TAEASS403
Participate in assessment validation
Release 2

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Participate in assessment validation

Learner guide

Aspire Version 1.2

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Version control and modification history

Version	Release date	Modification
Release 1, version 1.1	January 2017	First release
Release 2, version 1.2	April 2017	Updated to Release 2

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All websites referred to in this unit were accessed and deemed appropriate at time of publication.

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Contact details

Participant

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Start date: ....

Phone number: ....

Email: ....

Work location

Name: ....

Address: ....

Postal address: ....

Workplace supervisor name: ....

Phone number: ....

Fax: ....

Email: ....

Registered Training Organisation (RTO)

Name: ....

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Phone number: ....

Fax: ....

RTO contact name: ....

Mobile: ....

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Contents

Before you begin

This learner guide is based on the unit of competency *TAEASS403 Participate in Assessment Validation*, Release 2. Your trainer or training organisation must give you information about this unit of competency as part of your training program. You can access the unit of competency and assessment requirements at: www.training.gov.au.

How to work through this learner guide

This learner guide contains a number of features that will assist you in your learning. Your trainer will advise which parts of the learner guide you need to read, and which activities you need to complete. The features of this learner guide are detailed in the following table.

Feature of the learner guide	How you can use each feature
Overview	This section provides general information about the vocational education and training sector and its essential components (such as training packages), which will underpin your learning.
Introduction	The introduction covers the key concepts relevant to this particular unit of competency, including the terminology that will be used throughout this learner guide.
Learning content	Read each topic in this learner guide. If you come across content that is confusing, make a note and discuss it with your trainer. Your trainer is in the best position to offer assistance. It is very important that you take on some of the responsibility for the learning you will undertake.
Templates	Templates are referred to throughout the guide. These are samples of working documents similar to those found in a training organisation. Completed templates may be useful as evidence for portfolio assessments. Ask your trainer for sample templates provided with the *Trainer's and assessor's* guide for this unit.
Examples	Examples of completed documents that may be used in a workplace are included in this learner guide. Examples highlight learning points and provide realistic examples of workplace situations.
Activities	Activities give you the opportunity to put your skills and knowledge into action. Your trainer will tell you which activities to complete.
Summary	Key learning points are provided at the end of each topic.

Foundation skills

As you complete learning using this guide, you will be developing the foundation skills relevant for this unit. Foundation skills are the language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills and the employability skills required for participation in modern workplaces and contemporary life.

The following table outlines specific foundation skills noted for your learning in this learner guide.

Foundation skill area	Foundation skill description
Reading	▶ Analyses and interprets relevant policies and procedures, benchmarks and validation materials
Writing	▶ Records key information from the validation process accurately to meet requirements
Oral communication	▶ Communicates with others to confirm approaches, exchange ideas and information, articulate opinions, and reach agreement with others, using suitable tone, style and language
Navigate the world of work	▶ Identifies, confirms and takes responsibility for adherence to policies and procedures
Interact with others	▶ Collaborates with others and contributes to activities requiring joint responsibility and accountability
Get the work done	▶ Organises and prioritises work commitments with a sense of what is achievable within the time frame ▶ Uses analytical processes in non-routine situations gathering information, and identifying and evaluating options against agreed criteria

What do you already know?

Use the following table to identify what you may already know. This may assist you to work out what to focus on in your learning.

Topic	Key outcomes	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 1: Prepare for validation	1.1 Discuss and confirm the purpose, context and scope of the validation processes within relevant assessment system policies and procedures	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
	1.2 Arrange materials for validation activities	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
	1.3 Check all documents used in the validation process for accuracy and version control	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
	1.4 Analyse relevant units of competency and agree on the evidence needed to demonstrate competence	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
Topic 2: Participate in the validation of assessment tools	2.1 Demonstrate active and appropriate participation in validation sessions and activities using agreed communication methods and modes	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
	2.2 Apply principles of assessment and rules of evidence during validation sessions and activities	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
	2.3 Check that context and conditions of assessment include clear instructions for the assessor and candidate, and relate directly to the assessment conditions of the relevant unit	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
	2.4 Check that tasks to be administered to the candidate include clear and concise instructions and an outline of evidence requirements	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
	2.5 Check that assessment decision-making rules and benchmarks are clear and enable consistent outcomes	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
	2.6 Check that recording mechanisms are clear and allow for sufficient information to be recorded	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident

Topic	Key outcomes	Rate your confidence in each section
	2.7 Review and use assessment maps to assist in determining the validity of assessment instruments	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
Topic 3: Contribute to validation outcomes	3.1 Discuss validation findings to support improvements in the quality of assessment in a collective environment	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident
	3.2 Discuss, agree on and record recommendations to improve assessment practice	☐ Confident ☐ Basic understanding ☐ Not confident

Assessment

When you have completed your learning, you will be asked to complete an assessment. You need to understand what will be required of you regarding assessment as you work your way through this learner guide: your trainer/assessor will provide you with the relevant details. This learner guide does not include a final assessment. Your training organisation may be using Aspire's Assessment and RPL resource for this unit.

For this unit will you need to show evidence of:

▶ actively participating in a minimum of three validation sessions that address the critical aspects of validation

▶ clearly identifying the purpose for each validation, and the legal and ethical responsibilities of assessors

▶ collating and presenting documentation for each validation in a logical manner

▶ communicating and liaising with relevant people

▶ providing feedback and interpreting documentation in validation sessions

▶ recording their contribution to validation findings.

You will also show knowledge of:

▶ how to determine the evidence needed to demonstrate competence in a competency-based environment

▶ the reasons for carrying out validation and different approaches to validation that may be appropriate before, during and after an assessment

▶ the components of assessment tools

▶ critical aspects of validation, including validation of assessment processes, methods and products

▶ how principles of assessment are addressed in validation

▶ how rules of evidence are addressed in validation

▶ work health and safety legislation, codes of practice, standards and guidelines that impact on assessment

▶ obligations of an assessor under applicable legislation and/or standards, particularly in relation to validation activities.

Always refer to your assessor for information about the number, type and detail required in the assessment materials you will be required to complete.

Developing an evidence portfolio

An evidence portfolio is a useful way to demonstrate to your assessor how you have developed the skills, knowledge, attitudes and abilities that contribute to competence. Samples of your work that are developed as a part of the activities can be used as evidence for assessment.

Your trainer/assessor may also ask you to provide samples of documents or completed templates to demonstrate your progress in this unit. Some of these could be submitted as part of an evidence portfolio. Always follow the specific directions and guidance of your trainer/assessor to determine what documents your portfolio should include and how they should be presented.

Here are some examples of what your portfolio might contain:

▶ Your responses to specific activities as indicated in each section of the learner guide

▶ Personal reflections on your progress via an ongoing learning journal

▶ Recorded comments from your supervisor, peers or clients about how you have applied skills and knowledge

▶ Documents or completed templates* you have developed such as assessment plans, assessment tools, training session plans or checklists

▶ Samples and an analysis of relevant forms, documents and other material used in a training and assessment environment

*Throughout this learner guide, reference is made to specific templates that you can use for activities or for your portfolio. Ask your trainer for template samples; Aspire has included relevant templates in its Trainer's and assessor's guide for this unit.

Overview
Understand vocational education and training

There is a great deal more to the VET system and the delivery of training and assessment than the information provided in this Overview. Each learner guide for the units offered in the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment provides activities and examples to demonstrate the application of your VET knowledge.

To work effectively in the vocational education and training (VET) system, you need to understand its essential components, particularly training packages and how to use them in a training delivery and assessment role.

VET develops skills and knowledge for work through a national training system that seeks to provide consistent training across Australia. The primary purpose of VET is to equip people with the skills, knowledge and attributes they require to be 'work ready' and to operate effectively in employment. The Australian VET system comprises two fundamental elements that help ensure quality and consistency in training: training packages and the VET Quality Framework (VQF), which includes the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF).

Training packages

Training packages are the foundation of Australia's VET system. A training package is a set of nationally endorsed qualifications, units of competency and assessment requirements developed for a specific industry, sector or workplace. Copies of individual training packages can be viewed at: http://training.gov.au.

Training packages also provide the structure for competency-based training. A competency-based approach judges outcomes against specific standards established in the endorsed components of a training package. Endorsed components are the various units of competency, the qualifications within which they sit and assessment guidelines that describe the industry's desired approach to assessment and qualifications.

Training packages are developed by Service Skills Organisations (formerly by Industry Skills Councils) to meet the training needs of an industry or group of industries. Training packages are maintained in line with the National Skills Standards Council's Standards for Training Packages to ensure training packages are of high quality and meet the workforce development needs of industry, enterprises and individuals. These standards apply to the design and development of training packages for endorsement by the Australian Industry and Skills Committee (formerly the role of the now dissolved National Skills Standards Council (NSSC)).

Units of competency

Units of competency are the nationally agreed statements of the skills and knowledge required for effective performance in a particular job or job function. In other words, a unit of competency is a set of skills and knowledge that form part of a person's job role, and represents a discrete workplace outcome.

Units of competency are packaged as groups into qualifications and qualification levels in each training package. Each qualification has a descriptor that provides guidelines on how the unit is practically applied, who would use it and the unit's relationship to any applicable licensing, legislative or certification requirements.

Training packages do not prescribe how training is to be delivered. They provide guidance on assessment and the methods of assessment that may be appropriate for each unit of competency. Registered training organisations (RTOs) are responsible for how training and assessment occur.

An RTO can also issue qualifications derived from training packages or accredited courses, or statements of attainment to recognise the completion of a unit of competency from a qualification or accredited course.

The VET Quality Framework

The VET Quality Framework (VQF) is a set of standards and conditions used by the Australian Skills Quality Authority to assess whether an RTO meets the requirements for registration. The *National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011* (Cth) established the National VET Regulator (NVR) and underpins the VQF.

The VQF comprises:

▶ the Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015
▶ the Australian Qualifications Framework
▶ the Fit and Proper Person Requirements
▶ the Financial Viability Risk Assessment Requirements
▶ the Data Provision Requirements.

Training that leads to the award of an accredited qualification must be delivered and assessed by an RTO that satisfies the Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015. The Standards include the Essential Standards for Initial Registration and the Essential Standards for Continuing Registration. There are eight standards to which RTOs must comply.

You should familiarise yourself with the VQF and the compliance requirements it places on RTOs; this compliance directly affects the work you do as a trainer and an assessor.

Australian Skills Quality Authority

Course accreditation agencies such as the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) set regulations and standards for the VET sector to ensure course quality is maintained through the effective regulation of training providers and accredited courses. It does this mainly through the VQF. (Note: Victoria and Western Australia have not referred their powers of regulation to ASQA and continue to be subject to their respective state regulators if they operate solely within their state.)

ASQA works with other regulatory, funding and policy bodies to ensure the training provided is of high quality and meets the requirements of industry-developed training packages, so VET graduates have the required skills and competencies for employment.

Any RTO operating solely in Victoria and/or Western Australia is regulated by those states' regulators (not ASQA), and must comply with the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) Essential Conditions and Standards for Registration. The VQF Standards for NVR Registered Training Organisations derive from the AQTF standards.

Throughout this learner guide, reference is made to both sets of Standards, presented as VQF/AQTF.

The Australian Qualifications Framework

The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), a component of the VQF, is a policy framework that defines the standards for regulated qualifications in Australian education and training. It specifies the learning outcomes for 16 nationally recognised qualifications. The following diagram represents the 10 levels of the AQF.

Reproduced with permission of the AQF council, from AQF Second Edition, January 2013, p. 19.

An RTO must issue qualifications and statements of attainment that align to the AQF and meet the requirements of the AQF Qualifications Issuance Policy and the endorsed training packages within that RTO's scope of registration.

Training and assessment

The primary role of RTOs in the VET system is to deliver accredited training and assessment-based units of competency and qualifications. You may be employed by an RTO to facilitate classroom, online or blended learning; to deliver workplace-based training and assessment on-site to enterprise staff; or to coordinate and support enterprise trainers, coaches and mentors in their roles.

Alternatively, you may be an enterprise trainer whose role is to facilitate learning and carry out assessment in the workplace, perhaps based on national units of competency or internal enterprise standards. The work you do may or may not lead to a recognised qualification.

When working with training packages and before providing training or assessment services, there are two aspects of competency and units of competency that you need to understand:

▶ How to identify and 'unpack' the key features of a unit of competency
▶ The dimensions of competency and their role in ensuring that competency incorporates all aspects of work performance

Explore a unit of competency

You should unpack a unit of competency and consider each part of the unit to form a picture of what a competent person looks like, how assessment should occur and what evidence is required.

The following table summarises the components of a unit of competency, as defined in the TAE Training and Education Training Package Implementation Guide.

Component feature	What it relates to
Unit of competency	
Title	The title describes the unit outcome.
Unit application	This field describes how the unit is practically applied, who would typically use it and the unit of competency's relationship to licensing, legislative or certification requirements.
Prerequisite units	This is an optional field that specifies any unit/s in which the learner must already be competent prior to achieving competency in this unit.
Unit Sector	This field is used to categorise units of competency in relation to industry sectors or types of work.
Elements of competency	Elements of competency describe the outcomes of the significant functions and tasks that make up the competency. Elements describe actions or outcomes that are demonstrable and assessable.
Performance criteria	Performance criteria specify the required performance in relevant tasks, roles, skills (including foundation skills) and the applied knowledge that enables competent performance.
Foundation skills	This field describes the language, literacy, numeracy and employment skills that are essential to performance.
Range of conditions	This is an optional field that specifies different work environments and conditions that may affect performance. Range is restricted to essential operating conditions and any other variables essential to the work environment, so it is quite different from the previous range statement.
Unit mapping information	This field specifies the code and title of any equivalent unit of competency.
Links	This field provides a link to the Companion Volume Implementation Guide.
Assessment requirements	
Performance evidence	Performance evidence, as the name implies, specifies what individuals must do to show that they satisfy the performance standards in the unit of competency.

Component feature	What it relates to
Knowledge evidence	Knowledge evidence, as the name implies, specifies what individuals must know in order to carry out the work tasks described in the unit of competency safely and effectively.
Assessment conditions	This field describes mandatory conditions for assessment; for example, details of equipment and materials; contingencies; physical conditions; relationships with other people; and time frames. It also specifies assessor requirements.
Links	This field provides a link to the Companion Volume Implementation Guide.

Explore dimensions of competency

Reviewing the dimensions of competency is an important part of unpacking a unit of competency. The dimensions of competency relate to all aspects of work performance in both routine and non-routine work situations. A competent person can successfully apply their skills and knowledge to work activities in a range of contexts.

The following table explores the four dimensions of competency in more detail.

Dimensions of competency	Meaning
Task skills	The candidate must perform the individual skills required to complete a work activity to the required standard.
Task management skills	The candidate must manage a number of different tasks to complete a whole work activity, such as working to meet deadlines.
Contingency management skills	The candidate must use problem-solving skills to resolve issues that arise when performing a work activity.
Job/role environment skills	The candidate must perform effectively in the workplace when undertaking a work activity by working well with all stakeholders and following workplace policies and procedures.

Incorporate foundation skills

Foundation skills are the non-technical skills that support an individual's participation in the workplace, the community and in education and training. In training packages, the foundation skills can incorporate the language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills described in the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF), and the employability skills described in the Core Skills for Work Developmental Framework (CSfW).

Foundation skills underpin competent performance and are identified in each unit of competency in a foundation skills table. The foundation skills should be considered an integrated part of the unit for delivery and assessment purposes.

FSK Foundation Skills Training Package

The FSK Foundation Skills Training Package was developed to work in combination with other training packages to support the development of learners' core skills, so they can achieve their vocational training goals. Trainers have an opportunity to use material developed, such as those developed by Aspire Learning Resources, to deliver foundation skills to learners. RTOs have an opportunity to deliver training and qualifications in foundation skills units to support their students.

IBSA's Building Strong Foundations resource provides information about using the Foundation Skills Training Package. You can access Building Strong Foundations at this website:

▶   www.ibsa.org.au

The Foundation Skills Training Package Implementation Guide also contains an explanation of the use of this training package. You can access it at this website:

▶   https://vetnet.education.gov.au

Assessment methods

The competency-based assessment system relies on an assessor making a judgment about a person's competence against performance benchmarks in a unit of competency, using methods such as criterion-referenced assessment, standards-based assessment or evidence-based assessment. An assessment candidate should be judged as either competent or not yet competent according to whether they demonstrate that they can meet the specified standards.

The recognition process

The recognition process allows candidates to provide evidence that their previous training, work or life experience aligns to the skills and knowledge described in a qualification or unit of competency.

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is one form of this process. Recognition can also include recognition of current competency and credit transfer.

Evidence of competency may include work samples, journals, certificates of achievement and third-party testimonials. In addition, candidates may be asked questions, observed undertaking set tasks or asked to demonstrate the authenticity of their work.

RTO staff must be able to provide clear, accurate information on assessment and recognition processes to candidates. Your obligations could therefore include:

▶   advising and assisting a candidate/learner to apply for recognition

▶   determining the type of recognition for which the candidate/learner should apply

▶   assisting the candidate/learner to complete relevant documents

▶   processing recognition applications in a timely manner.

Candidates may apply for recognition before the learning program commences. In other cases it may become apparent as a learner progresses through training delivery that they have the skills, knowledge and competence to satisfy the assessment requirements for a unit of competency or a cluster of units.

Introduction
TAEASS403 Participate in assessment validation

What is validation?

Validation is a quality review process. Its purpose is to check that the assessment system and tools used in an assessment process produce evidence that is valid, sufficient, current and authentic so a reasonable judgment can be made as to whether the requirements of the relevant aspects of the training package or accredited course have been met. The validation process involves reviewing a statistically valid sample of the assessments and making recommendations for future improvements to the assessment tool, process and/or outcomes if applicable. Validation may occur before, during or after assessment. The outcome of a validation should include recommendations for future improvements to the assessment instruments, methods and processes.

Validation panels may be set up by registered training organisations (RTOs) or businesses to validate their assessment methods and instruments as part of their continuous improvement cycle. A validation involves rigorous planning and preparation on the part of the validation coordinator to ensure there is a validation action plan and all participants receive the relevant units of competency, examples of assessment tools and samples of evidence. Those who are asked to participate in a validation also need to be well prepared; they need to understand the validation approach they will use to evaluate the assessment process and be ready to provide information when asked, offer suggestions and make decisions when required.

What this unit covers

The unit of competency *TAEASS403 Participate in assessment validation* describes the performance outcomes, skills and knowledge required by an assessor to participate in an assessment validation process. You will be guided in what to do by a validation facilitator, someone especially appointed to lead the validation process.

This learner guide focuses on the assessment validation activities that are undertaken by RTOs. However, you should note that organisations other than RTOs that perform assessment should also conduct continuous improvement activities as part of their quality management approach.

Although this type of assessment does not need to comply with the standards defined in the VQF/AQTF, the business may choose to use the validation model described in this learner guide for their quality review model.

