates

How did the RTO handle the post assessment process?

Issues to consider include:

- notification of the outcome of the assessment process
- content and quality of feedback
- return of candidate assessment materials
- explanation of reassessment and the appeals process
- explanation of pathways for the candidate stemming from the assessment process
- issuance of Statement of Attainment or qualification.

Suggestions for improvement

What improvements could the RTO make to the assessment process?

Guidelines for conducting assessments

Description

Guidelines for conducting assessments are a checklist that specifies the steps which assessors must follow to fulfil the RTOs requirements for assessment.

Purpose

Guidelines for conducting assessments provide a structure which ensures that the assessment process is comprehensive, meets specified outcomes and is conducted within the requirements of the organisation and the relevant Training Package.

Application

Guidelines for conducting assessments may take a variety of forms but would usually include information on the following key steps in the assessment process:

- assessment planning
 - review assessment purpose and context
 - confirm requirements of the Training Package including the competency standards and the assessment guidelines
 - identify relevant unit(s) of competency
 - plan assessment activity
 - identify appropriate assessment tool(s)
- Preparing the candidate
 - inform candidate about assessment activity and/or evidence required
 - conduct pre-assessment interview
 - establish assessor and candidate responsibilities for evidence collection

- identify special needs of candidate
- prepare assessment plan
- Conducting the assessment
 - liaise with workplace regarding the assessment
 - brief candidate
 - provide assessment task(s)
 - collect evidence
 - provide support to candidate
 - address special needs of candidate
 - make assessment decision
- recording and reporting
 - record assessment outcome
 - notify candidate of decision and provide feedback on the assessment outcome
 - inform candidate of reassessment and appeals process (if required)
 - participate in appeals process (if required)
 - discuss pathways stemming from assessment with candidate
 - complete and maintain records
- evaluation and review
 - gather feedback on the assessment process from the candidate, workplace and other sources
 - review and analyse feedback
 - identify and implement improvements to assessment tools and processes.

Issues to consider

The key issues associated with the implementation of this technique are:

- fully documenting the steps involved in the assessment process
- gaining the support of assessors to consistently use the guidelines

- monitoring and reviewing the guidelines
- providing initial training and ongoing professional support for assessors associated with the use of the guidelines
- ensuring that the guidelines may be applied in a range of assessment contexts, including on-the-job, off-the-job and online environments
- ensuring that the guidelines are accessible to all assessors, including those working in partnership arrangements in schools and enterprises
- ensuring that the guidelines are appropriately integrated with other assessment products developed by the organisations, such as candidate kits and assessment tools .

Assessment sign-off sheet

Description

An assessment sign-off sheet is a formal statement that is completed by all parties to an assessment which indicates their views on the assessment process and outcomes.

The assessment sign-off sheet is normally completed by the assessor, the candidate and the employer, where appropriate.

Purpose

An assessment sign-off sheet contributes to the quality and consistency of assessment by ensuring that all parties are given the opportunity to formally express their views about the assessment process and outcomes. This information may be used in assessment review and other quality improvement processes.

Application

Assessment sign-off sheets take a variety of forms and focus on different aspects of the assessment process. The following list indicates some of the matters that may be included in an assessment sign-off sheet.

Planning and preparation of the assessment

- Was the assessment process explained to the candidate?
- Were the assessment tools appropriate?
- Was the workplace adequately briefed about the assessment process?

- Was an assessment plan prepared?
- Was the assessment plan followed?
- Did the candidate have the opportunity to have current skills recognised?

Conduct of assessment:

- Was the candidate ready to be assessed?
- Were the special needs of candidate adequately addressed?
- Was appropriate support provided for the candidate?
- Was the assessment activity fair, flexible, valid and reliable?
- Was the assessment decision making process explained to the candidate?
- Was the timing and location of the assessment appropriate?
- Did the assessor act in a professional manner?
- Was the assessment judgement understood and accepted by the candidate and the workplace?

Post-assessment

- Was the assessment decision fair?
- Was the candidate informed of the reassessment and appeals process?
- Was the candidate informed about the outcome of the assessment process in a timely and appropriate way?
- Was the assessment a positive experience?
- Was feedback on the assessment process provided?
- Was the candidate informed of pathways stemming from the assessment process?

Issues to consider

The key issues associated with the implementation of this technique are:

- designing an assessment sign-off sheet that may be used in a variety of situations and which gathers reliable information
- establishing processes that encourage assessors, candidates and workplace supervisors to complete the sheets
- establishing processes for analysing the information gathered through this technique and ensuring that it is incorporated in assessment review processes
- communicating the benefits and purpose of the technique to candidates, assessors and employers.

Mentoring for assessors

Description

Mentoring involves the pairing of a more skilled or experienced person with a lesser skilled or experienced one, with the agreed - upon goal of having the lesser skilled person develop specific competencies.

Mentoring arrangements may be either formal or informal. They may involve pairing an inexperienced assessor with:

- an experienced assessor who is a member of an assessor network
- an experienced industry assessor who may be in the workforce or recently retired
- an experienced RTO assessor from within the same or another RTO.

Purpose

Mentoring facilitates consistency in assessment decision making by promoting professional exchanges between assessors, the sharing of ideas and understandings about the assessment process and the structured skill development of assessors.

Application

Mentoring arrangements can contribute to consistency in assessment by focusing on:

- the interpretation of Training Packages, especially the competency standards and assessment guidelines
- the planning of assessment activities
- the review of assessment outcomes
- the critiquing of assessment tools
- the development of assessment exemplars
- providing professional support for less experienced assessors
- the application of reasonable adjustment policies
- the review of problematic assessments.

The types of mentoring may include:

- peer mentoring
- peer reviews
- alliances
- mentoring circles
- spot mentoring.

Issues to consider

The key issues associated with the implementation of this technique are:

- the identification, selection, induction and ongoing professional development of mentors
- the matching of mentors with less experienced assessors

- the costs involved with establishing, operating and maintaining mentoring arrangements
- managing the relationship between the less experienced assessor and the mentor
- monitoring mentoring arrangements
- evaluating the effectiveness of mentoring arrangements, including their contribution to facilitating consistency in assessment.

