Validation, moderation, evaluation, reviewing, comparing, auditing, …

Purpose:
A Guide to continuous improvement of assessment in VET replaces a previous publication on the same topic originally published in 2005. This updated version refers to current national training and assessment policies and requirements for RTOs. The Guide is part of a suite of six publications produced by the Western Australian Department of Education and Training all designed to assist trainers and assessors provide high quality assessment services. The other publications are:

- Guidelines for assessing competence in VET (2008)
- Troubleshooting guide: Assessment in VET (2008)
- Designing assessment tools for quality outcomes in VET (2008)

The information in this publication has not been referenced to specific AQTF 2007 standards, however the information provided is based on current standards and reflects good practice.

While the AQTF 2007 does not specify any particular documentation for assessment the documents suggested in this guide reflect good practice that an RTO can consider and adopt as required.

The information applies only to Training Package qualifications and accredited courses with a vocational outcome.

All publications are available in hard copy and can be downloaded from ventinfonet.det.wa.edu.au
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Introduction

Although we do our best to develop effective high quality assessment strategies we always need to be open to the possibility of further improvement. All aspects of assessment need to be regularly monitored, reviewed and improved. This is partly driven by our own need to improve as professional assessors, partly due to changes and improvements in our understanding of assessment processes, partly to meet changes in outcome standards, and partly to respond to changes within industry itself.

Fundamentally, continuous improvement is about applying good business practices to ensure the best outcomes for our clients, that is candidates, industry and the community. Our vigilance must extend beyond our own appraisal of the assessment systems we have established and seek and incorporate feedback and advice from industry, employers, other assessment professionals, and the people we assess.

This resource:
- is designed to provide you with strategies to regularly improve the quality and effectiveness of assessments you are conducting
- is written primarily for assessors who are responsible for the design, development and management of the assessment process
- relates to all forms of assessment conducted either on-the-job or off-the-job, and through simulations
- describes a comprehensive range of validation process including moderation
- involves all stakeholders in quality assessment
- is consistent with the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF).

Continuous improvement is based upon **assessment validation**, which is defined as:

A process for ensuring that the way a unit of competency or group of units is assessed, and the evidence collected through these assessments, is consistent with the requirements of the unit or group of units of competency and of industry. It includes validating the assessment process, the assessment tools and instruments, the evidence collected using tools and instruments, and the interpretation of that evidence to make a judgement of competence in relation to the same unit(s) of competency.

Validation may be undertaken before, during and after the actual assessment activity occurs and may include both formative and summative assessment. The latter includes assessment for the purpose of granting RPL. *(Source: AQTF 2007 – Users’ Guide to the Essential Standards for Registration, p.51)*

Assessment validation includes, but goes beyond, **assessment moderation** which is defined as:

A process which involves assessors in discussing and reaching agreement about assessment processes and outcomes in a particular industry or industry sector. It 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. *(Source: TAA04 Training and Assessment Training Package Glossary of Terms)*
This Guide is designed to provide assessors with strategies and information that will assist in developing their own assessment validation procedures. It does not prescribe any specific process as each RTO will need to develop strategies that reflect its industry and delivery scope, stakeholders and client group.

**This resource consists of five sections:**
1. Principles of continuous improvement
2. Strategies for continuous improvement
3. Gathering the evidence for continuous improvement
4. Recording the outcomes of continuous improvement
5. Links, networks and resources.

A comprehensive glossary of relevant terms can be accessed through the VET Teaching and Learning Directorate website at www.vetinfolnet.det.wa.edu.au/home/docs/GlossaryofTerms.pdf
Section 1. Principles of continuous improvement

**The purpose of a continuous improvement process**

*Why do we need to get involved in this task of continuous improvement?*

The quest for continuous improvement is a defining characteristic of professional practice. There are many reasons why we need to engage in the continuous improvement of assessment systems as professionals in the VET sector. These include:

- confirming the credibility and recognition of certification
- supporting the industry and community recognition of VET graduates
- providing the best service for VET clients – learners and industry
- ensuring assessments reflect changes in current industry requirements
- improving the validity, reliability, flexibility and fairness of assessments
- providing greater justice for assessment candidates with improved relevance, transparency and support in assessment processes
- ensuring more meaningful feedback and guidance for candidates following assessment
- supporting ongoing RTO quality assurance
- enhancing the reputation and recognition of the RTO and its services
- minimising risks associated with the assessment process
- improving the management of assessment systems
- informing assessor selection and guiding professional development.

