Assessment and moderation

Assessment is the process of collecting evidence and making judgements on whether competency has been achieved to confirm that an individual can perform to the standard expected in the workplace. The standard is described in the relevant endorsed industry/enterprise competency standards of a training package or an accredited course.

The assessment process is used to determine whether people are either ‘competent’ or ‘not yet competent’ against the agreed industry standards. A person who is not yet competent against any standard can undertake further study or training and be assessed again.

What are assessments used for?

The most obvious use for assessment is to determine whether someone is competent and has the specific skills and knowledge to do the job; this could also lead to the attainment of a qualification. However, because the competency standards described in training packages are industry-agreed benchmarks, assessment can be used for other purposes on the job. For example, classifications in industrial awards are sometimes linked to competency standards. Assessments may also be used to determine whether or not a person can be issued with a licence to work in a specific job role.

Who can conduct assessments?

Only qualified assessors working with a registered training organisation can conduct assessments leading to a national (Australian Qualifications Framework) qualification or statement of attainment.

The Australian Quality Training Framework Essential Standards for Registration, identifies that a person conducting assessment must:

- Have the necessary training and assessment competencies as determined in the National Quality Council Policy on Training and Assessment Competencies to be held by Trainers and Assessors
- Have the relevant vocational competencies at least to the level being assessed
- Continue developing their vocational, and training and assessment competencies.

If a person does not have the assessment competencies as defined in the National Quality Council policy determination and the relevant vocational competencies at least to the level being assessed, one person with all the assessment competencies listed and one or more persons who have the
relevant vocational competencies at least to the level being assessed may work together to conduct the assessments.

**How are assessments conducted?**

Assessment under the national vocational education and training system is quite different from the formal examinations and tests most people remember from their school days. Evidence is gathered to demonstrate competence in the skills and knowledge required by the units of competency.

Common types of assessment methods used by assessors to gather evidence include:

- Answers to questions
- Training records
- Work records
- Samples of work
- Observation
- Demonstrations
- Simulations and role plays

The evidence used in assessment depends on the requirements of the particular units of competency and the preferences or needs of the person being assessed. Each case is unique.

The registered training organisation responsible for assessing people’s competencies should devise an assessment plan for each student, apprentice or trainee. Students and, where appropriate, industry should be involved in the development of the assessment plan. The plan should incorporate recognition or prior learning and any reasonable adjustment that may be required.

Because work activities draw on the skills described in a number of units of competency, teachers and trainers can utilise holistic assessment methods to assess a range of units simultaneously.

Assessment can take place on the job or off the job. However, as applying skills in the workplace is a key facet of vocational education and training, most evidence should ideally be gathered as the student performs work duties, whether in the workplace or in the simulated work environment.

**What is meant by assessing a learner in a simulated work environment?**

Assessments conducted in a simulated work environment must replicate the conditions and outcomes encountered in a workplace, as noted in the unit(s) of competency. In some cases this may refer to the actual physical resources,
such as assessing an apprentice changing engine oil in a motor vehicle. In other cases this may refer to the interpersonal dynamics of the workplace, such as assessing a manager’s ability to conduct an interview to review work performance. It may refer to a combination of both.

The assessor will need to fully analyse the unit(s) of competency being assessed and make a judgment regarding the adequacy of a simulated work environment.

Content within the evidence guide and the range statement of each unit of competency will help the assessor determine the conditions of a valid simulated work environment.

NOTE: In some instances a training package may state that certain competency standards can only be assessed in an actual workplace setting.

**What is moderation?**

Moderation is a process which involves assessors discussing and reaching agreement about assessment processes and assessment outcomes in a particular industry or industry sector.

This process enables assessors to develop a shared understanding of the requirements of specific training packages, including the relevant units of competency and assessment guidelines, the nature of evidence, how evidence is collected and the basis upon which assessment decisions are made to ensure that assessments are valid, reliable, flexible and fair.

**How does moderation work?**

There is no single model for moderation.

Moderation involves assessors working in collaboration to review, compare and evaluate their assessment process and their assessment outcomes, in relation to the same unit(s) of competency. This includes validating assessment methods/tools, the evidence that was collected using these assessment methods/tools and the interpretation of that evidence to make a judgement of competence.

There may be variation in assessors’ judgments, but moderation works to ensure that the margins or variation are minimal.

**Why is moderation so important?**

The vocational education and training system is a national system, based on nationally developed qualifications and units of competency. Moderation is important to ensure that the outcomes of these qualifications and units of
competency are consistent across all registered training organisations. This will assist to ensure that industry has confidence in the training and assessment outcomes from the vocational education and training system.

Moderation also provides the opportunity for professional development of assessors and the improvement of assessment products and services.

An important moderation activity is to apply to VCAA, through SSMS (Sessional Staff Management System), to be a VCAA VCE assessor for the external examinations. Go to http://www.ssms.vic.edu.au for more information

More information

Key Resources

- AQTF 2007 Essential Standards for Registration

Key Contacts

- National Quality Council
- State and territory training authorities

Related articles

- Australian Quality Training Framework

This information is current at the date of publication (13 November 2008) and has been provided by the Training Packages @ Work team (Australian Government project).

Address: LMB 527, Brisbane QLD 4001
Email: info@tpatwork.com
Phone: 07 3225 2450
Fax: 07 3237 0356