



Guide to assessment tools

Guide

Introduction

This guide is designed to assist training providers and their assessors to develop practical assessment tools that:

- meet the requirements of the *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015* (the Standards) and
- deliver skilled graduates who are job ready from day one.

It is important for providers to understand the capacity of the tools they use and adapt these tools to meet their requirements.

This guide will provide tips on how to utilise your industry engagement and moderation activities to improve the quality of outcomes for students. This will help ensure confidence in the quality of assessment as well as providing you the assurance that your assessment is valid, reliable, flexible and fair.

You can also refer to the information in this guide if you are reviewing and contextualising commercially developed or licencing mandated assessment tools.

This guide should be read in conjunction with the *Standards for Registered Training Organisations 2015* and the [Users' guide to the Standards](#).

What is meant by assessment?

According to the *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015*:

- **Assessment** means the process of collecting evidence and making judgements on whether competency has been achieved, to confirm that an individual can perform to the standard required in the workplace, as specified in a training package or a vocational education and training (VET) accredited course.
- **An assessment system** is a coordinated set of documented policies and procedures (including assessment materials and tools) that ensure assessments are consistent and are based on the Principles of Assessment and the Rules of Evidence.

An **assessment tool** can cover an individual unit of competency, or a clustered group of units of competency such as a skill set. It will contain multiple assessment instruments, requiring students to respond or perform certain tasks, and includes the:

- context and conditions of assessment

- tasks to be administered to the student
- an outline of the evidence to be gathered from the candidate and evidence criteria used to judge the quality of performance (i.e. the assessment decision-making rules).

Developing assessment tools

When developing assessment tools there are three main steps.

1. Planning

- What are the assessment requirements of the training package/accredited course?
- What does consultation from your industry engagement recommend?
- What assessment methods are most appropriate for your student cohort?

2. Design and development

- How does each component of an assessment tool come together?
- Does the tool support an assessment process which meets the requirements of the Principles of Assessment (**fairness, flexibility, validity and reliability**)?
- Do the assessment tools allow for the collection of evidence to meet the Rules of Evidence (**validity, sufficiency, authenticity and currency**)?

3. Quality Checks

- How to review a tool prior to implementation?

Step 1 – Planning

The assessment process is the final stage in confirming a student has the skills and knowledge to perform an identified task. In planning for assessment you need to consider how a student will:

- competently demonstrate the task
- know what they need to do to complete the task and why
- demonstrate they have the knowledge skills required, and
- demonstrate they have the ability to perform the tasks in different contexts and environments.

First, consider the components of the training package or accredited course and identify all of the requirements a student needs to show to demonstrate competency.

Address all requirements of the training package or accredited course. This may mean that multiple and varied assessment methods are required.

Component	Description
Elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elements describe actions or outcomes that are demonstrable and assessable
Performance criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance criteria describe the performance needed to demonstrate achievement of the element • Performance criteria clearly relate to the element • They are expressed as a standard • They specify the required performance in relevant tasks, roles, and skills

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They reflect the applied knowledge that enables competent performance
Performance evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specifies the required product and process evidence • Specifies the frequency and/or volume of product/process evidence • Specifies the relationship between the product and process evidence and the performance criteria
Knowledge evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • specifies what the individual must know in order to safely and effectively perform the work task described in the unit of competency • Relates directly to the performance criteria and/or range of conditions • Indicates the type and depth of knowledge required to meet the demands of the unit of competency
Assessment conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stipulates any mandatory conditions for assessment • Specifies the conditions under which evidence for assessment must be gathered, including any details of required equipment and materials; contingencies; specifications; physical conditions; relationships with team members and supervisor; relationship with client/customer; and timeframe • Specific assessor requirements, including any details related to qualifications, experience and industry currency

Engagement with industry at the planning stage is critical in assisting you to identify the most appropriate assessment methods you should use to ensure students are ready for the workplace. You will need to be able to clearly articulate how, industry engagement representatives (including employers) have contributed to the development of your assessment practices and resources (Clause 1.5 – 1.6).

Industry engagement is critical as it assists in ensuring the assessment tool aligns to current industry methods, technologies, products, real life scenarios and performance expectations which will provide assurance that your students are ready to easily transition to the workforce.

The more consultation you undertake with a variety of industry stakeholders, the easier it will be to design and develop your assessment tools.

In planning your assessments, work collaboratively with your assessors to determine the best methods of assessment for the specific training package and the cohort of students undertaking the assessment.

When determining the assessment methods, consider:

Who is your student cohort?

- The most appropriate assessment methods depend on the students you're intending to target. When conducting an assessment, consider every student's individual needs. While you may not know all of a student's specific needs, when planning and developing the assessment tools, consider the general needs of the cohort. For example, it may be more appropriate to

consider a portfolio of evidence for students who are actively employed and are up-skilling existing competencies.

