



# Training Accreditation Council

## Designing and Using Assessment Tools

### Pre-session Reading

**Designing and Using Assessment Tools** is the second in a series of four workshops provided by the Training Accreditation Council. This handout revises key concepts from the first workshop. The workshop series comprises of:

Workshop 1: The Design and Development of an Assessment System

**Workshop 2: Designing and Using Assessment Tools**

Workshop 3: Making an Assessment Decision

Workshop 4: Assessment Validation

A recording of the previous session is available at the following link.

- [Design and development of an assessment system](#)

This workshop will focus on clauses:

- Clause 1.8 – The requirements of the assessment system;
- Clause 1.5-1.6 – the requirements for industry relevance and currency; and
- Clause 1.3 – the resources of the RTO

### References and Resources

The workshop is supported by the following documents:

- [The Standards for RTOs 2015](#)
- [The TAC Users' Guide for the Standards](#)
- [TAC Assessment Fact Sheet](#)
- [TAC Assessment Validation Fact Sheet](#)
- [TAC Reasonable Adjustment and Inclusive Practice](#)
- [TAC Records Management Fact Sheet](#)
- [TAC RTO Complaints and Appeals Fact Sheet](#)
- [TAC Industry Engagement Fact Sheet](#)
- [TAC Vocational Competence and Industry Currency Fact Sheet](#)
- [TAC Assuring the Quality of RTO Processes, Practices and Products Fact Sheet](#)
- [TAC Identifying and Meeting Learner Needs Fact Sheet](#)
- [TAC Amount of Training Fact Sheet](#)
- [TAC Third Party Arrangements Fact Sheet](#)

### Why focus on Assessment?

While not all RTOs deliver training, and not all RTO clients need training, all RTOs and all RTO clients undertake assessment.

The core business of an RTO is the certification of the industry-relevant **competencies** of individual candidates

This certification must be based upon a judgement of competency made by a **qualified assessor**

This **judgement** must be **valid, reliable, fair and flexible**

This judgement must be based upon **evidence gathered through assessment tools** that is **valid, sufficient, current and authentic**

The RTO and the assessor are accountable for the accuracy of these judgements ... any of the above might be challenged in an appeal ... and all of the above are the subject of validation.

## What are the criteria of high quality assessment practices?

RTOs and assessors are accountable for the credibility and legitimacy of the assessment judgements and the Certificates that reflect them as well as the need for comprehensive assessment records of the evidence trail to assist with any appeals and with assessment validation.

These qualities are unique to VET, they are not characteristic of other education sectors. Our regulatory framework includes the benchmarks against which we measure assessment practices.

So what are the criteria of high quality assessment practices?

1. The definition of competency (Glossary)
2. Resources and time (1.1 – 1.4)
3. Industry relevance (1.5 & 1.6)
4. Responsiveness to individual needs (1.7 & 1.12)
5. The quality of the assessment process, tools and judgement (1.8)
6. The credentials of assessors (1.13- 1.20)

There is at least one TAC Fact Sheet for each of the above. The current versions can be downloaded from the [TAC website](#).

## Competency

The idea of competency sets VET apart from general education and higher education and is at the heart of VET training delivery and assessment.

Competencies do not exist in isolation; each competency is a cog in the machine. It acts as part of a system to achieve industry outcomes, it interacts with other competencies of the individual and of others, it is adaptable and transferable to serve other functions even in other industries.

The natural habitat of competencies is the workplace not the RTO. The RTO is a kind of “competency zoo” where competencies are carefully managed and nurtured, but you always need to remember that their real role is working with other competencies in the workplace. This needs to be reflected in how RTOs teach and assess. The Standards for RTOs define competency as:

Competency means the **consistent application** of **knowledge** and **skill** to the standard of performance required in the **workplace**. It embodies the ability to **transfer** and **apply** skills and knowledge to **new** situations and environments.

