



## Template for submissions to the *Quality of assessment in vocational education and training – Discussion Paper*

All written submissions to the discussion paper and queries on the consultation process may be directed to the department via email at [trainingpackages&VETquality@education.gov.au](mailto:trainingpackages&VETquality@education.gov.au).

### Submission details

1. Submission made on behalf of:  Individual  Organisation
1. Full name: **REDACTED**
2. Organisation (if applicable): **REDACTED**
2. Please indicate your interest in this discussion paper:   
(i.e. as a student, VET practitioner, RTO, third-party provider, peak body, business, industry representative, regulator or other government agency or community member)
3. Do you want your submission to be published on the department's  Yes  No website or otherwise be made publicly available?
  - a. If yes, do you want your name and organisation (if applicable) to be published alongside your submission, OR would you like for only your submission to be available and your details kept anonymous?  Published  Anonymous
  - b. If no, please advise the department upon submission that you do not want your submission to be published or otherwise be made publicly available.

## 1. Discussion questions – RTO limitations:

### COMMENT:

- *Is it appropriate for relatively large numbers of RTOs to deliver TAE qualifications or skill sets? Should the number be reduced to a targeted number of RTOs focusing on high-quality provision?*

No, Nationally Accredited training is important to individuals, industry and the nation overall. This is the same issue as for School teaching – there are standards and there are limited providers who undertake this training.

TAE should be available via state institutions such as TAFEs and through a limited group of specialist providers that undergo a registration process.

- *Should RTOs be restricted from issuing TAE qualifications or skill sets to their own trainers and assessors?*

No, they should be able to issue to own staff, but see above – it should be a limited group who are registered to do it. Any registered TAE provider must offer the TAE to external as well as internal staff.

- *Are TAE qualifications and skill sets so significant that evidence of competence should not—or cannot—be appropriately demonstrated via recognition of prior learning?*
  - *Is recognition of prior learning for TAE qualifications or skill sets granted with sufficient rigour to ensure the quality of student assessment? Should the practice be restricted?*

RPL should only be used where a higher level teaching qualification can be produced – e.g. B.Teaching / B. Education / M. Education should confer the necessary skills regarding understanding assessment. The current practice of requiring VET teachers who hold an M.Education to undertake a Cert IV in TAE is nonsensical.

- *Are there opportunities to improve the assessment skills of the VET workforce through changes to the delivery and assessment of TAE qualifications and skill sets?*
  - *Should TAE qualifications and skill sets only be delivered by VET practitioners who can demonstrate a specific period of training and/or assessing employment history in the VET sector?*

Yes, to teach a TAE there should be a minimum of 2 years teaching experience in a VET teaching role and the qualification should follow TEQSA guideline of the teacher holding one AQF or higher level training in the relevant field. E.g to teach Cert IV TAE, the teacher should hold a Dip.Voc. Ed or higher + 2 years teaching experience of a VET competency (other than TAE).

- *What circumstances would support a change requiring some VET trainers and assessors to hold university-level or higher-level VET qualifications, for example, practitioners delivering and assessing TAE qualifications and skill sets?*

See above – in very case this should apply. There are plenty of higher qualified VET teachers available.

- *Should the TAE Certificate IV and/or Diploma require a practical component? If so, how long should the practical component be?*

Yes, there should be a practicum that includes the delivery of the unit that was developed in the TAE assignment to a class of at least 3 and observed by someone who holds a TAE or above.

- *Should entrants to the TAE Diploma be required to demonstrate employment history in the VET industry before being issued with the qualification? Would this condition help to improve the relevance and validity of assessment? How long would this period of time be?*

No, that doesn't sound practical – this would discourage attempting higher level VET study at Diploma level)– unless this means, should the person have employment history in the industry that was relevant to their VET teaching, if that is what is meant, then yes, 2 years experience in the industry that they then teach into would be useful.

