



ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES GUIDE

for fire and emergency services organisations



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council (AFAC) expresses its gratitude to the authors David Rawet and Sandra Lunardi on the development of this resource, Rebecca Duffy for the editing of this resource and Nicola Laurence for the editing, design and layout of this resource. AFAC would also like to thank Daniel Catrice from Forest Fire Management Victoria, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning; and Amanda Nabi from the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attraction (WA) for providing examples of Training and Assessment Strategies used within their organisations. Thanks also to those members of the AFAC Learning and Development Group and Cassandra Curtis (Chair) that provided feedback on the Guide content.

Guides produced by the Community Service and Health Industry Skills Council were useful in developing the structure and content of this Guide.

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Cover photo: sourced from Centre of Excellence for Prescribed Burning

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE	2
CHAPTER 1: ASSESSMENT CONCEPTS	3
1.1 Forms of assessment	3
1.2. Evidence	4
1.3. Principles of assessment and rules of evidence	4
1.4. Clustering units for assessment	6
1.5. Access and equity	7
CHAPTER 2: DESIGN ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES	8
2.1. Design process	8
2.2. Clarify the evidence requirements	8
2.3. Choose the assessment methods	10
2.4. Design and develop assessment tools	16
CHAPTER 3: USE THE ASSESSMENT TOOLS	31
3.1. Conduct assessments	31
3.2. Assessor decisions	32
CHAPTER 4: REVIEW, REVISE AND REFINE ASSESSMENTS	35
4.1. Review of assessment data	35
4.2. Review assessment systems, processes and outcomes	36
4.3. Assessment validation	37
4.4. Revision and refinement of assessment tools	37
CHAPTER 5: REFERENCES	38
5.1. Feedback	38
5.2 References	38
5.1. Links for further information	38

PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

This *Assessment Strategies Guide* is one of several guides produced to help with the development and delivery of learning and assessment materials for the fire and emergency services sector, and with implementation of the Public Safety Training Package.

The *Assessment Strategies Guide* is intended to assist people who are designing, developing and conducting assessments in the Fire Sector.

It is reasonable to assume anyone involved in assessment in the VET sector will have the required national assessment units. The development of this guide has not, however assumed any level of expertise in assessment knowledge and practice. The examples illustrating how the guidance has been applied in Fire Sector units have been drawn from the PUA12 Public Safety Training Package (PSTP). It is to be expected subsequent versions of the PSTP will render obsolete some of the specific content in those examples.





CHAPTER 1:

Assessment concepts

1.1. FORMS OF ASSESSMENT

1.1.1. Formative assessment

Formative assessment is used to inform learners and trainers of the progress learners have made, in their training, towards the achievement of the required performance outcomes (learning outcomes and/or competencies). The information formative assessment provides is used by learners and trainers to continue with or adjust the learning program so learners can achieve those performance outcomes.

1.1.2. Summative assessment

Summative assessment is conducted at the end of a program of training. Its purpose is to check learners have fulfilled all the requirements for the course or program of training.

Summative assessment requires the collection of sufficient, suitable evidence to make a judgement (see 1.3 Principles of Assessment and Rules of Evidence).

1.1.3. Diagnostic assessment

Diagnostic assessment may be used to identify learners' current knowledge of a subject, their skill sets and capabilities and to clarify misconceptions before training takes place. Knowing learners' strengths and weaknesses can help trainers plan what to teach and how to teach it.

1.1.4. Recognition of prior learning

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) means an assessment process to assess an individual's competency(ies) acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning to determine the extent to which that individual meets the requirements specified in the training package or VET accredited courses (Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015, p 11).

1.1.5. Recognition of current competency

Recognition of Current Competency (RCC) applies if a learner has successfully completed the requirements for a unit of competency or module and is now required, for example, by a licensing authority, to be reassessed to ensure the competency has been maintained. In this case, no extra skills or competencies are nationally recognised (Assessment in the VET sector, p 118).

1.1.6. Holistic assessment

Holistic assessment is an approach to assessment covering the clustering of many units and elements from relevant competency standards, focusing on the assessment of a whole-of-job role or function drawing on several units/ and elements of competency. Holistic assessment also integrates the assessment of the application of knowledge, technical skills, problem-solving and demonstration of attitudes and ethics (Assessment in the VET sector, p 114).

1.1.7. Discussion

There is some flexibility in the boundaries between these forms of assessment. It may be appropriate to set an assessment of knowledge prior to testing performance to make sure learners have the underpinning knowledge of the task. This would be considered a formative assessment. If, however, that knowledge is listed as 'Required Knowledge' in a unit, it is also a summative assessment.

While holistic assessment provides a high degree of correspondence between the workplace and the assessment situation (it may even be in the workplace), if learners' performance is not satisfactory it can be difficult to determine where the problem is.

A diagnostic assessment may be used if learners, after having been trained, performed below the expected standard in a test. Such a diagnostic test should separate the components of the competency (knowledge and skills) into smaller components to

identify where the weakness(es) lay. The results of the diagnostic test may also be used as summative evidence, depending on its construction.

1.2. EVIDENCE

The purpose of assessment is to gather evidence concerning the competence of the learner in relation to the competency unit(s) being undertaken. Evidence can take many forms and be gathered from several sources. The assessor makes judgements on the value of the evidence and ultimately, the competence of the learner.

1.2.1. Types of evidence

There are three types of evidence used by assessors: direct, indirect and supplementary (from *Assessment: Practical Guide*, pp. 6–8). In practice it is common to use a combination of direct, indirect and supplementary forms of evidence when conducting assessment. Used together they can provide the assessor with the information required to judge a learner’s competence.

DIRECT

Direct evidence is observation of the actual performance of a learner carrying out normal work tasks, special work-based projects or tasks and may include verbal questioning.

INDIRECT

Indirect evidence of performance is used where the assessment of a learner’s performance carrying out actual workplace tasks is either not possible or undesirable. It may involve evaluation of the work tasks, products or services produced or delivered by the learner during their work. It may also include the learner completing projects or performing in simulation and proficiency tests.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Supplementary evidence of performance may be necessary to check a learner can perform competently in various environments, unusual circumstances or in situations that occur rarely or are difficult to simulate. It may also be necessary when checking underpinning knowledge and understanding necessary to perform competently and to transfer their competence to new situations is required.

Supplementary evidence is often gained through written or verbal questioning, reports from third parties or tests done in a classroom or an offline workplace setting.

1.2.2. Forms of evidence

Evidence can be collected from different aspects of competency (products, process and underpinning knowledge) and may draw on one or more of the types of evidence.

PRODUCTS

- Work performed is to specification
- Unit functions as required
- Fault is found and rectified
- Equipment is properly set up
- Delivery of product is maintained
- Work is completed on time

PROCESS

- Correct procedures are followed
- Safe work methods are used
- Works as a member of a team
- Good communication is maintained
- Records are correctly maintained

UNDERPINNING KNOWLEDGE

- Workplace hazards
- Behaviour of environment and hazards
- Emergency procedures
- Statutory requirements

1.3. PRINCIPLES OF ASSESSMENT AND RULES OF EVIDENCE

PRINCIPLES OF ASSESSMENT

There are four principles of assessment that should be applied to all competency-based assessment: fairness, flexibility, validity and reliability (Training in Australia, pp. 145–146). Assessment is:

1. fair when it places all learners on equal terms
2. flexible when it can accommodate all delivery modes and delivery sites and the needs of learners
3. valid when it assesses what it claims to assess
4. reliable when it is consistent in all situations and with all learners.

Table 1 provides further information for each principle.

TABLE 1: PRINCIPLES OF ASSESSMENT

Source: *User's Guide to the Standards for RTOs 2015*, p 50

FAIRNESS	<p>The individual learner's needs are considered in the assessment process.</p> <p>Where appropriate, reasonable adjustments are applied by the RTO to take into account 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>
FLEXIBILITY	<p>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 • 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.
VALIDITY	<p>Any assessment decision of the RTO is justified, based on the evidence of performance of the individual learner.</p> <p>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 • judgement of competence is based on evidence of learner performance that is aligned to the unit/s of competency and associated assessment requirements.
RELIABILITY	<p>Evidence presented for assessment is consistently interpreted and assessment results are comparable irrespective of the assessor conducting the assessment.</p>

RULES OF EVIDENCE

When collecting evidence, the assessor should consider and apply the rules of evidence: validity, sufficiency, authenticity and currency. These rules relate to whether the evidence should or should not be used as part of making a judgement and whether the assessor has enough evidence to make a judgement. Explanations for each rule are included in Table 2.

TABLE 2: RULES OF EVIDENCE

Source: Evidence from *User’s Guide to the Standards for RTOs 2015*, p 50

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.
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.
AUTHENTICITY	The assessor is assured that the evidence presented for assessment is the learner’s own work.
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.

1.4. CLUSTERING UNITS FOR ASSESSMENT

Drawing on the Western Australia Department of Training and Workforce Development’s Assessment in the VET Sector, clustering is defined as a process used when developing learning and assessment materials (2016, pp. 42–47). It involves the development of processes and materials meeting the requirements for groups or clusters of units of competency, rather than individual units to:

- meet the required competency profile of the learner
- reflect the workplace in the learning and assessment experience
- maximise the opportunities for holistic evidence gathering in the assessment process
- address the corequisite requirements of the unit of competency (if they exist)
- maximise efficiency of effort for the trainer or assessor and the learner.

When RTOs cluster units for assessment purposes, the aim is to identify evidence for use across several units and assist the judgement of competency or to identify units for clustering because they form an holistic work task.

When designing assessment tools, the RTO must establish what evidence is required for each unit of competency in a cluster. This will require the RTO to unpack the units of competency individually.

When determining clustering of units, RTOs need to examine:

- the elements of the unit(s) of competency: the performance criteria, the foundation skills, the performance and knowledge evidence and the assessment context information
- the dimensions of competency: the task, task management, contingency management and job or role environment skills
- the employability skills, if relevant
- the relevant Australian Qualifications Framework descriptor
- related workplace processes, procedures and systems that help to contextualise the activity to be assessed. RTOs need to ensure any legislative, WHS or legal requirements are considered and included when conducting assessment.

