



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

Key consultation areas

The Department of Education and Training (the department) seeks stakeholder input on the *Quality of assessment in vocational education and training – Discussion Paper* (the discussion paper). The paper covers the following broad themes to improve assessment in vocational education and training (VET):

Chapter 1: Foundation reforms

- ensuring the requirements for VET teachers and trainers provide the strongest platform for high-quality assessment
- ensuring those teaching VET skills are highly competent professionals with high-quality, contemporary skills in assessment.

Chapter 2: Reforms to the assessment of VET students

- assuring the quality of assessment through industry engagement with assessment review and control mechanisms as a gatekeeper before qualifications are issued
- ensuring employers have clear and realistic expectations of VET graduate capabilities which align with the assessment of students.

Chapter 3: Reforms to the regulatory framework

- improving the detection of poor quality assessment
- ensuring quick action can be taken against registered training organisations (RTOs) delivering inadequate assessment
- managing the consequences of inadequate assessment by removing invalid qualifications from the system where necessary and supporting students if this occurs.

How to provide feedback

To support the Training and Assessment Working Group to provide the Australian Government Minister for Vocational Education and Skills with recommendations on how to improve assessment, stakeholder consultations will begin with the release of the discussion paper in January 2016 and continue through to Friday 11 March 2016.

Respondents may provide feedback on some or all of the discussion paper's themes. To assist with the compilation and analysis of the views of all stakeholders, respondents are encouraged to provide feedback via this preferred submission template, with attachments as required. Submissions in alternative formats will also be accepted.

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.

All written submissions will be made publicly available on the department's website, unless respondents direct otherwise. See the [terms and conditions for public submissions](#).

Submission details

1. Submission made on behalf of: Individual Organisation
2. Full name:
3. Organisation (if applicable):
4. 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)
5. Do you want your submission to be published on the department's website or otherwise be made publicly available? Yes No
 - 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.

Introduction

I have been working in the VET sector since 1996 and have worked in a wide range of RTOs operating under very different structures, ownership and business drivers – and with these different capabilities to manage the requirements of the RTO registration standards – past and present.

My professional experience includes:

- Public RTOs
 - Providing training and assessment to publicly enrolled students
 - Providing commercial – fee for service training and assessment to client organisations and to individual fee paying student , where the RTO may be part of a university
- Commercial RTOs:
 - Publically listed organisations whose business is the provision of both VET and higher education services to fee for service students [who may or may not access government funding] with multiple RTOS across many training packages in multiple locations and part of groups also offering higher education e.g. university qualification, where training and assessment is the core business
 - Small niche RTO – –with single/ dual shareholder ownership - with less than 5 units of competence and/or 1 or 2 qualifications on scope –offering public courses [or on line where allowed by the industry regulator]– for short courses for industry specific compliance needs e.g. Food Safety supervisor , responsible service of alcohol, responsible service of gambling – held at public venues.
 - Small niche RTO –with single shareholder owner - with less than 5 units of competence and/or 1 or 2 qualifications on scope – providing targeted training and assessment usually linked to the consulting services offered by the RTO – where consulting is the core business and training and assessment complements this. The client pays – and this a fee for service arrangement – and training is not linked to any funding other than WELL funding
 - Small Niche RTO – single owner - offering public courses to fee paying students, government funded students [where funding is available for skills shortages] and client specific training
- Other RTOs:
 - Small RTOs – part of a business Enterprise centre – that provide training and assessment as part or targeted programs to assist in the development of small business, utilising government funding for programs such as New Enterprise Incentive Scheme [NEIS]
 - Community Based adult education provider
 - Industry Association
 - Limited scope of qualifications in a specialist field aimed at industry professionals
 - Enterprise based
 - Limited scope of qualifications for internal learners only

My work has involved:

- Design of training and assessment for single units of competence
- Design of holistic training and assessment across a number of units of competence in qualifications from Certificate III to Advanced Diploma
- Delivery of training from Certificate II to Advanced Diploma and Vocational Grad Cert
- Conducting assessment from Certificate II to Advanced Diploma and Vocational Grad Cert
- Design, delivery and assessment in arrange of training packages:
 - Tourism and Hospitality
 - Business Services:
 - Quality auditing
 - Work Health and Safety
 - Leadership and Management
 - Micro business
 - Small business
 - Training and Assessment
 - Food Processing
 - Health and Community Services
- Independent assessment validation
- Development of quality management systems to achieve compliance with RTO standards
- Instructional design , development and facilitation of non-accredited training for organisational learning and development teams
- Sourcing and selecting RTOs as training providers and/or partners
- Working as part of a corporate learning and development team:
 - developing capability frameworks for health, safety and wellbeing in a range of industries
 - Designing, developing and facilitating a range of unaccredited training for use by staff and contractors.

