Assessment Policy & Procedure

1. Policy

At Central Australian College we recognise that assessment is a core service offered to our students (candidates) and is at the centre of our operation as a Registered Training Organisation. Quality assessment ensures that the skills and knowledge of candidates are assessed using four principle determinants:

- That assessment decisions are based on the assessment of skills and knowledge compared with units of competence drawn from industry Training Packages or State accredited courses.
- That the target industry or enterprise requirements are contextualised and integrated within the assessment.
- That evidence is gathered that meets the rules of evidence.
- That assessment is conducted in accordance with the principles of assessment.

Principles of assessment

In the delivery of assessment services, Central Australian College applies the principles of assessment. Assessment strategies have been designed to ensure:

Validity: We conduct assessment against the broad range of skills and knowledge identified within each unit of competence and which is integrated with their practical application.

Reliability: We seek to gather and interpret evidence in a consistent manner that provides for reliable assessment both for the candidate and for assessors. We achieve this by using assessors who have the required competencies in assessment and the relevant vocational competencies. Our assessment resources also provide for standardised outcomes supported by model answers to guide assessors in their judgements. Reliability is also supported by the moderation of assessment judgements across our assessors.

Flexibility: We strive to provide assessment opportunities that reflect a candidate’s needs. Our chosen assessment strategies provide for recognition of a candidate’s current competence, employ a range of methods appropriate to the context of the industry, the competency and the candidate.

Fairness: Our assessment approach encourages fairness in assessment through consideration of the candidate’s needs and characteristics and through making reasonable adjustments when it is required. Assessors achieve this through clear communication with a 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.

Benchmarks for assessment

Central Australian College uses units of competence drawn from nationally endorsed industry Training Packages as our primary benchmark for assessment. Supporting this are industry standards or codes of practice. These and other industry specific publications inform the context and standard of performance during assessment.

In order to identify the precise assessment criteria, we apply a methodology of unpacking a unit of competence in order to assess the full scope of the unit including elements of competence and performance criteria, incorporating range statement information and the specific requirements of the evidence guide. This process ensures that our assessment strategies accurately reflect the requirements of the relevant training package.
Engagement with industry

Central Australian College is well placed to leverage off current industry associations to incorporate industry requirements into the assessment process. Consultation with enterprises or industry will provide information about assessment requirements relevant to workplaces. Regulatory requirements that relate to specific units of competence will be incorporated to ensure our students are well prepared for their workplace duties. Further information on industry engagement can be found in the Industry Engagement Policy and Industry Engagement Tools sections earlier in this manual.

Collecting evidence that counts – the rules of evidence

In collecting evidence, Central Australian College applies the rules of evidence to inform the assessment strategy. Assessment strategies have been designed to ensure:

**Sufficiency:** We prioritise the collection of enough appropriate evidence to ensure that all aspects of competency have been satisfied and that competency can be demonstrated repeatedly.

**Validity:** We collect evidence that is specified in the benchmarks for assessment. Central Australian College places significant emphasis on direct evidence that is gathered in a workplace through observation and compilation of a portfolio of work outcomes. Where this is impractical due to geographic distance, other forms of evidence are used such as industry evidence and detailed assessment of underpinning knowledge.

**Authenticity:** We seek evidence that is authentic. To support this, assessors must be assured that the evidence presented for assessment is the candidate’s own work. Where documentary evidence is relied on it must be certified or supported by two other forms of evidence which demonstrate the same skill or knowledge (triangulation). In all instances, where work is submitted external to CAC (i.e.; electronically, distance assignments, online) this is to include a signed statement by the candidate that they certify the work as their own.

**Currency:** We must be satisfied that the candidate currently holds the skills and knowledge relating to a particular assessment. This will mostly relate to recognition applications where a candidate has been in the workplace for many years and is seeking recognition of skills and knowledge obtained through workplace experience or previous training. We will apply assessment strategies which satisfy currency through the gathering of direct evidence in the workplace.

Assessment context

Central Australian College recognises the importance of establishing the right context for candidates during their assessment. Assessment context refers to the physical and non-physical environment in which skills and knowledge are assessed. This may be a workplace such as an office setting or a manufacturing workshop. The non-physical environment refers to things such as workplace policy and procedure, workplace tempo and culture. Many units of competence may be applied in any workplace such as skills and knowledge relating to workplace safety or leadership.

It is our responsibility to ensure that candidates are provided with the right context to undertake their assessment activities. To achieve this, we will apply the following strategies:

- Incorporation of the a simulated workplace policies and procedures into the assessment scenario or activity
- Conduct of the assessment in the candidate’s workplace performing real workplace tasks. Simulated tasks based on real workplace tasks
- Integration of relevant industry codes of practice and other industry information into the assessment activity.
- Incorporation of industry job descriptions for students to align with during realistic simulated workplace scenarios and case studies.
- Incorporation of regulatory information relating to licensing which applies to some qualifications.
- Tailoring the program outcomes to meet the organisational training needs of the enterprise without compromising the Training Package requirements.
- Creating assessment activities which require the student to conduct specific research relating to industry situations and occurrences.
- Provide a realistic simulated workplace within Central Australian College facilities.