The AQTF also specifically targets continuous improvement as a key requirement for RTOs:

Continuous improvement is an integral part of AQTF 2007. An effective quality system includes processes that encourage and achieve continuous improvement. For RTOs this means developing a planned and ongoing process to systematically review and improve policies, procedures, products and services through analysis of relevant information and collection of data from clients and other interested parties, including staff. Data from the quality indicators provides a key tool for continuous improvement.

The value for RTOs of adopting a continuous improvement cycle is in its potential to create a stronger, more sustainable business that meets the needs of clients and stakeholders. Such a cycle also enables RTOs to adapt quickly to changing external environments such as economic factors and skills needs. *(Source: AQTF 2007 – Users’ Guide to the Essential Standards for Registration, p.4.)*

These are all good reasons for continuous improvement … but what do we have to do?
The AQTF requirements for continuous improvement

The Standards refer directly to the continuous improvement of training and assessment processes:

*The RTO collects, analyses and acts on relevant data for continuous improvement of training and assessment:*

**Systematically collecting and analysing data**

Systematic approaches support continuous improvement. They may include:
- planning where data will be collected from, how it will be collected, the form it will take, how often you will collect it, and how it will be collated, analysed and used
- ensuring that data collection and analysis confirm good practice and show where improvements need to be made
- making improvements where analysis demonstrates they are needed
- regularly reviewing data collection to assess its usefulness for improving products and services
- giving feedback to those who have contributed to the data.

**Ensuring that data is relevant and sufficient**

The focus of qualitative, *(eg feedback from assessment moderation meetings)* and quantitative, *(eg records of assessments undertaken and judgements made)* data collection could be informed by:
- prior continuous improvement activities
- assessing the relevance of the collected data to your training and assessment outcomes
- deciding which aspects of training delivery are most critical to your quality training and assessment.

Data sources relevant to improving training and assessment could include:
- client satisfaction surveys/questionnaires
- interviews, focus groups, and/or other data from consultation with candidates, enterprise clients, industry organisations and licensing bodies
- records of staff/planning meetings and agreed actions
- records of complaints and appeals and their resolution
- internal audit reports and organisational self-assessment
- staff performance-appraisal reports.

**Demonstrating improvements**

Improvements to training and assessment could be demonstrated by changes to:
- quality, currency, relevance and sufficiency of training and assessment resources, including reasonable adjustments made to meet the needs of candidates with a disability or other valid reasons for adjustment
- professional development activities and outcomes
- validity, reliability, flexibility and fairness of assessment processes.

For continuous improvement, revised practices are analysed in light of further data collection.
Ways of identifying opportunities for the improvement of assessment strategies could be through assessment system validation and the systematic improvement of processes set out above. Opportunities for improvement may also be identified through collaborative partnerships and risk management processes.

**Aspects of assessment to be monitored**

*What aspects of assessment do we need to monitor for continuous improvement?*

The AQTF Users Guide suggests that ‘Systems, processes, tools and practices are improved’. The TAA04 Training Package lists ‘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’. From these we can identify five targets for validation as follows:

1. Assessment systems
2. Assessment processes
3. Assessment methods and tools
4. Assessment evidence
5. Assessment judgements.

**Assessment systems** include but may not be limited to:
- grievances and appeals processes
- assessment processes
- validation systems and processes
- administrative procedures such as reporting/recording arrangements
- quality assurance mechanisms
- risk management strategies
- acquisition of physical and human resources
- identifying roles and responsibilities
- establishing partnership arrangements.

**Assessment processes** include but may not be limited to:
- providing RPL, dealing with appeals, complaints and grievances, managing resources and partnership arrangements
- designing assessment methods/tools
- selecting, managing, monitoring and professionally developing assessors
- managing the gathering of evidence, including third-party evidence gathering, workplace assessment, simulation and record-keeping
- making and recording judgements
- providing information to candidates
- providing feedback and guidance to candidates
- ensuring validity and reliability, flexibility and fairness.
**Assessment methods and tools** are used to gather assessment evidence, and may include but not be limited to methods such as:

- observation of performance through normal work activities or simulated workplace activities
- examining workplace products produced by the candidate
- questioning, conducting interviews
- seeking third party reports
- structured activities – role-plays, projects, presentations
- examining portfolios.

and tools such as:

- observation checklists (workplace and/or simulation)
- knowledge tests (written and/or oral)
- third party questionnaires
- the instructions provided to candidates and instructions for evidence-gatherers.

