

Consultation draft of the VET Workforce Quality Strategy

This VET Workforce Quality Strategy (consultation draft) has been designed to support registered training organisations (RTOs) and trainers and assessors to deliver high quality training and assessment. It aims to promote continuous improvement and excellence in the VET sector to support strong learner outcomes.

This is a consultation draft of the Strategy to inform the development of the final Strategy for agreement by Skills Ministers.

This draft Strategy spans a period of three years, commencing from early 2022, and includes short, medium and long-term measures. Skills Ministers will oversee the implementation of the measures, with a formative evaluation of the Strategy to be commissioned in 2023 to review implementation of the Strategy's measures.

The Strategy is intended to be a live document, with a view to update the Strategy on an annual basis to incorporate further measures based emerging issues.

Context

Vocational education and training (VET) trainers and assessors¹ are a vital component of Australia's VET sector, and in 2019 were responsible for skilling and upskilling 4.2 million learners². They are at the front line of ensuring that learners in the VET system receive high quality and engaging training that helps them to meet changing skills needs to improve employment outcomes and support Australia's productivity.

In 2020, all Australian governments agreed to progress reforms to strengthen the training system to support Australia's immediate economic recovery under the Heads of Agreement for Skills Reform³. In acknowledgement of the importance of the VET workforce, this commitment included developing a VET Workforce Quality Strategy.

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) identified that in 2019 there were an estimated 71,379 people in the VET workforce who were employed as trainers and assessors, with 52.6 per cent employed on a full-time basis and 47.4 per cent on a part-time basis. There is a high rate of casualisation in the VET trainer and assessor workforce, with an estimated 32.6 per cent employed on a casual or sessional basis, 13.9 per cent employed on contract or in temporary positions and 53.5 per cent

¹ For the purposes of this Strategy, the trainer and assessor workforce includes VET teachers, VET practitioners, TAFE teachers, LLN practitioners/teachers and lecturers.

² NCVER (2020) *Total VET students and courses 2019 statistical report*, p.1

³ (2020) Heads of Agreement for Skills Reform – accessed from <https://www.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/heads-of-agreement-skills-reform.pdf>

employed on a permanent basis⁴. A feature of the VET workforce is the prominence of dual professionals, that is, trainers and assessors who are employed within their industry while also delivering training at a RTO⁵.

Trainers and assessors undertake their role in a variety of settings including small private RTOs, large public institutions, community not-for-profit organisations, schools, volunteer organisations and enterprise RTOs delivering training to their own workforces. They deliver a range of qualifications, accredited courses and skill sets to a diverse range of learners including those gaining skills for the current and future needs of industry, undertaking lifelong learning or improving their foundation skills for employment or further study. Additionally, RTOs deliver training to international students, equity cohorts, and learners that have disengaged, or are at risk of disengaging, from education and employment.

VET trainers and assessors are required to have vocational competencies in the industry area/s in which they deliver training and assessment, broad industry knowledge and experience, a high degree of knowledge and practice in delivery of vocational education. Trainers and assessors also manage administrative and compliance workloads. Under the Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015 (Standards for RTOs), training and assessment for nationally recognised training can only be delivered by a person who has:

- specified qualifications in vocational education and training
- vocational competencies at least to the level being delivered and assessed
- current industry skills directly relevant to the training and assessment being provided, and
- current knowledge and skills in vocational training and learning that informs their training and assessment.

The Standards for RTOs also require trainers and assessors to undertake professional development in the knowledge and practice of vocational training, learning and assessment, including competency-based training and assessment. It is estimated that 77.1 per cent of trainers and assessors hold a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment⁶, with others holding a diploma or higher-level qualification in adult education. Some trainers and assessors work under formal supervision arrangements, as provided for in the Standards for RTOs.

To deliver the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, the Standards for RTOs require trainers and assessors to hold a Diploma of Vocational Education and Training, a Diploma of Training Design and Development or a higher-level qualification in adult education. The delivery of the Certificate IV underpins the quality of VET in preparing graduates to deliver training to skill Australia's workforce.

