



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.

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:

BHI Group thinks that it is appropriate for a select number of RTOs to deliver TAE qualifications or skill sets allowing for access equity. We consider that the current relatively large number could be reduced to a targeted number of RTOs focussed on high-quality provision. The training and delivery should be high quality, not to be provided by questionable RTOs with ill-equipped teachers/assessors. Delivery at BHI should be the measurement of quality. Selected RTOs should be the deliverers of the courses.

BHI Group does not think that RTOs should be restricted from issuing TAE qualifications or skill sets to their own trainers and assessors given the strict regulatory environment. External enrolments should be encouraged so that students gain the best training and assessment experiences.

BHI Group thinks that the mandated trainer qualification Certificate IV TAE and industry and vocational experience offer a good start for new VET teachers, however the 'Cert IV TAE' on its own is inadequate for continuing 'career' VET teachers whose main work is VET teaching. It is recognised

that educators within the VET system must be doubly professional, that is they must be fully conversant with the industry/field within which they teach or train, as well as being able to expertly educate students. While having Cert IV TAE and industry/vocational experience offers an excellent introduction, allowing Certificate IV TAE qualified 'only' people to continue to teach for many years shows a lack of recognition that education is a profession in its own right with an attendant body of knowledge. However these VET trainers, whilst often consummate professionals in their field of industry/expertise, often lack the requisite skills and knowledge to actually teach. We suggest that the Cert IV TAE be a suitable beginning to work under a simplified supervision plan – a sort of 'P plates' for VET teachers. To get the 'full license' they would have to engage in further training and produce a portfolio demonstrating and documenting their practice (as a modern version of a supervised teaching practicum).

BHI Group has traditionally provided professional development opportunities for our workforce in the mandatory Certificate IV competencies and the higher level Diploma and also postgraduate qualifications at master and graduate certificate level. BHI believes that VET teachers delivering such qualifications to other VET teachers should hold university-level teaching qualifications (including post graduate) to best teach and assess in this area. This will eliminate substandard performance within the qualifications. The demonstration of exemplary teaching skills within the TAE is essential if BHI or other RTOs are to have credibility both within and outside organisations. This needs to be monitored and only highly skilled teachers and assessors should represent BHI Group. BHI Group considers that the circumstances that would support a change requiring some VET teachers and assessors to hold university level or higher-level VET qualifications, for example, practitioners delivering and assessing TAE qualifications and skill sets would be the transition to the recognition that VET teaching and training is a profession in its own right requiring advanced theoretical and critical skills and knowledge. This then provides a higher expectation and hopefully greater recognition of the skills and knowledge. Also worthy of consideration is the standard required of the students and the recognition that the higher the quality of the teacher training, the better equipped will be the skills of the student.

BHI Group strongly supports programs and activities to ensure its workforce is able to maintain industry currency. Employing staff who maintain a work role in both VET and their substantive vocation assists in maintaining currency and links with industry practice. This can be practically challenging as some teaching staff are engaged fulltime, which then limits essential contact with industry. Such staff can be used to help update the currency of long-serving VET staff. BHI Group would support a model that encourages teachers to continue links with industry and seek opportunities to engage or collaborate with industry to maintain their vocational currency. This would be mutually beneficial to students, teachers and industry.

A stringent approach to Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) needs to be used to ensure that RPL is commensurate with learning within a program. RPL for TAE qualifications or skill sets must be granted with sufficient rigour to ensure the quality of student assessment. BHI Group thinks the practice of recognition of prior learning for TAE qualifications or skill sets should be restricted.

BHI Group argues that the assessment skills of the VET workforce can be improved through changes to the delivery and assessment of TAE qualifications and skill sets. Reiterating the imperative that VET teachers be recognised as professional practitioners TAE qualifications and skill sets should only

be delivered by VET practitioners who can demonstrate a significant period of training and/or assessing employment history in the VET sector.

BHI Group argues that the TAE Certificate IV and/or Diploma should require a practical teaching component. This practical component, Supervised Professional Experience (SPE), could be on a par with higher education qualifications, and we suggest could comprise from 10-30 days. Possibly one week for the Cert IV and one month for the Dip VET. SPE programs would offer genuine opportunities to establish strong links between the skills and knowledge attained in coursework and the practical experience of training. This will ensure that learning is effectively put into practice.

The Certificate IV is a base qualification that provides a way of understanding competency-based training and assessment, and the use of Training Packages, but has limited if any educational or pedagogic content, and no training on how to understand a broad range of learners, learning styles, and learning resources. This has largely been the responsibility of the trainer/ assessor. Where they have limited skills themselves it is not possible to model this for their students.

