

## Assessment

### Introduction

Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd has in place an assessment system that aligns with the requirements of the AQTF Essential Conditions and Standards for Continuing Registration 2013, *The Standards for Registered Training Organisations 2015* and the VRQA Guidelines for VET Providers 2016.

The Assessment System is designed to ensure that:

- *Assessment tools and materials (including tools developed to assist with Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)) comply with the assessment requirements of the relevant Training Package or VET Accredited course*
- *Program graduates are able to meet industry expectations*
- *Evidence to make a competency decision is gathered according to the rules of evidence*
- *Assessment is conducted according to the principles of assessment*
- *Assessment decisions are systematically validated (also see the **Assessment Validation Policy**)*

### Authorisation

Chief Executive Officer to authorise policy;

Director of Education to implement operational strategies.

### Scope

This policy applies to all VET programs based on Training Package qualifications or VET Accredited Curricula.

This policy applies to the development of all assessment tools including those developed for RPL.

### Assessment Tools

Assessment Tools (aligned to the Assessment Strategy articulated in the TAS – also see **Training and Assessment Policy** must be developed to support individual competency decisions in all Training Package and VET accredited curricula.

Assessment Tools will comprise (for each competency unit or cluster):

- Competency decision making rules:
  - How many assessment tasks need to be successfully completed to demonstrate competence in a unit/cluster
  - What criteria must be met to demonstrate success in an individual assessment task (e.g. You must answer 8 out of 10 questions correctly; You must meet all of the criteria listed below)
- Clear instructions for students about what to do in each assessment task
- Purpose, scope and context of each assessment task
- How, when and where each assessment task will be assessed
- Marking Guide/Assessment Criteria for each assessment task
- Advice to Assessors for each assessment task
- Resources required to conduct the assessment – those that will be provided by the organisation as well as those that the students need to provide
- A mapping document that demonstrates alignment with the relevant Training Package or accredited course
- Provision for progressive feedback
- Unit/Cluster level Cover Sheet which lists the assessment tasks, outcomes, overall competency decision, date of decision. teacher and student signatures

## Assessment Design

### What does competency look like?

Assessment Tools (including those for RPL) should be designed to allow an individual student to demonstrate competency in that they:

- have absorbed the required knowledge
- have developed the required skills
- can combine the knowledge and skills for the purpose of application
- have the ability to perform relevant tasks consistently in a variety of workplace situations or accurately simulated workplace situations
- have an understanding of what they are doing, and why, when performing tasks
- have the ability to integrate performance with understanding to show an ability to adapt to different contexts and environments

### Group Work

Assessment decisions must always be based on the performance of the individual student. If assessment tasks are undertaken as a group, each student must be assessed on each component of the task. Do not assume that because a group of students completed a task, each of them is competent.

## Assessment requirements

Each unit of competency contains assessment requirements grouped into three areas:

- performance evidence
- knowledge evidence
- assessment conditions.

Performance evidence and knowledge evidence describe what a student must demonstrate in order to be considered competent.

Assessment conditions describe the conditions under which a student must demonstrate this, including any specific requirements for resources, trainers and assessors and the context for assessment.

When planning assessment, ensure you address all of the requirements of the unit or module. This includes the performance criteria of each unit or module. This does not mean you have to develop separate assessment activities for each item, rather that as a whole your assessment activities must cover every area required.

## Clustering

As similar requirements are often expressed in multiple units of competency, you can often 'cluster' a number of units together for assessment to avoid repeating assessment of the same tasks. If you do this, take care to address all relevant environments and contexts in the assessment process and to meet any prerequisite requirements for every unit or module in the cluster. Analysis of each individual requirement across the cluster of units will reveal where such assessment methods are appropriate and where discrete assessment activities may be required. (Hint: a mapping document will assist with this)

## Applying the Rules of Evidence

When designing assessment tools (including those for RPL), ensure that the evidence they are designed to collect is valid, sufficient, authentic and current.

## Validity

- Ensure that evidence to be gathered is directly related to the competency being assessed. (mapping will assist with this)
- Ensure there is a direct relationship between the assessment task or activity the student undertakes (including assessment of practical application of skills); the evidence presented to the student; and the assessment requirements.

## Sufficiency

- Your assessment tools should allow for the gathering of enough evidence to make a valid judgement of competence or otherwise.
- The quantity of evidence may vary between students. Some may take longer or need to complete a greater number of tasks to demonstrate competence. Others may not be able to achieve competence despite repeated opportunities.

## Authenticity

- Ensure that evidence gathered by the assessment tool 'belongs' to the student being assessed and provides evidence of that person's skills and knowledge. For example, group assessments may not provide authentic evidence for each student involved in the group assessment.
- Where portions of the evidence submitted are gathered through independent study (e.g. assignments or projects) rather than through direct observation, consider using online systems to check work submissions for plagiarism or use direct questioning of the student to check their understanding of their submission.

