

Policy

This Policy and Procedure is designed to ensure that Australian College of Trade (ACOT) is able to ensure distance learning effectively addresses the requirements of the relevant Training Package (or accredited course) and the associated unit(s) of competency including Third-Party Evidence gathering. This allows ACOT to ensure assessments are conducted in accordance with the principles of assessment and rules of evidence and identify areas for improvement.

The following procedure will detail the required processes for Distance Learning for Training and Assessment. This process will ensure that all training and assessment occurs in a systematic and consistent manner and appropriate evidence of each assessment task, including practical activities are maintained.

Standards for RTO's 2015.v2 - Chapter 4 - Training & Assessment

The Users Guide for Standards for RTO's 2015.v2 – Chapter 4 - focuses on the training and assessment phase of the student's experience. High-quality training and assessment means students are well equipped for employment or further study; their qualification is seen as credible when they enter the job market; and they are judged by employers as holding the skills and competencies specified in their qualification.

Under the Standards for Registered Training Organisations 2015 (the Standards) relevant to the training and assessment phase of the student journey, registered training organisations (RTOs) are responsible for:

- implementing, monitoring and evaluating training and assessment strategies and practices (clauses 1.1 to 1.4 and 2.2)
- engaging with industry (clauses 1.5 and 1.6)
- **conducting effective assessment (clauses 1.8 to 1.12)**
- employing skilled trainers and assessors (clauses 1.13 to 1.16)
- providing supervision of trainers where needed (clauses 1.17 to 1.20)
- employing experts to teach trainers and assessors (clauses 1.22 to 1.24) - (Note: Clause 1.21 is no longer applicable. RTOs should refer to clause 1.23 for current requirements in relation to trainers and assessors delivering training and assessment qualifications.)
- **engaging independent validators to conduct the quality reviews of training and assessment qualifications (clause 1.25)**
- managing transitions from superseded training products (clauses 1.26 and 1.27).

This policy and procedure covers clauses 1.8 - 1.12

Clauses 1.8 – 1.12 Conduct effective assessment

Clause 1.8

The RTO implements an assessment system that ensures that assessment (including recognition of prior learning):

- a) complies with the assessment requirements of the relevant training package or VET accredited course; and
- b) is conducted in accordance with the Principles of Assessment contained in Table 1.8-1 and the Rules of Evidence contained in Table 1.8-2.

Conducting effective assessment

For a learner to be assessed as competent, your RTO must ensure the learner demonstrates their:

- ability to perform relevant tasks in a variety of workplace situations, or accurately simulated workplace situations
- understanding of what they are doing, and why, when performing tasks

- ability to integrate performance with understanding, to show they are able to adapt to different contexts and environments.

A learner must:

- be assessed against all of the tasks identified in the elements of the unit or module
- demonstrate they are capable of performing these tasks to an acceptable level.

Principles of Assessment and Implementation

No matter what assessment pathway or methods you use, the principles of fairness, flexibility, validity and reliability must be met.

Principles of Assessment	Implementing the principles of assessment
<p>Fairness The individual learner's needs are considered in the assessment process.</p> <p>Where appropriate, reasonable adjustments are applied by the RTO to consider the individual learner's needs.</p> <p>The RTO informs the learner about the assessment process and provides the learner with the opportunity to challenge the result of the assessment and be reassessed if necessary.</p>	<p>Fairness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At enrolment or prior to commencement of training, make recognition of prior learning available to all learners. Ensure any required adjustments are made to the training and assessment program for each learner. • Consider the learner's needs in the assessment process and make reasonable adjustments to accommodate the learner (such as providing oral rather than written assessment). However, don't compromise the rigour of the assessment process (e.g. if there is a requirement to complete documentation in a unit of competency, oral assessment would not be appropriate). • Ensure the learner is fully informed of the assessment process and performance expectations before undertaking assessment. • If a learner is unable to complete the required task to the level described in the assessment requirements, consider whether they need further training before being reassessed. Sound enrolment processes will help to identify the needs of learners and avoid learners being enrolled in a course that they will not be able to complete. • Have an appeals process to provide an avenue for learners to challenge an assessment decision and to have it reviewed objectively.