Specialist assessor

Description

Snapshot Case Study

Manufacturing Learning Victoria (MLV), the State industry training board for the process manufacturing industry, has initiated an industry based assessment service that utilises a small group of specialist assessors.

The assessors are all qualified assessors who have significant experience in the industry. In most cases, the assessors are people who have recently retired from senior positions in their former companies.

This group of assessors is referred to as the 'Pioneers'. They have specialist knowledge of the industry that is not available in the Victorian RTO network. The Pioneers have worked successfully with a range of RTOs to provide the technical expertise needed in workplace assessments.

Through this initiative, MLV has successfully increased the level of workplace assessment within the industry, facilitated information transfer between the industry and the RTO network and increased the existing workforce's access to nationally recognised qualifications.

The Pioneers were initially trained by MLV and supported through the early stages of the pilot program. MLV now supports the service by coordinating the matching of the Pioneers and the RTOs.

Specialist assessors are individuals with high level skills and experience in both assessment and a specific technical area. They normally hold assessment qualifications based on the Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training as well as formal qualifications and experience in their particular industry area.

The use of specialist assessors can enhance assessment consistency through ensuring that assessment decisions are made by a relatively limited number of people who have 'deep' knowledge of the industry and the assessment process.

Specialist assessors may include:

- individuals currently working in the industry who are recognised as having specialist expertise in their technical field
- industry consultants and technical experts who are recognised as having specialist expertise and knowledge of industry practices in their technical field
- recently retired individuals who are recognised as having specialist expertise in their technical field
- trainers within RTOs or other academics who are recognised as having specialist expertise and knowledge of industry practices in their technical field.

In all cases, specialist assessors possess recognised expertise in their industry area and formal qualifications and experience in assessment.

Purpose

The use of specialist assessors helps to enhance the quality and consistency of assessment. The technique may be applied in both summative and formative assessments in on- and off-the-job assessment contexts.

Specialist assessors focus their attention and skills on the assessment requirements of specific Training Packages. This single focus helps to increase assessment consistency.

Application

The use of specialist assessors enhances assessment consistency by:

- ensuring consistency in personnel and approaches to assessment activity
- developing highly skilled and experienced assessors
- ensuring that the assessment activity is clearly benchmarked against the unit(s) of competency in the relevant Training Package.

Issues to consider

The key issues associated with the implementation of this technique are:

- the need to ensure that specialist assessors maintain the currency of both their technical and assessment expertise
- the identification of specialist assessors
- establishing the qualification and experience requirements for specialist assessors

- the need to provide induction training and ongoing professional development for specialist assessors
- the need for a moderation process to ensure the consistency of decisions made by specialist assessors
- the costs involved with the establishment, operation and maintenance of the specialist assessor system
- ensuring ongoing industry support for the specialist assessors
- the importance of establishing effective partnership or contractual arrangements between RTOs and specialist assessors when they are not directly employed by an RTO.

3. DETERMINING YOUR STRATEGY

What do organisations need to consider when planning a strategy?

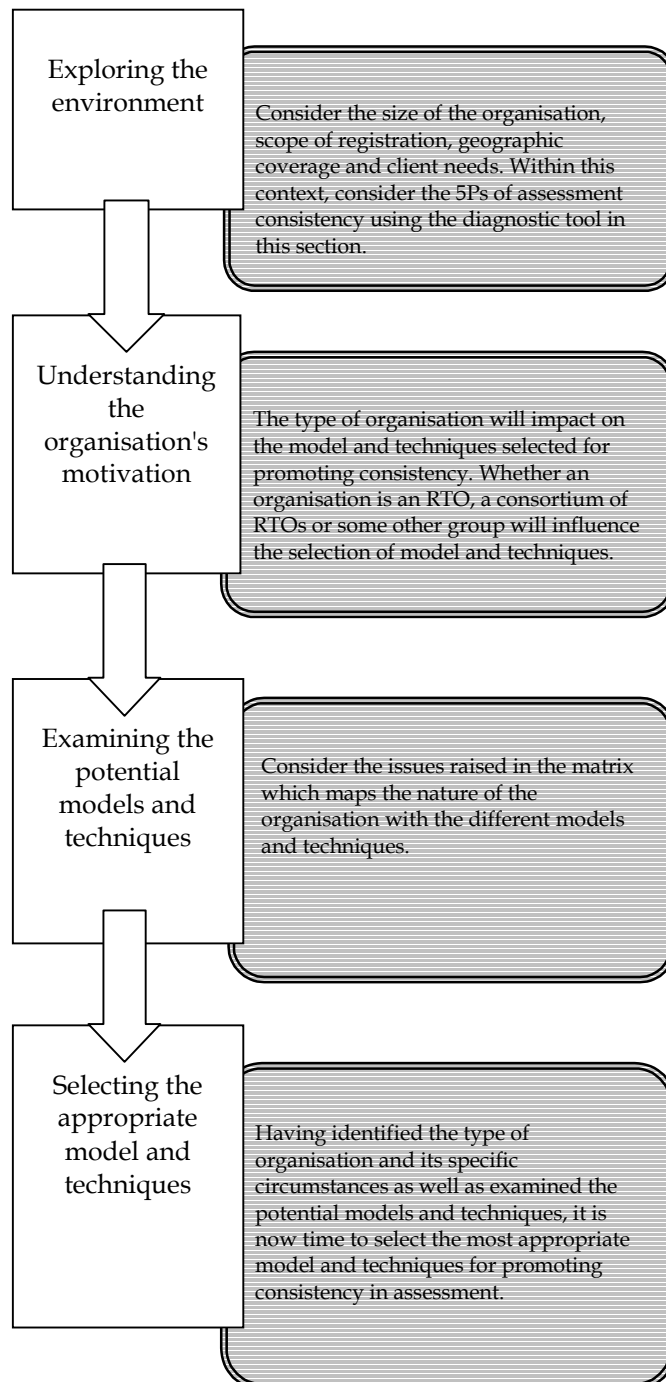
How to use this section

In this section the relationships between the type of organisation, the organisational approach and the use of the models and techniques are explored. The aim of this is to establish the organisation's approach to achieving consistent assessment outcomes.