**Assessment evidence** is information gathered which, when matched against the unit of competency requirements, provides proof of competency. Evidence can take many forms and be gathered from a number of sources. 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, sufficient, current and authentic evidence that enables the assessor to make the assessment judgement.

**Assessment judgements** involve the assessor evaluating whether the evidence gathered is valid, sufficient, current and authentic in order to make the assessment decision. The assessment decision will require using professional judgement in evaluating the evidence available about:

- the quality of evidence gathered using the assessment methods/tools
- the competency achievement of the candidate based upon that evidence.

Additional information relating to Assessment, including RPL is set out in the AQTF 2007 Users’ Guide to the Essential Standards for Registration, Standard1, Element 1.5, pp.16-17.
Quality standards in assessment

Where do we find the quality standards that tell us what we should be looking for in our assessment systems processes, methods/tools, evidence and judgements?

The AQTF 2007 and the Training and Assessment Training Package TAA04 give us considerable guidance.

Assessment systems

Assessment systems are the controlled and ordered processes designed to ensure that assessment decisions made in relation to many individuals, by many assessors, in many situations are valid, reliable, flexible and fair. Systems should have well understood components such as validation processes, assessment appeal mechanisms, recording and reporting processes.

Assessment processes need to:

- be recorded
- involve consultation with industry during development
- be equitable and meet the needs of a diverse range of candidates
- be regularly validated and improved
- be efficient and effective, (eg clustering of units of competency)
- be negotiated, integrated and monitored where the workplace is used
- be negotiated, agreed and monitored where partnership arrangements are utilised
- be appropriately resourced (staff, facilities, equipment, assessment materials)
- ensure that all participants in the process are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities
- comply with the Assessment Guidelines of Training Packages or assessment requirements of accredited courses
- lead to an AQF Qualification or a Statement of Attainment (including for Skill Sets)
- be valid, reliable, fair and flexible
- provide for reassessment on appeal
- be explained to all applicants on enrolment, (eg RPL)
- minimise time and cost to candidates, (eg RPL).

Assessment methods and tools need to:

- be valid, reliable, fair and flexible
- be regularly validated and improved
- comply with unit of competency requirements (one or more if clustered) including Employability Skills facets\(^1\), required skills and knowledge and critical aspects of evidence
- comply with contextualisation requirements
- reflect the language, literacy and numeracy requirements of the unit/s of competency

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\(^1\) Employability Skills guidance can be found at [www.training.com.au](http://www.training.com.au). Units of competency not reviewed since 2006 may still include information on Key Competencies and the relationship between these is explained in the publication *Employability Skills from Framework to Practice – a Guide for Trainers and Assessors*, 2006 ©DEEWR.
• provide evidence gatherers with clear instructions about the application of the tools and assessment methods, including advice on reasonable adjustment
• provide candidates with information about the context and purpose of the assessment and the assessment process
• provide candidates with clear guidance as to the benchmarks that must be achieved in order to be judged competent
• provide information and support for RPL candidates
• provide information and support for on-line or distance assessment
• reflect the four dimensions of competency (where relevant)
• provide information about feedback and guidance to candidates.

Assessment evidence needs to:
• meet the rules of evidence, eg be valid, sufficient, current and authentic
• be regularly validated
• reflect the requirements of the unit/s of competency
• be accurately recorded and reported for each unit of competency.

Assessment judgements need to:
• be regularly validated
• involve the evaluation of valid, sufficient, current and authentic evidence to enable professional judgements to be made about whether competence has been achieved
• reflect the requirements of the unit of competency including any pre-requisite and co-requisite units of competency
• reflect achievement of relevant Employability Skills facets
• provide information for constructive feedback and guidance to candidates.
Stakeholders in quality assessment

Now we know what to look for – but who shall we ask?

There are many stakeholders in the assessment process that can provide valuable input to our continuous improvement process. The stakeholders include:

- **Industry:** people who represent the industry as a whole, and may be identified through industry associations, employee representative organisations, Industry Skills Councils, Industry Training Advisory Bodies or Councils and regulatory authorities.

- **Employers:** people who deal with candidates in the workplace either through employment or work placement. They may include supervisors and managers. You may locate such people through local enterprises or employers with whom you are delivering traineeships, apprenticeships, work placements or structured workplace learning.

- **Technical and subject matter experts:** people with vocational competencies, may be identified through industry groups, employers or unions.

- **Candidates:** either undertaking your programs or seeking RPL.

