

# Assessment Policy

## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to describe and define States College's approach to assessment. Assessment is central to collecting evidence of competency and evaluating a unit of competency. This policy sets out assessment principles, planning procedures and emphasises States College's commitment to creating effective and meaningful assessment opportunities that support and enhances learning and assessment strategies.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all assessable units of competencies across all the courses on States College's scope of registration.

## 3. Definitions

**Course:** A program of study comprising units of competency leading to a qualification or an award

**Competency:** Means the consistent application of knowledge and skill to the standard of performance required in the workplace. It embodies the ability to transfer and apply skills and knowledge to new situations and environments.

**Unit of Competency or Unit:** A Unit of Competency, also generally referred to as a "unit", is a statement of a key function or role in a particular skill or knowledge area. It is made up of elements of competency, together with performance criteria, a range of variables, and an evidence guide.

**Assessment:** The means by which progress or achievement in a unit is evaluated. This can include assessment methods such as essays, examinations, projects, practical tasks, and tutorial participation.

**Reasonable Adjustment:** Means adjustments that can be made to the way in which evidence of candidate performance can be collected. Whilst reasonable adjustments can be made in terms of the way in which evidence of performance is gathered, the evidence criteria for making competent/not yet competent decisions (and/or awarding grades) should not be altered in any way. That is, the standards expected should be the same irrespective of the group and/or individual being assessed; otherwise, comparability of standards will be compromised.

**Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL):** Means an assessment process that assesses an individual's formal, non-formal and informal learning to determine the extent to which that individual has achieved the required learning outcomes, competency outcomes, or standards for entry to, and/or partial or total completion of, a VET qualification.

## 4. Legislative Context

- National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011
- The ESOS Act 2000
- Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Regulations 2019
- The National Code 2018
- Standards for Registered Organisations 2015
- Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986
- Disability Standards for Education 2005

## 5. Underlying Principles

RTO's assessment policy and procedures, including RPL are guided by the following principles and rules.

### Principles of Assessment

Principles of assessment are required to ensure quality outcomes. Assessments should be fair, flexible, valid and reliable as follows:

**Fairness:** Fairness requires consideration of the individual candidate's needs and characteristics, and any reasonable adjustments that need to be applied to take account of them. It requires clear communication between the assessor and the candidate to ensure that the candidate is fully informed about, understands, and is able to participate in, the assessment process, and agrees that the process is appropriate. It also includes an opportunity for the person being assessed to challenge the result of the assessment and to be reassessed if necessary.

**Flexible:** To be flexible, assessment should reflect the candidate's needs; provide for recognition of competencies no matter how, where or when they have been acquired; draw on a range of methods appropriate to the context, competency and the candidate; and, support continuous competency development.

**Validity:** There are five major types of validity: face, content, criterion (i.e. predictive and concurrent), construct and consequential. In general, validity is concerned with the appropriateness of the inferences, use and consequences that result from the assessment. In simple terms, it is concerned with the extent to which an assessment decision about a candidate (e.g. competent/not yet competent, a grade and/or a mark), based on the evidence of performance by the candidate, is justified. It requires determining conditions that weaken the truthfulness of the decision, exploring alternative explanations for good or poor performance, and feeding them back into the assessment process to reduce errors when making inferences about competence. Unlike reliability, validity is not simply a property of the assessment tool. As such, an assessment tool designed for a particular purpose and target group may not necessarily lead to valid interpretations of performance and assessment decisions if the tool was used for a different purpose and/or target group

**Reliability:** There are five types of reliability: internal consistency; parallel forms; split-half; inter-rater; and, intra-rater. In general, reliability is an estimate of how accurate or precise the task is as a measurement instrument. Reliability is concerned with how much error is included in the evidence.

### Rules of Evidence

Rules of evidence are closely related to the principles of assessment and provide guidance on the collection of evidence to ensure that it is valid, sufficient, authentic and current as follows:

**Validity:** There are five major types of validity: face, content, criterion (i.e. predictive and concurrent), construct and consequential.

**Sufficiency:** Sufficiency relates to the quality and quantity of evidence assessed. It requires collection of enough appropriate evidence to ensure that all aspects of competency have been satisfied and that competency can be demonstrated repeatedly. Supplementary sources of evidence may be necessary. The specific evidence requirements of each unit of competency provide advice on sufficiency.

