

Assessments of Competency Policy and Procedures

Policy

1. This policy is to support the Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015 – Standard 1 – Clause 1.8 and Clause 1.12.
2. The College implements an assessment system that ensures that assessment (including recognition of prior learning):
 - a) complies with the assessment requirements of the relevant training package or VET accredited course; and
 - b) is conducted in accordance with the Principles of Assessment and the Rules of Evidence.
3. This policy applies to the College's students and staff.
4. The CEO is responsible for the implementation of the policy and procedures and to ensure that staff are aware of its application and implement its requirements

Definitions

What is Competency?

Competency involves the specification of skills and knowledge and their application to a particular standard of performance required in the workplace. It embodies the ability to transfer and apply skills and knowledge to new situations and environments.

Aspects of work performance included in this concept involve:

- Performance at an acceptable level of technical skill;
- Organising one's tasks;
- Responding and reacting appropriately when things go wrong; and
- Transferring skills and knowledge to new situations and contexts.

Standards are statements of the required workplace levels of performance.

Assessment

Assessment is the process of collecting evidence and making judgments on the extent and nature of performance and other requirements, as described in a set of standards, or learning outcomes, resulting in a judgment of whether or not competency has been demonstrated.

Assessment means the process of collecting evidence and making judgements on whether competency has been achieved, to confirm that an individual can perform to the standard required in the workplace, as specified in a Training Package or VET accredited course.

Effective and objective assessment is essential to the successful implementation of competency standards in the workplace and in education. This is the judgment of performance and knowledge against the relevant industry competency standards.

Assessment is carried out by the comparison of a student's evidence of skills and knowledge, against the requirements of the Standards.

An assessment system includes not only the actual materials used directly in conducting assessment, but also policies, procedures and other supporting documents that inform the way assessment is conducted within the College.

Principles of Assessment

For an effective assessment system in a competency environment, some basic principles must apply:

Fairness

The individual learner's needs are considered in the assessment process.

Where appropriate, reasonable adjustments are applied by the College to take into account the individual learner's needs.

The College informs the learner about the assessment process, and provides the learner with the opportunity to challenge the result of the assessment and be reassessed if necessary.

An assessment system and its processes must not disadvantage any person or organisation. All eligible students must be guaranteed access to assessment, which does not discriminate on any basis. Assessment guidelines must include an approach for working with students who have special needs.

To achieve these principles, the assessment system must exhibit the following characteristics:

- The standards, assessment processes and all associated information are straight forward and understandable;
- The characteristics of potential students are identified, to enable all potential assessment issues to be identified and catered for;
- The chosen processes and materials within the system of assessment do not disadvantage students;
- An appropriate and effective review and dispute resolution mechanism is in place to investigate, examine and redress any issue of unfairness or disadvantage identified, involving access, assessment, certification or any other related issue; and
- Where potential disadvantages are identified, the system is amended to avoid or counter them, or appropriate steps taken to overcome them including reassessment if required.

Flexibility

Assessment is flexible to the individual learner by:

- reflecting the learner's needs;
- assessing competencies held by the learner no matter how or where they have been acquired; and
- drawing from a range of assessment methods and using those that are appropriate to the context, the unit of competency and associated assessment requirements, and the individual.

Every portfolio or set of student evidence is unique. Each student will identify and develop his or her own specific set of evidence to prove competency against the standards. This set will be based on the workplace experience of the student and will comprise diverse types and forms of relevant and appropriate evidence.

Assessors must be capable of taking a flexible approach to the assessment of evidence. Clearly, this approach must always take time and cost into account - both to ensure the best use of assessor time and from the viewpoint of the student and his or her employer.

An assessment system must evaluate the scope of knowledge and skills covered by the criteria - both performance (skill) and underpinning knowledge and understanding.

Validity

Any assessment decision of the College is justified, based on the evidence of performance of the individual learner.

