

FACT SHEET 2

ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Introduction

Assessment of unit standards in FHEC accredited qualifications levels 1–6 is conducted within a competency-based training and assessment system. Competency-based assessment involves the collection and evaluation of evidence to establish that competence has been achieved; that means confirming that an individual can perform to the standard expected in the workplace.

Higher Education Institutes are responsible for the conduct of assessment and will establish an assessment system to support the assessment process – refer to Fact Sheet #1. Specifically, assessment needs to meet the principles of good assessment: validity, reliability, fairness and flexibility.

Validity	Validity is concerned with the extent to which an assessment decision, which is based on evidence of performance, is justified.
Reliability	Reliability is concerned with how accurate or precise the tasks are; how much error is included in the evidence; that the evidence is consistently interpreted; and, that assessment outcomes are comparable across assessors.
Fairness	Fairness is concerned with considering the individual learner's needs and characteristics, and any reasonable adjustments to assessment that need to be applied. In addition, learners must know and understand the assessment process and the criteria to be applied.
Flexibility	Flexibility is concerned with reflecting the needs and characteristics of the individual learner, providing recognition of prior learning, and drawing on a range of methods appropriate to the context.

Source: Adapted from Gillis et al. 2009 and ASQA 2015.

Assessment tools

Assessment tools include:

- The context and conditions for the assessment.
- The tasks to be undertaken by the learner.
- An outline of the evidence to be gathered from the learner and the evidence criteria used to judge the quality of performance (including the assessment decision-making rules).

- The recording and reporting requirements.¹

Assessment tools may be a variety of documents that include:

- Instructions to assessors, such as the context and conditions for assessment.
- Instructions to learners as to the assessment tasks and the expected performance.
- Marking guides or rubrics, to inform assessor judgements.
- Mapping forms to explain how the tasks cover the scope of the unit standard.
- Recording and reporting forms.

The basis of any good assessment is well-developed assessment tools, not just for the individual assessor but also for assessment teams and learners. Assessment tools provide the assessors with clear guidance on how to conduct the assessments, how the evidence will be collected and how a decision of successful completion is to be made. Assessment tools can:

- Enable assessors to be consistent in their decision making of competence over time and multiple learners.
- Enable multiple assessors to conduct assessments in a similar way and also to reach similar conclusions when determining competence.
- Provide for transparency of decision making.
- Can be provided to professional bodies in programme recognition processes.
- Can be provided in internal or external moderation activities.

Assessment tools may relate to one or more unit standards.

When developing assessment tools, assessors need to ensure that the evidence to be collected meets the principles of quality evidence. Evidence should be:

- Valid: the evidence relates to the standard being assessed.
- Authentic: the evidence is the learner's own work.
- Sufficient: the quality and quantity of evidence enables a judgement to be made.
- Current: the evidence is from the present or the recent past.

¹ Gillis et al 2009, p. 57.

Developing assessment tools

There is no one right way to develop assessment tools; however, the process generally includes the following key steps.

1. Review the unit standard

- Review the unit standard to determine the evidence requirements
- Consider any knowledge and performance requirements
- Consider any contextual requirements or industry specific requirements

2. Select the assessment methods

- Select the assessment methods that provide the best opportunities for collecting valid, current and authentic evidence.
- Assessment methods may be direct (observation) and indirect evidence (such as third party evidence).

3. Draft the assessment tool

- For each method develop the task and the expected response (such as a marking guide or rubric, which may include a recording form, e.g. observation checklist), accompanied by instructions for administering the task (i.e., context and conditions, resources), any special provisions, and the decision making rule for successful completion of the task.
- Determine the decision making rule for the successful completion of the unit standard.

4. Panel and trial the assessment tool

- Panel: Check the draft assessment tools with colleagues and industry representatives; looking for useability, clear instructions, and clear guidance on the expected performance and decision making rule.
- Trial: Check the draft assessment tool with learner(s), looking for effectiveness, clear instructions and expectations.

1. Review the unit standard

Before developing the assessment tool, it is important to get a clear idea of the requirements of the unit standard, and for the assessor to be able to 'picture' what a competent person 'looks like'.

Unit standard

The unit standard has different sections to it, and it is important to understand what each section means and how it informs the 'picture of competence'.

Title	The title identifies the overall job task that the specification represents.
Level	The Fiji Qualifications Framework consists of ten levels. Industry Standards Advisory Committees decide the level for each unit standard.
Credits	The credit indicates how long it would take a 'typical' learner to complete the unit standard. One credit point relates to 10 hours of student effort. However, it may not necessarily impact on the assessment.
Purpose	The purpose statement provides further information about the job task.
Underpinning skills and knowledge	This section outlines the skills and knowledge that underpin the unit standard and would be applied in the job task. This list is applied to the teaching and learning, but should also be demonstrated in the assessment.
Definitions	The definitions section provides further clarification to the assessor of terms used in the unit standard and also provides the limitations to which the job task applies.
Outcomes	The outcomes are then outlined, accompanied by the specific evidence requirements for each. These evidence requirements outline further specific information in relation to the learning outcome, and all must be demonstrated by the learner. The range statement provides further clarification for the assessor as to where or how the learner performance is to be applied.

