AUDITING ASSESSMENT
the requirements of AQTF 2010 and the Training Packages and understanding the Auditor’s perspective

This paper summarises the key aspects of assessment which will be audited as part of AQTF 2010, and the standards which will be used in the audit.

Aspects of assessment to be audited

Assessment is the purposeful process of gathering appropriate and sufficient evidence of competence and the interpretation of that information to make a judgment. Included is the recording of evidence as well as the communication to stakeholders’. The communication includes how competence is to be demonstrated and feedback on the outcomes of the assessment.

An assessment tool contains both the:

- Instrument (the selected assessment methods, the development of these into tools e.g. questions asked and expected answers, profile of acceptable performance, decision making rules, checklists); and the

- Procedures (information/instructions for the conditions under which the assessment should be conducted and recording procedures eg instructions to assessors, instructions to candidates).

The AQTF standard

Element 1.5 of AQTF 2010 sets out the following requirements for assessment (including RPL)

1. Assessment meets the requirements of the relevant Training Package or accredited course
In addition to the broad requirements of the AQTF, Training Packages generally specify in some detail how competencies are to be assessed.

**Example 1** Competency SRFFFIT003B Undertake Client Induction and Screening from the Fitness Industry Training Package

“**Consistency in performance**

“Due to issues such as safety requirements and delivery of appropriate techniques, this unit of competency must be assessed over a minimum of three (3) different occasions to ensure consistency of performance over the Range Statements and context applicable”.

**Example 2** Competence TAATAS 504B Facilitate Group Processes from the Training and Assessment Training Package.

"**The collection of quality evidence requires that:**

the evidence collected must relate to a number of performances assessed at different points in time and in a learning and assessment pathway these must be separated by further learning and practice."

Example 1 is explicit in that it states that the student must demonstrate competency three times. Example 2 is less specific but implies that the student must demonstrate competency at least twice.

**Example 3 & 4** below is taken from the Business Services Training Package. *Volume 1 Page 114 © Australian National Training Authority 2004*

**Example 3** Assessment in a simulated environment

“Units of Competency in the Business Services Training Package may be assessed in the workplace or in a simulated environment.

Simulated environments are required for competency assessments in business because:

- suitable employment and/or work experience is not always available
- some workplaces or work situations do not use or allow the expression of the competency required
- conducting assessments may be disruptive to work requirements
it is sometimes appropriate to practise skills in live settings prior to the acquisition of competency, particularly in potentially dangerous situations or where valuable equipment may be at risk.

Given that simulations may be used and are often indicated, the Assessment Guidelines for the Business Services Training Package indicate the characteristics of a successful simulation.

In order to be valid and reliable, the simulation must closely represent what actually occurs in the workplace, and should seek to replicate an actual work setting. It is critical that the designer of the simulation is thoroughly familiar with the expression of the competency and is experienced in the current circumstances of the work.

In deciding whether a simulation or an assessment environment has been adequately designed, the following questions should be asked:

Are there opportunities to

- test the full range of equipment?
- use up to date equipment and software?
- reflect time pressures and deadlines?
- show the complexity of dealing with multiple tasks?
- involve prioritising among competing tasks?
- deal with customers, including difficult ones?
- work with others in a team?
- communicate with diverse groups?
- find, discuss and test solutions to problems?
- explore health and safety issues?
- answer practically oriented, applied knowledge questions?
- show the level of written and verbal expression sufficient for, but not exceeding, the work requirements?"

The Business Services Training Package is also quite specific in terms of contextualisation.

**Example 4 Contextualisation of Units of Competency by RTOs**

“Registered Training Organisation (RTOs) may contextualise units of competency to reflect local outcomes required. Contextualisation could involve additions or amendments to the unit of competency to suit particular delivery methods, learner profiles, specific enterprise equipment requirements, or to otherwise meet local needs. However, the integrity of the overall intended outcome of the unit of competency must be maintained. Any contextualisation of units of competency in this endorsed Training Package must be within the bounds of the following advice.

