



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:

The key point here is that there only needs to be 1 key Performance Criteria added to the Cert IV TAE to make it workable.

Demonstrated experience in delivering VET related units across at least 3 qualification levels to cohorts of at least 8 students in a face-to-face role. This would need to be demonstrated over a period of greater than 120 hours and the log book be certified by an employee of the RTO who already holds the higher level qualifications of the Diplomas.

Once this as well as the 10 units can be signed off as “competent” the qualification can be issued, but not before. This will reduce the “weekend warrior” style courses and also provide greater vigour to the process of allowing these people to “train” in the VET world. RPL is a legitimate assessment tool and should remain as long as ASQA (or subsequent regulator) are satisfied that the RPL process is rigourous and robust (which most are not).

This crosses over to another aspect but every VET trainer should be required to undertake a certain number of hours of practical experience each year to maintain their “currency” in a log book which is part of an annual re-registration process with a centralised national authority (aligned to the College of Teachers concept).

Use the new SSO system (PwC) and their industry IRC to revise the Cert IV and set a minimum time frame for delivery (say 6 months) and include the practical part, as suggest above, as this will need to be done after the completion of the 10 units, with no retrospectivity.

This will take the “dodgey” providers outside of the marketplace and 1 July 2017 would be an ideal date with 12 months for transition.

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:

Sorry but I find the questions confusing.

In simple terms a trainer in VET needs to be able to: -

Unpack a training package and undertand the component parts

Write materials that can be assessed to achieve the training package outcome

Provide materials that support the learning (face-to-face, e-version, distance version and blended)

Be flexible to provide reasonable adjustment to students as required

High assessment skills to determine “C” or “NYC” against all criteria

Networked and Linked to their specific industry

Hold a qualification higher than the one they are training (not only the same one)

If the units produce such a person, great. If not, then change the units. However, you need the rights people siting around the right tables making these decisions and at the moment you do not.

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:

Yes, but the question is what will happen to the plethora of ones out there now.

So yes there is a clear role for Government. The barriers will be built by those who have self-protectionist tendencies and therefore should be disregarded.

Simple: -

Set standards including annual CPD points

Set a fee

Take applications

Check against standards

Accept or decline membership

Have an appeals process

Enforce the fact that only "registered trainers" can be engaged by RTOs to deliver

Membership on a 3 year rolling basis only renewed on proof of PD and practical experience

Provide a consistent and guaranteed learning experience – same as for teachers at present.

ACPET does not offer individual membership so cannot represent trainers/ assessors only RTOs. VELG is a current option but does not have "teeth", which is what is required...so therefore a new entity is needed – "Australian College of VET Trainers"...set up capital needed but then self-sufficient over time based on membership fees...could even roll in NCVER and ACER into this mix to have a greater entity and save on duplicated admin costs

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:

Some of this has been covered in 3 above, BUT: -

Yes, all of the dot points mentioned could be covered by this new entity as one does not exist at present. There are many splinter groups, which reflects the current state of the industry.

National is a must as VET is a national project/ program

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:

A mandatory version of C with a national professional association as often we as trainers have a range of students who transact across State borders and being registered in multiple state would be counter productive and counter-intuitive.

Provide a better guarantee to students and Parents of students that the trainers were current and capable. Make RTOs meet guidelines by only using “registered trainers”, rid the industry of shonks or imported trainers.

Seed funding from Government and then self-sustaining from member registrations on an annual basis. Leave ACPET and TDA for various RTOs as commercial entities but have this as a professional association from VET Trainers only...albeit a compulsory one.

Having an association that is NOT MANDATORY is worse than having none.

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:

This is a “Nice to” but anything short of a mandatory “trainer association” is a waste of tax payers funds.

The cancers needs to be removed and this is the key to the process...the association will provide a “License to Train” ...and each RTO will only be able to trade if they have “licensed trainers” as staff or contractors...preferably the latter to ensure that the trainers meet their “currency” requirements by operating in the industry rather than just “training in the industry”.

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:

The use of the word “testing” is abhorant in this discussion as pass/fail is very different to Competent vs Not Yet Competent.

The methods of assessment should reflect real world practice and to the best of my knowledge “Passing a Test” is not common practice in most workplaces. There are tests for certain careers – example membership of PMI (Project Management Institute) is subject to a “test” but this works on the presumption that the candidate has Cert IV – Adv Dip in PM (or Higher Ed versions) and is practicing these skills in the real world. Assessment by doing and being observed doing on a number of occasions is far better than “regurgitating something in an exam” (once only).

