Training Accreditation Council
FACT SHEET

GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Industry Engagement

Vocational education and training (VET) is about skilling people for industry and for the workplace with the expectation that at the completion of the training, the student is work ready. This means that the training and assessment delivered by the registered training organisation (RTO) should accurately reflect workplace requirements.

This Fact Sheet explores industry engagement to ensure that training and assessment reflects the needs of industry. This Fact Sheet should be read in conjunction with the Vocational Competence & Industry Currency Fact Sheet and the Amount of Training Fact Sheet. The TAC Users' Guide also provides a comprehensive discussion of these requirements.

Industry Engagement Explained

Industry 'owns' the qualifications, skill sets and specific units of competency that an RTO delivers. These are set through industry developed Training Packages or accredited courses. When an RTO issues a Certificate or Statement of Attainment it should reassure industry that the training and assessment provided is relevant and meets its expectations. Industry engagement is a strategy to provide a direct relationship between the RTO and the industry it serves for the mutual benefit and confidence of each party.

The *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015* (the Standards) have two clauses that focus on industry engagement, they are:

1.5.   The RTO's training and assessment practices are relevant to the needs of industry and informed by industry engagement.

1.6.   The RTO implements a range of strategies for industry engagement and systematically uses the outcome of that industry engagement to ensure the industry relevance of:
   a) its training and assessment strategies, practices, and resources; and
   b) the current industry skills of its trainers and assessors.

The broad objective of these clauses is to ensure that the training and assessment offered by RTOs is contextualised in a manner that is consistent with the outcomes that are expressed in Training Packages or Accredited Courses. They ensure the relevance of what is done in RTOs.

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There are two main ways to engage with industry:

Outgoing

The RTO goes out into industry to learn of current industry practices and processes
This approach supports the current industry skills of VET trainers and assessors (Clauses 1.6b and 1.13b of the Standards), and will contribute to the industry relevance of the training, assessment tools and practices (Clause 1.6a).

Incoming

Industry comes to the RTO to review RTO practices and processes
This approach enables RTO trainers and assessors to confirm that the strategies and resources they have developed or selected are consistent with current industry practices and expectations.

In both approaches there are a range of engagement methods that could be used by RTOs including:

- Partnering with local employers, regional/national businesses, relevant industry bodies, or enterprise RTOs.
- Involving employers in industry advisory committees.
- Observation of a wide range of workplaces.
- Embedding RTO staff within enterprises.
- Ongoing networking with industry organisations, peak bodies, or employers.
- Undertaking product training.
- Developing networks of relevant employers and industry representatives to participate in design, assessment and / or assessment validation.
- Exchanging knowledge, staff and resources with employers, networks and industry bodies.
- Reading industry journals.
- Participating in industry forums or conferences.
- Sharing observations and resources with RTOs in other locations.
- Contributing to the national discussion on industry standards.

