

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

by fire and emergency services organisations on the  
PUA Public Safety Training Package fire qualifications



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# PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

This *Frequently Asked Questions Guide* is one of several guides produced to help Registered Training Organisation (RTO) Managers, trainers and assessors who are required to provide advice on the fire qualifications, contained within the PUA Public Safety Training Package.

This Guide will assist RTO Managers and people who are designing, developing, delivering and conducting assessments in the Fire Sector to provide consistent advice, guidance and direction to those questions frequently asked by auditors and students. This Guide is a living document and will be expanded to accommodate additional questions as they arise.



## WHAT IS THE FIRE SECTOR?

The Fire Sector is those sections of government departments, statutory authorities or organisations that have responsibility under jurisdictional arrangements for the delivery of firefighting and fire management services. The Fire Sector represents a workforce of 37,000 permanent, 6,000 part-time and 257,000 volunteer staff.

### What qualifications are used by the Fire Sector?

- PUA206XX Certificate II in Public Safety (Firefighting and Emergency Operations)
- PUA207XX Certificate II in Public Safety (Firefighting Operations)
- PUA306XX Certificate III in Public Safety (Firefighting and Emergency Operations)
- PUA307XX Certificate III in Public Safety (Firefighting Operations)
- PUA403XX Certificate IV in Public Safety (Firefighting Supervision)
- PUA505XX Diploma of Public Safety (Firefighting Management)
- PUA605XX Advanced Diploma of Public Safety (Firefighting Management)
- PUA609XX Advanced Diploma of Public Safety (Fire Investigation)

### Why are there two Certificate II and two Certificate III fire qualifications?

The two qualifications at Certificate II and III level represent two different types of firefighting. Those that specify 'Firefighting and Emergency Operations' reflect the work typically performed by full-time firefighters in urban environments, including the wearing of breathing apparatus for entry into burning buildings. Those qualifications specifying 'Firefighting Operations' are less specific in their core requirements and are designed to reflect the requirements of the broad range of firefighters who do not work full-time in urban environments. This includes most rural volunteers, land management firefighters and firefighters working in a mix of built and natural environments.

### Why is there only one Certificate IV qualification?

Certificates II and III encompass most of the tactical skills that are applied in the actual combat of fire and associated activities. The Certificate IV in Public Safety (Firefighting Supervision) has a focus on supervisory rather than tactical skills. Those supervisory skills apply equally to the 'Firefighting and Emergency Operations' and 'Firefighting Operations' work described in the Certificate II and III qualifications listed in 'What qualifications are used by the Fire Sector'?

## PREREQUISITES

Do fire prerequisites apply to non-fire organisations?

Fire prerequisites only apply to the Fire Sector. Since 1995, the Fire Sector has had prerequisite units in the Fire Sector qualifications. Prerequisite units support the integrity of the fire units and qualifications by ensuring the necessary skills and knowledge are gained before units that depend on those skills and knowledge are awarded. Prerequisite units are only listed within the Fire Sector units where that unit is, in its entirety, relevant to and necessary for the continuation of learning in the unit in which it is listed. The Fire Sector recognises other sectors may have different organisational requirements.

Where prerequisites apply for fire, they must be obtained prior to issuance of the unit to individuals within the Fire Sector or for the units to contribute to the attainment of a fire qualification.

### What are some examples of fire prerequisites?

The following are examples of how prerequisites apply in the Fire Sector:

- PUAFIR203X Respond to urban fire from Certificate II in Public Safety (Firefighting Operations) is a prerequisite unit for PUAFIR302X Suppress urban fire (from Certificate III in Public Safety (Firefighting Operations))
- PUAFIR204X Respond to wildfire from Certificate II in Public Safety (Firefighting Operations) is a prerequisite unit to PUAFIR303X Suppress wildfire (from Certificate III in Public Safety (Firefighting Operations)).

These examples reflect the industry's agreed position that the knowledge and skills gained in response to urban fire and wildfire units are required to undertake the more complex work performed at the next level. Both sets of units involve working in high-risk, hazardous and dynamic environments and extensive underpinning knowledge and skills application in the workplace are required for firefighters to be deemed competent in the suppress units.

### **Why are there optional prerequisites for some units used by fire?**

Industry determined from the outset that alternative prerequisites were required to ensure each Fire Sector qualification provides the flexibility required to include the three parts of the industry within each qualification. Otherwise, there would need to be separate qualifications representing the work of fire land managers, rural and volunteer firefighters and career urban firefighters which the industry would consider impeding interoperability and the adoption of common standards of work.