Principles of Assessment	Implementing the principles of assessment
<p>Flexibility Assessment is flexible to the individual learner by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reflecting the learner's needs; • assessing competencies held by the learner no matter how or where they have been acquired; and • drawing from a range of assessment methods and using those that are appropriate to the context, the unit of competency and associated assessment requirements, and the individual. 	<p>Flexibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At enrolment or prior to commencement of training, make recognition of prior learning available to all learners. Ensure any required adjustments are made to the training and assessment program for that learner. • Take the learner into account in the assessment process and recognise that they may already have demonstrated some aspects of the unit through other means. If individual learners have demonstrated current skills and knowledge, they should not be required to be reassessed in those areas, unless the previous demonstration of skills or knowledge is in a significantly different context or environment. • Use a range of assessment methods to help produce valid decisions and recognise that learners demonstrate competence in a variety of ways.

Principles of Assessment	Implementing the principles of assessment
<p>Validity Any assessment decision of the RTO is justified, based on the evidence of performance of the individual learner. Validity requires:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assessment against the unit(s) of competency and the associated assessment requirements covers the broad range of skills and knowledge that are essential to competent performance; • assessment of knowledge and skills is integrated with their practical application; • assessment to be based on evidence that demonstrates that a learner could demonstrate these skills and knowledge in other similar situations; and • judgement of competence is based on evidence of learner performance that is aligned to the unit/s of competency and associated assessment requirements. 	<p>Validity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of your assessment, require learners to demonstrate skills and knowledge across a range of environments and contexts relevant to the unit or module. Assessing in a variety of contexts shows that the learner can apply the skills and knowledge in other situations and can apply their knowledge in a practical way. • Ensure that assessment tasks and methods match assessment requirements. For example, if assessing a practical skill such as keyboarding, questions about how a keyboard operates may not be valid as this knowledge is not required in order to carry out the task. Instead, use questions that demonstrate knowledge of why the learner is doing the task in a particular way.
<p>Reliability Evidence presented for assessment is consistently interpreted and assessment results are comparable irrespective of the assessor conducting the assessment.</p>	<p>Reliability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make assessment decisions consistently across different learners and different assessors in the same unit or module. • Have a well-designed assessment system that includes measures to minimise variation between assessors. The same evidence presented by different learners or to different assessors should result in the same decision. • Develop evidence criteria (i.e. decision-making rules) to judge the quality of performance. This will help assessors make consistent judgements about competence. Evidence criteria could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • model answers (where appropriate) • descriptions of observations needed to assess skills and application of knowledge in a practical activity. • Benchmarks for practical activities must necessarily be broad enough to allow for variations in the precise task being undertaken and any variations in the context, but must include 'observable behaviours'—the behaviours which must be exhibited by the learner when carrying out the task.

Rules of Evidence and Implementation

The evidence used to make a decision about competence must be valid, sufficient, authentic and current.

