

1 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM

1.1 What is the National Training System

Australia's national vocational education and training system comprises of a nationally consistent approach to the delivery of vocational education and training (VET) within Australia. The system is overseen by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (Federal) in cooperation with the various registering bodies in each State and Territory. The system aims to deliver vocational (work) qualifications in a nationally consistent manner, incorporating elements of education best practice, actual work-place practice and the needs of business.

The three key components of the system are:

- Training packages
- The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)
- The Australian Quality Training Systems Framework (AQTF)

1.1.1 Training Packages

A training package is an integrated set of nationally endorsed competency standards, assessment guidelines and AQF qualification for a specific industry, industry sector or enterprise.

Each Training Package:

- Provides a consistent and reliable set of components for training, recognising and assessing people's skills, and may also have optional support materials
- Enables nationally recognised qualifications to be awarded through direct assessment of workplace competencies
- Encourages the development and delivery of flexible training which suits individual and industry requirements
- Encourages learning and assessment in a work-related environment which leads to verifiable workplace outcomes

Training packages are developed by an industry skills council in consultation with industry advisers, industry practitioners and educational experts and are subject to a continuous improvement review process.

Each training package has an expiry date before which time a full review of the competency standards and qualification in the training package is undertaken and a new training package is produced. The current training package for Financial Services is due to expire in 2010.

What is a competency standard?

A competency standard (or unit of competency) is a descriptive statement of the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to perform a particular task or activity.

1.1.2 The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)

The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) is the policy framework that defines all qualifications recognised nationally in post-compulsory education and training in Australia. The AQF comprises the rules in relation to the titles and guidelines that define each qualification, as well as the principles and protocols covering cross-sectoral qualification (e.g. VET and University sector) links and the issuing of qualifications and statements of attainment.

1.1.3 The Australia Quality Training Systems Framework (AQTF)

The Australian Quality Training Systems Framework (AQTF) is a set of nationally agreed quality assurance arrangements for training and assessments services delivered by training organisations. The AQTF forms the basis of the registration requirements and are the standards against which all Registered Training Organisations are audited. The latest version of the AQTF was introduced in July 2007 and comprises of:

- The *Essential Standard for Registration*:
 - *The Three Essential Standards for Registration*
 - *Quality Indicators*
 - *Conditions of Registration*
- The *Standards for State and Territory Registering Bodies*
- The *Excellence Criteria*

What is a Registered Training Organisation?

A Registered Training Organisation (RTO) is a training organisation registered by a state or territory registering body to deliver specified units of competency and/or qualifications from identified training packages under the current AQTF arrangements. A training organisation must be registered in order to deliver and assess nationally recognised training and issue nationally recognised qualifications.

1.2 Employability Skills

Employability Skills are also sometimes referred to as generic skills, capabilities or Key Competencies. The Employability Skills discussed here build on the Mayer Committee's Key Competencies, which were developed in 1992 and attempted to describe generic competencies for effective participation in work.

The Business Council of Australia (BCA) and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI), produced the Employability Skills for the Future report in 2002 in consultation with other peak employer bodies and with funding provided by the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) and the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA). Officially released by Dr Nelson (Minister for Education, Science and Training) on 23 May 2002, copies of the report are available from the DEST website at: http://www.dest.gov.au/archive/ty/publications/employability_skills/index.htm

The report indicated that business and industry now require a broader range of skills than the Mayer Key Competencies Framework and featured an Employability Skills Framework identifying eight Employability Skills:

- Communication
- Teamwork

- Problem solving
- Initiative and enterprise
- Planning and organising
- Self-management
- Learning
- Technology

The report demonstrated how Employability Skills can be further described for particular occupational and industry contexts by sets of facets. The facets listed in the report are the aspects of the Employability Skills that the sample of employers surveyed identified as being important work skills. These facets were seen by employers as being dependent both in their nature and priority on an enterprise's business activity.

1.2.1 Employability Skills Framework

The following table contains the Employability Skills facets identified in the report Employability Skills for the Future.