Understanding what evidence is required for each unit is essential for the RTO to make valid judgements for each unit but also to determine whether there is an opportunity to cluster units and use common evidence for assessment decisions.

1.5. ACCESS AND EQUITY

An important concept in VET is that there should not be any barriers to people who have the capacity to be able to meet competency requirements. This is addressed under the banner of access and equity.

Access and equity means policies and approaches aimed at ensuring VET is responsive to the individual needs of clients whose age, gender, cultural or ethnic background, disability, sexuality, language skills, literacy or numeracy level, unemployment, imprisonment or remote location may present a barrier to access, participation and the achievement of suitable outcomes (*Standards for RTOs 2015*, p 7).

As far as is practical and reasonable, RTOs should provide equipment, resources and/or programs to increase access for learners with disabilities and other learners in accordance with access and equity principles.

As with the concept of reasonable adjustment (discussed in the *PUA Nationally Endorsed Training Guide*), access and equity does not mean the required standards of performance learners need to demonstrate are diminished.



CHAPTER 2:

Design assessment activities

2.1. DESIGN PROCESS

There are five steps in the design process for assessment activities:

1. clarify the evidence requirements
2. choose the assessment methods
3. design and develop assessment tools
4. use the assessment tools
5. review, revise and refine assessments.

2.2. CLARIFY THE EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS

2.2.1. Develop a competency description for the task, job or role

The skills and knowledge required for a task, job or role are described in each unit of competency. The language used and the performance description in a unit of competency may not be easily understood by readers (such as subject matter experts – SMEs) who are not familiar with those documents. To improve readability, develop a competency description written in plain-English, using terms and references relevant and understandable to learners being assessed, as well as their supervisors and assessors. Each description should be contextualised to the specific group of learners being assessed (see 2.4.5. Contextualisation).

The description of competence should encompass the range of activities undertaken by a person doing the job. It does not need to address every possible variation but should reflect general workplace practice. A person who is competent in the job, such as a subject matter expert (SME), should be able to recognise the work they do in the description.

It is likely, where multiple units are being assessed in a job or role, there will be some overlap or common requirements between the units. Where this occurs, there may be opportunities for clustering of assessments. Clustering has two potential benefits:

1. reducing or eliminating duplication of assessments
2. linking assessment components from different units, better reflecting actual workplace practice and performance.

Identification of the potential for clustering will likely influence selection of assessment methods and the design of the assessment tools.

2.2.2. Confirm evidence requirements

Evidence is the information that, when considered against a unit of competency, enables confident judgement of whether a person is competent.

To determine the evidence required for collection, RTOs must ensure the competency requirements are appropriate. This can be achieved through examination of several essential information sources, including:

- the elements of the unit(s) of competency: the performance criteria, the foundation skills, the performance and knowledge evidence and the assessment conditions information
- the relevant Australian Qualifications Framework descriptor
- related workplace processes, procedures and systems that help to contextualise the activity to be assessed. RTOs need to ensure any legislative, WHS or legal requirements are considered and included when conducting assessment.

Once the available information sources are examined and relevant industry or workplace personnel consulted, all evidence requirements should be listed in a table. This should be done for each unit. An example is provided in Table 3.

TABLE 3: EXAMPLE UNIT OF COMPETENCY EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS TABLE

UNIT OF COMPETENCY	PUAFIR207B OPERATE BREATHING APPARATUS (OPEN CIRCUIT)
Evidence needed	As specified in/by:
Inspect BA, identify faults, record and report IAWP	PC 1.1, 1.2, RS 2, RK 1, RK 3, AC 1
Don BA	PC 2.1, RS 2, RK 3, AC 2
Start BA	PC 2.2, RS 2, RK 1
Follow BA control procedures	PC 2.3, RK 3, RK 11, AC 6
Select ancillary equipment	PC 2.3
Deal with hazards in BA environment	PC 3.1
Establish and maintain comms in BA environment	PC 3.2
Use BA when undertaking team activities	PC 3.3, RS 2, RK 2, RK 9, AC 3, AC 4
Implement BA entrapment procedures	PC 3.4, RS 1, RK 4, RK 10, AC 5
Maintain personal safety when using BA	PC 3.5
Close down and remove BA	PC 4.1, 4.2, RS 2, AC 7
Clean and maintain BA	PC 4.3, RS 2, RK 1, AC 7
Make BA ready for use	PC 4.4, RS 3, AC 7
Knowledge of PPE	RK 5
Knowledge of relevant Australian Standards	RK 6
Knowledge of respiratory system, irrespirable atmospheres	RK 7, RK 8
Key: PC = Performance Criteria RS = Required Skill RK = Required Knowledge AC = Assessment Conditions IAWP = in accordance with (organisational) procedures	

In Table 3, the specific evidence needed is described in line with the part of the unit specifying the requirement (e.g. element, performance criteria, performance evidence, knowledge evidence). Where there are common evidence requirements in different units, there is an opportunity to cluster units.

2.2.3. Identify the learners

Identify all learners required to be assessed for these units. There may be differences in the types of evidence learners in different groups or geographic areas can provide. This will influence the assessment methods and tools required for use and design, to ensure compliance with the Principles of Assessment (see 1.3 Principles of Assessment and Rules of Evidence).

2.3. CHOOSE THE ASSESSMENT METHODS

Keeping the profile of a competent worker in mind and knowing what knowledge and skills learners are required to demonstrate, RTOs need to determine which methods will be used to gather evidence in collaboration with learners, as well as colleagues, trainers, assessors and agency representatives.

2.3.1. Assessment methods and types

Assessment method choice is influenced by several factors, importantly, how learners can best provide the necessary evidence. Selected assessment methods need to consider each learner's circumstances, while maintaining the integrity of the unit(s) of competency or cluster. Some learners, for example, may prefer to demonstrate rather than talk about what they know. Learners with a disability may require more time to complete a task. Some learners may not be comfortable to perform in front of others. Whatever reasonable adjustments are made to the assessment method, RTOs must ensure the evidence collected addresses all requirements of the unit(s) of competency.

The type of evidence required is likely to be associated with specific assessment methods that have proven effective. Effective methods and types are those the assessor can be confident will enable a good decision to be made, in line with the Rules of Evidence (see 1.3 Principles of Assessment and Rules of Evidence).

ASPECTS OF PERFORMANCE

There are, according to Tovey and Lawlor (2008, pp. 149–151), three aspects of performance assessment seeks to measure: knowledge, skills and attitude. KSAO (knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics) is another approach to performance assessment. The inclusion of 'other characteristics' in the latter approach is problematic, however, as what they might be is not defined. Examination of evidence requirements should identify which aspects of performance need to be addressed in the assessments.

KNOWLEDGE

Assessments of knowledge try to measure the knowledge learners have gained through training. Such assessments test a learner's recall of facts, comprehension skills, analysis skills and evaluation skills. Knowledge in competency-based systems underpins the safe, effective and competent performance of practical skills. Having knowledge of how to do something, however, does not necessarily mean a learner can do it, even if they understand the steps and what should happen.

SKILLS

Assessment of practical skills represents the application of knowledge to a given situation and can usually be observed. In competency-based systems, the demonstration of skills is the mainstay of assessment. Skills are learned behaviours, developed and improved by combining abilities and knowledge.

ABILITIES

Abilities represent those natural or inbuilt things people can do. They may be enhanced and developed into skills through deliberate learning and practice. For instance, the ability to run can be transformed into a skill for racing through deliberate exercise, studying race strategy and techniques and race practice. Assessment of abilities is usually undertaken before training takes place.

ATTITUDE

Attitude intersects with knowledge and skill. It relates to how people display behaviours affecting conditional requirements that are applied in the performance of skills. Attitudes reflect how people choose to perform their work and are addressed in performance criteria with phrases such as 'in accordance with ...' (procedures, OHS requirements etc.) and 'as appropriate'. Assessment of attitude should be reflected in compliance with those conditional requirements.

Before assessors make a judgement on a learner's compliance with conditional requirements, they need to be confident the learner has the required knowledge and skills for the task. Only then should the attitude aspect of performance be deemed satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

PRESENTATION OF ASSESSMENT

There are four main ways assessment can be presented: real work, simulated work, written and verbal. RTOs should assess each unit or cluster of units to determine the appropriate presentation assessment.

Real Work

Assessment taking place while the learner is performing real work. It is on-the-job and subject to the normal pressures, distractions and stimuli of the workplace.

Simulated Work

Assessment similar as practicable to a work task but performed off-the-job.

Written

Assessment involving learners responding in written form to demonstrate what they know. Refer also to Foundation Skill: 'Involves reading and can involved literacy'. Written assessments can be conducted on- or off-the-job, noting real and simulated work can involve written documents but is different to written assessment.

Verbal

Assessment where learners speak about what they know and can be conducted on- or off-the-job. Refer also to Foundation Skill: 'Involves reading and can involved literacy'.

Table 4 lists the common assessment methods used in the fire and emergency management sector, together with some examples of applicable assessment tools (see 2.4 Design and Development Assessment Tools).

TABLE 4: ASSESSMENT METHODS AND ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Source: *Assessment in the VET Sector 2016*, pp 17–18

ASSESSMENT METHODS	ASSESSMENT TOOLS
DIRECT OBSERVATION	Real work/real-time activities at the workplace Work activities in a simulated workplace
STRUCTURED ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES	Simulation exercises/role-plays Projects Presentations Activity sheets
QUESTIONING	Written questions Interviews Self-evaluation Verbal questioning Questionnaires Verbal or written examinations (may be applicable at higher AQF levels)
EVIDENCE COMPILED BY THE LEARNER	Portfolios Collections of work samples Products with supporting documentation Historical evidence Journals/logbooks Information about life experience
REVIEW OF PRODUCTS	Products as a result of a project Work samples/products
THIRD-PARTY FEEDBACK	Testimonials/reports from employers/supervisors Evidence of training Authenticated prior achievements Interviews with employers, supervisors or peers

The selection of assessment methods and tools is informed by evidence, as discussed in Chapter 2, specifically:

- the evidence needed
- how the evidence is best displayed
- who the learners are
- how learners can best provide that evidence.

