



## 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](mailto: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:

The Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) is pleased to present a response to the Quality of assessment in vocational education and training – Discussion Paper.

QCEC is the peak strategic body with state-wide responsibilities for Catholic schools in Queensland. QCEC does not own or operate any schools but has delegated roles in relation to liaising with State and Federal Governments, negotiating and distributing government funds to Catholic schools and facilitating collaboration, consultation and planning among Catholic schooling authorities.

There are 300 schools administered by five diocesan schooling authorities: Brisbane, Cairns, Rockhampton, Toowoomba and Townsville and 17 Religious Institutes. There are about 146 500 students and 17100 staff. The 106 Catholic secondary schools in Queensland have enrolments of about 68000 students. Of these 67 are Registered Training Organisations (RTOs).

In 2015, 10642 students graduated from Queensland Catholic secondary schools and of these 4969 or 49% received a VET qualification. There were 1098 (10.3%) graduates in 2015 who had enrolled in a School-based Apprenticeship or Traineeship during their schooling.

Whilst QCEC believes there is a need for a robust regulatory regime it is the case that the strongest platform for high-quality assessment change is to ensure that teachers/ trainers are given the training or professional development in what is quality assessment. This is a proven method which builds teacher capacity and confidence in the education system as a whole.

QCEC values and supports the learning of all students and the range of learning opportunities undertaken by students including pathways to work, training and further education. We therefore support, in principle, proposals which will positively impact on the quality of trainers operating across the VET Sector, including those who provide training in Catholic schools.

There is a strong sense that the quality of delivery, the time expectations and the standards at completion for the TAE have significant variation across providers and furthermore there is often difficulty in accessing quality training providers for the TAE. In seeking remedies to quality and related issues, QCEC believes the focus should be on capacity building initiatives and therefore supports the following:

- Strategies that limit TAE delivery to high quality providers provided there is no increase in costs or reduction of services to regional, rural or remote communities
- Development of criteria for high quality delivery of the TAE RTOs with scope to deliver the TAE should not provide this qualification to their own staff, however this restriction to be for the TAE only.
- The principle of RPL particularly for other educators who hold higher level qualifications in teaching and assessing so long as the transcripts of higher qualifications show a link to the units of competency in the TAE.
- The implementation of a practical component as a pre-service component of the TAE and also consideration of a more developmental approach to the acquisition of training and assessing skills extending to a classification system for trainers
- Initiatives that utilise learnings from other established systems from the school and university sectors to enhance the knowledge and skills of trainers

QCEC notes there are opportunities to make links and leverage common aspects of training and secondary teacher pre-service teacher preparation courses. One example would be the option to incorporate the TAE qualification into the current teacher training courses. This would seem a logical development given that VET programs are now core components of current school curriculum offerings across the country. In 2015 49% of student who completed Year 12 in Queensland Catholic schools exited with a VET qualification. The majority of students in Queensland now exit school with at least one VET qualification. It is reasonable therefore that some focus of teacher training courses should include a focus on the VET sector preferably through the delivery of the TAE qualification.

## 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:

QCEC believes that the alignment and relationship between teaching or training and assessing is an important feature of a quality system. There is qualified support for the re-inclusion of TAE ASS502B Design and develop assessment tools as a core unit in TAE. In providing this support, QCEC recognises that quality judgements rely on the application of standards within the assessment context and therefore trainers equally need support in making judgement about competency.

QCEC does not support the inclusion of TAE ASS502B Design and develop assessment tools as a specialist unit at the AQF Level 5 (diploma-level). The separation of training and assessing within the TAE weakens the VET system and quality of assessment. A key principle of assessment is that assessment aligns with planning, training and learning. Therefore designing and developing assessment is core learning that cannot be separated from principles about training design and implementation.

In the case of making any updates to the TAE, QCEC is unclear about what is meant by the proposal to “form judgements based on majority considerations”. It is unclear who are considered to be key stakeholders in this process and on what basis decision makers determine the quality and nature of arguments put forward. QCEC seeks further clarification in relation to this element of the discussion.

### 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:**

Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) recognises and supports educational research which identifies excellence in teaching (training) as the single most powerful influence on the achievement of learners (Hattie, 2009). We therefore commend and support in principle, proposals which focus on building the capacity of trainers in the VET Sector and promoting their professionalism.