There are several key words in the definition that are important to consider:

- Consistent ... this means no variation in performance;
- Application ... this means not just potential or ability, but actual performance;
- Knowledge ... of industry, of processes, of protocols;
- Skill ... to perform the competency and demonstrate outcomes;
- Workplace standard ... this means relevant to actual workplaces; and
- Transfer and apply in new situations ... means long-term and broad application.

Assessment systems, including assessment tools and practice, must reflect all these qualities, namely the assessment system must assess consistent application, assess knowledge, assess skills, and assess transfer, and do so in workplace-like conditions.

This workshop addresses the designing of the assessment tools ... and the Standards are very clear about what is expected of those tools. They state:

#### **Clause 1.8 Assessment**

The RTO implements an assessment system that ensures that assessment (including recognition of prior learning):

- complies with the assessment requirements of the relevant Training Package or VET accredited course; and
- is conducted in accordance with the Principles of Assessment and the Rules of Evidence.

The first dot point in Clause 1.8 is focusing on meeting the requirements of the Training Package. This includes meeting all requirements of the unit of competency and assessment requirements and any further advice provided in the Training Package documents. This might for example include equipment requirements or assessor requirements. Information will differ in each Training Package so each Training Package must be read in full. Full Training Packages can be accessed on [Training.gov.au](http://Training.gov.au).

### **Units of Competency and Assessment Requirements**

The units of competency and assessment requirements have the following structure:

- Pre-requisite units (if any)
- Elements of competency and their performance criteria
- Foundation Skills (if any)
- Performance evidence
- Knowledge evidence
- Assessment conditions

The following tables describe each component of the unit of competency and its assessment requirements. These tables reflect the format used in streamlined Training Packages. There are a number of Training Packages that have not transitioned to this newer format as yet. If this is the case, the transition to this format should occur with the next revision of the Training Package.

The unit of competency and the assessment requirements tells us what we must assess, how we must assess, how often we must assess, in what conditions and contexts we must assess. This will therefore guide the development of all assessment tools used in the sector. Note that there are two types of attribute to be assessed ... knowledge and skills. Our assessment tools will therefore have

two kinds of assessment tasks; some form of question and answer to assess knowledge, and observation to assess skills (“show and tell”). These are not interchangeable.

The requirements of the unit serve to both direct what we look for as evidence of competency and what we need to have seen to judge that a person is competent.

### Unit of Competency Components

<b>Unit code</b>	A unique code will be assigned to a unit.
<b>Unit title</b>	A title that concisely describes the unit outcome.
<b>Application</b>	A brief description of the unit content, how the unit is applied and any licensing, legislative regulatory or certification requirements that apply to the unit.
<b>Pre-requisite unit (OPTIONAL)</b>	A list of any unit/s in which the learner must be deemed competent prior to the determination of competency in this unit.
<b>Elements</b>	Describe the essential outcomes of the unit by breaking down the unit into actions or outcomes.
<b>Performance criteria</b>	Relate directly to the corresponding element. Performance criteria break the corresponding element down into tasks, roles and skills and applied knowledge that reflect the required standard of performance in the workplace, education or community environment.
<b>Foundation skills</b>	<p>The Foundation skills are a combination of elements of the Australian Core skills Framework and the Core Skills for Work Developmental Framework that are essential to the performance of the unit.</p> <p>Australian Core Skills Framework – describes an individual's performance in the five core skills of learning, reading, writing, oral communication and numeracy.</p> <p>Core Skills for Work Developmental Framework – describes a set of non-technical skills, knowledge and understandings that underpin successful participation in work</p> <p>Only skills applicable to the unit outcomes are identified in the table.</p>
<b>Skill</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Reading skills</b>	
<b>Writing skills</b>	
<b>Oral communication</b>	
<b>Numeracy skills</b>	
<b>Learning skills</b>	
<b>Problem-solving skills</b>	
<b>Initiative and enterprise skills</b>	
<b>Teamwork skills</b>	
<b>Planning and organising skills</b>	
<b>Self-management skills</b>	
<b>Technology skills</b>	
<b>Unit mapping information</b>	Specifies the code and title of any equivalent unit of competency e.g. a previous version of the unit.