What you will learn

In this learner guide you will learn how to:

▶ prepare for validation

▶ participate in the validation of assessment tools

▶ contribute to validation outcomes.

Essential learning points

The information in this learner guide is based on an understanding of the following concepts and issues.

Participation

The responsibility of a validation panel or group is to compare and evaluate the assessment methods, tools, plans and decisions used to ensure that the assessment is fair, flexible, valid and reliable, and that they have produced evidence that is valid, sufficient, current and authentic so that reasonable judgments can be made in regard to a person's competence.

When you are part of a validation panel, you must actively participate by being well prepared; understanding the reason for the validation and your responsibilities; having the material you need; being prepared with relevant questions; and communicating clearly and effectively with other members of the panel/group.

Assessment system policies and procedures

Validation must take place according to the organisation's assessment system policies and procedures. An assessment system includes the policies and procedures (including assessment materials and tools) that ensure assessments are consistent and are based on the Principles of Assessment and the Rules of Evidence. You need to know what these are and your role in meeting these requirements. For example:

Validation

▶ The validation process is used to check that assessment instruments produce valid, sufficient, current and authentic evidence, and enable reasonable judgments to be made; how to review and make recommendations for future improvements to the assessment instrument and process; and making sure that a candidates work has identifying information removed to protect the confidentially and impartiality of the documents being validated.

Assessment records, etc.

▶ Assessment records, and data and information management – how to report and record results from a validation process.

Appeals processes

▶ Candidate grievances and complaints, and assessment appeals – the candidate's rights if they are concerned about their assessment.

Access and equity, and reasonable adjustment

▶ Procedures that promote access and equity in delivery and assessment for clients; for example, make sure the assessment instructions are worded clearly so that everyone can understand them and no one is disadvantaged because of language or cultural differences; and ensure that provision is made to cater for those with a disability, such as allowing the use of adaptive technology.

Links with HR or IR systems

▶ Links with human resources or industrial relations systems – the role and responsibility of RTO staff when participating in validation activities.

Links with the quality management system

▶ Links with the overall quality management system – the quality assurance system the RTO must implement that includes processes designed to help achieve comparability of standards.

Benchmarks for assessment

You will learn how to identify the criteria that the candidate will be assessed against. In many instances these will be units of competency from a training package. Knowing how to interpret a unit of competency is a crucial skill for assessors.

Materials

You need to be able to access the range of material to be used for the validation; for example, assessment tools, samples of collected evidence, documentation outlining the basis of assessment decisions, and reports and records of assessment decisions that have been made.

Validation activities

You need to be familiar with the validation activities you will undertake. These include analysing and reviewing:

▶ reviewing a statistically valid sample of assessments

▶ assessment tools produce valid, reliable, sufficient, current and authentic evidence

▶ collected evidence enables reasonable judgements to be made as to whether the requirements of the training package or accredited courses are met

▶ assessment decisions and records of assessment outcomes

▶ other aspects of assessment policies, processes and outcomes

▶ recording evidence of validation processes and outcomes.

Topic 1

In this topic you will learn how to:

1A Discuss and confirm the approach to validation

1B Arrange materials for validation activities

1C Check documents used in the validation process for accuracy and version control

1D Analyse relevant units of competency and agree on the evidence needed to demonstrate competence

Prepare for validation

You will need to undertake a range of tasks prior to evaluating assessment processes and instruments as part of a validation team with your colleagues and other relevant stakeholders. This learner guide focuses on the assessment validation activities that are undertaken by RTOs.

Businesses that provide in-house training activities for their workers may assess workers at the completion of their training and issue certificates of completion. Although this type of assessment does not need to comply with the standards defined in the VET Quality Framework (VQF)/Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF), the business may choose to use the validation model described in this learner guide for their quality review model.

1A Discuss and confirm the approach to validation

Assessment validation is a key component of a training organisation's quality management and continuous improvement systems. It requires assessors to systematically check that the assessment system, tools and methods used by the organisation produce valid, reliable, sufficient, current and authentic evidence to enable reasonable judgments to be made. Assessors should also evaluate whether the requirements of the relevant aspects of the training package or accredited course have been met.

In this section of the learner guide, you will develop the skills and knowledge to work collaboratively with your peers and other stakeholders to agree on the validation approach that will be used. This is an important step in planning for assessment validation.

Understand the purpose of validation

Validation is the process that an RTO uses to ensure their assessment system complies with quality standards as outlined in the Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015 and that the assessment methods they use to gather evidence are consistent with the requirements of the unit/s of competency and industry. The purpose of validation is to ensure the quality of the training organisation's assessment system and processes.

A validation should:

▶ provide a quality review of an organisation's assessment system

▶ ensure the RTO is compliant with regulatory requirements

▶ review assessment methods and tools used to gather evidence of competency to ensure that the evidence is valid, sufficient, current and authentic

▶ check that assessment processes are valid, fair, flexible and reliable

▶ ensure that assessors working across multiple sites are applying consistent standards and making reliable judgments

▶ contribute to continuous improvement

▶ help improve assessment practice of individual assessors

▶ contribute to professional relationships between assessors

▶ provide an opportunity for engagement with industry representatives.

Standards for RTOs

RTOs must comply with the Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015 (the Standards) in order to be registered. The Standards were endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments, made up of federal, state and territory ministers. The Standards are enabled by the *National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011* (Cth) and aim to provide consistency and quality in VET offerings.

You should ensure you are familiar with the Standards; in particular, Clause 1.8, which explains that assessment must:

▶ be conducted in accordance with the principles of assessment and the rules of evidence

▶ comply with the assessment requirements of the relevant training package or VET accredited course.

Clause 1.9 requires RTOs to implement a plan for 'ongoing systematic validation of assessment practices and judgments for each training product on the RTO's scope of registration [that includes] when validation will occur, which training products will be the focus for validation, who will lead and participate in validation activities and how the outcomes of these activities will be documented and acted upon'.

You can access the Standards at the Federal Register of Legislation website and a guide to the Standards on the ASQA website at:

▶ www.asqa.gov.au

Responsibilities of RTOs and assessors

RTOs must make sure their assessors comply with the assessment requirements listed in the units of competency in the training package/s they are using.

Part of validation is also looking at assessment decisions, which is sometimes called moderation. Moderation is the process of bringing assessment judgments and standards into alignment. The objective of moderation is to ensure the same standards are applied to all assessment results within the same unit/s of competency. This means that the candidate's evidence will be judged in the same way regardless of the RTO or individual assessor conducting the assessment.

The assessor's role

Your role as an assessor may require you to participate in assessment validation processes as part of a team under a lead validator where you collaborate with your colleagues (other trainers and administration staff), assessment candidates and industry or enterprise representatives to review the assessment processes that are implemented by the RTO to judge competence. All participants in a validation process should aim to ensure assessment is carried out fairly and openly in accordance with anti-discrimination and privacy regulations and in response to the needs of individual candidates.

Participating in a validation is a collaborative process that requires sound communication and planning skills.

Skills and knowledge used during the validation process:

▶ Planning skills to participate effectively in validation activities within agreed time frames.

▶ Communication and teamwork skills as you work with relevant people to decide the validation approach.

▶ Communication skills to share information and make suggestions in validation meetings.

▶ Understanding the different approaches to validation that may be appropriate before, during and after assessment.

▶ Understanding the legal and ethical responsibilities of assessors in the validation process to be fair to candidates.

▶ Knowing language, literacy and numeracy levels, and other issues that may impact on a validation.

▶ Understanding the legal issues of copyright and intellectual property.

Identify participants

Assessment validation is a collaborative process. The RTO quality or compliance manager, work colleagues, industry representatives, assessment candidates and members of the wider community may be invited to participate in the validation process. Clause 1.11 of the Standards for RTOs 2015, states that systematic validation of an RTO's assessment practices and judgments is undertaken by one or more persons who are not directly involved in the particular instance of delivery and assessment of the training product being validated, and who collectively have:

▶ vocational competencies and current industry skills relevant to the assessment being validated

▶ current knowledge and skills in vocational teaching and learning

▶ the training and assessment qualification or assessor skill set referred to in Item 1 or 3 of Schedule 1.

The discussion that takes place during validation ensures that various stakeholders agree on the interpretation of the unit of competency and the evidence requirements. In some cases, the assessment requirements may be interpreted differently by a range of assessors. Validation provides an important opportunity for stakeholders to agree on the interpretation of the benchmarking criteria to ensure consistency.

Understand the assessment resources

You need to be familiar with the assessment resources that you will be validating. RTOs vary in the way they develop assessment resources, but most require assessment instruments to be collated into an assessment bank – a collection of assessment instruments that are available for use by any of the assessors.

An assessment instrument is the task material given to an assessment candidate. It may include decision-making rules to be used by the assessor.

An assessment tool is the instrument with the addition of instructions for the assessor and the candidate.

Assessment instruments are also available from external sources, such as the following:

Other RTOs

Some RTOs offer the use of their assessment instruments for a fee.

Private sellers

Some private organisations sell assessment instruments for a fee. These are often provided in electronic format and are customisable to suit the needs of the assessor.

Publishers

Publishers such as Aspire Learning Resources offer a range of learner guides that include various assessment instruments for units of competency in various training packages. They may also offer trainers' and assessors' guides that are designed to assist assessors to meet their VQF/AQTF compliance obligations and contain assessment instruments with benchmark solutions that enhance the RTO's quality management processes.

Check assessment instruments

Assessment validation ensures that a check is performed on all assessment instruments being used to ensure they conform with the following requirements.

Assessment instruments should:

▶ comply with the RTO's assessment policy

▶ be consistent with the training and assessment strategy

▶ meet the objectives of the assessment plan

▶ be appropriate to the mode of delivery; that is, online or face to face, and the target group

▶ satisfy the rules of evidence and assessment principles.

Discuss assessment instruments

The validation session allows assessors to discuss specific aspects of the assessment instrument constructively to ensure there is consistency in interpreting and implementing the following aspects.

The following must be clear and unambiguous:

▶ be appropriate for the method of assessment

▶ instructions to assessors and candidates

▶ assessor judgment

▶ opportunities and instructions for recognition of prior learning

▶ instructions regarding reasonable adjustment

▶ methods that are used to record assessment outcomes.

Responsibility to check and validate

It is poor practice to source an assessment instrument from a printed book or the internet and rely on the mapping information provided by the developer as evidence that the assessment satisfies the RTO's requirements. More is required of an RTO and the assessors that it employs in taking into account the target group, mode of delivery, duration of the unit/course and the context in which it is delivered.

Necessity to record

It is the responsibility of the RTO to validate the assessment instrument and record the outcomes. The validation record serves as evidence of the RTO's compliance with VQF/AQTF standards during an audit. Any revisions made to the assessment instrument after validation contributes to the RTO's evidence of continuous improvement practices.

Check assessment bank tasks

When you use an assessment instrument from an RTO's assessment bank, you should check whether validation has already occurred. Read the record of validation to identify how recently the validation was completed and whether the unit of competency and evidence requirements have changed from those that were used in the validation. You may need to coordinate for a new validation to be conducted.

Graded results

In some cases, RTOs choose to provide candidates with a graded result. This means that in addition to being recorded as 'competent' or 'not yet competent' the candidate receives formal advice that describes their performance standard. It is essential that where candidates are to receive a graded result, a marking scheme should be included with the assessment instrument. Validation of assessment instruments provides an opportunity for assessors to interpret the marking scheme and agree on the dimensions that represent different levels of performance.

Understand assessment system policies and procedures

When participating in a validation process, you must follow the relevant policies and procedures that have been developed for your workplace.

VQF/AQTF requirements ensure that RTOs keep written policies and procedures for providing quality training and assessment consistent with its scope of registration and scale of operations.

An assessment policy underpins quality assessment by the RTO. It provides a framework of terminology, rights, responsibilities and obligations, and objectives. The RTO's approach to assessment validation must be detailed in its assessment policy, which must be readily available to the RTO's employees and should be regularly reviewed and revised where necessary as part of the organisation's continuous improvement system. There may often be a Validation policy that outlines the requirements for a validation plan and the detials of the units, and shows the statistical measures used to identify units for validation.

Components of an assessment policy

The key points that should be addressed in an effective assessment policy are outlined and described below. You need to keep these in mind and understand how they impact on your validation of assessment instruments, methods and processes.

Candidate selection

A candidate is any person presenting for assessment. The assessment policy should record the RTO's objectives and actions in regard to:

▶ informing candidates about prerequisite requirements

▶ supporting a candidate's language, literacy and numeracy skills

▶ providing accurate pre-assessment information

▶ determining whether the candidate has any need for reasonable adjustment

▶ providing comprehensive administrative support

▶ informing candidates about gaining credit for current competence or recognition of prior learning

▶ dealing with complaints and appeals

▶ requiring any information that may be used to identify a candidate to be removed from evidence prior to its inclusion in validation activities.

Rationale and purpose of competency-based assessment

Procedures will describe the steps to be taken in a competency- based assessment system. In this system, assessors are responsible for judging evidence presented by a candidate and making a decision regarding the candidate's competence in regard to a specific set of benchmarking criteria.

▶ The RTO will have registered to deliver and assess specific units of competence:

   – An AQF qualification is issued once the full requirements for a qualification, as specified in the nationally endorsed training package, are met.

   – A Statement of Attainment is issued when an individual has completed one or more units of competency from nationally recognised qualification/s or course/s.

Assessment records, and data and information management

The assessment policy must describe the actions that the organisation will implement to manage candidate records in regard to assessment, including:

▶ candidate results, such as records of their personal details, enrolment dates and assessment results

▶ qualifications and statements of attainment awarded

▶ assessment resources, including templates, questionnaires, checklists, summary sheets and records of feedback

▶ assessment tools

▶ storage of records.

Recognition of current competency (RCC), recognition of prior learning (RPL) and credit arrangements

There should be a policy and procedures for learners to:

▶ match their previous training, work or life experience with the skills and knowledge required for competent performance outlined in a qualification

▶ apply for credit transfer for units of competency that have been successfully completed at the same RTO.

The assessment policy should describe the RTO's approach to:

▶ allocating responsibility for activities related to RPL and credit transfer

▶ informing candidates of the opportunity to apply for RPL or credit transfer

▶ gathering relevant evidence to support a candidate's claim for

▶ RPL or credit transfer

▶ judging evidence

▶ maintaining appropriate records.

Assessment reporting procedures

The assessment policy should explain how to:

▶ provide feedback on assessment

▶ record the assessment outcome

▶ maintain records of the assessment procedure, evidence collected and outcome

▶ maintain confidentiality and privacy

▶ organise the issuing of statements of attainment and qualification.

Candidate grievances and complaints

Handling complaints is part of an RTO's continuous improvement system. Grievances may relate to candidate problems in regard the assessment approach. The complaints and grievance policy will usually identify:

▶ the process used to record complaints and grievances

▶ the role and responsibilities of RTO staff in responding to the grievance or complaint

▶ the process used to respond

▶ external review procedures.

A grievance or complaint may lead to an assessment appeal.

Assessment appeals

The assessment appeals policy should ensure that candidates receive feedback and counselling in regard to assessment outcomes. The policy should describe actions that are required to:

▶ provide the candidate with information on the reassessment and appeals process

▶ report disputed results

▶ process the reassessment or appeal.

Validation

The policy and procedures should include:

▶ The process to be implemented by the RTO to check that assessment instruments produce valid, reliable, sufficient, current and authentic evidence, and enable reasonable judgments to be made as to whether the requirements of the training package or accredited course have been met.

▶ The process for reviewing and making recommendations for future improvements to the assessment instrument and process.

▶ The process for maintaining records of assessment validation. For example, create a file for each validation activity, use specific forms or templates to record appointments, or record key points from conversations and minutes of meetings.

▶ A policy that requires the candidate's permission to use evidence they have submitted if it is to be part of a validation activity.

▶ A plan of the units selected and how this was determined using the statistical methods.

Evaluation and internal audit

The policy should describe when an audit will occur and the procedures to be followed; for example, suitably qualified personnel will be appointed to evaluate the organisation's policies, systems, processes and record-keeping to ensure compliance with internally established quality management benchmarks and standards mandated by regulatory authorities. The auditor may be an employee of the RTO, or the RTO may engage the services of an auditing firm.

Costs and resourcing

The policy and procedures should describe:

▶ the need for a budget for conducting validation activities; for example, wages and salaries for assessors, premises, transport, materials, insurance, utilities, technology, communication and professional development; the budget will influence whether validation panels are conducted in-house, in an external venue or online

▶ how the budget is confirmed.

Access and equity, and reasonable adjustment

The policy must ensure that there are procedures that promote access and equity in delivery and assessment for clients. This should include arrangements that should be made to meet the needs of individual candidates; for example, providing a reader or interpreter, ensuring access to the assessment location, providing assisting technology or special equipment, or adjusting the physical environment.

Partnership arrangements

If the RTO forms a partnership with an enterprise or industry organisation, or a collaborative arrangement with other RTOs, the policy should clearly outline the parameters and responsibilities of the RTO and parties involved; for example, how they will share resources, effort, time, costs, expertise and responsibility for assessment.

The RTO's assessment policy should describe the activities and responsibilities that the partners will contribute to assessment validation.

Links with human resources, industrial relations and the overall quality management system

The assessment policy should:

▶ describe the role and responsibility of RTO staff when participating in validation activities

▶ conform to industrial relations requirements

▶ acknowledge the impact of legislation, awards, workplace agreements and individual contracts when participating in validation activities

▶ explain reimbursement for any associated travel costs

▶ consider professional development.

The assessment policy and procedures should detail the quality assurance system the RTO must implement, which includes processes designed to help achieve comparability of standards. There are three major components to quality management of assessments: quality assurance, quality control and quality review. Standard 2 of the Standards is particularly relevant to quality assurance.

Confirm the validation approach

Once you are familiar with the purpose of the validation, the resources you will be working with and the organisation's assessment policies and procedures, you need to discuss with your validation partners how the validation will be conducted. Your approach should be aligned to the overall approach to validation that your RTO has recorded in their assessment policies and procedures.

The validation approach adopted by an RTO will vary to address their individual requirements. The validation coordinator is usually responsible for selecting the specific validation approach that will be used.

Validation approaches could include:

▶ panel reviews

▶ moderation meetings

▶ team meetings

▶ collectively developing and/or reviewing banks of assessment instruments and exemplars

▶ benchmarking or mapping exercises

▶ piloting assessment instruments

▶ peer review and mentoring

▶ internal audit processes

▶ client feedback

▶ using an independent assessment validation review.

Confirm the parties who will participate in the validation

The validation approach also needs to include specific strategies that establish the context, scheduling and procedures to be followed. The first step is confirming the people who will make up the validation team or group that you will be a member of.

Assessment validation should involve at least two people. Validators can be employees of your RTO, or you can seek external validators. Validation can be undertaken by one person or by a team of people. Your RTO must ensure the review process is completed by people who collectively hold:

▶ vocational competencies and current industry skills relevant to the assessment being validated

▶ current knowledge and skills in vocational teaching and learning

▶ the TAE40110 Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (or its successor) or the TAESS00001 Assessor Skills Set (or its successor).