In the previous section detailed information was provided about the nature of the various models and techniques.

The next step involves matching the particular models and techniques with the specific requirements of the organisation.

The process comprises four simple steps:



Exploring the environment

Understanding the operating environment of the organisation is a prerequisite for developing strategies that promote consistent assessment outcomes.

The factors which need to be considered include:

- operational size
- scope of delivery
- geographic coverage
- client needs and expectations.

Organisational size

The size of the organisation, the management structure, the number of assessors and the volume of assessments conducted will influence the strategies put in place to ensure consistency.

Large organisations, with assessors operating across a range of sites in a variety of program areas, will have different requirements from small organisations with only one or a small number of assessors.

Small organisations will have fewer assessors to support and manage. As a result they are more likely to be aware of the practical issues associated with each assessment. However, small organisations also have fewer resources to commit to ensuring consistency in the assessment process.

Large organisations may have more resources to commit to managing the assessment system. However, they may also have greater difficulties managing the assessment process due to the larger number of assessors and assessments.

A number of questions need to be considered:

- What is the structure of the organisation?
- At how many sites are assessments being conducted?
- How many assessors are engaged by the organisation?
- What is the annual volume of assessments? Are these evenly distributed throughout the year?
- Should strategies for ensuring consistency of assessment be applied across the whole organisation or will they be developed and deployed for each site or delivery area?
- What is the capacity of the record keeping system to report on the performance of the assessment system?
- Can the record keeping system be readily changed?
- Are communication and professional development processes in place?
- How does the management structure support the assessment processes?
- Is there a designated coordinator for the assessment process?

Scope of delivery

The range of Training Packages offered, the mode of delivery and assessment, and the level of support provided for assessors and candidates have a significant impact on the type of strategies which are put in place to ensure assessment consistency.

A number of questions need to be considered:

- Against which Training Packages are assessments conducted?
- What is the AQF range of qualifications being assessed?

- What are the processes for the identification and collection of evidence and the making of assessment decisions?
- What infrastructure, such as materials, guidelines and equipment, is provided to support assessors and candidates in the assessment process?
- Do the assessment processes comply with the assessment guidelines component of the relevant Training Packages?
- Do the assessors have qualifications that comply with the requirements of the relevant Training Packages?
- What is the mode of delivery and assessment?

Geographic coverage of the organisation

The location of assessors and candidates and the geographic coverage of the organisation play a significant part in determining the selection of strategies for ensuring consistency in assessment.

Organisations with far-flung geographic scope and constituencies may have to employ very different strategies from those housed under the one roof.

In some instances face-to-face meetings between assessors to discuss issues of consistency, undertake professional development or participate in an assessment panel are simply not practical. In such cases, electronic forms of communication may be used and there may be a greater reliance on paper-based checking of assessment outcomes and the critiquing of assessment tools prior to use.

A number of questions need to be considered:

- Is it practical to establish a process where the assessors meet regularly?
- Are there other organisations nearby with which collaborative arrangements can be established to support, for example, professional development or an assessment panel?
- Are the communications systems used by the organisation reliable?
- What are the limitations of the administrative and record keeping systems?
- Do the assessors have peer and supervisor support or do they operate relatively independently?
- Where does the assessment take place?

Client needs and expectations

The industry in which the organisation's clients operate, the size of their businesses and their expectations will all impact on the strategies selected to ensure consistency.

Some clients will view consistency in assessment to be critical. This may be the case where work is hazardous and/or highly regulated. In these instances, clients may demand fairly complex processes to achieve consistency irrespective of the cost and time involved.

Other clients may view the VET system as complex and difficult to negotiate. Additional overlays, steps and stages or costs in the assessment process could be a barrier to their participation in the system. In these cases, the organisation may seek to establish strategies which are straightforward, inexpensive and not intrusive.

A number of questions need to be considered:

- What is the value placed on the consistency of the assessment outcome?
- What is the level of risk to the client?
- Is the work performed hazardous or licensed?
- How critical is price to the client?
- Who pays for the establishment, operation and maintenance of the consistency strategy?
- What is the client's level of understanding of the assessment process and what information do they need about validation and consistency?

Focusing efforts

With this understanding of the factors that influence the operation of the organisation, it is now time to consider the elements which impact on the assessment consistency.

Mapping key elements against performance indicators

Section 1 covered the elements of consistency within an organisation which impact on the way that organisation operates. The five elements, termed the 5Ps of assessment consistency, are:

- people
- process
- product
- perspective
- policy.

The 5Ps are useful criteria against which organisations can assess their performance and which then provide an indication of those areas which need improvement. The 5Ps may be evaluated against the four dimensions:

- **approach** refers to the organisation's goals and the plans it has in place to help achieve these goals
- **deployment** refers to what the organisation is actually doing with respect to its goals and plans and how they are translated into action
- **results** refer to the way in which the organisation measures and monitors its achievement
- **improvement** refers to how the organisation questions, reviews and learns from what it has done, with the goal of continuing to seek improvement.

The self-assessment of the organisation's practices across the 5Ps and against the four dimensions will identify its strengths and opportunities for improving its assessment system.

Organisations can begin by asking some basic questions in relation to their overall performance in designing and delivering a quality assessment system.

Approach

- What significance does the assessment system have in the organisation?
- How clearly is it understood and defined in the organisation's planning?
- What objectives have been defined for the assessment system?
- How will results be evaluated?

Deployment

- To what extent are the plans and/or procedures for the assessment system being followed?
- How widespread through the organisation are the plans and/or procedures being implemented?

Results

- How is the effectiveness of the assessment system evaluated or measured?
- How are the results reported and communicated – by whom and to whom?
- What do the results indicate about the performance of the organisation with regard to the assessment system?
- Are the desired outcomes/objectives being achieved?

