TRAINING PACKAGE
FOR CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Assessment Guidelines
Section 1
The Assessment System

The NCSAC has endorsed the principles applied to competency based assessment described in the Guidelines for Training Package Developers and in the Australian Recognition Framework Arrangements. In addition, the industry acknowledges the importance of establishing a competency based assessment system within the industry. To do this, enterprises will develop policies and guidelines covering the support for and implementation of competency based assessment for all workers in the industry. Such policies will incorporate the endorsed Assessment Guidelines and will address the following components of a competency based assessment system:

- identification of the relationship between competency based assessment of work performance and the management of performance and quality of service standards and outcomes;
- enterprise negotiated packages of competency units for each qualification based on the qualifications framework;
- employer’s criteria for the selection and allocation of workplace trainers and assessors consistent with the requirements of Registered Training Organisations;
- commitment to raising resources for workplace assessor training and determination of the source of resources for assessment;
- identification of the roles and responsibilities within the organisation for coordinating and monitoring the organisation’s competency based assessment system consistent with the requirements of Registered Training Organisations;
- recognition of, and support for, the outcomes of assessment.

The policies and guidelines developed to support an industry assessment system must be consistent with legislation and statutory requirements. It will ensure that relevant personnel are aware of and will implement legislation and regulatory requirements. This will include legislation such as:

- Occupational Health and Safety
- Workcover or the equivalent
- Anti-discrimination Act
- Equal Employment Opportunities
- Racial Hatred Act
- VET Act
Review of the Assessment System

The industry’s commitment to the review of the assessment system will occur as part of the required review of the Training Package. The NCSAC is committed to reviewing the Training Package within five years of its endorsement. The Training Package will include processes for continuous evaluation of the material and the implementation strategies and outcomes.

Assessment benchmarks

Assessment benchmarks will be based on the National Competency Standards for Correctional Services and the Performance Criteria and Evidence Guides specified in those standards. The Performance Criteria and Evidence Guides will indicate the conditions required for assessment for each unit of competence. Wherever possible, workplace assessment should be used and integrated into a continuous management of performance process. Assessment instruments and requirements should be designed to be relevant to the Performance Criteria and should be based on the variables and the materials relevant to the industry and enterprises.

The Evidence Guides of the National Competency Standards contain specific requirements for the context of performance and parameters for demonstrating competency in the Performance Criteria of each unit.

Role of Registered Training Organisations

Requirements for Registered Training Organisations

To give the qualifications endorsed in this Training Package, an agency must be a Registered Training Organisation under the requirements of a State or Territory Training Authority.

Assessment of competence for a qualification does not have to depend on training delivery; it can be undertaken directly in the workplace against the competency standards.

The industry will recognise the assessment outcomes of Registered Training Organisations, either registered to deliver training or to conduct assessment, where they meet the evidence requirements specified in the National Competency Standards.

The industry endorses the following requirements, which will be part of a Registered Training Organisation’s quality control mechanisms or will be included in detail in the non-endorsed components of the Training Package:

For off the job training

- Assessment should occur directly against the units of competency of the National Competency Standards, and must be conducted according to the requirements of the evidence guides and assessment guides of the unit;
- Learning strategies will include clearly defined means of recognising current skills and knowledge, to ensure that unnecessary duplication of training effort is avoided;
- Both workplace assessment of competency and the learning outcomes of training will be recognised and incorporated in learner progress, record of competency and
allocation of qualifications; according to the Assessment and Evidence Guides of the National Competency Standards and the requirements of the National Training Package.

See Section 2: Qualifications Pathway.

**For on the job training and assessing**

- Employers (enterprises) will have competency based assessment policies, guidelines and processes which are endorsed by management and industrial parties and/or professional/occupational associations;

- Assessors requirements are covered in Section 2: Criteria for Assessors;

- Internal and independent appeals against workplace assessment will be clearly defined and established within policies and structures for enterprise human resource management and the requirements of Registered Training Organisations and State Training Authorities.

See Section 2: Qualifications Pathways.

**Recording Assessment Outcomes**

The correctional services industry recognises that all Registered Training Organisations will have responsibility for recording assessment outcomes and for maintaining and securing the records in a permanent and accessible system.

