

On Track

Moving towards
Assessment Validation



Assessment Validation Strategies

Acknowledgements

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Moving towards Assessment Validation

Background

These resources were developed as part of a NSW Department of Education and Training project, Assessment Validation Strategies for RTOs, conducted by the Vocational Education and Assessment Centre (VEAC). The project involved over 50 NSW Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) piloting a range of assessment validation strategies. A list of organisations who contributed to the resources through involvement in the project is included in Section 7.

The resources were designed to help RTOs with the implementation of assessment validation strategies in their own organisations. They were refined following feedback from practitioners in many of the RTOs involved in the project.

Who are the resources designed for?

The package contains information for managers and trainers about what assessment validation involves and how an assessment validation process could be developed either internally (within an RTO) or externally (involving a number of RTOs). There is information provided to guide assessors and RTOs involved in establishing assessment validation strategies and processes.

The written information in the resources provides an overview of assessment validation, a summary of the types of strategies that organisations could implement and some tips on how to get started on the process. There is also a trigger poster which could be used during information or professional development sessions and a set of sample OHTs to support the introduction of assessment validation. The disc included with the resources contains a copy of the OHTs and also a set of templates to help RTOs in establishing an assessment validation strategy. The templates are suggested models and can be customised to suit individual RTO needs.

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Section 1 An overview of assessment validation

What is assessment validation?

Assessment validation refers to a process where assessors compare and evaluate the use and effectiveness of their:

- assessment methods
- assessment procedures
- assessment decisions.

Assessment validation can be carried out by assessors from:

- within one registered training organisation
- a number of registered training organisations
- across a particular industry area.

As a requirement of the Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training all assessors are required to review their assessment process. There is now a requirement under the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) 2001 for RTOs to validate their assessment system and processes.

The AQTF states:

- | | |
|------|--|
| 9.2 | The RTO must validate its assessment strategies by: |
| (i) | reviewing, comparing and evaluating the assessment process, tools and evidence contributing to judgments made by a range of assessors against the standards*, at least annually; and |
| (ii) | documenting any action taken to improve the quality and consistency of assessment |

* These may be internal processes with stakeholder involvement or external validations with other providers and/or stakeholders

What is the goal of assessment validation?

The goal of assessment validation is to ensure that assessment is valid, reliable and fair; and that decisions about competence are made on the basis of sufficient and appropriate evidence.

Validation is also a way to ensure that different applications of industry performance criteria or performance benchmarks remain within acceptable limits.

There are a number of ways to implement an assessment validation process. One commonly used model outlined in detail in these resources is based on the idea of consensus moderation, where groups of assessors come together to reach agreement about the assessment tools and processes.

Validation strategies are not designed to produce a 'perfect' assessment system but their value is based on the assumption that, in most circumstances, the judgment of a group of assessors may be more reliable than the judgment of an individual assessor.

Assessment validation terminology

There is debate about the use of the term assessment validation. We have adopted the term assessment validation as that is how the processes that RTOs have to comply with are described in the AQTF.

The process described in these resources as validation is also sometimes called moderation. Validation is now a more common way of describing a range of processes and can include the narrower statistically based process of 'moderating' assessment results that is usually understood by the term assessment moderation. You can find definitions of the terms used in these resources in the glossary in Section 6.

'Professional conversation' – a model for assessment validation

In the UK, Devereux (1997, 1999) put forward a model of a negotiated assessment process between assessor and candidate where there is emphasis on why and how the assessment will take place as well as on what evidence will be required. He uses the term 'professional conversation' to describe the participatory process which includes meetings between the assessor and the candidate. Some of the features of a professional conversation approach include:

- a mutual respect for each other's knowledge and experience
- an intuitive feeling for the other person's needs and feelings
- good listening skills and sensitivity to the subtleties of language
- a desire to learn from each other for an enriched understanding
- focusing on the candidate's performance and the standards, not on the individual
- empowering the assessor with reflective skills to assess his or her own work.

Maxwell (2001) suggests that professional conversation is a good way to describe the process that should occur between assessors during assessment validation activities.

Using professional conversation in assessment validation meetings would allow the assessors to expand their understanding of the standards they are assessing against, understand what further development they need in assessment and increase their confidence as assessors.

The use of an assessment validation process based on professional conversation appears to be very compatible with the current devolved approach to assessment in the Australian vocational education sector promoted by the AQTF.

What strategies can an RTO use to validate assessment?

Assessment validation strategies that an RTO may implement include:

- meetings, where groups of assessors have the opportunity to compare and discuss their assessment processes

- the use of external assessment panels or teams of assessors
- external and written assessment tasks where markers' results are compared statistically
- benchmarking exercises with other organisations to compare assessment processes and practices
- the use of common assessment tasks by a number of assessors
- the use of a 'lead assessor' to manage or oversee the assessment process
- the use of an assessment panel to oversee or monitor the assessment process
- a mentoring system for assessors.

☞ Further information about each of these strategies can be found in Sections 2 and 3.

Selecting an appropriate assessment validation strategy for your RTO

Many of the activities or practices that you already have in place in your RTO may form part of an assessment validation strategy. Sometimes these activities just need to be formalised and documented.

RTOs will generally need to use a combination of assessment validation methods. Each RTO will need to choose the most appropriate method(s) of assessment validation based on its scope of registration, its size and organisational structure. It will also need to focus the validation process on those areas determined to be of highest risk within the area being assessed.

☞ Section 5 includes a template, *Assessment Validation Audit Checklist*, you could use to capture the activities related to assessment validation already occurring in the RTO

Include a discussion about assessment in your regular team meeting

A small private RTO included in the pilot project had a regular agenda item in its monthly team meeting about assessment. As part of their involvement in the pilot they adopted a number of templates to record the discussion that occurred in these meetings. They focused their discussion by developing a set of procedures to use and drew up a plan for systematically reviewing the assessments in the diploma course they were delivering.

They started by looking at the assessment of candidates' portfolios as that was one of the major assessment methods they used and the area of highest risk for them. The discussions they had as part of assessment validation made the assessors realise that their students needed clearer guidelines about how the portfolios would be evaluated and assessors needed to agree on the minimum standards and weighting of evidence for the material provided. They started on the process by working through several portfolios as a group and evaluating them against the standards.

If your RTO is introducing new assessment validation strategies such as regular meetings for assessors to get together and work through a systematic process of evaluating assessments, it is important that all the stakeholders within the RTO understand the purpose and benefits

of the processes right from the beginning and have an opportunity to assist in planning the implementation of the strategy.

☞ **Section 4 provides more information on how to get a new assessment validation process going in your RTO.**

The assessment validation processes adopted by the RTO should be an integral part of the organisation’s quality framework. The RTO needs to keep evidence of the validation process as well as evidence of continuous improvements made to the assessment process.

In order to comply with section 9.2 in the AQTF, RTOs will need to provide evidence when audited by the relevant state training authority. Although exact details of the range and quantity of evidence are not yet available, the following table provides information about the type of evidence requirements expected.

Standard 9: Learning and Assessment Strategies	
The RTO identifies, negotiates, plans and implements appropriate learning and assessment strategies to meet the needs of each of its clients.	
Standard	Evidence and examples
<p>9.2 The RTO must validate its assessment strategies by:</p> <p>i. reviewing, comparing and evaluating the assessment process, tools and evidence contributing to judgments made by a range of assessors against the standards, at least annually; and</p> <p>ii. documenting any action taken to improve the quality and consistency of assessment.</p>	<p>Evidence must include RTO assessment strategies validated through review, comparison and evaluation at least annually. Evidence must also include the documentation of actions taken to improve the quality and consistency of assessment.</p> <p>Examples of evidence of compliance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • records/minutes of validation meetings; • feedback from clients regarding assessment processes and tools used; • reports on assessment outcomes; • earlier drafts of assessment tools; • reports regarding changes made to assessment processes and tools; • review of evidence collected, procedure for ongoing review of assessment processes and tools; • professional development activities focusing on improving assessment strategies; • examples of materials used in process to review, compare and evaluate assessment tools, and evidence contributing to judgments made by a range of assessors against the same competency standards: and • earlier drafts of assessment tools, reports regarding changes made to assessment processes and tools, memos/emails/minutes of meetings explaining changes made to assessment instruments.