Improvement

- What processes are used to review and reflect on the overall approach, deployment and results of the assessment system?
- How are improvements to the assessment system identified, planned and implemented?

It is important for the organisation to determine where it is now and where it wants to be.

The following matrix can be used as a diagnostic tool within an organisation, such as an RTO or across RTOs, to determine the current position and identify areas for further improvement.

The matrix is based on a self-assessment model and provides a series of questions for each of the 5Ps across the four dimensions of approach, deployment, results and improvement. There is a column for the organisation to indicate areas which may need further improvement based on the series of questions and a column which gives examples of the types of evidence that may be used to document the approach, deployment, results and improvement for each of the 5Ps.

This matrix is available as a Word document on the *Training Package Assessment Materials Project* CD-ROM.

PEOPLE			
Sample questions based on key performance indicators	Yes/No	Further improvement	Evidence
APPROACH			Plans for professional development activities, both internal and external to the organisation. Performance management systems. Plans, policies, procedures on assessor involvement and communications in regard to the operation of the assessment system. Participation in networks and other structures which assist in ensuring consistency in assessment.
What processes are in place to obtain the full involvement of assessors and other staff in improving consistency and assessment?			
What processes are used to keep assessors informed about the performance of the assessment system?			
Is professional development provided for assessors to ensure that the Training Package assessment requirements are considered and understood?			
What approaches are used to ensure consistency between individual assessors and assessment teams?			
Do all assessors have the opportunity to participate in networks and external activities?			

PEOPLE			
Sample questions based on key performance indicators	Yes/No	Further improvement	Evidence
DEPLOYMENT			Participation in planning processes in regard to the operation of the assessment system.
Is there evidence that the assessors are committed to ensuring consistency in assessment?			Records of employee attendance at professional development activities. Staff time allocation for planning of assessment.
Is there evidence that the assessors are involved in validation strategies?			Induction and orientation programs. Individual and team performance plans.
Do the assessors understand their role and accountabilities? Do the assessors understand how they contribute to consistency in the assessment?			Representation on committees or working parties.
Do all assessors, including part time, casual and sessional, have access to relevant information and professional development?			
Do assessors receive feedback on their performance and recognition for their efforts?			
To what extent do the assessors, including part time, casual and sessional assessors, understand the assessment requirements of the relevant Training Package?			

PEOPLE			
Sample questions based on key performance indicators	Yes/No	Further improvement	Evidence
RESULTS			Evidence of evaluation processes.
Does the organisation evaluate the involvement and commitment of assessors in ensuring consistency in the assessment system?			Employee representation and feedback.
Does the organisation evaluate its performance management and development processes in regard to ensuring consistency of assessment?			
Are the results of these evaluations evaluated?			

PEOPLE			
Sample questions based on key performance indicators	Yes/No	Further improvement	Evidence
IMPROVEMENT			Organisational or human resource review processes.
Does the organisation review the involvement and commitment of its assessors in ensuring consistency in the assessment system?			Review of processes. Improvement plans. Review meetings.
Is there a process in place to learn from this review and put in place further improvements?			
How does the organisation review its performance management and development processes?			
How does it learn from this review and put in place further improvements?			

PROCESS			
Sample questions based on key performance indicators	Yes/No	Further improvement	Evidence
APPROACH			Internal service standard in regard to the assessment service.
What processes are in place to ensure consistency within the assessment system?			Performance monitoring process of the assessment service. Quality assurance processes. Management reporting.
What approach is used for identifying performance indicators for the assessment system? Are these performance indicators communicated to assessors? Are there processes for identifying and implementing new processes and services that may improve consistency with the assessment system?			Improvement plans. Internal service quality indicators and processes. Assessment service process. Benchmarking. Key performance indicators.
What strategies been developed to ensure that all assessors understand the assessment process?			
Are key assessment processes identified and documented?			
Are there procedures in place for managing and improving assessment processes?			

PROCESS			
Sample questions based on key performance indicators	Yes/No	Further improvement	Evidence
DEPLOYMENT			Examples of industry recognition. Examples of benchmarking. Employee feedback. Positive trends in performance of key processes. Audit results. Process review schedule.
What methods are used to build in quality to the design, development and validation stages of the assessment process?			
How does the organisation ensure that improvements to the assessment process are considered, validated and implemented?			
Are clear, consistent criteria in place to assist the assessors to understand and work with the assessment process?			
Is the assessment process standardised?			
Is a focus on continuous improvement evident in the assessment system?			
What approach is used to identify, prioritise and resource validation opportunities within the assessment system?			

PROCESS			
Sample questions based on key performance indicators	Yes/No	Further improvement	Evidence
RESULTS			Evaluation meetings. Benchmarking records.
Does the organisation evaluate the consistency of its assessment processes?			Measures of improvement in the process.
Are these findings reported and shared?			
Does the organisation evaluate the management of the assessment system?			
Are these findings reported and shared?			
Does the organisation evaluate the quality of the assessment system?			
Are these findings reported and shared?			

PROCESS			
Sample questions based on key performance indicators	Yes/No	Further improvement	Evidence
IMPROVEMENT			Review meetings. Improvement plans.
Does the organisation review the consistency of its assessment processes?			Best practice implementation.
Does it learn from this review and put in place further improvements?			
Does the organisation review the management of the assessment system?			
Does it learn from this review and put in place further improvements?			
Does the organisation review the quality of its assessment processes?			
Does it learn from this review and put in place further improvements?			

PRODUCT			
Sample questions based on key performance indicators	Yes/No	Further improvement	Evidence
APPROACH			Plans for professional development activities, both internal and external to the organisation. Plans, policies and procedures relating to the products used in the assessment service. Procedures to validate and evaluate new products. Criteria for the selection of assessment products.
What processes and criteria are established for the selection of assessment tools and other products such as candidate information and assessor manuals?			
What processes are used in the design of assessment tools and other products?			
What processes are used to evaluate assessment tools?			
What approach is used to ensure the assessment tools are benchmarked against the requirements of the Training Package?			
What procedures are used to monitor the use of the assessment tools?			
What processes are in place to ensure that all assessors have the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the assessment tools?			