## 2. Discussion questions – skills and qualifications of trainers and assessors:

### COMMENT:

- *Should the TAE Certificate IV be changed to a core unit on the design and development of assessment tools? How would this improve assessment outcomes for students?*
  - *Should the core unit be the existing TAEASS502B Design and develop assessment tools unit of competency? Are there alternative approaches, such as developing a new unit on the design and development of assessment tools?*

No comment

- *Is the TAEASS502B Design and develop assessment tools unit of competency a specialist unit that should only sit at the diploma-level on the basis the Certificate IV is currently designed for delivery to new entrants seeking to be trainers and assessors?*

No comment

- *In the case of making any updates to the TAE, is it appropriate to form judgements based on majority considerations? Or is it too risky to do so? Is it a better basis for decision makers to give strong weight to key stakeholders and the nature of the argument put forward?*

This is important enough to be informed by educational expertise and key stakeholders

### 3. Discussion questions – benefits and purpose of a VET professional association:

#### COMMENT:

- *Is there a need to establish a national professional association for Australia's VET system?*
  - *Specifically, is there a clear role for Australian governments in assisting the development of professional skills of the VET workforce by funding a professional association?*

Yes, VET teaching should be professionalised, including teacher registration and CPD requirements. Creating such a register, e.g similar to AHPRA for health professions would reduce the complexity of audit and provide greater transparency to students. Under ASQA guidelines, qualifications and current competency evidence is required to be maintained anyway, so government support to have a national register is not more burdensome than current local practice and is ultimately more efficient as each RTO doesn't need to develop its own teaching staff qualification and CPD database.

A national body may be self funded from membership by stakeholder groups e.g like Phil Honeywoods International education Lobby group, or could be a membership model of individuals like AMA etc. – If it held the registration function as well, then maybe there are more things to consider.

I prefer the AHPRA model that accepts guidance of groups like individual professional associations.

- *What are the barriers to establishing a national professional association? How could these be overcome?*

Different models will be advocated by different stakeholders – as outlined in your paper. If a national register was established, an industry developed national association would probably arise, even if it wasn't the actual administrator of the AHPRA like register.

- *What would be the most useful guiding purpose of a national professional association?*

A public register of VET teachers

#### 4. Discussion questions – potential activities of a VET professional association:

##### COMMENT:

- *What activities would be most beneficial for a national professional association to undertake?  
For example, would it:*

- *coordinate, approve or design professional development programs*
- *develop capability frameworks*
- *positively promote the profession of VET trainers and assessors as an employment destination and career path to attract professionals*
- *act as an advocate and voice for VET trainers and assessors*
- *interact with industry to respond to their emerging needs*

Yes, to all of the above

- *register VET practitioners?*

Maybe, depends whether you do an AHPRA like model or a Medical Colleges type model.

- *What advantages would there be to conducting these activities at a national level rather than through existing professional development undertaken through membership of existing groups, or that which is currently organised by RTOs?*

National or other level doesn't matter so much for the association, the national issue is registration of VET teachers – this completes the circle: National accredited Training packages / National Regulator / National Teacher registration

*Existing groups may be fine, any probably*

- *Are there any existing organisations that could fulfil this role?*

ACPET and TDA could merge to cover the whole industry – or they could be separate if there was a separate register

## 5. Discussion questions – models for a VET professional association:

### COMMENT:

- *Which of the suggested models for a VET professional association would be considered most preferable and viable in the current VET environment? Model A,B or C?*

I believe model A & C combined would be the most efficient outcome.

Model A allows for a separate accreditation body that is designed in consultation, but allows for association(s) outside. Model C provides a simpler path to implementation and local management of quality issues. This could be implemented in a similar way to creation of AHPRA, with local registration boards managing local business. AHPRA was essentially self funding at an average cost of \$252 per registrant. This is a large and complex board with high risk health activities. Teacher registration in Victoria is \$120 per annum – so a combination of some teacher fee, some RTO component and some ASQA component (recognising the audit efficiency) the cost of an AHPRA like board would not be a particularly high net cost.

NOTE: If an AHPRA like teacher education body is formed then it should roll up a national register of teachers: Early childhood, Primary, Secondary, Vocational and Higher Education. There is a similar teaching confidence issue in universities and many new ‘teaching only’ positions and high use of casuals as teachers – there should also be assurance and standards for these people.

- *What value would a VET professional association, or associations, add to the VET sector?*

Registration of practitioners would add a huge amount of credibility and support the international standing

- *What mechanism would sustain a professional association, for example, membership fees from individuals or RTOs?*

See above

- *Should VET teacher and trainer membership with a professional association be mandatory or voluntary?*

Registration should be compulsory and association membership voluntary

## 6. Discussion questions – capability frameworks:

### COMMENT:

- *What can be learnt or applied from the capability frameworks that have been developed or are currently being developed?*
  - *Is there an opportunity to make better use of these frameworks, irrespective of proposals to develop a professional association?*

No comment

## 7. Discussion questions – increasing industry confidence:

### COMMENT:

- *Are there alternative approaches not covered in this discussion paper on how industry can increase engagement with the conduct of assessment, but not specifically the validation?*

Industry could be recognised formally for engagement in assessment and work placement, e.g. industry placed staff sometimes have 'adjunct' teaching appointments with RTOs / universities. Possibly 'adjunct' teachers could also be listed on a registration site to recognise their commitment to supervision / assessment.