The suitability of the methods used in an RTO will depend on what the RTO is trying to establish from the engagement process. It's important to remember that industry engagement underpins all activities in the lifecycle of a qualification within an RTO and the RTO will be seeking different information at different times of the lifecycle (see Figure 1). For example, if an RTO is seeking to understand Industry's needs, then they may choose to conduct workplace visits to a range of organisations. If an RTO is conducting validation, they may invite industry representatives to the session to provide feedback about whether the work of the students meets the industry standard.
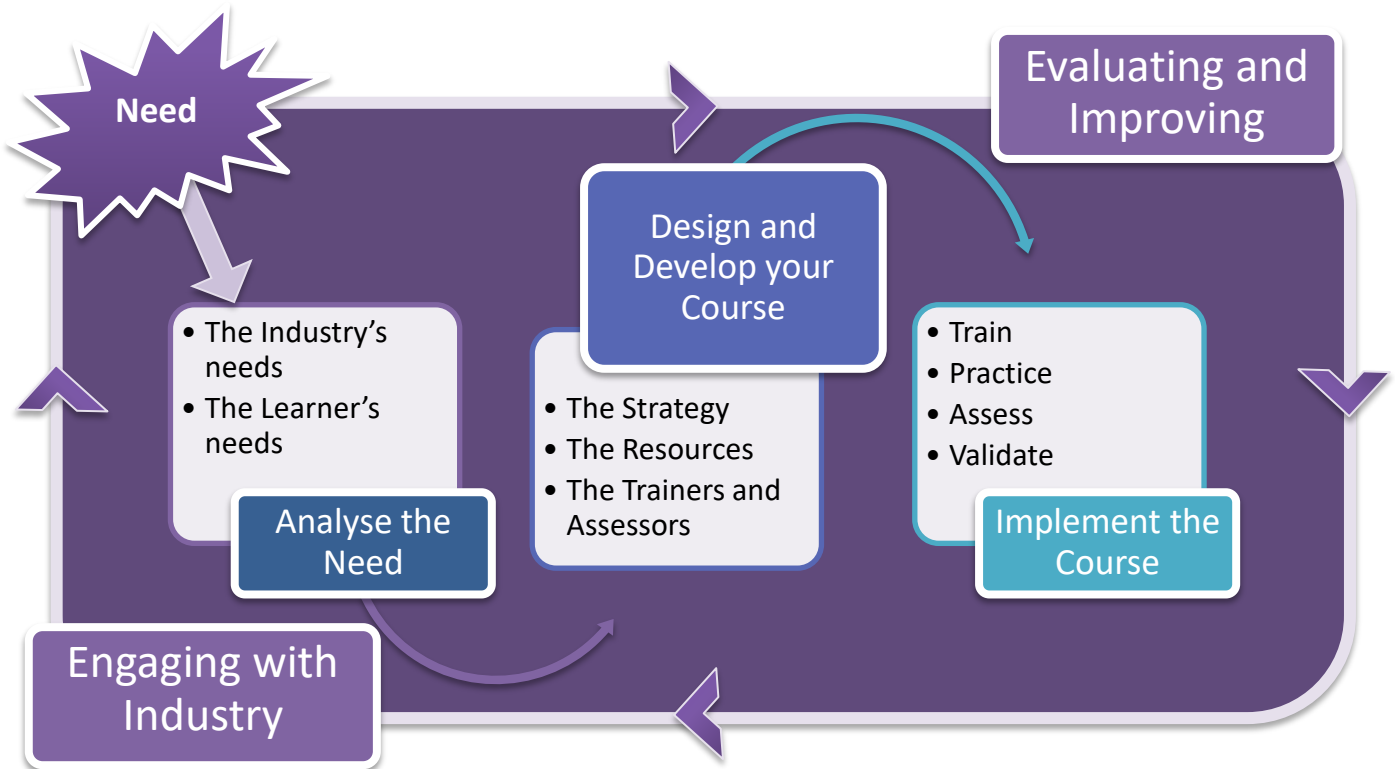
Figure 1 – The lifecycle of a Qualification

Industry engagement should involve a combination of the strategies

The methods that are used for industry engagement can vary dramatically between RTOs and this is expected. What is important is that based on the findings of the industry engagement, the RTO should at a minimum, use the information gathered to:

- design strategies for training and assessment;
- select suitable resources for delivery and assessment;
- assure the relevance of the RTO's practices; and
- assure the industry currency of trainers and assessors' knowledge and skills.

Common misunderstandings, challenges, risks and compliance issues

RTOs frequently ask industry representatives to read and review delivery and assessment plans and their assessment strategies and tools as a primary strategy for industry engagement. This can be a method for affirming industry relevant content, but RTOs should be aware that most industry representatives do not have a VET background and should not be expected to be able to comment on VET specific requirements e.g. training package requirements, or decipher training and assessment documentation.

Instead, engagement with industry representatives should be focused on fully understanding the way work is carried out and to what standard. This is then used to inform the RTO's delivery and assessment plans and their assessment strategies and tools to ensure they are relevant to the industry, reflect industry practices, are current and in line with legislation.