PRODUCT			
Sample questions based on key performance indicators	Yes/No	Further improvement	Evidence
DEPLOYMENT			Plans, policies, procedures on employee involvement and communications in regard to the operation of the assessment system. Plans for professional development activities, both internal and external to the organisation. Performance management systems. Participation in networks and other structures which assist in ensuring consistency in assessment.
Are clear, consistent criteria in place for the selection of assessment tools?			
How is the use of the assessment tools monitored?			
Are clear, consistent criteria in place for the development of assessment tools?			
How are assessment tools validated? Are assessors involved in the selection and evaluation of assessment tools?			

PRODUCT			
Sample questions based on key performance indicators	Yes/No	Further improvement	Evidence
RESULTS			Benchmarking records. Evaluation meetings. Measures of improvement in performance.
Does the organisation evaluate the assessment tools used in the assessment system?			
Are these findings reported and shared?			

PRODUCT			
Sample questions based on key performance indicators	Yes/No	Further improvement	Evidence
IMPROVEMENT			Review meetings. Improvement plans.
Does the organisation review its processes related to the evaluation of the assessment tools used in the assessment system?			
Does it learn from this review and put in place further improvements?			

PERSPECTIVE			
Sample questions based on key performance indicators	Yes/No	Further improvement	Evidence
APPROACH			Industry, employer and candidate complaints.
What processes are in place to monitor industry, employer and candidate satisfaction with the assessment service?			Industry, employer and candidate communications. Plans and processes to measure industry, employer and candidate satisfaction. Industry and employer consultative groups. Benchmarking activities.
Is this information used to inform future planning?			
Do processes exist for industry, employers and candidates to provide feedback, make or seek assistance regarding the assessment system?			
Are assessors able to directly provide assistance or resolve problems?			
Is feedback from industry, employers and candidates used to improve the assessment system?			

PERSPECTIVE			
Sample questions based on key performance indicators	Yes/No	Further improvement	Evidence
DEPLOYMENT			Assessment service evaluations.
Are industry, employer and candidate needs communicated, analysed and used to plan and improve the assessment system?			Records of industry, employer and candidate meetings.
Do assessors understand and respond to the special needs of candidates?			Evidence of use of feedback to improve processes.
Are assessors able to directly address complaints and concerns from industry, employers and candidates about the assessment system? Are these recorded and used in future planning?			
Are assessors able to act on industry, employer and candidate feedback?			
Are there resources, systems support, guidance and training provided to assessors to assist in this process?			
Does the organisation monitor industry, employer and candidate satisfaction with the assessment system?			

PERSPECTIVE			
Sample questions based on key performance indicators	Yes/No	Further improvement	Evidence
RESULTS			Candidate satisfaction study. Analysis of data from meeting with industry, employers and candidates.
Does the organisation evaluate its processes for identifying industry, employer and candidate needs and expectations?			
Does the organisation evaluate its processes for managing industry, employer and candidate needs and expectations?			
Does the organisation evaluate its processes for monitoring of industry, employer and candidate satisfaction?			
Are the results reported and shared?			

PERSPECTIVE			
Sample questions based on key performance indicators	Yes/No	Further improvement	Evidence
IMPROVEMENT			Improvement plans. Review meetings.
Does the organisation review its processes for identifying industry, employer and candidate needs and expectations?			
Does the organisation review its processes for managing industry, employer and candidate needs and expectations?			
Does the organisation review its processes for monitoring industry, employer and candidate satisfaction?			
Does it put in place further improvements as a result of the review?			

POLICY			
Sample questions based on key performance indicators	Yes/No	Further improvement	Evidence
APPROACH			Planning meetings. Assessment policy.
Is there a policy regarding the operation of the assessment system?			Assessors' participation in planning process.
Are all stakeholders, including assessors, candidates, industry, employers and unions, involved in the assessment system policy?			
How does the organisation communicate the policy to all stakeholders?			
Is the assessment policy consistent with the Australian Quality Training Framework and the relevant Training Package?			

POLICY			
Sample questions based on key performance indicators	Yes/No	Further improvement	Evidence
DEPLOYMENT			Planning and review meetings. Policy and procedures.
Are all stakeholders involved in developing the assessment policy? Who are they and how do they do it?			
Is the issue of consistency integrated into the assessment policy?			
Is the policy effectively communicated to all assessors?			
Is the assessment policy understood and supported by all assessors?			
Do assessors have a role in the development and communication of the assessment policy?			

POLICY			
Sample questions based on key performance indicators	Yes/No	Further improvement	Evidence
RESULTS			Review and planning processes.
Does the organisation evaluate the implementation of the assessment policy?			
Does the organisation evaluate the extent to which the aims of the assessment policy have been achieved?			
Are these evaluations reported and shared?			

POLICY			
Sample questions based on key performance indicators	Yes/No	Further improvement	Evidence
IMPROVEMENT			Review meetings. Improvement plans.
Does the organisation review its assessment policy with regard to the issue of consistency?			
Does it learn from this and plan improvements to enhance consistency within the assessment system?			

Understanding the organisation's motivation

As well as understanding the nature of the organisation and its operational environment, it is important to identify the reason why the organisation wants to promote consistency in assessment. This reason may vary significantly between different organisations.

In the case of a single RTO, the reasons may include:

- the need to strive for process performance to ensure high levels of assessment, accuracy, fairness and client confidence
- compliance with AQTF standards for RTO registration
- the need to ensure consistency of assessment outcomes in partnership arrangements with non-registered partners, eg schools.

In the case of a group of RTOs, the reasons may include:

- the need to develop a range of protocols and practices to build consistency and confidence between their operations and assessors
- the need to establish consistency in practice and outcome in order to deliver a cohesive service to clients.

In the case of industry, community or regional groups (eg community associations, ITABs, industry associations, professional bodies or unions), the reasons may include:

- the importance of having their needs properly reflected and met by the training system

- the importance of maintaining industry standards and confidence in assessments which are vital to groups where, for example, pay is linked to the achievement of competency
- consistency of outcomes as a major indicator of quality.