Skill	Facets Aspects of the skill that employers identify as important. The nature and application of these facets will vary depending on industry and job type.
Communication that contributes to productive and harmonious relations across employees and customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listening and understanding • speaking clearly and directly • writing to the needs of the audience • negotiating responsively • reading independently • empathising • using numeracy effectively • understanding the needs of internal and external customers • persuading effectively • establishing and using networks • being assertive • sharing information • speaking and writing in languages other than English
Teamwork that contributes to productive working relationships and outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working across different ages irrespective of gender, race, religion or political persuasion • working as an individual and as a member of a team • knowing how to define a role as part of the team • applying teamwork to a range of situations e.g. futures planning and crisis problem solving • identifying the strengths of team members • coaching and mentoring skills, including giving feedback
Problem solving that contributes to productive outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing creative, innovative and practical solutions • showing independence and initiative in identifying and solving problems • solving problems in teams • applying a range of strategies to problem solving • using mathematics, including budgeting and financial management to solve problems

Skill	Facets Aspects of the skill that employers identify as important. The nature and application of these facets will vary depending on industry and job type.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • applying problem-solving strategies across a range of areas • testing assumptions, taking into account the context of data and circumstances • resolving customer concerns in relation to complex project issues
Initiative and enterprise that contribute to innovative outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adapting to new situations • developing a strategic, creative and long-term vision • being creative • identifying opportunities not obvious to others • translating ideas into action • generating a range of options • initiating innovative solutions
Planning and organising that contribute to long and short-term strategic planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • managing time and priorities – setting time lines, coordinating tasks for self and with others • being resourceful • taking initiative and making decisions • adapting resource allocations to cope with contingencies • establishing clear project goals and deliverables • allocating people and other resources to tasks • planning the use of resources, including time management • participating in continuous improvement and planning processes • developing a vision and a proactive plan to accompany it • predicting – weighing up risk, evaluating alternatives and applying evaluation criteria • collecting, analysing and organising information • understanding basic business systems and their relationships
Self-management that contributes to employee satisfaction and growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • having a personal vision and goals • evaluating and monitoring own performance • having knowledge and confidence in own ideas and visions • articulating own ideas and visions • taking responsibility
Learning that contributes to ongoing improvement and expansion in employee and company operations and outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • managing own learning • contributing to the learning community at the workplace • using a range of mediums to learn – mentoring, peer support and networking, IT and courses • applying learning to technical issues (e.g. learning about products) and people issues (e.g. interpersonal and cultural aspects of work) • having enthusiasm for ongoing learning • being willing to learn in any setting – on and off the job • being open to new ideas and techniques • being prepared to invest time and effort in learning new skills • acknowledging the need to learn in order to accommodate change
Technology that contributes to the effective carrying out of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • having a range of basic IT skills • applying IT as a management tool

Skill	Facets Aspects of the skill that employers identify as important. The nature and application of these facets will vary depending on industry and job type.
tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using IT to organise data • being willing to learn new IT skills • having the OHS knowledge to apply technology • having the appropriate physical capacity

1.2.2 What does this mean for you?

Employability Skills are:

- A set of skills which support our ability to perform effectively in the workplace
- Non-technical skills that might also be called 'soft skills', 'generic skills' or 'transferable skills'
- Part of your training and assessment
- Defined for your qualification, in the Employability Skills Summary

Employability Skills that you attain in one workplace can be applied and further developed in other workplaces and job roles.

In most cases Employability Skills are already part of the tasks and activities you do on a daily basis.

Employers in Australia, and around the world, are placing greater and greater emphasis on these skills.

As a learner or candidate for assessment, you should be aware of the role Employability Skills play in the qualification and occupation for which you are training or being assessed.

If you would like more information on the specific aspects of the employability skills that have been identified as relevant to your course, please contact Gold Seal.

1.3 Competency-Based Training

Competency-based Training (CBT) draws on behavioural learning theories and emphasises the ability to do something. CBT requires that this ability must be both observable and measurable and must comply with stated standards of performance. In Australia, this is manifested in the National Skills Framework through a requirement that vocational education and training used a competency-based assessment in which students must demonstrate that they have the skills, knowledge and experience required to perform specific tasks and activities within the workplace.

1.3.1 What is competency?

Competency involves the specification of skills and knowledge and their application to a particular standard of performance required in the workplace. Aspects of work performance included in this concept involve:

- Performance at an acceptable level of technical skill;

- Organising one's tasks;
- Responding and reacting appropriately when things go wrong; and
- Transferring skills and knowledge to new situations and contexts.