QCEC supports the establishment of a national professional association for the VET sector subject to further consultation about the nature and purpose of the association and its relationship to other key stakeholders in the VET Sector including ASQA/other registering bodies.

Given the significant investment of public funds in the VET sector and the potential benefits to society through improved workforce capability that would accrue through improved trainer quality, QCEC believes that it would be appropriate for Australian Governments to assist in the development of professional skills of the VET workforce through funding the establishment of a National Professional Association for VET. Supporting the establishment of a national professional body provides Australian Governments with the opportunity to affirm the role of trainers as highly skilled professionals.

Potential barriers to establishing a national professional association may include the cost of implementation and industry wide acceptance of the association and its role, particularly if the association was set up such that it was viewed as “another layer of red tape”. This barrier would be overcome if the association was established in a way that its mandate was to support and advocate and confirm quality standards for the VET Workforce rather than being set up to primarily monitor or audit.

QCEC recognises the value that a national association can potentially provide in establishing a nationally consistent framework to describe the standard of practice for trainers in the VET sector and advocate for professional learning and initiatives which focus on building the capacity of trainers which is seen as an enabling factor in improving the quality of VET training and outcomes. The work of AITSL will provide some guidance to the framework that could be applied.

Another barrier is the diversity of managing VET in the various states and territories. A national program of professional development may not be as effective as having state based funded personnel to manage programs and network with key local stakeholders.

#### 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:

QCEC recognises the potential for a national professional association to positively impact the quality of trainers and therefore training in the VET Sector. We contend that any such body needs to have a very clear role and structure so that it does not become another compliance body but rather maintains a supportive role focussing on improving VET practitioner capability.

QCEC supports a national professional association being charged with developing, communicating and supporting the implementation of a capability or standards framework for VET Trainers and Assessors across all VET Industry Areas. It is suggested that the framework model the structure provided within the AITSL standards which describes performance at various levels of sophistication. It is also suggested that performance indicators be based on the AQF levels and take into consideration the level of risk inherent in different industry training areas. The IBSA VET Capability Framework also provides a model that has the potential to support the differentiation needed to reflect the complexity of the VET Sector.

In establishing a capability framework we recognise the opportunity to incorporate a provisional status within the framework, to acknowledge desired and required levels of industry currency and to differentiate the AQF level of qualification required to support demonstrations of performance at higher levels. The example below is included to provide an illustration of a differentiated framework for trainers and assessors:

- Provisional (Graduate) – TAE and current (minimum) requirements to train and assess and authorised to deliver Certs 1 & 2
- Proficient – TAE, specified additional industry experience and authorised to deliver Cert 3 & 4 and higher AQF levels
- Highly accomplished – Diploma level qualification and extensive industry experience.
- Lead – Bachelor Degree or above and extensive industry experience.

Such a proposal would allow the industry to focus on encouraging ongoing learning and development within the VET Workforce.

QCEC would support a national professional body identifying industry standards of performance for VET Trainers and Assessors taking control of the TAE with benefits including consistency in identifying key stakeholders including interacting with industry to respond to their emerging needs and what is considered VET currency.

Given a supportive and capacity building role, it would also be appropriate for a national professional body to engage in activities such as coordinating, approving or designing professional development programs related to professional standards (including TAE qualifications); acting as a 'help' desk to support individual trainers and assessors; coordinate the sharing of information through the use of social media; positively promoting the profession of VET trainers and assessors as an employment destination and career path to attract professionals and acting as an advocate and voice for VET Trainers and Assessors. It may not be necessary for this professional association to be a registering body, however it would be appropriate for the national professional body to provide advice about what is required for registration.

## 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:**

QCEC recognises the benefits of a nationally consistent approach to training and professional standards for VET Trainers and Assessors who are delivering nationally consistent training. Therefore, Model B is a preferred model.

QCEC recognises that a VET professional association will add value to the VET sector through supporting the development of trainers so that they have capacity to deliver high quality training, learning and assessment.

QCEC believes that mandatory registration will assist in support the establishment of consistent standards of performance amongst the VET Trainer Workforce. Fees associated with registration would appropriately be met by the individual, with employers having the opportunity to support trainers in meeting these fees. It is essential that the level of the fees are set to ensure they do not act as a disincentive to recruits to the VET Trainer and Assessor Workforce.