In the case of an industry regulator or licensing body, the reasons may include:

- qualification attainment is a requirement for licensing and the capacity to practice in an industry
- consistency of outcomes is essential to industry to ensure standards are met and workers are adequately equipped to operate safely.

Matching the organisation with the models and techniques

As discussed in Section 2, there are four key models that may be used to facilitate consistency in assessment. These are:

- assessment panel
- lead assessor
- independent validator
- moderation meetings.

In selecting which of these models to use, consideration needs to be given to the nature of the organisation, its operating environment and reasons for wanting to achieve consistency in assessment. In addition, attention needs to be paid to how effectively the models address the 5Ps of assessment.

Chart 1 provides advice on selecting the most appropriate model for four different styles of organisations, which are:

- a single RTO
- a group of RTOs
- industry, community or regional groups (eg community associations, ITABs, industry associations, professional bodies or unions)
- an industry regulator or licensing bodies.

Having used Chart 1 to identify the most appropriate model for the organisation, the next step is to select the technique or group of techniques that might be used within the model to facilitate consistent assessment. This is done by referring to the information in Chart 2. This chart provides advice for selecting the most appropriate techniques for each of the four different styles of organisations.

The information in Charts 1 and 2 provides guidance on the selection of an appropriate model and the associated techniques for facilitating consistent assessment. When considering this information, reference should also be made to:

- the nature of the organisation
- the operational environment of the organisation
- the reasons why the organisation wants to achieve consistent assessment outcomes.

Chart 1: Selecting the appropriate model for different types of organisations

Model	Single RTO	Group of RTOs	Industry/ Community Groups	Industry Regulator
Assessment panel This model addresses the following elements of consistency in assessment: • people • process • product • perspective • policy.	• Highly relevant for RTOs of all sizes and enables the best skills to be brought together to ensure consistency. • Inclusive process which can build on the work and roles of existing groups. • RTOs with wide geographic spread will need to consider the cost benefits and difficulties of bringing an assessment panel together, eg is teleconferencing viable?	• Highly relevant, valuable in a partnership or consortium arrangement – enables membership from all contributors. • Partnerships or consortia with wide geographic spread will need to consider the cost benefits and difficulties of bringing an assessment panel together, eg is teleconferencing viable?	• Highly appropriate to seek representation on assessment panels.	• Highly appropriate to seek representation on assessment panels.

Chart 1: Selecting the appropriate model for different types of organisations (continued)

Model	Single RTO	Group of RTOs	Industry/ Community Groups	Industry Regulator
Lead assessor This model addresses the following elements of consistency in assessment: • people • process • product • policy.	• Highly relevant, particularly for larger RTOs with large numbers of assessors. • Potentially inappropriate for small RTOs unless the lead assessor has a whole of organisation role. • Significant cost for small RTOs with few assessors. • Large RTOs need to consider whether lead assessors will be used at the RTO level or with separate assessors within teaching areas/schools or business units. • Provides appropriate management support for complex situations. • Provides central focus for communications with assessors.	• Highly relevant to provide coordination and consistency of effort across RTOs working in consortia or partnership. • Can provide focus for communications which are critical to the success of coordinated efforts. • Sound technique for building and monitoring quality control processes.	• Not appropriate where the organisation/ stakeholder is not an RTO.	• Not appropriate where the regulator or licensing authority is not an RTO.

Chart 1: Selecting the appropriate model for different types of organisations (continued)				
Model	Single RTO	Group of RTOs	Industry/ Community Groups	Industry Regulator
Independent validator This model addresses the following elements of consistency in assessment: • process • perspective • policy.	• Relevant for RTOs of all sizes, coverage and geographic spread. • Cost is to be considered.	• Highly relevant for partnerships or consortia of all sizes, coverage and geographic spread. • Cost is to be considered.	• Highly relevant for community and industry groups to provide independent validators for RTOs. • Cost is to be considered.	• Highly relevant for regulators to provide independent validators for RTOs. • Cost is to be considered.

Chart 1: Selecting the appropriate model for different types of organisations (continued)

Model	Single RTO	Group of RTOs	Industry/ Community Groups	Industry Regulator
Moderation meetings This model addresses the following elements of consistency in assessment: • people • process • product.	• Highly relevant for RTOs where more than one assessor is conducting assessments against the same unit of competency/ qualifications in a particular Training Package. The significance of this model increases as the number of assessors and the range of locations at which assessments are conducted increases. • Critical process if the outcomes of the assessment process are graded. • Cost of establishing, operating and maintaining moderation meetings is an important consideration in the adoption of this model. • Model provides significant professional development opportunities for assessors participating in the meetings. • Highly consistent with approaches that support the use of common assessment processes and tools.	• Highly relevant for groups or consortia of RTOs where many assessors from a variety of RTOs are conducting assessments against the same unit of competency/ qualifications in a particular Training Package. The significance of this model increases as the number of RTOs, the number of assessors and the range of locations at which assessments are conducted increases. • Critical process if the outcomes of the assessment process are graded. • Cost of establishing, operating and maintaining moderation meetings is an important consideration in the adoption of this model. • Model provides significant professional development opportunities for assessors participating in the meetings. • Highly consistent with approaches that support the use of common assessment processes and tools.	• Highly relevant for industry bodies, including ITABs, industry associations, professional bodies, unions and employer groups, to be involved in moderation meetings to ensure that assessment practices and materials comply with industry requirements. • Critical process if the outcomes of the assessment process are graded. • Cost of establishing, operating and maintaining moderation meetings is an important consideration in the adoption of this model. • Model provides significant professional development opportunities for assessors participating in the meetings. • Highly consistent with approaches that support the use of industry endorsed common assessment processes and tools.	• Highly relevant for industry regulators to be involved in moderation meetings to ensure that assessment practices and materials comply with industry requirements. • Critical process if the outcomes of the assessment process are graded. • Cost of establishing, operating and maintaining moderation meetings is an important consideration in the adoption of this model. • Model provides significant professional development opportunities for assessors participating in the meetings. • Highly consistent with approaches that support the use of industry endorsed common assessment processes and tools.

