

Training Accreditation Council FACT SHEET

Assuring the Quality of RTO Processes, Practices and Products

This Fact Sheet has been prepared to support RTOs to maintain the quality of their services and demonstrate compliance with the *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015*, particularly the requirements of Standard 2. This fact sheet does not provide specific instruction on quality assurance processes but is designed to draw attention to the obligations of the RTO with regard to quality assurance.

The primary focus of Standard 2 in the *Standards for RTOs* is monitoring and improving the quality of RTO services.

The requirement in Standard 2 goes well beyond the quality of training and assessment to include all aspects of the RTO. The glossary defines 'operations' as "including training, assessment and administration and support services relating to its registration, including those delivered across jurisdictions and offshore".

The context statement for Standard 2 states that "The RTO is ultimately responsible for ensuring quality training and assessment within their organisation and scope of registration, regardless of any third-party arrangements where training and/or assessment is delivered on their behalf," and concludes by observing that "evaluating information about performance and using such information to inform quality assurance of services and improve training and assessment is sound business and educational practice. The information used to evaluate RTO performance must be relevant to the operating characteristics and business objectives of the RTO and will vary from one RTO to another."

There is no uniform strategy for quality assurance, and RTOs are expected to develop their own processes to reflect their clients, industry, operational modes and objectives.

Clause 2.1 indicates that the RTO must "comply with these Standards at all times", and again reminds us that this also applies "where services are delivered on its behalf."

Clause 2.2 provides some detail on process, indicating that the RTO:

- “systematically monitors the RTO’s training and assessment strategies and practices to ensure ongoing compliance with Standard 1”; and
- “systematically evaluates and uses the outcomes of the evaluations to continually improve the RTO’s training and assessment strategies and practices. Evaluation information includes but is not limited to quality/performance data...validation outcomes, client, trainer and assessor feedback and complaints and appeals.”

Clause 2.3 requires written agreements with third-party providers, leading to Clause 2.4 which requires the RTO to ensure that it “has sufficient strategies and resources to systematically monitor any services delivered on its behalf ...”

We can see from these references, that there are two parts to quality assurance:

- 1 Compliance with the Standards by the RTO and third-party providers across all the RTO’s operations; and
- 2 The continuous improvement of training and assessment strategies and practices.

The first of these parts is driven by the formal structure of the Standards, whereas the second is less well defined and there is no clear guidance on what would constitute ‘improvement’.

Compliance with the *Standards for RTOs*

The *Standards for RTOs* define sound business and training and assessment practices and are a primary indicator of the quality of the services provided by the RTO.

Compliance with the Standards is a continuing responsibility for an RTO across all its operations, including services delivered on its behalf by third-parties. While issues of compliance might be revealed at a TAC audit, an RTO is required to declare continuing compliance on an annual basis (Clause 8.4a) through the submission of the [Annual Declaration on Compliance](#) (due in September each year). This means that RTOs must conduct an internal audit of all its operations each year. To support RTOs in meeting this annual obligation, a [Self-Assessment Tool](#) is available on the TAC website. TAC has also published a [Users’ Guide to the Standards for RTOs](#) and a number of [Fact Sheets](#) which may also assist RTOs in meeting their compliance obligations.

As the provision of services through third-party providers are part of the RTO’s operations, these also need to be routinely audited by the RTO (Clause 2.4) and may be audited by TAC (Clause 8.2). These third party arrangements and any internal audit requirements need to be clearly specified as a part of the written agreement between the parties (Clause 2.3) and should also include strategies to monitor the training and assessment services delivered by third-party providers to support continuous improvement.

Continuous improvement of training and assessment strategies and practices



Performance evidence

The core business of an RTO is the training, assessment and certification of units of competency, skill sets and qualifications. The key stakeholders in the outcomes are industry, employers, and learners and therefore, the RTO's quality assurance monitoring and improvements will draw heavily upon their impressions.

Industry engagement (Clauses 1.5 and 1.6) is an important way of identifying industry needs and gauging industry responses about the RTOs operations including its training and assessment. This is addressed further in the [Vocational Competence and Industry Currency Fact Sheet](#). This engagement is a two way process, RTOs should observe and learn from industry practices and standards, as well as industry observing and commenting upon RTO standards and practices.

Employer satisfaction can be ascertained through the [Employer Questionnaire](#). This can be administered to employers of learners including apprentices or trainees and to employers of graduates of the RTO. An employer survey can provide important feedback on the relevance and application of the training to the workplace. Other evidence of quality can be gleaned directly from workplace site visits, the employment destinations of graduates, or by employers nominating the RTO to train their apprentices or trainees.

Learner satisfaction can be measured through the administration of a [Learner Engagement Questionnaire](#). This survey can provide detailed information about the experience of undertaking training at the RTO. Other evidence can be gathered informally by trainers and assessors through student surveys, or formally through issues raised in complaints and appeals (Clause 6.5b). Evidence of learner satisfaction should also be gathered where services are provided on the RTO's behalf by third-parties.

Those working within the RTO can also provide quality data, including trainer and assessor feedback or feedback from student services and administration. Competency outcomes and course completions are also indicators of the RTO's quality outcomes. These quality indicators from industry, employers, learners and internal data available to the RTO need to be aggregated and recorded.



Interpreting performance evidence

In many ways, quality is elusive and intangible. Different observers will have different criteria and different benchmarks for quality. The indicators of quality will differ between RTOs depending upon objectives and approach. What is important is that the RTO is self-reflective and strives to improve its processes and practices to achieve its goals.

Care must be taken to ensure that commentators on the RTO are fully informed about the operating characteristics and business objectives of the RTO. For example, an RTO delivering training to 'at risk' learners might follow a very different trajectory to another RTO; a critic of an RTO might not understand the AQF level of a qualification and be disappointed with the work of a Certificate 1 graduate; another RTO offering training to a pre-selected experienced cohort may have an apparently insufficient training program. For these reasons, in seeking feedback it is important to make sure that the respondent is fully informed of the RTO's intent, and in responding to feedback it is important to consider how well informed is the critic.



Remedies

Feedback and analysis is pointless without follow-up action. Where the evidence indicates that the RTO is on track, this should be related back to those responsible for that achievement and where the evidence indicates that there are areas for improvement, these need to be acted upon.

Many RTOs maintain a record of required improvements, action to be taken, persons responsible, deadlines and outcomes to manage their quality improvement process. Where actions have been completed, follow-up monitoring is advisable to assess the effectiveness of the action in remediating the issue. This follow-up monitoring would generally involve returning to the original source(s) of the concern(s) to reappraise the situation after changes had been implemented. In some circumstances, the issue may be remedied by refining the RTO's objectives and expectations to ensure that they are clear, appropriate and reasonable. There may also be a need to revise and strengthen third-party arrangements.

Finally, there may be a call for individual or group professional development as a part of the remedy (Clause 1.16).



Compliance

Auditors look for documented evidence of a systematic process to monitor and improve quality across all the RTO's operations, including any third-party arrangements. This might involve evidence of:

- a statement of quality criteria for the RTO;
- formal and informal strategies to gather evidence of quality;
- strategies to collate and analyse quality evidence;
- strategies to act on quality issues, and to manage quality improvement; and
- strategies to monitor the impact of changes.