From my experience in industry – working across these many different types of RTOS – and working with many different trainers and assessors – I believe the quality of training and assessment is more about the RTO than the Trainer and Assessor.

What a trainer and assessors is required to do, for example:

- Design and develop assessments Develop assessment guides
- Conduct assessments
- Plan assessments
- Design training
- Participate in assessment validation
- Conduct RPL
- Develop RPL processes, tools and evidence guides
- Lead assessment validation
- Undertake professional development
- Be formally observation of their training and assessment for feedback purposes

Is determined by the RTO that selects, appoints and manages the trainer and assessor. So the quality and robustness of the quality management processes – will determine the quality of assessment. – not the Trainer/ assessor – they are only part of the assessment process.

The new standards for RTOS introduced in 2015 – in principle would enable the provision of quality training and assessment – if implemented appropriately, with sufficient resource allocation - and appropriately reviewed through audit –and enforced – at initial registration and through ongoing registration audits.

For these new standards to be successful requires:

- Focus on quality training and assessment rather than a focus on compliance. An RTO focuses on quality training and assessment – we will have learners with the required competencies – and the RTO will achieve compliance as an outcome of their commitment to quality
- RTO operators with sufficient skills and knowledge to interpret and implement the standards in a useful and practical way – where it is clear how to do this in the context of the RTO organisation
- ASQA auditors – who look to the how implementation is undertaken – and not just focus on the high level policy documents of the RTO which really only provide intent
- Higher level of understanding on assessment validation – by RTO operators and how it drives quality assessment
- Clarity in the definitions of terms in the standards such as Industry engagement
- High level engagement with industry by the Industry reference groups – supported by the Skills Service organisations – so that the outcomes of industry engagement are shared with all RTOs – through guidance notes on assessment – for use in assessment validation.

The current RTO standards have only been in force since January 2015 – with some elements yet to come on line - and as yet have not been given the opportunity to address issues associated with the quality of assessment and the quality of trainers and assessors – the outcomes of audits need to be reviewed to see if there is an improvement overall – before further changes are made to industry requirements.

1. Discussion questions – RTO limitations:

- 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?
- Should RTOs be restricted from issuing TAE qualifications or skill sets to their own trainers and assessors?
- 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?
- 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?
 - 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?
 - Should the TAE Certificate IV and/or Diploma require a practical component? If so, how long should the practical component be?
 - 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?

COMMENT:

- Restricting the number of RTOs offering TAE qualifications and skillsets as may have some unintended circumstances with no guarantee of improvement to the quality of assessment. Consequences may include:
 - Legal consequences – in relation to a possible restriction on trade
 - current RTOs losing this qualification from scope seeking compensation
 - restricted geographic locations provided the training – with people in regional locations not being able to find training locally
- Restricting RTOs from issuing TAE qualifications to their own staff – may have negative consequences for the enterprise, industry and professional associations – with this on scope – as they would not be able to achieve strategic organisational and industry objectives. This could result in these RTOs needing to cease operations and minority small non re
- To improve the standards of assessment – there needs to be a more robust approach to the processes and requirement for RTOs in initial registration for TAE qualifications and subsequent renewal applications – and consideration for different time frames for re registration based on risk, compliance levels and number / level and type of qualifications on scope.

COMMENT:

- RPL is a recognised tool for a person to demonstrate competency in the VET sector and therefore should be available for a person aiming to achieve competency in the TAE
 - There is a risk RPL may not be undertaken appropriately [regardless of the qualification] which is likely to be linked to:
 - Assessor skills / knowledge [competence] - in the use of assessment criteria when determining if the evidence provided is:
 - Sufficient
 - Current
 - Authentic
 - Valid
 - Assessor understanding of what RPL actually is
 - RPL process and tools of the RTO including;
 - Verification of evidence
 - Supervision of Assessors
 - Validation of RPL tools and processes
 - Education/ training of assessors in internal requirements
 - What attention does the regulator give RPL processes, tools and understanding of this at time of the initial registration audit and at re- registration?