As well, the industry endorses the following requirements:

- Assessment outcomes will be recorded at the unit level of the National Competency Standards;

- Records will give equal recognition to assessment outcomes based on either direct assessment of workplace performance conducted by a competent workplace assessor, and the assessment outcomes, determined by a workplace practitioner whose assessment is validated by a competent workplace assessor;

- Records will recognise knowledge described in the Evidence Guides whether acquired through on or off the job learning.
Reporting Assessment Outcomes

Reporting must be consistent with the quality assurance requirements of the Australian Recognition Framework and the requirements of State and Territory Training Authorities. The industry emphasises the following aspects of those requirements:

- Reporting will be based on the competency standards unit and the endorsed industry qualifications;
- All reporting, whether for a qualification or a statement of attainment will include a list of the units of competency achieved;
- In order to emphasise the positive aspects of assessment, reporting should ideally only indicate that the applicant has demonstrated competency; only where necessary for feedback should reporting record requires further evidence. Reporting should avoid any suggestion of not competent.

Appeals and Reassessment

Registered Training Organisations providing training and assessment services are required to demonstrate that they have mechanisms in place for auditing of quality, including trainee/applicant evaluation and appeals. These mechanisms will be monitored by State and Territory Training Authorities.

Where assessment is based on workplace performance in an industry work site, appeals and reassessment processes should be developed in consultation with industry and should be consistent with the human resources’ policies and processes, the enterprise agreements of the employing organisation, and the requirements of the Registered Training Organisation.

Consultation between Registered Training Organisations and industry should include the identification of validation and adjudication mechanisms, independent and external monitoring and processes for routine quality and consistency checks.

External Audit

State and Territory Training Authorities will manage the processes for independent audit of Registered Training Organisations.

The correctional services industry recognises the benefits of involving industry representatives in this audit mechanism and its national industry body, the NCSAC, will provide support and referral for State and Territory monitoring systems.

Assessment Pathways

Qualifications and/or statements of attainment will be given for assessment of competency based on workplace performance, which is assessed directly against the National Competency Standards for Correctional Services.

The performance criteria have been designed to place emphasis on performance in the workplace and it will not be possible to meet the requirements of assessment without a significant component of on-the-job assessment.
The correctional services industry recognises that multiple pathways of on and off the job learning are necessary to ensure flexibility, equity, relevance and optimum opportunities for transferability within and outside the industry. The negotiation of multiple pathways to learning will also enable the most cost-effective use of training resources. However, assessment should be focused in the workplace unless justification can be given for alternative methods, for example, where there is an emphasis on knowledge, or where for safety reasons, performance should initially be demonstrated in a structured simulation.

The correctional services industry also recognises all of the diverse means by which people acquire skills and knowledge leading to competence. Therefore, assessment pathways will demonstrate accessibility of assessment through structured work practice and experience and alternative acquisition of competency through prior learning, prior work experience or life experience as well as formal contracts of training.

This recognition of diverse learning must also be accompanied by recognition of the context of the correctional services workplace. This requires a commitment to methods of learning and assessment which are appropriate to the circumstances of the learner and the work role, the resources of the workplace and the nature of the learning and performance being assessed. Wherever possible, maximum use should be made of the workplace as a learning environment and consideration given to the particular context of the enterprise in which the workplace operates.

Wherever possible, assessment of prior learning should be cost effective, avoid unnecessary duplication of assessment and should be based on a realistic interpretation of equivalence of competency covered by other industry standards.

Section Two

Assessor Qualifications

Requirements for Assessors

Assessments against the competencies in the Training Package will be carried out in accordance with these guidelines. The guidelines include the necessary qualifications for those conducting assessments and provide for those situations where more than one person may contribute to the assessment and where the required technical and assessment competencies may not be held by any one person.

No formal qualification for assessors is required other than those specified under Criteria for Assessors.
Using Qualified Assessors

Criteria for Assessors

The criteria for the selection and deployment of assessors will be based on two sources of criteria: the regulatory requirements for Registration of Training Organisations and the statutory and enterprise requirements for maintenance of quality performance systems and standards in the industry.

Assessors will have demonstrated competence against Unit BSX0008\6: Conduct Assessment of the Competency Standards for Assessment or a recognised equivalent such as Unit BSX0008\6: Conduct Assessment in the National Competency Standards for Correctional Services. Assessors should, where possible, have industry experience at the level and performance determined by the unit being assessed. Workplace assessment teams may include partnerships of assessors and experienced workers who collectively meet these requirements;

Correctional services has a high level of public accountability for the delivery and maintenance of specific standards, imposed and monitored through a range of legislation and through specialised statutory requirements such as the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

The correctional services industry expects that there will be increasing application of workplace assessment of competency whether learning occurs on the job or in a structured training program conducted off the job.

