**Making an Assessment Decision** is the third in a series of workshops provided by the Training Accreditation Council. This handout revises key concepts from the first two workshops. Reviewing these notes and the Fact Sheets will enable you to participate fully in the webinar session. A recording of the workshops are available at the following links.

* [Design and development of an assessment system](https://tac.wa.gov.au/about-us/Pages/Professional-Development-Recordings-and-Resources.aspx)
* [Designing and Using Assessment Tools](https://tac.wa.gov.au/about-us/Pages/Professional-Development-Recordings-and-Resources.aspx)

**References and Resources**

The workshop is supported by the following documents available from the [TAC website.](https://www.tac.wa.gov.au/StandardsRTOs2015/Pages/Fact%20Sheets/Fact-sheets.aspx)

* [The Standards for RTOs](https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2019C00503)
* [The TAC Users’ Guide for the Standards](https://www.tac.wa.gov.au/StandardsRTOs2015/Pages/Users%e2%80%99-Guide-.aspx)
* [TAC Fact Sheet: Assessment](https://www.tac.wa.gov.au/Pages/Assessment.aspx)
* [TAC Fact Sheet: Assessment Validation](https://www.tac.wa.gov.au/Pages/Assessment-Validation.aspx)
* [TAC Fact Sheet: Records Management](https://www.tac.wa.gov.au/Pages/Records-Management.aspx)
* [TAC Fact Sheet: RTO Complaints and Appeals](https://tac.wa.gov.au/Pages/RTO-Complaints-and-Appeals.aspx)
* [TAC Fact Sheet: Industry Engagement](https://www.tac.wa.gov.au/Pages/Industry-Engagement.aspx)
* [TAC Fact Sheet: Vocational Competence & Industry Currency TAC Fact Sheet](https://www.tac.wa.gov.au/Pages/Vocational-Competence-and-Industry-Currency.aspx)
* [TAC Fact Sheet: Identifying and Meeting Learner Needs](https://www.tac.wa.gov.au/Pages/Fact-Sheet---Identifying-and-Meeting-Learner-Needs.aspx)
* [TAC Fact Sheet: Amount of Training](https://www.tac.wa.gov.au/Pages/Amount-of-Training.aspx)

**Why do we need high quality assessment practices?**

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](https://www.tac.wa.gov.au/StandardsRTOs2015/Pages/Fact%20Sheets/Fact-sheets.aspx).

1. **Competency**

Firstly, how is competency defined?

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.

Key words in this definition of competency are:

* Consistent …no variation in performance;
* Application … 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 … relevant to actual workplaces; and
* Transfer and apply in new situations … long-term and broad application.

Our assessment tools must reflect all these qualities, specifically our assessment tools must assess consistent application, assess knowledge, assess skills, and assess transfer, and do so in workplace-like conditions. So let’s examine each of the benchmarks in the standards that relate to quality assessment of competence.

1. **Resources and Time**

Clauses 1.1 – 1.4 require us to provide access to sufficient resources and time for assessment with regard to:

* The needs of the learner (existing skills, knowledge and experience) … Amount of Training;
* The location (workplace, workshop) and mode of delivery (including RPL);
* The requirements of the unit of competency (equipment, personnel); and
* The requirements of the training package (industry requirements).

Please review the [TAC Fact Sheet: Amount of Training](https://www.tac.wa.gov.au/Pages/Amount-of-Training.aspx) and [TAC Fact Sheet: Identifying and Meeting Learner Needs](https://www.tac.wa.gov.au/Pages/Fact-Sheet---Identifying-and-Meeting-Learner-Needs.aspx) for further information.

1. **Industry Relevance**

Clauses 1.5 and 1.6 require us to ensure that our assessment strategies, practices and resources are relevant to the needs of industry.

This requires effective industry engagement, in particular we need to visit industry to see what is happening there. Clause 1.6 lists the elements of our practice that must be reviewed through industry engagement activities. This clause includes how we assure the currency of our trainers and assessors.

Please review the [TAC Fact Sheet: Industry Engagement](https://www.tac.wa.gov.au/Pages/Industry-Engagement.aspx) and the [TAC Fact Sheet: Vocational Competence & Industry Currency TAC Fact Sheet](https://www.tac.wa.gov.au/Pages/Vocational-Competence-and-Industry-Currency.aspx) for further information.

1. **Responsiveness to Individual Needs**

Clauses 1.7 and 1.12 require us to:

* Identify the educational and support needs of individual candidates;
* Provide access to educational and support services (including Reasonable Adjustment);
* Ensure learners are offered RPL.

Please review the [TAC Fact Sheet: Identifying and Meeting Learner Needs](https://www.tac.wa.gov.au/Pages/Fact-Sheet---Identifying-and-Meeting-Learner-Needs.aspx) for further information.

1. **The quality of the assessment process, tools and judgement**

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.

Clause 1.8 states that the assessment system must ensure certain very strict requirements.

“An assessment system is a coordinated set of documented policies and procedures (including assessment materials and tools) that 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 and assessment judgement?

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

Mandatory unit requirements

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? …

**Our assessment practices must ensure that evidence gathered is**

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 [TAC Fact Sheet: Assessment](https://www.tac.wa.gov.au/Pages/Assessment.aspx) for further information.

1. **The credentials of assessors**

Clauses 1.13 – 1.20 provide precise requirements for assessors:

• Vocational competencies at least to the level being assessed;

• Current industry skills;

• Current VET knowledge and skills;

• VET Assessment credentials;

• Professional development; and any

• Supervision arrangements (Clauses 1.17 – 1.20).

Please review the [TAC Fact Sheet: Vocational Competence & Industry Currency TAC Fact Sheet](https://www.tac.wa.gov.au/Pages/Vocational-Competence-and-Industry-Currency.aspx) for further information.

**Additional Guidance:**

The following documents provide additional guidance on the clauses discussed above.

**The TAC Users’ Guide**

The [TAC Users’ Guide to the Standards for RTOs](https://tac.wa.gov.au/StandardsRTOs2015/Pages/Users%e2%80%99-Guide-.aspx) 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](https://www.dtwd.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/uploads/Assessment%20in%20the%20VET%20Sector%20-%202016%20-%20Final.pdf). 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.