Source: ANTA Evidence Guide for Registered Training Organisations and Auditors 2001.

Why is it essential for RTOs to establish an assessment validation process?

Validation is an important process that forms part of an assessment quality assurance system. Assessment validation processes are a very supportive mechanism for confirming professional judgment and they provide the opportunity for professional exchange.

An assessment validation strategy can provide assessors with an opportunity to:

- reach a common understanding of the criteria they are using for the assessment to ensure their approach is consistently applied (reliable)
- evaluate the technical quality of the assessment tools being used (valid)
- develop some benchmark performances (examples of what competent performance looks like)
- discuss issues of concern about the assessment process, particularly in relation to fairness and flexibility
- suggest improvements to the assessment system or processes.

What are some of the advantages of assessment validation?

An assessment validation process within an RTO:

- can increase confidence in RTO standards which allows mutual recognition to work more successfully
- can help to maintain standards when assessment occurs in new locations and contexts, such as through part-time traineeships
- helps ensure that candidates receive fair treatment during the assessment process and value the credentials of the RTO.

On the right track?

An assessor from a small community sector RTO who participated in the pilot project said that the validation sessions she had attended:

“ really made me feel good about what I do. I don't usually have a chance to talk to anyone I just get on with it but getting involved in the validation meetings showed I was on the right track. If anything I was expecting too much of my students and assessing above the AQF level of the candidates”

What is the difference between internal and external validation?

Internal validation refers to the comparison of assessment tools and evidence collected to make a judgement for issuing a qualification within an RTO. The process helps ensure that assessors working across a number of sites are applying consistent standards and making consistent judgments.

External validation refers to a process established across an industry area or across a number of RTOs. An external assessment validation system can:

- provide an opportunity for assessors from different organisations to exchange information about the assessment methods they are using and reach consensus about the validity of their approaches

- help assessors working across the industry to apply consistent standards and make consistent judgments
- give assessors access to up-to-date information about what is happening in their industry.

Once an internal validation process is established, an RTO may further ensure quality by developing links with others assessing in the same industry area. This may be done through contact with another local RTO, the relevant ITAB, or professional or industry associations and networks. In RTOs where there are very small numbers of candidates being assessed against a particular Training Package qualification, the RTO could identify other RTOs delivering the same level courses and establish a validation process with them.

☞ Further tips on setting up external validation processes can be found in Section 4

What are the minimum requirements for an RTO assessment validation process?

Each RTO needs to develop an internal validation process to suit the needs of assessors and match the resources available.

The minimum requirements for an RTO establishing its own process would be:

- the development of assessment validation action plans which document procedures, time frames, target units/modules to be sampled and subsequent improvements made
- establishment of an assessment validation strategy that fits into other systems within the RTO
- the identification of a person to take on a coordinating role
- involvement of current assessors in whatever validation process is adopted by the RTO
- regular meetings of those involved in validation
- a system that involves assessors to review the validation processes
- a clear strategy and procedures for comparing assessments during validation meetings.

Section 2 An assessment validation strategy involving meetings of assessors

Where an assessment validation process involves meetings of assessors much the same process is followed regardless of whether meetings are organised within an RTO or across a number of RTOs or an industry area.

The RTO will need to decide how many assessors to involve in the process and what areas of assessment will be the focus. As assessors generally find this a valuable professional development activity, it is advisable to include as many assessors as is both possible and practical.

The main elements of an assessment validation system are:

- the development of validation action plans
- regular validation meetings of assessors from each industry area or course/qualification
- the sampling of assessment tasks and assessed work
- maintaining records of the validation system for RTO audit purposes.

Establishing a process for quality assuring assessment need not be an onerous or costly task. Many activities that assessors currently engage in, such as team meetings or mentoring programs, may be documented and form part of the RTO's assessment validation strategy.

What is an assessment validation action plan?

It is advisable that one person in the RTO for each industry area within the RTO's scope of registration takes on the role of validation facilitator and formulates an action plan that identifies:

- **when** validation meetings are to occur
- **how** the procedure for validation is to be conducted
- **what** units of competency or modules are to be included
- **what** percentage of assessed work is to be scrutinised.

It is important to document the validation process as evidence that the RTO has reviewed its assessment. The templates included in this kit can assist you to do this.



Go to Section 5 for model templates. Template 2 is a sample assessment validation action plan and Templates 1 & 3 can assist in the planning process.

What is included in assessment validation meetings?

The most successful method for comparing assessment is for assessors to come together at meetings. The aim of validation meetings is to provide the opportunity for assessors to:

- discuss the assessment instruments that they have used
- discuss the assessment decisions that they have made

- scrutinise the evidence that has been presented by candidates
- check that there has been consistent interpretation of the standards in both the design of the instrument and the judgment made.



Go to Section 5, Template 6 for an example of a checklist that you could use to guide discussion in a validation meeting.

VET sector assessors are encouraged to assess in a holistic/integrated way in order to assess the candidate's competence in the particular industry area being assessed. Validation of holistic or integrated assessment can be more challenging to organise than validation of discrete assessment tasks but assessors can agree on:

- the validity of the holistic task
- the range and sufficiency of evidence collected and
- the usefulness of their evidence guides, checklists and other assessment material.

Similarly if the assessment for a set of competencies involves the candidate presenting a portfolio of evidence, validation could involve discussion of the information provided to the candidate about how to put the portfolio together, agreements about the range of evidence provided against the standards to determine that they have been met, what is the most critical evidence and is the evidence sufficient and current.

When assessors meet to discuss specific assessment tasks they need to have a copy of all the elements of each unit of competency that are covered by the task. They then can have an informed discussion on whether the task does in fact assess what it has set out to assess and whether there are any gaps that would require additional evidence. In the case of integrated/holistic tasks there may be elements drawn from a number of units of competency covered by the task, so assessors taking part in the validation exercise would need a copy of all of these elements.

What are some of the comments assessors in the pilot program made about the validation meetings they attended?

The opportunity to work on assessment tasks together, refine them and pilot them with the students was great. Working in the school system we don't get a lot of time to work with teachers from other schools like that but getting together gave us the chance to assess in pairs. It confirmed that what we were doing was OK.

We had lots of input from part time teachers who work in the industry about current practices in aged care and it helped us sort out the standard we were expecting our students to be at.

I'm the only assessor in my workplace so it was excellent to be part of a network with others assessing in Tourism and Hospitality. One thing a lot of us realised was that with our Trainees we were over assessing and expecting more than they needed for Certificate II. We also worked out ways to validate the evidence we collected from workplace supervisors.

The group of assessors gathered for assessment validation meetings can be based on existing industry networks. The meetings can be either formal or informal and may involve a group of assessors from one or more sites where the RTO delivers training.

Where assessors are based in different locations across the RTO, the use of telephone, fax, email and internet links can also be used effectively. There is value in an initial face-to-face session for all assessors involved in the RTO assessment validation process to allow for the development of a shared understanding and ownership of the process.

When should assessment validation occur?

It is suggested that assessors aim to meet at least twice during the cycle of the course delivery and assessment. This may be once early in the year to discuss assessment tasks, tools and evidence guides, and once later in the year after assessments have been conducted, to look at some candidates' performances and assessment judgments.

Meetings can be held before, during or after assessment has taken place.

Validation **before** assessment takes place concentrates on:

- the design of the assessment activities
- the evidence guides and assessment tools
- the benchmarks against which learner performance is to be assessed.

Validation **during** assessment concentrates on:

- the actual performance being undertaken by a learner. This can obviously only be conducted where there are teams of assessors working together.

Validation **after** assessment concentrates on:

- the assessment task and the assessment process
- learner performance
- the assessment decision that has been made
- reporting and record keeping.

While validation after assessment is the most common method used by many RTOs, procedures for checking methods, evidence requirements and benchmarks of performance prior to any assessment are also vital for assuring the quality of assessment.

Who needs to be involved in assessment validation?

All assessors who are undertaking assessment for your RTO should be involved in some form of an assessment validation process, even if it only involves getting together for a validation meeting prior to assessment being undertaken to clarify the assessment process.

