



How to Prepare for an AQTF Audit

An integral part of the progression to become a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) and maintain registration is participation in audits.

The following information has been compiled to assist you and your organisation to prepare for an AQTF audit.

Why is your organisation being audited?

Australian Qualifications Framework Standards (AQTF) audits are conducted when training organisations first apply for registration, within the first 12 months of registration for new RTOs and subsequently on an assessment basis during the five year registration period.

The extent to which each RTO is monitored and audited by the registering body throughout its registration period is based on an assessment of risk to the quality of training and assessment outcomes and the national VET system. The Training Accreditation Council (TAC) uses information about the RTO's performance and its operating context to undertake a risk assessment. The process is described in the *National Guidelines for a Registering Body* (refer to www.training.com.au).

Who will conduct the audit?

On the day of the site visit you may have an audit team that consists of a single lead Auditor, one or more Auditors and/or a Technical Advisor. Observers may also attend audits to ensure that correct audit processes are being followed. The roles of the audit team and observers are outlined in the AQTF Audit Handbook, which is available on the www.training.com.au website.

If an observer is required to attend your audit, you will receive a request seeking your consent from the Registration Officer.

What will be the focus of the audit?

The focus of an audit is on the outcomes achieved by the RTO. Auditors will evaluate what the RTO has achieved against the Essential Conditions and Standards for Registration and quality indicators based on evidence provided by the RTO. Evidence takes many forms and auditors will consider a range of evidence to determine if an RTO has met its required outcomes. The *Users' Guide to the Essential Conditions and Standards for Registration* is a useful tool for RTOs to determine how best to inform the auditor about its operations, outcomes achieved, analysis and how these are driving continuous improvement in the RTO.

Given the less prescriptive nature of the current standards there is no one template or a "must do" checklist for RTOs to follow. RTOs are responsible for providing evidence and for the form that the evidence takes. Evidence will vary depending on the size and scope of operations and the context in which the RTO operates.

Where possible other audits may be integrated with AQTF audits to minimise disruption to your organisation. An example is where an RTO has been contracted to deliver training by the Department of Training and Workforce Development (DTWD) and an audit is required to confirm compliance with DTWD's Delivery and Performance Agreement.

You will be advised of the scope of the audit by the TAC Secretariat prior to audit. As the audit unfolds the auditor may identify other areas that also require further inquiry.

What will happen during a site audit?

The audit will commence with an opening meeting that the auditor will conduct with senior staff of the organisation to outline the process.

During the audit, the auditor will talk with relevant staff, learners and end user clients such as employers, and review evidence to determine the extent to which the organisation is achieving quality training and assessment outcomes in line with the Essential Conditions and Standards for Registration and the operating context of the RTO. The audit may also identify opportunities to improve on these outcomes.

For an initial registration, the auditor will only look for evidence that required systems are in place. Deployment will be confirmed at the post initial audit (conducted within the first 12 months of registration).

The auditor will report the audit findings and will take notes in some form during the audit to assist them with providing you with an accurate audit report. The audit report is based on a nationally consistent format utilised by all jurisdictions; the report template is available for information in the Audit Handbook Guideline (refer to www.training.com.au).

The audit will conclude with a closing meeting which provides the auditor with an opportunity to confirm the basis of their findings and the RTO with an opportunity to comment on the audit conclusions.

A formal written report will be provided to you a week after the closing meeting.

How can your RTO prepare for the audit?

- Be informed – review the intent and requirements of the audit as advised by TAC. There are a number of resources available from the TAC website www.tac.wa.gov.au and from the national website – www.training.com.au
- Consider evidence requirements - the auditor's role is to verify evidence that the organisation is achieving quality training and assessment outcomes and is using a continuous improvement approach to ensure the ongoing achievement of these outcomes.
- Conduct a self-assessment prior to audit – there is no magic checklist or template; use an approach that suits the context of the RTO. Refer to Section 6 of the *Audit Handbook* for possible approaches to audit which could inform the conduct of a self-assessment. A self assessment tool is also available at www.training.com.au.
- Whatever form your self-assessment takes, at the very least it will be important to determine if and how the organisation is achieving the following:
 - delivering training to industry standards meeting the learning needs of your clients
 - continuously improving the outcomes of these
 - meeting the requirements of the national VET system
- Work with the auditor to help them understand your organisation. It is a good idea to provide the auditor with a snapshot such as the scope of delivery, number of students, modes of instruction, staffing, facilities, client groups, special features, etc.
- Identify key contacts - staff, learners, clients
 - Decide which staff will be best placed to provide supporting evidence, and ensure they will be available.
 - Participation in an audit can be stressful. Work with staff to help them feel more at ease with the audit process and let them know what is expected during the process.
 - It is most likely that the auditor will track the progress of learners and as a result will identify learners and where relevant clients such as employers to interview to determine the extent to which the RTO is achieving its outcomes.
- Consider logistics for the audit – any special access requirements, etc
 - Allocate a staff member to be the auditor guide during the visit. The guide assists the process by maintaining the auditor, ensuring staff are available at planned times, assisting with auditor requirements and acting as the liaison between the auditor and the organisation's staff.
 - Allocate a workspace for the auditor to work at for evidence analysis and to conduct interviews and advise the auditor of any special access arrangements, such as safety clothing, security or parking arrangements.
 - Give consideration to the duration of the site audit – this will be dependent on the size and scope of the audit.

- Many organisations use a consultant to assist them prepare for an AQTF audit. During an audit, it is necessary for the interaction to be between the auditor and the organisation, and not between the auditor and the consultant. A consultant may attend an audit to provide support to you but, can not provide responses to the auditor on the organisation's behalf, or enter into discussions regarding the conduct, progress or findings of the audit.

What will happen following the audit?

The auditor will prepare an audit report based on the findings of the site audit. Where non compliance has been identified, the report is sent directly to the RTO by the auditor, and a copy is sent to the TAC Secretariat. Where non compliance has been identified the organisation will be given opportunity to rectify this. This may include the opportunity to present extra evidence or to provide further information which will enable a better understanding of the RTO's position with respect to the reported non compliance.

For more detailed information about what happens after the site visit, including what to expect, the possible outcomes, and the organisation's responsibilities, access the brochure "What Happens Following an AQTF Site Audit?" from the TAC website.

Further information will be provided by your Case Manager following the audit to ensure that you are well informed about the post audit process.

Following a site audit, the organisation will be given an opportunity to provide feedback on the audit process and the conduct of the audit. The Council uses this feedback to monitor and review the process, and where appropriate make improvements.

Is further assistance available?

You can contact your registration officer at the TAC Secretariat, Department of Education Services either by phone on (08) 9441 1910; or by email: tac@des.wa.gov.au