A preferred model would be to have an incorporated association (or similar legal entity) to receive and acquit any funding and act as a central administrative body. Each state and territory could then have 2 or 3 part time support officers who are very experienced VET trainers and assessors. The role of the support officers would be to respond to local inquiries; organise a program of professional development; take responsibility for a national conference when such conference is in their state or territory; report to the national body.

## 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:**

QCEC supports the development and implementation of a capability framework for VET Trainers and Assessors across all VET Industry Areas, recognising the possibility to build trainer capacity and develop a shared understanding of what quality training looks like across the VET Sector.

It is suggested that the framework, model the structure provided within the AITSL standards which describes performance at various levels of sophistication. It is also suggested that performance indicators be based on the AQF levels and take into consideration the level of risk inherent in different industry training areas. The IBSA VET Capability Framework also provides a model that has the potential to support the differentiation needed to reflect the complexity of the VET Sector.

## 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:

QCEC supports proposals that build the capacity of trainers to make quality judgements about trainee performance against the standards specified in the training package and thus improve industry confidence in VET outcomes, strengthening their validity, reliability and credibility in the wider community. Any changes need to be constructed in the best interests of learners and the quality of their training. They must also prioritise trainer professionalism and developing trainer capacity.

QCEC acknowledges that there may be a place for industry-endorsed, external assessment in some high risk training at some AQF levels. However QCEC would not in general support a proposal to implement industry-endorsed, externally administered tests as a practical alternative to ensure VET graduates are competent. QCEC is concerned that external assessment would reduce the quality of training as trainers would be encouraged to train to the assessment. More rigorous validation processes may meet the same end and possibilities in this area should be explored in the first instance. We also point out that in delivery of some high risk qualifications there is already industry administered additional assessment of competency and that these practices can continue.

QCEC does not believe that current issues being experienced about confidence in VET outcomes across the sector can effectively be addressed by the use of external assessment. There is a risk of introducing an additional layer of “red tape” that will not lead to improved quality of training and therefore improved outcomes for students. Instead QCEC believes that there is a need to address trainer quality/capacity in applying the key principles of assessment that together support quality learning outcomes. Assessment should remain flexible and enable authentic pedagogy to be enacted with clear alignment of planning, teaching, learning and assessment.

Assessment is authentic when it is placed within the natural processes of learning, allows for skill development, facilitates the provision of timely and appropriate feedback, provides flexibility for successful demonstrations of knowledge, understanding and skills and caters for diversity of learning needs.

QCEC believes that the establishment of the IRC's (Industry Reference Committees) supported by the SSO (Skills Service Organisation) will help to provide certainty and stability around the scope and make-up of training packages. RTO's have had difficulty keeping up with training package changes mid cycle and this has unnecessarily impacted on quality training.

QCEC also recognises the value of quality support of many of the ISC's (Industry Skills Councils) who have previously provided exemplars of quality assessment. Some did this well. However this needs to be more systematic and organised. Industry endorsed resources particularly the identification of possible activities or projects that will build trainer capacity that is aligned with industry expectations.

Provision of assessment exemplars can assist in the removal of ambiguity that may exist through varying interpretations of what is required in a training package. These examples, especially if they are devised through partnerships with industry, can provide trainers with quality exemplars that can be referenced when developing assessment items and support trainers to make consistent and aligned competency judgements. The exemplars provided by Innovation and Business Skills Australia (IBSA) provide a good example. A challenge to this may be the history of bodies/organisations protecting resources for training and assessment which has been to the detriment of quality outcomes. Sharing resources gives trainers a starting point that builds trainer capacity. The annotated work samples provided by ACARA in relation to the Australian Curriculum to demonstrate quality assessment and exemplify standards of work through student samples is an example of where this has worked well in an education context.

## 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:

QCEC values the involvement of industry in assessment however acknowledges that a varied interpretation of "industry" exists across the VET sector. It is not apparent how 'industry' could be defined in a clear way and whether efforts expended here would provide greater returns than previous suggestions that validated exemplars be made available to all trainers delivering a particular training package/qualification or competency.