- **Trainers or teachers:** people who meet AQTF Standards and deliver training on-the-job or off-the-job but are not necessarily assessing. They may be delivering as partners or as peers. You may consult trainers within your own RTO or other RTOs. Network groups such as the Trainers and Assessors Network (TAN), the Curriculum Support Service Networks (CSSNs) and Curriculum Advisory Groups (CAGS) also provide access to other trainers with whom to work (see Links, Networks and Resources section).

- **Assessors:** people who meet AQTF Standards and conduct assessments on or off the job but are not necessarily delivering training. They may be assessing as partners or as peers. You may consult assessors within your own RTO, in partner organisations or other RTOs. Network groups such as the TAN or the CSSNs also provide access to other assessors with whom to work.

- **Evidence-gatherers:** people who gather evidence on your behalf and under your supervision on the job or off the job. They may include workplace supervisors and are commonly called ‘third party evidence gatherers’. Their purpose is to gather evidence not to make assessment judgements.

- **Government authorities** include the Training Accreditation Council (TAC) auditors, Department of Education and Training, WorkSafe WA and regulatory/licensing authorities.

Some individuals may fit a number of categories. For example, a workplace supervisor may be able to provide industry input, technical expertise and an evidence-gatherer’s perspective. Many individuals will fall into a number of categories, for example most trainers are also assessors.

What will these people do? How can they contribute to your continuous improvement process? In the next section we will look at some strategies for continuous improvement of our assessment processes, and then suggest questions that we can ask of each stakeholder group.
Section 2. Strategies for continuous improvement

What strategies can we use to identify opportunities for improvement?

There are three fundamental processes to identify opportunities for continuous improvement. These are:

- Reviewing
- Comparing
- Evaluating.

**Reviewing**

This involves the inspection of processes and products to determine the ‘face validity’ of the assessment strategy – in effect we are asking ‘does it look right?’ and meet the principles of assessment. Examples of this process include:

- mapping and matching assessment methods/tools to unit of competency and Training Package requirements
- opinions of industry representatives about the proposed assessment process and assessment methods/tools
- opinions of peers about the assessment process and assessment methods/tools
- compliance of assessment processes and assessment methods/tools with AQTF requirements.

These processes and other relevant indicators aid reviewing and support an assessor’s professional judgement when applying an assessment strategy.

**Example of reviewing**

The assessors working for a small RTO routinely meet with an industry focus group to seek feedback on their assessment tools. In particular they are keen to be reassured that the assessment tools reflect current industry practice, and that industry would be comfortable employing graduates who have been judged as competent after using these tools for assessments. These assessors also meet as a team to review the RTO’s assessment process documentation and each other’s assessment tools to ensure that they match Training Package and AQTF requirements. Opportunities for improvement identified through these internal and external reviews are documented, along with the name of the person responsible for addressing each issue, and a date for completion. Changes made are reported at the next assessment review meeting.
Comparing
Professional judgement involves comparing assessment documentation and assessment outcomes to determine content validity, reliability, consistency, and reproducibility of the assessment judgements. There is no single model for assessment comparisons, however, assessment moderation is a commonly used comparison process and it is not a flawless process. There may be variation in assessors’ judgements, but moderation works to ensure that the margins of variation are minimal. Moderation includes comparing:

- the assessment methods/tools of two or more assessors for the same unit/s of competency
- the observations of two or more evidence gatherers for the same candidate’s performance
- the judgements made by two or more assessors based upon the same evidence
- the assessment results of two or more similar units of competency for the same candidate.

For example two units covering different technical activities but involving similar application of problem-solving skills to determine that this aspect of the candidate’s competency is being validly and reliably assessed.

Example of comparing

Assessors from a number of RTOs meet to carry out assessments of the competence of a candidate using a video recording of the candidate’s performance and samples of the products produced by the candidate. The assessors utilise their own assessment tools to assess the performance and products, then compare their judgements and the evidence behind their judgements. Differences in the evidence gathered and in judgements are discussed to clarify the interpretation of the unit of competency until consensus is reached. Individual assessors then modify their assessment processes to maintain that consensus in future. Each RTO records its own participation in the meetings and the improvements made as a result of the meetings.