The trainer and assessor who delivered/assessed the training product being validated:

▶ can participate in the validation process as part of a team

▶ cannot conduct the validation on his/her own

▶ cannot determine the validation outcome for any assessment judgments they made

▶ cannot be the lead validator in the assessment team.

The RTO will usually appoint a validation coordinator who identifies the people who will participate.

Participants may be:

▶ employers and employer associations

▶ other industry bodies

▶ trainers and assessors, or

▶ consultants.

Requirements for a person undertaking validation

An RTO must ensure that the people who are undertaking validation collectively hold vocational competencies and relevant, current industry skills to the assessment that is being validated. They must collectively hold current qualifications in training and assessment.

People who have vocational competence can contribute vital information in relation to the industry relevance of the assessment's context and conditions.

For further information, you can read ASQA's fact sheet 'Conducting validation' at this website:

▶ www.asqa.gov.au/media-and-publications/conducting-validation1.html

Select assessment and evidence samples

It is neither necessary nor feasible for the RTO to validate every assessment instrument or aspect of the assessment system. It is appropriate for the RTO to use a representative sample for assessment validation purposes. There is a range of risk factors that could be considered by the RTO when selecting the representative sample, as described here:

Risk factors that should be considered when prioritising items for validation:	
▶ Site of assessment: workplace, simulated, online or classroom?	▶ Low completion rates: this may be related to assessment factors.
▶ Assessment methods implemented: formative or summative?	▶ Assessments with high rates of 'not yet competent'
▶ Level of risk of incorrect judgment	▶ Impending audit. RTO may review what industry reports have flagged as an issue
▶ Enrolment size: degree of risk increases with number of candidates	▶ Units of competency recently added to scope
▶ Customer complaints	▶ High-risk units of competency: this refers to the type of work learners will perform
▶ Changes in the industry, e.g. in technology or legislation	▶ Level and experience of the assessor

Validation processes in small RTOs

Small RTOs should develop validation processes that comply with the VQF/AQTF regulations and are achievable within their resource constraints. Assessors in small RTOs should participate in regular quality reviews of all aspects of their assessment practice, including assessment tools and instruments. For example, a small RTO may include validation activities as part of their regular team meetings rather than convening formal validation review teams. It is crucial that smaller RTOs invest the necessary resources in maintaining the formal validation documents required for VQF/AQTF compliance.

Confirm the roles, responsibilities and obligations of the assessment validation coordinator

The validation coordinator should ensure that everyone involved in validation activities receives timely, formal advice on their assessment validation role and responsibilities as well as a copy of the validation action plan.

You need to know who the validation coordinator is and what their responsibilities are. A key responsibility is communication. This includes communicating with validation participants about the time, place and outcomes of the validation session/s, and explaining the type of resources and financial support available for assessors in their validation role. Here is a list of other responsibilities.

The assessment validation coordinator is usually responsible for:

▶ determining how the validation team is made up

▶ preparing a validation action plan (if required by RTO policies and procedures)

▶ scheduling assessment validation activities

▶ identifying units of competency to be included

▶ determining the sampling method

▶ confirming the validation approach

▶ ensuring revisions are made to assessment instruments when necessary

▶ sharing information about validation activities (including outcomes) to relevant stakeholders

▶ coordinating version control of assessment instruments.

Confirm the roles, responsibilities and obligations of participants

You need to know what your specific responsibilities will be.

The RTO/validation coordinator should advise assessment validation participants in advance of their responsibilities. These could include the requirements below.

Participant responsibilities include:

▶ participating actively in assessment validation activities

▶ undertaking advance preparations as required by the assessment validation coordinator

▶ collaborating constructively with validation team members

▶ maintaining appropriate records

▶ promoting the principles of innovation and continuous improvement

▶ behaving ethically

▶ avoiding conflicts of interest

▶ complying with relevant legislation, regulations and codes of conduct

▶ protecting the confidentiality of information that is shared as part of validation activities.

Confirm the location

Validation meetings may be conducted in the RTO's premises or any other suitable venue available to the RTO.

Validation meetings may also be conducted using appropriate online collaboration technologies, such as Adobe Connect, telephone or video conferences.

Further practical decisions in preparing for validation

Before making preparation decisions about assessment tools, many other decisions and arrangements need to be made.

Confirm the unit of competency or performance criteria to be used

The RTO quality manager and validation coordinator should collaborate to identify the unit of competency or performance criteria that are to be validated. Panel members require reasonable amount of time to receive validation material, interpret the benchmarking criteria, identify appropriate evidence and familiarise themselves with the necessary forms and checklists.

Identify the time frame

Assessment validation may occur before, during or after assessment. The assessment validation coordinator should use a method such as risk assessment to identify the optimal time to validate assessment processes, including assessment instruments. For example, RTOs that have recently added new units of competency to their scope would usually validate the assessment instruments prior to using them with candidates to confirm that they satisfy the rules and principles of assessment. The assessment validation coordinator will also be aware that these units would be included in the next external audit and are therefore potentially a high risk to the RTO.

Confirm how the validation procedure will be conducted

The validation may be conducted:

▶ face to face
▶ electronically using conference telephone calls or electronic collaboration tools, such as online meetings or forums.

Confirm the assessment tools and methods to be validated

Panel members require the most recent version of each of the assessment tools and methods that are to be included in the validation. The validation coordinator may also ask assessors to provide judged evidence for validation.

Identify the method for sampling

The RTO will use a representative sample of assessment instruments and methods for assessment validation purposes based on the risk they pose to the RTO in terms of quality and compliance.

Confirm records management

You should confirm what records will be created, how to maintain confidentiality and the duration of retention; for example, you may need to:

▶ create a hard-copy file for each validation activity
▶ use specific forms or templates that have been designed to schedule appointments, record key points from conversations, record the minutes of meetings, maintain a communication log or gather feedback from stakeholders.

Identify continuous improvement methods

Confirm how improvements will be made to both assessment instruments and validation procedures; for example, the validation team will need to know if they are to revise assessment instruments during validation sessions or if they are to prepare a report making recommendations for changes.

Ensure compliance with work health and safety (WHS) legislation

Before conducting any assessment validation activity, you should conduct a WHS risk assessment. During the validation process, you must be alert to any WHS hazards and take appropriate steps within your level of authority to minimise or eliminate the hazards. This may require you to bring your concerns to the attention of the validation coordinator, training and development manager, HR manager or WHS representative. Your workplace policies and procedures should include information that will be useful to you in reporting and controlling risk, both in your workplace and when conducting off-site assessments.

It is essential that you remember you have a duty of care to the panel members, and must take all reasonable steps to ensure their health and safety during the assessment validation process.

Developing a validation action plan

RTOs are required to produce records of assessment validation activities as evidence of VQF/AQTF compliance during audits so a comprehensive action plan is essential. The action plan should encompass all the activities the validation coordinator has identified and confirmed, and clearly indicate the approach to validation that the team is taking.

A comprehensive action plan will enable all participants to check when validation is scheduled to occur, the sampling method that will be used, and the units and qualifications that have been selected for validation and record keeping.

Ask your trainer for a template sample 'Assessment validation action plan'; Aspire has included relevant templates in its *Trainer's and assessor's guide* for this unit.

Scheduling validation activities

The RTO's validation policy should be designed to ensure that validation occurs at various points during the assessment process. This means that validation should occur before, during and after assessment has taken place. It is important to remember that in order to comply with the VQF/AQTF standards, the RTO must ensure that a review of assessment processes (including assessment instruments) occurs at least annually. Each training product on an RTO's scope of registration must be validated.

It is useful to develop an assessment validation schedule to identify when validation will take place. This should detail the training package used, the name of the assessment validation facilitator, the facilitator's contact details, dates of the pre- and post-assessment validations, and session details (venue, date, time, etc.).

Ask your trainer for a template sample 'Assessment validation schedule'.

ASQA fact sheet: Conducting validation

ASQA has produced a fact sheet on conducting validation with information on scheduling and determining appropriate sample sizes. A validation panel must validate a representative sample of assessments and must validate enough assessments to ensure that the results of validation are accurate and meaningful, i.e. they need a statistically valid sample. Calculating this is not a skill you must have, but it is relevant background knowledge.

You can read this information at:

▶ www.asqa.gov.au/media-and-publications/conducting-validation1.html

Validation before assessment

The reputation of the RTO will be damaged in cases where poorly designed or poorly administered assessment tools and methods are implemented. This lack of quality may also lead to incorrect judgments of competence. The RTO may also be found to be non-compliant in a VQF/AQTF audit. In addition, industry partners may require the RTO to validate prior to implementation.

Validators must ensure that instructions to candidates are clear and accurate so that candidates will be able to understand how their competence will be judged, the context of assessment and the evidence they are required to submit. This is especially important in an application for recognition of prior learning.

Validators must also agree on how competence will be judged so that there is shared understanding and the validation is consistent across all assessors. All units should be analysed to ensure there is a shared interpretation of the standards of performance that are required to make a judgment of competence.

It is also worth validating any assessment plans to ensure they meet candidate needs and comply with the assessment requirements.

When validating before assessment, validation team members must make sure they are prepared and have materials such as samples of acceptable evidence and assessment tools so that they can complete the validation process promptly within given time lines. Validating before assessment can also generate new ideas and improvements in clustering or sequencing assessments or using different methods.

Before assessment, you should:

▶ check assessment plans

▶ prepare assessment validation materials

▶ interpret the unit/s of the competency to be assessed

▶ agree on how competence will be judged and the required evidence

▶ interpret instructions to candidates and assessors

▶ review the assessment tools and methods

▶ review the recognition of prior learning assessment process.

Validation during assessment

Even though the instructions were validated before the assessment, you may find that some of them are ambiguous or unclear in practice or that the candidate is unable to gather the required evidence. You may find that the candidate has been asked to gather too much or not enough evidence, so ensure you look carefully at the evidence instructions. For example, the validation team may find that language, literacy and numeracy issues were not considered in the instructions. Or that there is a problem with third-party reporting where the supervisor was just 'ticking off' the student checklist with little consideration.

Validators must also make sure that assessors and candidates have no problems with any reasonable adjustments that have been made and that they allow for appropriate evidence to be collected. Below are some actions you can take to validate during assessment.

Interpret the scope

Interpret the scope for reasonable adjustment

Review instructions

Review the instructions to candidates and assessors

Review amount

Review the amount of assessment undertaken by the candidate

Make judgments

Make judgments based on the evidence provided

Validation after assessment

The validation process after assessment has taken place provides you with information that allows you to make revisions to enhance usability before an assessment instrument is used again and to ensure that VQF/AQTF requirements have been met. You will also be able to check whether all assessors made the same judgment of competence. It is your responsibility to acknowledge all feedback received from candidates and other assessors. It is essential that all findings from the validation process are recorded.

Validation activities after assessment:

▶ Review the effectiveness of the assessment instrument in gathering appropriate evidence.

▶ Review the standard of performance achieved.

▶ Ensure consistency in assessment decisions including benchmarks.

▶ Report and record findings.

▶ Include feedback from candidates.

▶ Review collected evidence and assessor judgments.

▶ Check authenticity of evidence provided.

▶ Review the record keeping and storage of evidence used.

Example

Discuss and confirm the approach to validation

Melinda has recently joined an RTO. She learns that the organisation's most valuable customer has engaged the RTO to deliver learning and conduct assessment for the retail assistants and fresh produce staff. The RTO has added a unit of competency to their scope to suit the needs of this major customer.

Melinda learnt about her RTO's validation approach through her induction into the organisation. She has read the company's assessment system policies and procedures.

She knows that their validation approach involves the following:

▶ Prepare a validation action plan and validation schedule.
▶ Conduct a risk assessment to prioritise units of competency for validation:
   – competency units that have recently been added to the RTO's scope, revised assessment instruments or competency units that have been the subject of customer complaints are the highest priority
   – competency units with a high number of enrolments are considered a medium risk.
▶ Validate assessment instruments before, during and after the assessment process.

Activity 1

1. You are participating in an assessment validation session and have been asked to explain the purpose of validation to panel members. List in dot points what you might say.

2. What legal and ethical requirements will you consider in preparing for a validation activity?

3. You work for an RTO that has been engaged by an organisation to deliver training to improve their staff's communication skills. They have agreed on a skill set that could be delivered and assessed to provide staff members with a statement of attainment. The management team in the organisation believe that many staff members will be entitled to recognition of prior learning (RPL). The quality manager of the RTO is aware that there have been several complaints from assessment candidates regarding the application process for RPL. You are to participate in a validation session to review the organisation's assessment process for candidates who are presenting evidence for RPL.

    Identify the approach to validation with a description of:

    ▶ the purpose of validation

    ▶ the context

    ▶ relevant assessment system policies and procedures to comply with

    ▶ the process/steps the validation panel will follow to review the assessment process for candidates who are presenting evidence for RPL.

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4. Complete this table by recommending at least three assessment validation
    activities you would consider using before, during and after assessment, and why
    you would do this.

Stage of assessment	Assessment validation activities	Reason for activity
Before assessment		

Stage of assessment	Assessment validation activities	Reason for activity
During assessment		
After assessment		

Click to complete Activity 1

1B Arrange materials for validation activities

Your workplace policies and procedures will describe the types of assessment validation activities that are conducted by the RTO. As an assessor, you play an important role in planning validation activities and may be called upon to undertake the coordination of specific aspects of validation activities.

The RTO will set up validation activities that satisfy their registration obligations and suit their specific operational needs by considering costs, availability of suitably qualified staff, relationships with industry and enterprises, enrolments and the scope of their registration.

Validation activities should analyse and review:

▶ the assessment instruments

▶ the type of evidence collected

▶ marking guides, if applicable

▶ assessment decisions/records of assessment outcomes

▶ other documents such as assessment plans, policies, training and assessment strategies, training package units and implementation guides.

Components of assessment tools

Components of assessment tools include guidelines for the assessor and instructions for the learner. Foundation skill requirements should be reflected in the tools.

Components of assessment tools:

▶ context

▶ conditions

▶ tasks to be administered

▶ outline of evidence gathered

▶ evidence criteria

▶ administration (recording and reporting information).

Review assessment tools and instruments

A significant component of the RTO's validation activities will focus on a quality review of assessment instruments (the specific questions or activity and methods used to assess competence). These may be supported by a profile of acceptable performance and the decision-making rules or guidelines to be used by assessors.

You and your group will validate the identified assessment methods and instruments to ensure that the RTO's assessment system and individual assessment instruments are VQF/AQTF compliant and satisfy the rules of evidence and principles of assessment.

It is important to remember that the VQF/AQTF Standards do not prescribe a specific format for assessment instruments. Individual RTOs are responsible for using a quality management approach to design assessment instruments that gather evidence, allowing a judgment to be made regarding a candidate's competence.

You should also review the assessment tools, as outlined in the assessment plan.

Ensure the assessments take into account:

▶ the characteristics of the target group

▶ the assessment context

▶ the specific assessment conditions

▶ the evidence criteria that will judge competence

▶ recording and reporting requirements.

Analyse collected evidence

In order to evaluate how effectively an assessment instrument gathers evidence that satisfies the rules and principles of evidence, it is necessary to perform a quality review of the evidence that has been gathered.

Evidence from candidates and assessors

The validation panel will need access to evidence submitted by candidates to demonstrate their competence. The validation team will need to evaluate evidence collected from more than one candidate using a specific assessment instrument to ensure there is consistency, reliability and validity in the type of evidence collected across the cohort of candidates. They may also be reviewing the same assessment that was conducted by different assessors.

Range of contexts and candidates

The amount of collected evidence evaluated by the validation team should be sufficient to enable them to consider how the assessment activity was implemented in various assessment contexts with a range of candidates (including those with special needs, such as a disability or lower levels of literacy and numeracy) and with varying reasonable adjustments.

Maintain privacy and confidentiality

The validation team will need to ensure that they comply with the RTO's policies in regard to maintaining privacy and confidentiality of the personal information of candidates and the organisation's information. Your workplace policies and procedures may require any information that may be used to identify a candidate to be removed from evidence prior to its inclusion in validation activities.

Material required for the validation process

Assessment validation must include a review of the material that is given to assessors to support them in judging competence. This advice could take the form of benchmark solutions, model answers and samples of products or work practices that demonstrate competent performance or marking rubrics (assessment marking guides). In those cases where the RTO awards a graded result (in addition to determining competency) to candidates, a marking rubric should be available to assessors.

To be prepared for the validation activities, make sure you have the following material available:

▶ the relevant training package

▶ samples of assessment instruments

▶ evidence gathered using assessment instruments

▶ records of assessment decisions, including marking guides and benchmark solutions

▶ assessment policies and strategies

- feedback from candidates
- feedback from assessors
- audit reports
- assessment validation meeting plans or agendas

- assessment validation participant records
- assessment validation benchmarking summaries
- sampling techniques.

Samples of assessment instruments

When selecting assessment instruments for validation activities, consider including those that were prepared by a range of assessors. In addition, select instruments that are used for various assessment contexts, such as workplace trainees, RPL or group learners. It is also important to review assessment instruments that use various assessment methods. For example, role-plays, simulation, observation, portfolio assessment, projects and quizzes are regularly used to gather evidence.

The RTO should not rely on validating assessment instruments that represent only one of these assessment methods. Best practice validation standards require the evaluation of a cross-section of assessment instruments.

The validation team should identify those units of competency, contexts of assessments and assessment instruments that pose the greatest risk of inaccurate information when determining the validation sample.

The validation team will usually review the following aspects of the assessment instrument:

- Instructions to the candidate.
- Instructions to the assessor.
- How well the assessment tool maps to the unit of competency.
- Compliance with assessment requirements.
- Access and equity.
- Reasonable adjustment.
- Compliance with the principles of assessment and rules of evidence.

Review benchmark solutions and marking guides

Assessors may develop a bank of solutions or decision-making rules that can be used to promote reliability in assessment. This is an important part of the assessment strategy that the RTO uses to satisfy their obligations in relation to Clause 1.8 of the Standards, which requires that 'Evidence presented for assessment is consistently interpreted and assessment results are comparable irrespective of the assessor conducting the assessment'. You may find that auditors will ask RTO staff for samples of the benchmark solutions or marking guides they use when judging competence.

Some RTOs develop a bank of exemplar solutions or model answers that may be made available to candidates. Remember that permission needs to be sought from learners to use their work as exemplars in a validation process.

Prepare reports and records of assessment outcomes

The RTO must be able to demonstrate that assessment judgments are made consistently and reliably by assessors. During an audit, auditors will ask the RTO to submit evidence that any assessor employed or engaged by the RTO would make the same assessment decision based on the evidence submitted by the candidate.