**Recognition of prior learning**

Central Australian College will provide all students the opportunity to seek recognition of their prior learning. Recognition is viewed simply as another method of assessment and therefore is conducted in accordance with this policy. Further information can be found in the Recognition policy.

**Credit transfer**

Central Australian College will recognise and award credit for candidates presenting with current competence. Where a candidate is seeking credit for a unit of competence that is on our scope of registration and the candidate can provide satisfactory evidence that the unit has been previously awarded to the candidate, credit will be awarded. Further information can be found in this manual in the sections on Credit Transfer.

**Competence of assessors**

In accordance with the Australian Quality Training Framework, assessors are required to hold the minimum competencies for assessment as outlined by the National Skills Standards Council (NSSC) and the vocational competencies at least to the level being assessed. Central Australian College has appropriate systems in place to ensure that all staff members are appropriately qualified to meet our requirement under the SNR. Where an assessor does not hold the required training and assessment competence, but is a recognised industry expert, we will put appropriate supervision arrangements in place to support the gathering of valid evidence.

**Assessment validation**

Assessment validation is the process where assessors compare and evaluate their assessment methods, assessment procedures and assessment decisions. Central Australian College will facilitate regular assessment validation opportunities to maintain a quality assessment and to continuously improve assessment strategies. Further information can be found in this manual in the sections on Assessment Validation.

**Assessment tools**

Assessment tools are the media (electronic or hard copy) used to gather evidence about a candidate’s competence. We have developed assessment tools which support the assessment of applicable units of competence in accordance with the requirements of industry Training Packages. It is important for Central Australian College staff members to acknowledge that these are generic tools which provide us with a starting point for the development of other supporting tools which will reflect the needs of our clients or target industry group. Central Australian College staff members must be satisfied that tools developed for assessment fit with the requirements of the target industry and enterprise requirements. Some units of competence are associated with licensing requirements and whilst this is not always stipulated in the unit of competence, we will need to be informed of the additional requirements this imposes during assessment.

The following are examples of assessment tools which may be incorporated into an assessment strategy to meet the Training Package and industry requirements, the rules of evidence and the principles of assessment:

- Direct observation checklist;
- Simulation exercises or role-plays;
- Project outlines and explanation sheets;
- Workplace templates;
- Written questionnaires;
- Verbal questionnaires;
- Portfolios, for example collections of work samples by the candidate;
- Product with supporting documentation or journal/log book;
- Workplace samples/products; and
- Industry/workplace evidence reports.

This list of assessment tools identifies only a small number of assessment tools which are in use in the VET sector today. These are however the more common tools and support holistic assessment methods favoured by Central Australian College. Tools are developed by Central Australian College according the identified training and assessment strategy.

**Assessment information**

Assessment information is the information provided to both candidates and assessors to guide their conduct of the assessment and the completion of assessment activities. This information is used to draw out a response from a candidate.

Examples of assessment information include:

- Instructions to set the framework for the activity such as who, what, where, when and how.
- The expected outcomes refer to the ‘what’ and it is critical that from reading the assessment information, the required (expected) outcome is straightforward and in line with the candidate’s preparation during learning or through other competency development pathways.
- Scenario information includes information that sets the context for a simulated assessment activity. This may be a simple case study or a deep scenario which requires analysis and interpretation. It is important to note that the higher the AQF qualification level, the greater the requirement to analyse and apply cognitive skills to produce workplace outcomes. Scenario information used to support assessment at a Diploma level, for example, should be relatively deep and complex to allow the candidate to exercise their analytical skills and produce viable workplace products and outcomes.
- Industry information includes items such as codes of practice, policies and procedures, legislation and regulations. Whilst this may not be provided in hard copy to every candidate, they should be provided contacts, web sites or hyperlinks to access this information. Electronic copies of industry information are also acceptable.

At Central Australian College our assessment activities are to be supported by clear assessment information that will ensure a reliable assessment across our operation. Ultimately, the quality of assessment outcomes produced by a candidate will be directly affected by the quality of the information provided at the commencement of the activity. Central Australian College staff is to prepare suitable assessment information for all assessment activities and are to gain approval from the Central Australian College Chief Executive Officer/Business Manager for the use of assessment resources.

**Collecting industry evidence**
At Central Australian College we place a high value on the assessment evidence that is gathered by supervisors or employers in the workplace. This evidence is usually very current and valid and contributes to the assessment decisions made by a qualified assessor.

In addition to this, during the development of assessment tools, assessors are to ensure that the observation criteria used within industry evidence reports is wholly task orientated. These observation criteria should reflect the tasks that the supervisor would issue to an employee and monitor during normal workplace duties. The industry evidence report is not to contain assessment criteria drawn from an industry Training Package as these assessment criteria are suitable only for trained and qualified assessors.