It may not be feasible to form an assessment validation group for each of the Training Packages delivered in the RTO, particularly where there are small numbers of assessors assessing against particular standards. It may, however, be possible to combine a number of Training Package areas or to convene a group working from different sites, relying mainly on technology to communicate with each other.

It is important to identify someone to take on the role of the assessment validation facilitator for each of the areas of training assessed in the RTO. One assessor may be able to perform the coordinating role for a number of industry areas.

What is the role of an assessment validation facilitator?

An assessment validation facilitator is responsible for:

- the development of the assessment validation action plan

- the organisation of assessment validation meetings and the development of an agreed set of guidelines about how the process will operate
- providing guidelines for assessors about the material to be used at validation meetings and how it should be collected and presented
- maintaining records of the validation documentation used, sessions held and filing reports of the process for later reference
- reviewing the validation process on a regular basis and modifying or improving the process as required.

This role can be shared or rotated but it does need to be resourced appropriately.

What qualities make a good assessment validation facilitator?


Assessors who took part in assessment validation meetings as part of the pilot project said the facilitators who worked with them were essential in establishing the process and keeping it going. Participants felt their facilitators showed a range of vital skills including:



What are participating assessors expected to do?

Assessors participating in an assessment validation process need to:

- collect samples of assessment tasks and candidates' performances, attach relevant cover sheets and send the material to the facilitator
- attend validation meetings
- maintain confidentiality about assessment material discussed at meetings
- respect other assessors' professional judgment
- suggest improvements to the assessment process where necessary as a result of comparison of tools, evidence and judgments.

 Template 5 provides a cover sheet that assessors can use to record details of the assessment context of materials they provide for use in meetings.

What can be included in validation meetings?

Sampling

Sampling involves choosing a selection of assessed work from a sample of target units of competence or modules. It enables effective use of available resources.

In selecting a sample of assessed work, include the following as appropriate:

- areas of high risk where the assessment decision has greater implications for the candidate, employer or the RTO
- assessment work of a range of learners
- assessment work of a range of teachers
- assessment of a sample of units of competence
- any apparent anomalies or borderline cases.

Where a course is being delivered across a range of sites, it is a good idea to sample some assessments from each site to check whether assessors are applying the assessment strategy in a consistent manner.

Although it is easier to collect examples of written assessment tasks, it is important not to overlook other forms of assessment. Audio and video taped assessments are difficult to collect, but they are useful for validation meetings. Other forms of assessment tasks such as logbooks, portfolios, project work or integrated tasks can all be used for discussion in validation meetings.

Exemplars and benchmark materials

Where there are a number of assessors working in the same industry area, it is a practical idea to collect good examples of assessment tasks, instruments and learner responses that can be shared by colleagues.

Before using shared materials, assessors need to agree that the selected learner performances, responses or 'model answers' do in fact represent the standard required for learners to be considered competent. Exemplars or benchmark materials need to be checked to ensure that:

- they accurately assess the performance criteria being assessed (validity)
- the instructions are unambiguous and clear for assessors and learners (reliability and fairness)
- all assessors agree that they are acceptable benchmarks.

Currency is an important issue with shared material. It is important to review benchmarked materials regularly to check their ongoing relevance and validity. New benchmark material should also be added regularly.

It may also be necessary to clarify ownership of benchmark material if more than one RTO is involved in the process.

What worked well in project validation meetings?

Introductory meetings

An initial meeting allowed all the assessors involved to have input into the process. It was an opportunity to set up some rules and procedures for operating and built up participants' confidence and willingness to share. Facilitators used a range of different activities as icebreakers for the first meeting. This gave the assessors in the group an opportunity to meet each other.

Even where the group of assessors knew each other well an introductory activity helped dispel some of the anxiety associated with sharing assessment material. One activity that was used successfully by a lot of the pilot groups was Photolanguage where members of the group chose a picture to convey the particular issues that they faced with assessment.

Popular meeting activities

Apart from the standard validation activity that occurred in most meetings of discussion based around actual assessment material and how well it met the standards being assessed, many of the facilitators involved in the project used a range of other activities to develop the skills and confidence of participants in their judgement as assessors.

Many of the activities from ANTA Training Package Materials were useful in validation meetings. One popular activity was a game that involved assessors making judgements about what evidence would be the most critical in a particular assessment context (Kit 4, P 67). This activity was adapted to suit different industry assessment contexts and created valuable discussion between assessors in meetings. Another useful activity from the ANTA Training Package Materials (Kit 4, P130) gave assessors in meetings hands on experience looking at the dimensions of competence and how they can be incorporated into assessment tasks.

Assessors as experts

The pilot project confirmed that when assessors are provided with opportunities to interact with each other as part of a validation process they have increased confidence in their professional judgement and can provide support to each other. Through participation in validation meetings assessors expanded their understanding of the standards they assess against and came to an agreement on what constitutes competence and how this can be demonstrated. With the current devolved approach to assessment within the Australian vocational education sector many assessors have very few opportunities to work professionally with each other so those involved in the project reacted very positively to the experience.

Section 3

A snapshot of other assessment validation strategies

Section 2 provided information about how to conduct assessment validation through meetings of assessors. This section provides a short summary of a range of other strategies that you might consider when deciding on an assessment validation strategy for your RTO. This is not a complete list of assessment validation strategies that an RTO could use, but rather a selection of strategies that some RTOs are currently using with success to validate their assessment processes.

It is important that you consider all the factors and limitations that you may face in implementing an assessment validation strategy. You may have a large number of relatively inexperienced assessors who would benefit from regular validation meetings but because of geographic factors the cost of implementing such a strategy would be prohibitive. In this case you could consider an initial face-to-face meeting, with smaller groups subsequently working by email or phone to share assessment, or a lead assessor who provides support to assessors and visits various sites to conduct meetings.

It is unlikely that your RTO would choose one strategy in isolation, but more probable that you would need to select the most appropriate combination of strategies to suit your assessment context.

The strategies summarised in this section are:

- assessment panels
- assessment teams
- benchmarking
- use of common assessment tools and instruments, exemplars and benchmarks
- lead assessor
- mentoring system for assessors.

Not just one strategy

Many of the RTOs involved in the assessment validation pilot program decided to use one of the strategies listed above or a combination of several strategies. In most instances they introduced the selected strategy by getting as many of the RTO's assessors together for an introductory meeting.

One pilot RTO with widely geographically dispersed assessors many of whom were new to the process appointed two **lead assessors** who would also be responsible for establishing and managing a **mentoring scheme** for their new assessors. As part of the mentoring process they also encouraged the pairs involved in mentoring to assess together where practicable so they also incorporated **assessment teams** into their strategy.

1. Assessment panels

What is an assessment panel?

An assessment panel is a group of people selected by an RTO to oversee its assessment process. The assessment panel may have responsibility for higher level strategic and policy matters or it may be responsible for the more practical and operational matters.

Assessment panels should include relevant industry representatives. The RTO will need to select the right mix of members with skills and experience in assessment in the industry area involved. The panel may have representatives of assessors and managers operating from different RTO sites or it may include union or industry body representatives. When an RTO is establishing an assessment panel it needs to document its role and responsibilities.

What are the features of an assessment panel?

An assessment panel acts as a monitoring body for the area of assessment that it is responsible for. By including key people on an assessment panel, for example industry representatives, managers or assessment experts from the organisation, assessor representatives and perhaps a candidate representative, the RTO can provide a quality assurance mechanism for its assessment processes. The role of an assessment panel will need to be decided based on the scope of delivery and size of the RTO, but some of the functions of an RTO's assessment panel could include:

- reviewing assessment instruments and establishing benchmark examples of particular assessments
- doing a risk analysis of the assessment being undertaken to determine critical evidence required or areas within the assessment that is interpreted differently by assessors
- reviewing assessment outcomes and borderline assessments
- organising professional development or mentoring for assessors.

An assessment panel may work across a number of RTOs, for example a number of providers from the same sector in a particular region, or it may operate within a single RTO. The panel may focus on the assessment of a qualification or a range of qualifications within a Training Package or it may be responsible for the assessment of the full scope of registration of a particular RTO. A large TAFE institute may establish an assessment panel for all its assessment across the institute where the panel is more involved in policy making and systems, or it may establish an assessment panel for a particular industry area, for example all assessment within Tourism and Hospitality in the organisation.