- Assessment skills of the VET Workforce:
 - The new requirements as of 1 January 2017 under the 2015 RTO standards for TAE trainers and assessors to hold a higher level qualification either the Diploma in VET or Diploma in Training Design and development should assist in this aspect
 - On the same basis then person training and assessing the Diploma in VET and the Diploma in Training Design and Development should also have a higher level qualification e.g. a degree or post graduate qualifications in Adult education
 - A vocational qualification higher than the qualification being trained and assessed by a trainer/ assessor also may be valuable – so there is a higher level understanding of the vocational content, which may also contribute to improved design and development of assessment
 - A minimum time period for TAE assessors / trainers in training and assessing prior to training and assessing in TAE may not be practical to enforce. The obligation to ensure appropriate skills for a trainer & assessor already exists in the 2015 RTO Standards at **Clauses 1.13 – 1.16 Employ skilled trainers and assessor** - should be sufficient to address this.
 - **Standard 2: the Operations of the RTO are quality assured** of the 2015 RTO standards – implies that trainers and assessor performance would be monitored – as they are part of the quality of training. Should the new standards be allowed to address these requirements
 - As the Cert IV and the Diploma are qualifications in the VET sector – there is a practical component by default - more detail and specific requirements may be needed in the assessment criteria such as the Addendum to the TAE training package prepared by IBSA

in January 2016 – where the volume and frequency of assessment requirements have been strengthened.

- The higher level requirements of the 2015 RTO Standards should be given the opportunity to improve assessment before making any other changes to the operating environment of the RTO

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

- 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?
 - 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?
- 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?

COMMENT:

- The current RTO standards have only been in force since January 29015 – with some elements yet to come on line - and as yet have not been given the opportunity to address issues associated with the quality of assessment and the quality of trainers and assessors – the outcomes of audits need to be reviewed to see if there is an improvement overall – before further changes are made to industry requirements

Core unit in the TAE

- To include the Diploma unit *TAEASS502B Design and develop assessment tools*, raises the issue as to what is the expectation of an entry level Trainer and Assessor in industry.
 - The Cert IV TAE is considered the entry level qualification for a trainer and assessor – - the current qualification indicates these trainer and assessor is only expected to:
 - Plan assessment [TAEASS401 Plan assessment activities and processes]
 - Assess competence [TAEASS402 Assess competence]
 - Participate in assessment validation [TAEASS403 Participate in assessment validation]
- If the role of the assessor is to design and develop assessments rather than use existing assessments, the skills required are “design and develop” – such as *TAEASS502B Design and develop assessment tools*
- The decision as to whether staff require the higher level qualification/ unit of competence in design – should be left with the RTO –dependent upon how they design and develop their assessments. Where assessors are provided with assessments – developed by someone with higher level skills- most assessors would only need the current units of competence. – someone who acts as lead assessor – may require the higher level qualification.
- There may also be the need to consider what skills and knowledge requirements there are for assessment validation – and the possible inclusion of the unit: *TAAASS503A Lead assessment validation processes* in the Cert IV TAE - more for the operator of the RTO – or someone assuming the role of “Lead assessor”

- The inclusion of *TAEASS503A lead assessment validation* as a core in both these Diplomas may also be of assistance
- The nature of vocational education and training is that someone who has experience in a vocational field is able to share their skills and knowledge and teach the next generation of worker in their field. There is a possibility some of these trainers and assessors may not have strong literacy and numeracy skills which may impact their ability to assess.
- There may also be a need for trainers and assessors to have skills and knowledge to train and assess people with low levels of literacy and numeracy also – as suggested in the training packages put for endorsement in 2015.
- Is there also a need to stipulate the minimum qualifications of persons operating an RTO – so they are capable of design and development of assessment – along with leading assessment validation i.e. someone holds the Diploma in VET or Training Design and Development
- The inclusion of TAE ASS503A lead assessment validation as a core in both these Diplomas may also be of assistance

Majority considerations:

- The minority view point may be valuable as a voice to consider – given the different structure and driver of RTOs . If the majority voice is listened to – it is the commercially driven RTOs who will determine the future of training and assessment - do they have the same agenda as an enterprise RTO or an industry association? With profit as a key driver – lifting standards may not be in the interest of the commercially driven RTOs.

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

- 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?
- What are the barriers to establishing a national professional association? How could these be overcome?
- What would be the most useful guiding purpose of a national professional association?

COMMENT:

- The current RTO standards have only been in force since January 2015 – with some elements yet to come on line - and as yet have not been given the opportunity to address issues associated with the quality of assessment and the quality of trainers and assessors. The professional development requirements could address this in same way e.g. requirements imposed by RTO committed to quality training and assessment of their Trainers and Assessors belonging to AHRI or the Australia Training and Development Institute.
- The findings of audits of RTOs now being audited to these new standards should be closely monitored to determine if further action such as an industry association is required
- Given there are existing associations is there really a need for further organisations. There are vocational bodies that many trainers / assessor may belong to – and would be expected to belong too as part of maintaining their currency – these organisations could set up [or may already have] membership streams for trainers and assessors
- In many high risk vocational areas – trainers and assessors already have to demonstrate their currency and competency to assess high risk work – introducing a mandatory professional membership may not offer great value – to these people
- I belong to 4 professional associations – 3 vocational [2 of which have special interest groups in education in the vocational area] and learning & development association. These currently cost me \$1000 pa – and I use them to maintain currency – they are valuable resources for me – that keep me current. Vocational specific associations offer great resources – and should be encouraged – rather than mandatory membership a VET association – which reinforces a compliance mindset – rather than quality training and assessment. RTOs should be driving the professional development of their trainers/ assessors – they are obliged to provide quality trainer and assessors.