- Are there other ways to ensure industry confidence in assessment without requiring independent validation of assessment? For example, are industry-endorsed, externally administered tests a practical alternative to ensure that VET graduates are competent?
  - What would be the benefits and drawbacks in requiring such tests? Under what circumstances would they be mandated, for example, for particular student cohorts? Should these be specified in training products?

There should be an increase in 'licenced' trades / professions. The recent experience of roting in the sector has generally not been seen in licenced areas – nursing, electrical, plumbing etc.

Licencing should be considered on a risk basis and be externally assessed where independence is warranted.

- *Who should regulate the tests?*

Industry associations where applicable (e.g. plumbing and electrical) or via public tender (e.g. scaffolding, various machine operations etc.)

- *Should such a test be a pass/fail dichotomy, or would it be more important to use the test to identify gap training?*

Should be pass / fail – but feedback on reasons for failure should be given and referral back to an RTO

- *Is the concept of an externally administered test, such as a test required before receiving a qualification, inconsistent with the premise of a competency based VET system?*

No, it is a risk based verification that the assessment as competent is correct. It would make sense for an RTO who has deemed someone to be competent to be identified prior to the external test being undertaken. This would provide information to regulators and RTO on their internal standards of assessment. There would always be failures, but at least it could be looked at on a comparative and trend basis. For example if an RTO had student failure rate above a threshold level, then this would trigger ASQA audit.

- *Should the results of tests be made public at the RTO level?*

Data should be public but be contextualised – e.g. provide pass rates and trend data but provide a comparison line to 'all providers' or similar – e.g. like NAPLAN scores.

## 8. Discussion questions – the role of industry in assessment:

### COMMENT:

- *What role should industry, for example, employers and industry organisations, play in validation of assessment? Does the varied interpretation of 'industry' inhibit a proper appreciation of the topic and should it be defined? If so, who would best define 'industry' when considering the practice of validating assessment?*

Industry should definitely be consulted, however due to the complexity of the training package system and the extensive use of 'elective' units it would be hard to find common ground.

Externally tested areas should focus on 'core' units. Local employers, smaller sectors may like to run their own assessment on specialist areas of competency.

The focus of external assessment should be risk based; skills gap based; employment based (e.g. turned on and off depending whether there were employability issues identified)

- *Do employers or industry groups have the skills required to fulfil this role in validating assessment? Is assessment such a specialised skill that industry and employers either do not want to get involved or should not get involved?*

Depends on the industry

- *Is there a need to build industry capacity and capability regarding involvement with training and assessment? If so, how might this be done?*

No, market should decide how necessary it is and should be generated from industry associations. The only exception would be where public policy required intervention where it wasn't otherwise being done – e.g. Security services

- *How can we ensure engagement with industry is appropriately targeted so it does not add undue burden and is targeted to those within industry with appropriate expertise required for validation of assessment?*

The new version of skills councils / industry peak bodies e.g. AIG

## 9. Discussion questions – specific models:

### COMMENT:

- *How can independent validation be best applied to avoid a ‘one size fits all’ approach? For example should independent validation of assessment be triggered by:*
  - *improving RTO practice, for example, through a principles based model and best practice guide to support the VET workforce in identifying the most appropriate technique to validate assessment*
  - *mandatory requirement to lift quality in specific instances, for example, where a qualification is identified as high-risk*
  - *funding requirement, for example, independent validation of assessment could become a requirement for RTOs seeking to access government funding.*

Government funding should be allocated only where there is a public benefit, there is also an obligation to the tax-payer to properly acquit public money. Therefore government should assess what training they support and the related risk – whether that is public safety; critical skills; employability and determine which needs to be externally assessed. Industry could then make recommendations about where they think external assessment was needed. Where there was no particular risk inherent then no external assessment may be warranted, however if it still had significant public subsidy (including via a HELP scheme) then spot audits based on volume of training should be conducted.

