

Assessment Policy and Procedure

Relevant standard: *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015, Clause 1.8.*

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At Applied Education & Training, we recognise that assessment is a core service offered to our learners (candidates) and is at the centre of our operation as a Registered Training Organisation. Quality assessment ensures that the skills and knowledge of candidates are assessed using four principal determinants:

- That assessment decisions are based on the assessment of skills and knowledge compared with units of competency drawn from nationally endorsed Training Packages or accredited courses.
- That the target industry or enterprise requirements are contextualised and integrated within the assessment.
- That evidence is gathered that meets the rules of evidence.
- That assessment is conducted in accordance with the principles of assessment.

Assessing the Unit of Competency

Applied Education & Training uses units of competency drawn from nationally endorsed Training Packages and Accredited Courses as the primary benchmark for assessment. Supporting these there may be industry standards or codes of practice. These and other industry specific publications inform the context and standard of performance during assessment.

To identify the precise assessment criteria, we apply a methodology of unpacking a unit of competency in order to assess the full scope of the unit including elements of competence, performance evidence, knowledge evidence and the requirements of the evidence conditions. This process ensures that our assessment strategies accurately reflect the requirements of the relevant training package and are valid. To ensure alignment with all components of a unit of competency, unit mapping must be undertaken during the design and development of assessment. Unit mapping must also be undertaken when carrying out assessment validation.

Unit mapping will show the relationship between the planned assessment activities and each component of the unit. This must be conducted at a micro level of detail to allow the mapping to be useful later on as a reference to demonstrate the validity of the assessment. An assessment mapping document is available for this purpose.

Assessment context

Applied Education & Training recognises the importance of establishing the right context for candidates during their assessment. Assessment context refers to the physical and non-physical environment in which skills and knowledge are assessed. This may be a workplace such as an office setting or a manufacturing workshop. The non-physical environment refers to things such as workplace policy and procedure, workplace tempo and culture. Many units of competency may be applied in any workplace such as skills and knowledge relating to workplace safety or leadership.

It is our responsibility to ensure that candidates are provided with the right context to undertake their assessment activities. To achieve this, we will apply the following strategies:

- Incorporation of the candidate's own workplace policies and procedures into the assessment scenario or activity.
- Conducting the assessment in the candidate's workplace performing real workplace tasks where possible.
- Integration of relevant industry codes of practice and other industry information into the assessment activity.
- Incorporation of industry job descriptions for learners to align with during realistic simulated workplace scenarios and case studies.
- Incorporation of regulatory information relating to licensing which applies to the unit of competency.
- Tailoring the program outcomes to meet the organisational training needs of the enterprise without compromising the Training Package requirements.
- Creating assessment activities which require the learner to conduct specific research relating to industry situations and occurrences where applicable.
- Providing a realistic simulated workplace within Applied Education & Training facilities.

While applying these strategies it is important to ensure that in establishing the context for assessment, we do not affect the transferability of the unit of competency. When the candidate is assessed as competent, this also means that the candidate can transfer the applicable skills and knowledge between different workplaces and contexts. This means that the competency is transferable and is a fundamental element of competency-based training and assessment.

Principles of assessment

In the delivery of assessment services, Applied Education & Training applies the principles of assessment. Assessment strategies have been designed to ensure:

Validity. We conduct assessment against the broad range of skills and knowledge identified within each unit of competency and which is integrated with the performance of workplace tasks. We ensure that the assessment is transferable to different contexts and situations and all components of the unit of competency are being assessed.

Reliability. We seek to gather and interpret evidence in a consistent manner that provides for reliable assessment both for the candidate and for assessors. We achieve this by using assessors who have the required competencies in assessment and the relevant vocational competencies. Our assessment resources also provide for standardised outcomes supported by model answers to guide assessors in their judgements. Reliability is also supported by the moderation of assessment judgements across our assessors.

Flexibility. We strive to provide assessment opportunities that reflect a candidate's needs. Our chosen assessment strategies provide for recognition of a candidate's current competency, employ a range of methods appropriate to the context of the industry, the unit of competency and the candidate themselves.

