



Staying connected: Peer groups, forums, networks, communities and professional registration

A reference guide for trainers and assessors in automotive and mining Vocational Education and Training (VET) contexts

Part of the AUSMASA Trainer and Assessor VET Career Framework

About this guide

Professional isolation is one of the most consistently reported experiences among trainers and assessors in automotive and mining vocational education and training (VET). Many work in small teams, deliver in dispersed locations, or are the sole person in their organisation with their technical background. Connecting with peers who understand the work makes a genuine difference to both professional development and wellbeing.

This guide does not recommend specific communities, podcasts or events, as these can change quickly and may not be relevant across all roles, industries or career stages.

Instead, the guide is designed to help you:

- where to look
- what to search for
- how to find what others in similar roles have found useful.

Online communities and peer networks

A range of online communities for VET trainers and assessors exists across platforms, including LinkedIn, Facebook and dedicated professional forums. Some are broad, covering VET practice generally, while others are more specific, focusing on assessment, compliance, particular training packages, or sectors. The quality and activity levels vary considerably.

The value of these communities is not primarily in the content posted. It is in access to peers who are dealing with the same challenges (such as assessment design, difficult learners, compliance questions and industry currency) and who can offer practical, experience-based responses that formal training rarely provides.

Where to look

LinkedIn

Search for groups using the terms provided (refer to Table 1). LinkedIn groups vary in activity level; some are well-moderated and active, while others are dormant. Check the activity level before joining.

Facebook

Several active VET trainers and assessor communities operate on Facebook, including some specifically for trainers and assessors in trades and technical areas.



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Dedicated forums and platforms

Some professional development organisations and peak bodies host their own member forums. These are often more focused and better moderated than social media groups.

Podcasts and YouTube channels

A growing number of VET trainers, assessors, and commentators produce audio and video content related to VET, including teaching practice, assessment, compliance and sector developments.

Search terms worth trying

The following table lists search terms likely to identify relevant communities and content. Try combinations across different platforms.

Table 1: Relevant search terms

What you are looking for	Search terms to try
Vocational Education and Training	Registered Training Organisation (RTO), RTO network, VET teacher, VET trainers and assessors, trainer and assessor, vocational educator, RTO teacher, TAFE teacher
Automotive-specific	Automotive trainer, Automotive Retail, Service and Repair Training Package (AUR), AUR training, light vehicle trainer, heavy vehicle trainer, automotive assessor, automotive VET
Mining-specific	Mining trainer, Resources and Infrastructure Industry Training Package (RII), RII training, resources sector trainer, mining assessor, safety-critical training VET
Assessment and compliance	VET assessment, competency-based assessment, RTO compliance, validation VET, Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA)



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What you are looking for	Search terms to try
Teaching practice	VET pedagogy, instructional design VET, blended learning VET, workplace assessment, industry currency VET
Professional development	VET professional development, TAE professional development, VET professional development (PD)
Communities of practice	VET community of practice, VET community of practice (VETCoP), RTO network, trainer network Australia

Referrals from others

When you meet other trainers and assessors at professional development events, validation sessions, industry activities or conferences, ask what they listen to, follow or belong to. Word of mouth consistently highlights the most useful communities. People doing similar work in similar sectors are the most reliable guides to what is worth your time.

A note on quality

Not everything shared in online communities is accurate, evidence-based or well considered.

Treat it as useful and worth considering, but not as a substitute for verifying against regulatory guidance, training package requirements or your own professional judgement. Some communities are better moderated than others.

If you find a community that consistently provides useful, accurate and considered discussion, it is worth participating in and contributing to.



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Conferences and professional events

Professional isolation is a significant challenge for trainers and assessors, particularly those in regional or remote locations, small RTOs, or specialist delivery areas. Face-to-face events serve a different purpose from online communities. They offer concentrated exposure to new ideas, the opportunity to hear from trainers and assessors in different contexts, and the chance to build relationships that continue beyond the event.