There is general support for industry taking a lead role in the development of tools which define the specific industry skills identified by industry as essential 'job ready' skills. Industry, employers and RTOs need to be working together to remove any perceived misunderstanding about the terms 'competent' and 'job ready'. Defining the 'industry' to become involved is a significant challenge. Employers are predominately concerned with core skills for work whereas 'industry' is concerned with the relevance of 'employees' capability to apply skills and knowledge in specific areas of operations.

The definitions and descriptions of 'assessment validation' in the RTO Standards stresses that validation is to be conducted by persons who have both TAE and vocational qualifications and currency and are persons independent of the organisation having assessment validated. Having industry present at validation is not mandated. However, industry is supposed to be involved throughout the training and assessment procedures. This is a preferred model given, in the past, some employers and industry representatives did not feel comfortable about commenting on the more technical aspects of assessment design and many prefer to be involved in site visits and discussion with trainers and assessors on what represents quality tasks for the vocational qualification being undertaken.

The newly established Industry Reference Councils and Service Skills Organisations could take a lead role in supporting industries and defining the industry which needs to be involved in any validation of assessment or training. This group would then be best placed to develop online resources for RTOs which meet industry standards. These could then be accessible for all RTOs.

## 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:

QCEC contends that quality assessment needs to be aligned with the cycle of training and learning. QCEC is concerned that isolating assessment on the assumption that it is the “gatekeeper” to quality provides too narrow a focus that will not address existing concerns about the quality of VET outcomes. QCEC contends that we need to ensure adequate support around the whole training and learning process, including the development of assessment tools and the making of competency judgements.

QCEC suggest the way forward is to develop a framework that allows organisations to work to their strengths and be supported through their weaknesses.

QCEC agrees that the validity and reliability of trainer devised assessments could be enhanced through improvements to the current quality assurance validation processes outlined in the 2015 Standards for RTOs. However, any new processes should be trialled, with sufficient time allowed for meaningful feedback to inform refinements to processes prior to implementation. These processes may not be a one-size fits all model with the level of AQF and risk factor of the qualification guiding where enhanced processes may realise the most benefit. A guiding principle should be that the cost of implementing any new process is not outweighed by the potential benefits experienced by trainees in improved quality and increased confidence in the training they receive.

QCEC does not believe that reassessment of trainee competency after the issue of a qualification would enhance industry and wider community confidence in VET outcomes. This proposal would also not benefit trainees and allow them to engage confidently in VET.

## 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:**

There is a role for both Government and Industry to work in partnership to ensure a common understanding of national VET system outcomes. There is a need for further clarification in training packages to explain ‘competent’ at an AQF level (pathway or prevocational qualifications e.g. Certificate I in Engineering). Students may be deemed competent but may not be job ready at AQF level I or II.

A checklist developed by industry could assist in communication about ‘competent’ and ‘job ready’.

## 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:**

QCEC notes that the focus of these questions is on compliance and that the previously proposed alternative model provides a more holistic approach to delivering quality training outcomes.

QCEC maintains that VET is already a highly regulated area and that intensive compliance requirements already impact significantly on schools. These levels of compliance do not necessarily lead to better quality training in the training environment.

QCEC urges the working group to consider how effective the above proposals will be in improving quality compared to the cost of implementation which will necessarily be passed onto trainees in most cases.

## 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:**

QCEC does support validation processes that include looking at outputs (evidence) of student learning and recognises the importance of feedback about trainer impact to inform improvements in future training cycles.

QCEC supports the proposal to investigate moderation and verification models which focus on evidence of trainee performance being aligned to the training package.

### 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:**

QCEC does not believe that reassessment of trainee competency after the issue of a qualification would enhance industry and wider community confidence in VET outcomes. There is a risk that, rather than improving confidence in VET outcomes, this proposal (including the rescinding of qualifications) will have the opposite effect and in fact will erode confidence in the system. We believe that a pro-active approach would be to implement more stringent processes in organisations dealing with high risk qualifications.

Of significant concern is the likely impact on trainees who would not benefit and would risk their willingness to engage confidently in VET. QCEC acknowledges the complexity of this issue but does not believe that improved training outcomes will be achieved by trying to regulate the "grey" areas around competency.