## Currency

- Decide how valid the evidence is, given the time that has passed since the evidence was generated. Currency is important in determining if a student is competent. Currency is a particular risk with recognition of prior learning, as you may be presented with a range of evidence gathered over a number of years. This does not mean evidence that is not recent is not valid; however, you must ensure there is sufficient evidence of the person's competence at the time you make the assessment decision.

You must determine whether the evidence is recent enough to show the student is competent at the time you make an assessment decision. For example, a computer programmer who has 10 years' experience but has not been directly involved in hands-on programming work for the past three years may not have current skills in or knowledge of contemporary programming methods. However, the programmer may be able to update their skills and knowledge through a 'gap training' program. This varies to some extent between industries and, as a person with current industry skills and knowledge, an assessor is well-placed to make this judgement.

## Applying the Principles of Assessment

When designing assessment tools (including those for RPL) ensure that you take the following Principles of Assessment into account:

### Fairness

- Consider the student's needs in the assessment process and make reasonable adjustments to accommodate the student (such as providing oral rather than written assessment). However, don't compromise the rigour of the assessment process (e.g. if there is a requirement to complete documentation in a unit of competency, oral assessment would not be appropriate).
- Ensure the student is fully informed of the assessment process and performance expectations before undertaking assessment.

### Flexibility

- Take the student into account in the assessment process, and recognise that they may already have demonstrated some aspects of the unit through other means. If individual students have demonstrated current skills and knowledge, they should not be required to be reassessed in those areas, unless the previous demonstration of skills or knowledge was in a significantly different context or environment. (See the **Credit Transfer and Recognition of Prior Learning Policy** for more information).
- Use a range of assessment methods to help produce valid decisions and recognise that students demonstrate competence in a variety of ways.

### Validity

- As part of your assessment, require students to demonstrate skills and knowledge across a range of environments and contexts relevant to the unit or module. Assessing in a variety of contexts shows that the student is able to apply the skills and knowledge in other situations, and can apply their knowledge in a practical way.
- Ensure that assessment tasks and methods match assessment requirements. For example, if assessing a practical skill such as keyboarding, questions about how a keyboard operates may not be valid as this knowledge is not required in order to carry out the task. Instead, use questions that demonstrate knowledge of why the student is doing the task in a particular way.
- Ensure skills are assessed by observing the student actually carrying out the relevant task in an appropriate environment. It is not appropriate to assess a student's ability to carry out a task by simply requiring them to describe how they would do the task.

## Reliability

- Include instructions to Assessors with all assessment tasks to allow for consistency of decision making across different students and different assessors in the same unit or cluster.
- Provide assessment tools that detail the context and conditions of assessment for assessors (in order to ensure consistency in the application of assessment across different assessors and different student cohorts).
- Develop evidence criteria (i.e. decision-making rules) to judge the quality of performance. This will help assessors make consistent judgements about competence. Evidence criteria could include:
  - model answers (where appropriate)
  - descriptions of observations needed to assess skills and application of knowledge in a practical activity.
- Benchmarks for practical activities must necessarily be broad enough to allow for variations in the precise task being undertaken and any variations in the context, but must include 'observable behaviours'—the behaviours which must be exhibited by the student when carrying out the task.

## Purpose, Scope and Context

When designing assessment tasks it is important to be clear about what the **purpose** of the task. For example, the purpose of the task might be:

- To demonstrate practical skills in a simulated setting
- To demonstrate understanding of regulatory requirements
- To apply skills and knowledge to a workplace task
- To apply collaborative and team work skills in the completion of a project

It is also important that the **scope** of each assessment task is clear. For example:

- This report should be between 500-700 words
- You will need to demonstrate this skill 3 times
- You need to present the information using a maximum of 10 PowerPoint slides with 4 dot points per slide
- You need to complete all 8 questions
- Your answer should reference 2 pieces of legislation

In addition, according to the Principles of Assessment, assessing in a variety of **contexts** (across a whole qualification) shows that the student is able to apply the skills and knowledge in other situations, and can apply their knowledge in a practical way.

Community Unity Plus Services Ltd recognises the importance of establishing the right context for students during their assessment. Assessment context refers to the physical



and non-physical environment in which skills and knowledge are assessed. This may be a workplace such as an office setting or it might be a non-physical environment referring to things such as workplace policy and procedures or workplace tempo and culture. Many units of competency may be applied in any workplace such as skills and knowledge relating to workplace safety or leadership.

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

- Incorporation of an industry endorsed simulated workplace environments into the assessment scenario or activity when required as indicated in the Unit of Competency;
- Simulated tasks based on real workplace tasks;
- Integration of relevant industry codes of practice and other industry information into the assessment activity;
- Incorporation of industry job descriptions for students to align with during realistic simulated workplace scenarios and case studies;
- Incorporation of regulatory information relating to licensing which may apply to some qualifications;
- Tailoring the program outcomes to meet the organisational training needs of the enterprise without compromising the Training Package requirements;
- Creating assessment activities which require the student to conduct specific research relating to industry situations and occurrences;
- Provide a realistic simulated workplace within Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd facilities.