Rules of Evidence	Implementing the rules of evidence
<p>Validity The assessor is assured that the learner has the skills, knowledge and attributes as described in the module or unit of competency and associated assessment requirements.</p>	<p>Validity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that evidence is directly related to the competency being assessed. • Ensure there is a direct relationship between the assessment tasks or activities learners undertake, the evidence presented and the assessment requirements.
<p>Sufficiency The assessor is assured that the quality, quantity and relevance of the assessment evidence enables a judgement to be made of a learner's competency.</p>	<p>Sufficiency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather enough evidence to make a valid judgement of competence or otherwise. • The quantity of evidence may vary between learners. Some may take longer or need to complete a greater number of tasks to demonstrate competence. Others may, despite repeated opportunities, not be able to achieve competence.
<p>Authenticity The assessor is assured that the evidence presented for assessment is the learner's own work.</p>	<p>Authenticity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that evidence gathered 'belongs' to the learner being assessed and provides evidence of that person's skills and knowledge. • Verify that the person you are enrolling, training and assessing is the same person that will be issued with a qualification or statement of attainment. This can be particularly challenging if you deliver distance training, including through online methods, where there are more opportunities for learners to submit the work of others than there are in a 'traditional' classroom setting. This does not remove your responsibility to verify the identity of a learner enrolled in a face-to-face course, but it is clearly easier to do this through direct interaction with the learner. Regardless of the delivery method, you must be able to demonstrate how you have verified the identity of the learner. • If substantial portions of the evidence submitted are gathered through independent study (e.g. assignments or projects) rather than direct observation, consider using online systems to check work submissions for plagiarism and identical content in other submissions.
<p>Currency The assessor is assured that the assessment evidence demonstrates current competency. This requires the assessment evidence to be from the present or the very recent past.</p>	<p>Currency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide how valid the evidence is, given the time that has passed since the evidence was generated. Currency is important in determining if a learner is competent. Currency is a particular risk with recognition of prior learning, as you may be presented with a range of evidence gathered over a number of years. This does not mean evidence that is not recent is not valid; however, you must ensure there is sufficient evidence of the person's competence at the time you make the assessment decision. • You must determine whether the evidence is recent enough to show the learner is competent at the time you make an assessment decision. For example, a computer programmer who has 10 years' experience but has not been directly involved in hands-on programming work for the past three years may not have current skills in or knowledge of contemporary programming methods. However, the programmer may be able to update their skills and knowledge through a 'gap training' program. This varies to some extent between industries and, as a person with current industry skills and knowledge, an assessor is well placed to make this judgement.

A guide to compliance

ACOT needs to show that our practice aligns with our assessment system and validation plan. Consider what information sources will confirm that ACOT's practices and assessment methods—including our validation activities—support this alignment. An

example of this might be ensuring actual completed student assessments are retained in the appropriate student files, aligned with the appropriate assessment tool. You will need to retain sufficient assessment evidence to be able to validate assessment judgements.

“ASQA’s [General direction—retention requirements for completed student assessment items](#) requires that RTOs retain all completed assessment items relating to each unit or module for six months from the date on which the decision on competence for the individual unit or module was made. If you can’t retain the actual item (e.g. construction projects or perishable items), retain evidence, such as photographs, showing that the standard of the item or work completed justifies the assessment outcome. Completed assessment items such as assignments should not be handed back to students until the six-month period has expired. At audit ASQA will only ask you to produce those assessment records your RTO is required to retain.”

You can compare assessment evidence to the requirements of the unit of competency or cluster of units to determine whether:

- the decision was based on sound assessment practices
- the decision was made after considering the evidence against all of the relevant requirements, including the principles of assessment and rules of evidence.

If the assessment is completed via recognition of prior learning, the requirements of the Standards do not change. However, you may need to collect and consider a greater variety of evidence when making the assessment decision than when assessment is completed through ‘traditional’ assessment activities. Similarly, the same requirements of the Standards apply to distance and online delivery methods, but you may need to change the type of evidence considered. **Regardless of the mode of delivery or engagement, all assessment must meet the same Standards.**

Part of the evidence that determines whether assessment has been conducted adequately is the evidence criteria that your assessors use to judge the quality of performance and make their decisions. Evidence criteria could be in the form of:

- model answers or responses
- samples of work items that meet specifications
- more general guidance for assessors about the characteristics of satisfactory responses or behaviours.

How prescriptive such material is depends on the nature of the unit—units from lower AQF level qualifications will tend to be more prescriptive with ‘correct’ responses, while those at higher levels may have broader guidelines.

You need to maintain evidence showing:

- that your validation plan has been actioned
- what the outcomes were
- how lessons learnt from validation have been acted upon (for example, what improvements have been made to assessment tools, processes and practices and
- how staff have been involved in understanding and implementing the outcomes).