Alternative prerequisites recognise differences exist within the sector, while also bringing all parts of the sector together on those areas of work, where the work is common. This provides a mechanism to allow a large group of people to access the same qualification, while allowing for different specialisations to exist within that cohort.

Alternative prerequisites recognise specific knowledge and skills must be held prior to achieving a higher-level competency but that there can also be more than one pathway to acquire the competence. Supervisory and managerial units in the Fire Sector, for example, may be applied in a range of quite different work environments. It is important to note, competence is required in the environment the supervisor or manager works in, but not in all possible environments.

### **What are some examples of optional fire prerequisites?**

The following is an example of how this applies:

PUAOPE012X Control a Level 1 incident (from Certificate IV in Public Safety (Firefighting Supervision)) has two alternative prerequisites: PUAFIR302X Suppress urban fire and PUAFIR303X Suppress wildfire. It is critical for safety and effectiveness that competence at Certificate III level in fighting the type of fire being faced is required because the Control a Level 1 incident does not distinguish between incident types. In this example, the environment is sufficiently different that competence in one area (urban) does not confer competence in the other (wildfire) and vice versa.

One or other of the options listed is, therefore, necessary for a person to be deemed competent as an Incident Controller at a Level 1 fire.

A similar situation applies for the unit PUAOPE016X Manage a multi team sector (from Diploma in Public Safety (Firefighting Management)). Again, competence in dealing with one of the two alternative fire environments is required.

### **Does a prerequisite have to be awarded before training commences for the unit for which it is a requirement?**

Many of the units in the PUA Public Safety Training Package (PUA PSTP) identify prerequisite units. Where a unit of competency lists a prerequisite, competence in this prerequisite unit must be achieved first.

This does not, however, preclude training to both the unit of competency and its prerequisite at the same time. Training to both units is a common practice but issuance of the statement of attainment for the prerequisite unit must occur prior to issuing a statement of attainment for the unit for which it is a prerequisite. The pathway(s) by which learners may do this should be identified. If no pathway can be identified, then achievement of the prerequisite units should be added to the project scope or established as a separate project.

## What advice has Australian Skills Quality Authority provided in support of this position?

ASQA provided the following response to this question on Thursday 7 February 2019:

***‘Provided any additional requirements of the packaging rules for a training product have been met, a prerequisite can be delivered first or concurrently, however, assessment must be conducted prior to the determination (final assessment) of competency in the actual unit’.***

### Are corequisites still in use?

The Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) does not provide an official definition for the term ‘corequisite.’ However, a corequisite unit could be described as a unit that must be undertaken before or at the same time as another unit. Corequisite units are most commonly used where training conducted in one corequisite unit provides a learner with the complementary knowledge needed to complete the other corequisite unit(s). This is distinct from ‘entry requirements’ (formerly prerequisites) which must be completed prior to another unit. The use of corequisites is being eliminated from the units within the Public Safety Training Package (PSTP).

## TRAINING AND ASSESSMENT

### What are the requirements to be a trainer and/or assessor in the Vocational Education and Training sector?

This is a regulatory question and the same trainer and/or assessor requirements apply to all training packages, therefore Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) should contact their regulatory body for information. Refer to <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2017C00663> for information about the requirements for Trainers and Assessors.

### Every time the TAE qualification is updated, is it necessary to complete the new one?

No. The RTO Standards specify the qualifications and units required to remain current. In some instances no updates are required, depending on the elective units taken at the time the qualification was undertaken. For instance TAE40110 holders need only ensure that

two specific units which were electives at that time are held. They may need to undertake two, one or zero additional units to maintain currency. Refer to Schedule 1 Item 2 of the Standards for RTOs.

### What does supervision mean for trainers who do not hold the Certificate IV of Training and Assessment?

Trainers are those who provide training (1.13, 1.14 & 1.16 of RTO Standards). The supervisor does hold Cert IV TAE. Evidence of supervision does not appear to mandate that every session the trainer conducts has the Cert IV supervisor present, but evidence of monitoring (by observing training sessions and providing feedback) must be collected. Trainers under supervision (1.17 to 1.20 of RTO Standards) need one of a list of Skill Sets as of April 1 2019 (below).

### How can supervision of training and assessment be provided for volunteer organisations?

Identify key personnel to hold Cert IV TAE (current).

Trainers to hold one of skills sets specified (below) in Schedule 1, items 1 to 7.

Assessment decisions only by qualified assessors (Cert IV TAE40110 plus TAELLN411 or 401A plus TAEASS502, 502A or 502B or TAE40116 or a Diploma or higher level qualification in Adult Education or: TAE Enterprise Trainer and Assessor Skill Set or TAE Assessor Skill Set as specified in Schedule 1 Item 5).