**Authenticity:** To accept evidence as authentic, an assessor must be assured that the evidence presented for assessment is the candidate's own work.

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

## 6. Policy

States College is committed to designing and developing assessments that engage the learners, incorporate a feedback process and are based on competency elements of each unit of competency, enabling States College to collect sufficient evidences of competency and provide the students with recognition of their achievements against specified criteria.

States College will ensure that all assessments are;

- Valid, fair, flexible, reliable, feasible and incorporate clearly defined assessment criteria and evidence requirements
- Designed to measure students' achievements against explicit learning objectives, to promote learning, and improve student performance
- Based on a range of assessment practices or modes designed to accommodate the diversity of learners and allows them to demonstrate their achievement as learners
- Promote integrity in assessment to ensure, as far as possible, that students receive proper credit for assessable work which is their own
- Incorporate feedback that supports student learning and is prompt, informative and where appropriate provided throughout, not just at the end of, the learning process
- Be moderated or validated to ensure appropriateness to the unit/module and level of difficulty

### 6.1 Communication of Assessment Requirements to Students

6.1.1 Details and expectations of assessment tasks will be provided to the student at commencement of a unit, describing criteria and standards by which their performance will be judged.

6.1.2 Students shall be provided with an Assessment Plan that lists the types of assessments set for a unit. Assessment tasks will provide the students with information on assessment requirements such as assessment criteria, evidence requirements, length, submission dates and provisions for extension and re-submission.

6.1.3 All students must clearly understand the assessment requirements and how they are going to be assessed. Appropriate teaching and learning support will be provided to ensure that students are able to complete their assessments on due date and have an opportunity to discuss their options with the assessor.

### 6.2 Feedback to Students

6.2.1 Formative assessment tasks will be designed to provide an opportunity for feedback at the early stages of the unit, enabling students to make timely and informed judgements about their performance so that subsequent assessment can be undertaken with improved likelihood of success and enhancement.

6.2.2 Feedback may be provided in a variety of ways including;

- Written and/or verbal comments on formative assessment tasks.
- Class or group discussion on critical aspects of assessment
- Individual, face-to-face discussion with the assessor and identification of opportunities for improvement
- Email communication, discussion forums (if available)

6.2.3 Trainers and assessors will ensure that the students are developing required competencies through formative assessment tasks before they attempt summative assessment tasks, especially in the case where summative assessment task build up on formative tasks.

6.2.4 A detailed feedback to summative tasks should be provided by the assessors to explain the reasons behind the grading outcome

6.2.5 The students will have the right to view their marked exam paper, assignments and grading remarks but must not make copies or take original documents.

6.2.6 Students wishing to discuss the outcome of the summative assessments in detail may contact their assessor for a post-assessment meeting.

### **6.3 Management of the Assessment & Validation Processes**

6.3.1 States College's delivery and assessment strategies will be developed in consultation with relevant enterprises and industry groups by taking into account:

- The needs of candidates
- The requirements and practices of enterprises and industry The specifications in the relevant training package
- Their own capacity as well as the capacity of relevant enterprises to provide delivery and assessment opportunities for candidates
- The legislative regulations and requirements of industry

6.3.2 To meet the quality and regulatory requirements, States College shall develop and implements a plan for ongoing systematic validation of assessment practices and judgements for each of the courses on its scope of registration. The plan will include;

- When assessment validation will occur;
- Which courses or units of competencies will be the focus of the validation; Who will lead and participate in validation activities; and
- How the outcomes of these activities will be documented and acted upon.

The CEO shall delegate Academic Manager and the Quality Assurance Committee to ensure that such a plan is developed and approved at the start of each academic year.

## **7. Assessment Planning Process**

### **Step 1: Establish the learning and assessment context**

The RTO will consider the following questions when establishing the delivery and assessment context:

- What need is the program intended to address? Is this program directed at an enterprise, a group of enterprises or a broader audience?
- Will the program be offered through a 'work-based' or 'institutional' pathway?

- Who should be consulted about the development of this program?
- What is the best way to engage these individuals and organisations?
- What are the characteristics of the likely participants?
- Will they be in employment?
- Will they have access to workplaces?
- What are the occupational health and safety requirements?

**Step 2: Identify participant and enterprise needs.**

When considering enterprise needs an assessment will be made of the macro and micro level requirements of the enterprise.