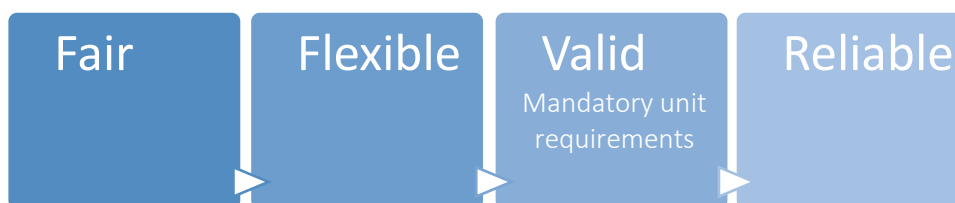
### Assessment Requirements Components

<b>Title</b>	Specifies the code and unit title that the assessment requirements relate to.
<b>Performance evidence</b>	Specifies process and product evidence and the frequency/volume of evidence that needs to be collected by an assessor to determine competence.  Elements and performance criteria are not to be reiterated in this field.
<b>Knowledge evidence</b>	Specifies knowledge a learner must have to perform the work tasks described in the unit of competency.
<b>Assessment conditions</b>	Specifies conditions, methods, contexts and resources required for assessment. Advice may also include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mandated assessment methods</li> <li>• identified co-requisite relationships</li> <li>• mandated assessment tools and their implementation requirements.</li> </ul>

The second dot point in Clause 1.8 says that we must ensure assessments are consistent and are based on the Principles of Assessment contained in Table 1.8-1 and the Rules of Evidence contained in Table 1.8-2.” (Glossary)

### What are the principles of assessment?

**We must ensure that our assessment practices enable us to make judgements that are:**



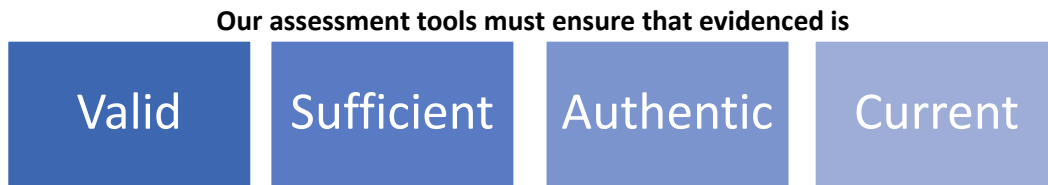
Fairness means that our assessment tools must ensure candidates are fully informed about the assessment processes, that their individual needs are recognised and responded to (as far as is practicable), and that candidates know they have the right to appeal and seek re-assessment if they dispute the judgement.

Flexibility means that the assessment tools are able to be adjusted to meet individual needs, including the provision of an assessment-only pathway for those who might not need training. It also allows the assessor to make judgements on the basis of evidence that was not planned for, to vary assessment contexts and processes to exploit assessment opportunities, or to delay the assessment judgement to allow for the gathering of further evidence.

Validity requires that the judgement of competency can only be made once evidence has been seen that the candidate has demonstrated each and every required component of the unit of competency, so the set of tools must cover all requirements. This takes us back to the key words in the definition of competency, including “workplace”, “transfer” and “consistent”. Validity also requires assessment tools only gather evidence that is a reflection of the unit of competency, and not some extraneous factors.

Finally, reliability requires that the assessment judgement is not influenced by the assessor, but is an objective reflection of evidence, based on valid assessment tools that have been used correctly. But can we trust the evidence?

## What are the rules of evidence?



If we are to trust the evidence, it must conform to its own set of standards. These are the rules of evidence with which assessment tools must comply.