Evaluating
This involves gathering stakeholder feedback to determine the predictive validity, impact, effectiveness and credibility of the assessment strategy. We can evaluate five kinds of impact, as follows:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>How it feels:</td>
<td>Does the person feel comfortable with the assessment process?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>How it works:</td>
<td>Can the person apply the competency in a workplace role?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>How it is used:</td>
<td>Is the assessment process properly applied?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>How it serves:</td>
<td>Does the assessment process contribute to industry and RTO organisational objectives?</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>How it rates:</td>
<td>Is the assessment process the most time and cost effective option?</td>
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</tbody>
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Examples of gathering feedback include:
- opinions of candidates about their assessment experience
- evidence from assessment appeals, complaints or grievances about assessment
- feedback from employers and industry representatives about the competency of graduates
- opinions of evidence-gatherers about the assessment resources and processes and their ease of use
- feedback from auditors about non-compliances or opportunities for improvement.

**Example of evaluating**

To identify possible improvements an RTO routinely surveys its current candidates and employers of its graduates to gauge satisfaction with its training delivery and assessment services. Students are surveyed by written questionnaires and employers are interviewed by telephone. Feedback relating to assessment processes is provided to assessors and action taken.
Section 3. Gathering the evidence for continuous improvement

Just as we use an assessment plan to map our evidence-gathering sources in assessment, so we can also plan our evidence-gathering sources for continuous improvement using a simple checklist. This should help us identify what we need to ask of each stakeholder group (by reading the columns in the table below) and identify who we need to consult for each aspect of continuous improvement (by reading the rows).

In the table below the demands upon each stakeholder group are limited by identifying those aspects for which each is best placed to contribute.

Key:
- A: Industry
- B: Employers
- C: Technical & subject matter experts
- D: Candidates
- E: Trainers and teachers
- F: Assessors
- G: Evidence gatherers
- H: Government authorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continuous improvement activity</th>
<th>Primary evidence sources</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review assessment process</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review assessment methods/tools</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review assessment judgement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review assessment evidence</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Compare assessment process</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Compare assessment methods/tools</td>
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<td>Compare assessment evidence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Compare assessment judgement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate assessment process</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluate assessment methods/tools</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluate assessment evidence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate assessment judgement</td>
<td>✓</td>
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</tbody>
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Based upon this checklist, we can suggest some of the questions you might put to each group. Throughout the following questions, always keep in mind that ‘assessment’ includes both assessments associated with training delivery and assessments through RPL. Also keep in mind that some stakeholder groups may not be familiar with all the VET terminology and you may need to change the wording of the questions to expressions they are more familiar with.

**Industry:**
*Questions like these could be asked before implementing the assessment process as part of a review process.* You may need to reword some questions to suit the audience.

☑ Is the assessment process consistent with industry’s expectations as described in the Training Package Assessment Guidelines and units of competency?
☑ Do the selected assessment methods and tools reflect current industry standards and practices?

*Questions like the following could be asked as part of evaluation:*
☑ Is the industry comfortable about employing graduates who have demonstrated achievement through this assessment process?
☑ Do you think that this assessment process will preserve or improve workplace performance standards in your industry?

**Employers:**
*Questions like the following could be asked of employers of candidates who are employees, trainees or apprentices or who have been placed through work placement or work experience and are being assessed in the workplace.* You may need to reword some questions to suit the audience.

**Review questions:**
☑ Will the assessment process fit comfortably within your organisation’s activities and workplace culture?
☑ Do the selected assessment methods and tools reflect current industry standards and work practices used in your business?

**Evaluation questions:**
☑ Has the assessment process had a positive impact on your organisation?
☑ Were supervisors able to effectively use the assessment tools?
☑ Did the assessment tools provide your organisation with useful information about your employees/trainees/apprentices?
☑ Were the judgements made about the candidates’ competencies consistent with your knowledge of these employees/trainees/apprentices?
☑ Have the candidates assessed as competent through the assessment process continued to perform at the appropriate level?
Technical and subject matter experts:  
*Questions like these are particularly important if you are assessing on a team basis, pairing an assessment expert with a vocational/technical/subject matter expert drawn from industry. You may need to reword some questions to suit the audience.*

**Review questions:**
- Do the assessment methods and tools reflect the performance requirements of relevant units of competency?
- Do the assessment methods and tools reflect current industry standards and workplace practices?

**Evaluation question:**
- What impact do you think the use of these assessment methods and tools will have on future performance of these candidates?