### What are the Skill Sets for delivering training and conducting assessment post 31 March 2019, one of (list Skill Sets)?

- TAESS00007 Enterprise Trainer—Presenting Skill Set
- TAESS00014 Enterprise Trainer—Presenting Skill Set (or its successor)
- TAESS00008 Enterprise Trainer—Mentoring Skill Set
- TAESS00013 Enterprise Trainer—Mentoring Skill Set (or its successor)
- TAESS00003 Enterprise Trainer and Assessor Skill Set
- TAESS00015 Enterprise Trainer and Assessor Skill Set (or its successor).

### What is the transition period for revised training package components?

This is a regulatory question and therefore RTOs should contact their regulatory body. ASQA have issued a General direction – learner transition information page outlining the general direction arrangements made in accordance with the provisions of the Standards for Registered Training Organisations 2015. For RTOs not registered with ASQA please contact the relevant regulatory body – Western Australia Training Accreditation Council (WATAC) or Victorian Registering and Qualifications Authority (VRQA).

RTOs must always meet the requirements of their relevant regulator. If in doubt, check with the relevant regulator to ensure compliance with the regulations.

### What are nominal hours?

Nominal hours are used for funding of units and qualifications; however, they are only anticipated hours and it may mean quality training and assessment will exceed the nominal hours listed in the purchasing guide.

Nominal hours are the anticipated number of hours deemed necessary to conduct training and assessment. They do not include the hours associated with non-supervised work experience, field work, work placement or private study.

Once a new version of a training package is endorsed and received by the Victorian government they develop and release the *Purchasing Guide*. This includes what they have deemed to be the nominal hours for the endorsed qualifications and units. Most other states and territories will generally accept the nominal hours proposed by Victoria, but they do have the right to have 'purchasing hours' that differ from the Victorian *Purchasing Guide*.

### What is volume of learning?

The volume of learning allocated to a qualification should include all teaching, learning and assessment activities required to be undertaken by the typical student to achieve the learning outcomes. These activities may include some or all of the following:

- guided learning (such as classes, lectures, tutorials, online study or self-paced study guides)
- individual study
- research

- learning activities in the workplace
- assessment activities.

For further information, click on link <https://www.aqf.edu.au/sites/aqf/files/volume-of-learning-explanation-v2-2014.pdf>

### What is 'amount of training' and 'volume of learning', and how do they differ?

The amount of training essentially comprises the formal learning activities you provide to a learner. The amount of training must enable a learner to:

- meet the requirements of each training product
- gain the skills and knowledge specified in the relevant training product.

The amount of training will be determined by:

- the training product
- your learner cohort, and
- the mode of delivery.

When delivering a qualification, the training and assessment strategy should reflect the complexity required of that qualification. The complexity of a qualification is defined by:

- the breadth and depth of the knowledge
- skills required
- application of knowledge and skills, and
- the AQF volume of learning

The AQF volume of learning is part of the complexity requirements of a qualification. The AQF volume of learning describes how long a learner, who does not hold any competencies identified in the qualification, would normally take to develop all the required skills and knowledge at that qualification level.

The volume of learning includes all teaching, learning and assessment activities that are required to be undertaken by the typical student to achieve the learning outcomes.

If your RTO intends to deliver to learners who are new to the industry area and/or who do not have any workplace experience, the amount of training required that is described in the training and assessment strategy would closely match the timeframe listed with the AQF volume of learning.

However, if you plan to deliver to a learner cohort that already has defined skills, knowledge and workplace experience appropriate to the industry, a smaller amount of training may be sufficient to ensure that each learner has fully absorbed the required knowledge and has developed the skills required in a range of different contexts.

For further information, click on the following link:

<https://www.asqa.gov.au/news-publications/publications/fact-sheets/amount-training>

### Assessment requirements often refer to the workplace. How is the workplace defined?

Workplace is not specifically defined. The reference to workplace is a means to ensure assessment is valid.

Validity requires:

- 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 shows 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.

The second and third points are most clearly demonstrated when assessment is conducted in the workplace. They may, however, also be demonstrated in other places that provide equivalent rigour to the assessment process.

## RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

### Can a superseded unit of competency be used toward recognition of prior learning (RPL) for a current unit of competency? (Clause 1.12)

Yes, a superseded unit of competency can be used as part of an RPL process toward the award of a current unit of competency.

However, currency is a particular risk with recognition of prior learning. Your RTO may be presented with evidence gathered over several years, including evidence of competency from a superseded unit of competency. This does not mean the superseded unit is not valid; however, you must ensure there is sufficient evidence of the person's competence at the time you make the assessment decision.