Attending a sector event, even once every year or two, can significantly shift a trainer's and an assessor's sense of professional belonging and connection. The value is often less about the formal program and more about the conversations it enables and the networks created.

Types of events worth knowing about

- **National and state VET sector conferences:** Several organisations run annual events focused on VET teaching, assessment and practice. These typically combine keynote presentations with workshops and networking. Search for the organising bodies listed in the following section.
- **State training awards:** Most states and territories run annual training awards recognising excellence in VET delivery. Award ceremonies and associated events are useful networking opportunities and recognition pathways.
- **Industry-specific events:** Events in the automotive and mining sectors can include sessions on training and workforce development and are useful for maintaining industry currency and professional connections. Check with industry associations and peak bodies in your sector.
- **Jobs and Skills Council events:** AUSMASA and other Jobs and Skills Councils hold consultative and engagement events that bring together trainers and assessors, employers and sector leaders. These are worth attending when available.
- **RTO association events:** Several organisations representing RTOs and VET trainers and assessors hold member events, webinars and forums throughout the year. These vary in content and format.



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Organisations that run relevant events

The following organisations are known to run professional development events, conferences or sector forums relevant to VET trainers and assessors. Search their websites for current events.

- VELG Training - national VET professional development provider, runs conferences and workshops
- Vocational Development Centre (VDC), Victoria - professional learning events and workshops
- Australian Institute of Training and Development (AITD) - professional development for learning and development trainers and assessors
- VET Quality and Innovation Learning Hub (VETQI) - VET professional development provider, runs conferences
- AUSMASA - Jobs and Skills Council for automotive and mining, consultation and engagement events
- State Training Authorities - check your state or territory training authority website for funded events and forums
- Australian Training Awards - national recognition program with state and territory equivalents

Search terms for finding events

- VET conference Australia, VET sector forum, trainer assessor conference, RTO conference, training and assessment conference
- Australian Training Awards, state training awards (your state), VET teacher of the year
- AUSMASA events, automotive training conference, mining training forum, resources sector training



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Professional certification

Trainers and assessors in VET do not currently hold individual professional registration, as nurses, doctors or schoolteachers do. This is an area actively discussed within the sector.

One initiative that has emerged recently is the RTO Certified Professionals Institute (RTOCPI), operated through the RTO PD Hub. It is a voluntary certification scheme for RTO trainers and assessors. Offering certification across role categories, including trainer and assessor, validator and RTO manager, with annual CPD requirements to maintain certification.

It is worth noting that voluntary certification schemes for VET trainers and assessors have been attempted previously but have not achieved lasting national traction.

About RTOCPI

RTOCPI is a new and emerging initiative. It is privately operated, voluntary and not formally recognised by ASQA, state regulators or any government body. It does not confer any regulatory standing or compliance benefit. It represents one organisation's attempt to build a sense of professional identity and a commitment to ongoing learning within the VET sector.

Whether it has a lasting impact will depend on how widely it is adopted and whether it develops broader sector recognition over time.

For trainers and assessors interested in demonstrating a commitment to their professional development, it may be worth exploring.

It should not be confused with formal registration or regulatory compliance.

Find out more at rtocpi.com.au.



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The broader conversation

Beyond RTOCPI, there are ongoing national discussions about whether and how to develop a more formal professional registration framework for VET trainers and assessors. These discussions involve peak bodies, government, Jobs and Skills Councils and trainers and assessors themselves. No formal scheme has been established at the time of publication.

For trainers and assessors who want to engage in this conversation, following the work of AUSMASA and other Jobs and Skills Councils, attending sector forums and participating in communities of practice are the most direct ways to stay informed and contribute.

Caution

Online communities, events and initiatives in this space change frequently. The guidance provided in this document focuses on where and how to look rather than specific recommendations, which may date quickly.

Learn more about the Trainer and Assessor VET Career Framework

Explore more practical tools, guides and resources supporting VET capability, wellbeing, industry engagement and career development