For each unit, even if examination of evidence requirements suggests clustering, the information should be presented in individual tables, an example is provided in Table 5. Units should be presented individually, as units have differences in context, therefore assessment requirement may not be immediately apparent from the evidence requirements description. The decision to cluster is best made on completion of individual unit analysis.

TABLE 5: SAMPLE EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS AND EVIDENCE-GATHERING TECHNIQUES

UNIT OF COMPETENCY	PUAFIR207B OPERATE BREATHING APPARATUS OPEN CIRCUIT	
EVIDENCE NEEDED	As specified in/by:	Possible evidence-gathering techniques
INSPECT BA, IDENTIFY FAULTS, RECORD AND REPORT IAWP	PC 1.1, 1.2, RS 2, RK 1, RK 3, AC 1	Simulation, verbal questioning, written questioning, activity sheets
DON BA	PC 2.1, RS 2, RK 3, AC 2	Simulation, verbal questioning
START BA	PC 2.2, RS 2, RK 1	Simulation, verbal questioning

It is recommended to use a separate table for each unit, even if examination of evidence requirements suggests clustering of units is desirable. It may be that units have differences in context and therefore assessment requirements may not be immediately apparent just from the description of the evidence requirements. The decision to cluster is best made after the analysis has been completed for individual units.

The list of possible evidence-gathering techniques should address the range of learners identified earlier. This may result in more than one technique being developed for one or more evidence requirements.

SMEs should be consulted, as evidence requirements and evidence gathering techniques are identified as they can describe how they judge whether a person is able to do a job, which is useful information when designing assessments.

2.3.2. Assessment methods: advantages and disadvantages

Circumstances will determine whether an assessment method and tool are likely to meet the Principles of Assessment and provide assessors with data to meet the Rules of Evidence.

The following are some of the advantages and disadvantages of general assessment methods used in the fire and emergency services sector with reference to those principles and rules.

DIRECT OBSERVATION OF REAL WORK/ REAL-TIME ACTIVITIES IN THE WORKPLACE

Learner undertakes real work activities in the workplace to demonstrate skills and knowledge and can be video recorded if appropriate.

Advantages

- High level of validity
- Focus on products and/or processes
- High level of holistic assessment and clustering of units
- Assessment of attitudinal and interpersonal skills
- Realistic evidence of competency
- Focus on relevant performance criteria
- Indirect evidence of knowledge and understanding
- Complex assessments
- Flexibility for assessments in diverse situations
- Inexpensive for assessing performance of simple tasks
- A safe environment can be created.

Disadvantages

- Circumstance of observation may be too specific for making judgement on overall competency
- May not be a repeatable assessment, reducing reliability and fairness
- May require lengthy and costly assessments for reliability when assessing complex work or work activities that occur infrequently
- Observation may be difficult to perform in the workplace
- Learner's (and other workers') usual performance in the workplace might be affected by presence of the assessor
- It may be difficult or impossible to question the learner during the assessment
- Risk of adverse outcome may be unacceptably high.

DIRECT OBSERVATION OF WORK ACTIVITIES IN A SIMULATED WORKPLACE

Learner undertakes work activities in a simulated workplace to demonstrate skills and knowledge and can be video recorded if appropriate.

Advantages

- Assessment opportunity when access to the workplace is not available or when specific skills and knowledge unlikely or unable to be demonstrated in the workplace
- Variable but controllable level of validity
- Consistent assessment environment for learners, increasing reliability and fairness
- High level of holistic assessment and clustering of units
- Assessment of attitudinal and interpersonal skills
- Assessment of practical and technical skills
- Complex assessments
- Indirect evidence of knowledge and understanding
- Opportunity to focus on specific aspects of competency
- Reduces risks if learner makes error during assessment
- Pause or stop assessment without affecting workplace activities
- Introduce verbal questioning techniques without affecting workplace activities.

Disadvantages

- May be too dissimilar to workplace for task to offer valid evidence of competency
- May not adequately address all aspects of competency
- Inferences of competence from simulation may not generalise to valid range of workplace circumstances
- A simulated workplace will not replicate a real work environment in every details such as time management and conflicting priorities.

VERBAL QUESTIONING

Learner responds to structured questions or interview, with the opportunity for assessor to add additional questions to clarify skills/knowledge. The assessor can record the assessment event as evidence, if appropriate.

Advantages

- Directly relevant for knowledge, understanding and cognitive skills
- Easily varied to suit learner increasing fairness and flexibility
- Assess across a range of circumstances
- Useful supplement to other assessment methods
- Can measure candidate's listening skills.

Disadvantages

- Not directly applicable to practical skills or technical performance
- Low level of integrated assessment
- Assessor subjectivity can reduce reliability
- Limited applicability for assessment of complex problems
- Requires significant time commitment by assessor.

WRITTEN QUESTIONING

Questionnaires (Written examinations may be applicable at higher AQF levels)

Advantages

- Directly relevant for knowledge, understanding and cognitive skills
- Assess across a range of circumstances
- Suited to assessment of complex problems
- High level of reliability
- Useful supplement to other assessment methods.

Disadvantages

- Not directly applicable to practical skills or technical performance
- Low level of integrated assessment
- Dependent on learner literacy level and may depend on the candidate's digital literacy skills.

SKILLS TESTS

Suitable for work samples, procedure performance (e.g. drill) and practical projects. While they may be performed in the workplace, they are usually not part of regular work.

Advantages

- Moderate level of validity
- Focus on specific process(es) and/or product(s)
- Form part of integrated assessment
- Assessment of practical and technical skills
- Standardised for many learners increasing reliability.

Disadvantages

- Difficult to infer overall competency from individual skills tests
- Difficult to vary test to replicate normal variation in workplace.

EVIDENCE COMPILED BY THE LEARNER

This may be used for recognition of prior learning (RPL) or as part of a larger assessment strategy. It may include portfolios, collections of work samples and historical evidence such as journals or logbooks or evidence of training.

Advantages

- High level of validity
- Focus on products, processes and performance
- High level of flexibility and fairness
- Permits economies in assessment.

Disadvantages

- Quality of evidence may be difficult to determine, affecting validity
- Currency of evidence may be problematic
- Difficult to infer competence generally from prior performance
- Difficult to ensure reliability between assessors, regarding sufficiency of evidence.
- Difficult to ensure authenticity of evidence
- Time consuming to conduct
- Authenticity may be hard to determine but can be validated with a third-party report.

THIRD-PARTY REPORTS

Reports on learner performance may be provided by people who are not assessors (i.e. a third party). Reports may be structured (using assessor-designed or agency-designed forms) or unstructured. Reports may be written and/or verbal.

Advantages

- Widens possible range of performance-based evidence
- Reduced need for assessor to be present to collect all evidence
- Increased validity if assessor can check report directly with author
- Reliable, if standard format provided for third party to use

Disadvantages

- Third party may not be SME or understand all requirements of competency being assessed, affecting sufficiency of evidence
- Assessor may have difficulty confirming validity and authenticity of evidence
- Difficult to align report evidence to competency requirements

2.3.3. Feasibility of assessments

Practical considerations are important when designing the assessments to be used. Factors of cost, time commitment, complexity and credibility may be relevant.

COST

The cost of assessment is of interest to those paying for the process. To understand cost, it must be looked at in its component parts:

- Development of assessment tool: A computer simulation requiring many hours of expert programming will be more expensive to develop than a multiple-choice test. The question of value for money will rest on the number of times it will be used (cost per unit) and the risk associated with getting the assessment result wrong (e.g. passing a person who is not competent to operate a waterbombing aircraft).
- Cost of running the assessment: An assessment may be cheap to develop but expensive to run, and vice versa. Where expensive machinery, many people and high-priced consumables are required those costs need to be managed and minimised. The risk to expensive equipment should also be considered. Flight simulators are an instance where this risk is minimised.
- Cost of processing the assessment data: A multiple-choice test is quick and cheap to process, whereas a comprehensive project report requires a lot of time from a SME assessor and may need to go to a second person for confirmation.
- Cost of maintenance: In general, simple to build assessments are also simpler and less costly to maintain.

TIME COMMITMENT

Time could be considered as a cost, but the opportunity cost of having scarce resources (human and other) unavailable for other work may be more important than their intrinsic cost. For instance, specialists in emergency response need to be available at short notice and tying them up for long periods in assessment would introduce increased community risk.

COMPLEXITY

There is a trade-off between simple and complex assessments, especially when using simulations. The real workplace is complex and there is a temptation to incorporate as much of that complexity as possible into the assessment. When done well, the result is an assessment with a high degree of alignment to the real world resulting in valid and reliable outcomes. There are, however, risks associated with increasing the complexity of an assessment, including:

- **Introduction of factors that reduce validity:** The test may not, due to unforeseen factors, measure what it was designed to measure.
- **Effect on cost and time:** Increased complexity usually increases the cost and time requirements in each aspect of assessment.
- **Need for specialists:** There are often several specially trained and/or skilled people required in complex assessments and its success relies on these people being available when and where required.

CREDIBILITY

Assessments should be respected by all parties (learner, assessor, supervisors and managers). An assessment for breathing apparatus not involving use of the equipment in confined spaces would carry little credibility in the organisation, reducing confidence in those who underwent the assessment as well as those who designed and conducted it.

2.4. DESIGN AND DEVELOP ASSESSMENT TOOLS

The design of assessment tools can be undertaken once the assessor has identified the evidence requirements, possible evidence gathering techniques and grouped the data by the evidence gathering techniques (see Table 5).