Evidence must be valid ... that means that Q&A is used to assess knowledge, that observation is used to assess skills and that every item of knowledge is assessed, every skill is observed, and any other mandated requirement in the unit of competency is complied with.

Evidence must also be sufficient ... there must be confidence that the evidence is not accidental or limited in scope. When assessing skills it is desirable to observe the skill at least twice, in varied contexts, so that there is evidence of consistency, transfer, and retention.

Thirdly, the evidence must be authentic, so our assessment tools have to ensure that the person being observed or asked questions is in fact the person who is enrolled. This has significant ramifications for past evidence that might be offered for RPL, evidence gathered on-line or at a distance.

Finally, the evidence must be current ... so again this has significant ramifications for past evidence that might be offered for RPL.

So our assessment tools have serious responsibilities ... to faithfully reflect the requirements of the unit of competency (1.8a), to ensure quality judgements (principles of assessment) based on quality evidence (rules of evidence). These requirements are non-negotiable in our assessment system.

Please review the [Assessment Fact Sheet](#) for further information.

## What else influences how we develop our assessment tools?

### Assessment tools must reflect industry practice:

- The range of applications of the competency in workplaces...how is the competency used to achieve productive outcomes?
- The range of industries using the competency...where is the competency used?
- National and local industry expectations
- Regulations

Please review the [Industry Engagement Fact Sheet](#) for further information.

### Assessment tools will depend upon RTO resources

- Facilities
- Equipment and materials
- Evidence-gathering processes and tools
- Candidate support services
- Industry work sites and personnel

- Trainers and assessors

Please review the [Amount of Training Fact Sheet](#) for further information.

## Assessment tools must respond to candidate characteristics

- Language, literacy and numeracy
- Disability
- Current employment
- Previous experience and/or training
- Location
- Access to technology

Please review the [Amount of Training Fact Sheet](#) and [Identifying and Meeting Individual Needs Fact Sheet](#) for further information.

## Additional Guidance

VET is an evidence-based enterprise, so assessment tools must gather credible evidence and make quality evidence-based judgements. Evidence of relevant knowledge, and evidence of actual relevant performance must be gathered. This is a substantial task and there are a number of resources available to assist:

### Fact Sheets:

Fact Sheets to support RTOs understanding of many of these requirements. The current versions of the fact sheets can be downloaded from the [TAC website](#).



### TAC Users's Guide:

The [TAC User's Guide to the Standards for Registered Training Organisations](#) discusses key aspects of each clause and provides a guide to compliance for the clauses.

### Assessment in the VET Sector:

The Department of Training and Workforce Development have published a detailed guide to the conduct of assessment for the VET Sector called, [Assessment in the VET Sector](#). The publication provides in depth information about assessment practice as well as links to key supporting legislation. The document also contains examples from a range of RTOs.

**The following appendences will be referred to during the workshop**



## Appendix 1 - Knowledge Assessment Tool

**Unit:**

TAEASS301 Contribute to assessment

**Candidate name:**

**Assessor:**

**Evidence-gatherer:**

**Date(s) of assessment:**

**Unit requirements addressed by this assessment tool:**

**Note:** Refer to Unit of Competency and Assessment Requirements for full text of each requirement.

- 1 Competency-based assessment
- 2 Principles of assessment
- 4 Different purposes of assessment
- 5 Diversity of assessment contexts
- 6 Different types of evidence
- 7 Evidence-gathering methods
- 8 Assessment tools & assessment plans
- 9 Barriers to evidence-gathering
- 10 Organisational policies & procedures

**Instructions for the evidence-gatherer:**

1. Time allowed:
2. Venue requirements:
3. Resources to be provided by the RTO: (Drawings/plans, documentation, ...):
4. Resources to be provided by the candidate:
5. Allowable access to texts or calculators:
6. Recording answers: (✓) (✗) (?) Narrative
7. Constraints on prompting:
8. Feedback to the candidate:
9. Supplementary assessment:
10. Flexibility and Reasonable Adjustments:
11. Review of assessment tool and feedback to assessor:

**Instructions for the candidate:**

1. Time allowed:
2. Venue:
3. Resources that will be provided by the RTO: (Drawings/plans, documents ...):
4. Resources that must be provided by the candidate:
5. Access to texts or calculators:
6. Supplementary assessment:
7. Reasonable Adjustments:
8. Appeals and complaints processes:
9. Procedure to be followed by the candidate:

**Administering the test:**

A full description of the administration of the knowledge test.

**Recording and reporting tool:**

Provide a tool for the evidence-gatherer to record:

1. Name of candidate
2. Name of evidence-gatherer/administrator
3. Date of observation
4. Knowledge questions (mapped to unit requirements)
5. Typical correct answers
6. Answers provided
7. Record:
  - ☐ Correct
  - ☐ Incorrect
  - ☐ Uncertain
8. Feedback on the assessment tool

## Appendix 2

### Performance Assessment Tool

Unit: TAEASS301 Contribute to assessment

Assessment: ☐ PA1 ☐ PA2 ☐ PA3

Candidate name:

Assessor:

Evidence-gatherer:

Date(s) of assessment:

Unit requirements addressed by this assessment tool:

**Note:** Refer to Unit of Competency and Assessment Requirements for full text of each requirement.

#### Elements and performance criteria

##### ***1. Clarify role and responsibilities in the assessment process***

- 1.1 Confirm assessment purpose
- 1.2 Confirm assessment benchmarks
- 1.3 Assessment plan
- 1.4 Responsibilities

##### ***2. Confirm organizational arrangements for evidence gathering***

- 2.1 Organisational policies & procedures
- 2.2 Clarify assessment tools
- 2.3 Context & candidate characteristics
- 2.4 Resource requirements

##### ***3. Collect evidence in accordance with the assessment plan***

- 3.1 Brief candidate
- 3.2 Use assessment tools

##### ***4. Record and report findings***

- 4.1 Provide evidence to assessor
- 4.2 Seek feedback from assessor
- 4.3 Document improvements

#### Performance Evidence

- 1 Clarify role
- 2 Clarify assessment plan
- 3 Conduct three assessment activities
- 4 Report findings

#### Instructions for the evidence-gatherer:

1. Time allowed:
2. Venue requirements:
3. Resources to be provided by the RTO: (Equipment, materials, drawings/plans, documentation, ...):
4. Resources to be provided by the candidate:
5. Allowable access to texts or calculators:
6. Recording answers or observations: (✓) (✗) Narrative
7. Constraints on prompting:

8. Feedback to the candidate:
9. Supplementary assessment:
10. Flexibility and Reasonable Adjustments:
11. PPE requirements:
12. OH&S warnings:
13. Review of assessment tool and feedback to assessor:

**Instructions for the candidate:**

1. Time allowed:
2. Venue:
3. Resources that will be provided by the RTO: (Equipment, materials, drawings/plans, documentation):
4. Resources that must be provided by the candidate:
5. Access to texts or calculators:
6. Supplementary assessment:
7. Reasonable Adjustments:
8. Appeals and complaints processes:
9. PPE requirements:
10. OH&S warnings:
11. Procedure:

**Activities to be completed:**

Provide a full description of the task(s) to be undertaken by the candidate.

**Recording and reporting tool:**

Provide a tool for the evidence-gatherer to record:

- Name of candidate
- Name of evidence-gatherer
- Date of observation
- Assessment conditions
  - Organisation
  - Unit of competency assessed and qualified assessor
- Typical task evidence and outcomes (mapped to unit requirements)
- Candidate performance and narrative
- Record:
  - ☐ Required performance observed
  - ☐ Required performance not observed
  - ☐ Uncertain
- Feedback on the assessment tool