What evidence is required to demonstrate competency

- It is important when planning the assessment process that you consider the type of evidence that you will be seeking from the student to demonstrate competency. It is also important that you consider how this will be communicated the requirements to an assessor to ensure that they are aware of the type of evidence to consider.

Who will collect the evidence?

- Establishing who will collect the evidence will enable appropriate instructions to those collecting the evidence. For example, a workplace supervisor would be responsible for collecting third-party evidence, and the student would be responsible for collecting a portfolio of evidence. Remember, no matter who collects the evidence for assessment, the assessor is the one that determines competence.

Where will the assessment be conducted?

- In many instances, the requirements of the training package or accredited course determine the assessment conditions. Some units of competency require assessment to occur in the workplace. Other units recognise that, for reasons of safety, space, or access to equipment and resources, assessment can take place in simulated conditions that represent workplace conditions as closely as possible. Once you understand the requirements of the unit or module and have feedback from industry on the assessment process, you can consider the assessment methods you use to gather evidence.

Types of assessment methods

Using a range of assessment methods helps produce valid decisions and recognises that students demonstrate competence in a variety of ways. A range of assessment methods are outlined in the table below.

Method	Description
Direct observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessed in real time in the workplace • Assessed in a simulated off-the-job situation that reflects the workplace, including role-plays • Direct observation requires: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the ability for 'live' interaction between the assessor and the student ○ active participation between the assessor and the student ○ the ability to have verbal conversations during the assessment process ○ the ability for the assessor to view all relevant areas and to be able to clearly view the student completing the assessment
Product based methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured assessment activities such as reports, displays, work samples, role plays, and presentations

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A purposeful collection of work samples (e.g., a portfolio) of annotated and validated pieces of evidence, compiled by the student • Evidence could include written documents, photographs, videos or logbooks
Questioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally more applicable to the assessment of knowledge evidence • Assessment could be by written or oral questioning, conducting interviews, questionnaires and case studies
Third-party evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third party evidence can take many forms, an example could include a work report from a work placement supervisor • For more information on using third party evidence, refer to ASQA's Fact sheet—Using third-party evidence to assess competence

Step 2 – Design and development

An assessment tool comprises a number of components which ensure assessment is conducted in a manner that is fair, flexible, valid and reliable. These components include:

- i. the context and conditions of assessment
- ii. the tasks a student must complete to demonstrate competency
- iii. an outline of evidence to be gathered from the student
- iv. evidence criteria used to judge the quality of performance
- v. administration, recording and reporting requirements

The context and conditions of assessment

The context and conditions of assessment clarify the target group and purpose of the tool and is recorded in instructions for the assessor, the student and any contributing third party.

The instructions should be appropriate for the reader. The instructions can be included with the assessment instrument or attached as a separate document.

The context and conditions of assessment considers those characteristics of the student cohort that may impact on performance. For example, an assessment tool could be developed to cater for particular language, literacy and numeracy requirements; a student's workplace experience; or other student needs that require reasonable adjustment. The context of the assessment may also take into account assessments already completed, and the competencies demonstrated in these assessments.

By looking at context you can consider the conditions under which evidence for assessment must be gathered. Training package requirements and industry consultation may identify conditions to be considered when conducting assessment such as:

- equipment or material requirements
- contingencies

- specifications
- physical conditions
- relationships with team members and supervisors
- relationships with clients/customers
- timeframes for completion.

Any conditions should be clarified in the instructions to ensure consistency in the application of the assessment.

Example—ensuring your assessment tool includes required assessment conditions

The unit *SHBXCCS001 - Conduct salon financial transactions* has the following assessment conditions:

- Skills must be demonstrated in a personal services salon environment; this can be:
 - an industry workplace (a **physical condition**) or
 - a simulated workplace set up for the purpose of skills assessment, that provides services to paying members of the public (**contingencies**).
- Assessment must ensure access to:
 - paying clients, both new and regular, with different transaction requirements, who have the expectation that the services provided reflect those of a commercial business
 - relevant workplace documentation:
 - organisational policies and procedures relevant to financial transactions
 - manufacturer instructions (**equipment requirements, relationship requirements, and timeframes**).
- Assessment must ensure use of:
 - computer with salon software system
 - point-of-sale equipment that can process credit cards and EFTPOS transactions
 - relevant point-of-sale documents:
 - stock, inventory and price lists
 - financial transaction dockets and slips
 - credit and product return slips
 - sample debit and credit card vouchers (**equipment requirements, physical conditions, relationships**).
- Assessment activities that allow the individual to:
 - complete financial transactions within commercially realistic speed, timing and productivity
 - demonstrate competency in an environment reflective of real work situations
 - manage tasks and contingencies in the context of the job role (**equipment requirements, physical conditions, relationships**).
- Assessors must satisfy the Standards for Registered Training Organisation's requirements for assessors (**specifications**).