The next step is to determine how many separate assessment tools of each type need to be developed. For instance, you may have determined observation

checklists were appropriate for several different aspects of competency (potentially involving a cluster of units). You could develop a separate tool for each aspect or a single multi-part tool to cover every aspect. The decision should consider whether the same person will be administering all the assessments, the period over which assessments will take place and whether completion of one aspect needs to be confirmed before commencing another (especially where safety is relevant).

In general, the follow is preferred for assessment tools:

- fewer, rather than many
- simple to use
- completable in one session
- a range of assessment types
- a consistent look and feel.

2.4.1. Selection of assessment tools

The information in this section is intended to guide assessors in their selection of suitable assessment tools for evidence collection. Keep in mind the principle of flexibility may require more than one tool for some evidence requirements.

WORKPLACE OBSERVATION

Real work/real-time activities at the workplace

Assessment in the workplace is often considered ideal because there can be no question of whether the evidence collected is relevant to the workplace. There is some contention about how or whether the observer should interact with the person being assessed. If the assessor merely observes work being performed then all the required skills and knowledge may not be demonstrated, particularly if the competency involves a variety of tasks to be performed. If the assessor deliberately sets the learner an assessment task in the workplace then some of the legitimacy of the workplace as an assessment environment may be diminished.

EXAMPLE 1: CLUSTERING UNITS IN AN ASSESSMENT

Source: Extract from DBCA WA Workplace Observation Fire Fighting Crew Leader Task Book (v2017-08-25).

2 Preparing to respond The trainee demonstrated the ability to:	Supervisor signature and date	
	1	2
2.1 Receive details of incident Initial briefing is obtained from the Operations Officer. Details of the incident including its location, type , behaviour and development are received and recorded. PUAFIR303B PC 1.1, 1.2, 2.1; PUAOPE020A PC 1.1, 1.2; PUAOHS002B PC 1.1, PUATEA002B 3.1; PUAOPE014A PC 1.1		
2.2 Prepare to respond to incident: Safest effective access route is determined. Personal protective clothing and equipment (PPE) , apparel, navigation maps and equipment, food and water are obtained before departure, in accordance with organisational requirements (i.e. 'fire ground ready'). PUAFIR303B PC 2.2, 7.1; PUAOPE020A PC 1.2; PUAOHS002B PC 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 3.4; PUATEA002B PC 1.4, 1.5; PUAOPE014A: PC 1.2		
Supervisor's comments:		

In the example provided in Example 1 the assessment items address multiple parts of several units, providing an example of clustering units in an assessment. The green highlighted text identifies the parts of the unit(s) that each item addresses.

STRUCTURED ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

Simulation activities

Simulation activities may range from simple desktop exercises performed by an individual, to multi-player complex field exercises running for many hours, through to a high-fidelity computer environment that looks and feels like the real world.

Simple simulations are useful as learning exercises and formative assessment. They may also be used as a form of summative assessment, where the skills and knowledge they address can be assessed validly in isolation to other factors.

Complex simulations, especially those with multiple players (role-players and learners) can pose difficulties for assessors to isolate the evidence they seek. Issues of authenticity can arise from work done in teams and of sufficiency, if the trajectory of the simulation does not present all learners with the required quantity and quality of task challenges.

EXAMPLE 2: ACTIVITY SHEET

Source: Extract from DBCA WA Fire Fighting Crew Leader Activity Booklet v2017-08-25

FFCL Field Activity 19 (Assessable)

Dispatch and preparation enroute

PUAOPE014A PC 1.1, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.6;

What you will be assessed on:

- receiving and documenting a briefing for dispatch to an incident
- analysing available information to develop situation awareness
- preparing for and briefing your crew.

BACKGROUND: You will be dispatched to a reported smoke in the area where you are operating. You will receive a briefing prior to dispatch together with a map of the area.

TIME: 45 minutes

TASK: As the responding Crew Leader (in groups), undertake an initial appraisal of the incident and formulate potential actions that are required to manage the developing incident.

OUTCOMES: Each participant must be able to provide, at the end of the exercise, suitable material to allow them to present a clear and documented briefing.

- Record of briefing received at the commencement of this exercise. Important information, details and actions are recorded in an appropriate manner and detail to allow tasks to be commenced.
- What did you assess and agree in terms of selecting a route to this incident. Provide a short summary of decisions made and reasons.
- You will be providing feedback (briefing) to the incoming 1st Arriving Officer. Notes should be made to allow you to present this briefing in a clear, concise and efficient manner.
- You will be providing a briefing to their crew to commence mop up activities, paying attention to initial LACES summary. Notes made in the fire diary should allow this LACES process to be demonstrable in a clear, concise and efficient manner.
- What are you going to prepare to assist you in these briefings (notes, maps, etc)? What notes are you going to make to allow you to refer to them now and in the future during this incident.

The example provided is accompanied by forms the learners use to complete the simulation.

Role-plays

In role-plays, learners are assigned roles and a scenario to enact potential responses to situations. They are used to explore how a learner can handle different situations in the workplace, including communication skills with clients, the public, colleagues, supervisors and managers. They can be used to assess responses to difficult or sensitive situations that would be difficult or unethical to reproduce in the real world.

Role-plays may be used in both formative and summative assessments. Role-plays may be adjunct to other summative assessment tools to increase the

range and quantity of data (sufficiency of evidence) upon which the assessor will make judgement, especially where a unit requires a variety of situations to be addressed.

For role-plays to be used as summative assessment, a well-structured assessment sheet is critical. This will greatly strengthen the reliability of the tool.

Example 2 illustrates a role-play where the learner provides a duty officer a situation report (using the PAFFTACC template), based on a briefing given to the learner prior to arrival and their observations once arrived at the site of the role play.

EXAMPLE 2: DELIVER PAFFTACC REPORT

Source: Extract from DBCA WA Fire Fighting Crew Leader Activity Booklet v2017-08-25 (condensed)

20 (iii) Deliver PAFFTACC Report	
Prepare and deliver a PAFFTACC report to the Duty Officer.	
Incident name: _____ Diary page: 028576	
ICS position: _____ DATE: _____	
TIME (24hrs)	DIARY ENTRY
	Position
	Area
	Fuel
	Fire activity
	Time to control
	Assistance required
	Cause
	Communication

Projects

The learner completes a task (e.g. fire investigation report, review of existing or proposed agency equipment or procedure, development of new proposal for agency) set by the assessor (with or without learner input) in a set timeframe. Projects are helpful in linking theory to practice.

Projects allow application of knowledge to completing set tasks that can range from simple to complex. They are best used to simulate or directly relate to the types of tasks completed in a workplace.

Projects are most often used as a form of summative assessment and are best suited to higher AQF levels. To be confident the project will provide the required evidence the assessor must ensure the project instructions are comprehensive and should check progress to confirm the learner is heading in the right direction. Projects are time-consuming for learners to undertake and for assessors to mark. The learner can use technology to authenticate it is their own work (such as photographs, voice over describing how they completed the project).

Presentations

The learner is given a topic and time to research and prepare before presenting to an assessor and

possibly to other learners and audience. Presentations demonstrate knowledge and can demonstrate skills relevant to a unit of competency. They address research, planning and communication skills.

Presentations can be used as a form of summative assessment to demonstrate required knowledge and, depending on the situation, of required skills as well.

As with projects, the assessor must ensure the instructions to the learner are comprehensive and that the learner’s progress is monitored.

Activity sheets

An activity sheet provides a list of activities or tasks the learner is required to complete to a defined standard. They are most useful when they address skills that are easily isolated from others and can each be demonstrated in a short period of time (minutes). Examples are: filling, using and extinguishing a drip torch; starting, operating and shutting down a quick-fill pump; and maintenance of hand tools such as axes and rake hoes.

The example below illustrates the general principle of activity sheets. In this assessment the assessor also completed other documentation to confirm the activities were completed satisfactorily.

EXAMPLE 3: GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF ACTIVITY SHEETS

Source: Extract from DELWP Vic General Firefighter Part 3a Practical Assessment (December 2017)

Part 3 Practical Assessment

1. Locate, maintain, carry and restow hand tools (rakehoe, may include axe, pulaski or slashers)

- Located and obtained hand tools
- Checked tool is clean, sharp, head is tight, handle is smooth and fitted correctly with no cracks or splinters
- Carried hand tool correctly
- Performed maintenance and rectified faults, as required
- Recorded and reported faults or damage to supervisor, as required
- Sharpened hand tool correctly
- Sought and provided assistance, as required
- Restowed hand tool

Supervisor: _____ Signature: _____

Comments: _____

QUESTIONING

Verbal questioning

Verbal questioning is a natural form of exchange between people and is well suited to eliciting information that demonstrates required knowledge. It is suitable for most learners, though some prefer other forms of assessment.

Assessors must have a well-structured set of questions and know or have a list of the required responses at hand. In most situations, assessors must note down

the learners' responses during assessment, which can affect the continuity of the process. Assessors must also make an on-the-spot judgement of the responses, deciding whether to ask additional questions for clarification or additional information. This introduces the potential for variability of assessment by the same and between different assessors, thus, affecting reliability. Training in the conduct of verbal assessments is recommended when it forms a significant part of an agency's assessment strategies. Example 4 forms part of the assessor instructions for a verbal assessment.

EXAMPLE 4: ASSESSOR INSTRUCTIONS FOR VERBAL ASSESSMENT

Source: Instructions for verbal assessment and examples of the questions asked in the DELWP General Firefighter Part 2 Oral Assessment Student Copy (v3 gh38 20170308).

Assessors must record the candidate's response to each question by placing a tick in each box correctly answered. Document any additional responses you receive in the space provided. The guidelines for deciding if a candidate has given a satisfactory or an unsatisfactory result are clearly stated.

Mandatory answers

- 2+ must include the first mandatory answer and one other satisfactory answer given by the candidate
- 4+ must include the first two mandatory answers and 2 other satisfactory answers given by the candidate
- If blank, assessor discretion required
- Document any additional satisfactory answers you receive in the space provided

These conditions must be satisfied to be given a satisfactory result for that answer. To ensure consistent assessment from one assessor to another, **assessors must adhere to the conditions of each question** when deciding if the answers are satisfactory.