This Strategy aims to support RTOs and trainers and assessors to deliver high quality training and assessment, and excellent learner outcomes, whilst acknowledging the diverse roles within the sector, delivery settings and learner cohorts. It is an important part of a broader suite of quality reforms currently underway which include revising the Standards for RTOs, building RTO capability and promoting a culture of

⁴ National Centre for Vocational Education Research (2020) *Understanding the Australian vocational education and training workforce*, p7

⁵ Productivity Commission (2011), *Vocational Education and Training Workforce*, p.34

⁶ National Centre for Vocational Education Research (2020) *Understanding the Australian vocational education and training workforce*, p16

continuous improvement and excellence for RTOs. The Standards for RTOs are being revised as part of the quality reforms to ensure they focus on quality outcomes, are clear and provide for consistent interpretation, and outline the minimum level of quality for RTOs.

As quality is the cornerstone of an effective and efficient VET system, there will continue to be linkages with the industry engagement and qualification reforms. As the system moves to improved industry and qualification arrangements, it will be vital to ensure RTOs and trainers and assessors have the necessary supports in place to continue to have capability to deliver high quality and industry relevant skills.

Developing the Strategy

To inform the development of the Strategy, consultation on supporting the VET workforce took place as part of the quality reforms consultations between December 2020 to March 2021. This included online workshops and surveys, with a specific survey seeking the sector's views on how best to support VET workforce quality. Feedback from this consultation highlighted the importance of having high-quality trainers and assessors within RTOs, barriers RTOs face in attracting and building the VET workforce and the importance of RTOs supporting trainers and assessors in terms of their capability and industry currency.

Key themes raised during the consultations included the following:

Capability frameworks and professional standards

Capability frameworks and professional standards were both viewed as effective in improving the capability and quality of the VET workforce, and were identified as useful for performance planning, professional development, workforce planning, setting expectations and guiding self-assessment.

Industry currency

There was a strong focus on the importance of supporting trainer and assessor linkages with industry to maintain industry currency. Some RTOs identified they had implemented return to work programs and/or structured time for trainers and assessors to engage with industry, including through industry groups and forums.

Professional development and support

It was commonly suggested that access to effective professional development that was appropriate to trainers' experience and skills base was important for supporting quality. Mentoring was also a common suggestion raised as it was seen to be effective for supporting and improving the confidence and skills of trainers and assessors, particularly new entrants.

Supporting learner cohorts

Most stakeholders indicated they delivered training and assessment to learner cohorts with specific or complex needs, however there were differing views from RTO managers and trainers around whether RTOs have the necessary supports in place to deliver training to these cohorts effectively.

The themes raised from consultation, along with issues identified in existing literature, have informed the development of this Strategy and its measures.

Strategy support measures

This Strategy includes measures which aim to assist RTOs and trainers and assessors to deliver high quality training and assessment. Creating an understanding of best practice will assist in further developing the capability of trainers and assessors across all areas of the VET sector and support improved consistency in training and assessment. In addition, the measures include developing tools, resources and guidance material to assist RTOs to support their workforce and help trainers and assessors in their role. Initial commissioned work to implement Strategy measures will be led by the Australian Government, in consultation with state and territory governments.

Due to the significant diversity in how RTOs operate, it is recognised that not all measures in the Strategy will be relevant for all RTO settings, or apply to all trainers and/or assessors, and will depend upon their role within their RTO. However, the work commissioned from the measures in this Strategy will provide best practice examples and case studies for RTOs and trainers and assessors to integrate, where relevant, into everyday practice. In addition to supporting improved capability, the measures within this Strategy are intended to foster a culture of excellence within RTOs for their VET workforce.

State and territory governments and industry currently invest in varied initiatives to support the VET workforce. This includes the Victorian VET Development Centre, the delivery of professional development and other support through VET regulators, and professional development and capability programs across TAFEs, and in some jurisdictions, private RTOs. Other initiatives include Certificate IV in Training and Assessment traineeship programs and VET sector forums and communities of practice for RTOs and the VET workforce.

The measures within this Strategy are intended to be complementary to those initiatives, and will draw on the experience and success of these to inform the progression of the measures. This will ensure a more consistent national approach and support continuous improvement for all RTOs.

