Competency-Based Assessments

Definition of Competency

Assessment in this context can be defined as:

The fair, valid, reliable and flexible gathering and recording of evidence to support the judgement on whether competency has been achieved. Skills and knowledge (developed either in a structured learning situation, at work, or in some other context) are assessed against national standards of competence required by industry, rather than compared with the skills and knowledge of other candidates.

The features of a competency-based assessment system are:

- It is focused on what candidates can do and whether it meets the criteria specified by the industry as competency standards.
- Assessment should mirror the environment the candidate will encounter in the workplace.
- Assessment criteria should be clearly stated to the candidate at the beginning of the learning process.
- Assessment should be holistic. That is, it aims to assess as many elements and/or units of competency as is feasible at one time.
- In competency assessment, a candidate receives one of only two outcomes – 'competent or not yet competent'.
- The basis of assessment is in applying knowledge for some purpose. In a competency system, knowledge for the sake of knowledge is seen to be ineffectual unless it assists a person to perform a task to the level required in the workplace.
- The emphasis in assessment is on assessable outcomes that are clearly stated for the trainer and candidate. Assessable outcomes are tied to the relevant industry competency standards where these exist. Where such competencies do not exist, the outcomes are based upon those identified in a training needs analysis.

JobSkills Training Academy
RTO Code 52875

Assessing Nationally-Recognised Training

Developing and conducting assessment, in an Australian vocational education and training context, is founded on the Principles of Assessment and the Rules of Evidence:

Principles of Assessment

1. **Assessment must be valid**
    - Assessment must include the full range of skills and knowledge needed to demonstrate competency.
    - Assessment must include the combination of knowledge and skills with their practical application.
    - Assessment, where possible, must include judgements based on evidence drawn from a number of occasions and across a number of contexts.
2. **Assessment must be reliable**
    - Assessment must be reliable and must be regularly reviewed to ensure that assessors are making decisions in a consistent manner.
    - Assessors must be trained in national competency standards for assessors to ensure reliability.
3. **Assessment must be flexible**
    - Assessment, where possible, must cover both the on and off-the-job components of training within a course.
    - Assessment must provide for the recognition of knowledge, skills and attitudes regardless of how they have been acquired.
    - Assessment must be made accessible to candidates through a variety of delivery modes, so they can proceed through modularised training packages to gain competencies.
    - Assessment must be mutually developed and agreed upon between assessor and the assessed.
    - Assessment must be able to be challenged. Appropriate mechanisms must be made for reassessment as a result of challenge.

4. **Assessment must be fair**
    - Assessment process must consider the individual needs of the candidate.
    - Assessment must provide for reasonable adjustments, where appropriate, to take into account the individual candidate's needs.

(Source: Standards for RTOs 2015, Clauses 1.8 – 1.12)

Rules of Evidence

When collecting evidence, there are certain rules that apply to that evidence. All evidence must be valid, sufficient, authentic and current:

1. **Valid**

   Evidence gathered should meet the requirements of the unit of competency. This evidence should match, or at least reflect, the type of performance that is to be assessed, whether it covers knowledge, skills or attitudes.

2. **Sufficient**

   This rule relates to the amount of evidence gathered. It is imperative that enough evidence is gathered to satisfy the requirements that the candidate is competent in all aspects of the unit of competency.

3. **Authentic**

   When evidence is gathered, the assessor must be satisfied that evidence is the candidate's own work.

4. **Current**

   This relates to the recency of the evidence and whether the evidence relates to current abilities.

(Source: Training in Australia by M Tovey, D Lawlor)

Dimensions of Competency

The national concept of competency includes all aspects of work performance and not only narrow task skills. The four dimensions of competency are:

1. Task skills
2. Task management skills
3. Contingency management skills
4. Job or role environment skills

Reasonable Adjustment

Adapted Reasonable Adjustment in teaching, learning and assessment for learners with a disability - November 2010 - Prepared by - Queensland VET Development Centre

Reasonable adjustment in VET is the term applied to modifying the learning environment or making changes to the training delivered to assist a candidate with a disability. A reasonable adjustment can be as simple as changing classrooms to be closer to amenities or installing a particular type of software on a computer for a person with vision impairment.

Why make a reasonable adjustment?

We make reasonable adjustments in VET to make sure that candidates with a disability have:

- The same learning opportunities as candidates without a disability, and
- The same opportunity to perform and complete assessments as those without a disability.

Reasonable adjustment applied to participation in teaching, learning and assessment activities can include:

- Customising resources and assessment activities within the training package or accredited course
- Modifying the presentation medium
- Learner support
- Use of assistive/adaptive technologies

- Making information accessible both before enrolment and during the course
- Monitoring the adjustments to ensure candidate needs continue to be met

Assistive/Adaptive Technologies

Assistive/Adaptive technology means 'software or hardware that has been specifically designed to assist people with disabilities in carrying out daily activities' (World Wide Web Consortium - W3C). It includes screen readers, magnifiers, voice recognition software, alternative keyboards, devices for grasping, visual alert systems, digital note-takers.

IMPORTANT:

Reasonable adjustment made for collecting candidate assessment evidence must not impact on the standard expected by the workplace, as expressed by the relevant unit(s) of competency. For example, if the assessment were gathering evidence of the candidate's competency in writing, allowing the candidate to complete the assessment verbally would not be a valid assessment method. The method of assessment used by any reasonable adjustment must still meet the competency requirements.