Candidates
*You may ask questions like these through a forum, questionnaires or by interview. These are all evaluation questions:*
- Were you told that you had the right to an RPL assessment before you started this course?
- Were you given clear instructions about what to do in the assessment?
- Do you feel that you were given sufficient information about what was going to be assessed and how and when you were going to be assessed?
- Do you feel that the assessment process was fair and equitable?
- Do you feel that the person observing your performance was fair and unbiased?
- Do you think the overall judgement about your competency performance was accurate and fair?
- Were you given adequate feedback about your performance after the assessment?
- Were you told about your right to an assessment appeal?
- Were you given useful advice about further learning after the assessment?
- Were you encouraged to monitor your own future progress?

Trainers and teachers
*Trainers and teachers may also be assessors. The following questions could be asked of trainers or teachers who are not directly involved in the assessment process other than through assessments used to monitor candidate progress. In these questions ‘the assessment process’ relates to assessments used to determine competence.*

**These are all evaluation questions:**
- Was the assessment process compatible with the training delivery program?
- Did the candidates have a clear understanding of the relationship between the training they are receiving and the assessment processes?
- Did candidates understand the difference between assessments used to monitor their progress and assessments used to determine their competency?
- Did feedback from the assessment process help the candidates to better direct their learning efforts?
- Did the assessment process distort or damage the candidates learning?
- Was the final judgement of competency performance made through the assessment process consistent with your observations of each candidate?
Assessors

The most informed observers of your assessment system will be other assessors, either from within your RTO and/or from another RTO. Other assessors can contribute to all aspects of your continuous improvement process. It is understood that a natural reluctance to reveal good ideas or weaknesses to a competitor means this approach has some risk, but the returns can be substantial. It is desirable to form a working relationship with other assessors in your field or from other industry areas of whom you can ask questions like the following. You may want them to sign a confidentiality agreement, or you might simply establish a reciprocal arrangement regarding sharing materials to protect each parties’ interests.

Review questions:
The initial questions suggested below apply more to planning and development processes; the latter to implementation of assessment methods/tools.

- Is the assessment process consistent with the relevant Training Package Assessment Guidelines or accredited course assessment requirements?
- Do all assessors involved in the process meet the requirements of the Training Package Assessment Guidelines or course assessment requirements and AQTF? If not, are they properly managed as required by the Assessment Guidelines and AQTF?
- Is the assessment process compliant with the AQTF?
- Are the roles of all parties in the assessment process clearly defined?
- Is clustering of units of competency appropriately used in the assessment process?
- Does clustering confuse or enhance the assessment process for all aspects of each unit of competency and why?
- Does the assessment plan faithfully reflect all required components of the unit/s of competency and the critical aspects of evidence?
- Do the assessment methods/tools (either developed or adopted) faithfully reflect the assessment plan and the requirements of the units of competency?
- Is any contextualisation of the unit/s of competency compliant with Training Package requirements?
- Do the assessment methods/tools reflect current industry practices and workplace context?
- Do the assessment methods/tools reflect the level of complexity, responsibility and autonomy indicated by the Employability Skills facets and the AQF alignment of the unit/s of competency?
- Do assessment simulations reflect current workplace practices and environment and adequately show evidence of the four dimensions of competency?
- Do the assessment methods/tools reflect the functional level of language, literacy and numeracy required by the unit/s of competency and the workplace?
- Can reasonable adjustment be made to the assessment tools?
- Have limits to reasonable adjustment been set, and are these limits consistent with the Training Package Assessment Guidelines or accredited course assessment requirements?
- Does the judgement process reflect the required performance outcomes and critical aspects of evidence of the unit/s of competency?
- Is a form of version control in place to ensure that only current versions of assessment method/tools are being used?
Do partnership agreements clearly specify the assessment roles and responsibilities of both parties, including quality assurance, and record keeping?

Are all the necessary assessment resources readily accessible?

Have evidence gatherers been appropriately selected, briefed, managed and monitored to ensure sufficient quality evidence?

Are clear instructions provided for evidence gatherers?

Are clear instructions provided to candidates?

Is the quality of evidence regularly reviewed for credibility and admissibility?

Are judgements based upon sufficient evidence (a range of time, context, and application)?

Are the assessment records adequate to respond to appeals or complaints?

The following questions require assessors to utilise the assessment processes and compare their results – a process usually described as ‘moderation’.

Do different assessors develop similar assessment strategies for the same unit/s of competency?

Do different assessors record the same evidence when observing the same candidate’s performance? The tools and assessment process may need adjustment if they do not.

Do different assessors make the same judgement based upon the same evidence for a unit of competency?