Your responsibilities during assessment validation require you to review samples of assessment decisions and records of assessment outcomes to ensure that the same standards are applied to all assessment results within the same unit of competency. This process of moderation brings assessment judgments and standards into alignment. Moderation sessions are often scheduled independently of other validation activities.

Other aspects of assessment policies, processes and outcomes

The RTO may use a risk-management approach when identifying which aspects of the assessment system to include in validation activities. Validation represents a significant investment in resources by the RTO, such as staff, accommodation and meeting facilities. To maximise the benefits to the organisation, the RTO should consider which aspects of their operations pose the greatest risk to quality, VQF/AQTF compliance and candidate satisfaction. The RTO can choose to include any aspect of the assessment system in their validation processes, although validation of assessment instruments will often be identified as the aspect of the assessment system that requires the closest scrutiny.

Assessment documentation

Validation activities may be conducted to ensure that the following documents meet the RTO's quality standards for distribution, clarity, version control and suitability for use by people of diverse backgrounds:

▶ candidate assessment guides, checklists, forms and templates used by assessors

▶ records of conversation forms

▶ feedback forms

▶ application forms for recognition of prior learning and reasonable adjustment.

Industry engagement

The RTO must consult with industry as part of its validation and other operations. Having industry representatives as members of the validation panel also helps with engagement with the training and assessment strategies, professional development and currency for trainers and assessors. The validation team may review:

▶ the method that is used to select industry representatives

▶ communication strategies

▶ the methods used for sharing feedback

▶ the way evidence is recorded relating to industry consultation and activities undertaken by the RTO to ensure they are aware of trends and changes that apply to specific industries.

Record evidence of validation processes and outcomes

The RTO will require participants in assessment validation activities to maintain a comprehensive record of the process. Your workplace policies and procedures will include a range of forms, templates and checklists that have been designed to be used during assessment validation activities. All validation documents themselves should be validated to make sure they are appropriate for the task.

Aspire has included the following templates in its *Trainer's and assessor's guide* for this unit:

▶ Assessment tool evaluation checklist

▶ Evaluating assessment tools to assessment methods template

▶ Evaluation of RPL assessment process checklist

▶ Formatting checklist for an assessment instrument

▶ Observation assessment instrument checklist

▶ Portfolio assessment instrument checklist

▶ Requirements for making assessment decisions

▶ Assessment validation action plan template

▶ Assessment validation schedule.

Documentation outlining the basis of assessment decisions

The purpose of reviewing documentation outlining the basis of assessment decisions is to promote reliability and consistency in assessor judgments. During validation activities, assessors should critically review the judgments that were made by other assessors to determine whether they have complied with the assessment requirements unit of competency.

Assessors are required to maintain records of the feedback they give to candidates and the documents they use to record their evaluation of the candidates' evidence.

These documents could include:

▶ evidence that has been submitted by candidates, where the assessor has inserted comments (hand-written or online) as they reviewed the evidence and awarded a result

▶ observation checklists

▶ interviews with candidates

▶ third-party reports

▶ feedback prepared regarding a candidate's assessment portfolio.

Reports and records of assessment decisions

The process of moderation ensures the same standards are applied to all assessment results within the same unit/s of competency. The RTO must take appropriate actions to ensure that when evidence is evaluated by various assessors, they all arrive at the same judgment of competence. For example, it would be unfair if two candidates submitted similar evidence to different assessors in the organisation and each assessor arrived at a different judgment that resulted in one candidate being assessed as 'competent' and the other being benchmarked as 'not yet competent'.

Validation also has the objective of ensuring moderation in assessment judgments across different RTOs. Candidates should be confident that the evidence they present to demonstrate their competence will be judged in accordance with the rules and principles of assessment and based on a uniform interpretation of the unit of competency and training package guidelines, regardless of which RTO they are enrolled with.

The RTO will include reports and records of assessment decisions in validation activities to enable participants to review the unit of competency, assessment instrument and evidence presented by candidates, and evaluate whether they would arrive at the same judgment that was recorded by the assessor. Where participants believe they would have arrived at a different assessment decision, the RTO should make recommendations to revise the assessment instrument or the instructions to the assessor to achieve moderation.

Implementation guides of the relevant training packages

The validation team needs to evaluate relevant aspects of the assessment process to ensure they comply with the industry's preferred approach. This will involve confirming that assessors have necessary qualifications, and reviewing the strategies that are used to conduct assessments.

Validation team members may require access to information, such as workplace policies and procedures, sample assessment instruments (including instructions to assessors), student handbooks, assessor qualification records and exemplar solutions to evaluate conformance with the training package implementation guide.

The implementation guide of a training package may have information about:

▶ using a simulated environment in assessment

▶ access and equity issues

▶ relevant licencing

▶ resource and equipment requirements

▶ context of assessment such as workplace assessment

▶ an assessment checklist.

Assessment requirements of the relevant units of competency

From January 2014, all training packages submitted for endorsement have needed to comply with new Standards for Training Packages. This was aimed at supporting the introduction of the streamlined training package model and improving consistency in the language and quality of training and assessment.

Streamlined units of competency do not include an evidence guide to assist with the interpretation and assessment of the unit as older training packages did. However, companion volumes, which support the implementation of training packages, are not compulsory but they offer authoritative industry advice. They may contain some information that must be considered when designing and validating assessment tools; for example, the issues that have been of concern in industry and have been addressed in the streamlined training package, access and equity, foundation skills, licensing requirements resource, equipment requirements and work placement hours.

You will need to refer to performance evidence, assessment conditions and knowledge evidence during validation activities to check that the assessment meets requirements.

Example

Arrange materials for validation activities

An RTO specialises in delivering and assessing workers in the childcare industry. They have recently added the Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care from the CHC Community Services Training Package to their scope.

The RTO's approach relies on blended delivery. Learners complete a series of learner guides developed by Aspire Learning Resources for the units of competency in the Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care, receive on-site support from an RTO trainer and attend a workshop one day per month at the RTO's training premises.

The RTO intends to use the final assessment tools that are in the Aspire Learning Resources's learner guides for summative assessment. The quality manager has organised for the final assessments in the learner guide and additional tools, such as observation checklists that were sourced from Aspire's trainers' and assessors' guides, to be validated. The RTO has customised the various checklists to suit the individual needs of the candidates that are to be assessed.

Validation sessions are to occur prior to using the assessment instruments and again post-implementation. The evidence that was gathered by a pilot group that trialled the assessment instrument will be reviewed in the validation session.

Activity 2

If you were arranging material for validation of units of competency referred to in the previous example, you may be required to complete an assessment validation materials cover sheet. Use this example cover sheet for assessment material to be used for assessment validation.

What materials should accompany this form? List materials that must be attached/ enclosed and examples of materials that may be relevant.

Assessment validation materials coversheet	
RTO:	
Validation group	CHC50113 Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care (Release 4)
Date	
Unit/s of competency	▶ *CHCECE002 Ensure the health and safety of children* ▶ *CHCECE003 Provide care for children*
Assessors' names	Linda Murphy Lorelei San Diego Raj Singh
The following materials are attached or enclosed with this form:	

Click to complete Activity 2

1C Check documents used in the validation process for accuracy and version control

RTOs are required under the VQF/AQTF Standards to manage records to ensure they are accurate, current, can be easily accessed, and that their integrity and confidentiality is maintained.

You have an obligation to contribute to monitoring and reviewing various aspects of the organisation's record-keeping system. For example, during audit processes, the RTO will be asked to produce evidence that their operations comply with this aspect of the Standards. In order to achieve compliance, the RTO will provide you with written instructions of how you should maintain workplace records (including those related to the validation process) and ensure that you participate in relevant induction and regular refresher training.

It is essential that the validation process is designed to ensure that a systematic check is performed on the accuracy, version control and currency of any materials that are used. The validation panel will need clear instructions in relation to how validation records will be documented and who will maintain the validation records and samples.

Documents used to record validation processes

RTOs develop various documents to record the actions they take in the validation process. These records are critical pieces of evidence in the organisation's VQF/AQTF compliance regime. They are also used by the validation panel in recommending revisions to assessment processes and sharing their findings with relevant stakeholders.

The validation panel needs to check that names, dates and comments that have been completed during validation activities accurately record the validation proceedings. The various points where a check box should have been completed must also be reviewed for accuracy. Your RTO may develop a checklist that you use to review the completed validation process documents. This review checklist should also be retained in the RTO's record-keeping system.

The documents that are used during assessment validation include:

▶ assessment validation cover sheets

▶ assessment validation schedules

▶ assessment validation action plans

▶ assessment validation participant attendance records

▶ pre-assessment validation checklists

▶ post-assessment validation checklists

▶ assessment mapping

▶ assessment tools, processes and evidence checklists.

Materials used in validation

The following is a summary of the aspects of documents that should be included on a quality checklist, which the validation panel may use when reviewing accuracy. The validation panel also needs to check that names, dates and comments that have been completed during validation activities accurately record the validation proceedings. The various points where a check box should have been completed must also be reviewed for accuracy. Your RTO may develop a checklist for you to use to review the completed validation process documents. This review checklist should also be retained in the RTO's record-keeping system.

Assessment context

Criteria:

▶ Purpose of assessment is identified.

▶ Target group (characteristics and needs of candidates) are identified.

▶ Assessment requirements are identified.

▶ Learning outcomes relevant to assessment requirements (if required) are identified.

▶ Assessment method identified.

▶ Justification of reasonable adjustment (in keeping with the requirements of the training package).

Competency mapping

Criteria:

▶ RTOs use mapping documents during the assessment design process and as part of their evidence in a VQF/AQTF audit to ensure they will gather evidence to enable a reasonable judgment of competence. Mapping can be a subjective process, particularly concerning foundation skills. The assessor's length and depth of work experience can impact significantly on their competence to perform reliable mapping.

▶ It is important that the validation panel checks mapping documents for accuracy. The teamwork approach will help to address the issues related to subjectivity and will promote consistency in evidence-gathering.

Information to candidates in assessment instruments

Criteria:

▶ Instructions to the candidate are clear and appropriate to the candidate's individual needs.

▶ Instructions to the candidate clearly identify the evidence the candidate must present as part of the assessment process.

▶ Instructions to the assessor are clear and promote reliability in assessment.

▶ Required materials and resources are identified.

▶ Instructions for reasonable adjustment are included.

▶ Where the assessor is required to give verbal instructions to candidates, the validation panel may wish to role-play the process to check the accuracy of the information.

▶ It is good practice for the validation participants to attempt to follow any instructions given to candidates that require them to access specific websites. It is essential that any instructions that link assessment activities to specific websites are current at the time of assessment. Candidates may become confused and panic if they cannot access information as instructed during assessment.

Decision-making rules

Criteria:

▶ The instrument describes the benchmarks that will be used to judge competency.

▶ Where the candidate receives a graded result, the performance criteria for each grade are described clearly. The validation panel should check any numerical scoring used in graded assessment for accuracy.

Reporting

The instrument must accurately describe the RTO's reporting process. The validation panel should check that the information given on the method that is used to record results and the availability of results to candidates accurately reflects workplace policies and procedures. In those cases where candidates are required to use the internet to obtain reports, the validation panel should attempt to access results using the instructions that are given to candidates.

Use a risk-management approach

You may find it helpful to adopt a risk-management approach to checking documents in validation sessions and activities. Using this approach, the validation panel will identify the aspects of documents that are most likely to have errors or inconsistencies, and the consequences of those errors and inconsistencies for various stakeholders.

Consequences for candidates

▶ Time will be wasted in formal examinations if a candidate tries to perform tasks with incorrect figures or cannot understand what they are required to submit.

▶ The impact may be even greater if the candidate has low levels of language, literacy or numeracy, or low levels of previous education or work experience.

Consequences for RTOs

The RTO may experience negative impacts from inaccuracy in assessment instruments. Candidates may lodge complaints or appeals and may share negative feedback about the RTO with their colleagues. The reputation of the RTO and its relationship with industry and enterprises may be damaged if these types of issues are not isolated cases.

Consequences for industry and individual employers

Industry and individual employers may have problems where candidates are incorrectly judged in regard to their competence.

Consequences if validation documents are inaccurate

▶ Errors may be detected during internal and external audits and the RTO will need to invest additional resources in undertaking rectification work. They will need to have the documents re-examined by the audit team.

▶ Unnecessary revisions may be made to assessment tools.

Adopt version control methods

Version control refers to the process used in organisations to manage their files and records to ensure users are able to identify the currency of the file or record.

Version control can be used to track the changes that occur to a document and record its distribution throughout the document's development, implementation and subsequent revision/s.

Make sure you follow the procedure to name a file or records, such as checklists and consultation papers, so they are easy to access at a later date; this should be detailed in the RTO's workplace procedures.

You also need to be familiar with the version control procedure adopted in your workplace to ensure you have sourced the currently used version of any assessment instruments or documentation used in assessment activities. Those responsible for quality management and continual improvement may need to approve amendments to documents, such as forms, templates and checklists.

Example

Maintain version control for documents used in the validation process

The following is an extract from the procedures manual of an RTO. The extract contains instructions for version control.

1. All draft documents will be initially numbered Version 0.1.

2. After each revision, the number to the right of the dot point increases by 0.1 (Version 0.2, 0.3, etc.).

3. When the document is authorised by the quality manager, the number converts to Version 1.0 and the document is distributed.

4. Once published, the number to the right will increase with each minor amendment approved (Version 1.2, 1.2 etc.).

5. A full review of a document will result in the number to the left of the point increasing by 1 and the number to the right of the dot point returning to zero (Version 2.0).

6. In all internal documents, the version control number and date of amendment are to be indicated in the left-hand margin of the footer section. The version number and date approved are to be updated after each amendment. The date the policy came into effect must remain the date the original version was approved until the next full review.

Activity 3

1. What do VQF/AQTF Standards specifically require of RTOs in relation to managing assessment records?

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2. How do RTOs ensure that records are managed in compliance with the VQF/AQTF Standards?

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3. Explain what it means to take a risk-management approach to validation, and why this approach should be taken.

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Click to complete Activity 3

1D Analyse relevant units of competency and agree on evidence needed to demonstrate competence

Assessment is the process of gathering evidence and making judgments on whether the candidate has demonstrated they can perform to the standard expected in the workplace, as expressed in the units of competency in a relevant training package or the learning outcomes of an accredited course.

An understanding of assessment underpins learning in this unit.

You need to know:

▶ how to determine the evidence needed to demonstrate competence in a competency-based environment

▶ the critical aspects of validation, including validation of assessment processes, methods and products.

Types of assessment

Here are terms for various types of assessment methods described below. Competency-based assessment is evidence-based, although it has similarities to criterion-referenced and standards-based assessment when a candidate's ability to meet performance criteria is being assessed. While an understanding of evidence requirements is crucial to developing and validating assessments, in VET the term 'competency-based assessment' is used more often than the term 'evidence-based assessment'.

Criterion-referenced assessment and standards-based assessment

These types of assessment assess against fixed criteria or standards. Fixed standards or performance criteria are a set of established benchmarks, which could include:

▶ units of competency from relevant training packages

▶ national assessment requirements of relevant training packages

▶ performance standards and evidence requirements of learning and development activities

▶ requirements of legislation, codes of practices, standards and guidelines

▶ organisational requirements or product specifications.

Evidence-based assessment

Evidence-based assessment uses units of competency described in relevant training packages and involves gathering sufficient evidence to make a judgment about whether the specified standards have been met.

Norm-referenced assessment

Norm-referenced assessment judges candidates against others in the cohort. Those with the best performance receive the highest grades. Norm-referenced assessment is not suitable for use in competency-based training as it does not measure a person's performance against a standard or criterion.

Formative assessment

Formative assessment is the term used to describe assessment conducted throughout the learning process. These can include the activities you provide learners with during each session to allow them to practise skills or apply knowledge, or they may be discrete tasks that learners need to successfully complete before they can move on to the next stage of learning.

Summative assessment

Summative assessment is used to determine the learner's skills and knowledge in a comprehensive manner; i.e. it will take into consideration the entire learning program rather than a single part of it. Summative assessment is the final assessment on which an assessor will determine the learner's competence or successful completion of the learning.

This kind of assessment generally occurs at the very end of a learning program.

Confirm assessment requirements and benchmarks

Once you have established the RTO's approach to validation, you need to work closely with your peers to analyse relevant benchmarks that will be used to judge the candidate's competence for assessment. You should use your teamwork, communication and planning skills to work collaboratively and effectively with your validation partners.

The benchmarks you refer to when judging evidence for assessment will be determined by your employment situation. If you are employed by an RTO, you will generally judge competence in relation to the assessment requirements of the units of competency. Assessment requirements consist of the performance evidence, knowledge evidence and assessment conditions in a unit of competency. Before training packages were streamlined, the term 'critical aspects of assessment' was used.

If you are not employed by an RTO, you may be asked to assess the candidate's performance against the learning outcomes or performance criteria that are identified in course curricula, enterprise or industry standards, or product specifications. In these situations, unless your employer partners with an RTO, the candidate will not receive a formal qualification or statement of attainment. Workplace policies and procedures should provide information to help you determine the benchmarks you need to use for assessment.

Assessment tools should enable you to judge a candidate's competence against all of the tasks identified in the elements of a unit or module benchmarking criteria.

To be valid, assessment should cover the broad range of skills and knowledge that are essential to competent performance, i.e. task skills, task management skills, contingency management skills and job/role environment skills.

Validation partners need to agree on their interpretation of the benchmarking criteria before they can determine whether assessment tools are effective in gathering appropriate evidence. Assessment tool designers and validators must use information from the unit or module elements, performance criteria and assessment requirements to determine what competence looks like and use this information to set benchmarks for measuring the learner's performance using 'observable behaviours'. Performance and knowledge evidence describe what a learner must demonstrate to be considered competent. Assessment conditions describe the conditions under which a learner must demonstrate this, including specific requirements for resources, trainers and assessors, and the context for assessment.

Units of competency

In each unit of competency, the training package will specify the skills and knowledge required to perform effectively in the workplace. The validation panel should understand each component of the unit of competency and how they contribute to establishing benchmarks for assessment. They should consider the 'Unit Sector' and 'Unit Application' descriptors for the competency unit as this provides an overview of the intended work outcomes of the unit/module.

Foundation skills essential to performance are generally explicit in the performance criteria of the unit of competency, but sometimes they are not, and should be taken into account. Here is an outline of the main components of a unit of competency that should be used to develop benchmarks.

Elements of competency

Elements of competency describe the outcomes of the significant functions and tasks that make up the competency.

Elements describe actions or outcomes that are demonstrable and assessable.

The way that elements are worded provides clues about evidence requirements; for example, an action verb generally indicates that a candidate must demonstrate a certain skill.

Performance criteria

Performance criteria specify the required performance in relevant tasks, roles, skills (including foundation skills) and the applied knowledge that enables competent performance.

Knowledge evidence

Knowledge evidence, as the name implies, specifies what individuals must know in order to carry out the work tasks described in the unit of competency safely and effectively.