Chart 2: Selecting the appropriate techniques for different types of organisations				
Technique	Single RTO	Group of RTOs	Industry/ Community Groups	Industry Regulator
Assessor networks This technique addresses the following elements of consistency in assessment: • people • product.	• Provide valuable support, potential source of specialist assessors and professional development for RTOs of all sizes, coverage and geographic range.	• Provide valuable support, potential source of specialist assessors and professional development for RTOs of all sizes, coverage and geographic range.	• Valuable source of information, support and influence.	• Valuable source of information, support and influence.
Quality endorsement of assessment tools This technique addresses the following elements of consistency in assessment: • product • perspective.	• Potentially useful as an internal quality control mechanism within an RTO. • Lacks benefits of transportability and independence.	• Viable method of ensuring consistency in approach across RTOs in partnerships or consortia.	• Highly relevant and viable for industry associations to develop and operate a quality endorsement process.	• Highly relevant and viable for regulators to develop and operate a quality endorsement process.
Record keeping process for audit trail This technique addresses the following elements of consistency in assessment: • process.	• Essential component of developing consistency approach.	• Essential component of developing consistency approach.	• Not relevant.	• Not relevant.

Chart 2: Selecting the appropriate techniques for different types of organisations (continued)

Technique	Single RTO	Group of RTOs	Industry/ Community Groups	Industry Regulator
Bank of assessment exemplars and benchmarks This technique addresses the following elements of consistency in assessment: • people • product • perspective.	• Highly valuable for RTOs of all sizes, coverage and geographic spread. • Maintains commercial confidentiality of tools and protects copyright. • Provides strong induction and professional development support.	• Highly valuable for partnerships or consortia of all sizes, coverage and geographic spread. • Provides practical solution for building consistent approach across RTOs. • Provides strong inductions and professional development support.	• Highly valuable for, in particular, industry groups to develop banks of instruments as a means of ensuring relevance and consistency across RTOs. • Enables benchmarks to be set.	• Highly valuable for industry regulators to develop banks of instruments as a means of ensuring quality and consistency across RTOs. • Enables benchmarks to be set. • Links regulatory process to the assessment process.
Guidelines to interpret units of competency This technique addresses the following elements of consistency in assessment: • people • process • perspective • policy.	• Highly valuable technique for RTOs of all sizes, coverage and geographic reach.	• Highly valuable technique for partnerships and consortia of all sizes, coverage and geographic reach.	• Highly viable and relevant technique, particularly for industry groups, to provide enhanced understanding of the interpretation of units.	• Highly viable and relevant technique, particularly for regulators, to provide enhanced understanding of the collection of appropriate evidence.

Chart 2: Selecting the appropriate techniques for different types of organisations (continued)

Technique	Single RTO	Group of RTOs	Industry/ Community Groups	Industry Regulator
Guidelines on collection and judgement of evidence This technique addresses the following elements of consistency in assessment: • people • process • perspective • policy.	• Highly valuable technique for RTOs of all sizes, coverage and geographic reach.	• Highly valuable technique for partnerships and consortia of all sizes, coverage and geographic reach.	• Highly viable and relevant technique, particularly for industry groups, to provide enhanced understanding of the collection and judgement of evidence.	• Highly viable and relevant technique, particularly for regulators, to provide enhanced understanding of the collection and judgement of evidence.
Validation of assessment tools This technique addresses the following elements of consistency in assessment: • product • process • perspective.	• Highly valuable technique for RTOs of all sizes, coverage and geographic reach. • Enables critiquing and collective approach to development. • Facilitates 'endorsement' of instruments in a number of models.	• Highly valuable technique for partnerships and consortia. • Enables critiquing and collective approach to development. • Facilitates 'endorsement' of instruments in a number of models.	• Highly viable technique for groups to be involved in the development of high quality and relevant instruments.	• Highly viable technique for regulators to be involved in the development of high quality and relevant instruments.
Sampling of assessments for review This technique addresses the following elements of consistency in assessment: • people • process.	• Highly valuable techniques for use by RTOs of all sizes to ensure objectivity in the process of establishing approaches to consistency.	• Highly valuable techniques for use by partnerships and consortia to ensure objectivity in the process of establishing approaches to consistency.	• Not relevant.	• Not relevant.

Chart 2: Selecting the appropriate techniques for different types of organisations (continued)

Technique	Single RTO	Group of RTOs	Industry/ Community Groups	Industry Regulator
Candidate satisfaction study This technique addresses the following elements of consistency in assessment: • process • product • perspective.	• Highly valuable technique for RTOs of all sizes, coverage and geographic reach.	• Highly valuable technique for partnerships and consortia.	• Not relevant.	• Not relevant.
Guidelines for the process of assessment This technique addresses the following elements of consistency in assessment: • people • process.	• Highly valuable technique for RTOs of all sizes, coverage and geographic reach.	• Highly valuable technique for partnerships or consortia.	• Not relevant.	• Not relevant.
Sign-off assessment sheets by the assessor, assessee and employer This technique addresses the following elements of consistency in assessment: • process • product • perspective.	• Highly valuable technique for RTOs of all sizes, coverage and geographic reach. • Provides potential audit trail and improves communication and understanding of the process by all stakeholders.	• Highly valuable technique for partnerships and consortia. • Provides potential audit trail and improves communication and understanding of the process by all stakeholders.	• Not relevant.	• Not relevant.