In contextualising units of competency, RTOs:
must not remove or add to the number and content of elements and performance criteria

may add specific industry terminology to performance criteria where this does not distort or narrow the competency outcomes

may make amendments and additions to the range statement as long as such changes do not diminish the breadth of application of the competency and reduce its portability, and/or

may add detail to the evidence guide in areas such as the critical aspects of evidence or resources and infrastructure required where these expand the breadth of the competency but do not limit its use."

2. **Assessment is consistent with the training and assessment strategy developed for the Qualification by the RTO.**

That is, actual delivery and assessment follow the RMIT implementation plan and course guide.

3. **Assessment is conducted in accordance with the principles of assessment and the rules of evidence.**

The rules of evidence are:

- Assessment is valid, reliable, flexible and fair,
- Assessment involves the collection of sufficient, valid, authentic and current evidence

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<th>Validity requires that:</th>
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<td>- Assessment against the units of competency must cover the broad range of skills and knowledge that are essential to competent performance</td>
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<td>- Assessment of knowledge and skills must be integrated with their practical application</td>
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<td>- Judgement of competence must be based on sufficient evidence (that is, evidence gathered on a number of occasions and in a range of contexts using different assessment methods). The specific evidence requirements of each unit of competency provide advice on sufficiency</td>
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• Assessment focuses on the application of knowledge and skills to the standard of performance requirements in the workplace

• Assessment confirms workplace and regulatory requirements

• There is a system to ensure that judgements made by assessors are consistent

• Systems, processes, tools and practices are improved.

The Intent of this Standard is that

• Assessments ensure that only learners who hold the requisite skills and knowledge are certified as competent and correspondingly learners who hold the requisite skills and knowledge are certified as competent.

• Validation processes facilitate consistent interpretation of competency standards and create national consistency for the same employment in different geographic localities

**Key actions required of the University under this Standard**

1. The University must ensure that assessors systematically validate and improve assessment processes, tools and evidence requirements.

2. Validation involving, reviewing, comparing and evaluating assessment processes, tools and evidence contributing to judgements made by a range of assessors against the same standards is undertaken. Validation may be undertaken before, during and after the actual assessment activity occurs

   o **Before assessment**, to develop a common understanding of Unit(s) of competency. Assessment tool design, Acceptable evidence, Required standard at appropriate AQF level.

   o **During assessment**, to review: Assessor practice, Assessment process

   o **After assessment**, to review: The validity and consistency of the judgement, The validity of the evidence collected, Assessment tool design, Required standard

3. Maintaining records of evidence of improvements such as:

   o Actions taken in response to data from stakeholders

   o Revised assessment tools, processes and practices

   o Professional development on assessment practices

   o Records of validation activities
Benchmarking of activities with other RTOs.

**Implications for articulation pathways and graded assessment**

It may be argued that a particular course has been designed (contextualised) as an articulation pathway. Even so, for the course to be regarded as consistent with the Standard the assessment must meet the following criteria:

- A pass (50%) confirms that the student is competent, and is validated against the requirements of the training package.
- A student cannot be failed on “enhanced competency criteria”.

This is what the external auditor would want to see.

The grading of courses above 50% may be validated against the requirements of the HE program.

The Business Services Training Package is silent on graded assessment however the Metal and Engineering Training Package MEM05 version 1.01 Volume 1 page 129 provides the following advice:

> “The minimum level of reporting assessment outcomes is at the unit level. Assessment outcomes must primarily be reported without grading on the basis of the candidate being either competent or not yet competent. However this does not preclude supplementary reporting based on endorsed quality principles. It should be noted that there cannot be any grading of ‘competent’. However, supplementary reporting of some form of grading may occur where there is agreement between the Registered Training Organisation and their client. Any supplementary reporting of graded assessment outcomes must be shown as additional information on any testamur or transcript and not detract or obscure the report of the primary outcome.”

At RMIT the supplementary reporting of graded assessment is provided on the RMIT transcript.