Performance evidence

Performance evidence, as the name implies, specifies what individuals must do to show that they satisfy the performance standards in the unit of competency.

Assessment conditions

This field describes mandatory conditions for assessment; for example, details of equipment and materials, contingencies, physical conditions, relationships with other people and time frames.

Assessment conditions may specify that the candidate has access to resources, which may have a bearing on evidence requirements.

Determine assessment benchmarks when candidates are not enrolled in a unit of competency

Validation activities in some environments, such as workplace settings, may centre on assessment tools that have been designed to assess learners who are not enrolled in a unit of competency. Here is information about other situations that can assist you if you are required to validate assessments in these contexts.

Assessment criteria of course curricula

Course documents that describe delivery and assessment strategies are referred to as 'curriculum'.

In some cases, curriculum is developed to suit a specific context where no unit exists in a training package.

For example, the delivery of site management and conservation learning in a remote Indigenous community. In the course curriculum, the RTO will include details of how they intend to contextualise learning and assessment to suit the needs of the group of learners; for example, the course curriculum may be contextualised to include assessment information that reflects the types of leadership, negotiation, relationships and languages used in that community.

It is essential that when candidates are being assessed against units of competency in a training package, the curriculum, including any contextualisation of assessment, continues to satisfy the evidence requirements specified in the units of competency.

Performance specifications of an enterprise or industry

Private organisations or enterprises and industry associations may develop their own organisational benchmarks that they use to assess the competence of those working in a specific work location or job role. These types of standards are developed by private organisations that identify a need for specific standards that relate to their own operations. The standards may relate to workplace health and safety, sophisticated manufacture or logistic processes, or work locations that involve very specific environmental working conditions.

The HR manager in the organisation where you are conducting assessments should be able to provide you with printed or electronic information about the standards you will use to judge performance.

Product specification

Some industries and workplaces require workers to produce products that satisfy specific criteria. These criteria may relate to design specifications, the client brief, Australian quality standards or safety requirements. As an assessor, you may be asked to judge whether the candidate is competent to produce a product or part of a product that satisfies product specifications. You should ask for information about the product specifications and any relevant quality standards from the candidate's:

- ▶ line manager
- ▶ team leader
- ▶ training and development officer
- ▶ quality assurance manager
- ▶ HR manager.

Identify the type of evidence needed for competence

Evidence is gathered information that provides proof of competency. While evidence must be sufficient, trainers and assessors must focus on the quality rather than the quantity of evidence. Your key objective when conducting assessment validation is to perform a quality review of whether the assessment tool (both the assessment instrument and the method of gathering the evidence) satisfies the rules of evidence to enable reasonable judgments to be made in regard to the candidate's competence against the benchmarking criteria.

The evidence used to make a decision about competence must be valid, sufficient, authentic and current. The assessment tool must be capable of gathering evidence that meets these rules.

Each of these rules of evidence requirements is covered in greater depth in Topic 2.

An assessment tool must gather evidence of this quality

Valid
The assessment tool must gather evidence that covers skills and knowledge required for competent performance.

Sufficient
The assessment tool must gather evidence of sufficient quality, quantity and relevance to judge a learner's competency.

Current
The assessment tool must gather evidence from the present or very recent past.

Authentic
The assessment tool includes requirements to ensure that the evidence is authentic.

Confirm types of evidence

Assessment tools are used to gather evidence from candidates. Evidence takes three forms: direct, indirect and supplemental. Your validation team needs to confirm the types of evidence the candidate must provide in order to demonstrate competence.

The distinguishing features of each type of evidence are summarised in the following table.

Direct evidence
Direct evidence is anything that the candidate has either produced themselves or which they have been primarily responsible for. Forms of evidence include: ▶ audio-recording or podcast ▶ audiovisual recording using DVD, video or YouTube ▶ correspondence (letters, memos, fax messages and emails) composed by the candidate ▶ demonstrations of skill ▶ diary extracts or learning journal entries ▶ materials or tools used to perform work ▶ observation by an assessor or workplace supervisor ▶ photographs ▶ published works, such as operational manuals ▶ samples of work ▶ workplace policies and procedures written by the candidate.

Indirect evidence
Indirect evidence consists of work that can be reviewed or examined by assessors that was gathered off the job, including: ▶ accredited courses or qualifications they have been completed ▶ budgets prepared or implemented by the candidate ▶ the candidate's curriculum vitae (CV) or rèsumè ▶ the candidate's performance appraisal ▶ certificates of achievement (this could be for non-accredited training) ▶ formal certificates or results of relevant training that has been completed ▶ job specifications or position descriptions ▶ letters of appreciation from customers, suppliers or work colleagues ▶ membership of professional associations ▶ minutes of meetings that contain information on your participation and performance in specific activities ▶ presentations or written speeches ▶ references from previous employers ▶ letters of support ▶ workplace awards and certificates ▶ a written test of underpinning knowledge.

Supplementary evidence

Supplementary evidence is additional evidence presented by candidates to demonstrate competence. For example:

▶ It may be necessary to seek supplementary evidence where a candidate has submitted a portfolio of documents or work samples for assessment. The assessor may liaise with the candidate to agree on additional evidence that could be gathered to address these gaps.

▶ It may be agreed that the candidate will provide a written report or answer questions that are designed to address the required knowledge component of the unit of competency.

▶ Testimonials from employers may also be used as supplementary evidence.

Critical aspects of validation

The critical aspects of validation are the activities that ensure the validation panel can be certain the assessment is conducted in accordance with the principles of assessment and the rules of evidence.

In order to validate assessment, the following must be validated:

▶ assessment processes

▶ methods and tools

▶ the collected evidence leading to assessment decisions

▶ assessment decisions.

Methods of judging the critical aspects of validation

In order to confirm that assessment is conducted in accordance with the principles of assessment and the rules of evidence, a range of questions will be most relevant. Here are examples of questions that can assist in judging the processes, methods, products involved in administering an assessment tool and making decisions about evidence. There is more information about the principles of assessment and rules of evidence in Topic 2.

Assessment processes

Is the assessment process:

▶ Flexible: for example, is a range of assessment methods used? Does the assessment reflect the candidate's needs?

▶ Valid: for example, does assessment cover a broad range of skills and knowledge essential to competent performance? Does it assess what it claims to assess?

▶ Reliable: for example, are assessment results comparable, irrespective of the assessor conducting the assessment?

▶ Fair: for example, where appropriate, are reasonable adjustments applied by the RTO?

While validators may discuss the assessment process with the assessor who conducted the assessment, only the evidence collected, retained and recorded will support a validation decision.

Assessment methods

▶ Cost: is the method of assessing skills effective and practical, including the time and resource demands placed on candidates?

▶ Required skill level: does the method call for a higher level of skill than is required in the workplace?

▶ Sufficiency: will the method gather sufficient evidence to make a judgment about whether the standards specified have been met, given that candidates may be located in workplaces with widely differing environments.

Assessment product

▶ Transferability: for a product or performance to be judged as valid evidence, there needs to be evidence that the skills and knowledge used to produce an assessment product or performance could be demonstrated in other similar situations.

▶ Aligned to competency: participant performance is aligned to the unit of competency and associated assessment requirements.

▶ Broad ranging: assessment of knowledge and skills is integrated with their practical application.

Assessment decisions

▶ Do assessment decision-making rules enable consistent outcomes? Are they clear?

Example

Analyse relevant units of competency and agree on the evidence needed to demonstrate competence

Josh is a trainer/assessor at an RTO that offers training and assessment of units of competency in the SIS Sport, Fitness and Recreation Training Package.

He will deliver training and conduct assessment for the SIS30315 Certificate III in Fitness on-site to a group of employees at a large fitness centre. The RTO's quality manager will be coordinating a validation process to review the quality of the assessment instruments and RPL process that have been developed for Certificate III in Fitness.

The process followed by Josh and repeated by the quality manager to agree on evidence needed to demonstrate competence is outlined below.

Obtain documents

Josh needs to understand the benchmarks that he will use to judge the performance of candidates enrolled in *SISFFIT002 Recognise and apply exercise considerations for specific populations,* Release 1. He obtains a copy of the unit of competency and assessment requirements documents from training.gov.au.

Read 'Application' section

Josh begins by reading the 'Application' section of the unit of competency, which describes the work activity and relevant work roles. He notes that there are no licensing requirements and that the unit does not apply to the provision of exercise to high-risk clients.

Read elements

He uses the elements to understand the outcomes that workers performing this activity are expected to achieve.

Analyse assessment requirements

Josh reads the assessment requirements of the unit.

The performance evidence section describes the required performance needed to demonstrate achievement of the element. Knowledge evidence requirements specify what candidates must know in order to complete the tasks outlined in the element and their performance criteria. The knowledge evidence requirements of this unit of competency specify the legislation, regulations, risk management strategies, organisational policies and procedures, knowledge of anatomical and physical considerations, roles of relevant professionals and symptoms of physical distress that a candidate must demonstrate knowledge of.

The assessment conditions include relevant information, such as the requirement that candidates must demonstrate skills through assessment activities that allow them to develop a variety of exercise programs for specific population clients over a period of time, ensuring adequate time to allow for the implementation of required modifications.

Consult workplace assessment policies

John is aware from discussions with colleagues that it is essential that assessors gather clear evidence of the application of skills and knowledge detailed in the unit of competency. His workplace has developed a policy that requires him to use questioning to gather evidence of the knowledge component of the unit, and observation for the performance evidence component.

Check performance evidence requirements against capability of existing tool

The performance evidence requirements are extensive and explicit about the types of evidence that need to be collected from candidates. SISFFIT002 assessment candidates must plan, document, implement and evaluate suitable exercise programs within their scope of practice for 10 clients from specific groups. The exercise programs of half the clients must be planned under the guidance of medical or allied health professionals. There must be evidence that:

▶ the assessment candidate has modified programs for at least three clients
▶ sessions incorporate specific requirements, providing ongoing and clear feedback to clients
▶ the candidate has conducted periodic ongoing evaluation of outcomes from fitness programs.

The foundation skill requirements of this unit describe observable skills that a competent worker would need to have.

Assessment evidence for this unit must be gathered and recorded over time. Observable skills need to be witnessed by a qualified observer. The knowledge that candidates must demonstrate that they have is best covered by questions as it only becomes relevant at times that cannot be scheduled in workplaces.

The existing assessment tool includes portfolio-based assessment, which caters well for the need for recording and reporting evidence over time.

An observation checklist allows a record of observable skills, such as 'use active listening and open and closed probe questioning to identify specific population client needs and preferences'.

The questionnaire and observation checklist also provide supplementary evidence.

Confirm assessment tool

Josh feels confident that he understands the benchmarks and assessment requirements, and is equipped to participate in a quality review of the assessment instrument with the purpose of confirming its suitability.

Activity 4

1. Select a unit of competency. Write down the step-by-step process you will carry out to read and interpret it in order to identify the evidence needed and the type of assessment methods.

2. What are the three critical aspects of validation?

3. Choose a unit of competency you are familiar with. Identify at least four problems with using only a questionnaire to collect evidence for the unit.

Click to complete Activity 4

Summary

1. Validation is a quality review process that benefits RTOss because it confirms the assessment system can consistently produce valid assessment judgments.

2. Assessment validation is a quality review process rather than a single activity. You will need to undertake various tasks prior to any assessment validation session in order to maximise your personal contribution to the improvement of the assessment system.

3. RTOs must comply with the Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015 (the Standards) in order to be registered. Validation activities examine whether assessment is be conducted in accordance with the principles of assessment and the rules of evidence, and comply with the assessment requirements of the relevant training package or VET accredited course, as required by Clause 1.8, 1.9, 1.10, 1.11 of the Standards.

4. VQF/AQTF requirements ensure that RTOs keep written policies and procedures for providing quality training and assessment consistent with its scope of registration and scale of operations. An assessment policy underpins quality assessment by the RTO. It provides a framework of terminology, rights, responsibilities and obligations, and objectives. General quality assurance policies and procedures and reporting procedures also apply to validation activities.

5. Assessment validation activities may be conducted before, during or after an assessment tool has been implemented.

6. Participants must agree on an interpretation of the elements and performance criteria in the unit of competency and share an understanding of the assessment requirements. They need to know:
    ▶ how to determine the evidence needed to demonstrate competence in a competency-based environment
    ▶ the critical aspects of validation, including validation of assessment processes, methods and products.

7. All documents used in the validation process must be checked for accuracy and version control.

Topic 2

In this topic you will learn how to:

2A **Actively participate in validation sessions and activities using appropriate communication**

2B **Apply principles of assessment and rules of evidence**

2C **Check that assessment instruments conform to requirements**

2D **Review and use assessment maps to determine the validity of assessment instruments**

Participate in the validation of assessment tools

Well-developed communication, teamwork and planning skills are essential for you to actively participate with your validation colleagues as part of a validation workshop or panel session. You need to be organised and well prepared so that you can contribute to an informed discussion about:

▶ benchmarks for assessment

▶ decision-making rules

▶ assessment tools, including the clarity of instructions

▶ recording mechanisms

▶ samples of evidence collected

▶ training package requirements.

2A Actively participate in validation sessions and activities using appropriate communication

Participating fully in a validation session involves sharing information, interpreting units of competency and comparing and evaluating assessment plans, practices, methods, tools, collected evidence and assessment decisions.

To make an effective contribution, you need to thoroughly understand the unit/s of competency, and be able to communicate your ideas clearly and support your findings with appropriate evidence. In addition, you need to listen to what others are saying and be prepared to understand their perspectives. Methods and modes of communication should include respectful and effective questioning and discussion.

People involved in the validation may include assessors from a range of RTOs and representatives from organisations and industry.

Validation responsibilities

When actively participating in validation sessions, you will need to apply your understanding and a broad range of your skills to tasks that have some complexity. Relevant skills include analysis, interpretation, communication, collaboration, organisation and prioritisation. You need to analyse and interpret relevant policies and procedures, benchmarks and validation materials, and identify and evaluate options against agreed criteria.

Another responsibility involves coming to a shared understanding of what evidence is required, based on the assessment requirements in the unit of competency. Ask yourself: what evidence would a competent person be producing in the workplace? Relate this to the assessment requirements. In some cases the assessment requirements will be quite restrictive, and stipulate the amounts and types of evidence that must be presented for assessment. However, in many instances assessors will need to use their professional judgment to interpret the assessment requirements information and decide on the appropriate evidence needed.

Responsibilities of a validation panellist are described here.

Unpack unit of competency

Panellists must agree on an interpretation of the unit of competency, especially about the assessment requirements.

Determine AQF level

You need to develop an understanding of the AQF level of the person performing the role by identifying how much autonomy, support, guidance, initiative or experience a worker performing these tasks as part of their job needs to have.

Examine assessment tools

Review and evaluate each part of the summative and formative assessment tools and methods to confirm whether they:

▶ will achieve what is intended

▶ are appropriately designed to gather evidence that assessors can use to make a judgment of the candidate's competence.

Apply principles of assessment

Apply the principles of assessment to ensure assessments are fair, flexible, valid and reliable.

Apply rules of evidence

Apply the rules of evidence to ensure assessments are valid, authentic, sufficient and current.

Actively contribute

Assessment validation is a collaborative process and you will be required to work with people from within and outside of the RTO to perform validations. You need to be receptive to the feedback and ideas of other participants in the validation session or activity. You may find that other participants visualise the performance criteria being performed in a workplace differently from you. The validation leader will help participants to reach consensus on the interpretation of the assessment requirements.

You may find that once the introductory part of the validation session or activity is concluded, the larger group of participants is broken into small groups to validate individual units of competency and relevant assessment instruments. Ideally, each group validating an assessment will include at least two assessors and one industry or enterprise representative.

Participating and contributing to validation activities is likely to enhance the professional development of participants in the following ways.

Networking and communication

You should welcome the opportunity to participate in validation activities as you will practise important skills, such as communication, teamwork and problem-solving. You will also have the opportunity to form professional relationships and participate in professional conversations with industry and business representatives or assessors from other RTOs who share your interest in achieving the best possible outcomes for candidates and who are committed to providing high standards of quality in assessment systems. If you work in a large RTO where assessors are situated in various locations, you will benefit from having an opportunity to meet with assessors from across the organisation.

Increase understanding of assessment requirements

Participating and contributing to validation activities will enhance your understanding of the assessment guidelines in training packages, and the rules and principles of assessment.

Assessment validation activities also provide opportunities for you to reflect on your own assessment practice. It is worth maintaining a record, such as a journal of your experience in validation activities, which you may use as evidence of your professional development, contribution to quality management and continuous improvement.

Required skills

Your RTO should support you in developing your competence to participate in validation activities. Your study of this unit, *TAEASS403 Participate in assessment validation*, is an important part of your professional development as an assessor. However, you should continue to participate regularly in learning and development opportunities that demonstrate your commitment to lifelong learning and expand your range of skills and knowledge. You will benefit from watching experienced assessors in validation sessions and asking for their advice and guidance; you may also like to have a mentor to support you.

Problem-solving skills

▶ Problem-solving skills enable you to identify and deal with information that is inconsistent, ambiguous or contradictory.

Planning skills

▶ Planning skills are required to participate in validation activities within agreed time frames and be adequately prepared.

Communication skills

▶ Communication skills enable you to actively participate and share information in validation meetings.

Evaluation skills

▶ Evaluation skills are required to determine evidence requirements from units of competency, and to review assessment processes, methods and tools, and collected evidence.

Use communication skills

Effective assessment validation relies on participants communicating constructively to identify opportunities for improving the evidence-gathering methods used by RTOs. The more preparation you have undertaken prior to assessment validation sessions, the better positioned you will be to make a meaningful and valuable contribution to the validation process. Your communication skills will help you build relationships with your validation partners and promote an atmosphere that encourages participation and the free exchange of ideas. Always be prepared to listen to the comments of other

validation participants with an open mind. Maintain a friendly but professional tone in your communication. It is also important to know the meaning of key terms used in assessment and validation as this 'jargon' allows precise and concise communication.

Here are further tips for communication in a validation context.

Plan and prepare beforehand

You may find it helpful to plan your initial comments and suggestions prior to attending a formal assessment validation session to help you to feel more confident during the early stages of the session. This could involve annotating the unit of competency, assessment instruments or the candidate's evidence with your evaluation of whether the rules and principles of evidence have been satisfied.

You may also record preliminary suggestions for improvement. You may find that it is easier to support your suggestions for improvement if you have reflected on your own experience using the assessment instrument prior to attending the validation session. You could take diary notes, records of conversations, feedback from employers or candidates, or your journal as evidence of your experience implementing the assessment instrument or assessment process. Completed candidate or employer surveys will usually provide information that is particularly useful to assessment validation.

Encourage others

You should encourage the active participation of all those attending validation sessions. While the person leading the session will take primary responsibility for encouraging all participants to make comments and suggestions, and to ask questions, you should support participation by using positive body language, active listening and constructive feedback.