What are the benefits of establishing an assessment panel?

An assessment panel provides a structured means of assessment validation. It brings together a group of people for this specific purpose and provides a collaborative mechanism for planning and reviewing assessment.

Piloting an assessment panel

An RTO with an emphasis on flexible delivery decided to set up an **assessment panel** for a particular course because they had a lot of part time assessors. The assessors were sent candidates' work consisting of portfolios of evidence but had little opportunity to discuss the assessment process or their decisions with other assessors. The panel sampled work from all the assessors involved in the program on a regular basis and gave them feedback about the actual assessments they conducted. The panel members were rotated because it was recognised as a very useful professional development opportunity for them.

2. Assessment teams

What is an assessment team?

Team assessment involves two or more people coming together to undertake an assessment of a candidate and to make an assessment decision.

What are the features of an assessment team?

There are a number of situations in which team assessments can be used to improve the quality of assessments. These include the following:

- When an assessor does not have the required technical competencies to assess in a particular subject area, a technical or subject matter expert who is competent in the particular area being assessed should be included in the team. This person may or may not be a qualified assessor.
- Where the assessor is separated by distance from the candidate, a workplace supervisor or a subject expert may provide input into the final assessment judgment.
- Where an industry expert is used as a member of a team, he or she is able to provide advice on current workplace standards and practices and to ensure that the evidence provided matches the standard. This form of assessment is often called a panel assessment.

Although it is an effective means of improving the validity of assessment and also the skills of assessors, using assessment teams in an RTO involves considerable time and therefore a cost for the industry personnel and RTOs involved.

If an RTO decides to use this strategy, it must make sure that roles and responsibilities of those involved are clear and that there is an opportunity for communication between the people involved. Candidates need to be well prepared so that they understand what is involved.

What are the benefits of establishing an assessment team?

The main benefits in using team assessment are that:

- the validity of the assessment is enhanced
- the skills and knowledge of both assessors and technical experts can be extended
- a broader range of competencies can be assessed
- industry's confidence in the assessment process and the assessment judgment may be improved
- increased contact with industry allows the strengthening of working relationships
- technical experts may consider this as a meaningful way to have input into assessment.

Piloting assessment teams

An RTO with low student enrolments but where the students are geographically dispersed identified the area being assessed as high risk because of OH&S factors. The RTO decided to set up assessment teams for all assessors new to the program. They use local assessors with the necessary technical skills but to validate the assessment process all assessors have to do at least one team assessment a year and all assessors new to the program complete a team assessment before going solo.

3. Benchmarking

What is benchmarking?

Benchmarking involves making comparisons with other organisations to identify or create areas for improvement. It includes identifying superior performance and/or practices and incorporating them into your own practice.

The two major forms of benchmarking include:

- **performance benchmarking** - the comparison of performance between a number of organisations against a number of agreed measures. In relation to assessment validation the organisations would need to select a particular qualification or group of competencies that they both assess and compare and discuss the assessment process and judgements.
- **procedures/process benchmarking** - the comparison of their procedures/processes as well as performance. As an assessment validation exercise the organisations involved would select sections of their assessment process such as recognition, record keeping, assessor training or assessment information provided to candidates as the focus of the benchmarking process.

What are the features of benchmarking?

Organisations can undertake both procedures/process and performance benchmarking to find out what should be improved but also to determine how this can be done and what is feasible. An analysis of the findings should result in the implementation of improvements to the processes that were benchmarked.

In performance benchmarking, the partners may be competitors. Therefore, although their identities are known, the data sources need to be obscured.

Performance benchmarking does not tell the RTO how to improve its performance as it only compares performance. It requires the RTO to have a group of benchmarking partners.

In procedures/process benchmarking, on the other hand, the identity of partners and data sources are known. Therefore, either the partners must not be competitors or the information must not be confidential. This strategy requires careful selection of partners. It usually involves a comparison of a single procedure/process and may require organisational visits.

It is considered useful to use performance and procedures/process benchmarking together so that organisations can find out how to improve and also how much they need to improve.

What are the benefits of benchmarking?

Performance benchmarking can:

- provide useful ways of identifying where one stands in relation to other training organisations
- give clear evidence of where organisations most need to improve
- cover a wide spectrum of the organisation while measuring the performance of one process.

Process benchmarking can:

- inform organisations how to improve and how much improvement is feasible
- facilitate comparison between organisations
- be a change agent for groups involved in the process.

Benchmarking at work

A community sector RTO outside the metropolitan area began working with several new organisations assessing Trainees on the job. As this involved working in two new industry areas, mining and viticulture, the RTO, which had well established processes in place for validating assessment in its other areas of operation, looked for an appropriate process for assessment validation in the two new industry areas. Both organisations it was contracted to work with already had Trainees at various worksites in other states. In both cases the new NSW based RTO was able to establish benchmarking processes with interstate RTOs who had experience delivering the same courses and working in partnership with the same two companies.

Both companies concerned were pleased with this arrangement as it meant that consistency of assessment across its operating sites would be improved. By locating benchmarking partners in other states there was less of a problem with commercial in confidence issues than there would be when working with local RTOs competing for work in the same industry area.



An example of a Benchmarking Checklist to help you get started with the process is included in Section 5 as Template 8.

4. Use of common assessment tools and instruments, exemplars and benchmarks

What are common assessment tools and instruments, exemplars and benchmarks?

Benchmarks or exemplars are sample assessment tools or evidence (candidate responses) that assessors agree are good examples. These can include actual assessment tasks and instruments, pro-formas and evidence guides and 'model' answers to particular tasks with information about why they meet the particular standard. They may also include sample products or descriptions of what a competent performance on a particular task looks like.

Where there are a number of assessors working together with the same unit(s) of competency needing to share quality assessment material, it is a good idea to collect good examples of assessment tools or evidence.

What are the features of common assessment tools and instruments, exemplars and benchmarks?

Before using shared materials, assessors need to agree that the selected learner performances, responses or model answers do in fact represent the standard required for learners to be considered competent. What is a 'good' sample? Is it an 'average' sample, a 'just across the line' sample or a 'best practice' sample?

Exemplars or benchmarks need to be checked to ascertain that:

- they do accurately assess the performance criteria being assessed (validity)
- instructions and decision-making rules are unambiguous and clear for assessors and candidates (consistency and fairness)
- all assessors agree they are of an acceptable quality.

Currency is an important issue with shared material. It is **critical** that benchmark materials are reviewed regularly to ensure their ongoing relevance and validity for the currently endorsed unit(s) of competency. Therefore version control is vital when maintaining benchmark and exemplar materials.

While common assessment tools may be useful to assessors and reduce work involved in designing assessments it is important that the tasks are able to be adapted to the candidate's own workplace or learning context.

What are the benefits of using common assessment tools and instruments, exemplars and benchmarks?

The key benefits of using benchmarks and exemplars are that they encourage:

- the development of a common understanding amongst a group of assessors of the standard of performance to be achieved
- improvement in the consistency in assessment judgments and practices
- a sense of confidence in assessors.

Sharing the load

A large public sector RTO involved in the pilot selected a qualification in the Community Services and Health sector for the focus of their assessment validation. Their initial meeting included assessors from five different sites. They were introduced to the concept of validation and worked on several activities where they evaluated assessment tasks used by members of the group using the *Pre-assessment validation checklist* (Template 6).

As their industry area had been through enormous change over a short period the group members felt they would benefit from having a common set of validated assessment tools. Each group member agreed to work on an assessment tool for a specific set of competencies, trial it, circulate it to the group for further trialing and refinement and bring the tools to a second meeting later in the year for another validation exercise. Over time they plan to develop more tools using this process. They modified the *Assessment validation materials cover sheet* (Template 5) and agreed that this sheet would be attached to the front of all tasks so that assessment conditions would be clear and they had a means of recording suggested changes to the tool during the process.



Template 10 included in Section 5 is a checklist that you could use to evaluate assessment tools.

5. Lead assessor

What is a lead assessor?

A lead assessor is an individual appointed by an RTO or a group of RTOs in a particular industry area to develop and manage strategies to ensure consistency in assessment. A lead assessor operates in much the same way as an assessment panel. He or she may be responsible for either the assessment system or policy or may be more focused on the quality of the actual assessment process.