*Macro Level:*

- The broad areas in which training is required, e.g., customer service, OH & S, quality control
- The training delivery mode, e.g., self-paced delivery, coaching, learning syndicates
- The enterprise and States College's capacity/willingness to deliver and assess
- Customisation of the Training Package to meet enterprise conditions
- The sequencing of delivery and assessment
- The recognition of prior learning and current competency
- The situations in which simulation may/may not be used in evidence gathering Evidence collection, i.e., collected by assessor/candidate
- The ways of catering for candidates with special needs, e.g., literacy, numeracy and disability.

*Micro Level:*

- The specific competencies to be developed through the program
- Discussing and understanding the different aspects of the units of competency
- Integrating enterprise operating procedures and performance standards with the relevant industry competency standards
- The design of assessment tools and processes
- Scheduling delivery and assessment activities
- Establishing communication links between States College and the enterprise
- Establishing record-keeping strategies
- Providing participants with information on the program
- Appeals and reassessment.

This process can be demonstrated by:

- Surveys, research reports, statistical information on needs of client groups
- Customised delivery and assessment strategies to meet client needs
- Meeting minutes/notes to indicate enterprise/industry consultation in development of assessment strategies
- Letters acknowledging enterprise/ industry involvement in development of assessment strategies

**Step 3: Select the relevant qualification and units of competency.**

The appropriate qualification and units of competency will involve:

- Identifying the appropriate Training Package, qualifications and units of competency
- Interpreting and analysing the unit/s of competency
- Checking the assessment guidelines to ensure that proposed assessment approaches are consistent with the advice provided in the Training Package
- Checking the packaging advice in the Training Package to ensure that the required combination of units of competency is permitted

- Reading the customisation guidelines in the Training Package to identify what changes can be made to the qualification and units of competency to ensure that enterprise and participant needs are met
- Identifying relevant support materials, such as learner guides and assessment tools
- Confirming the selection of Training Package, qualifications and units of competency with the enterprise, if appropriate.

**Step 4: Determine the structure, mode and sequence of learning and assessment.**

This involves making decisions about the:

- Structure of the training program
- Mode of delivery
- Evidence-gathering techniques and tools
- Sequence of learning and assessment.

Staff may choose to deliver and assess each unit in a course independently. However, this can lead to situations where:

- Learning and assessment strategies do not conform with the way in which work activities are organised in an enterprise
- Too much evidence is collected as assessors and participants feel that it is necessary to gather multiple items of evidence for each unit of competency

In response to these issues, staff may choose to cluster the units of competency for delivery and assessment purposes. Units of competency in this case may be clustered around key work activities or around key areas of underpinning knowledge and related work activities.

The above process can be demonstrated by:

- Outline of program structure and delivery/assessment strategies
- Client information on delivery/assessment options
- Delivery plan and evidence of implementation
- Assessment plan and evidence of implementation

**Step 5: Prepare the student for assessment.**

Explain the purpose, criteria and methods of collecting evidence for the assessment to the student well before the assessment as well as the reporting processes

Ensure the student is informed of all known potential consequences of decisions arising from an assessment, prior to the assessment

- Negotiate collection of evidence with the student
- Determine with the student whether any reasonable adjustments are necessary
- Explain the purpose, criteria and methods for the assessment event
- Seek feedback regarding the student's understanding of the assessment procedure
- Use appropriate communication skills when preparing the student
- Ensure the student is made aware of rights and process of appeal

### Step 6: Confirm staffing and infrastructure requirements.

A process of confirming that the RTO has access to the staffing and infrastructure required to support the program is documented.

#### This will include:

Demonstrating that the teaching staff have the required competencies as described in VET Quality Framework and the relevant Training Packages.

Documentation of the verified access to facilities, equipment and training and assessment materials needed for delivery and assessment.

### Step 7: Post assessment - give feedback, result and reassessment options to the student.

- Make the decision based on the evidence
- Use an appropriate location for providing feedback to the student
- Ask the student 'what went well for you?' and 'what would you do differently?'
- Have the student self-assess their performance
- Add any feedback if necessary
- Ask the student to summarise the outcome and major aspects of the feedback.