Fairness. Our assessment approach encourages fairness in assessment through consideration of the candidate's needs and characteristics and through making reasonable adjustments when it is required. Assessors achieve this through clear communication with a candidate to ensure that the candidate is fully informed about, understands and is able to participate in the assessment process, and agrees that the process is appropriate.

Collecting evidence that counts – the rules of evidence

In collecting evidence, Applied Education & Training applies the rules of evidence to inform the assessment strategy. Assessment strategies have been designed to ensure:

Sufficiency. We ensure the collection of valid assessment evidence in such quantity to ensure that all aspects of competency have been satisfied and that competency can be demonstrated repeatedly. The collection of sufficient assessment evidence will be supported by using a range of assessment methods which lead to the collection of evidence over time based on a range of performances.

Validity. We collect evidence that directly aligns with the components documented within each unit of competency. The collected assessment evidence must replicate the outputs of the task as though it were being performed within an actual workplace. This may include the observation of the candidate performing the tasks relevant to the unit of competency or the collection of completed workplace products. Assessment evidence that is purely academic in nature should be given a lesser priority to the collection of evidence that relates directly to the candidate performing the tasks indicative to the unit of competency.

Authenticity. We seek evidence that is authentic. To support this, assessors must be assured that the evidence presented for assessment is the candidate's own work. Where documentary evidence is relied on it must be certified or supported by two other forms of evidence which demonstrate the same skill or knowledge. In all instances, where work is submitted external to Applied Education & Training (i.e.; electronically, distance assignments, online) this must include a signed authenticity statement by the candidate that they certify the work as their own.

Currency. We must be satisfied that the candidate currently holds the skills and knowledge relating to a particular unit of competency. Assessment evidence must be based on the candidate's performance either at the time of the assessment decision or in the very recent past. Questions of evidence currency will mostly relate to recognition of prior learning applications where a candidate has been in the workplace for many years and is seeking recognition of skills and knowledge obtained through workplace experience or previous training. In all situations, assessors must validate the currency of a candidate's knowledge and skills.

Employers and other parties contributing to assessment evidence

Where industry representatives are engaged to contribute toward assessment evidence, Applied Education & Training will use a standard approach to collect this evidence. We place a high value on the assessment evidence that is gathered by supervisors or employers in the workplace. This evidence is usually very current and valid and contributes to the assessment decisions made by a qualified assessor. We do not however advocate the use of industry evidence (also referred to as third party evidence) as a substitute for the gathering of direct evidence by an assessor. In all areas of our operation, industry evidence is only to be used to complement and support the evidence being gathered by an assessor and is **not** to be used as primary evidence.

During the development of assessment tools, assessors will ensure that the observation criteria used in industry evidence reports is wholly task-orientated. These observation criteria should reflect the tasks that the supervisor would expect to issue to an employee and monitor during normal workplace duties. The industry evidence report should not contain assessment criteria drawn from a unit of competency as these assessment criteria are suitable only for trained and qualified assessors to interpret.

It is also not desirable to collect industry evidence simply by providing a document to be completed. This leads to the collection of insufficient evidence and is an annoyance to industry. Where possible assessors are to engage with industry representatives directly and collect evidence about a candidate's performance through discussion with supervisors. This discussion will be based on observable workplace tasks and evidence will be recorded by the

assessor. These discussions may be undertaken face-to-face or over the phone. The assessor must record the industry representative's details, contact information and the date/time of the engagement.

Engagement with industry

Applied Education & Training is well-placed to leverage off current industry associations to incorporate industry requirements into the assessment process. Consultation with enterprises or industry will provide information about assessment requirements relevant to workplaces. Regulatory requirements that relate to specific units of competency will be incorporated to ensure our learners are well prepared for their workplace duties. Further information on industry engagement can be found in the Industry Engagement Policy.

Recognition of prior learning

Applied Education & Training will provide all learners with the opportunity to seek recognition of their prior learning. Recognition is viewed simply as another method of assessment and therefore is conducted in accordance with this policy. Further information can be found in the recognition section of this policy.