What are the features of a lead assessor?

The lead assessor may be the direct line manager of the assessors in an RTO or may be in a role with responsibility for the quality and consistency of the assessment process without responsibility for supervising the assessors themselves.

The lead assessor may work within a single RTO or even a section within a large RTO. The person in the position may be responsible for the assessment of qualifications within one industry area or for a number of industry areas. Smaller RTOs could form a consortium and use the services of one lead assessor. This would be cost effective and would also offer opportunities for benchmarking.

When a lead assessor is appointed in an RTO the responsibilities of the role will have to be determined and documented, but some of the functions of a lead assessor could include:

- the selection and induction of assessors
- the ongoing professional development or mentoring of assessors
- the facilitation of assessment validation meetings of assessors in the RTO
- the development or maintenance of shared assessment instruments or benchmark material
- the review of assessment outcomes including collection of feedback from candidates of the assessment process and the establishment and monitoring of an assessment appeals process.

What are the benefits of appointing a lead assessor?

Appointing a lead assessor gives the validation of assessment a clear focus in the RTO. The lead assessor can support assessors in the RTO and will develop considerable expertise in the area. Where an RTO decides to use this approach it will need to ensure that the lead assessor maintains contact with the relevant industry areas and professional networks.

Leading the way

A large private RTO in the pilot program decided to set up a strategy involving a lead assessor combined with a mentoring scheme after surveying assessors working for the RTO at locations across the state. There was a range of experience among the RTO assessors even though they all had Certificate IV qualifications. The area being assessed posed potentially high OH&S risks. The lead assessor would sample particular assessments from a range of sites at regular intervals, visit assessment sites and where feasible arrange for assessors to assess in pairs.

All assessors new to the organisation would be teamed with a more experienced assessor for their first few months on the job. This mentoring system for new assessors would be conducted largely by phone and email because assessors were working on the job and often in isolation. More experienced assessors taking on the role of mentor would be provided with a set of resources and a small time allocation as part of their workload.

6. Mentoring system for assessors

What is an assessment mentoring system?

A mentoring system for assessors is a relationship where people can share their professional assessing skills and experiences. Typically the relationship is between a more experienced assessor and a less experienced assessor, however it may be combined with other procedures such as formal team meetings. An assessment mentoring system is based on encouragement, constructive comments, openness, mutual trust and a willingness to learn and share.

What are the benefits of establishing an assessment mentoring system?

Benefits to the RTO:

- new assessors are quickly introduced to the assessment system by an experienced colleague, ensuring a consistent approach
- the mentoring system then becomes part of a validation process
- it ensures the dissemination of assessment information to new staff, particularly part-time staff
- it contributes to AQTF 7.2 relating to the RTO's induction of new staff regarding Training Packages, competency based training (CBT) and assessment
- successful assessors who are mentored often become mentors.

Benefits to the mentor:

The mentor:

- learns how to encourage and motivate someone else
- understands more about the assessment approach
- finds better ways of doing things
- ensures a consistent approach to assessment within a team
- takes part in challenging discussions with people who have fresh perspectives and who are not already part of the organisational thinking.

Benefits to the person being mentored:

The person being mentored:

- gains an application of assessment knowledge from mentoring and an improved understanding of his or her role as an assessor in the RTO
- gains confidence, professional experience and competence
- is provided with a supportive environment to evaluate experiences. The system also means that new assessors are quickly introduced to the assessment system by more experienced colleague.



Section 5, Template 9 is an example of a mentoring agreement that you could use to record the planned mentoring activities

Section 4 Getting started with assessment validation

This section has been included as a guide for RTOs who are establishing a new internal assessment validation strategy or modifying an existing one. It will be of interest to those responsible in either an RTO or a particular teaching section for planning and setting up validation processes.

There is no “one size fits all” validation strategy. Each RTO needs to look closely at its structure, courses on its scope of registration, constraints such as geographic isolation, or numbers of assessors and work out which validation strategies will be most suitable for them to adopt. Whatever strategies are adopted there needs to be an evaluation process built in to review and modify where necessary on a regular basis.

The following tips for getting started in assessment validation were compiled from feedback from RTOs who piloted different strategies.

	SOME ISSUES/POINTS TO CONSIDER
PREPARING THE WAY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that RTO management is aware of why you need to have a validation process in place and what it involves. Try to resolve resourcing issues. (Section 5 includes a set of sample OHTs that you could use or modify when running validation information sessions.) • You need to make sure that staff in your RTO such as the registrar, those responsible for RTO compliance, or others such as quality or curriculum officers are aware of decisions about assessment validation processes you are planning. • You need to have a holistic approach and validation should fit in with all the other related activities in your RTO eg you may already conduct student satisfaction surveys and could add questions that relate specifically to assessment quality. Responses could inform your assessment validation process. • Involve as many members of staff as possible and practicable in the decision about what validation process to implement. Provide staff with information about what validation involves and why you need to do it as a first step in the process. (Sample OHTs in Section 5 and trigger poster could help you do this) • ALLOW TIME for this consultation and planning process to happen. Your strategy will have more chance of success if more people understand what it is about and why. • Look closely at all the related processes that you have in place. (see Section 5, Template 4 for a model of an audit form to help you do this) You may be doing enough to satisfy the requirements for assessment validation but you may not have labelled it. Don't reinvent the wheel.

	SOME ISSUES/POINTS TO CONSIDER
PREPARING THE WAY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set achievable goals. Start small. Choose an area to get started in. This may be your area of highest risk or your area where you think you will have success. You may decide there is a potential risk because there have been recent changes to the competency standards or you may have new assessors or very few assessors working in a particular area. There may be an area within the qualification being assessed which presents particular OH&S difficulties or an area of evidence which is critical to guarantee competence. These are just some of the factors to consider when deciding where to begin. • Start drawing up an overall Validation Plan for your RTO to show what strategies will occur and when for each qualification you offer.
GETTING GOING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide who is responsible for coordination of the assessment validation activities. Provide them with background information and support. • Whatever strategy you plan to adopt, it is a good idea to have an initial meeting to agree on processes, set guidelines for operating and allow assessors from different sites to meet each other. • At the initial activity develop a validation action plan so that everyone involved knows what will happen and when. Section 5 (Template 2) provides a model of a validation plan. • Make sure you set up processes for recording what you do and filing the information. Keep the record keeping as simple as possible. • Make sure you work out a process for ensuring anonymity and confidentiality of assessment material that you use so that individual candidates or assessors cannot be identified. This allows people to be more open in their discussion.
KEEPING IT GOING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up a system that links to other processes in your RTO. • Make sure that the co-ordinator is resourced. • Include any new assessors or workplace supervisors involved in your assessment process. • If you have relied on assessment validation strategies within your RTO you may need to get some validation from others in the industry area to be confident you are on track. If any of your RTO's assessors belong to an assessor network they may be able to provide feedback from the network to your staff. Input from industry networks is also valuable.

	SOME ISSUES/POINTS TO CONSIDER
KEEPING IT GOING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At significant periods eg when the Training Package you are working with is reviewed or updated you may need to change whatever process you have adopted. • You may be able to include processes to keep staff up to date with industry changes as part of your validation strategy.
EVALUATING THE PROCESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect feedback from those involved in the validation process and where necessary refine the process. You need to review annually whatever strategy your RTO adopts. • Don't forget to gather feedback from the candidates as part of your validation process. • Be prepared to modify or change your processes as required. You may have a high turnover of assessors in your RTO and need to introduce new processes to support them or just vary the activities to keep the process stimulating for the assessors involved.

Setting up external assessment validation strategies

Many of the steps listed above apply whether the process being established is within an RTO (internal) or across a number of RTOs (external). As part of the pilot project three external assessment validation groups were established in the Tourism and Hospitality, Business Services (Frontline Management) and Community Services and Health (Aged Care) areas. The following points may be useful for anyone planning external validation strategies.