If the answer provided by the Trainee is satisfactory, tick the box on the right side of the page. If the answer is unsatisfactory clearly cross the box .

Interviews

Interviews are like verbal questioning, however, the questions asked are usually more open. Interviewing skills require listening skills. They are best suited to eliciting evidence of understanding of concepts and how theoretical knowledge could be applied in practice. Subsequent questions often follow from the responses to initial questions and may be driven by the learner rather than a fixed set of questions with expected responses.

Written questions

Written questions require either short answer responses or long-form responses. Short answer responses are suited to questions that have known and

easily framed answers, for instance 'What are the three sides of the fire triangle?'

Longer form responses are suited to more open questions requiring understanding of the question and involving integration of knowledge and theoretical concepts. Marking learners' long-form responses requires the assessor to interpret them before making a judgement.

Example 5 and Example 6 are two examples of written assessments. Example 5 is the assessor's copy which includes the required responses and indicates how the questions map to the units. Example 6 is the learner's copy.

EXAMPLE 5: WRITTEN ASSESSMENT – ASSESSOR'S COPY

Source: Extract from DBCA WA Firefighting Crew Leader Fire Fighting Crew Leader Knowledge Assessment 1 (v 17-7-17)

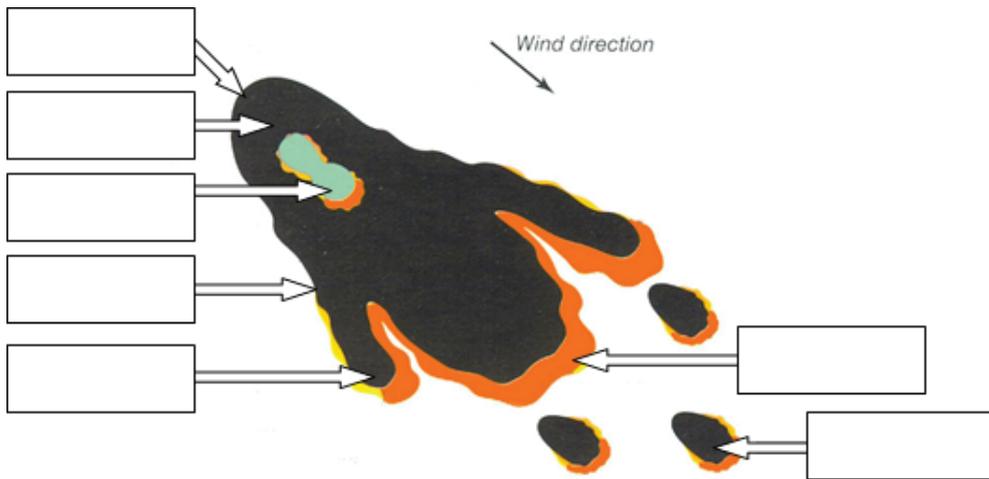
<p>1. Describe the difference between available fuel and total fuel.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">PUAFIR303B PC 5.9, 5.10, S3, K2</p> <p>Total fuel refers to the total amount of fuel regardless of moisture content while available fuel refers to the amount of fuel dry enough to burn.</p>	
<p>2. Identify the time of year in south west WA when grass fuel availability is at its peak. Explain why.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">PUAFIR303B PC 5.9, 5.10, S3, K2</p> <p>Late spring/early summer. At this stage, all the grass has dried off but not yet grazed down.</p>	
<p>3. Describe the effects of the following weather factors on fire behaviour:</p> <p>Temperature:</p> <p>Relative humidity:</p> <p>Wind:</p> <p>Atmospheric stability:</p> <p style="text-align: right;">PUAFIR303B PC 5.9, 5.10, S3, K2</p> <p>The higher the air temperature the higher the temperature of the fuel, therefore the more easily it will be preheated to ignition temperature. Generally, the higher the temperature the drier the fuel.</p> <p>The lower humidity generally the drier the fire fuels, therefore they will ignite and burn more readily.</p> <p>The stronger the wind: Increases oxygen supply to the fire; bends flames toward new fuels, preheating; bends the convection column through new fuels; and transports burning material ahead of the fire</p> <p>A stable atmosphere resists convection and so tends to discourage fire behaviour while unstable atmosphere promotes convection therefore encouraging fire behaviour.</p>	

EXAMPLE 6: WRITTEN ASSESSMENT – LEARNER'S COPY

Source: Extract from CFS SA Assessment Workbook Units 4–11 (v 2.2 March 2014)

Q6A.10. Label the diagram of a bushfire below with the correct terms:

Area of Origin, Head, Heel, Flank, Spot Fire, Finger, Unburnt Island



Q6A.11. Give a brief description of these types of bushfires:

1. Ground fire _____
2. Surface fire _____
3. Crown fire _____

Q6A.12. A fire which has started ahead of the main fire front as the result of embers, burning objects or firebrands is known as a:

Questionnaires

Multiple choice questionnaires (MCQ) and true/false questionnaires (TFQ) are often used for assessing knowledge requirements (see Example 7). They are suited to knowledge questions that can be framed simply and have short and unambiguous answers. Guidelines for the construction of MCQs include:

- provide four or five choices
- each choice should be feasible to someone who does not know the correct answer
- assign the correct response randomly within the list (computerised assessments can do this each time the assessment is given)

- each choice should be similar in length and word usage.

MCQs are more time-consuming to construct than short answer written questions but are simpler to present to learners and quicker to mark.

TFQs are generally held to be of limited value (low validity) given a learner with no knowledge has a 50 per cent chance of entering a correct response.

A disadvantage with MCQs and especially with TFQs, is the assessor cannot know if a correct response is luck. Nor can they determine whether an incorrect response is due to no knowledge at all or to a small deficit in knowledge.

EXAMPLE 7: MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONNAIRE

Source: Extract from DELWP Forest Fire Management Victoria General Firefighter Part 1 Theory Assessment (December 2017)

15. Which group of words below best describe the three main factors that affect fire behaviour?

Click one correct answer.

- a. Fuel, wind, terrain
- b. Topography, humidity, small twigs and leaves
- c. Fuel, weather, topography
- d. Fuel, temperature, topography

16. Which group of words below best describe the five main fuel factors that affect fire behaviour?

Click one correct answer.

- a. Elevation, arrangement, moisture content, type, size
- b. Small, flammable, species, leafy, dry
- c. Quantity, arrangement, temperature, type, size
- d. Quantity, arrangement, moisture content, type, size

17. Which group of words below best describe the four main topographic factors that affect fire behaviour?

Click one correct answer.

- a. Slope, aspect, wind, elevation
- b. Slope, aspect, land formations, fuel quantity
- c. Slope, aspect, land formations, elevation
- d. Slope, aspect, land formations, moisture content of fuel

Self-evaluation

A structured self-evaluation would not normally be regarded as satisfying the rules of evidence. Such assessments can, however, be useful diagnostic and formative assessment tools.

EVIDENCE COMPILED BY THE LEARNER

The following forms of evidence are most commonly associated with RPL. They may also be used as supplementary evidence where other assessment methods and tools are insufficient for the assessor to make a valid judgement.

Portfolios

A collection of materials prepared by learners to demonstrate their knowledge and skills, often used for recognition of prior learning. It is important all learners being assessed by this means must have a shared understanding of the level expected of their work. It is good practice to show learners relevant examples and suggest a proposed format and quantity of evidence. If the nature of the evidence needed from learners is transparent, this makes marking more straightforward, as does having a marking proforma for all assessors, thereby, increasing reliability. As portfolio building is usually time consuming, offer interim assessment opportunities so learners can receive advice on whether the evidence they are assembling is appropriate. Evidence ensuring authenticity is critical, as portfolios are vulnerable to academic misconduct (e.g. plagiarism, work done by other parties).

Collections of work samples and products with supporting documentation

These may be regarded as a subset of what can be included in portfolios. The same issues and considerations associated with portfolios therefore apply. The material may come from workplace activities, special projects or even through interests the learner has.

Evidence of training

Training that has been previously attended by learners may provide supplementary evidence for an assessor. The value of the evidence will vary depending on whether assessment took place and the nature of that assessment, the time since the training was attended and the alignment of the training with the competency being assessed.

Historical evidence or authenticated prior achievements

This is evidence that may not meet the rule of currency (1.3. Principles of Assessment and Rules of Evidence). It may, however, provide some corroboration for claims of prior competence or learning.

Journals/logbooks

These are used to provide evidence of competency application in a variety of situations over time (see Table 6). Their usefulness will depend on how much detail is contained in the journal or logbook and on who can verify the evidence.

TABLE 6: EXAMPLE LOGBOOK

Source: Logbook extract from DBCA WA Fire Fighting Crew Leader Activity Booklet v2017-08-25

Date	Fire or Prescribed Burn Number	Location	Role (e.g. FFCL/ Sector Commander)	Supervisor signature

Information about life experience

Life experience may provide evidence of required skills, especially skills not specific to the competency (such as verbal communication). The assessor will need to establish the relevance of these skills to the competency requirements.

THIRD-PARTY FEEDBACK

Testimonials/reports/interviews from employers/supervisors/peers

Third parties (people who can attest to a learner’s competence) can be a valuable source of evidence, particularly when it is difficult or very time-consuming for an assessor to be present as a learner demonstrates satisfactory performance in a range of situations over a sufficient period of time.

Evidence can either be structured (e.g. a workplace task book given by the assessor to the learner for supervisors to fill in as tasks are satisfactorily completed) or unstructured (a written endorsement). Good third-party evidence satisfies the rules of currency and authenticity (1.3. Principles of Assessment and Rules of Evidence). It is still up to the assessor to confirm the validity and sufficiency of the evidence and to make the judgement of competence.