BHI Group would support a balanced approach that recognises different preparation requirements for different levels of teaching responsibility and facilitates entry to VET teaching or moving in and out of VET teaching roles for industry experts, rather than creating barriers to entry that dissuade industry experts from bringing their knowledge and skills to teaching in VET.

BHI Group considers that entrants to the TAE Diploma should be required to demonstrate employment history in the VET sector before being issued with the qualification or have completed a requisite number of hours or days undertaking equivalent SPE. BHI Group strongly supports programs and activities to ensure its workforce is able to maintain industry currency. Employing staff who maintain a work role in both VET and their substantive vocation assists in maintaining currency and links with industry practice. Such staff can be used to help update the currency of long-serving VET staff. BHI Group would support a model that encourages teachers to continue links with industry and seek opportunities to engage or collaborate with industry to maintain their vocational currency. This should be mutually beneficial to students; teachers and industry.

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:

BHI Group considers that the TAE Certificate IV be changed to include a core unit on the design and development of assessment tools. As assessment is crucial to judging whether the student is competent in the given situation, it is imperative that teachers have the capacity to develop relevant assessment instruments. This would improve assessment outcomes for students as the teacher would be better equipped to deliver targeted assessments as well as have the advanced skills and knowledge to be able to adjust an assessment instrument to suit the student as required. We contend that educators can play an ongoing role in the relationship between industry, employers and students as knowledge and skill needs change over time, and are well-placed to develop and adapt training materials and assessments as required. It is not the training packages that deliver the knowledge and skills, but rather educators. Gavin Moodie (2015) argues that the discussion papers 'continue the long and systematic exclusion of educators from participating in decisions about vocational education policy. This has led to the erosion of the educational value of vocational education'. Asking practitioners, who understand both student diversity and the qualifications, is vital.

Students find the existing *TAEASS502B Design and develop assessment tools*, by far the most difficult unit in the Diploma of VET – it should not be included at Cert IV level as it currently exists. It requires a sophisticated knowledge base and developed skills in assessment design, not found in Cert IV-level students. Perhaps a similar unit looking at the design and development of assessment tools could be written for the Cert IV to develop these skills, but not at the level offered in the Diploma. BHI Group welcomes the focus on assessment tool design and would support the development of new unit on the design and development of assessment tools at the Cert IV level.

It is imperative that new entrants seeking to be trainers and assessors are introduced to all aspects of the role of educator that they will be required to undertake. It would be appropriate that specialist unit/s to address more advanced aspects of assessment sit at the diploma-level.

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:

BHI Group would support the introduction of a VET teacher association to maintain the professional standing of VET teachers and promote the profession. Such a profession might allow for and recognise levels of VET teachers i.e novice to expert.

To be credible, graded membership could be offered as with other professions.

A VET teachers association of which membership requires a set amount of continuing professional development annually, as modelled in other professions would encourage individual teachers to take responsibility for their own professional development and subsequently build the professional standing of VET teachers.

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:

BHI Group supports the importance for educator input into training package development so that matters of pedagogy are addressed, and allowance is made for best practice as regards training.

A national professional association could undertake to coordinate, approve and 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 more professionals; act as an advocate and voice for VET trainers and assessors; and interact with industry to respond to their emerging needs.

BHI supports the idea of notional VET practitioner registration, as this would also promote the development of valid and current teaching qualifications in the sector. A professional association could monitor professional development as a requirement. National coordination would ensure consistency and parity for those training packages that are delivered and accredited nationally. This would enhance, rather than detract from, existing professional development undertaken through membership of existing groups, or that which is currently organised by individual RTOs.

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:

BHI Group would see that Model A most closely aligns with the contemporary environment and would thus be more easily implemented. It allows for the current complex funding and accreditation frameworks as well as for the discrepancies between public and privately funded institutions.

A VET professional association/s would support the professionalism of the educators within the sector, and be able to valuably represent the sector to industry and the community.

BHI Group considers that a mechanism that would sustain such a professional association, would need support from membership fees from individuals and from RTOs who benefit from the professionalism of their staff.

BHI Group supports the model where continuing professional development is a shared responsibility between individual teachers and training providers. A VET teachers' association of which mandatory membership requires a set amount of continuing professional development annually, as modelled in other professions would encourage individual teachers to take responsibility for developing themselves and in turn build the professional standing of VET teachers.

Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registration is not voluntary and without it teachers cannot be employed in both primary or secondary schools. There is an annual fee and teachers can be audited for currency in both teaching and professional development. There is some merit in professional rigour as often those who would most benefit from membership of such an association do not join if it is voluntary.