Support visitors

You may find that industry or enterprise representatives particularly appreciate your efforts in helping them contribute to meetings as they:

▶ may be unfamiliar with your RTO's assessment polices and system

▶ may be new to the validation process

▶ may not have previously met other participants.

It would be beneficial for the session leader to explain the validation process and the role of participants at the beginning of the assessment validation session.

Use digital technology competently

The validation may be conducted electronically using conference telephone calls or electronic collaboration tools, such as online meetings or forums. Validation activities will proceed more smoothly if panel members have learnt how to use the relevant platform, have obtained the necessary software and have logged in before activities using an electronic mode commence.

Ask questions

You can use questioning to encourage discussion and gather feedback from other participants about their evaluation of the assessment instrument process. The RTO will have developed a checklist or guide that you will be expected to follow during the validation session. However, some examples of questions to ask are listed below.

You may also wish to ask your validation partners the following questions:

▶ Can you explain how the collected evidence has been mapped to the assessment requirements?

▶ Have you had any feedback from employers or candidates on these assessment methods and tools?

▶ Have you received any complaints about this assessment?

▶ How did you consult with industry to develop this instrument?

▶ How helpful did you find the instructions provided to assessors?

▶ How is reasonable adjustment provided in the assessment tool?

▶ How reliable were the exemplar solutions that you used for judging competence?

▶ How satisfied are you that the evidence collected satisfies the rules and principles of evidence?

▶ Were there any assessment contexts where this method of assessment was ineffective?

▶ What feedback have you received about the instructions given to candidates?

▶ What types of appeals have been made by candidates about this assessment?

▶ What types of candidates is this assessment suitable for?

▶ What was your experience of collecting evidence of foundation skills?

Focus questions by topic

Be prepared to compare and evaluate your own experiences with those of others. Here are additional questions and information to help you focus on making the validation session as effective as possible, especially when it is not clear how assessment complies with the principles of assessment and rules of evidence.

Assessment practices

▶ What are the key individual needs of candidates that you are responsible for assessing?

▶ What process did you use to design the assessment?

▶ What were the outcomes of the assessment instrument's pilot implementation?

▶ What approach did you take when mapping the assessment instrument to the assessment requirements?

▶ What strategies do you find most effective for collaborating with your peers to develop and review assessment instruments (other than assessment validation processes)?

Assessment plans

▶ How do you go about planning for assessment?

▶ What methods do you use to identify the individual needs of learners?

▶ How do you ensure that you fulfil your obligations in regard to access and equity in assessment?

▶ What methods of consultation do you use to develop assessment plans?

Interpret unit of competency

▶ What method do you use to interpret units of competency?

▶ How do you ensure that your interpretation is consistent with other assessors?

Assessment methods and instruments

▶ What process do you use for selecting the appropriate assessment method and instruments for a unit of competency?

▶ How helpful are the assessment requirements in the unit when you are designing assessment instruments?

▶ Do you use peer review to ensure that the assessment method will gather appropriate evidence?

Assessment decisions

▶ Be prepared to discuss with other participants how you arrive at assessment decisions. You may find it helpful to have available samples of candidates' evidence that you have judged so that you can ask for feedback from other participants.

▶ During assessment sessions or activities, you may want to discuss with participants those situations where you found it challenging to make an assessment decision or where a candidate appealed your decision. You may also want to discuss the process you use where a candidate is found not yet competent in one aspect of the assessment requirements.

Collected evidence

▶ You may be asked to take samples of evidence you have collected from candidates to the assessment session or activity. You must ensure that you have protected the candidates' identities if required to do so by your workplace procedures.

▶ Wherever possible, you should take a sample of collected evidence that represents a wide cross-section of assessment contexts, methods and candidates. For example, you should consider including a sample of collected evidence where you have provided reasonable adjustment or the candidate has sought recognition of prior learning.

Example

Prepare to actively participate in validation sessions and activities

Gabriel assesses candidates who are undertaking SIT30812 Certificate III in Commercial Cookery. Learners attend the RTO's premises four days per week during the delivery stage of the unit and undertake assessment in the RTO's kitchens. Many of the students speak English as their second language, live in shared accommodation and do not currently work in the hospitality industry.

Gabriel has limited experience in assessment validation sessions. So far, she has only participated in simulated validation sessions while she was completing her TAE40116 Certificate IV in Training and Assessment.

In order to ensure that she actively participates in the validation session, she has reflected on her experience using the assessment instruments developed by the RTO, and the feedback she has received from candidates and representatives from industry she has spoken to at conferences and trade shows.

Gabriel has prepared the following summary of the key points she wants to make in the validation session. She also knows that she has to speak clearly and listen to what others are saying when taking part in discussions.

Aspect of assessment	Comment
Accuracy of assessment instrument mapping	In some cases the questions included on the third-party report and written quiz are not correctly mapped to the knowledge component of the unit.
Feedback from candidates	The assessment instrument uses portfolio assessment. Many candidates are not familiar with the use of portfolios for assessment. We need to give candidates examples of portfolios and much simpler instructions.
Complaints received about this assessment	Three candidates have complained that they do not have sufficient time to gather all of the evidence they require for their portfolios. They each complained that they only have limited access to the necessary tools and equipment, so it is difficult to prepare sufficient meals. Another candidate complained that they did not have the correct software for creating portfolio items, such as menus.
Instructions to assessor	The instructions are easy to understand.
Reliability of exemplar solutions	The exemplar solutions are not adequate. They do not provide sufficient information to make a reliable judgment. In most cases, the exemplar simply states 'individual samples will vary'.
Reasonable adjustment	I have an assessment candidate who has disclosed that she has a hearing impairment. She also speaks English as her second language. I am unsure how I should modify the assessment to ensure she complies with the RTO's access and equity policies.

Aspect of assessment	Comment
Appeals received	No appeals have been received.
Evidence of foundation skills	The mapping document that includes foundation skills is accurate and easy to follow.
Suitability of assessment	Portfolio assessment requires additional support for candidates with limited work or study experience, and those who speak English as their second language. I need to ensure that candidates have the necessary resources to collect sufficient evidence. The assessment would be suitable for workplace candidates.
Additional issues/ concerns	The assessment includes a quiz to gather evidence of the candidate's knowledge of food items, safety issues and food quality indicators. This is proving very difficult for candidates who speak English well, but who have problems reading and writing English. I am keen to hear the feedback of other assessors to learn how they tackle this issue. I should be able to conduct the quiz verbally and record the candidate's response. I am also keen to suggest as part of the RTO's continuous improvement program that they offer additional language, literacy and numeracy support.

Activity 5

1. Why should validation not be regarded as a single activity?

2. Provide at least three tasks a participant is likely to have to complete outside a validation session to fulfil their obligations.

3. You may communicate and collaborate with a range of people during validation sessions and need to make decisions about matters people have different stakes in and different understandings of. What communication modes and methods are effective in these circumstances?

4. When participating in validation sessions, what tone, style and language is likely to be effective when an employer on the panel wants to apply a different criteria from what is in the training package?

5. How could you obtain feedback about your participation in validation sessions and activities?

Click to complete Activity 5

2B Apply principles of assessment and rules of evidence

As an assessor, and during the validation process, you have a responsibility to evaluate the assessment methods and instruments used (collectively referred to as assessment tools) to ensure they comply with the specified assessment guidelines, and satisfy the rules of evidence and principles of assessment. Assessment processes, methods and tools, the collected evidence leading to assessment decisions and assessment decisions themselves must all be reviewed in relation to these.

You may find that assessment instruments that seek to gather evidence of competence for several units of competency (integrated assessment) present additional challenges in clearly identifying the link between various parts of the assessment instrument and the performance evidence requirements.

In the introductory part of any formal validation session or activity, the validation leader should remind participants that the purpose of validation is to review assessment tools to ensure that the tools:

▶ gather evidence that will lead to a candidate's competence being assessed against the relevant assessment requirements

▶ are appropriate to the context and methods of assessment identified in the unit of competency.

Apply the rules of evidence

The Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015 (the Standards) establish an RTO's obligation to conduct assessment in accordance with the principles of assessment and the rules of evidence. The Standards document includes a description of the rules of evidence that must be followed.

Evidence is information that provides proof of competency. While evidence must be sufficient, trainers and assessors must focus on the quality rather than the quantity of evidence. There are four rules that guide the collection of evidence. These are described on the following table.

Valid

Definition:
Assessment is valid when the process is sound and assesses what it claims to assess. Validity requires that the evidence must cover the required skills and knowledge and be integrated with their practical application. Evidence used for assessment must have been gathered on a number of occasions and in a range of contexts using different assessment methods. The assessment requirements in each unit of competency will provide advice on sufficiency.

Example:
The assessor reviews a unit of competency and pictures how a competent person will look when they are processing an application for a new bank account.

The assessor decides that they will gather evidence of the candidate in a range of scenarios during the delivery stage of the unit, including:

▶ role-plays (where an observation record is completed)
▶ a quiz where the learner will answer questions to assess underpinning knowledge as they are checking the application form and entering data on the computer system
▶ a summative assessment instrument.

Sufficient

Definition:

Sufficiency requires that evidence of the learner's competence has been demonstrated repeatedly across all aspects of the unit of competency. In some cases, it will be difficult to gather sufficient evidence using a summative assessment instrument and the assessor will need to arrange to gather supplementary information. This may involve requesting a third-party report where the learner is observed performing a specific skill.

Example:

The candidate is completing a course in interior design and development. The candidate has compiled a portfolio of evidence of the designs she has created as she progresses through the course. She will be completing a final project where she will be assessed holistically against the assessment requirements of the relevant unit of competency.

Teamwork is identified as a required skill in the unit of competency. Her assessor organises for the candidate's supervisor to complete a third-party report to gather evidence of the candidate's competence to work as a team member.

Authentic

Definition:

You must be convinced that the evidence presented for assessment is the learner's own work and that supporting documents are genuine.

Example:

The candidate is completing a statement of attainment in medical terminology.

In order to meet employers' requirements, the RTO directors decide that all candidates will be assessed during a supervised exam. This is part of the RTO's strategy to authenticate the candidate's assessment.

Current

Definition:

Currency relates to the age of the evidence presented by a candidate to demonstrate they are still competent. Competency requires demonstration of current performance, so the evidence collected must be either from the present or the very recent past.

Example:

A training organisation's assessment policy requires that evidence must be no more than three years old.

Apply the principles of assessment

When validating assessment tools, you need to ensure that the principles of assessment have been met. Here are strategies you can use to check compliance with the principles of assessment.

Principle of assessment	Explanation	Strategies
Fair	An assessment system and its processes must not disadvantage anyone. All eligible candidates must be guaranteed access to assessment that does not discriminate on any basis. Assessment processes must be designed to address the individual needs of candidates. This may require reasonable adjustment of assessment methods.	▶ Communicate clearly to the candidate about the assessment process. ▶ Letting the candidate know the criteria for the assessment; for example, is a presentation about the presenting skills or the content in the presentation ▶ Ensure the candidate agrees to the assessment process. ▶ Provide an opportunity for the candidate to challenge the result of the assessment and for reassessment to occur if necessary. ▶ Make adjustments; for example, provide personal support services (such as a reader, Auslan interpreter or scribe), provide assistive technology or special equipment, or adjust the physical environment.
Flexible	The methods selected to gather evidence must reflect the candidate's individual needs and circumstances. The assessor must also implement an assessment strategy that supports recognition of competencies that have been demonstrated by the candidate.	Assessment tools and instruments should be able to be used in a variety of assessment contexts, including: ▶ online ▶ in a real workplace ▶ in a simulated workplace ▶ in a group learning environment ▶ in recognition of prior learning.

Principle of assessment	Explanation	Strategies
Valid	Assessment is valid when the process is sound and assesses what it claims to assess.	Strategies that may be used to evaluate that an assessment instrument is valid include: ▶ assessment mapping ▶ using a pilot group ▶ benchmarking assessment instruments with other RTOs ▶ consulting with industry to ensure that assessors are knowledgeable about current industry work practices.
Reliable	Reliable assessment processes use methods and procedures which ensure that the units of competency are interpreted and applied consistently from person to person and in a variety of contexts. Judgments of competence need to be made consistently by various assessors relying on the same types of evidence.	Assessment validation of judged evidence is the key strategy used by RTOs to ensure that assessors are making reliable judgments of competence.

Evaluate the purpose and documentation

Your workplace will have developed policies and procedures that describe the methods that assessors should use to document the relationship between the assessment process and the assessment requirements (including required performance evidence, knowledge evidence and foundation skills). The process that assessors follow to identify and document these relationships is termed 'mapping'.

Mapping is subjective in nature. Your interpretation of the performance requirements and how they look when comprising part of a person's job will influence how you see the relationship between the assessment instrument and the unit of competency. Validation offers an excellent opportunity to review the mapping document with other assessors and validation panel members to confirm its accuracy. Here are steps in preparing to validate an assessment instrument.

Reaffirm purpose

Read the assessment instrument at least once after you have had an opportunity to reflect on your interpretation of the benchmarks identified in the unit of competency. Your goal is to work with your colleagues to evaluate whether the assessment instrument is likely to gather the evidence that satisfies the requirements of the assessment requirements, the rules of evidence and the principles of assessment.

Access the relevant checklist

The RTO will have developed a checklist or form that the validation panel can use to ensure they evaluate each component of the assessment instrument and record their findings. Ask your trainer for a template sample 'Validation activity checklist' template.

Follow policies and procedures

Make sure you have access to any mapping documents that have previously been prepared for the unit of competency and assessment instrument. The mapping document forms an important component of the RTO's quality management system as it demonstrates that the individual assessment instruments are designed to satisfy the rules of evidence.

Ask your trainer for a sample 'Assessment mapping' template.

Use validation criteria

The validation panel will discuss the validation criteria specified on the RTO's checklist, form or template. While the criteria will vary to suit the RTO's policies and procedures, they are designed to guide the validation panel to discuss the following types of questions.

Method and process

▶ Is the assessment method appropriate for the AQF level of the unit of competency?

▶ Have assessment tasks been designed to allow holistic and integrated assessment of knowledge, skills and attributes?

▶ Was the assessment instrument developed in consultation with stakeholders?

▶ How can reasonable adjustment be made to the strategy to ensure equity for all candidates while maintaining integrity of the assessment outcomes?

Assessment instrument

▶ Is the assessment instrument based on realistic or authentic work activities and contexts?

▶ Where work samples are to be used as evidence, will candidates receive specific guidelines on requirements, including information about ensuring authenticity and the currency of the evidence?

▶ Are checklists and instructions to assessors for performing observations clearly mapped to the unit of competency?

▶ Does information to candidates include method, criteria, procedure, feedback and an appeal process?

▶ How does the assessment instrument cater for individual needs of candidates in regard to language, literacy and numeracy?

▶ Can the assessment instrument be adapted to meet the needs of all candidates and workplaces?

▶ Is the assessment instrument suitable to use in other contexts?

Evidence

▶ Does the evidence to be collected relate directly to the units of competency?

▶ Will evidence be drawn from a variety of sources on more than one occasion?

▶ What are the sources of skills and knowledge evidence that underpin competence?

Assessment decisions

▶ Are instructions to assessors clearly designed to promote reliability in judgments?

▶ Are there opportunities for feedback and review to be provided to the candidate?

Assess quality

Assessment instruments should be assessed for quality. Here is some criteria the validation panel may consider using to analyse various types of assessment tools.

Project

Check that instructions regarding health and safety, project scope, final report, consultation and referencing are accurate and clear. Check that reasonable adjustment has been provided.

Presentations

Candidates also require accurate information about the duration of their presentation, timing (when it is to be delivered), health and safety, availability of technology and the content of their presentation.

Activity sheets

Instructions must be clear, logical and accurate. Consider the AQF level of the person completing the activity sheet. Diagrams and illustrations may be appropriate.

Questioning

Instructions must be clear, logical and accurate. It is particularly important to trial multiple choice and true/false questions to ensure they are worded appropriately, accurately and unambiguously.

Case studies

The information contained in the case study must be accurate and appropriately referenced (where necessary). It is important that candidates do not become distracted from the purpose of assessment by inaccuracies contained in the detail of the case study scenario.

Observation checklists

The student should be given a copy of the tasks so they know what the assessor/supervisor is looking for. The checklist should have observable items clearly written in a form that shows what the candidate must show; for example, accessing WHS policy documents in the workplace.

Third-party reports

These need to have verification information on the person who has signed or authenticated the documents.

Role-plays

Role-play cards reflect what the aims of the activity are and what each person's role will be in the activity. The candidate can see what needs to be demonstrated in the role-play and what is being assessed.

Review assessment instruments after implementation

The assessment validation panel should also evaluate units of competency and their relevant assessment instruments post-implementation. In these cases, the validation panel will be given samples of the evidence that was collected from candidates using the assessment instrument to see whether the evidence collected relates directly to the units of competency, and whether it is valid, authentic, sufficient and current.

When post-implementation validation is performed correctly, it is the most effective and accurate form of validation. Validation panel members have the opportunity to evaluate the collected evidence to confirm whether it fulfils the unit's assessment requirements, and satisfies the rules and principles of evidence.

The validation panel should evaluate evidence collected from more than one candidate using the same assessment instrument to ensure there is consistency, reliability and validity in the type of evidence collected across the cohort of candidates. This would also apply to units being validated where there is a variety of assessors interpreting and managing one assessment. The amount of collected evidence evaluated by the validation panel should be sufficient to enable them to consider how the assessment activity was implemented in various assessment contexts with a range of candidates (including those with special needs, such as a disability or lower levels of literacy and numeracy) and with varying levels of reasonable adjustment.

Evaluate benchmarks of appropriate evidence

The assessment validation panel should also evaluate the material that is given to assessors to support them in judging competence. This advice could take the form of benchmark solutions, model answers and samples of products or work practices that demonstrate competent performance or marking rubrics. In those cases where the RTO awards a graded result (in addition to a determination about competence) to candidates, the validation panel may also want to evaluate the marking rubric (assessment marking guide).

Assessment validation activities provide an excellent forum for assessors to agree on whether the benchmarks adequately represent a standard that would be demonstrated by competent candidates.

Discuss whether the benchmarking material given to assessors:

▶ accurately assesses the performance criteria being assessed (validity)

▶ contains instructions that are unambiguous and clear for assessors and candidates (reliability and fairness)

▶ is accepted by all assessors as reflecting the rules of evidence and principles of assessment.

Example

Apply principles of assessment and rules of evidence

The following is an extract of the validation activity evidence form completed by a validation panel, which reviewed the assessment tool used to gather evidence of the unit of competency *MSMWHS200 Work safely*, Release 1 from the MSM Manufacturing Training Package.

The panel were checking that:

▶ 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 is based on evidence that demonstrates that a learner could demonstrate these skills and knowledge in other similar situations.

▶ Judgment of competence is based on evidence of learner performance that is aligned to the unit/s of competency and associated assessment requirements.