For example, if a learner is applying for recognition of prior learning for the unit BSBWHS301A Maintain workplace safety and provides evidence of previously completing the unit BSBCM311B Maintain workplace safety, your RTO should:

- consider all the requirements of the unit BSBWHS301A and compare them to the skills awarded in BSBCM311B (refer to the mapping information provided within the BSB07 Training Package for guidance)
- identify any additional forms of evidence the student could provide to demonstrate competence
- ensure the total evidence provided by the learner shows she or he has current skills and knowledge in all requirements of BSBWHS301A
- retain all evidence collected during the process.

### **As part of the Rules of Evidence, under Currency, the Standards refer to ‘the very recent past’. What does this mean? (Clause 1.8)**

The Standards require evidence demonstrating current competency is from the present or the ‘very recent past’. The Standards do not specify the time considered to be ‘very recent past’, as this may vary between industries.

However, trainers and assessors who have the current skills and knowledge should be able to determine what constitutes ‘very recent past’ for their organisation. Your RTO must determine whether the evidence is recent enough to show the learner is competent at the time the assessor makes an assessment decision. For example, a firefighter who has 10 years’ experience but has not worked in the industry for the past eight years may not have current skills in, or knowledge of, the latest doctrine or equipment. However, the firefighter may be able to update their skills and knowledge through a ‘gap training’ program.

This does not mean older evidence cannot be included in the evidence used to make an assessment judgement. However, older evidence must be supported by evidence the person has the required skills and knowledge at the time of the assessment.

### **What is the acceptable currency period for vocational competence?**

Qualifications and units of competency do not specify an end date. There are some industries that do apply an end date to units, for example, first aid. Most fire services and land management organisations maintain the currency of their personnel through skills maintenance arrangements which are determined on an organisation by organisation basis.

The only area within the fire and emergency services sector, where recertification arrangements have been established are in aviation roles and incident management. The former, through the work of the National Aviation Firefighting Centre (NAFC) and the latter, through the Emergency Management Professionalisation Scheme (EMPS).

### **Are my qualifications and/or units of competence transferable/recognised between fire agencies?**

There is a requirement under the *Standards for RTOs* that all RTOs recognise units and qualifications issued by other RTOs. This does not, however, mean a person who was performing a role based on a set of units is automatically entitled to perform a similar or equivalent role in another agency. There may be differences between each agency’s equipment, procedures, risk environments and other areas that make it necessary for additional training to take place.

### **If an individual has completed a qualification by collecting units of competency, do you issue the qualification with all electives completed or only those required to meet the requirements of the qualification?**

AQF Issuance Policy is not explicit on ‘every’ unit completed but does state that graduates are entitled to ‘a record of results’ (Clauses 2.1.1 & 2.1.2). The absence of a clause suggesting that only the minimum number of units required is listed strongly suggests that all should be. Furthermore 2.5.1 says that a ‘record of results’ may also be issued for Statements of Attainment. The intent is clearly that the graduates should have a record of each unit completed, if not on the qualification itself then on a SoA record. The former is the better and more logical option. The Record of Results show the results for all units enrolled- presumably beyond the requirements of the qualification if undertaken as part of the qualification. The qualification must be issued to meet the Packaging Rules, and usually a Statement of Attainment with the additional units of competency, identifying the qualification they come from, is issued.

### **Who identifies what electives I need to undertake?**

The fire and land management agencies will determine the qualifications and/or units of competency required by their personnel to undertake roles within their organisation and to meet their operational requirements.

Individuals seeking to complete a fire qualification will also select those electives that are requisite to their career choices and interest.

## SIMULATIONS

### What is an industry approved simulated workplace?

The phrase industry approved simulated workplace is used as a generic statement in each unit under the section 'Assessment Conditions'. There is no industry-approved simulation workplace within the Fire Sector. Each fire and land management RTO will determine what is an industry-approved simulated workplace.

### What are suitable simulated environments?

Simulation-based training can take many forms and includes role play, storytelling, part-task or procedural, multiplayer online, virtual worlds, and computer-generated scenarios (Gaba, 2014). An important issue for any type of simulation is its level of realism. In simulation, the term used for realism is 'fidelity'. Fidelity can be described as the degree of realism a simulation has with the situation (real-world or reference system) it is intended to represent (Alessi, 1988).

*Physical fidelity:* how closely the simulation's equipment and procedures match the real-world (Hays & Singer, 1989) can be described as the degree to which a simulation 'looks and performs like the "real thing"' (Elliott et al., 2004).