Standards are statements of the required workplace levels of performance.

1.4 Principles of Assessment

Assessment is the process of collecting evidence and making judgements on the extent and nature of performance and other requirements, as described in a set of standards, or learning outcomes, resulting in a judgement of whether or not competency has been demonstrated.

Effective and objective assessment is key to the successful implementation of competency standards in the workplace and in education. This is the judgement of performance and knowledge against the relevant industry competency standards.

Assessment is carried out by the comparison of a candidate's evidence of skills and knowledge, against the requirements of the Standards.

1.4.1 Assessment Procedures

In general terms assessment during training will involve:

- Portfolio of evidence
- Written response to questions, assignments and case studies
- Oral responses to questions
- Students will be given advance warning of the time and form of any assessment and will not be expected to sit an assessment they have not prepared for
- Students will be given an opportunity for at least one reassessment for any competencies not achieved on the first attempt

1.4.2 Assessors

The role of an assessor is to objectively assess and judge a candidate's evidence against a set of standards. In order to do this effectively, an assessor must have a sound knowledge of, and be skilled in, the relevant industry area. In addition, the assessor must have acknowledged competency in assessment itself and hold an appropriate Workplace Assessor qualification or equivalent.

An assessor must:

- Interpret and understand the criteria;
- Ensure that evidence meets the standards;
- Ensure that evidence is valid, authentic, reliable, consistent, current and sufficient; and
- Use expertise to make fair and objective judgements.

The training and ongoing professional development of assessors must include such areas as:

- Roles, responsibilities and ethics;

- Procedural and administrative duties;
- Performance and knowledge evidence gathering and presentation;
- Interpretation and usage of standards;
- Selecting and using appropriate methods of assessment; and
- Requirements regarding processing and recording of results, progress and feedback.

It is crucial that assessors always understand and practise fair, objective, unbiased and flexible assessment processes.

1.4.3 Forms of Evidence

In general, basic forms of skills evidence include:

- Direct performance evidence - current or from an acceptable past period - from:
 - extracted examples within the workplace;
 - natural observation in the workplace; and
 - simulations, including competency and skills tests, projects, assignments
- Supplementary evidence, from:
 - oral and written questioning;
 - personal reports; and
 - Witness testimony.

Appropriate and valid forms of assessment utilised for both skills and knowledge may include:

- Evaluation of direct products of work;
- Natural observation;
- Skill tests, simulations and projects;
- Evaluation of underpinning knowledge and understanding;
- Questioning and discussion; and
- Evidence from prior achievement and activity.

1.4.4 Candidates with Special Needs

One fundamental principle of an assessment system is that each candidate must have access to fair and open assessment. Candidates with special needs should be offered the same opportunities as any other candidate.

As special needs extend to more than identifiable physical or learning difficulties, an assessor will also need to consider the best approach when dealing with candidates with needs such as low literacy, lack of confidence or non-English speaking background.

An assessor must take special needs into consideration from the planning stage onwards and adopt particular assessment methods as appropriate. Depending on any specification given in the standards, the assessor may be able to accept alternative evidence from a candidate with special needs.

If there is uncertainty, the assessor should call on other assessors or a verifier for assistance and guidance, as required. In such a case, the situation must be fully documented, with appropriate feedback being provided to the candidate at all stages.

1.5 Assessment of competencies

The method section defines the procedure used for conducting assessments. The method applies to assessments conducted for the purposes of national recognition in both institutional and workplace contexts. Equally it applies to assessment only pathways, training and assessment pathways or Recognition of Prior Learning. All assessment must:

- Comply with the Assessment Guidelines included in the applicable nationally endorsed Training Packages or the assessment requirements specified in accredited courses;
- Lead to the issuing of a Statement of Attainment or qualification under the AQF when a person is assessed as competent against nationally endorsed unit(s) of competency in the applicable Training Package or modules specified in the applicable accredited course;
- Comply with the principles of validity, reliability, fairness and flexibility;
- Provide for applicants to be informed of the context and purpose of the assessment and the assessment process;
- Where relevant, focus on the application of knowledge and skill to the standard of performance required in the workplace and cover all aspects of workplace performance, including task skills, task management skills, contingency management skills and job role environment skills;
- Involve the evaluation of sufficient evidence to enable judgements to be made about whether competency has been attained;
- Provide for feedback to the applicant about the outcomes of the assessment process and guidance on future options;
- Be equitable for all persons, taking account of cultural and linguistic needs; and
- Provide for reassessment on appeal

