



NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY
MANA TOHU MĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA

**BEST PRACTICE PRINCIPLES FOR THE
ASSESSMENT OF UNIT STANDARDS**

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INTRODUCTION

NZQA is committed to identifying and promoting best assessment policy and practice in relation to unit standards.

We encourage all assessors of unit standards to use this document as a resource and reference.

PRINCIPLES OF BEST PRACTICE ASSESSMENT

Principle 1: Assessment Design

Best practice assessment will occur when the assessor focuses on elements, and gives due consideration to all performance criteria within the unit standard(s).

Principle 2: Assessment Decisions

Best practice assessment will occur when the assessor judges, overall, that the candidate has provided sufficient evidence that the outcomes, identified in the elements, have been met.

CONCEPTS UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES

Principle 1: Assessment Design

- 1.1 Unit standards are statements of what a person knows and/or can do, expressed as outcomes.
- 1.2 The element(s) identify the outcomes against which the candidate is assessed.
- 1.3 Performance criteria do not express outcomes. They indicate the minimum¹ evidence to consider when making a judgement as to whether the candidate has achieved the outcomes of the element and, therefore, the standard. Sufficiency of evidence should be described in the assessment schedule.
- 1.4 Assessment(s), and the basis for making assessment decisions, must be designed to be consistent with the unit standard.
- 1.5 Assessment(s) should be designed to focus on the wholeness of performance against the outcomes identified in the elements. Assessment(s) designed for individual performance criteria may lead to over-assessment.
- 1.6 Assessment of related or similar learning outcomes should be integrated, where possible.
- 1.7 Assessment(s) must be designed to ensure that the candidate has adequate opportunity to meet the requirements of the unit standard.
- 1.8 Assessment(s) must include an assessment schedule clearly showing the evidence the candidate is expected to provide, and the basis on which assessment decisions are to be made.

Principle 2: Assessment Decisions

- 2.1 Performance criteria are critical guidelines to the type of evidence that must be collected to make a judgement about performance.
- 2.2 In making an assessment decision, sufficient evidence must be provided so that the assessor is confident that the candidate can do what the standard requires. This evidence can be drawn from a range of sources, eg set tasks, naturally occurring evidence, recognition of prior learning (RPL) and current competency (RCC). The key question must always be, "Is the assessor confident the candidate knows or can currently do what is required by the standard(s) being assessed?"

¹ See Question & Answers

- 2.3 Assessment decisions based on consideration of only some of the performance criteria will lead to assessment that is not at the national standard.
- 2.4 Assessment decisions will be consistent with, and at, the national standard when they are based solely on the requirements of the standard.
- 2.5 The use of exemplars, discussions with other assessors and moderation processes assist assessors in making consistent judgements whether there is sufficient evidence of competence.
- 2.6 Over-assessment² leads to frustration for candidates, assessors and trainers.

² See Questions & Answers

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. **What if I have to use a poorly designed unit standard?**

You should apply the principles as best you can to the situation. For example, design assessment events that provide evidence over a number of performance criteria within an element or elements.

Unit standards are national standards and can only be reviewed and changed at the national level. You should send your concerns/suggestions to the national standards setting body (NZQA, industry training organisation, or national qualifications advisory organisation).

2. **Do I have to consider all of the performance criteria?**

Yes. The assessment judgement must consider all matters in the performance criteria of each element. You should design an assessment that efficiently provides the evidence you require.

3. **What do I do if the assessment guide instructs me to assess performance criterion by performance criterion?**

If the assessment guide has been produced by your organisation, check to see if you have an opportunity to seek a review of the guide and to be a part of the development process.

Design best practice assessments that conform to the guide, eg events that provide evidence across a group of performance criteria.

If the national standards setting body has produced the assessment guide, there are a number of options:

- Give feedback to the national standards setting body and find out what their review process is and whether you can take part in it.
- Your organisation could develop its own assessment guide, provided that it meets the requirements of the standards setting body.

4. **Do I have to consider all the contexts specified in a range statement when making an assessment decision?**

Yes. You should assess all range statements (unless they are elective within a range statement eg “may include but not limited to”) when making a judgement for an element or elements.

Some unit standards have range statements that require a large quantity of evidence to make a judgement. If you think that range statements are poorly designed, provide feedback and consult with the national standards setting body.

5. **What do I have to do to recognise prior learning or current competency?**

The same principles apply as to making any assessment judgement. You must be confident the candidate has provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate competency in all the element(s) of the unit standard(s) being assessed, ie does the candidate (still) have the skills and/or knowledge required by the standard? If you want further clarification or guidelines for specific standards, contact the relevant national standard setting body.

6. **Do I have to develop a different assessment activity for each unit standard?**

No, refer to concept 1.6.

7. **What is over-assessment?**

Assessment against unit standards measures competency against a stated (national) standard.

Over-assessment occurs when the candidate is required to produce more than sufficient evidence to demonstrate competency eg repeated performance of the same skill or knowledge, more demonstrations of a skill or knowledge than is stated in the standard.

8. **Where can I go for help?**

Your organisation should be your first point of contact for support. Many industry areas also have professional educator associations to support tutors and assessors.

All assessors are encouraged to complete the following unit standards with an accredited training provider.

- 4098, Use standards to assess candidate performance
- 11552, Design assessment
- 11551, Moderate assessment.

The Industry Training Federation (ITF) represents Industry Training Organisations (ITOs) to government and works with agencies and sector groups to improve the policy for and delivery of industry training. <http://www.itf.org.nz>

See also the publication, Learning and Assessment – A Guide to Assessment for the National Qualifications Framework, NZQA, 2001, ISBN 0-90892751-7.

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