- *Should there be an increased role for external assessment by industry, and in which situations? For example, should it be mandatory for certain industries where there is a concern for public safety if a learner is incorrectly deemed competent?*

Yes, risk assess all publicly funded and categorise appropriately – in some cases this may only be a competency within another qualification e.g. scaffolding

- *If independent validation of assessment is to be risk-based, then what factors should be considered in the assessment of risk, for example, public safety, RTO profile, student cohort?*

Public safety [ food safety, machinery operation, scaffolding, health]

Critical skills [ e.g all construction trades]

High value industries [ incl. education, Tourism, financial services]

Also – then by high public subsidy providers – e.g. the new VET FEE HELP loan qualification via online ACER test is being rorted by ‘brokers’ sitting alongside students whilst conducting online tests – there is too much financial incentive to ‘cheat’ the test to achieve commission. High VET FEE HELP recipient institutions should have independently invigilated testing for these types of activities.

- *Should high-risk student cohorts be required to undergo independent reassessment of industry-agreed sets of competencies before being issued with their qualifications?*
  - *For example, particular qualifications; students undertaking qualifications with RTOs with high levels of non-compliance; or that conduct assessment wholly online or on-the-job; or in areas of public safety.*

Yes, where a finding is made, however ASQA should be acting to de-register such providers, and should have an automatic de-registration if found to be in the bottom quartile of expected completion rates. Innocent students should have recourse to gap closure training.

- *Would the burden be too great if independent reassessments were required for an entire student cohort, and should independent reassessment apply to a sample of students instead? If so, how could such a sample be chosen?*

A random sample should be tested with sample expansion parameters pre-set. E.g select 10% of student if 10% or more of these are incompetent then sample a further 10% and keep going until an acceptable rate is found.

- *Who would be most appropriate to oversee the reassessment of qualifications?*
  - *For example, could existing regulators or other organisations (such as firms that specialise in assessing students) take on this role?*

Public TAFEs and specifically registered providers – NOTE: public TAFEs are chosen because each state minister has direct control of these entities. State ministers can be held to account via COAG agreements that relate to funding. Specifically registered RTOs outside Ministerial control would also be Ok but would need clear contract requirements

## 10. Discussion questions – industry expectations and graduate capabilities:

### COMMENT:

- *Is there a role for Government or industry to develop resources outlining VET graduate expectations for particular training products? If so, who should take this work forward?*
  - *Do higher order issues need to be resolved regarding terminology such as ‘competent’ (as assessed against the training product) and ‘job ready’ (ready to undertake all aspects of a particular job)? Is there a common understanding of VET system outcomes?*

National training packages should describe graduate attributes as well as the core and elective competencies.

Students /Employers should be provided with a competency list attached to the vocational qualification so that they can see what is covered.

‘Job ready’ may be too hard in packages where there are many options of electives. However, this could be a category of endorsement from a professional association based on their view of ‘must do’ electives. An example of this would be diploma of Nursing where ANMAC agrees with each provider what elective competencies are in the course, what type and duration of training and what assessments are used – graduates from these ANMAC approved courses would be considered ‘job ready’.

Conversely, a Diploma of Agriculture has so many elective components that an employer would have to carefully examine the course content. E.g it may have no cropping or irrigation and only relate to pig farming or business which would be of little use to a wheat producer or cotton grower.

## 11. Discussion questions – evidence of assessment and graduate competency:

### COMMENT:

- Should the Standards for RTOs be revised to include strengthened and more specific rules around the conduct of and evidence to support assessment? Which elements that have a clear link to quality of student outcomes need to be strengthened?

Yes, this should be in the training package, maybe shown as example or mandatory assessments and evidence.

- Would a more prescriptive condition of registration, such as a requirement for RTOs to retain all assessment samples for a longer period, improve the quality of assessment?

Retaining samples of assessment can be problematic – it is hard to record clinical or practical observation unless assessors wear a Go-Pro on their head. Although video was quite commonly used in Victoria for some trades. Other parts of assessment such as a model (e.g carpenters building a cubby house or boat builders building a dinghy) are impossible to store.

Perhaps retention of written assessments in electronic format and electronic video files is as much as could be done.

- *How could the focus of regulation move to evaluating assessment outputs, such as samples of students' assessment pieces, without incurring excessive costs or imposing excessive burden on RTOs?*

– *Is ASQA the appropriate regulator to oversee this function, or are there better placed agencies such as firms that specialise in assessing students?*

Specialised assessing firms, licenced by ASQA would be better than ASQA directly. A risk based approach to outputs would be good. Possibly even drop audit of process and just require this to be in place and only look at it if RTOs start failing output assessment.