Formal agreement is obtained from both the student and the assessor that the assessment was carried out in accordance with agreed procedures

#### For students who have been assessed as Not Competent (NC), the following options will be available:

- **FEEDBACK:** Trainers/assessors will provide assessment feedback to students and advise how they can improve their performance
- **RESUBMISSION:** Further evidence for assessment might be required if the student has partially completed the assessments and some of the works/assignments can be corrected or completed for resubmission.
- **REASSESSMENT:** If a student does not qualify for resubmission or is still deemed Not Competent (NC) after the resubmission, he/she will need to go through the reassessment process. To qualify for reassessment the student should have participated in all learning and assessment activities and tasks for the unit of competency for which reassessment is sought and attempted at least part assessments.
- **RESIT:** The student will need to re-sit the unit in the following term/semester if they are not deemed eligible for any of the above post-assessment options; i.e., both the options of resubmission and reassessment have been exhausted. The student will also need to re-sit the unit if the result from reassessment is still Not Competent (NC). Re-sit may result in extension of course duration and may affect student's original completion date of the course.
- **ABSENTEES:** Students are absent of the day of the assessment without prior approval or a **valid** reason (e.g. medical certificate) will be marked **Not Competent** – and will be required to Resit the affected unit(s).

Detailed reassessment policy is provided separately; Refer to *Reassessment Policy*.

### Step 8: Establish the assessment validation process. Principles

- The RTO will carry out an assessment validation at least annually. This process involves reviewing, comparing and evaluating assessment methods, tools and evidence to achieve standardisation in assessment. This will determine that outcomes of training are consistent both within the RTO and between other RTO's issuing the same qualification.
- All staff involved in training and assessment will attend assessment validation meetings to ensure they are using appropriate assessment tools and making accurate assessment decisions.
- At the validation meeting staff analyse samples of clients' work and discuss the assessment methods and tools used to determine the competence of candidates. They determine whether there has been consistent interpretation of the standards in both the design of assessment tools and the judgements made. They help to identify effective practice and if necessary, modify current practice.
- Each course will be validated at least once every five years, with at least 50% of products validated within the first three years of each five-year cycle, taking into account the relative risks of all of the training products on States College's scope of registration, including those risks identified by the VET Regulator.
- For this purpose, States College will also include one or more persons who are not directly involved in the particular instance of delivery and assessment of the course (being validated) in the validation process – or as an additional review by an external expert in core/high risk units.

## 8. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Credit Transfer

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Credit Transfer processes are guided by States College's *RPL and Credit Transfer Policy and Procedure*.

## 9. Reasonable Adjustment

States College will implement policies that include reasonable adjustment and access and equity principles. Reasonable adjustment will be provided for participants with special learning needs (such as a disability or learning difficulty) according to the nature of the learning need. Evidence collection can be adjusted to suit individual student needs if required and will be endorsed by the Academic Manager and student.

Reasonable adjustments are made to ensure that the participant is not presented with artificial barriers to demonstrating achievement in the program of study. Reasonable adjustments may include the use of adaptive technology, educational support, and alternative methods of assessment such as oral assessment.

The learning need identified from this review will form the basis of any adjustment to the training program and appropriate strategies will be agreed with the student. Any adjustments will be recorded in the student file and will not compromise the competency standard.

The following LLN strategies might include, but are not limited to:

- Using inclusive teaching practices
- Acknowledging a range of learning styles and adapting teaching strategies to reflect the needs of learners
- Regularly revising content
- Note-taking and assignment writing skills
- Allowing additional time to complete tasks

Whilst reasonable adjustments can be made in terms of the way in which evidence of performance is gathered, the evidence criteria for making competent/not yet competent decisions (and/or awarding grades) must not be altered in any way.



## 10. Responsibility

Training and assessment staff are responsible for implementing and maintaining key principles of assessment and providing required information, support and direction to the students.

The Academic Manager is responsible for providing adequate assessment resources, tools and guides to trainers and assessors.

The Academic Manager is responsible for maintaining integrity of the assessment process and collecting and storing evidences of competency of each student.

The Academic Manager is responsible to effective implementation and management of this policy as well as provision of information on ways to resolve complaints of breaches of this policy.

The CEO has overall responsibility for the implementation and review of this policy.

Any complaints or breaches in relation to this policy should be reported to the Chief Executive Officer in person or by email to: [ceo@states.edu.au](mailto:ceo@states.edu.au)