Re-assessment

Where student does not meet competency, the assessor will discuss the issues with the students and allow them to be re-assessed (at a different date). The student will be permitted to redo the assessment up to two times. If, after two reassessment attempts, the student is still deemed NYC, the student will need to redo the unit.

At Central Australian College, our approach to these situations is to work with the student in order to address deficiencies and to build their skill and knowledge in preparation for additional assessment. This will be undertaken within the scheduled training plan or may be completed under alternative arrangements agreed between the student and the assessor.

In some rare circumstances, students may find it difficult to develop the necessary skills and knowledge within the constraints of the scheduled training plan. When this occurs, arrangements may be agreed to that allows the student to undertake additional learning in their own time and return for additional assessment at a time suitable for Central Australian College. This may be during a period of reduced training activity or at a time when planned assessments are occurring and it is convenient to the facility additional assessment of the student. As a general guide, assessors are to make alternative arrangements to provide opportunities for assessment within the constraints of available time and resources. In all circumstances, the assessment is to be a planned activity that is conducted in accordance with the assessment procedures in the following section.

In some cases, after alternative arrangements have been exhausted, it will be suitable to find a student as not-yet-competent and record this result with their statement of attainment.

2. Responsibility

The DOS and the Training Manager are responsible for compliance with this policy.

3. Assessment Procedures

The following procedure is to be applied for conducting assessments:

**Step 1: Prepare for assessment.** The assessor is to:

- Establish the context and purpose of the evidence to be collected;
- Identify and analyse the units of competency, Training Package and the Central Australian College assessment strategy to identify the evidence requirements; and
- Review the assessment tools and confirm their currency and adequacy in meeting the rules of evidence.

**Step 2: Prepare the candidate.** The assessor meets with the candidate to:

- Explain the context and purpose of the assessment and the assessment process;
- Explain the units of competency to be assessed and the evidence to be collected;
- Outline the assessment procedure and the preparation the candidate should undertake, and answer any questions;
- Assess the needs of the candidate and, where applicable, negotiate reasonable adjustment for assessing people with disabilities without compromising the competency outcomes;
- Seek feedback regarding the candidate’s understanding of the units of competency, evidence requirements and assessment process; and
- Determine if the candidate is ready for assessment and, in consultation with the candidate, decide on the time and place of the assessment.

**Step 3: Plan and prepare the evidence-gathering process.** The assessor must:

- Establish a plan for gathering sufficient quality evidence about the learner’s consistent performance in order to make the assessment decision;
- Source or develop assessment materials to assist the evidence-gathering process;
- Organise equipment or resources required to support the evidence-gathering process; and
- Coordinate and brief other personnel involved in the evidence-gathering process.

**Step 4: Collect the evidence and make the assessment decision.** The assessor must:

- Establish and oversee the evidence-gathering process to ensure its validity, reliability, fairness and flexibility;
- Collect appropriate evidence and match compatibility to the elements, performance criteria, range statement and evidence guide in the relevant units of competency;
- Evaluate evidence in terms of the four dimensions of competency - task skills, task management skills, contingency management skills and job/role environment skills;
- Incorporate allowable adjustments to the assessment procedure without compromising the integrity of the competencies;
- Evaluate the evidence in terms of validity, consistency, currency, authenticity and sufficiency;
- Consult and work with other staff, assessment panel members or technical experts involved in the assessment process;
- Record details of evidence collected; and
- Make a judgement about the candidate’s competence based on the evidence and the relevant unit(s) of competency.

**Step 5: Provide feedback on the assessment.** The assessor must provide advice to the learner about the outcomes of the assessment process. This includes providing the candidate with:

- Clear and constructive feedback on the assessment decision;
- Information on ways of overcoming any identified gaps in competency revealed by the assessment;
- The opportunity to discuss the assessment process and outcome; and
- Information on reassessment and the appeals process if applicable.

**Step 6: Record and report the result.** The assessor must:
- Record the assessment outcome according to the policies and procedures of Central Australian College;
- Maintain records of the assessment procedure, evidence collected and the outcome according to the policies and procedures of Central Australian College;
- Maintain the confidentiality of the assessment outcome; and
- Organise the issuance of statements of attainment according to the policies and procedures of Central Australian College.

**Step 7: Review the assessment process.** On completion of the assessment process, the assessor must:

- Review the assessment process;
- Report on the positive and negative features of the assessment to those responsible for the assessment procedures; and
- If necessary, suggest to appropriate Central Australian College personnel ways of improving the assessment procedures through raising a Continuous Improvement Report or by providing input to the next scheduled assessment validation.

**Step 8: Participate in the reassessment and appeals process.** The assessor must:

- Provide feedback and counselling to the candidate, if required, regarding the assessment outcome or process, including guidance on further options;
- Provide the candidate with information on the reassessment and appeals process;
- Report any assessment decision that is disputed by the candidate to appropriate Central Australian College personnel; and
- Participate in the reassessment or appeal according to the policies and procedures of Central Australian College.