Validity requires:

- assessment against the unit(s) of competency and the associated assessment requirements covers the broad range of skills and knowledge that are essential to competent performance;
- assessment of knowledge and skills is integrated with their practical application;
- assessment to be based on evidence that demonstrates that a learner could demonstrate these skills and knowledge in other similar situations; and
- judgement of competence is based on evidence of learner performance that is aligned to the unit/s of competency and associated assessment requirements.

The assessments actually assess what they claim to assess and what they have been designed to assess.

Validity of assessment is achieved when:

- Assessors are fully aware of what is to be assessed, as indicated by the standards of competence, including clearly defined performance criteria.
- Appropriate evidence is collected from activities that can be clearly related to the units of competency.

Reliability

Evidence presented for assessment is consistently interpreted and assessment results are comparable irrespective of the assessor conducting the assessment.

Reliable assessment uses methods and procedures that ensure that the competency standards are interpreted and applied consistently from person to person and from context to context.

The following are important to ensure that assessment produces consistent outcomes:

- Clear, unambiguous, well-documented assessment procedures and competency standards;
- Clear, consistent and specific assessment criteria;
- Effectively trained, briefed and monitored assessors;
- Adequate assessors across industries and a hierarchy of assessment which ensures a quality outcome; and
- Assessment is carried out within a system flexible enough to cope with multiple and diverse forms of evidence.

Rules of Evidence

Rules of evidence are closely related to the principles of assessment and provide guidance on the collection of evidence to ensure that it is valid, sufficient, authentic and current as follows:

Validity

The assessor is assured that the learner has the skills, knowledge and attributes as described in the module or unit of competency and associated assessment requirements.

The assessments actually assess what they claim to assess and what they have been designed to assess.

Validity of assessment is achieved when:

- Assessors are fully aware of what is to be assessed, as indicated by the standards of competence, including clearly defined performance criteria
- Appropriate evidence is collected from activities that can be clearly related to the units of competency.

Sufficiency

The assessor is assured that the quality, quantity and relevance of the assessment evidence enables a judgement to be made of a learner's competency.

Evidence of competency should be sufficient to cover all the elements, performance criteria and required range of variables in the standards against which assessment is to be carried out. A tendency of many students is to provide more (or less) evidence than is actually required to prove competency against the standards. An effective assessment system ensures that students are clearly advised regarding the amount and form of evidence, which is sufficient to prove competency. This should avoid the situation where masses of evidence are provided, requiring assessors to spend more time than necessary per student, or too little evidence, making it difficult to judge competence.

Authenticity

The assessor is assured that the evidence presented for assessment is the learner's own work.

The evidence collected is authentic - that is, it is actually derived from valid sources and is directly attributable to the individual.

Currency

The assessor is assured that the assessment evidence demonstrates current competency. This requires the assessment evidence to be from the present or the very recent past.

Under an effective system, assessment evaluates whether or not the individual's skills and knowledge are current and can be applied in today's workplace. As a general rule, competencies that have not been demonstrated within the past 3 years are not usually accepted as "current". However, an assessor, under some circumstances may make exceptions to the specified period.

There may be specific situations where individual skills have not been directly applied for a longer period, but these skills are in fact still current for the individual. In cases such as this, evidence from earlier periods may be admissible, and assessed for currency, within an appropriately flexible assessment system.

Assessors

The role of an assessor is to objectively assess and judge a student's evidence against the College's assessment system applying the principles of assessment and rules of evidence. In order to do this

effectively, an assessor must have a sound knowledge of, and be skilled in, the relevant industry area. In addition, the assessor must have acknowledged competency in assessment itself and hold an appropriate training and assessment qualification or equivalent.

An assessor must:

- Interpret and understand the criteria;
- Ensure that evidence meets the standards;
- Ensure that evidence is valid, authentic, sufficient, and current;
- Use expertise to make fair and objective judgements.

The training and ongoing professional development of assessors must include such areas as:

- Roles, responsibilities and ethics;
- Procedural and administrative duties;
- Performance and knowledge evidence gathering and presentation;
- Interpretation and usage of standards;
- Selecting and using appropriate methods of assessment; and
- Requirements regarding processing and recording of results, progress and feedback.