Assessment tools you develop for this unit must reflect these assessment conditions. All skills must be demonstrated in a personal services salon environment, where the student will demonstrate those skills either in a real-time working environment or in a simulated off-the-job situation that reflects the workplace. Regardless of whether the assessment is conducted in real time or in

simulation, the tasks must reflect framework requirements and the resources for assessment must include the conditions and equipment reflected in the assessment conditions listed in the unit of competency. Your assessment tool must ensure that the person making the determination of competence is an assessor who meets the requirements of the Standards.

The tasks a student must complete to demonstrate competency

The instructions you provide to the student should outline the task(s) through which the student can demonstrate competency. These instructions will prompt the student to say, do, write or create something.

The student clearly needs to understand the tasks, and why they are needed in the job to be performed, on graduation. In other words, the context for the tasks needs to be clear, so the students approach the task with the purpose of doing the job. If the student reviews the tasks and needs to clarify the instructions or ask further questions, then the instructions will not lead to a valid or reliable outcome. Well-designed assessment instructions minimise the variation between assessors and any ambiguity around the task being asked of the student.

Further, assessments should be simple for the student to understand and to implement (meeting all training package requirements).

Example—providing instructions to a student about demonstrating evidence

The unit *SHBXCCS001 - Conduct salon financial transactions* requires some of the following performance evidence:

Evidence of the ability to complete tasks outlined in elements and performance criteria of this unit in the context of the job role, and:

- operate electronic point-of-sale equipment to accurately perform each of the following transactions on at least two occasions:
 - cash sales
 - non-cash sales:
 - credit card
 - EFTPOS
 - refunds/exchanges
- demonstrate the following secure payment handling procedures for all transactions listed above:
 - balancing point-of-sale terminal
 - calculating non-cash documents
 - clearing terminal and transferring tender
 - counting cash
 - determining change required and denominations of change
 - ensuring security of cash and non-cash transactions
 - maintaining cash float
 - opening and closing of point-of-sale terminal
 - recording takings

- securing cash and non-cash transactions
- tendering change.

To provide instruction to the student about demonstrating the performance evidence, the task information should clarify if assessment is conducted in real-time or in simulation (with electronic point-of-sale equipment), where the assessment will occur, when the assessment will occur, who will conduct the assessment, and what the student will be assessed against.

An outline of the evidence to be gathered from the student

As well as informing the student of what they will do in the assessment, you will need to explain to them what evidence they need to provide in response to the tasks.

If a student is required to submit evidence, the instructions need to include guidance on:

- what to include as evidence
- how to submit the evidence
- how to present the evidence.

If a student is observed by an assessor, the outline of the evidence should clarify what the assessor will look for during the observation, including the tasks to be completed and the frequency and conditions they need to be completed in. An 'observation checklist' could be appropriate in this instance. You should also communicate to the student if the observation is being recorded by audio or video.

Where a unit of competency requires various tasks to be performed before an assessor, and these tasks are all part of the same job, the provider may design an activity incorporating all of the practical tasks to be assessed and utilise an observation checklist to check off each task observed.

Utilising a holistic approach for tasks that will be combined in the workplace helps prepare a student not only for having the knowledge and isolated skills for each individual task, but developing confidence in the ability to complete all combined tasks that will be required on the job when they graduate. This is an important part of being "job ready".

Related to the above, contextualisation of assessment tasks is also an important part of a student's learning and preparation for the workplace. Units of competency should be contextualised so that the student learns how the content of that unit applies in their particular, chosen field of work. Without contextualisation, students may develop a narrow knowledge and skill base around a certain task but lack the understanding of how to apply that task in the context in which they will be working, or why it is needed.

The evidence gathered in the assessment process should be gathered over time and in different ways, to build a body of evidence that supports sign off by the assessor in marking the student competent in the task. For practical tasks, for instance, providers may assess a unit of competency in its discrete context, and then conduct a holistic assessment of combined tasks in the context of the job, resembling a type of scenario (of combined tasks) that would be encountered in the workplace.

Example—instructions to learner on assessment

For the unit *SHBXCCS001 - Conduct salon financial transactions*, a provider must ensure that all skills are demonstrated. Instructions to the student need to clarify how they will demonstrate each skill, and who they will demonstrate these skills to.

Where a skill is not observed by the assessor, you should provide instructions to guide the student on how they can collect the evidence (e.g. by the provision of work samples) and how then to submit the evidence to the assessor for determination.

Evidence criteria used to judge the quality of performance

The evidence criteria are also referred to as the ‘assessment decision-making rules’. Examples of evidence criteria are tools such as ‘marker guides’, or ‘instructions for assessors’. These are the rules used to make judgements about whether competency has been achieved.