	SOME ISSUES/POINTS TO CONSIDER
PREPARING THE WAY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide on the most appropriate group for the external validation process. This may be other local RTOs or may be a group of RTOs all assessing against the same Training Package standards. It could be a group of RTOs from the same sector eg school based RTOs, TAFE Institutes or community sector RTOs. • Identify other people who could assist with the process. Involving an ITAB is recommended where the external validation group is from a particular industry area. • Identify whether there are any existing networks of trainers and assessors working in the area you have identified. Existing networks are a good way of identifying a potential group of RTOs which may form an assessment validation group.

GETTING GOING	SOME ISSUES/POINTS TO CONSIDER
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange an initial meeting of representatives from the RTOs involved to plan the process and an initial assessor meeting. • Identify someone to coordinate and facilitate the initial meeting. • At the first assessor meeting develop an agreed set of operating procedures and a plan for when and where to meet in future. Meeting dates need to be set in advance as each RTO has different constraints and delivery/assessment cycles and it is often difficult to find suitable dates. • Decide on a segment of the Training Package that is assessed by the majority of group members as a starting point for discussion. It is a good idea to start with compulsory or core competencies at a particular AQF level. • Allow lots of time initially for information exchange as members of the group need to discuss their assessment contexts as these will impact on the assessment processes they have adopted.
KEEPING IT GOING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try not to have too long a gap between meetings as initially it is important to keep the momentum of the group going. • Sometimes it is difficult to get the composition of the group right. It is important for current assessors to be involved so that meaningful discussion about assessment processes and decisions can occur. It is not always easy for smaller RTOs to release assessors to attend meetings. • Accept that there are some limitations in sharing materials due to commercial issues for RTOs but meaningful discussion can still occur and assessors from the different RTOs can share information about how they assess particular parts of the standards. It is often useful to initiate discussion by using assessment tasks that don't belong to any group members. • For continuity it is useful if the same RTO representatives can be involved in validation meetings. It takes time to develop trust between group members from different RTOs and new members joining the group at each meeting often changes the group dynamics. • Keep a record of the meetings as part of the evidence that RTOs can use to demonstrate AQTF compliance. • Record any decisions made by the group. The group may be able to provide feedback to the relevant national ITAB relating to the standards that could be of use for future Training Package reviews.
EVALUATING THE PROCESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect feedback from those involved in the external validation process and where necessary refine the process.

Section 5 Templates and resources

The templates and resources included in this section have been designed to help you implement assessment validation strategies in your RTO.

They can be customised to suit your context. All of the templates and resources included in this section are also on the disc included with this publication. Templates have been designed as samples and you can adapt them to the needs of your RTO. RTOs who used them as part of the pilot project customised them with their own logos and organisation details.

Some of the materials have been adapted from the materials included in Quality Assurance Guide for Assessment, Guide 10 ANTA Training Package Assessment Materials.

The templates and resources included are as follows:

1. Assessment validation schedule
2. Assessment validation action plan
3. Assessment validation participant record
4. Assessment validation audit checklist
5. Assessment validation materials cover sheet
6. Pre-assessment validation checklist
7. Post-assessment validation checklist
8. Assessment validation benchmarking summary
9. Assessor mentoring agreement
10. Assessment tools, processes and evidence checklist
11. Set of OHTs for use in assessment validation information sessions

Template 1



Assessment validation schedule

Name of RTO: _____

Plan for the period:

Training Package	Assessment validation facilitator	Facilitator contact details	Pre-assessment validation	Post-assessment validation	Meeting details (venue, date, time, etc)

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Template 2



Assessment validation action plan for (course/qualification)

Name of RTO: _____

Plan for the period:

Unit of competence	Activity undertaken	Proposed date pre-assessment validation	Proposed date post-assessment validation

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Template 3



Assessment validation participant record

Name of RTO: _____

Qualification: _____

Assessment validation activity: _____ Date: _____

Name of participating assessor	Delivery site

Follow up action required:

Template 4



Assessment Validation Audit Checklist

Use this checklist to document validation strategies already occurring in your RTO to help plan useful assessment validation

Assessment validation strategies	Name of Qualification Eg Bus Services Cert II (Office Admin)
What types of assessment is used in this qualification?	
Do groups of assessors meet to compare their processes, assessment tools and judgements. If yes, please specify how often they meet and whether minutes or records are kept.	
Are assessors for this course using standardised assessment tools ? If yes, are these tools developed locally, by a curriculum unit or have been commercially produced?	
Is there any sampling of assessments for this course to check for consistency? How is this done?	
Is an assessment panel or team used for assessment of this course? Who is included on the panel/team? And how does it operate?	
Is there any industry involvement in the development and carrying out of assessment for this course? How is it done?	

<p>Is there a mentoring system in place for new assessors in the course? Is this process documented?</p>	
<p>Do more experienced assessors act in a lead assessor role assisting less experienced teachers/assessors. Is this process documented?</p>	
<p>Is feedback on the assessment process collected from candidates? If yes, how is this feedback used as part of a quality improvement process?</p>	
<p>Has there been any benchmarking of assessment processes and tools done between different delivery sites or with other RTOs?</p>	
<p>Do any assessors working on this course belong to an assessor network? If yes, how does it operate? How is information collected passed on to other assessors?</p>	
<p>What professional development activities focusing on improving assessment strategies are provided to assessors?</p>	
<p>What other methods are used by the assessors of this course to validate their assessment processes?</p>	

Date:

Completed by:

Position in RTO:

Template 5



Assessment validation materials cover sheet

Use this cover sheet for assessment material to be used during assessment validation or for shared assessment material so that assessors can use it in a consistent way. Please attach any written material provided to the candidate relating to the task such as checklists, evidence guides or written instructions.

Name/number of unit of competence: _____

Performance criteria being assessed: _____

Information relating to the context of use of the task:

- Oral instructions given to the candidate before or during assessment

- Conditions (eg time limit, assistance given, material or equipment used)

- Other comments (eg adjustments made, context of the assessment)

Template 6



Pre-assessment validation checklist

Use this checklist as part of an assessment validation meeting to evaluate assessment tools, tasks or strategies that you have developed.

Name/number of unit of competence _____

Assessment activity	Yes/No	Comments
Assessment task instructions and assessment conditions are clearly identified.		
Written information is worded appropriately.		
The assessment activity addresses the evidence requirements for the competency or competencies being assessed.		
The level of difficulty of the activity is appropriate to the competency or competencies being assessed.		
Evidence guides or assessment checklists are available for use in making an assessment decision.		
Is the assessment activity suitable for use in other assessment contexts? Eg recognition, trainees, workplace		

Modification required (as identified under comments): Yes/No

Changes made to assessment items: Yes/No Date:

Assessment task is ready for use: Yes/No Date:

Validating peer or mentor

Template 7



Post-Assessment Validation Checklist

Use this checklist as part of an assessment validation meeting to evaluate assessment evidence provided to meet particular performance criteria

Name/number of unit/s of competency/ies _____

Elements to be assessed _____

Description of evidence provided to meet the performance criteria:

TO BE COMPLETED

Evidence criteria	Yes/No	Comment
Valid		
Is the evidence provided relevant to what is being assessed?		
Have a variety of assessment strategies been used?		
Are skills and knowledge assessed in an integrated way?		
Sufficient		
Is the evidence provided by this assessment sufficient for a judgement of competence?		
What additional evidence is required ?		
Consistent		
Is the evidence consistent with that from other assessments?		
Can any inconsistencies between this evidence and other evidence collected about the candidate be explained?		
Authentic		
Can you verify the evidence provided is the work of the candidate?		

General comments about the evidence presented

Signed : _____

Date: _____

Template 8



Assessment validation benchmarking summary

Use this template to record details of decisions made, areas for review identified during a benchmarking process.

RTO name:	
Name of benchmarking partner	
Name of benchmarking partner contact	
Contact details	
Scope of benchmarking activity	<i>Insert scope of the area to be benchmarked eg Specific area of assessment, qualification or assessment process to be reviewed</i>
Benchmarking team members	<i>Insert names of RTO staff participating in the benchmarking activity</i>
Benchmarking site	<i>Record details of site where benchmarking took place</i>
Date	<i>Insert the date(s) on which the benchmarking activity took place</i>
Benchmarking summary	<i>Summarise any significant outcomes or findings of the benchmarking activity. Record any areas identified for improvement, further action or information to be gathered, who is responsible for any follow up or implementation and the planned timeframe.</i>
Future benchmarking activities	<i>Insert dates or details of future or follow up activities planned</i>
Signed:	Date:

Template 9



Assessor mentoring agreement

This type of agreement is designed to document the responsibilities of both the mentor and assessor being mentored and record planned activities.