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

- 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
 - register VET practitioners?
- 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?
- Are there any existing organisations that could fulfil this role?

COMMENT:

- The new 2015 RTO standards should be given the opportunity to prove their worth at assisting the professional development for trainers and assessors
- Use the current regulatory environment to drive the quality of training and assessment through those organisations providing the training and assessment. If an RTO cannot meet the requirements they should not be in the market place providing the training and assessment services.
- The introduction of a VET professional association will impose increased administrative and compliance burdens upon the RTO , with the need to check and monitor Trainer/ assessor membership
 - Given the need to maintain vocational currency also – to be able to do both – training & assessment and vocational development in one organisational may be valuable.
 - Where a professional body offers certification as a “professional” in a certain field e.g. Risk Management Institution of Australasia offers certification as a risk management professional – they could offer Risk management trainer and assessor certification also – adopting a national standard for training and assessment
 - The choice of membership of a professional body should be linked to the development plan of trainer and assessor to maintain their currency = vocationally and in training & Assessment – overseen by the RTOs that they work for.

Additionally – changes to regulatory environment – with more frequent audits of RTOs may be more valuable – drive the quality of training and assessment through those organisations providing the training and assessment. If an RTO cannot meet the requirements they should not be in the market place providing the training and assessment services.

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

- 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?
- What value would a VET professional association, or associations, add to the VET sector?
- What mechanism would sustain a professional association, for example, membership fees from individuals or RTOs?
- Should VET teacher and trainer membership with a professional association be mandatory or voluntary?

COMMENT:

- The new requirements of the 2015 RTO standards need to be given the opportunity to drive improvements in training and assessing before this decision is made along with more detailed consideration of existing industry, professional and licensing bodies.
- There are existing bodies/ organisations addressing specific vocational and regulatory needs – and if introduced a trainer/ assessor may find themselves requiring membership of 2 or more bodies – and increased
- If the fees were paid by an RTO on behalf of the trainer/assessor – an Enterprise RTO may find it faces significantly increased operational costs – which could strain possibly limited financial resources.
- There would be an increased administrative burden imposed upon the RTO to manage these records, increasing the cost doing business.

6. Discussion questions – capability frameworks:

- 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?

COMMENT:

- It is assumed that the current Cert IV & Diploma were developed using an existing framework to address the competencies required by training and assessment professionals - as how were the current qualifications – at Cert IV and Diploma level were developed if there is no existing capability framework.
- Does this mean the content of the qualifications is not addressing the competencies required as training and assessment professionals
- If assessment validation is a key requirements – why isn't the need to lead assessment validation a core skill?
- Existing public frameworks such as the Vet Practitioner Capability Framework – need to be publicised – rather than reinvent the wheel
<https://www.ibsa.org.au/sites/default/files/media/VET%20Capability%20Framework%20Implementation%20Guide.pdf>
- This framework could be used by an RTO for workforce planning, professional development and in the recruitment process as part of their business activities associated with quality trainers and assessors.
- More professional HR practice in RTOs may assist with this .
- Trainers and assessors holding a higher level vocational qualification than the level they are training and assessing in – may be a useful inclusion in the capability framework

7. Discussion questions – increasing industry confidence:

- 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?
- 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?
 - Who should regulate the tests?
 - Should such a test be a pass/fail dichotomy, or would it be more important to use the test to identify gap training?
 - 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?
 - Should the results of tests be made public at the RTO level?

COMMENT:

- With the changes in the VET sector – with new RTO standards introduced in 2015 and the recent changes from Industry skills Councils to Service Skills Organisations etc. – the impact of these changes should be observed and used to guide future direction –and provide continuous improvement opportunities
- The new IRCs and SSOs – may need to make themselves more visible – in the validation process – and share validation findings with all RTOs in the industry sector –
- External testing – may be valuable in high risk work – and as part of a licence-
- Alternatively maybe RTOs need to be endorsed by the licensing body in high risk work , such as already done for the construction Induction and asbestos removal etc. – where being an RTO is not sufficient - and those with specialist knowledge of the vocational requirements review the RTO for vocational requirements– which ASQA may not be able to do – as they cannot be expected to be experts in vocational areas

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

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

COMMENT:

- The skills and knowledge for validation may also need to be addressed in the qualifications as currently the Cert IV TAE only requires participation in assessment validation.
- It is important to understand what role the IRCs and SSOs can play in the validation of assessment.
- RTO operations and their staff need stronger validation skills in the first instance

9. Discussion questions – specific models:

- 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.
- 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?
- 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?
- 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.
- 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?
- 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?