- *Are there other mechanisms that you would like to see added to the regulatory framework to prevent poor assessment? For example, should training-only RTOs be recognised as a formal part of the regulatory framework?*

Yes, training only RTOs should be regulated and their teachers registered as “trainer only”

## 12. Discussion questions – enforcement:

### COMMENT:

- *How could the focus of regulation move to evaluating assessment outputs?*

Simply update ASQA guidelines to require risk based audit of outcomes as primary activity with process audit and compliance a follow up item to be triggered by poor outcomes audit. De-register or conditionally register based on process follow up audit.

- *Which additional regulatory enforcement options should be considered in dealing with RTOs providing inadequate assessment? For example, should the regulator have an explicit administrative power to require a RTO to arrange and fund external reassessment, or should additional civil penalty provisions be created?*

Civil penalty should be set at the cost of reassessment (fixed rate) and this should be paid to specified RTOs to undertake the re-assessment. Failure to pay civil penalty would result in automatic suspension of registration for any new students.

- *To what extent should the characteristics of the RTO influence the response? Should the size of the RTO or the number of students involved matter?*

Size shouldn't matter, however risk evaluation should also consider the impact on students, government and industry. A large poor provider is a bigger risk than a small poor provider

- Given the need to balance procedural fairness with swift and effective enforcement action, what methods should be available to the regulator to manage RTOs that are repeatedly non-compliant with assessment requirements? How could such repeat offenders be defined?

An escalating 'strike system' that has automatic penalty triggers. E.g. First warning and corrective action requirement (no penalty, just listing on public web-site); second warning or severe initial finding (automatic suspension of new registrations + reassessment civil penalties); De-registration

- *What role should regulators have in communicating their activities and findings? Does current regulatory practice provide adequate transparency and disclosure, or are there other approaches that should be taken?*
  1. Require each provider to have a link to "regulatory status" on their home page as a condition of registration
  2. Set up Training. Gov provider page to link to 'Restriction' tab of relevant provider as landing page

### 13. Discussion questions – cancellation and reassessment:

#### COMMENT:

- *Where inadequate assessment has occurred, should the power to cancel qualifications be exercised more frequently than it has in the past? What factors should affect this decision (for example, potential impact on public safety) and how should they be balanced?*

In the case of inadequate assessment, then re-assessment should be first step before considering withdrawal of qualifications. If re-assessment is not possible or shows to be inadequate then withdrawal should be undertaken. Students should have recourse to tuition assurance for gap closure, unless they are deemed to be complicit and therefore should be charged with fraud.

- *Should a scheme for the reassessment of students be implemented? If so:*
  - *Are there any situations where a student should not be offered the chance to be reassessed, for example, student fraud?*

If student commits fraud they should not be reassessed. (they should be charged)

- *Should there be a time period after which ASQA should not move to cancel an individual's qualification? Noting potential public and other safety issues, should a decision to cancel consider whether or not the person involved is reliant on the qualification for their current employment?*

Qualification should always be cancelled if it is not verifiable. If a long period has passed and they have gained on the job skills they should have an opportunity for RPL assessment.

- *Who should bear the cost of reassessment and any gap training found to be necessary? If the cost is to be recovered from the RTO, should this be pursued regardless of the RTOs financial viability?*

RTOs should have tuition assurance / other insurance in place to cover this. RTOs without insurance should pay a bond or first mortgage equivalent to 30% of government income (incl. FEE HELP)

- *Who should deliver the reassessment? Are there any circumstances in which it would be appropriate for the original RTO to undertake the reassessment?*

Specifically registered RTOs and public VET providers. No, reassessment should be independent of the initial provider.

- *What should the qualifications be for those doing the reassessment, and what industry experience and currency would they need? To what extent should ASQA, industry or employers be directly involved in the reassessment process?*

A registered VET teacher with industry currency relevant to the competency being tested

- *Should a tuition assurance fund be set up to further protect students in Australia's VET sector, particularly in the context of any scheme of reassessment or cancellation of qualifications? Should membership be mandatory for all RTOs? Who should operate such a fund, and who should bear the cost of its operation?*

Mandatory unless other specific insurance is held (e.g public providers). Cost would ultimately be born by student fees

- *What linkages with income support eligibility should apply for graduates impacted by any recall of qualifications?*

No limits on state subsidy eligibility or FEE HELP loan maxima for repeat training – assume tuition assurance would repay previous costs / debt.