Name of mentor	
Contact details	
Name of assessor being mentored	
Contact details	
Timeframe for planned mentor activities	

The mentor will:

Include details of any assessment activities such as team assessments, working on shared assessment material that will occur. Include details of how often and where meetings or communication will occur.

The assessor will:

Include details of assessment material/activities that the assessor being mentored is required to complete.

Resources to be used in the program include:

Include details of any resources or professional development activities to be used.

Potential support and assistance for the program:

Include details of other people and sources of support such as networks that are recommended.

Template 10



Assessment tools, processes and evidence checklist

Use this checklist to assist you to design assessment tools and strategies. Gauge your assessment against the following statements, and where you are unable to answer YES, re-work your approach.

VALIDITY	Yes/No	Comment
1. The assessment tasks are based on realistic workplace activities and contexts.	Y/N	
2. The evidence relates directly to the units of competence, or learning outcomes, being assessed.	Y/N	
3. The instrument will assess the candidate's ability to meet the level of performance required by the unit(s) of competency.	Y/N	
4. The assessment tasks have been designed to allow holistic and integrated assessment of knowledge, skills and attitudes.	Y/N	
5. More than one task and source of evidence will be used as the basis for judgement, with evidence drawn from a variety of performances over time where practical.	Y/N	
6. Different sources of evidence of knowledge and skills that underpin the unit of competency will be considered in the assessment.	Y/N	
7. The purpose, boundaries and limitations of the interpretations of evidence have been clearly identified.	Y/N	
8. The methods and instruments selected are appropriate for the assessment system specified by the industry (where applicable).	Y/N	
9. Where practical, the methods and processes for assessment have been validated by another person with expertise in the competencies being assessed.	Y/N	

RELIABILITY	Yes/No	Comment
1. Critical elements have been identified and sampling will be used to ensure that the most important aspects are assessed.	Y/N	
2. Assessment exemplars and checklists have been prepared for use by assessors.	Y/N	
3. Guides for observing and recording evidence are based on units of competency.	Y/N	
4. Clear guidelines are available to ensure that assessors make consistent decisions over time and with different candidates.	Y/N	
5. Where multiple assessors are involved in conducting parallel assessment events, the strategies used have been agreed.	Y/N	
6. Consistent instructions to candidates and procedures for undertaking assessment are available to all assessors.	Y/N	
7. Where work samples are to be used as evidence, candidates will receive specific guidelines on requirements, including information about ensuring authenticity and currency of the evidence.	Y/N	
8. Where a unit or units of competency are to be assessed in different situations, the situations are generally comparable.	Y/N	

FLEXIBILITY	Yes/No	Comment
1. The assessment approach can be adapted to meet the needs of all candidates and workplaces.	Y/N	
2. Where practical and appropriate, assessment will be negotiated and agreed between the assessor and the candidate.	Y/N	
3. Candidates will be able to have their previous experience or expertise recognised.	Y/N	
4. The assessment strategy adequately covers both the on- and off-the-job components of the training.	Y/N	

FAIRNESS	Yes/No	Comment
1. Candidates will be given clear and timely information on assessment.	Y/N	
2. Information for candidates will cover assessment methods, procedures, the criteria against which they will be assessed, when and how they will receive feedback and the mechanism for appeal.	Y/N	
3. Candidates will be included in discussions on the choice of assessment methods and timing.	Y/N	
4. Candidates will be made aware of their responsibilities with regard to assessment.	Y/N	
5. The assessment approach chosen caters for the language, literacy and numeracy needs of all candidates.	Y/N	
6. The special geographic, financial or social needs of candidates have been considered in the development and conduct of the assessment.	Y/N	
7. Reasonable adjustment can be made to the assessment strategy to ensure equity for all candidates, while maintaining the integrity of the assessment outcomes.	Y/N	
8. Opportunities for feedback and review of all aspects of assessment will be provided to candidates.	Y/N	
9. There are clearly documented mechanisms for appeal against assessment processes and decisions and these will be provided to candidates prior to assessment.	Y/N	

Template 11



Material for Assessment Validation Information Sessions

These slides have been developed for use at information sessions about Assessment Validation or to provide an overview of the subject at initial meetings in your RTO. A copy of the text has been included here but the OHTs are included on the accompanying disc. You can customise the OHTs to suit the needs of your group. You could also use the poster included with these resources at introductory meetings.

OHT 1

On Track

Moving towards Assessment Validation

OHT5

What must RTOs and assessors do to assure quality?

- AQTF sets out requirements
- Specific Training Packages may specify further assessment guidelines
- RTO must conduct internal audit/self assessment of compliance

OHT2

Why assure the quality of assessment?

- Assessors concern – “subjective” nature of assessment
- National VET system (mutual recognition)
- Training authorities concern/national research – lack of assessment consistency
- 2001 – AQTF introduced

OHT6

Why develop an assessment validation strategy?

- Maintenance of consistent standards
- Professional exchange
- Provides valuable feedback mechanism
- AQTF compliance

OHT3

Assessment Validation AQTF 9.2

9.2 Each RTO must validate its assessment strategies by:

- 1) reviewing, comparing and evaluating the assessment processes, tools and evidence contributing to judgements made by a range of assessors against the same standards* at least annually: and
- 2) Documenting any action taken to improve the quality and consistency of assessment.

** These may be internal processes with stakeholder involvement or external validation with other providers and/or stakeholders.*

AQTF Standards for RTOs, June 2001

OHT7

Key aspects to be quality assured are:

- the assessment system
- the assessment process
- the assessors
- the evidence
- the judgement

Quality Assurance Arrangements- Assessment Guide 2001

<p>OHT4</p> <p>What does assessment validation involve?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of an action plan and agreed set of procedures • Someone to take on coordinating role • Regular meetings of those involved in the process • Maintaining records of the validation system for RTO audit purposes 	<p>OHT8</p> <p>Assessment validation strategies include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meetings of assessors • assessment panels • assessment teams • benchmarking • use of common assessment tools and instruments, exemplars and benchmarks • lead assessor • mentoring system for assessors
---	---

OHT 5		
The key aspects that need to be validated are:		
↓	↓	↓
Assessment Process	Assessment Tools	Evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrolments • Assessments • Recording • Reporting • Appeals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific assessment tasks • Instructions for candidates • Instructions for assessors • Evidence guides, checklists • Assessment criteria • Rules of judgement • Examples of acceptable responses and description of typical competent performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3rd party • Simulation • Sources: Indirect, direct, supplementary

Section 6

Glossary of assessment terms

Assessment

Assessment is the process of collecting evidence and making judgments on whether competency has been achieved to confirm that an individual can perform to the expected standard in the workplace as expressed in the relevant endorsed industry/enterprise competency standards or the learning outcomes of an accredited course.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Assessment context

The environment in which the assessment will be carried out. This will include physical and operational factors, the assessment system within which the assessment is carried out, opportunities for gathering evidence in a number of situations, the purpose of the assessment, who carried out the assessment and the period of time during which it takes place.

From Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training

Assessment guidelines

Assessment guidelines are an endorsed component of a Training Packages which underpins assessment and sets out the industry approach to valid, reliable, fair and flexible assessment. Assessment guidelines include the assessment system overview, assessor requirements, designing assessment resources, conducting assessment and sources for information on assessment.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Assessment judgement

Assessment judgement involves the assessor evaluating whether the evidence gathered is current, valid, authentic and sufficient to make the assessor decision. The assessment judgement will involve the assessor in using professional judgement in evaluating the evidence available.

From ANTA Training Package assessment materials

Assessment materials

Assessment materials are any resources that assist in any part of the assessment process. They may include information for the candidate or assessor, assessment tools or resources for the quality assurance arrangements of the assessment system.

From ANTA Training Package assessment materials

Assessment method

Assessment method means the particular technique used to gather different types of evidence. This may include methods or techniques such as questioning, observation, third party reports, interviews, simulations and portfolios.