Industry validation is a MUST and ASQA needs to ensure that this is the case – random checks on the current 50% rule...3 strikes and the RTO loses their licence to trade...simple

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:

Some RTOs just want to make \$s the quick and easy way.

Honest hardworking RTOs will invest time, effort and \$s in ensuring great trainers are delivering the latest up to date industry information to their students to make them “job ready”.

I will readily admit that I have worked with many and varied types along this spectrum.

Each RTO needs to put together a panel that best suits their needs – maybe industry organisations or maybe not, employers yes, a qualified “trainer” yes, some local Small Business owners yes, and ex-student maybe. A good cross –section is needed plus a good facilitator to make the job “happen”.

The new SSO/ IRC arrangement may work as long as the membership of these bodies are “representative” and funded...at present there are arguments that this is definitely NOT the case as the IRC are often “jobs for the boys (or girls)” and not representative of industry.

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:

Just look at the school teacher moderation model – this works so why not apply something similar to VET.

Limit what RTOs do have on their scope...this reduces risk and then apply specific terms and conditions on RTOs with high risk courses and ensure a direct linkage to industry as a mandatory condition of having a license.

The RTO is the body and the trainers are the "arms and legs"...strike at the heart and only the strong will survive. Stop playing around the edges and make so strong firm decisions about our future workers opting for VET as a training pathway.

Stop allowing them to be ripped off by some dodgy RTOs..they are investing time, effort and \$s into their own future...the least we can do is provide them with the best opportunity and not build new bridges for them to jump over.

Get it right, do it once and put them into the real world with the best chance for a role of their choosing. Remember that there can be separate roles for trainers and assessors...may be a single person is NOT able to both for the one student...you can be a trainer or an assessor or both ... BUT not for that same student.

This concept means that at least 2 people are looking at the same student before making the “C” or “NYC” decision.

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:

The training product needs to be industry endorsed (the role of SSO and IRC) and then “sold” to an RTO as an off the shelf product or alternatively the RTO develops their own resources (at own cost). Either way they need to meet ASQA standards.

The RTOs must employ “registered trainers” (see previous comments) who meet ASQA standards for currency (approved by industry).

The trainers and or trainers/ assessors deliver the content and then assess against this content and provide the outcome to the RTO. The RTO then ensures that this process meet their ASQA approved guidelines and then confirms the “C” or “NYC” decision which in turn builds toward a qualification.

The RTO issues the qualification which industry accepts and respects...

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:

As stated previously there are 2 options for assessments – a make or buy business decision.

If you choose to buy the organisations who produce these materials need to be regulated and audited to ensure that they meet current standards and then ASQA will look after the application of the assessment by the RTO. This ensures that the RTO has a guarantee from the writer as to the validity and currency of the material.

If an RTO decides to “build their own” these assessments materials should be “audited” before they are used to ensure that they meet the industry standards by the same organisation who are regulating the commercial providers (see above). The RTO will need to provide details of their industry panel as part of this process.

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:

Enforcement should be 3 strikes and you are out – there is too much leniency in the current situation.

If you make the decision to drive whilst drunk and are caught – you lose your license – you can appeal and have a limited licence – unless you have done it too many times and then there is no leniency.

Why not apply the same principle – the RTO is influencing the future life of their student – bad training with non-skilled trainers delivering historical information is very dangerous in a whole lot

of areas – they receive 2 warnings and then they are gone. Their students MUST BE protected via assurance schemes and the owners should face the full brunt of the law for breaking the “rules”...it is not “rocket science”.

If a school does not have appropriate governance in place funding is withdrawn and the CEO changed to make it better. Between ATO, ACCC and ASQA there is enough power to make the changes we need to have a strong healthy VET sector, so why not do it.....we all know the legend of Nero

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:

I have great difficulty with a qualification being cancelled. This impacts on the student who has invested time, effort and labour into a qualification that they consider "good" because the regulator ASQA (read government) has allowed them to trade.

Why should the student be made to pay for the errors of the RTO and their trainers.

RTOs need to bear the costs of any tuition assurance schemes (compulsory) same as any contract trainers need to have PI and PL insurance before they train.

There should be no recall of qualifications...just direct contact with the student explaining that the RTO they chose has not provided them with appropriate training and that "free of charge" another appointed trainer/ RTO will work with them to rectify the problem as cost to the previous RTO, its owners or directors. The students have paid once for the course they should to be charged again as the regulator need to ensure that all RTOs are "bona fide".

Any reassessment would need to be supervised by the regulator at cost to the original RTO and as long as it meets current industry guidelines the “who” is immaterial.