The Strategy measures aim to benefit the following stakeholders:

- **Registered training organisations** will have the necessary information and strategies to establish workforce development plans and build the capacity and capability of their trainer and assessor workforce, with a focus on high quality outcomes for learners through appropriate staff support.
- **Trainers and assessors** will have access to materials and professional development to support their ability to provide high quality, inclusive, relevant and engaging training and assessment that supports better learner outcomes.
- **Learners** will be supported throughout their training by a high-quality trainer and assessor workforce that delivers inclusive, engaging, relevant, and high-quality training and assessment.
- **Industry and employers** will be assured that VET graduates have received high-quality training delivery that provides learners skills they need for their role in the workforce.

The measures for implementation for the Strategy are outlined in **Attachment A**, and key themes have been grouped as follows:

1. Capability frameworks and professional standards

While there are a range of capability frameworks and professional standards for the VET sector, most are developed by larger RTOs for use within their own organisation. There is currently no, up-to-date national framework or set of standards to describe and formalise the capability of the VET workforce.

Many stakeholders have indicated that capability frameworks and professional standards have a positive impact on performance planning and management, professional development, workforce planning and self-assessment of performance. They provide a framework for trainers and assessors to determine the skills and knowledge required to improve in their role and progress in their career, and provide a basis for RTO managers to set expectations for their workforce.

RTOs may not have the capacity to develop their own capability frameworks or professional standards, and as such, a Strategy measure includes developing an updated capability framework and/or professional standards. These will be for voluntary uptake, to assist these RTOs to identify gaps in knowledge and skills across their trainer and assessor workforce, and tailor professional development and career path development accordingly. A wide variety of RTOs will be consulted as part of the development of these resources to ensure the diversity of the VET sector is reflected.

2. Qualifications and entry pathways

Stakeholders raised concerns regarding trainer and assessor qualifications and their effectiveness in ensuring trainers and assessors are job-ready upon entry to the workforce. There are mixed views on whether the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment adequately prepares entry level trainers and assessors for their role. It is perceived to contain some significant limitations such as its narrow focus on teaching practices, lack of recognition of the diversity of VET roles, and its effectiveness in preparing trainers and assessors to deliver to learners with more complex needs, including those with low levels of language, literacy, numeracy and digital literacy.

The Education Industry Reference Committee (IRC) is responsible for the Training and Education (TAE) Training Package and is currently in the process of undertaking a holistic review of the Training Package, which includes the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. Re-examining the Training Package will help ensure it is adequately preparing VET trainers and assessors to deliver effective training to support better learner outcomes by focussing on ensuring:

- TAE units of competency deliver the variety, and depth, of skills and knowledge that are relevant in a modern VET teaching, training, and assessment environment
- the packaging rules of TAE40116 Certificate IV in Training and Assessment provide adequate flexibility for learners pursuing the variety of VET teaching, training and assessment job roles that exist in the modern labour market
- the TAE Training Package makes use of 'stackable' skill sets that allow for a 'scaffolded' approach to skill development and attainment of qualifications
- the TAE Training Package is structured to support the range, and diversity of career pathways available to workers in the VET industry, and

- the structure and content of the TAE Training Package addresses the skills gaps of those working in other education sub-sectors such as VET for Secondary Students or enterprise training.

The Strategy identifies key areas for consideration for the training package review, based on feedback received during consultation.

3. Ongoing professional support and industry currency

Professional support measures, which include areas such as professional development, mentoring and maintaining industry currency, will better equip RTOs, as well as individual trainers and assessors, with appropriate materials and strategies to improve pedagogical practices, foster links with industry, and improve the quality of training delivery and assessment practices. Material produced will be able to be customised to individual RTOs, which is vital to assist small or niche RTOs that may not have the capacity to develop in-house professional support material.

4. Fostering best practice and continuous improvement

The development of best practice examples, case studies and other resources, will provide RTOs and trainers and assessors with a clear illustration of what constitutes quality above minimum compliance with the Standards for RTOs, and will assist trainers and assessors in their role. A key focus of these resources will be showcasing the diverse nature of the VET sector, delivery settings and learners. These resources will be shared with VET regulators to support their role in providing education and guidance materials to RTOs, and does not preclude the VET regulators from developing additional resources to support continuous improvement.

5. Workforce planning and data

To assist with a better understanding of how to support the VET workforce, a workforce plan will be commissioned to explore the following:

- Current workforce - Data analysis of current workforce and identifying workforce needs
- Growing the workforce - Analysis to project workforce demand, including regional distribution and the shortage of specialist roles, for example language, literary, numeracy and digital skills (LLND) practitioners.
- Retention – Identification of retention strategies
- Career development – Mapping career pathways and strategies to support career development
- Succession planning – Implications of ageing workforce.