Evidence gatherers

Evidence gatherers are people who act on behalf of an assessor to apply an assessment method/tool to gather evidence relating to a candidate’s performance. Evidence gatherers do not make an assessment judgement; they simply record what they have observed using an observation checklist and record provided by the assessor. All assessors are evidence gatherers, accumulating evidence until there is sufficient to make a safe judgement but anyone referred to as an ‘evidence gatherer’ is probably not an assessor. The following evaluation questions are some that might be put to evidence gatherers:

Were your roles and responsibilities as an evidence gatherer clearly specified?

Were you provided with clear instructions relating to gathering the evidence and recording the outcomes?

Were occupational health and safety (OHS) and other regulatory issues adequately addressed in your instructions on evidence gathering?

Were the assessment methods/tools relevant to your role as an evidence gatherer and easy to use?

Were limits to reasonable adjustment clearly defined and applicable?

Was there any perceived or actual conflict of interest between your role as an evidence gatherer and your relationship with the candidate (as a supervisor, client, colleague)?

Comparison task:

Do different evidence gatherers record the same evidence when observing the same candidate’s performance?
Government authorities

Government authorities will from time-to-time audit compliance of the RTO with various standards relating to OHS and the AQTF. For the most part they will ask the questions, but their findings can contribute to your continuous improvement process. The sort of question you can ask is:

☑ What ‘non-compliance’ or ‘opportunities for improvement’ relating to assessment have been identified?

Of course, if you have been asking questions of the other stakeholders you will be unlikely to receive any surprises, and an auditor will be impressed by your diligence and professionalism, and by the improvements you have made. It is important to implement your continuous improvement processes and outcomes.

The three processes of reviewing, comparing and evaluating are shown together on the following flow diagram:

1. **Review** the assessment of the unit of competency
   - Identify stakeholders for review of assessment documentation
   - Design and distribute review questions to stakeholders
   - Collect and analyse stakeholder responses

2. **Compare** assessments of the unit of competency
   - Identify assessors and/or evidence-gatherers
   - Set up a moderation meeting to compare outcomes
   - Analyse results of moderation exercise

3. **Evaluate** the assessment of the unit of competency
   - Identify stakeholders for distribution of evaluation surveys/interviews
   - Design and put evaluation questions to stakeholders
   - Collect and analyse stakeholder responses

   Prepare list of improvements and required action
Section 4. Recording the outcomes of continuous improvement

Your investment in the continuous improvement of assessment needs to be recorded for a number of reasons:

• to monitor and improve the continuous improvement process itself
• to provide for version control and reflect the underpinnings of current assessment resources
• to maintain a trace of improvements to guide the development of future assessment resources and provide suggested remedies to address any future assessment concerns.

It is suggested that you create a separate file for each unit of competency or clusters of units commonly assessed together, (eg Skill Sets). Within each unit/s file it is suggested that you keep the following documents:

• the complete unit/s of competency
• an assessment plan indicating how each component of the unit/s can be assessed (including RPL)
• current assessment tools (observation checklists, short answer tests, simulations etc) used to gather evidence, including instructions provided to evidence gatherers and to candidates
• validation surveys/questionnaires for each validation source (industry, candidates, other assessors)
• a schedule for the administration of validation surveys/questionnaires showing past and future activities
• a summary of evidence gathered to date from each validation source
• who was involved with validation
• a summary of improvements identified and actions taken to implement them with supporting strategy documents such as the minutes of meetings confirming each decision.

If you maintain comprehensive documentation on the outcomes and effects of assessment validation there is no requirement to keep completed surveys/questionnaires, samples of student work or past assessment tools.
Section 5. Links, networks and resources

**VETInfoNet**
The VET Teaching and Learning Directorate in the Department of Education and Training manages an informative website www.vetinfonet.det.wa.edu.au through which you can gain access to valuable information, resources and networks to support assessment and other VET activities. Much of the following information is taken from this site.

**VET Teaching and Learning Directorate**
The VET Teaching and Learning Directorate provides strategic leadership to the VET Sector in the provision of quality teaching and learning support services. The Directorate works closely with a range of stakeholders at state and national level, leading the development, implementation and review of systemic initiatives, policies and programs in the areas of curriculum management, professional development for VET practitioners, VET access and participation and VET for School Students.

**Trainers’ and Assessors’ Network**
The Trainers’ and Assessors’ Network (TAN) is a locally driven network for trainers and assessors who work in VET in Western Australia. It is supported by the Department of Education and Training. Meetings take place in Perth and in a number of regional areas.