There is a common assumption that training and assessment staff of an enterprise RTO do not need to engage with the wider industry, and that their day-to-day dealings with a real workplace is sufficient. While it seems reasonable to expect that employees should only be trained in the ways of their employer, the qualifications are nationally recognised, so the training and assessment resources need to reflect the range of contexts that may apply nationally.

Most VET trainers have at some time worked within their industry, but such experience may be limited to certain contexts or involve out-of-date practices. The national qualifications they are delivering must reflect current practice over the broad scope of industry.

Finally, there is a frequently held view that reading industry journals and participating in industry forums provides a sufficient basis for industry engagement on its own. These sources are at 'arm's length' and are not an adequate substitute for direct, personal observation and participation in real workplaces. They might form one part of your RTO's approach to industry engagement.

Suggestions for Compliance

Industry expectations are reflected in training packages or accredited courses. These products are written by industry representatives to define the current skills and knowledge required for safe and productive employment.

Direct industry engagement can be achieved through observation and participation in a range of workplaces that utilise the competencies being delivered and assessed. This could involve a schedule of visits to observe current workplace practice of experienced workers or trainees. For example while observing a trainee at a workplace, you could use this opportunity to have a conversation with industry experts to assess if the current practices of the RTO align accordingly with industry.

In order to contribute to the range of strategies required under Clause 1.6, and learn of industry practice beyond the RTO's immediate location, you may wish to consider reading industry journals, participating in web conferences, undertaking product training, sharing with RTOs in other regions and contributing to the national discussion.

Finally, RTOs need to invite representatives from industry to review and reflect on their training and assessment resources. As they are not likely to be qualified trainers and assessors or be familiar with the Standards, the focus should be on whether the content adequately reflects the reality of current industry processes and practices.

How to meet compliance

Evidence that could be provided at audit that demonstrates industry engagement has occurred could include:

- plans for industry engagement;
- industry personnel consulted;
- minutes of meetings;
- records of interviews;
- narratives of worksite visits;
- feedback from industry; and
- improvements to training and assessment resources.

RTOs will also need to be able to show evidence on how this industry engagement has informed their current practices.

Industry consultation may also impact on the **amount of training** your RTO determines is appropriate for a learner group. More information on this is available in the TAC *Amount of Training Fact Sheet*. Ultimately the effectiveness of industry consultation will be revealed through the quality of an RTO's training and assessment products.

CASE STUDY:
INDUSTRY ENAGEMENT SITE VISITS

Making incident reports in the Security Industry.
An RTO has recently undertaken a round of industry site visits and has identified that things have changed since their staff worked as security officers.

In the past, incident reports in the security industry were made on a paper report. Security officers would make brief notes about the incident in their notebooks and make a full report at the end of their shifts or sooner if directed by supervisors.

As technology progressed many security providers have moved to using electronic reporting as part of their incident management system, with some using simple clear reporting apps that replace the paper note keeping and reporting of the past. As the apps become more widely available and used, most companies now want their security staff to be able to use technology for reporting purposes.

When considering how this information will inform the practice of the RTO, the RTO has determined that the following improvements need to be made to current practice:

- **The skills and knowledge required for trainers and assessors to hold**
  All of the trainers and assessors will need to become competent users of the most common systems for electronic reporting.

- **The amount of learning and practice that would typically be required to develop skills that would be at industry standard**
  The electronic systems that are used in industry are reasonably intuitive, however the RTO learner cohort are not used to this system. Discussions with industry have shown that on average their staff have needed four to five hours of practice using the system to become competent users.   The RTO will build these hours into two units of competency that require reporting. Industry also explained that once the staff are competent users, the actual reporting process is faster. The RTO anticipates that this will therefore add four hours to the amount of training. This will be monitored in the first two courses for the year to determine if it is sufficient, or if more or less time is required.

- **The strategy, resources and practices the RTO uses for training and assessment.**
  The two most common electronic reporting systems used by the industry will be bought for the RTO. The RTO will need up to 10 licenses for each system.