*Psychological fidelity:* the extent to which the 'environment prompts the essential underlying psychological processes relevant to key performance characteristics in the real-world setting' (Kozlowski & DeShon, 2004). A simulation scenario with high psychological fidelity requires participants to use the cognitive and interpersonal processes that underlie effective performance. This means participants would make the same types of judgements and decisions they would in the equivalent real-world setting.

### What is the purpose of simulation-based training?

Simulation can be used for a variety of purposes and is used to support:

- understanding (e.g. build and develop theories, models and structures)
- prediction (e.g. reliable estimate of a future state)
- decision making

- design and modelling (e.g. explore design options, refine a prototype prior to production)
- learning (e.g. teach technical, operational and teamwork skills)
- entertainment (Landriscina, 2013; Simulation Australasia, 2014).

### Are there any tasks not able to be simulated?

In theory it is possible to simulate any task. In practice however, some tasks are difficult or would be very expensive to simulate. An example is operating a bulldozer at a bushfire to create a fire line or push trees. This may be done in the absence of live fire but creating a simulation that incorporates live fire would be difficult. A comparison might be made with aircraft simulators; it is possible to develop but requires time and expense. When using simulation for assessment, more than one type of simulation will be required.

### What are the key elements of design and development?

Simulation fidelity and validity: the degree of realism a simulation has and its alignment to the required training and assessment.

Systems-engineering principles used to assess a simulation: validation, verification and accreditation – the simulation's model is sound, it accurately implements the model and it meets an organisation's needs.

- *Development of fit-for-purpose simulations:* questions important for design and a dimensions-of-simulation framework.
- *Measuring participant and team performance:* rationale and techniques for ensuring the quality of the associated performance-assessment practices.
- *Providing sound feedback to participants and teams:* role, nature and timing of feedback.
- *Evaluating the effectiveness of the exercise:* the purposes, importance and phases of evaluation.

In the context of learning, simulation is a training and assessment method, it is not a particular technology (Gaba, 2004; Salas et al., 2009). Simulation-based training occurs when key elements of a task or system are imitated to develop knowledge, skills, attitudes or other abilities (KSAOs). (Hayes P, 2015)

## What are the different types of simulation?

Simulations generally come in three styles: live, virtual and constructive. A simulation may also be a combination of two or more styles.

1. Live simulations use real people and real systems (e.g. field exercises or tunnelling and Incident Management Team exercise in a real Incident Control Centre). Time is continuous, as in the real world.
  2. Virtual simulations involve real people and equipment in a computer-controlled environment. Time might be controllable, such as a flight simulator e.g. stopped and started again, to allow for feedback.
  3. Constructive simulations may involve real people interacting with simulated systems, or simulated human (or other) actors within a synthetic environment. Constructive simulation can be used to simulate flood events, where the computer independently simulates the behaviour of advancing flood waters in a scenario that enables participants to test their prediction about what evacuations are required and can be performed safely. (Hayes P, 2015)
- *Organisational Simulation* (Rouse & Boff, 2005)
  - *Performance measurement in simulation-based training* (Salas et al., 2009)
  - *Learning by doing ...* (Aldrich, 2005)
  - *Defining excellence in simulation programs* (Palaganas et al., 2015)
  - *Readings in training and simulation: A 30-year perspective* (Swezey & Andrews, 2000)
  - *The PSI handbook of virtual environments for training and education: Developments for the military and beyond. Volume 1: Learning, requirements, and metrics* (Schmorrow, Cohn & Nicholson, 2009)
  - *The PSI handbook of virtual environments for training and education: Developments for the military and beyond. Volume 2: VE components and training technologies* (Nicholson, Schmorrow & Cohn, 2009)
  - *The PSI handbook of virtual environments for training and education: Developments for the military and beyond. Volume 3: Integrated systems, training evaluations, and future directions* (J. Cohn, Nicholson & Schmorrow, 2009).

## Where can I find more information about the use of simulations?

It is beyond the scope of this document to provide detailed information on the use of simulation for training and assessment. If you are interested in reading further on how simulation can be used for training and assessment, the following are useful resources:

- *Human factors in simulation and training* (Vincenzi, Wise, Mouloua & Hancock, 2009)
- *Fundamental issues in defense training and simulation* (Best, Glanis, Kerry & Sottolare, 2013)
- *New trends in cooperative activities: Understanding dynamics in complex environments* (McNeese, Salas & Endsley, 2001)
- *Scaled Worlds: Development, validation and applications* (Schiflett, Elliott, Salas & Coovert, 2004)