### Assessment Methods

According to the Principles of Assessment it is important to use a range of assessment methods to help produce valid decisions and which recognises that students demonstrate competence in a variety of ways. It is also important that the assessment methods chosen allow for the application of skills and knowledge as required in the workplace.

Below are some examples of assessment methods and tools for gathering evidence:

Method	Evidence Gathering Tool
Practical Demonstration	Observation Checklist

Written Report	Sample/Template
Role Play	Observation Checklist
Portfolio	List of Items to be included
Journal/Logbook	Template
Third Party Report	Template
Presentation	Sample/Template
Concept Map/Diagram	List of items to be included/sample
Test/Exam	Sample answers

### Engagement with Industry

Industry representatives should be consulted when designing assessment strategies and tools. Specifically, there should be industry input into:

- Relevance of assessment tasks to workplace practice/requirements
- The development of simulated workplace environments where required to ensure they reflect real workplace practice
- Standards of performance required to be met by students that reflect industry benchmarks

Further information on industry engagement requirements can be found in the **Industry Engagement Policy**.

## Conduct of Assessment

### Applying the Principles of Assessment

The following principles of assessment apply in the conduct of assessment:

#### Fairness

At enrolment or prior to commencement of training, make recognition of prior learning available to all students. Ensure any required adjustments are made to the training and assessment program for each student.

Ensure the student is fully informed of the assessment process and performance expectations before undertaking assessment.

If a student is unable to complete the required task to the level described in the assessment requirements, consider whether they need further training before being

reassessed. Sound enrolment processes will help to identify the needs of students and avoid students being enrolled in a course that they will not be able to complete.

Have an appeals process to provide an avenue for students to challenge an assessment decision and to have it reviewed objectively. (Also see **Complaints and Appeals Policy**)

### **Flexibility**

At enrolment or prior to commencement of training, make recognition of prior learning available to all students. Ensure any required adjustments are made to the training and assessment program for that student.

Take the student into account in the assessment process, and recognise that they may already have demonstrated some aspects of the unit through other means. If individual students have demonstrated current skills and knowledge, they should not be required to be reassessed in those areas, unless the previous demonstration of skills or knowledge was in a significantly different context or environment.

### **Assessment Information**

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

Examples of assessment information include:

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

At Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd, assessment activities are to be supported by clear assessment information that will ensure a reliable assessment across our operation. Ultimately, the quality of assessment outcomes produced by a student will be directly affected by the quality of the information provided at the commencement of the activity. Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd staff are to prepare suitable assessment information for all assessment activities and are to gain approval from the Training Manager for the use of assessment resources.

### **Assessment Resources**

Ensure that all the required resources are available to conduct the assessment including any specialist resources that may be required by the unit of competency.

### **Student Feedback**

It is important that during the assessment process, feedback is provided to students against the identified assessment or performance criteria and includes guidance on how performance can be improved.

### **Re-assessment**

It is inevitable that some students will not meet the requirements of the assessment evidence and will be judged as not-yet-competent. At Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd, our approach to these situations is to work with the student in order to address deficiencies and to build their skills and knowledge in preparation for additional assessment. This will be undertaken within the scheduled training plan or may be completed under alternative arrangements agreed between the student and the assessor.

In some circumstances, students may find it difficult to develop the necessary skills and knowledge within the constraints of the scheduled training plan. When this occurs, arrangements may be agreed to that allows the student to undertake additional learning in their own time and return for additional assessment at a time suitable for Comm Unity Plus Services Ltd. This may occur during scheduled Program Unique Supervised Hours which are scheduled on a weekly basis to allow students extra time to seek additional support from their trainer, during a period of reduced training activity or at a time when planned assessments are occurring and it is convenient to facilitate additional assessment of the student. As a general guide, assessors are to make alternative arrangements to provide opportunities for assessment within the constraints of available time and resources. In all circumstances, the assessment is to be a planned activity that is conducted in accordance with the assessment procedures in the following section.

In some cases, after alternative arrangements have been exhausted, it will be suitable to find a student as not-yet-competent and record this result with their statement of attainment.

### **Recording of Assessment Results**

Outcomes of the assessment process should be recorded on the Unit/Cluster level Assessment Cover Sheet and retained on the student file with the actual student work. Results should be entered into the student management system (aXcelerate) on or before the required results deadline.

Student assessments will be retained according to the provisions of the Record Retention and Record Request Policy.

## Responsibility

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for adopting this policy.

The Training Manager will delegate the responsibility for the implementation of this policy to the relevant authorised delegates of the Education team.

## Related Policies and Resources

AQTF Essential Standards for Initial and Continuing Registration

The VRQA Guidelines for VET Providers 2016

*The Standards for Registered Training Organisations 2015*

Student Complaints and Appeals Policy

Credit Transfer and Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

Record Retention and Record Request Policy

Industry Engagement Policy

Assessment Validation Policy