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:

The capability frameworks that have been developed or are currently being developed provide insight into the detailed and behaviourally-specific descriptions of the key behaviours, and underlying skills, knowledge, abilities and attributes, which are required for successful performance as trainer and assessor in the VET sector. While BHI Group supports the development of the VET Practitioner Capability Framework it is the the implementation of those capabilities that needs to be addressed. Now that they have been identified, there is an opportunity to develop these attributes in VET professionals where possible. These attributes are currently being addressed by BHI Group's teaching validation program and personalised professional development is undergoing a design process.

BHI Group has re-worked the VET Practitioner capability framework developed initially by IBSA to meet the Institute requirement to design a teaching enhancement program that will improve the student experience at BHI Group. The four domains of quality teaching titles remain the same but the framework behind has been structurally altered. The BHI Group rubric positions teacher skill sets as incomplete, emerging, consolidating and established and has designed a teacher self-assessment tool to commence the process of self-reflection and identification of areas for development. The self-assessment tool is administered in conjunction with the online teacher induction to ensure teacher development needs are addressed at the beginning of employment as either sessional, contract or ongoing teacher positions. This teacher induction is also provided for existing teachers to refresh and review their VET knowledge, particularly at times of Industry change such as the implementation of new standards.

The BHI Group teaching enhancement capability framework has reformed the skill areas of the IBSA Framework to reflect enablers of quality teaching. These include Innovative and effective course design, teaching environment and equipment, course wellness, business administration process to support teaching and compliance.

The Draft VET Teaching Capability Framework released by L. H. Martin Institute through the VET Development Centre is a thorough exploration of the teacher skills in relationship to their Professional Knowledge, Professional Practice and Professional Learning, but has a lesser emphasis on the skills required of the teacher to maintain their place in the industry. The place in industry is critical not just to be able to draw on networks to create relevant learning experiences but to actually be a member of that vocational community and to model 'how to be' and other non-written and non-verbal competencies that make the industry member recognisable to other members of the community.

The VET sector is highly regulated and the teaching practice must be designed to meet quality teaching as well as compliance requirements. The Draft VET Teaching Capability Framework does not include compliance or the ability to accommodate the ASQA Standards into practice to support

quality teaching in the framework. We believe that this is an important domain of quality teaching and should be reflected within the framework. The Framework uses language effectively to reinforce the importance and professionalism of VET Teaching. The Framework begins with Professional Knowledge, Professional Practice and Professional Learning which effectively frames and positions the context of the VET Teacher.

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:

It is good practice to have appropriately-experienced industry representatives review the way and on what students are being assessed to ensure assessments are work relevant. But having industry formally mandated to validate assessments is fraught with issues. These include:

- Industry are not training and curriculum specialists, most find units of competency foreign and without guidance from said educational/specialists, will not be able to provide informed validation of assessments.
- It is difficult for RTOs to get industry involved. Industry is not that interested in taking time out to participate in assessment validation. Time is money and most do not see assessment validation as their role. There is little incentive or disincentive for them to participate unless directly involved or benefiting from the training (e.g. employers of those being trained by the RTO especially if they are paying for training).
- Industry engagement seems to be an area of teaching for which staff display uncertainty. This area requires development within the sector.
- A test is a snapshot of ability and if this is considered important, then a more reliable checking process needs to be put into place – an industry practicum would be preferable.

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:

With the advent of Training Packages and stronger focus on workplace performance there has been a particular emphasis on simulation and its benefits to enhanced learning. Most of the Training Packages state that the assessment of competence should take place in a workplace or a simulated work environment.

According to Training Package Assessment Guidelines if the training is carried out within the TAFE institute, the training should be in a simulated work environment closely resembling the expected workplace environment. The Training Package Assessment Materials Project states that assessment should ... involve the candidate in completing or dealing with a task, activity or problem in an off-the-job situation that replicates the workplace context. Thus a mix of training workplaces and simulated workplace environments would ensure optimum student success, for example, hospitality students should receive their training in a training restaurant at times the industry operates i.e. up to 10.30 pm, while automotive apprentices should be trained in a simulated automotive workshop, hairdressers in a simulated salon. It is likely that when the training is closely tied to the workplace conditions or simulation, the minimum amount of time is required to bring about acquisition of the work related skills and workplace attitudes ensuring an efficient training environment.

Delegation of Regulatory Responsibility allows for judicious development of training that quickly responds to the dynamic industrial environment, which addresses both the needs of industry and worker. While this could be applied to local industry, it is imperative that national consistency remain within all industries and qualifications and that all vocational qualifications and skills be included in the national system. While it may not always be possible to deliver certain qualifications, the broader the availability, the more inclusive opportunity becomes for a workforce that are often willing to travel if necessary for work and training. The mining sector would be just one example of this phenomenon where workforce needs have shifted dramatically over recent years.