Validity	Yes/No	Comment
Off-the-job assessment must sufficiently reflect realistic operational workplace conditions that cover all aspects of workplace performance, including environment, task skills, task management skills, contingency management skills and job role environment skills.	Yes	Assessment in conducted in a workplace or using case studies. Observation checklist includes ability to identify hazards, and assess risks and communication skills in relation in a range of situations, including providing input to minimise hazards.
Assessment in a simulated environment should use evidence collected from one or more of the following: walk-throughs, demonstration of skills, industry-based case studies/scenarios, or 'what ifs'	Yes	Case study reflected industry practice and workplace example that was realistic to the experience the student would have in a real workplace situation.
The evidence relates directly to the units of competency or learning outcomes being assessed.	Yes	The mapping document has been checked. Evidence is gathered of skills, knowledge and performance criteria over time.
The instrument will assess the candidate's ability to meet the level of performance required by the unit/s of competency.	Yes	▶ The candidate must be able to work with minimal supervision and be capable of performing work safely in a manufacturing environment. ▶ The case studies and observation checklists assess at the appropriate AQF level.

Validity	Yes/No	Comment
The unit should be assessed holistically and the judgement of competence should be based on a holistic assessment of the evidence.	Yes	Evidence gathered in this unit may also contribute to assessment in *MSMSUP210 Process and record information*, Release 1
The collection of performance evidence should provide evidence of the ability to perform in a range of situations that may be encountered, including typical disruptions to normal, smooth work conditions.	Yes	Evidence included: ▶ Case studies ▶ Observation in the workplace ▶ Questioning ▶ Third-party report

Activity 6

1. For each rule of evidence, list at least two things you will do to satisfy yourself that the evidence you are validating meets these rules.

2. For each of the four principles of assessment, list at least two things you will do to satisfy yourself that the assessment process used meets these principles.

Click to complete Activity 6

2C Check that assessment instruments conform to requirements

The assessment instrument should be checked for its ability to confirm that an individual can perform to the standard required in the workplace, as specified in a training package, or a vocational education and training accredited course. The quality of its documents (i.e. their clarity and conformance to relevant standards and organisational procedures) should also be checked.

Assessment tools need to meet legislative, regulatory, organisational and quality requirements.

A systematic check should ensure the following:

▶ Instructions for the assessor and the candidate are clear and relate directly to the assessment conditions of the relevant unit.

▶ Tasks to be administered to the candidate include clear and concise instructions and an outline of evidence requirements.

▶ Any materials that are used are accurate and current (currency relates to the age of the tool and also to version control).

▶ Assessment decision-making rules and benchmarks are clear and enable consistent outcomes.

▶ Recording mechanisms are clear and allow for sufficient information to be recorded.

▶ The organisation's record-keeping system is current and accurate.

An assessment instrument is part of an assessment tool

Assessment tools are ways of gathering evidence and include the following components:

▶ context

▶ conditions

▶ tasks to be administered (the instrument)

▶ outline of evidence gathered

▶ evidence criteria

▶ administration (reporting information).

An assessment instrument is part of an assessment tool. It is the specific questions, activity or checklist used by the assessor to assess competence by the assessment method selected. It should require an assessor to provide feedback to the learner. This is fair to the learner as it allows the learner to understand why a judgment was made and how they can improve, if necessary.

VQF/AQTF Standards do not prescribe a specific format for assessment instruments. Individual RTOs are charged with responsibility for using a quality-management approach to design assessment instruments that gather evidence to allow a judgment to be made regarding a candidate's competence. They must implement continuous improvement processes that include the validation of all assessments by a panel

of stakeholders. This ensures that an RTO's assessment system and individual assessment instruments are VQF/AQTF compliant and satisfy the rules of evidence and principles of assessment.

An assessment instrument should be supported by:

▶ instructions to the candidate

▶ a statement of the purpose of the assessment

▶ an outline of any specific assessment conditions that apply to assessment

▶ a profile of acceptable performance

▶ the decision-making rules or guidelines to be used by assessors.

Instructions for an assessor and candidate

An assessment tool includes information about the context and conditions of assessment. It must include clear instructions for the assessor and candidate, and relate directly to the assessment conditions of the relevant unit. Check unit of competency documents and guidelines for making reasonable adjustment to ensure that this is the case.

Candidates must be assessed in accordance with the assessment conditions specified in the unit of competency. RTOs invest significant resources in developing templates and proformas to create records that clearly demonstrate they are fulfilling their compliance obligations.

If the assessment tool provides details of the conditions under which assessment must take place (for example, by simulation or with access to workplace documentation), the validation panel can check that this is the case.

You will most likely find a range of templates and proformas are available for you to use in various assessment contexts. The information on the following table will help you check that you have the necessary documents available during an assessment process.

Assessment methods used in assessment instruments

Observation method

▶ Observation checklists

▶ Instructions to the candidate

▶ Instructions to the assessor

▶ Advice to the workplace supervisor

Simulation method

▶ Simulation scenario

▶ Observation checklist

▶ Instructions for the assessor

▶ Instructions for the candidate

Questioning

▶ Prepared questions
▶ Benchmark responses (model answers)
▶ Instructions for candidates
▶ Instructions for assessors
▶ Form to record responses

Third-party report method

▶ Instructions for the third party
▶ Third-party observation checklist

Portfolio

▶ Instructions for the assessor
▶ Instructions for the candidate that includes suggestions for portfolio items

Usability of assessment instructions

A validation panel may need to validate assessment tools that will be administered online or in workplaces, published in books or used in group learning environments. Assessment tools may be used by assessors with minimal experience and candidates who are not familiar with assessment processes. It is crucial that the people using the assessment instruments in their specific context are given all of the instructions they need so they can interpret how they are meant to administer the assessment instrument and gather quality evidence to make a reliable assessment decision. Instructions should be as informative as they need to be, yet concise and clear for candidates to follow correctly.

Assessment tools should cater for the end users of the product. Instructions must comply with the RTO's VQF/AQTF obligations and validators should check the quality and clarity of instructions for users.

Consider the following in relation to assessment instructions:

▶ Are the assessment instructions likely to be interpreted correctly and understood by the assessor so they can administer it appropriately?
▶ Are they likely to be interpreted correctly by the candidate so that they have the best possible opportunity to provide evidence of competence?
▶ Do they provide clear, accurate and unambiguous instructions so the candidate can understand the assessment process and their responsibilities?

Instructions for candidates

In determining whether the assessment instrument's instructions are clear and fair, the validation panel should consider whether it is likely that terms used in the assessment task might cause difficulties. Validation panel activities should ascertain whether the instructions are adequate and that the candidate fully understands them.

The candidate needs to understand:

▶ The assessment method being used

▶ The assessment instrument/s being used

▶ Any provisions/reasonable adjustment for people who have special needs

▶ Opportunities for recognised prior learning (this will have been described at enrolment)

▶ How their performance will be reviewed, if required

▶ Materials and resources that are required for assessment

▶ How to present evidence

▶ How to submit evidence.

Applicable legislation and standards for assessment instruments and validation activities

Many units of competency require candidates to demonstrate knowledge of relevant state and territory legislation, codes of practice and standards. This changes over time and it is important to check that the assessment instrument assesses candidates' knowledge of current and relevant legislation and/or standards they need to know in order to be competent.

Legislation and/or standards are relevant in other ways to the validation process.

During the validation process

Legal obligations also apply to the assessor in relation to validation activities, including state and territory legislation and regulations relating to human rights, RTO Standards, copyright, WHS and privacy (for example, the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth)). Training and assessment products must avoid bias towards any particular candidate group in order to comply with anti-discrimination policies and the legislation on which they are based.

Qualifications of validators

The Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015 require that validators who are not directly involved in the particular instance of delivery and assessment of the training product being delivered have vocational competencies and current industry skills relevant to the assessment being validated, VET skills and specified training and assessment qualifications.

RTOs must ensure that trainers and assessors hold the training and assessment qualification at least to the level being delivered.

WHS legislation, codes of practice, standards and guidelines that affect assessment

Work health and safety (WHS) legislation has an impact on assessment and, consequently, on validation of assessment. WHS regulations set out standards that workplaces are required to meet for specific risks, such as noise and licences required for conducting hazardous work tasks. Codes of practice are developed to address a significant or widespread risk in an industry. They contain information about specific hazards, risks and controls. Guidance material contributes to the overall state of knowledge about hazards, risks and controls, and provides advice and solutions for controlling hazards.

Assessment of a training product needs to reflect what is known about controlling hazards in the part of industry relevant to the unit/s of competency.

Here is a summary of aspects of WHS that a validation panel needs to consider.

Currency

RTO assessors involved in validation need to know how to use units of competency to identify the relevant state, territory and Commonwealth WHS legislation, codes of practice, standards and guidelines that impact on the assessment they are validating. Validation judgments based on incorrect information can indirectly lead to a breach of duty or law after this judgment has been communicated to trainers.

Duty of care

Assessors have a duty of care to protect candidates' health and safety, and should ensure that candidates are never required to undertake risky activities during assessment. Simulated activities and role-plays should be chosen when there is a WHS risk. There may be WHS implications of the assessment activities, especially when a candidate is being assessed on their ability to work safely in a situation that involves risks (for example, the use of power tools by young learners, such as apprentices). In this type of situation, the assessment instrument should include specific advice to the assessor to perform a risk assessment.

Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Cth)

WHS legislation, codes of practice, standards and guidelines provide information that enables employees, including trainers and assessors, to know how to work safely. Training packages refer to the obligation to work safely in the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Cth), and training and assessment products must address this.

Check that recording mechanisms are clear and allow sufficient information to be recorded

Candidate evidence for assessment must be recorded for many reasons, including to demonstrate that an RTO has well-designed assessment systems and validation processes, which produce assessment judgments that comply with the rules of evidence and principles of assessment.

Examples of recording mechanisms include:

▶ written observations

▶ observations by video or voice recording

▶ checklists

▶ reports.

Unexpected situations arise during some assessment processes. The inclusion of a section for an assessor to write comments caters for situations when an explanation is needed of how evidence meets benchmarks and demonstrates competency.

If candidates are not provided with sufficient space on a knowledge evidence questionnaire, the assessment process is not fair and the 'sufficiency' rule of evidence may not be met.

The quality of the document can be checked as part of a quality assurance review during validation. A formatting checklist, such as a sample 'Formatting checklist for an assessment instrument', can be used during validation to check that an assessment instrument complies with an organisation's formatting guidelines.

Ask your trainer for a sample 'Formatting checklist for an assessment instrument' template.

Record keeping

Under the VQF/AQTF Standards, RTOs are required to manage records to ensure they are accurate, current, can be easily accessed, and that their integrity and confidentiality is maintained. The validation process must be designed to ensure that a systematic check is performed on the accuracy and currency of any materials that are used.

During the audit process, the RTO will be asked to produce evidence that their operations comply with record-keeping aspects of the Standards. Standard 5 concerns the requirement for learners to be properly informed and protected. The RTO needs to document relevant information correctly to prove they are compliant with AQF Standards. In order to achieve compliance, the RTO should have provided you with written instructions of how you should maintain workplace records (including those related to the validation process), and ensure that you participate in relevant induction and regular refresher training.

All completed student assessment items must be securely retained for six months from the assessment judgment date. Some items may need to be kept for longer periods, depending on government funding for certain programs.

Example

Tasks to be administered to the candidate include clear and concise instructions and an outline of evidence requirements

CHCOM001 Provide first point of contact is a unit of competency that applies to entry-level workers in a job that includes interaction with customers.

Helen is a new trainer/assessor. She has taught this unit as part of HLT31015 Certificate III in Ambulance Communications (Call-taking), but is now teaching it as part of an AQF level two qualification to a different group of learners. Helen reviews her existing assessment tool to see if and how it can be modified to assist her new group, who have the following characteristics:

▶ Candidates are all under 21 years of age.

▶ Most candidates have not completed schooling beyond year 10.

▶ Nearly a quarter of candidates speak English as their second language.

She realises significant changes would have to be made, but that the overall structure can be kept if the instrument is customised to suit the context and needs of the learners. This will require concise, simple instructions and resources for reasonable adjustment. She begins by altering the instructions to candidates.

Existing instructions

All questions must be answered to a satisfactory standard for Part B to be completed satisfactorily. There is no restriction on the length of the question responses, but the task must be completed within thirty minutes unless reasonable adjustment provisions apply. You must complete all questions unassisted by the assessor or other personnel, but may refer to reference material as needed.

Revised instructions

Write your answers in the booklet provided. Please use black or blue biro.

You have 30 minutes to complete 20 questions. Speak to your trainer before you start if there is any reason why you can't do this.

You need to answer all questions satisfactorily.

You can refer to your class notes when you are answering questions, but do not speak to other candidates during the assessment.

Activity 7

With another learner or group of learners, examine a unit of competency and an assessment tool that has been developed to determine whether the assessment instrument conforms to requirements. The focus of this learning activity is to determine the following:

▶ Instructions for the assessor and the candidate are clear and relate directly to the assessment conditions of the relevant unit.

▶ Tasks to be administered to the candidate include clear and concise instructions and an outline of evidence requirements.

▶ Materials that are used are accurate and current (currency relates to the age of the tool and also to version control). For example, are references to WHS legislation and regulations up to date?

▶ Assessment decision-making rules and benchmarks are clear and enable consistent outcomes.

▶ Recording mechanisms are clear and allow for sufficient information to be recorded.

▶ Aspects of the organisation's record-keeping system.

If you are not currently working at an organisation that offers vocational training and assessment, ask your trainer for an example. You may also be able to find an example of a current training and assessment policy online.

Write a brief report summarising how the assessment tool conforms to requirements. This should include recommended actions to bring the tool into compliance. A sample 'Formatting checklist for an assessment instrument' can be used to guide discussions, but does not cover all of the above. Ask your trainer for a sample 'Formatting checklist for an assessment instrument' template.

Click to complete Activity 7

2D Review and use assessment maps to determine the validity of assessment instruments

An RTO needs to have developed policies and procedures that describe the methods that assessment instrument designers should use to document the relationship between the assessment process and the assessment requirements (including required knowledge and foundation skills). The process they follow to identify and document these relationships is termed 'mapping'.

The mapping document forms an important component of the RTO's quality management system as it demonstrates that the individual assessment instruments are designed to satisfy the rules of evidence.

Assessment validation activities should include checking that assessment mapping has been completed correctly. During validation, assessment mapping that is confirmed as correct is used to assist in determining that the assessment process gathers evidence of each of the assessment requirements, including the knowledge evidence and performance criteria. Assessment instruments must do this in order to be valid.

Match to course requirements

Assessment instruments must be benchmarked against the relevant unit or units of competency or relevant organisational performance criteria. Ask your trainer for a sample 'Assessment mapping' template. By using such a template, trainers, assessors, candidates, managers, auditors and validators can see quickly where components of a unit of competency are being addressed by the assessment instrument.

The instrument should have been developed after the following components of the unit of competency have been taken into account.

Components of a unit of competency
▶ Application
▶ Elements
▶ Performance criteria
▶ Foundation skills
▶ Performance evidence
▶ Knowledge evidence
▶ Assessment conditions
▶ Dimensions of competency
▶ Implementation guide or companion volume for information on contextualising, foundation skills, etc.

Mapping can be subjective

Some of the discussion during validation activities will concern different interpretations of performance evidence and knowledge evidence. There may be discussion about the way in which the unit of competency has been mapped.

Mapping is subjective in nature. Collaboration and discussion during design and validation of assessment instruments should minimise or eliminate the risks posed by subjectivity in mapping. Discussion brings to light how a range of people interpret the unit of competency and their conclusions about the types of evidence that are required to demonstrate competence. The reliability of the mapping document and the assessment instrument is likely to be confirmed or improved through well-managed validation discussions.

Check mapping as part of assessment validation

There are consequences to various stakeholders where the mapping process has not been undertaken accurately and the assessment process is therefore not valid. The RTO may be found to be non-compliant in regard to aspects of the Standards for RTOs (2015) and the reputation of the RTO in the community and industry may be damaged. Assessment candidates may find that they need to provide supplementary evidence to substantiate their claim of competence.

You may decide to prepare a checklist that you can use to ensure you have considered all of the relevant components of the unit of competency during the mapping exercise. When checking the mapping of an assessment instrument, or the instrument itself, a checklist such as the one below can be of assistance.

Your checklist could include the following questions.

▶ Does the assessment instrument address the entire unit of competency, including information in the unit of competency document and the assessment requirements document?

▶ Are the foundation skills implicit in the assessment instrument?

▶ Does the completed mapping document demonstrate that the candidate will need to supply supplementary evidence?

▶ Is there evidence of underpinning knowledge?

▶ Is the evidence gained from different types of activity, in line with a variety of different criteria and knowledge being assessed, as specified in the relevant unit or training package?

▶ Does the assessment instrument gather evidence that the candidate can 'bring it all together' using the performance evidence and required knowledge in a holistic way (if applicable)?

Dimensions of competency

Assessments that do not explore the dimensions of competency are not valid. Dimensions of competency refers to the broader aspects of being competent in a work role; for example, how the person copes with the need to be organised, manage time and manage unexpected contingencies. AQF levels are relevant when considering the dimensions of competency. AQF level 2 candidates may be expected to follow a work schedule in order to manage tasks competently, while AQF level 5 candidates may be expected to be competent to 'plan, coordinate and evaluate the work of teams within broad but generally well-defined parameters'.

The following explores the four dimensions of competency.

Task skills

The candidate must perform the individual skills required to complete a work activity to the required standard.

Task management skills

The candidate must manage a number of different tasks to complete a whole work activity, such as working to meet deadlines.

Contingency management skills

The candidate must use their problem-solving skills to resolve issues that arise when performing a work activity.

Job/role environment skills

The candidate must perform effectively in the workplace when undertaking a work activity by working well with all stakeholders and following workplace policies and procedures.

Example

Review and use assessment maps to assist in determining the validity of assessment instruments

This assessment map shows that not all performance criteria that are part of Element 1 are being assessed. The assessment instrument is not a valid assessment of a candidate's competence until it can be changed to collect evidence that the candidate can 'collect relevant information from appropriate sources, and analyse and share with the work team to improve work performance'. What would you recommend if you were part of a validation panel examining the assessment instrument for this unit of competency?

BSBLDR402 Lead effective workplace relationships	Learner guide	Knowledge evidence questions	Workplace Project	Third-party (supervisor) checklist
Collect, analyse and communicate information and ideas				
Collect relevant information from appropriate sources and analyse and share with the work team to improve work performance				
Communicate ideas and information in a manner which is appropriate and sensitive to the cultural and social diversity of the audience and any specific needs	✓		✓	✓
Lead consultation processes to encourage employees to contribute to issues related to their work, and promptly relay feedback to the work team in regard to outcomes	✓		✓	✓
Seek and value contributions from internal and external sources in developing and refining new ideas and approaches	✓	✓	✓	
Implement processes to ensure that issues raised are resolved promptly or referred to relevant personnel as required	✓	✓	✓	

Activity 8

Obtain an example of an assessment tool that consists of at least two assessment activities that can be used to assess a current unit of competency. Ask your trainer for a sample 'Assessment mapping' template.