Credit transfer

Applied Education & Training will recognise and award credit transfer for candidates presenting with current competence. Where a candidate is seeking credit transfer for a unit of competency that is on our scope of registration and the candidate can provide documentary evidence that the unit has been previously awarded to the candidate, credit transfer will be awarded. It is important to note that credit transfer is not an assessment. It is an administrative function that determines the equivalence of a unit of competency the candidate has been previously awarded to units of competency incorporated into courses being delivered by Applied Education & Training. If the unit is the same or is equivalent, then the unit may be issued as a credit transfer. This is not to be confused with the recognition of prior learning which is a method of assessment. Please refer to the Credit Transfer Policy for further guidance.

Competence of assessors

In accordance with the Standards for Registered Training Organisations, assessors are required to hold the minimum competencies for training assessment and the vocational competencies at least to the level being assessed. Applied Education & Training has appropriate systems in place to ensure that all staff members are appropriately qualified to meet our requirements under the Standards for Registered Training Organisations. Further information can be found in this manual within the Trainer Competency Requirements policy.

Where an assessor does not hold the required training and assessment competence, but is a recognised industry expert, we will put appropriate supervision arrangements in place to support the gathering of valid evidence. Further guidance on supporting these assessors can be found in this manual in the policy on Assessment Partnerships.

Assessment validation

Assessment validation is the process where assessors compare and evaluate their assessment methods, assessment procedures and assessment decisions. Applied Education & Training will facilitate regular assessment validation opportunities to maintain a quality assessment and to continuously improve assessment strategies. Further information can be found in this manual in the policy on Assessment Validation.

Assessment tools

Assessment tools are the media used to gather evidence about a candidate's competence. We have developed assessment tools which support the assessment of applicable units of competency in accordance with the requirements of National Training Packages and Accredited Courses. It is important for Applied Education & Training staff members to acknowledge that these are generic tools which provide us with a starting point for the development of other supporting tools which will reflect the needs of our clients or target industry group. Applied Education & Training staff members must be satisfied that tools developed for assessment fit with the requirements of the target industry and enterprise requirements. Some units of competency may be associated with licensing requirements and whilst this is not always stipulated in the unit of competency, we will need to be informed of the additional requirements this imposes during assessment.

The following are examples of assessment tools which may be incorporated into an assessment strategy to meet the Training Package and industry requirements, the rules of evidence and the principles of assessment:

- Direct observation checklist;
- Simulation exercises or role-plays;
- Project outlines and explanation sheets;
- Workplace templates;
- Written questionnaires;
- Verbal questionnaires;
- Portfolios, for example collections of work samples by the candidate;

- Product with supporting documentation or journal/logbook;
- Workplace samples/products; and
- Industry/workplace evidence reports.

This list of assessment tools identifies only a small number of assessment tools which are in use. These are however the more common tools and support holistic assessment methods favoured by Applied Education & Training.

Completed assessment tools are to be retained within the learner record in accordance with the Records Retention and Management policy.

Assessment information

Assessment information is the information provided to both candidates and assessors to guide their conduct of the assessment and the completion of assessment activities. This information is used to draw out a response from a candidate.

Examples of assessment information include:

- Instructions to set the framework for the activity such as who, what, where, when and how. The expected outcomes of the assessment should be included in these instructions and it is critical that they are straightforward and in line with the candidate's preparation during learning or through other competency development pathways.
- Scenario information includes information that sets the context for a simulated assessment activity. This may be a simple case study or a deep scenario which requires analysis and interpretation. It is important to note that the higher the AQF qualification level, the greater the requirement to analyse and apply cognitive skills to produce workplace outcomes. Scenario information used to support assessment at a Diploma level, for example, should be relatively deep and complex to allow the candidate to exercise their analytical skills and produce viable workplace products and outcomes.
- Industry information includes items such as codes of practice, policies and procedures, legislation and regulations. Whilst this may not be provided in hard copy to every candidate, they should be provided contacts, web sites or hyperlinks to access this information. Electronic copies of industry information are also acceptable.