Educator Delegation of Regulatory Responsibility and self-accreditation coupled with industry collaboration allows for quick responsiveness to emerging industrial and workforce changes and could be applicable to development of many accredited courses.

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:

It is difficult to engage people from industry who have the skills and knowledge required at the unit level to give feedback on assessments. Often these people are not allowed to take time out from work to attend, or are not interested in participating as they do not see it as their responsibility. There needs to be some incentive for the right people from industry to participate.

Validating assessments requires more than just checking if assessments are relevant to industry. It is not appropriate to expect industry to participate in a full validation session, but rather to provide input only on areas that ensure the assessments are valid.

Caution is needed about responding in a knee-jerk fashion to industry feedback on training and assessment, often they have very individual/specific expectations or too high expectations of VET training, outside the scope of the unit/s.

Involving the right industry and RTO people, in a well planned approach to the training and assessment review (as opposed to full validation), can provide great benefit to assessments, training and sustained partnerships between industry and RTOs. But this takes skilled people to coordinate and implement at the RTO level.

Option A (outlined above) – improving RTO practice, for example, through a principles-based model and best practice guide to support the VET workforce in identifying the most appropriate techniques to validate assessment. Do not introduce more regulation, but more encouragement and support to RTOs to meet the Standards for RTOs 2015 which include the requirement for independent validation.

There needs to be a concerted focus on validation across the sector to ensure that assessment tools and processes are professional and valid.

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:

Clear and detailed descriptions about what graduates of VET qualifications and units can do would help clarify to industry the scope of the training and outcomes. Industry often does have too high expectations of training, expecting it to provide them with people with skills equivalent of employees of many years.

The new Skills Service Organisations (SSOs) together with Reference Committees (IRCs) were created with a view to provide a new model and a new opportunity to enhance and support industry’s role in the VET sector. The Federal Government (Government) argues that the new approach will place industry engagement at the centre of training product development and will cement industry’s role in overseeing training product content.

Specifically, it is claimed that the new model will support industry to:

- engage more employer feedback in training product development
- embed the national character of qualifications, not only for the benefit of seamless operations across borders, but also enhanced career opportunities for graduates of VET
- ensure the quality of VET qualifications is retained

BHI Group welcomes the Government goals identified for SSOs and IRCs. We support a fresh look at the shape and usefulness of existing training packages for a 21st century workforce. Training packages should embody ‘work ready skills and knowledge’. Skills and knowledge that embrace new thinking such as the importance of innovation and entrepreneurship.

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 Standards for RTOs 2015 do not need to be revised. There are clear rules around assessment, how it is to be conducted, by whom and validated.

A requirement for RTOs to retain all assessment samples for a longer period would not improve the quality of assessment as it is already difficult for RTOs to store assessments for 6 months – physically or electronically.

The focus of regulation could move to evaluating assessment outputs by having ASQA auditors conduct validation on a sample of students when auditing RTOs. Add spot validations to ASQA's scope of activities to encourage RTOs to make sure they are maintaining the standards for assessments throughout their registration period. This function must be managed by ASQA, but they can employ people or engage consultants who specialise in assessment validation and industry representatives to participate as needed.

It makes little sense to have RTOs that train only and assessment is undertaken by a separate organisation, this is likely to result in poor alignment between training and assessment and impact negatively on the student experience.

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:

Requiring re-assessment of students impacts negatively on students who may need to demonstrate competency again. The aim of the regulator is to enforce high stake penalties on RTOs that persuade them to provide quality assessments rather than penalise students. One approach may be to include quality indicator results/completion rates and outcomes of audits on training.gov.au.

The characteristics of the RTO ought not influence the response.

The methods that should be available to the regulator to manage RTOs that are repeatedly non-compliant with assessment requirements are the ability to deregister repeat offenders. That is the whole point of the Standards; RTOs are registered to deliver training and assessment according to the Standards. If they don't they are no longer able to be registered.

Current regulatory practice does not provide adequate transparency and disclosure. More can be done to communicate with the general public about the quality of different providers in terms of completion rates and audit outcomes.

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:

Cancelling qualifications of students is a last resort, but where clearly fraudulent and inadequate training and assessment has occurred it could be an option. However, where this occurs the following could be offered to students:

- a. Refunds for all fees associated with the training (paid from an insurance scheme all RTOs must have).
- b. Option to be re-assessed (paid for from the insurance scheme) by another approved RTO (RPL option).
- c. Option to enrol in the qualification to complete 'proper' training and assessment through another approved RTO.