From ANTA Training Package assessment materials

Assessment plan

A document developed by an assessor that includes the elements or units of competency to be assessed, when the assessment will occur, how the assessment will occur, the assessment methods to be used and the criteria for the assessment decision.

From Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training

Assessment process

The assessment process is the agreed series of steps that the candidate undertakes within the enrolment, assessment, recording and reporting cycle. The process must best suit the needs of all stakeholders and be both efficient and cost-effective. The agreed assessment process is often expressed as a flow chart.

From ANTA Training Package assessment materials

Assessment system

An assessment system is a controlled and ordered process designed to ensure that assessment decisions made in relation to many individuals, by many assessors, in many situations are consistent, fair, valid and reliable.

From Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training

Assessment tool

These incorporate both the instruments and the instructions for the gathering and interpreting of evidence. A variety of assessment tools should be used in the process of establishing competency. Evidence gathering/assessment tools include:

- specific instructions for candidates
- examples of acceptable responses
- rules of judgments in holistic competency assessment
- descriptions of typical competent performance.

From ANTA Training Package assessment materials

Audit

Audit means a systematic, independent and documented process for obtaining evidence to determine whether the activities and related outcomes of a training organisation comply with the *AQTF Standards for Registered Training Organisations*.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)

Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) means the policy framework that defines all qualifications recognised nationally in post-compulsory education and training within Australia. The AQF comprises titles and guidelines, which define each qualification, together with principles and protocols covering articulation and issuance of qualifications and Statements of Attainment.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF)

Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) means the nationally agreed recognition arrangements for the vocational education and training sector.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Candidate

A candidate is any person presenting for assessment. The candidate may be:

- a learner undertaking training in an institutional setting
- a learner/worker undertaking training in a workplace
- a learner/worker wanting their skills recognised
- or any combination of the above.

From ANTA Training Package assessment materials

Competency

The specification of knowledge and skill and the application of that knowledge and skill to the standards of performance required in the workplace.

From Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training

Competency standards

These define the competencies required for effective performance in the workplace. Standards are expressed in outcome terms and have a standard format comprising a unit title, unit descriptor, the elements of competency, performance criteria, range of variables and evidence guide.

From Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training

Dimensions of competency

The concept of competency includes all aspects of work performance and not only narrow task skills. The four dimensions of competency are:

- task skills
- task management skills
- contingency management skills
- job/role environment skills.

From Training Package Developers' Handbook

Element

An element is the basic building block of the unit of competency. Elements describe the tasks that make up the broader function or job, described by the unit.

From Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training

Evaluation

Evaluation includes all the activities related to the registration of a training organisation to determine whether it meets, or continues to meet, all the requirements of the *AQTF Standards for Registered Training Organisations* necessary for registration. Evaluation may include review of past performance, review of complaints and other feedback, risk assessment, examination of documentation, conduct of audit, consideration of audit reports and other relevant activities in relation to the organisation.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Evidence and 'quality' evidence

Information gathered which, when matched against the performance criteria, provides proof of competency. Evidence can take many forms and can be gathered from a number of sources. Direct evidence is the observation of a performance under real or simulated work conditions. Assessors often categorise evidence in different ways, for example:

- direct, indirect and supplementary sources of evidence
- evidence collected by the candidate or evidence collected by the assessor
- historical and recent evidence collected by the candidate and current evidence collected by the assessor

Quality evidence is valid, authentic, sufficient and current evidence that enables the assessor to make the assessment judgement.

ANTA Training Package assessment materials

Evidence guide

Part of a unit of competency. Its purpose is to guide assessment of the unit of competency in the workplace and/or a training environment. The evidence guide specifies the context of assessment, the critical aspects of evidence and the required or underpinning knowledge and skills. The evidence guide relates directly to the performance criteria and range of variables defined in the unit of competency.

From Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training

Holistic/Integrated assessment

An approach to assessment that covers multiple elements and/or units from relevant competency standards. The approach focuses on the assessment of a 'whole of job' role or function that draws on a number of units of competency. This approach also integrates the assessment of the application of knowledge, technical skills, problem solving skills and demonstration of attitudes and ethics.

From Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training

Moderation

Moderation is a process which involves assessors in discussing and reaching agreement about assessment processes and outcomes in a particular industry or industry sector. This enables assessors to develop a shared understanding of the requirements of specific Training Packages, including the relevant competency standards and assessment guidelines, the nature of evidence, how evidence is collected and the basis on which assessment decisions are made.

From ANTA Training Package assessment materials

Mutual recognition

Mutual recognition applies nationally and means:

1. The acceptance and application of the registering body that has registered a training organisation or a course accrediting body that has accepted a course, by another registering body or course accrediting body, without there being any further requirements for a process beyond the initial process, including:
 - a. the recognition and application by the registering body of each State or Territory of the decisions of the registering body of other States and Territories in relation to the registration of, imposition of sanctions on, including the cancellation of registration of training organisations; and
 - b. the recognition and application by the course accrediting body of each State or Territory of the decisions of the course accrediting body of other States and Territories in relation to the accreditation of courses where no relevant Training Package exists
2. The recognition by State and Territory registering bodies of the decisions of the National Training Quality Council in endorsing Training Packages.
3. The recognition and acceptance by a Registered Training Organisation of Australian Qualifications Framework qualifications and Statements of Attainment issued by other Registered Training Organisations, enabling individuals to receive national recognition of their achievements.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Performance criteria

These evaluate statements that specify what is to be assessed and the required level of performance. The performance criteria specify the activities, skills, knowledge and understanding that provide evidence of competent performance for each element of competency.

From Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training

Qualification

Qualification means, in the vocational education and training sector, the formal certification, issued by a Registered Training Organisation under the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), that a person has achieved all the requirements for a qualification as specified in an endorsed national Training Package or in an accredited course.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Recognition process

Recognition process is a term that covers Recognition of Prior Learning, Recognition of Current Competency and Skills Recognition.

All terms refer to recognition of competencies currently held, regardless of how, when or where the learning occurred. Under the Australian Quality Training Framework, competencies may be attained in a number of ways. This includes through any combination of formal or informal training and education, work experience or general life experience. In order to grant recognition of prior learning/current competency the assessor must be confident that the candidate is currently competent against the endorsed industry or enterprise competency standards or outcomes specified in Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) accredited courses. The evidence may take a variety of forms and could include certification, references from past employers, testimonials from clients and work samples. The assessor must ensure that the evidence is authentic, valid, reliable, current and sufficient.

Registered Training Organisation (RTO)

Registered Training Organisation (RTO) means a training organisation registered in accordance with the Australian Quality Training Framework, within a defined scope of registration.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Scope of registration

Scope of registration means the defined scope for which a training organisation is registered that identifies the particular services and products that can be provided. A Registered Training Organisation may register to provide either:

- a. training delivery and assessment services and products and issue Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) qualifications and Statements of Attainment; or
- b. assessment services and products and issue AQF qualifications and Statements of Attainment.

The scope of registration is further defined by AQF qualifications and/or endorsed units of competency.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Training Package

A set of learning and assessment resources that provide a basis for the achievement of national qualifications as a result of assessment against competency standards. Training Packages have endorsed components: national competency standards, national qualifications and national assessment guidelines. They also include non-endorsed components: learning strategies, professional development and assessment materials.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Unit of competency

Describes a discrete job or function and is written in outcome terms. It is further developed through elements and performance criteria.

From AQTF Standards for RTOs

Validation

Involves reviewing, comparing and evaluating assessment processes, tools and evidence contributing to judgments made by a range of assessors against the same standards. The process may involve having both technical and assessment specialists review the assessment tools, procedures and judgments for validity. The process may be internal with stakeholder involvement or external with other providers and/or stakeholders.

From ANTA Training Package assessment materials

Section 7 Reference List

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Patterson, JG (1996) *Benchmarking Basics*, Crisp Publications, INC. Menlo Park, California

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Titles in kit:

1. Training Package assessment materials kit
2. Assessing competencies in higher qualifications
3. Recognition resource
4. Kit to support assessor training
5. Candidate's Kit: Guide to assessment in New Apprenticeships
6. Assessment approaches for small workplaces
7. Assessment using partnership arrangements
8. Strategies for ensuring consistency in assessment
9. Networking for assessors
10. Quality assurance guide for assessment.

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