COMMENT:

- External assessment requires clear definitions and criteria
- Independent validation
 - RTO standards to address – and may need to be strengthened to address all assessments and all items on scope – a percentage to be undertaken each year – and all items with full validation every 2 -3 years
 - The cost and administrative burden to an RTO also need to be considered
 - Oversight of reassessment should not rest with the offending RTO – and may sit best with an industry association or licensing body
- Should the skills and knowledge for validation be addressed also?
- External assessment
 - High risk qualifications may need external assessment – but this then begs the questions of what is high risk?

- High risk criteria may need to consider training outcome where the health and safety of the end user, wider community, the practitioner. This could include many qualifications – what is public safety – could this include hairdressers? Food handlers? Health care workers? Or is it high risk trades e.g. electrical, aviation?
- Independent validation
 - RTO standards to address – and may need to be strengthened to address all assessments and all items on scope – a percentage to be undertaken each year – and all items with full validation every 2 -3 years
- Oversight of reassessment should not rest with the offending RTO – and may sit best with an industry association or licensing body

10. Discussion questions – industry expectations and graduate capabilities:

- 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?

COMMENT:

- Training package development could also include the development of sample assessments – which would be overseen by the IRCs and SSOs.
- These samples could be used to guide the development of assessments
- Provision of sample assessment strategy could also be part of training package development

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

- 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?
- 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?
- 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?
- 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?

COMMENT:

- The new 2015 RTO standards have effectively increased the obligations of RTOs – however there may be sub standards RTOs offering substandard assessments until such time that all RTOs are audited against the new standards.
- The focus of the regulator could be to:
 - Require more evidence of assessment strategies and tools, RPL processes & tools, and the standards required of trainers / assessors within an RTO in initial registration audits
 - Shorter time frame from initial registration to re- registration audits. –
 - Alternatively – a risk based audit cycle – where an audit score is assigned – such as the audit scheme used by the NSW Food authority for the Vulnerable Persons Food Safety Scheme <http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/ip/audits-and-compliance/audits-of-licensed-businesses>
- Keeping assessments longer is not an indicator of quality – a robust process and tools for assessment design and validation and management of trainer/ assessors should be sufficient

12. Discussion questions – enforcement:

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

COMMENT:

- The current RTO standards have only been in force since January 2015 – with some elements yet to come on line - and as yet have not been given the opportunity to address issues associated with the quality of assessment and the quality of trainers and assessors – the outcomes of audits need to be reviewed to see if there is an improvement overall – before further changes are made.
- Additionally the changes in the VET sector –and the recent changes from Industry skills Councils to Skills Service Organisations etc. – the impact of these changes should be observed and used to guide future direction –and provide continuous improvement opportunities
- The Regulator maybe needs powers around the audit cycle such as the audit and compliance model used by the NSW Food Authority: <http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/ip/audits-and-compliance/audits-of-licensed-businesses>
- While this is likely to increase the cost and administrative burden of RTOS – it may contribute to improved quality of assessment.

13. Discussion questions – cancellation and reassessment:

- 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?
- 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?
 - 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?
 - 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?
 - Who should deliver the reassessment? Are there any circumstances in which it would be appropriate for the original RTO to undertake the reassessment?
 - 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?
- 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?
- What linkages with income support eligibility should apply for graduates impacted by any recall of qualifications?

COMMENT:

- The current RTO standards have only been in force since January 2015 – with some elements yet to come on line - and as yet have not been given the opportunity to address issues associated with the quality of assessment and the quality of trainers and assessors – the outcomes of audits need to be reviewed to see if there is an improvement overall – before further changes are made to industry requirements.
- Need to consider the same high risk factors covered in Question 9.
- Reassessment –
 - With another RTO – that has met a defined standard performance standard.
 - Need to also consider regional location limitations and the associated costs
 - Industry bodies for licensing could also be involved in reassessment where appropriate
- The issue of time frame for cancellation for an individual's qualification seems reasonable – as the lack of competence may be related to a lack of currency in the field rather than the quality of their assessment initially when trained and assessed.