Evidence criteria are used by an assessor to ensure consistent outcomes when:

- checking evidence quality (i.e. the Rules of Evidence)
- ‘judging if the student achieved competency according to the assessment tools and standards expected’, and
- collating evidence from multiple sources to make an overall judgement.

The evidence criteria ensure the intent of the assessment tool is met and that the student is able to demonstrate they have valid, sufficient, authentic and current skills and knowledge relevant to the unit. The criteria confirms the evidence provided by a student:

- directly relates to the competency being assessed
- is enough to allow the assessor to make a valid judgement
- is the student’s own work, and
- shows currency of the skills and knowledge required.

The evidence criteria should not be open to interpretation. The criteria must provide sufficient clarity for assessment judgements to be consistent across a range of assessors and points in time. If you have only one assessor, you must still develop evidence criteria to ensure consistency in that assessor’s judgements.

Remember that assessment judgements can only be made by an assessor who meets those requirements of Clauses 1.13 – 1.16 (and Clauses 1.21 – 1.24 if applicable) of the Standards. If you use evidence collected by a third party, an assessor is the one making a judgement on that evidence. The assessment tools and assessor guidance material need to include guidance for an assessor in considering third party evidence if it used in the assessment process.

Example—performance evidence assessed by direct observation

For the unit *SHBXCCS001 - Conduct salon financial transactions*, where performance evidence is assessed by direct observation in the workplace, you could develop an observation checklist to judge and record candidate observations.

An assessor could then record their observations of the student’s performance directly onto this checklist. Instruct the assessor to record their observation on the checklist during or after the observation.

The checklist needs to allow the assessor to record when they have not had the opportunity to observe the student demonstrating the skills and knowledge in real time in the workplace. The tool also needs to include instructions on how to treat items not observed so the assessor can then assess these items in simulation.

The checklist should also allow for an assessor to record the number of instances, the period of observation, and any defining resources used to demonstrate the student has conducted various salon financial transactions on at least two occasions.

Administration, recording and reporting requirements

You must securely retain—and produce in full if required—all completed student assessment items for each student for a period of six months from the date on which the judgement of competence for the student was made. You must also retain sufficient data to be able to reissue AQF certification documentation for a period of 30 years.

In recording evidence of assessment, assessors and students need to be informed of the administration, recording and reporting requirements related to that assessment tool.

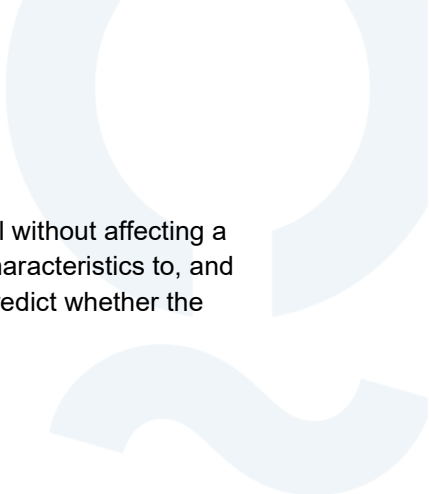
You must retain evidence that contains enough details to demonstrate the judgement made by your assessors of how the student's performance meets the required standards, and your assessment tools. Each assessment tool should require an assessor to provide feedback to the student, both where competency has been demonstrated and where further evidence is required. Providing feedback shows fairness in the assessment process and allows a student to understand why a result was awarded.

Design your assessment tools to comply with the provider's internal processes and procedures to manage administration, recording and reporting requirements.

Step 3 – Quality checks

You should undertake several checks before implementing a new assessment tool.

- Further consultation with industry will confirm if the content of the tool is correct and relevant to the workplace. Industry representatives could critique the tool for its:
 - clarity
 - content accuracy
 - relevance, including real-life scenarios, and
 - appropriateness of language for the learners.
- Moderating the tool with other trainers and assessors who have current skills and knowledge in vocational training, learning and assessment, including competency-based training and assessment, can check whether:
 - the tools will address all assessment requirements of the training package or accredited course
 - the level of difficulty is appropriate to the unit or module
 - the tools will enable effective collection of evidence, and
 - you have provided clear instructions which can be easily understood by the student, third party and assessor.

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- Trialling the tool before it is used by students tests the effectiveness of the tool without affecting a student. When trialling a tool, select a group of individuals who have similar characteristics to, and levels of ability of, the target student group. The findings of the trial will help predict whether the tool would:
 - be engaging to the student
 - produce valid and reliable evidence, and
 - be cost effective to implement.

Further information

[Standards for Registered Training Organisations 2015](#)—clauses 1.8 – 1.12.

[Users' guide to the Standards for RTOs 2015](#).