The workforce plan will assist in identifying additional measures to include in the Strategy to ensure the sector is able to respond to future workforce demands.

Work will also be commissioned to scope the value of conducting a regular data collection for the VET workforce, and the most effective way to collect this data without imposing additional burden on the sector.

Attachments

Attachment A: Measures to support the quality of the VET trainer and assessor workforce

Measures to support the quality of the VET trainer and assessor workforce

Theme	Phase One (2022)	Phase Two (2023)	Phase Three (2024)	Indicators of success
<p>Capability frameworks and professional standards</p> <p><i>Capability frameworks and professional standards support performance planning and management, professional development, workforce planning and self-assessment of performance</i></p>	<p>Commission research into professional standards for the VET workforce, and the value of these as a resource for the sector in addition to, or as part of, an updated capability framework.</p> <p>Develop an updated capability framework and/or professional standards as resources available for the sector.</p> <p>Commission development of guidance material for individual RTOs to tailor the final product to their organisation.</p>	<p>Promote the use of the capability framework and/or professional standards to RTOs – create webinar series/guidance material for RTOs on how the tools can be used for role definition, career progression, performance management, self-reflection, and to tailor professional development to identified skills/knowledge gaps.</p>	<p>Evaluation and monitoring of uptake and success of the capability framework and/or professional standards and their impact on improving the quality of the VET workforce. Evaluation to be used to determine if further adjustments are required to the tools.</p> <p>Implementation of capability frameworks and/or professional standards recognised as a marker of excellence in the quality reforms for continuous improvement.</p>	<p>RTOs use capability frameworks and/or professional standards to reflect on their workforce needs and to plan for career progression, performance management and identify professional development needs for their staff.</p> <p>RTOs use capability frameworks/professional standards to strive for excellence in their trainer and assessor workforce.</p>
<p>Qualifications and entry pathways</p> <p><i>Qualifications and entry pathways recognise the diversity of roles within the sector and prepares trainers and assessors for their role, including</i></p>	<p>Develop a set of principles to ensure the review of the Training and Education Training Package supports the diversity of roles and career pathways within the sector and the pedagogical capability of the VET</p>	<p>Promote to RTOs the value of encouraging and supporting their existing workforces in undertaking higher qualifications in adult learning or additional skills sets to improve pedagogical knowledge and delivery to</p>	<p>Consider how the quality reforms for continuous improvement will recognise qualifications and entry pathways as markers of excellence for high performing RTOs. Factors for consideration could include RTOs that support</p>	<p>Qualifications for entry into the VET trainer and assessor workforce provide graduates with the necessary skills and experience to be high quality trainers and assessors in a variety of VET settings.</p>

Theme	Phase One (2022)	Phase Two (2023)	Phase Three (2024)	Indicators of success
<p><i>delivering to learners with complex needs.</i></p>	<p>workforce. These principles could cover areas such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognising the diversity of settings, learners and career pathways within the VET sector. - Supporting the VET workforce to deliver to specific cohorts of learners, including those with low levels of language, literacy or numeracy, Indigenous learners, and learners with disability. - Providing greater options for career pathways and progression for trainers and assessors, including options for upskilling in the areas of teaching practice/teaching facilitation and increasing capability in foundation skills delivery. - Providing flexibility within the training package to provide adequate flexibility for 	<p>learner cohorts with specific or complex needs.</p> <p>Promoting the role of a VET trainer and assessor as a career option through the National Careers Institute.</p>	<p>their trainer and assessor workforce to undertake additional skills sets or qualifications that improve pedagogical knowledge and delivery to learner cohorts with specific or complex needs.</p>	<p>Trainers and assessors have the skills and confidence to train learner cohorts with specific or complex needs.</p> <p>Trainers and assessors have viable options available to further upskill and improve their professional capabilities.</p>

Theme	Phase One (2022)	Phase Two (2023)	Phase Three (2024)	Indicators of success
	<p>learners to pursue the variety of training and assessment job roles that exist in the modern labour market. This flexibility could include stackable skills sets, to attract industry experts to VET and options for additional pathways and upskilling opportunities for current trainers and assessors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognising the role of the VET workforce in delivering training that provides knowledge and skills to prepare a diverse range of learners for the workforce or further study. <p>Develop case studies on innovative practices in delivery of the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, including approaches on further supporting industry experts to become trainers and assessors.</p>			