Chart 2: Selecting the appropriate techniques for different types of organisations (continued)

Technique	Single RTO	Group of RTOs	Industry/ Community Groups	Industry Regulator
Assessment mentors This technique addresses the following elements of consistency in assessment: • people • process • product • perspective.	• Highly valuable for RTOs of all sizes, coverage and geographic spread.	• Highly valuable for partnerships or consortia of all sizes, coverage and geographic spread.	• Highly viable for community and industry groups to provide assessment mentors for RTOs.	• Highly viable for regulators to provide assessment mentors for RTOs.
Specialist assessors This technique addresses the following elements of consistency in assessment: • people • process • product • perspective • policy.	• Highly valuable for RTOs of medium to large size, all coverage and geographic spread. • Particularly useful where difficulties are experienced in sourcing relevantly skilled and experienced assessors in an area. • Practical solution for combining specialist industry experience with specialist assessment experience/skill. • Cost is to be considered.	• Highly valuable for partnerships or consortia of all sizes, coverage and geographic spread. • Enables the maximising of efficiency and the best use of resources. • Useful where difficulties are experienced in sourcing relevantly skilled and experienced assessors in an area. • Practical solution for combining specialist industry experience with specialist assessment experience/skill. • Cost is to be considered.	• Highly viable for industry/ community groups to provide specialist assessors.	• Highly viable for regulators to provide specialist assessors.

Decision making: pulling it all together

The decision to implement a strategy which enhances consistency in assessment is a complex one and cannot be undertaken in isolation from other quality assurance strategies.

The magnitude of the changes which may be instituted to support a consistent approach can also vary widely. On one hand, an RTO may decide that a simple step such as putting in place a more formalised process is all that is required. For example, an RTO may participate in an assessment panel with representatives from other RTOs to discuss the factors that influence consistency in assessment across a group of RTOs offering a common qualification. This may require little more than establishing terms of reference for the assessment panel and randomly sampling a small set of assessment each year. On the other hand, a large RTO may wish to form partnerships with other RTOs or non-registered bodies such as schools or enterprises. In this case, the RTO may decide that a major review of its approach to ensuring consistency is required. It may choose to implement assessment moderation arrangements utilising a range of different techniques.

Chart 3 summarises the key factors that should be considered in selecting the appropriate model and associated techniques. This involves answering four key questions:

- What is the context?
- What are the key outcomes of the analysis of the organisation?
- Which models will work best?
- Which techniques will work best?

Chart 4 provides an example of how the decision making process may be applied to a single, multi-site RTO delivering qualifications in Business Administration from the Business Services Training Package. As indicated in the chart, the model selected in this case incorporates both an assessment panel and a lead assessor.

Chart 3: Decision making process – issues to be considered

What is the context?	What are the key outcomes of the analysis of the organisation?	Which models will work best?	Which techniques will work best?
What is the context in which the model and techniques will be used?	What are the outcomes of the analysis of the organisation's performance for each of the 5Ps? People: Analysis of the assessors and managers, their involvement in and commitment to the assessment service provided by the RTO or group of RTOs, their level of skill and knowledge and opportunities for professional development and networking. Process: An analysis of the assessment process within the RTO or across RTOs, whether there are formal procedures in place, and if so, are these communicated to all assessors. Product: Analysis of the types of assessment products including tools used in assessments, candidate information, assessor manuals and how they are selected and by whom, whether they are validated or trialed and how they are used within the RTO or across RTOs. Perspective: Analysis of whether the assessment service addresses the requirements and expectations of industry, employers and candidates. Policy: Analysis of the RTO's stated intention about how the assessment process will be undertaken and managed including the operation of validation strategies.	Which of the four models reflect the needs of the organisation and the validation requirements under the AQTF? Assessment panel which can be inter or intra RTO and may involve industry representatives. This model could be applied to an existing panel or other informal or formal group. Lead assessor or someone charged with the validation process and/or coordination of assessors within or across RTOs. Independent validator is someone from within the RTO or external to the RTO who validates assessments. Moderation meetings involve meetings of groups of assessors who are involved in assessing against the same units of competency in a Training Package. The purpose of these meetings is to establish common interpretation of the standards, common performance criteria, assessment processes and assessment tools.	Which techniques reflect the needs of the organisation and the validation requirements under the AQTF? Planning and preparation for assessments - Assessor networks - Quality endorsement of assessment tools - Bank of shared assessment tools - Bank of assessment exemplars and benchmarks - Guidelines to interpret units of competency - Validation of assessment tools. Conducting of assessments - Guidelines on collection and judgement of evidence - Guidelines for process of assessment - Sign-off of assessment sheets by assessor, candidate and employer - Assessment mentoring - Specialist assessors. Recording and reporting assessment outcomes - Record keeping processes to provide audit trail of validation of assessment. Evaluating the assessment process - Sampling of assessment for review which can be both within or across RTOs.

Chart 4: Decision example			
What is the context?	What are the key outcomes of the analysis of the organisation?	Which models will work best?	Which techniques will work best?
Single, multi-site RTO delivering qualifications in Business Administration from the Business Services Training Package.	People: - Ad hoc approach to professional development - Small number of full time staff - Training Package is not accessible to staff or well understood. Process: - No evidence of organisational process to support consistency of assessment - No evidence of plans and formalised internal communication strategies. Product: - A select range of assessment tools is provided by the organisation - The cost of purchasing new tools to reflect a new Training Package is of concern. Perspective: - No formalised process in place to identify industry requirements. Policy: - No clear policy on strategies to ensure consistency within and validation of assessments - Organisational concern about meeting AQTF requirements.	The use of both an assessment panel and the appointment of a lead assessor offers the best support for achieving consistency by: Assessment panel - Strengthens the process - With the inclusion of an industry representative, it provides better client perspective - Can be used to oversee and validate the development of in-house assessment tools. Lead assessor - Provides advice, guidance and support for staff - Facilitates professional development - Ensures consistency by validating assessments and providing feedback to staff - Acts as a referral point for problematic assessments.	Assessment panel - Quality endorses assessment tools - Provides input into the development of assessment exemplars - Conducts a client satisfaction study. Lead assessor - Uses a sampling technique to identify assessments for review - Coordinates the specialist assessor technique - Develops the guidelines for the process of assessment - Develops the guidelines for the interpretation of competencies and the collection of evidence - Manages the record keeping process - Establishes assessment mentor program.

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 maybe.

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), 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.