The expertise of the third party is a factor the assessor must also consider. A SME’s evidence is likely to be more highly regarded than evidence provided by someone without those skills and knowledge. A structured report format can aid in mitigating this, by guiding the party’s attention to the aspects of performance required to be assessed. Example 8 is taken from a document designed to collect evidence as part of a recognition of prior learning process.

EXAMPLE 8: EVIDENCE COLLECTION FOR RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

Source: Extract from Forest Fire Management Victoria General Firefighter RPL Third Party Reports Vers. 1.0 Sept 2017

<input type="checkbox"/> Workplace Supervisor <input type="checkbox"/> Fireground Supervisor <input type="checkbox"/> Other Please specify if other:			
PUAOHSOO2B Maintain safety at an incident scene			
Instructions to the person completing this third party report. Please answer these statements honestly as a record of performance based on your direct experience or knowledge of the candidate’s ability to consistently perform to the required standard. You may also provide supporting statements or documentation (attach if required).			
I verify that I have observed the candidate ...			
	Yes	No	Not sure
Determine hazards at incident site which may affect self and/or others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Implement hazard controls at incident scene, rectify where possible and report hazards appropriately	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maintain personal safety using the appropriate PPE and following workplace procedures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify others who might be at risk and contribute to maintaining safety of other work group members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maintain safety at a real life incident, exercise or simulation, or a series of practical workplace demonstrations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Observed the candidate’s performance and experience during the following deployments:	Date/s observed		
Observed the candidate’s performance and experience at the following events: (if required)	Date/s observed		

For another example of a structured report format see Example 1.

2.4.2. CREATE THE ASSESSMENT TOOL

The assessment tool must provide the opportunity for a learner to demonstrate they have the skills and knowledge required. Designers should ask, 'If the learner does what I am asking, can I confidently judge they have the skill and/or knowledge required?'

An assessment tool may address more than one evidence requirement. For instance, a single simulation may address several performance criteria, potentially across more than one competency unit, if the units are clustered. Similarly, a written question may address a performance criterion and knowledge requirements.

2.4.3. Populate an evidence map

An evidence map correlates the assessment tools with the performance criteria, performance evidence, knowledge evidence and assessment conditions. In this way it is straightforward to identify which assessment tools are providing evidence against all the unit's requirements. Table 7 provides an example of evidence mapping undertaken for the PUA FIR303B Suppress wildfire.

It is also possible to identify which components of a unit are addressed by each assessment tool, where this occurs. This is important because if a tool is modified or deleted then it can be determined if the new tool or its absence affects the validity or sufficiency of the evidence being collected in each case.

TABLE 7: EXAMPLE OF EVIDENCE MAPPING

Source: Extract from evidence map for PUA FIR303B Suppress wildfire (DBCA, WA). (KA1, KA2 refer to separate knowledge assessments.)

Element	Performance Criteria	Foundation Skills	Task book/ Third Party	Course Activities	Knowledge questions	Documents
5. Combat wildfire	5.1 Access to the area of operations is gained in the safest and most effective manner		3.1	20	KA2: 04, 12, 26, 27, 28, 29	ICS 5.01 Briefing checklist SMEACS
	5.2 Notification of arrival and appropriate report is provided	LA LI	4.1		KA2: 16, 26	T-cards, SOP 81, PAFFTACC, FIRE660 - Initial Fire Report
	5.3 Briefing is received including area of operations, strategies and tactics to be employed	LA LI NU	4.1	19, 20	KA2: 26, 27, 28, 29	IAP ICS 5.01 Briefing checklist SMEACS
	5.4 Most suitable location to commence wildfire control operations is selected		4.3	20	KA1: 22, 24 KA2: 07, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19, 26, 27, 28, 29	Deadman zone
	5.5 Firefighting media and equipment are selected and used effectively and safely in accordance with organisational procedures	LI	4.5	15, 16, 20	KA2: 04, 07, 12, 13, 14, 17, 26, 27, 29	BPRM Ch9 Redbook SOP 25 SOP 024

	5.6	Fire hazards are identified, and action taken to minimise the risk of injury to the public, personnel and self		5.1, 5.2	6, 20	KA1: 22, 24 KA2: 01, 02, 04, 07, 08, 10, 13, 15, 17, 19, 26, 27, 28, 29	SOP 64, 75, 96 ICS 2.6, 5.01 ICS 5.01 Briefing checklist SMEACS FIRE660- Initial Fire Report SOP 024 Prescribed Burn and Bushfire Security, SOP 25 SOP 065 Identifying Hazardous Trees and Inspecting Roads
	5.7	Firefighting strategies are implemented to achieve objectives in accordance with organisational procedure	LI NU	4.5	7–16, 20	KA2: 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 07, 08, 09, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 26, 27, 28, 29	SOP 24
	5.8	Fire control activities are undertaken to minimise overall damage and impact on assets and the environment		5.1	14	KA2: 05, 06, 08, 11, 12, 13, 28	SOP 24, 64, 65, 75 BPRM Ch9 (FOG 76)
	5.9	Potential fire behaviour is considered and acted upon to ensure safety and achievement of objective	NU	5.1, 5.2, 5.3	1, 2, 3, 7-14	KA1: 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, 09, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 KA2: 01, 02, 05, 07, 08, 09, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 18, 26, 27, 29	FOG 21, 22, 23, 37 41, Redbook SOP 096 Emergency Communications SOP 073 PPE
	5.10	Fuel, weather and topographical factors are observed and potential fire behaviour anticipated	LI NU	5.1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7-13	KA1: 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, 09, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 KA2: 01, 07, 11, 13, 15, 16, 18, 26, 27	FOG 21, 22, 23, 37, 41 Redbook
	5.11	Communication is maintained with supervisor and other firefighters in work area	LA	5.3, 5.5, 5.6	6, 17	KA2: 15, 16, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27	CHEK215 SOP 096, 081 FIRE660 ICS 5.01
	5.12	Fire reports are provided to supervisor as required	LA LI NU	4.5, 4.6	17, 20, 21	KA2: 15, 16, 26	PAFFTACC, T-cards, Fire Diary and Fire Logs First Aid Slips Equipment Damage and Report Form ICS 5.01 Briefing checklist SMEACS ICS 3.6 Sector Situation Reports
	5.13	Area of origin and evidence of fire cause are protected and brought to attention of supervisor or relevant authority	LA	5.5	6	KA2: 19, 26	BIPRM Ch9 FIRE660 Fire Report PAFFTACC ICS 3.6 Sector Situation Reports Fire Diary and Fire Logs
	5.14	Escape routes and safety zones are established and communicated to personnel	LI LA NU	5.1	6	KA2: 04, 15, 27	SOP 096 Investigation and Reporting of Significant Safety Incidents at Bushfire (BPOM) ICS 5.01 Briefing checklist SMEACS

Evidence maps may also identify those parts of the learning program and the agency documents that are of relevance to each component of a unit. Note an individual assessment item can address more than one performance criteria, skill or knowledge requirement.

2.4.4. Assessment environment and conditions

The ideal for assessment, from a reliability perspective, is for all learners to undertake the same assessment in a workplace environment, under a range of typical conditions. Several factors often prevent this ideal from being realised, (see 2.3.3 Feasibility of Assessments). The design of the assessment tools should account for anticipated variability and provide capacity for assessors to customise the assessments, as required.

- **Safety:** It may not be safe for the learner, the assessor, other workers and/or the public for assessment to take place in a workplace. The safety of each party must be considered when specifying the environment and conditions for assessment.
- **Variability of environment and conditions:** A unit of competency may be relevant to workplaces that vary widely in terms of environment and conditions. It is not reasonable to expect everyone to be able to provide evidence in all circumstances. Rather than being specific about these, the assessment tool should describe a range within which a valid assessment may take place. The range may also include simulated workplaces. For instance, learners completing Respond to wildfire who will fight fires in the Northern Territory should not be expected to demonstrate competence in fighting fires in Tasmanian forests and vice versa.
- **Learner requirements:** This information is not always at hand at the planning stage and you will need to adapt your methodology and assessment plan to accommodate learners' needs as they become clearer. However, it is important to decide in advance how you determine learners' needs and how you will use this information to customise your assessment process.
- **Timing of assessment:** Includes the amount of time an assessment takes to conduct; how the assessment fits in with workplace schedules (peak work periods etc.); equity of access to assessment (considering obligations that learners may have to other matters); and religious observances.

- **Reasonable adjustment:** The requirements for reasonable adjustment must be applied for learners with disabilities (see PUA Nationally Endorsed Training Guide) or who have been deemed to have a low performance level in language, literacy and numeracy skills. Assessment design should anticipate this requirement.

2.4.5. Contextualisation

Industry or agency specific information should be included with a unit of competency to reflect the immediate operating context, thus increasing its relevance. Contextualisation must be guided by the Standards for Training Packages and the relevant training package contextualisation guidelines.

Ensure assessment tools are contextualised, or can be contextualised, to the student cohort to produce valid skills relevant to the learner's industry, agency or work context.

2.4.6. Instructions for administration of assessment

Once the assessment tool has been designed the instructions for its use must be written. Two sets of instructions are required: one for the assessor and one for assessor to convey to the learners.

The assessor's instructions will include reference to pertinent points from 2.4.4 Assessment Environment and Conditions, as well as specific directions in the setting up of the assessment. The instructions to learners should include guidance on:

- how the assessment will run (time, place, allowable learner actions)
- personal protective clothing (PPC) and equipment (PPE) to be used in the assessment
- other equipment to be used
- safety measures and emergency procedures
- what will happen after the assessment has been completed
- where to go for further information
- what a satisfactory result means in the context of the assessment
- Information on the appeals process.

There should be some documentation supporting these points given to learners, especially regarding safety measures and emergency procedures. Ideally this would be provided to learners well before the assessment to ensure they have the required PPC and PPE.