It is crucial that assessors always understand and practice fair, objective, unbiased and flexible assessment processes.

Forms of evidence

In general, basic forms of skills evidence include:

- Direct performance evidence - current or from an acceptable past period - from:
 - extracted examples within the workplace;
 - natural observation in the workplace; and
 - simulations, including competency and skills tests, projects, assignments
- Supplementary evidence, from:
 - oral and written questioning;
 - personal reports; and
 - Witness testimony.

Appropriate and valid forms of assessment utilised for both skills and knowledge may include:

- Evaluation of direct products of work;
- Natural observation;
- Skill tests, simulations and projects;
- Evaluation of underpinning knowledge and understanding;
- Questioning and discussion; and
- Evidence from prior achievement and activity.

Students with special needs

One fundamental principle of an assessment system is that each student must have access to fair and open assessment. Students with special needs should be offered the same opportunities as any other student.

As special needs extend to more than identification of physical or learning difficulties, an assessor will also need to consider the best approach when dealing with students with needs such as low literacy, lack of confidence or non-English speaking background.

An assessor must take special needs into consideration from the planning stage onwards and adopt particular assessment methods as appropriate. Depending on any specification given in the standards, the assessor may be able to accept alternative evidence from a student with special needs. This is termed *reasonable adjustment*.

If there is uncertainty, the assessor should call on other assessors or a verifier for assistance and guidance, as required. In such a case, the situation must be fully documented, with appropriate feedback being provided to the student at all stages.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

RPL means an assessment process that assesses the competencies of an individual that may have been acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning to determine the extent to which that individual meets the requirements specified in the training package or VET accredited courses.

- formal learning refers to learning that takes place through a structured program of instruction and is linked to the attainment of an AQF qualification or statement of attainment (for example, a certificate, diploma or university degree);
- non-formal learning refers to learning that takes place through a structured program of instruction, but does not lead to the attainment of an AQF qualification or statement of attainment (for example, in-house professional development programs conducted by a business); and
- informal learning refers to learning that results through experience of work-related, social, family, hobby or leisure activities (for example the acquisition of interpersonal skills developed through several years as a sales representative).

The College ensures it implements an assessment system that includes Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). Applications for RPL are assessed using a student RPL Application Kit that is available from Student Services.

Feedback on Student Assessments

Where students are assessed as not competent they will be provided with additional feedback on their assessment outcome to assist in achieving the required performance standard on reassessment.

Assessment Grading

For each unit of competence there will be a minimum of two assessments tasks dependent on the qualification being undertaken. Students will receive one of the following results:

- Competent - C
- Not Yet Competent - NYC
- Not yet Assessed - NYA
- Credit transfer - CT
- Recognition of Prior learning - RPL

Reassessment

Students who are dissatisfied with their assessment outcome may apply for reassessment by contacting their trainer or assessor.

Students are entitled to a maximum of three assessment attempts for each unit.

If after three assessment attempts student's competence is "not yet competent" they will be required to repeat the unit and pay any fees associated with repeating the unit.

Not attending for an assessment will be counted as one assessment attempt for each occurrence unless:

- a) the student can provide a certificate from a registered medical practitioner indicating that the student was medically unable to attend the assessment; or
- b) the student can provide independent evidence of exceptional compassionate circumstances beyond the students control, such as serious illness or death of a close family member to explain the non- participation at the assessment

Procedures

1. The purpose of this procedure is to outline the system used to conduct effective assessments.
2. The CEO is responsible for the implementation of this procedure and to ensure that staff and students are aware of its application and that staff implement its requirements