Theme	Phase One (2022)	Phase Two (2023)	Phase Three (2024)	Indicators of success
<p>Ongoing professional support and industry currency</p> <p><i>Professional support and industry currency improve the capability and skills of the VET workforce to strengthen learner outcomes.</i></p>	<p>Commission the development of high-quality professional development resources in areas where it is most needed, such as digital learning, learner engagement and teaching facilitation, recognition of prior learning, LLND delivery, and teaching design. The costs associated with undertaking professional development will remain the responsibility of the sector.</p> <p>Develop best practice principles which identify the characteristics of high quality and effective professional development.</p> <p>Commission development of resources for new trainers and assessors that provides information to support induction to the profession and aims to support individuals to develop a professional identity.</p> <p>Develop guidance materials to assist experienced trainers and assessors taking</p>	<p>Evaluation and monitoring of uptake and success of professional development resources, with the possibility of identifying additional resources for development.</p> <p>Develop an online tool to record professional development activities for trainers and assessors, to support professional development planning and career progression.</p> <p>Develop guides for RTOs on design and implementation of good practice induction support, including a focus on mentoring and team-teaching.</p> <p>Guides for RTOs to be supported by a series of webinars/workshops to encourage RTOs to adopt best practice for induction support.</p>	<p>Consider how the quality reforms for continuous improvement will recognise ongoing professional support and industry currency as markers of excellence for high performing RTOs. Factors for consideration could include RTOs that support their trainer and assessor workforce in areas such as effective induction processes, providing high quality professional development opportunities, and staffing arrangements that support training delivery.</p>	<p>RTOs and trainers and assessors have access to and use professional support materials, and strategies to ensure high quality training delivery to learners, including support for maintaining industry currency.</p>

Theme	Phase One (2022)	Phase Two (2023)	Phase Three (2024)	Indicators of success
	<p>on a mentoring or coaching role and materials to assist mentees to benefit from mentoring.</p> <p>Develop case studies and best practice examples in relation to maintaining industry currency across a wide range of VET qualification areas.</p> <p>Develop case studies and best practice examples in relation to recognition of prior learning.</p> <p>Develop case studies and best practice examples in relation to developing skills for LLND delivery.</p>			
<p>Fostering best practice and continuous improvement</p> <p><i>Creating a clear illustration of best practice for supporting the VET workforce to drive continuous improvement.</i></p>	<p>Develop a series of best practice examples and case studies to demonstrate to RTOs what constitutes best practice in supporting the trainer and assessor workforce.</p>	<p>Promote the use of the best practice examples and case studies to RTOs and trainers and assessors.</p> <p>Share best practice examples and case studies with VET regulators to assist in their role of providing general education and guidance materials to RTOs.</p>	<p>Evaluation and monitoring of uptake and success of the impact of case studies and implementation of best practice in RTOs.</p>	<p>There is an agreed, sector wide illustration of what constitutes a high-quality training and assessment workforce in a variety of VET settings.</p> <p>RTOs encourage a culture of continuous improvement in relation to training and assessment.</p>

Theme	Phase One (2022)	Phase Two (2023)	Phase Three (2024)	Indicators of success
<p>Workforce planning and data</p> <p><i>Workforce planning and data collection to assist in understanding the needs and demands of the VET workforce now, and into the future.</i></p>	<p>Commission the development of a workforce plan for the VET workforce, considering issues such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the capability of the current workforce • mechanisms to grow the workforce, including attracting industry experts and specialist VET roles, such as LLND practitioners. • retention • career progression • upskilling of current workforce. <p>Commission research into the value of undertaking a regular data collection for the VET workforce, and suggest a method for collection that is accurate and does not place undue burden on RTOs.</p>	<p>Implement outcomes of VET workforce plan, as appropriate.</p> <p>Implement data collection strategy for the VET workforce, as appropriate.</p>		<p>VET stakeholders, including governments, understand the needs and pressures facing the VET workforce, and adjust policy parameters to further support VET workforce quality and learner outcomes.</p>