2.4.7. Test the assessment tool

It is good practice to test the assessment tool prior to giving it to learners. You need to know the tool will work as intended and the results will be usable. The consequences of failure if the tool is distributed for use untested are high. If the test does not discriminate well between competent and not yet competent learners, people may either be unfairly denied award of a unit(s), or worse put themselves and others at risk when they are not competent to be there. There are three distinct levels of people who may be used in a pilot assessment:

1. a sample of the target group of learners who are aware it is a pilot test and that the results may not count towards a real outcome
2. a group of learners already deemed competent; if they cannot pass the assessment, it may be too difficult
3. a group of future learners who have not been trained. If this last group pass, the assessment may be too simple.

The assessment tool is ready for release if the test responses are consistent with the assessment designer's expectations and it effectively discriminates between those who do and do not have the skills and knowledge being tested for.



CHAPTER 3:

Use the assessment tools

3.1. CONDUCT ASSESSMENTS

The conduct of an assessment is a critical event for both learners and the agency conducting the assessment. The assessment will determine the competency outcome for the learner and establish for the agency whether their investment in training has yielded the expected reward.

There are factors to consider regarding when assessments should be conducted, especially when run as part of a training course. There are practical as well as learning issues to consider.

Running assessments at the start of a day provides learners with an opportunity to revise their learning from the day before and to check with trainers on matters they have questions about. A break between the learning and the assessment also increases the likelihood the learning will be retained in the longer term.

3.1.1. Assessor preparation

The assessor or trainer should be fully prepared for the assessment, in line with the assessor instructions.

The following requirements must be in place prior to conducting the assessment:

- The assessor must be well versed in the assessment, the detail of its components, how it is to run, how to make necessary adjustments and everything else needed to run the assessment. It may be worthwhile for assessors to have a 'dry run' to make sure they are ready to conduct it with learners.
- Assessment tool documents are present, ready to be used and/or handed out as required.
- Assessment equipment and supplementary requirements (such as stationery or other consumables) are present and confirmed to be in working order (e.g. radios fully charged and tested).

- The physical environment is prepared for assessment, including tables and chairs for a written assessment, or an area taped off for field activities.
- Personnel assisting in the assessment are briefed, wearing required clothing (PPE or other), and are where they need to be.
- Sufficient marking guides are available for each candidate.
- The time required to conduct the assessment is available.

A common issue encountered at training courses is that a training session can go overtime, delaying the start of an assessment. The scheduling of assessments should allow for this by having some extra time available at the end to compensate for delays.

3.1.2. Learner readiness for assessment

In principle, learners should only be assessed when they are ready and likely to meet the assessment requirements. In practice, this is not always the case as the assessment is embedded in the course schedule. The assessor should consider whether it is appropriate for a learner to undergo assessment if the result is likely to be unsatisfactory. For some, a failure to succeed may lead to withdrawal. For others, the exercise is useful and provides an incentive to improve. Not undertaking the assessment will be visible to other learners and may itself have negative consequences. Ultimately the decision to be assessed sits with the learner.

An effective way to reduce potential issues between learners not undergoing assessment and the rest of their cohort is to discuss the option with all learners at the commencement of the training.

3.1.3. During the assessment

The assessor should make notes on how the assessment progresses and of any matters requiring their intervention. For example, a learner may find

an instruction unclear or query the meaning of some information provided. Things that go well and things that do not are worth noting. This information can be raised at assessment moderation and validation meetings and be used to improve the assessment and future training.

The assessor may need to make an adjustment to the assessment tool or the running of the assessment while the assessment is in progress. The change may or may not affect all learners. It is important all learners are advised of any changes. This may require the assessor to pause the assessment, instruct learners on the change and then resume the assessment.

There are times when one or more learners require more time to complete an assessment than was anticipated or provided for. It is better to have made and communicated a strategy of what will occur if learners require extra time before the assessment starts. Then it is simply a matter of invoking those arrangements. The decision to allow learners to continue depends on:

- whether the assessment task has an inherent time limit (i.e. part of the assessment criterion)
- whether it is likely additional time will allow the learner to satisfactorily complete the assessment
- whether it will adversely affect remaining learners or the overall conduct of the training course.

Some assessments run for a significant duration and involve learners having meal or other breaks. There is a potential for learners to exchange information during these breaks, potentially affecting the authenticity of the results. The assessor must make clear in these situations what the assessment conditions and expectations are and what the consequences of breaching them would be.

The assessor should ensure documents have all required identifying information on them before they are collected from learners. Where each learner will submit multiple documents, the way the documents will be grouped must be predetermined and the means to do so be used (e.g. envelopes, staples).

3.2. ASSESSOR DECISIONS

3.2.1. Assessment tool decision

Within an assessment tool, the assessor is likely to need to determine whether each question or component of the tool has been answered or performed to the

standard expected. It is common for an overall rating of 'Satisfactory' or 'Not satisfactory' to be holistically applied to the tool.

There should be guidance for the assessor when making this decision. There may be a mandated requirement for every question or component to be correct (100 per cent). Alternatively, it may be up to the assessor to decide based on the learner's overall performance.

3.2.2. Assessing to a single unit of competency

In most instances, a single unit of competency will use more than one assessment tool to determine learner competence, as listed in The Training and Assessment Strategy (TAS) document. Learners, to be deemed competent, are required to have a 'Satisfactory' result for each assessment tool.

3.2.3. Assessing to a cluster of competencies

Assessing to a cluster of competencies is usually associated with a job a learner does as a part of their role. There will be some assessment questions or tools that are used in determining competency in more than one unit. The TAS will indicate where the clustering occurs. Possible outcomes from a clustered assessment are competence in none, one, some or all the clustered units, depending on how the various assessment tools are designed.

3.2.4. Assessing to a role or rank

The requirements of a role or rank in an agency may include several, endorsed competency units as well as non-endorsed skills and/or knowledge not described in units of competency. To avoid complications affecting RTO management and audit processes, where possible, it is advisable to use separate assessment tools for non-endorsed requirements.

A role or rank may require a learner complete a full qualification. Assessment may include assessments to both single units and clusters of units. Example 9 provides an example assessing to a role, specifically a Firefighting Crew Leader.

In most instances when a learner is being considered for a role or rank, the learner must successfully complete all associated assessments in accordance with the principles of assessment and rules of evidence (1.3. Principles of Assessment and Rules of Evidence). The decision to appoint or promote, however, is a managerial one and outside the scope of this Guide.

EXAMPLE 9: FIRE FIGHTING CREW LEADER ROLE

An example of assessing to a role is the Firefighting Crew Leader (FFCL) in the Department of Conservation, Biodiversity and Attractions (DBCA). The FFCL builds on the Fire Fighting Crew Member (FFCM) role, which is the entry level for DBCA's firefighting and prescribed burning workforce. FFCM is based on Certificate II in Public Safety (Firefighting Operations) and has been in place for several years. Many in the agency's workforce, however, did not go through that program when they commenced fire management activities and have not obtained the competencies FFCM delivers.

The FFCL is a relatively recent addition and it requires learners to have prerequisite units from FFCM. Some of the units from FFCM and FFCL are also prerequisite to the Public Safety Training Package prescribed burning units and more senior operational roles that DBCA requires selected fire management personnel to hold. A process for recognition of prior learning (RPL) was identified as a necessary part of FFCL implementation.

The FFCL role was examined and the following five units from Certificate III in Public Safety (Firefighting Operations) were identified to be part of the program:

- PAUFIR303B Suppress wildfire
- PUAOPE014A Navigate to an incident
- PUATEA002B Work autonomously
- PUAOHS002B Maintain safety at an incident site
- PUAOPE020A Lead a crew.

The prerequisites to the FFCL units are: PUAFIR204B Respond to wildfire, PUAFIR215 Prevent injury and PUATEA001B Work in a team. An RPL process was established to ensure FFCL learners would complete these prerequisite units prior to completing the FFCL program.

A Training and Assessment Strategy was developed for the FFCL program and the units identified placed on DBCA's RTO scope. Evidence maps were developed for each unit drawing on training and assessment content from pre-existing agency material (Level 2 Firefighter). Gaps were identified, a team assigned to address the gaps and develop new training and assessment course material.

The evidence maps also pinpointed areas where clustering of units would be advantageous. This is evident in the DBCA examples of assessment tools (see Example 1) where numerous assessment items have relevance to more than one unit.

For two reasons, the FFCL course was developed as an integrated program rather than one where each unit is presented separately. Firstly, the boundaries between the units' content were not reflective of how people operate in the role and to conform to unit-based learning would have been counter-productive. Secondly, the efficiencies available by clustering assessments far outweighed the additional documentation required to indicate where clustering had been applied.

The resulting assessments include:

- Two knowledge assessments addressing knowledge associated with performance criteria and required knowledge.
- A series of activities in an activity booklet addressing performance criteria, required skills and required knowledge. Only those activities specifically identified as such in the activity booklet are used as evidence. The remaining activities are used as learning exercises only. Learners are made aware which activities are assessable.
- A workplace observation booklet that collects third-party evidence of performance criteria, required skills and required knowledge.
- An RPL tool for the FFCL units.

The training and assessment for the FFCL role was successfully implemented and has become an established part of DBCA's fire management development pathway.

3.2.5. Appeals processes

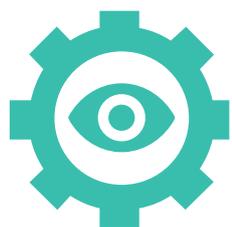
There may be instances when a learner does not agree with the judgement(s) made by an assessor. The Standards for RTOs require all RTOs have policies for handling appeals. Those policies must support processes that are clear, will explain what will occur and do not disadvantage those lodging appeals. The process must not erect barriers to learners by being overly complex or by expecting learners to provide extensive written information.

The appeal process 'must follow the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness by allowing anyone subject to a decision by your RTO, or anyone who has allegations made against them, to tell their side of the story before a decision is made.' (*User's Guide to Standards for RTOs 2015*, p. 31). The appeal decision maker must be independent of the decision being reviewed.