Picture of competence

To picture competence, the assessor needs to consider:

- What are the task skills associated with this work activity?
- What contingencies may occur in the work activity that the learner would need to deal with?

- Would the work activity be undertaken with other tasks? And how would these be managed?
- What are the workplace requirements that would overlay the work activity?

It may help for the assessor to then describe in their own words what a competent learner would look like. This 'picture' will help the assessor than to determine the appropriate methods to enable the 'picture' to be demonstrated.

2. Select the assessment methods

In competency-based assessment learners could be required to do (such as observe), say (such as interview), write (such as portfolio) or create (such as build or make) something as a demonstration of their skills, knowledge and application (Gillis et al., 2009; Griffin, 2014).

Most assessment methods can be categorised against the above four broad methods. The selection of methods is dependent on a fit-for-purpose approach, such as those methods that provide the most direct evidence. Often the assessment method that reflects the workplace job task is the most appropriate.

Observation	Observation is of a learner's application of skills and knowledge, their performance. It could include applying the skills and knowledge of a particular process. Observation may occur in the workplace or a simulated environment. It includes third-party reports from others, such as a supervisor.
Product-based methods	Products may include projects, work samples, reports, or items that are built or made (e.g. roof, cakes, window display).
Portfolio	The portfolio may be a mix of products (such as written documents, photographs, audio or video tapes). Within the submission the learner explains why the sample is relevant to the unit standard and authenticity is confirmed in some way.
Interview	Questioning may be semi-structured, structured or unstructured; may include written or oral responses.

Finally, there are three basic approaches to assessment:

- The learner is assessed during the programme, and there is no final assessment
- The learner is assessed in a final assessment that may or may not include written or oral questions under exam conditions
- A mix of the above two approaches.

Often these approaches use a mix of assessment methods, e.g. written questioning under exam conditions plus practical skills assessment. It is unlikely that one assessment method and one assessment event will suffice to address the scope of

the application of skills and knowledge that reflect workplace standards (Bateman, Chakroun, Coles and Oates et al. (draft 2016).

3. Draft the assessment tool

The assessment tool is developed in stages and, as mentioned previously, there are multiple components:

- After confirming the evidence requirements from the unit standard and selecting the most appropriate assessment method, a task needs to be developed for each assessment method chosen.
- For each task develop the expected performance requirements. The expected performance requirements could include a marking guide or rubric, an observation checklist, a product checklist, or a set of expected answers, depending on the method chosen.
- For each task develop instructions for administering the task (i.e. context and conditions, resources) and the decision-making rule for successful completion of the task. Included here could be any special provisions that need to be made in response to learners within the cohort.
- Once all completed, the assessor needs to determine the decision-making rule for the successful completion of the unit standard, i.e. all tasks need to be completed successfully for a determination of 'competence'.

4. Panel and trial the assessment tool

Once the assessor has drafted the assessment tool, it needs to have a quality check before it is used. The best way to quality check the assessment tool is to:

- Panel: Share the assessment tools with colleagues and industry representatives; looking for usability, clear instructions, and clear guidance on the expected performance and decision-making rule.
- Trial: Check the draft assessment tool with the learner(s), looking for effectiveness, clear instructions and expectations.

Once the assessor has received feedback, final adjustments to the assessment tool can be made and then it is ready for use!

Remember that internal moderation and external moderation will assist in continuing to improve the assessment tool.

Related documents

- Fact Sheet 1: Assessment system
- Fact Sheet 3: Recognition of Prior Learning
- Fact Sheet 4: Internal moderation
- Fact Sheet 5: Assessment simulation
- Fact Sheet 6: Meeting assessors' requirements
- Fact Sheet 7: Using third parties to collect assessment evidence
- Fact Sheet 8: Structured workplace learning and workplace assessment
- Assessment tool templates.

References

- ASQA. 2015. *Guide to developing assessment tools*. Canberra, Australian Government.
- Bateman, A. Chakroun, B. Coles, M. and Oates T. et al. (draft 2016). *Quality Assurance for TVET Qualifications*. UNESCO, Bangkok.
- Gillis, S. Bateman, A. and Clayton, B. 2009. *Guide for developing assessment tools 2009*. Canberra, National Quality Council.
- Griffin, P. 2014. *Assessment for Teaching*. New York, Cambridge University Press.
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