Map performance criteria, performance knowledge evidence, assessment conditions, dimensions of competency and foundation skills for an assessment tool. You will need to discuss and clarify how to do this in relation to some components. For example, knowledge evidence may include knowledge how the following legal and ethical considerations are applied in the workplace: codes of practice, human rights and informed consent. Each of these should be mapped separately, as below.

Knowledge evidence	Assessment 1 Questions	Assessment 2 Case study	Assessment 3 Practical placement
Knowledge of codes of practice and how they are applied in the workplace	Q7	CS5	
Knowledge of human rights and how they are applied in the workplace	Q9		PPL 8
Knowledge of informed consent and how it is applied in the workplace	Q10	CS2	PPL 5

Click to complete Activity 8

Summary

1. Assessment validation sessions may be conducted face-to-face or electronically using conference telephone calls, or electronic collaboration tools such as online meetings or forums. Members of a panel should be prepared to use the technology involved before validation activities commence.

2. Effective assessment validation relies on participants communicating constructively and positively with a view to identifying opportunities to improve the evidence gathering methods used by the RTOs to achieve enhanced outcomes for stakeholders.

3. The RTO will have developed policies and procedures that describe the methods that assessors should use to document the relationship between the assessment process and the assessment requirements of a unit of competency. Validation panel members have the opportunity to evaluate the collected evidence to confirm whether it fulfils assessment requirements of the unit and satisfies the rules of evidence.

4. RTO assessors involved in validation need to know how to use units of competency to identify the relevant state, territory and Commonwealth WHS legislation, codes of practice, standards and guidelines that impact on the assessment they are validating. Duty of care and currency of legislation are considerations in assessing and validating an assessment process.

5. When validating assessment tools, the panel needs to ensure that the principles of assessment and the rules of evidence have been met.

6. Assessment validation activities review and use assessment maps to assist in determining that the assessment process gathers evidence of each of the assessment requirements, including the required knowledge and the performance criteria. Assessment instruments must do this in order to be valid.

7. RTOs are required under VQF/AQTF Standards to manage records to ensure that they are accurate, current, easily accessible, and that their integrity and confidentiality is maintained.

Topic 3

In this topic you will learn how to:

3A Discuss validation findings to support improvements in the quality of assessment

3B Discuss, agree on and record recommendations to improve assessment practices

Contribute to validation outcomes

It is the role and responsibility of validation panel members to interpret the data that is gathered when various components of the RTO's assessment approach and methodology are reviewed. The aim is to identify and record any issues or shortcomings in the quality of assessment and formulate recommendations for remedial action. Panel members should use group problem-solving and decision-making processes to develop their recommendations.

Assessment validation is also an opportunity for those who conduct assessment to reflect on their assessment practice and learn from their validation colleagues' experience. As a professional assessor, you have a responsibility to be an active participant in your own professional development, and should maximise the opportunity provided by validation activities to gather feedback, reflect on your competencies, and plan future learning and development to improve the quality of your performance.

3A Discuss validation findings to support improvements in the quality of assessment

During the validation process, panel members use various methods to record their findings. They may:

▶ make handwritten or electronic notes on assessment instruments

▶ code evidence that has been judged by assessors

▶ collate feedback and survey forms

▶ complete checklists

▶ record conversations and interviews with various assessment stakeholders.

At the conclusion of this stage of the validation session, the panel will find itself with a significant quantity of data that needs to be carefully analysed to identify trends and patterns, and enable the findings to be presented as meaningful information. It is essential that any suggestions for changes to assessment tools (including assessment instruments) are justified with reference to the validation findings.

Assessors need skills in analysing findings constructively and collectively to identify opportunities for improvements to the quality of assessment.

Debrief after a validation

One of the keys to successful validation is the quality of the discussion that occurs between the various parties involved. The validation panel will have used a range of tools, such as checklists and forms, to record the data they gathered during the process. The purpose of these records is to present the findings of validation activities in a format that assists panel members to identify those areas of assessment that need to be strengthened, revised or superseded.

The validation panel needs to review these documents systematically to identify opportunities for improvement, and best practice examples in assessment that may be used to inform future assessment activities. The validation leader will usually adopt a risk-management approach to determine the order in which findings are reviewed; for example, they are likely to prioritise remedial action units of competency that have recently been added to the RTO's scope of registration, or other units where significant gaps were found in the quality of assessment. The validation panel should agree on a priority ranking of the units of competency that require improved or new assessment.

Implement improvements to your work practices

The ability to reflect critically on your performance is a key attribute of professional trainers and assessors. It is not possible to validate your own work. As a result of validation discussion, you may be provided with some feedback that you can use to improve your work practices. You should also welcome any feedback you receive from other validation panel members as a valuable contribution to your ongoing professional development. You should be prepared to act on the feedback you receive and your own reflections to improve your assessment practices.

Improvements represent an investment of your time and energy in effecting the changes. You may find that the actions you need to take to improve your performance are already available to you. For example, you may need to revise the instructions given to candidates, or review the information you give them about recognition of prior learning pathways. You may already have the skills and knowledge required to implement these improvements.

Contribute to an effective discussion

Effective group discussions during the final stages of an assessment validation session require communication and team-working skills. Here is a summary of the key skills that are required. You should use this information to reflect on your current competence and, where necessary, plan how you could undertake appropriate professional development.

Professionalism

Assessment validation panels comprise members of various professional backgrounds and levels of experience. You should support your validation colleagues by willingly sharing your experience, knowledge and observations; adopting a positive attitude to validation processes; and demonstrating a commitment to continuous improvement and quality management.

Ethical behaviour

During assessment validation sessions, you may have had access to commercially sensitive information, such as problems with assessment instruments. You must comply with the RTO's policies for confidentiality by ensuring that validation records are secured correctly and that you do not discuss commercial information inappropriately, particularly with external parties.

Conflict resolution

You may find that in some cases, validation panels cannot reach consensus on validation findings. For example, several members of the panel may believe that the process for recognition of prior learning does not satisfy the rules of evidence because assessment candidates are not asked to authenticate the evidence they present for assessment. You must use appropriate skills to hear the objections raised by other panel members, and work cooperatively to find areas of mutual agreement and a way forward. The validation coordinator will have primary responsibility to resolve conflict between panel members.

Empathy

Individual validation panel members will have different stakes in the validation process. When examining an assessment instrument, you may participate in a panel that includes the assessor who designed the assessment instrument. In this situation, the assessment instrument designer may resist making changes to the assessment instrument. You will need to reflect on how you can give constructive feedback, and promote the value of innovation and change during validation sessions.

Promote access and equity

RTOs must comply with the legislation that relates to anti-discrimination and equal opportunity, both in their own business operations and when conducting assessment in a candidate's workplace. This means that you must not discriminate against anyone based on their gender, age, religion, ethnicity, family situation or sexual preference.

Time management

Validation sessions represent a significant investment by RTOs in resources, such as staff and accommodation. Participants must make effective use of the resources available to them. This includes managing the debriefing session in accordance with the planned agenda and using an appropriate process to wind up a session that is running overtime or where consensus cannot be reached.

Action plan

You may be assigned the task of formally recording the validation panel's outcomes of their findings. Ensure you are familiar with the format the RTO uses for this purpose. These often include a list of recommendations based on the feedback with an action plan list along with time lines.

Analyse validation findings and identify improvements

With the validation coordinator, confirm the form or template that the panel is required to complete to summarise their findings. The panel may be expected to complete a record of the validation process, which includes a checklist that records the evaluation of the assessment tool benchmarked against the rules of evidence and principles of assessment.

Ask your trainer for a sample 'Assessment tool validation report' template.

Remember, the purpose of assessment validation is to review and make recommendations for future improvements to the assessment tool, assessment process and/or outcomes. It is not enough to complete the records of validation and store them as evidence to be produced during audit activities. Rather, the validation process requires participants to collaborate and make specific recommendations for improvements.

Your recommendations could relate to the following areas:

▶ Assessment processes (for example, prepare clearer advice for assessment candidates regarding opportunities for recognition of prior learning)

▶ Context and conditions for assessment (for example, make assessment instruments more flexible so they can be used in various contexts, such as online or in the workplace)

▶ Assessment methods and tools (for example, adjust the assessment methods so that they capture performance evidence requirements more accurately)

▶ Administration instructions (for example, rewrite the instructions to candidates to ensure they understand the evidence they are required to submit for assessment)

▶ How evidence is collected (for example, the RTO may need to develop enhanced procedures for collecting evidence from candidates for recognition of prior learning)

▶ Criteria used for judging competence (for example, the validation panel may determine that benchmark solutions need to be revised to more accurately reflect current work practices)

▶ Guidelines for making reasonable adjustments to evidence gathering methods (for example, assessment instruments used in remote Indigenous communities)

▶ Recording and reporting requirements (for example, systems may need to be improved to ensure candidates receive their transcripts more promptly)

▶ Training and assessment strategy documents may need to be changed to reflect the improvements and suggestions. For example clustering of units due to duplication.

Outcome of validation activity

At the conclusion of a validation activity, you should be able to produce records of the validation process and your findings and recommendations for improvements. In many cases, you may also be required to produce revised assessment instruments. The assessment leader will inform you of the RTO's expectations about the outcomes that the validation panel is to produce.

The RTO may use a validation activity checklist to record details of proposed validation activities and recommendations following the activities. Ask your trainer for a sample 'Validation activity checklist' template.

Example

Discuss validation findings to support improvements to the quality of assessment

Sandra is a teacher at a TAFE institute where she is responsible for delivering and assessing various units of competency in SIR20212 Certificate II in Retail Services. The institute's policy is to mainstream learners who have special needs (including physical and intellectual disabilities) in retail classes.

Sandra learns that her faculty has selected the unit that assesses learners' competence in creating visual displays in retail stores for validation. She has recently used an assessment instrument from the institute's assessment bank and found that one of the learners – Stephen, who has an intellectual disability – was unable to write the report and complete the short answer quiz that was required to complete the assessment instrument.

Maggie has recently joined the institute as a part-time teacher, while continuing her role as a visual merchandiser at a large retailer. During the validation session, Sandra and Maggie evaluate the assessment instrument against the performance evidence requirements of the unit, and agree that it is not necessary for learners to demonstrate they can write reports. They revise the assessment instrument to ask learners to create a display in a shoebox. The assessor will question each learner about their display. It is important that learners can explain the elements of their display and explain how they have used appropriate safe work practices to create it.

Activity 9

1. Why is it important to communicate effectively during validation? What are examples of communication techniques that facilitate effective collaboration in a collective environment?

2. How should documentation assist in organising and planning work in relation to validation activities?

3. You are participating in an assessment validation session and have been asked to explain the purpose of validation to panel members. List in dot points what you might say.

4. How can a properly conducted validation process benefit you as an assessor?

Click to complete Activity 9

3B Discuss, agree on and record recommendations to improve assessment practices

The validation panel will use the analysis of the findings to identify where gaps occur in the quality of the assessment and the actions that are required to address them. The validation panel's goal is to achieve consensus in the recommendations they put forward for improvements.

The leader is responsible for ensuring all panel members have the opportunity to discuss their opinions about the recommendations, that all views are listened to and that the majority of people are happy with the decision. As it is not always possible to achieve consensus, the validation leader should explain the process that will be used for decision-making. You may find that decisions are based on the majority rules or the validation chairperson's recommendations.

The nature of recommendations

Recommendations made by the validation panel will vary to reflect the unique nature of each assessment instrument. They consist of recommendations for improvement of assessment instruments, processes or judgments.

Generally, recommendations relate to the following:

▶ giving clearer instructions to candidates and assessors

▶ changing the method of assessment so it can be used in a wider range of assessment contexts (for example, online, group learning or workplace assessment)

▶ providing clearer advice to candidates and assessors about reasonable adjustment

▶ providing checklists, diagrams or flowcharts to help candidates understand what they are required to do

▶ ensuring candidates have access to necessary resources, such as workplace policies and procedures, technology and tools

▶ reducing the amount of evidence that candidates are required to submit

▶ changing the conditions of assessment to more closely simulate a workplace (for example, it may be appropriate to assess using a simulation rather than a written assessment).

Record recommendations

The validation panel will use the method preferred by the RTO to make their recommendations. This could be in the form of a business report, an annotated version of the assessment instrument, or in the appropriate section of the validation activity checklist or form. Where recommendations are made for improvements to assessment instruments, the panel may be asked to collaborate in order to prepare a revised instrument.

The recommendations proposed by the validation panel will be considered for implementation by people in the RTO who are responsible for quality management and continuous improvement. The RTO will evaluate the costs of implementing the proposed recommendations against the benefits that will be achieved because of improved assessment outcomes and compliance. A key driver for the acceptance of recommendations will be the consequences to the RTO and its stakeholders if best quality standards in assessment are not achieved.

Changes in assessment represent an investment in resources by the RTO. Time must be made available to assessors to revise assessment; the record-keeping system must be updated; and candidates, assessors and enterprises must be advised of the innovations. The RTO may decide to conduct professional development activities to advise staff of the continuous improvement that has occurred, and attempt to minimise similar issues in assessment arising in the future.

Retain evidence

The assessment validation plan should guide the validation panel in how to document and act on assessment outcomes. The RTO should also have processes in place to maintain records in accordance with requirements.

A validation panel should retain evidence of:

▶ personnel involved in validation and their qualifications

▶ the assessment validation tools used by the panel

▶ the sample tool

▶ all evidence samples considered

▶ the assessment validation outcomes.

Record improvements

Analysis of the validation process findings may demonstrate that while the assessment instrument is satisfactory, there are gaps in the quality of other aspects of the RTO's approach to assessment. The validation panel has a responsibility to document recommendations about innovations that could be implemented by the RTO as part of their commitment to continuous improvement.

The validation participants may formulate such recommendations as:

▶ additional professional development for assessors

▶ revisions to the RTO's assessment policy to reflect the needs of industry and workers

▶ revisions to the RTO's assessment policy to ensure compliance with relevant standards

▶ systematic improvements to the record-keeping system

▶ reviewing learning and assessment resources

▶ changes to assessment system procedures

▶ reviewing partnership arrangements

▶ additional or enhanced engagement with industry and enterprises

▶ improvements to evidence collection processes

▶ revised information for assessors

▶ revised information for candidates or third parties

▶ assessment design processes

▶ engagement with subject matter experts

▶ changing the sequencing and clustering of assessments.

Support recommendations with evidence

It is important that the recommendations made by the validation panel are supported by some form of justification or evidence. The people in the RTO who are responsible for implementing the panel's recommendations will need to carefully consider:

▶ the gaps that have been found in assessment

▶ the recommendations and justification for improvement

▶ the potential benefits and outcomes that will be achieved by implementing the proposed changes.

The RTO will require participants in assessment validation activities to maintain a comprehensive record of the process. Your workplace policies and procedures will include a range of forms, templates and checklists that have been designed to be used during assessment validation activities. You should check which method the validation panel should specifically use to propose their recommendations for improvement. In many cases, the recommendations will be recorded on the assessment validation checklist or summary. Alternatively, your RTO may require the validation panel to prepare a separate report of their findings and recommendations. Information regarding this should be available in the RTO's policies and procedures or style guide.

Regardless of the format that is used to make recommendations, it is essential that the validation panel clearly describes:

▶ any gaps in assessment practice they have identified

▶ the material they have examined to arrive at their conclusions

▶ the specific actions that should be taken to address these gaps.

Example

Discuss, agree on and record recommendations to improve assessment practices

The following example demonstrates the recommendations that were proposed by a validation panel which found that the current assessment instrument did not comply with the performance evidence requirements of the unit of competency or the rule of sufficiency.

Performance evidence

The candidate is required to perform a particular work activity safely using appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and sustainable work practices.

Panel findings

The validation panel finds that the assessment instrument currently used by the RTO asks the candidate to deliver an oral presentation about the use of PPE.

The validation panel agrees that the assessment instrument needs to be redesigned because it does not currently gather sufficient evidence of the candidate's skills in using safe and sustainable work practices.

Recommendations

The validation panel examines the assessment requirements and makes the following recommendations to the suggested assessment methods:

Assessment should be conducted in a simulated workplace when appropriate, since many of the assessment candidates are recent school leavers without access to a workplace.

Candidates should be asked to perform a work task that is relevant to their qualification in a simulated work environment with access to policies and procedures, relevant instructions and checklists.

In addition to observing the oral presentation about the use of PPE, the assessor should observe the candidate using the equipment in a typical situation and should use direct questioning to gather additional evidence of underpinning knowledge.

The candidate should be required to maintain a work log or journal to record how they managed their personal safety and duty of care obligations.

Document the recommendations

The validation panel writes a report that clearly describes the inadequacies or flaws with the current assessment method (oral presentation) and makes recommendations for improvements that include a practical application and observation in a simulated workplace, direct questioning, and work log/journal.

Activity 10

1. Read Clauses 1.8–1.12 of the Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015. List the clauses that could result in an RTO changing aspects of the way a specific unit of competency is assessed, as recommended by a validation panel that completed validation activities.

2. A validation panel meets to discuss an assessment instrument designed to assess *CHCCOM001 Provide first point of contact*. The RTO, which offers Certificate II in Sport and Recreation, has purchased training materials and assessment tools that have general applicability, but it has yet to contextualise the materials to suit its target industry or learners. A typical learner is under 25 years old and interested in working as a recreation assistant in sporting facilities. What should an assessment panel review before adjusting the tool used in assessing competence for the unit?

3. During validation, the panel notes that the assessment tools are used by a student who is currently working in a community services workplace. As they are required to demonstrate knowledge of industry- and job-specific terminology, this needs to be addressed in assessment as well as training. How should this recommendation be presented?

Click to complete Activity 10

Summary

1. The validation panel will need to review validation findings systematically to identify opportunities for improvement and best practice examples in assessment that may be used to inform future assessment activities.

2. Effective group discussions during the final stages of an assessment validation session require communication and team working skills.

3. Validation panel members should welcome any feedback they receive from other members of the validation panel as a valuable contribution to their ongoing professional development. It is important that they are prepared to act on the feedback they have received to improve their assessment practices.

4. The validation panel will use their analysis of the findings to identify where the gaps occur and the actions that are required to address them. The validation panel's goal is to achieve consensus in the recommendations they put forward for improvements.

5. The RTO will evaluate the costs of implementing the proposed recommendations against the benefits that will be achieved in improved assessment outcomes and compliance.

6. Analysis of the validation process findings may demonstrate that while the assessment instrument is satisfactory, there are gaps in the quality of other aspects of the RTO's approach to assessment.

7. Recommendations will need to be implemented across a variety of documents and reflected in an action plan with time lines.

8. The RTO will require participants in assessment validation activities to maintain a comprehensive record of the process. Workplace policies and procedures will include a range of forms, templates and checklists that have been designed for use during assessment validation activities.