3.2.6. Achieving good assessment outcomes

There is a lot to keep track of when conducting assessments involving written, verbal and observational components. To achieve good assessment outcomes the following guidance can assist assessors:

1. **Follow the instructions:** It is likely the assessment developers have designed the assessment in a way that is most likely to provide learners with the opportunity to demonstrate their competence. Conducting the assessments in a contrary manner may jeopardise the desired and expected outcomes. If circumstances are such that you are unable to follow the instructions as intended, document how the assessment was varied. Reasonable adjustment in assessment is permissible. The reasons for the variation should be visible, however, to anyone who reviews or is required to validate the assessment.
2. **Use checklists provided or develop your own:** The Principles of Assessment demand fairness, flexibility validity and reliability; each of which is increased by using checklists and conducting assessments consistently.
3. **Ensure enough time for each learner to undergo assessment:** Inevitably there will be some learners who take longer than others to complete assessments. Unless there is a valid reason to limit the time available (which should be specified in the instructions to the assessor), learners should be given every opportunity to complete the assessment.
4. **Check all the required assessment items and associated equipment are available** and in working order before commencing the assessment.
5. **Maintain the Principles of Assessment:** During the conduct of the assessment you should be continually ensuring that it is Fair, Flexible, Valid and Reliable.
6. **Ensure the Rules of Evidence are followed:** Evidence used for judgement of competency must be valid, sufficient, authentic and current.
7. **Ensure the safety of all learners, assessors and third parties:** Assessments may involve the use of dangerous equipment and/or be conducted in hazardous environments. The instructions to the assessor should specify safety procedures to follow, the assessor must monitor the assessment events for those and any other risks that are present or may emerge. When conducting simulations, all involved should be made aware of the words and/or actions that will halt the assessment to ensure safety.



CHAPTER 4: Review, revise and refine assessments

Quality systems are required to have processes that provide for the improvement of how an organisation does its work. Assessment, being a critical factor in ensuring work is done safely and effectively, is subject to this requirement. In accordance with Assessment in the VET Sector there are five aspects of assessment available for examination (2016, p 89):

- assessment systems
- assessment processes
- assessment methods and tools
- assessment evidence
- assessment judgements.

Note the *Standards for RTOs 2015* also lists validation as a specific requirement for RTOs. A full examination of these requirements and how to meet them, however, is beyond the scope of this Guide.

4.1. REVIEW OF ASSESSMENT DATA

All systems should have review processes to check performance against the set standards or expectations. Reviews can be formal or informal, conducted to a set timeline or on an as-needed basis. Data can contribute to reviews, including assessment notes, assessment results analysis, assessment moderation and assessment feedback.

4.1.1. Assessment notes

Assessors should take notes during the conduct of assessments. These notes should be made available throughout review processes. In preparation for a review, the assessor should collate and summarise their notes. When notes identify significant issues, the information should be sent to those responsible for the assessments.

4.1.2. Analysis of assessment results

Assessors should examine the results from the assessments they set. The best way to do this is to create a table showing the outcomes for each question or test requirement for each person. This allows for examination of individual questions as well as the performance of individual learners.

In general, every item should be challenging enough that learners can get it wrong if they do not have the required knowledge or skill the training seeks to provide. In skill tests, the results may show some items take more attempts to achieve a satisfactory result. Through assessment analysis various possible interpretations may emerge, several of which are discussed in this section. Note, simply identifying a trend does not automatically identify the cause.

Assessors should identify the assessment items that appear anomalous and discuss with the trainers and other assessors to seek clarification to determine how or why it has occurred.

EVERYONE, OR NEARLY EVERYONE, PASSES

It is possible a question or task was too easy. Review the questions or tasks to determine if it elicited responses meeting the required standard or identifies an unintended bias. On the other hand, if the test reflects exactly what the learners need to do or know then a 100 per cent pass rate in a group for this item is a positive. In this instance, it may also reflect the effectiveness of the training.

MORE SATISFACTORY THAN NOT SATISFACTORY

This could indicate the question or task is set to a level that effectively discriminates between people with the knowledge or skill and those who do not. In a competency-based assessment, it is okay for a person to need more than one attempt to acquire knowledge and/or skills. A good assessment will identify those who need additional help.

In general, this mix of results suggests the training is generally on target, however, it is possible those who are not meeting the requirements would benefit from improvements in the training.

A MIX: MORE NOT SATISFACTORY THAN SATISFACTORY

This usually means one of two things, sometimes both. Firstly, the training is not providing learners with the necessary knowledge and skills. Secondly, the task or question may be too difficult or not properly aligned to the training. Those who are getting it right are doing so despite the training and/or assessment, not because of it.

NO-ONE OR NEARLY NO-ONE PASSES

This can be an indication of more than one problem. Firstly, check if the item was appropriately addressed in the training, if at all. It may be in the lesson plan but for some reason omitted. Secondly, check if the item is assessing the same thing the training provided. Finally, check the wording is not leading the learner to interpret the item differently to what is intended.

Everyone who gets it wrong, makes the same mistake

This is typical of an ambiguous question or task and the learners are making an interpretation error. Improving the framing of the item, may improve learner responses.

4.1.3. Assessment moderation

In many instances the assessor must make a judgement regarding whether a response is or is not satisfactory. Very good responses or performances are usually clear and vice versa for poor responses or performances. There can, however, be a grey area where the result is based on the assessor's interpretation of the evidence. There is a risk that assessors will make different decisions when presented with the same evidence. It is also possible the same assessor, on different days, will make different judgements on the same evidence. These are both problematic.

Moderation is the process where two or more assessors compare and discuss their judgements of (and associated reasons) learner responses. The intent is for assessors to find consensus on what constitutes satisfactory knowledge and/or performance, to ensure, individually and collectively, consistent judgements are made on evidence.

An example of variation in judgement, that would not meet the Rules of Evidence, is if different assessors did not allow learners the same number of attempts to perform a task satisfactorily. These variances can be identified during moderation.

4.1.4. Assessment feedback

Learners should be encouraged to provide feedback on the processes and tools of assessment, including how well the assessments reflect the learning outcomes the training promoted. Assessments that are mismatched with the training fail to meet the purpose of both. On the other hand, when learners can successfully display what they have learned, it is a positive and reinforcing learning experience.

4.2. REVIEW ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS, PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES

The systems and processes within which assessments are conducted can enable or hinder an assessor's ability to do their job. Assessors are in a good position to comment on:

- what is working
- what is not working
- duplications in paperwork
- gaps in systems and processes.

The managers of assessment systems and processes are more likely to act on comments provided by assessors if the comments are accompanied by suggestions for improvements.

Other stakeholders may also be invited to comment on aspects of assessment, especially assessment outcomes, including:

- **Agencies, employers and industry:** Those who employ or depend on the competence of those who have been assessed. Their interest may be in whether the context of assessment is relevant and workers are able to operate safely and effectively in their workplaces.
- **Technical and subject matter experts and third-party evidence gatherers:** They may be able to provide critical advice on the type and gathering of evidence, and on the readiness for work of people assessed as competent. The evidence gatherers provide advice on the tools and procedures they are expected to use.

- **Government authorities:** This includes state and commonwealth training registration authorities, government training and safety agencies and authorities as well as regulatory and licensing authorities.

4.3. ASSESSMENT VALIDATION

Assessment validation is a specific requirement of the Standards for RTOs 2015. RTOs must implement a plan for ongoing systematic validation of assessment practices and judgements for each training product on the RTO's scope of registration.

The Standards define validation as (2015, p 13):

'... the quality review of the assessment process. Validation involves checking that the assessment tool/s produce/s valid, reliable, sufficient, current and authentic evidence to enable reasonable judgements to be made as to whether the requirements of the training package or VET accredited courses are met. It includes reviewing a statistically valid sample of the assessments and making recommendations for future improvements to the assessment tool, process and/or outcomes and acting upon such recommendations.'

Validation is a review of assessment judgements made by an RTO, generally conducted after assessment is complete. The validation process must be undertaken in a systematic way (involving a five-year cycle), as set out in the Standards for RTOs.

Validation may include engagement with industry to confirm the RTO's assessment system:

- produces valid assessment judgements
- ensures graduates have the skills and knowledge required by industry, as expressed in the training package or accredited course.

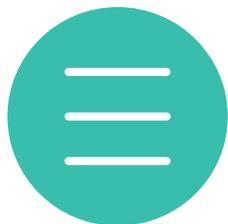
Assessors will be required to work with the RTO managers to ensure the RTO's validation requirements are met. Those requirements will include much of what has been addressed earlier in this Chapter.

4.4. REVISION AND REFINEMENT OF ASSESSMENT TOOLS

What emerges from the processes described in this chapter will provide assessment developers with valuable information when revising and refining assessment tools. The initial development process involving detailed analysis of the competency unit(s) should be revisited, even if to ensure any proposed changes do not inadvertently compromise the integrity of the target or another assessment tool or assessment tool item.

In most cases, however, refinement of assessment tools is not complex. The resulting improvement in assessment quality also easily justifies the effort.

A critical but sometimes overlooked aspect of refining assessment tools is getting them into use. The introduction of revised tools requires development of a process to implement the change. The assessment systems should ensure only the current versions of assessment tools are used by assessors. Familiarity with these processes should be part of every assessor's induction into the agency's assessment system.



CHAPTER 5:

Feedback and references

5.1. FEEDBACK

If you have any ideas, resources, case studies or feedback to contribute, please provide your feedback to AFAC contacts.

5.2. REFERENCES

Anonymous. 2016. *Assessment in the VET sector*. Department of Training and Workforce Development. Western Australia. 2nd Ed.

Anonymous. 2017a. *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015*. Department of Education and Training. Canberra.

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Tovey M D and Lawlor D R. 2008. *Training in Australia, 3rd Ed*. Pearson Education Australia. Frenchs Forest NSW.

Anonymous. 1994. *Assessment: Practical Guide*. Department of Employment, Education and Training, Australian Government Publishing Service. Canberra.

5.3. LINKS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

You might find this resource on the AIDR web site useful.

<https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/media/3547/handbook-3-managing-exercises.pdf>