1.5.1 Method

Establish the assessment context

The assessor:

- establishes the context and purpose of the assessment;
- identifies the relevant competency standards, assessment guidelines and qualification framework in this Training Package;
- identifies any NTQC noted support materials that have been developed to facilitate the assessment process;
- analyses the competency standards and identifies the evidence requirements
- identifies potential evidence collection methods.

Prepare the candidate

The assessor meets with the candidate to:

- Explain the context and purpose of the assessment and the assessment process

- Explain the Competency Standards to be assessed and the evidence to be collected
- Advise on self-assessment including processes and criteria
- Outline the assessment procedure, the preparation which the candidate should undertake, and answer any questions
- Assess the needs of the candidate and, where applicable, negotiate reasonable adjustment for assessing people with disabilities without compromising the integrity of the competencies
- Seek feedback regarding the candidate's understanding of the competency standards, evidence requirements and assessment process
- Determine if the candidate is ready for assessment and, in consultation with the candidate, decide on the time and place of the assessment
- Develop an assessment plan.

Plan and prepare the evidence gathering process

The assessor must:

- Establish a plan for gathering sufficient and quality evidence about the candidate's performance in order to make the assessment decision (and involve industry representatives in the development of plans for the validation of assessment)
- Source or develop assessment materials to assist the evidence gathering process
- Organise equipment or resources required to support the evidence gathering process
- Coordinate and brief other personnel involved in the evidence gathering process.

Collect the evidence and make the assessment decision

The assessor must:

- Establish and oversee the evidence gathering process to ensure its validity, reliability, fairness and flexibility
- Collect appropriate evidence and assess this against the Elements, Performance Criteria, Range Statement and Evidence Guide in the relevant Units of Competency
- Evaluate evidence in terms of the four dimensions of competency - task skills, task management skills, contingency management skills and job/role environment skills
- Incorporate allowable adjustments to the assessment procedure without compromising the integrity of the competencies
- Evaluate the evidence in terms of validity, consistency, currency, equity, authenticity and sufficiency
- Consult and work with other staff, assessment panel members or technical experts involved in the assessment process
- Record details of evidence collected
- Make a judgement about the candidate's competency based on the evidence and the relevant Unit[s] of Competency.

Provide feedback on the assessment

The assessor must provide advice to the candidate about the outcomes of the assessment process. This includes providing the candidate with:

- Clear and constructive feedback on the assessment decision

- Information on ways of overcoming any identified gaps in competency revealed by the assessment
- the opportunity to discuss the assessment process and outcome information on reassessment and the appeals processes.
- An opportunity for reassessment on appeal by the candidate

Record and report the result

The assessor must:

- Record the assessment outcome according to the policies and procedures of the RTO
- Maintain records of the assessment procedure, evidence collected and the outcome according to the policies and procedures of the RTO
- Maintain the confidentiality of the assessment outcome
- Organise the issuance of qualifications and/or Statements of Attainment according to the policies and procedures of the RTO.

Review the assessment process

On completion of the assessment process, the assessor must:

- Review the assessment process
- Report on the positive and negative features of the assessment to those responsible for the assessment procedures
- Make suggestions (if necessary) on improving the assessment procedures to appropriate personnel in the RTO.

Participate in the reassessment and appeals process

The assessor must:

- Provide feedback and counselling to the candidate, if required, regarding the assessment outcome or process including guidance on further options
- Provide the candidate with information on the reassessment and appeals process
- Report any assessment decision that is disputed by the candidate to the appropriate personnel in the RTO
- Participate in the reassessment or appeal according to the policies and procedures of the RTO.

1.6 Useful Links

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR)

<http://www.deewr.gov.au/>

DEEWR is a Commonwealth Government Department responsible for the development of policies in relation to all aspects of education and training, including the vocational education and training system, in cooperation with State and Territory Governments.

Training.com.au

<http://www.training.com.au>

Training.com.au is now the single point of access to the vast range of vocational education and training information, products and services in Australia.