Assessment requirements

Each Unit of competency contains assessment requirements grouped into three areas:

- Performance evidence
- Knowledge evidence
- Assessment conditions

Performance evidence and **knowledge evidence** describe what a learner must demonstrate to be considered competent.

Assessment conditions describe the conditions under which a learner must demonstrate this, including any specific requirements for resources, trainers and assessors and the context of assessment.

Some training packages and courses may not have been updated to this format. In these cases, 'required skills and knowledge' and 'evidence guide' or similar terms are used.

When planning assessment, ensure that we address all the requirements of the unit of competency or module. This does not mean that we must develop separate assessment activities for each item, but that our assessment activities must cover every area required. To achieve a "competent" result, learners must meet all the requirements of the unit.

As similar requirements are often expressed in multiple units of competency, you can often 'cluster' a few units together for assessment to avoid repeating assessment of the same tasks. While doing this, we take care to address all relevant environments and contexts in the assessment process and to meet any pre-requisite requirements for every unit of competency or module in the cluster. Analysis of each individual requirement across the cluster of units will reveal where such assessment methods are appropriate and where discrete assessment activities will be required.

How do we do this?

The assessment results are recorded in the Unit Record Results Sheet and filed in the students file.

Procedures

Training and Assessment for Distance Learning:

Distance training (face to face with learners) will be delivered via an online video conferencing platform. The platform being used by ACOT is named "ZOOM". ZOOM video webinars allow trainers/assessors to see and speak to entire classes at the same time as well as the student being able to see and speak to the trainer/assessor and the other students in their group.

This online platform also allows students to view PowerPoint presentations, videos and other documents that the trainer wishes to share with the students. Prior to being accepted into the distance learning mode each student must have completed the enrolment and Pre-Training review in person at the training facility.

Once the student has completed the Pre-Training review and is enrolled in the course, they will be sent an email with the login instructions for attending distance learning classes. At a minimum, the student will be required to have access to a computer with microphone and video capability. If a student does not have access to these minimum requirements for distance learning **they will not** be accepted into this mode of training. The distance learning (face to face portion of the course) will last the full amount of time required for each unit of competency, meaning the student must be online, in the webinar so that the trainer/assessor can visibly see and speak to the student.

All training instruction will be delivered via the online platform to reduce the risk of contamination to students due to the COVID 19 Virus. All written assessments, all practical training and assessment will remain face to face at the college campus. Students will be required to this portion of each course/unit at the college's training facility, with social distancing and hygiene measures as per government and health authorities' guidelines being in place.

Assessments will be completed per cluster including the practical element. This will ensure valid and authentic assessment occurs.

By undertaking this method of training, students will still receive the relevant skills at the same time meeting health authorities, education regulator and licensing regulations.

ACOT's trainers/assessors will:

- Log into the webinar a minimum of 15 minutes prior to the commencement of a scheduled class to ensure timely start to each session
- Ensure that an attendance record is maintained for each day of the course.
- This will be achieved by taking a screen shot of the ZOOM session when all participants are online, which will highlight date and time as well.
- Ensure that all students have the necessary aids and guidelines in preparation for the assessment. The training resources will be provided via email by cluster to aid the students learning. The student will be offered an option to attend our campus and collect paper copy versions of the assessment from Student Administration.

ACOT's administration staff will:

- Ensure all courses are created and have their own webinar access
- Ensure that all student is enrolled in the appropriate webinar and can access it via the online portal. This will be achieved by running a pre commencement induction to ensure that each student has a complete understanding of how to access to ensure no disruptions to classes.
- Ensure that all student files have all the required evidence for all written and practical assessments which will be assessed face to face.

ACOT's management team will:

- Periodically login into the Distance Learning sessions as an observer to monitor and ensure that training is conducted as per all ACOT Policies and Procedures
- Offer feedback to trainers/assessors to help improve student engagement
- Ensure that all assessment evidence meets the minimum requirements to enable awarding the student competency in the course/units