Therefore, the industry supports the importance of having clear agreement on the criteria for selecting and recognising workplace assessors to ensure transparency of process and outcomes. The validity and consistency of assessment depends on agreement on the selection, training and expectations of assessors.

The industry supports the need for quality assurance requirements for Registered Training Organisations which will include specific criteria for assessment methods and assessor competency and experience. The industry will support quality assurance requirements which are realistic, affordable, accessible and applied consistently.

Monitoring of Assessors

The industry assumes that State and Territory Training Authorities will require industry consultation as part of the mechanisms for monitoring ongoing compliance of training organisations. The industry will support appropriate mechanisms established by State and Territory Training Authorities to monitor and maintain the quality of assessment. Advice on appropriate representatives from the industry will be provided by the NCSAC.

Professional Development

The competency outcomes associated with supporting the learning and assessment process are incorporated in the units of competency in the National Competency Standards for Correctional Services. These include units such as:

CSC010A      Develop and maintain effective workplace practice and standards,
CSC330A      Conduct training
Professional development strategies and materials will be included in the non-endorsed components of the Training Package.

Section Three

Guidelines for Designing Assessment Materials

Assessment materials are the tools which determine the content and the process of the assessment. Competency in workplace assessment will include the design and application of authentic, relevant and economical assessment materials.

In addition, the design of assessment material for the correctional services industry will have to take account of the following characteristics of the industry:

- It has high levels of knowledge needed for operating in a human services and statutory environment;
- It has unpredictable human factors which make much of the work non-routine;
- It has mandatory components which will influence the sequence of performance and the specification of workers’ roles and responsibilities;
- It is highly procedural within enterprise and work site requirements and significant customisation will be required to recognise this through selection from the range of variables and knowledge required;
- The nature of the work is complex and work functions and activities are interrelated and therefore demonstrations and evidence may (and should) cover a number of different units. Related units are identified in the Assessment Guides of the units;
- Assessment materials and instruments should be directly related to the performance criteria and should not require additional or unrelated performance (for example written reports) unless this additional performance is to be assessed as well (for example assessing the medium as well as the content).
Section Four

Guidelines for Conduction Assessment

General Principles of Assessment

The NCSAC supports assessment processes which are reliable and fair and which demonstrate a balance between requiring sufficient evidence to ensure that the judgement can be valid, reliable and consistent, and while, at the same time also being flexible, fair and cost effective.

The NCSAC has emphasised the importance of ensuring that the evidence collected is directly consistent with the performance required. For example, the evidence should not require the applicant to demonstrate additional skills to those specified in the performance criteria unless such demonstration can be recorded as evidence for other performance criteria. Therefore, written evidence should be required where written reporting is actually one of the functions specified in the performance of the unit or where it can double for evidence for a unit on written reporting.

Because of the unpredictable and non-sequential nature of human services work, assessment should be undertaken in a way which integrates a wide range of performance criteria in the one demonstration. This form of holistic assessment should be economical of time and resources, avoid unnecessary duplication and avoid representing the competencies as distinct, sequential and mechanistic.

Where possible, assessment should give priority to direct observation of performance and the routine gathering of material evidence in the form of standard products of the work performed (eg reports) but this may require indirect evidence drawn from oral questioning, projects, exercises and knowledge testing. In particular, the high level of knowledge required in this statutory work as well as being inferred from performance, may be more efficiently assessed through interviews and written and oral tests.

Because of the strong component of duty of care and the unpredictable and confidential nature of the work, many requirements will not reliably be able to be demonstrated in the assessment timeframe or real work environment. Therefore it will sometimes be necessary to used retrospective reporting, contingency analysis and simulations.

The Evidence Guides of the National Competency Standards have attempted to provide clear direction for the range and the nature of the evidence needed to be collected. Strategies to evaluate the implementation of the Training Package will include a strong focus on the reliability of the Evidence Guides.

Guidelines for Conducting Assessment

These Guidelines will be included as part of the Learning Strategies and Professional Development Components of the Training Package.

The Guidelines will be based on the Assessment Principles and will place emphasis on the following:
Assessment will be:

- fair and equitable,
- voluntary unless part of probationary or statutory requirement,
- based on processes and performance negotiated between applicants and assessors
- developmental and will include formative reports and counselling,
- consistent with industry career pathways and career development,
- promoted as part of a learning environment and performance enhancement program.

In particular, training and assessment will be promoted as part of an on-going developmental approach to expanding the competency of the correctional services workforce. This will emphasise preparation for future organisational and career needs and the maintenance of a learning environment and a continuous performance enhancement program best suited to the requirements of the industry and the opportunities available to those who work in the industry.