At Applied Education & Training our assessment activities are supported by clear assessment information that will ensure a reliable assessment across our operation. Ultimately, the quality of assessment outcomes produced by a candidate will be directly affected by the quality of the information provided at the commencement of the activity. Applied Education & Training staff prepare suitable assessment information for all assessment activities and gain

approval from the Applied Education & Training Chief Executive Officer for the use of assessment resources.

Re-assessment

Learners who are assessed as not yet competent are provided with detailed verbal and written feedback to assist them to identify the gaps in their knowledge and skills to be addressed through further training. These learners should be provided with additional training and learning support to target their specific gaps in knowledge and/or skills and prepare them for additional assessment.

It is the policy of Applied Education & Training to provide **three** opportunities for additional training and re-assessment at no additional cost to the learner or employer. Learners who require additional training and reassessment after they have exhausted their three opportunities will be required to pay a fee for additional training and re-assessment. Please refer to the current fee schedule to identify the re-assessment fee.

Learners requiring additional learning support are brought to the attention of Applied Education & Training management so the progress of the learner can be monitored closely and additional support services can be applied well before it becomes necessary to impose an additional fee for re-assessment. Where learners repeatedly do not demonstrate competence following significant learning and assessment support, a learner's enrolment can be determined through mutual agreement.

Assessment Procedure

The following procedure is applied for conducting assessments:

Step 1: Prepare for assessment. The assessor:

- Establishes the context and purpose of the evidence to be collected;
- Identifies and analyses the units of competency, Training Package and Applied Education & Training assessment strategy to identify the evidence requirements; and
- Reviews the assessment tools and confirm their currency and adequacy in meeting the rules of evidence.

Step 2: Prepare the candidate. The assessor meets with the candidate to:

- Explain the context and purpose of the assessment and the assessment process;
- Explain the units of competency to be assessed and the evidence to be collected;
- Outline the assessment procedure and the preparation the candidate should undertake, and answer any questions;

- Assess the needs of the candidate and, where applicable, negotiate reasonable adjustment for assessing people with disabilities without compromising the competency outcomes;
- Seek feedback regarding the candidate's understanding of the units of competency, evidence requirements and assessment process; and
- Determine if the candidate is ready for assessment and, in consultation with the candidate, decide on the time and place of the assessment.

Step 3: Plan and prepare the evidence-gathering process. The assessor must:

- Establish a plan for gathering sufficient quality evidence about the learner's consistent performance in order to make the assessment decision;
- Source or develop assessment materials to assist the evidence-gathering process;
- Organise equipment or resources required to support the evidence-gathering process; and
- Coordinate and brief other personnel involved in the evidence-gathering process.

Step 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 match compatibility to the elements, performance criteria, range statement and evidence guide 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, consistency, currency, authenticity and sufficiency;
- Consult and work with other staff, assessment panel members or technical experts involved in the assessment process;
- Record details of evidence collected; and
- Make a judgement about the candidate's competence based on the evidence and the relevant unit(s) of competency.

Step 5: Provide feedback on the assessment. The assessor must provide advice to the learner about the outcomes of the assessment process. This includes providing the candidate 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; and
- Information on reassessment and the appeals process if applicable.

Step 6: Record and report the result. The assessor must:

- Record the assessment outcome according to the policies and procedures of Applied Education & Training;
- Maintain records of the assessment procedure, evidence collected and the outcome according to the policies and procedures of Applied Education & Training;
- Maintain the confidentiality of the assessment outcome; and
- Organise the issuance of statements of attainment according to the policies and procedures of Applied Education & Training.

Step 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; and
- If necessary, suggest to the appropriate Applied Education & Training personnel methods of improving the assessment procedures through raising a Continuous Improvement Report or by providing input to the next scheduled assessment validation.

Step 8: Participate in the reassessment and appeals process. The assessor must:

- Provide feedback and counselling to the candidate, if required, regarding the assessment outcome or process, including guidance on further options;
- Provide the candidate with information on the reassessment and appeals process;
- Report any assessment decision that is disputed by the candidate to appropriate Applied Education & Training personnel; and
- Participate in the reassessment or appeal according to the policies and procedures of Applied Education & Training.

Assessment Process