Requirements

1. The method section defines the procedure used for conducting assessments. The method applies to assessments conducted for the purposes of national recognition in both institutional and workplace contexts. Equally it applies to assessment only pathways, training and assessment pathways or Recognition of Prior Learning.
2. All assessment must:
 - Comply with the Assessment Requirements included in the applicable nationally endorsed Training Packages or the assessment requirements specified in accredited courses;
 - Lead to the issuing of a Statement of Attainment or qualification under the AQF when a person is assessed as competent against nationally endorsed unit(s) of competency in the applicable Training Package or modules specified in the applicable accredited course.
 - Comply with the principles of validity, reliability, fairness and flexibility;
 - Provide for applicants to be informed of the context and purpose of the assessment and the assessment process;
 - Where relevant, focus on the application of knowledge and skill to the standard of performance required in the workplace and cover all aspects of workplace performance, including task skills, task management skills, contingency management skills and job role environment skills;
 - Involve the evaluation of sufficient evidence to enable judgements to be made about whether competency has been attained;
 - Provide for feedback to the applicant about the outcomes of the assessment process and guidance on future options;
 - Be equitable for all persons, taking account of cultural and linguistic needs; and
 - Provide for reassessment on appeal

Method

1. Establish the assessment context

The assessor establishes the context and purpose of the assessment by identifying the relevant competency standards, assessment requirements and qualification framework, identifies the College support materials that have been purchased and developed to facilitate the learning and assessment process.

2. Prepare the student

The assessor meets with the student to:

- Explain the context and purpose of the assessment and the assessment process
- Explain the Competency Standards to be assessed and the evidence to be collected
- Advise on self-assessment including processes and criteria
- Outline the assessment procedure, the preparation which the student should undertake, and answer any questions
- Assess the needs of the student and, where applicable, negotiate reasonable adjustment for assessing people with disabilities without compromising the integrity of the competencies
- Seek feedback regarding the student's understanding of the competency standards, evidence requirements and assessment process
- Determine if the student is ready for assessment and, in consultation with the student, decide on the time and place of the assessment
- Implement the College assessment plan

3. Plan and prepare the evidence gathering process

The assessor must:

- Use the College's assessment tools to gather sufficient and quality evidence about the student's performance in order to make the assessment decision.
- Organise equipment or resources required to support the evidence gathering process.
- Coordinate and brief other personnel involved in the evidence gathering process.

4. Collect the evidence and make the assessment decision

The assessor must:

- Establish and oversee the evidence gathering process to ensure its validity, reliability, fairness and flexibility
- Collect appropriate evidence and assess this against the Elements, Performance Criteria, performance evidence and knowledge evidence and foundation skills that describe language, literacy, numeracy and employment skills incorporated in the performance criteria that are required for competent performance in the relevant Units of Competency.
- Evaluate evidence in terms of the four dimensions of competency - task skills, task management skills, contingency management skills and job/role environment skills
- Incorporate allowable adjustments to the assessment procedure without compromising the integrity of the competencies
- Evaluate the evidence in terms of validity, currency, authenticity and sufficiency
- Consult and work with other staff in the assessment process
- Record details of evidence collected
- Make a judgement about the student's competency based on the evidence and the relevant Unit[s] of Competency.

5. Provide feedback on the assessment

The assessor must provide advice to the student about the outcomes of the assessment process. This includes providing the student with:

- Clear and constructive feedback on the assessment decision

- Information on ways of overcoming any identified gaps in competency revealed by the assessment the opportunity to discuss the assessment process and outcome information on reassessment and the appeals processes.
 - An opportunity for reassessment if appropriate or requested by the student
6. Record and report the result
The assessor must:
- Record the assessment outcome
 - Maintain records of the assessment procedure, evidence collected and the outcome
 - Provide signed and dated assessment outcomes to the Student Administration
 - Maintain the confidentiality of the assessment outcome
7. Review the assessment process
On completion of the assessment process, the assessor must:
- Review the assessment process
 - Report on the positive and negative features of the assessment to those responsible for the assessment procedures
 - Make suggestions (if necessary) on improving the assessment procedures to appropriate personnel in the College.
8. Participate in the reassessment and appeals process
The assessor must:
- Provide feedback and counselling to the student, if required, regarding the assessment outcome or process including guidance on further options
 - Provide the student with information on the reassessment and appeals process
 - Report any assessment decision that is disputed by the student to the Director of Studies
 - Participate in the reassessment or appeal according to the Complaints and Appeals policy and procedures of the College.