The network has four objectives:
- provide opportunities for the development of an informed and highly skilled group of trainers and assessors across the VET sector in Western Australia
- provide an environment to share information, build relationships and maintain effective partnerships across industry and the VET sector
- provide advice in consultation with the Department of Education and Training to relevant state and national bodies on issues relating to assessment and workplace training
- enhance the professional standing of trainers and assessors in VET.

The Perth based TAN meets approximately four times a year. Times and days on which the meetings are held are varied to meet the different needs of members.

**Curriculum Support Service Networks**
The Curriculum Support Services Network (CSSN) Centres have been funded by the Department of Education & Training in Western Australia to establish a communication link between the Department and the RTOs and VET practitioners.

The VET curriculum has been divided into three main areas:
- Mining & Engineering, Trades & Services (METS) serviced by the Swan CSSN.
- Professional & Lifestyle Services (PALS) serviced by the Central CSSN.
- Primary Industry & Personal Services (PIPS) serviced by the Challenger CSSN.
Each CSSN Centre is responsible for keeping the VET stakeholders within their portfolio informed of changes or updates to Training Packages, Implementation Guides and Courses. CSSNs play a significant role in promoting a collegial spirit amongst trainers and assessors, and host moderation meetings to promote quality training and assessment.

Current information regarding curriculum support materials and professional development is regularly sent through the network. Alternatively stakeholders can access curriculum support information through their relevant CSSN Centre.

**Curriculum Advisory Groups**
Curriculum Advisory Groups (CAGs) representing the VET sector state-wide have been established to meet and discuss curriculum related issues or concerns within subject or industry areas. Membership includes representation from industry, private RTOs, TAFEWA Colleges, Industry Training Advisory Bodies or Councils and other interested stakeholders. Notes taken at each meeting are distributed via email to the relevant wider circulation group and feedback is encouraged.

All stakeholders are welcome to join the network or nominate a representative by contacting the relevant CSSN.

**Industry Skills Councils**
The Industry Skills Councils provide advice and information between the national VET system and industry. They have a number of roles including:

- providing accurate industry intelligence to the VET sector about current and future skill needs and training requirements
- supporting the development, implementation and continuous improvement of quality nationally recognised training products and services, including Training Packages.

ISCs have their own websites and an overarching site where roles and engagement protocols with RTOs can be found. The generic ISC website is: www.isc.org.au.

**Industry Training Councils**
Industry Training Councils (ITCs), sometimes identified as Industry Training Advisory Bodies, are non-government, not for profit industry driven bodies that provide advice to the Western Australian government about training priorities and the vocational education and training needs of its particular industry. The role of ITCs is to ensure the availability of suitable training and skills development arrangements in the VET sector.

ITCs also provide advice and information on industry specific training related matters such as industry training policy, resource information and industry research. This includes contributing to the development of the State Training Strategy.
Other useful links and resources

VETInfoNet: www.vetinfonet.det.wa.edu.au
This website of the VET Teaching and Learning Directorate in the Department of Education and Training is very informative and you can gain access to valuable information, resources and networks to support assessment and other VET activities.

DEEWR website: www.deewr.gov.au
This website of the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations publishes policy documents, Training Package development and quality assurance specifications, equity materials, research papers, links to Industry Skills Council and state/territory training authority sites.

NTIS website: www.ntis.gov.au
This website contains a database of all endorsed Training Packages – full text of units of competency available; a National Register of qualifications and Registered Training Organisations; and listings of training support materials that meet National Quality Council (NQC) quality criteria – full text of support materials not available, but source is indicated.

AQTF website: www.training.com.au
This website provides all the AQTF Standards and guidance publications and access to associated projects such as trials of the AQTF 2007 draft Excellence Criteria

AQF website: www.aqf.gov.au
This website provides details on the Australian Qualifications Framework. You can also find information on VET for schools, learning pathways, quality assurance, RPL principles and more.

Resource Generator: www.resourcegenerator.gov.au
The Resource Generator provides trainers and assessors with access to information about units of competency, qualifications and learning resources across a range of industries. It allows users to:
• view documents
• customise resources
• download and print documents
• upload their own resources and incorporate them into documents.

WestOne: www.westone.wa.gov.au
WestOne was created to facilitate the development and growth of flexible learning within Western Australia. Its services include developing learning resources; teaching resources; assessment resources and professional development resources. These resources may take the form of vision (video), DVD, CD, online, printed publication or PDF. Many of the resources produced have been designed specifically to support flexible learning.

WestOne also manages intellectual property and copyright for the Department of Education and Training.