

Career conversation guide

A guide for supervisors and program leaders in automotive and mining Vocational Education and Training (VET) contexts

Part of the AUSMASA Trainer and Assessor VET Career Framework



Conversation details

Name:

Role:

Date:

**Career stage
(approximate):**

**Supervisor or
program leader**

Next review date:

About this guide

This guide supports supervisors and program leaders to have meaningful career conversations with trainers and assessors at any stage of their VET careers. It is designed for use at performance reviews, regular check-ins and any planned discussions about career development, aspirations, and future pathways.

It is not a performance management tool or a checklist. Its purpose is to open a genuine conversation about where a trainer or assessor is in their career, what they want from it and what support might be possible.

Trainers and assessors who feel comfortable expressing their career aspirations are more likely to stay in the sector, even when an organisation cannot immediately offer everything they want. An unplanned departure is almost always a greater loss than a conversation that surfaces an aspiration the organisation cannot yet meet.

Not every question will be relevant in every conversation. Use prompts that fit the person and the moment and leave room for the conversation to go where it needs to.

Many providers offer recognition of prior learning (RPL) pathways for both VET and higher education qualifications. If you have substantial experience as a trainer, assessor or in a related role, RPL may allow you to demonstrate competency without completing all units from the start.

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How to use this guide

4 career stage sections are provided below. Select the section that best reflects where the trainer or assessor sits right now. Career stages are a guide, not a fixed classification. If you are unsure which stage applies, start with the establishing questions and adjust as the conversation develops.

Career stages at a glance

- New entrant - getting started and finding your feet
- Establishing - building confidence and consistency
- Advanced - handling complexity and informal responsibility
- Expert - drawing on deep experience and perspective

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New entrant

About this stage

At this stage, the immediate focus is on managing delivery, completing or progressing through the TAE and navigating a new professional environment. The transition from industry to teaching involves a genuine adjustment, and this can be an isolating period.

The conversation for anyone at this stage is about making the person feel seen and supported and about beginning to paint a picture of what their career in VET might look like over time.

Settling in

How are you finding the role so far? What has been most challenging and what has surprised you?

Is the workload manageable now? Are there parts of the role that are taking more time or energy than you expected?

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Support and connections

Do you feel you have the support you need right now? Is there anything the organisation could do differently to help you through this early period?

Career aspirations

It is never too early to ask about aspirations. A light touch at this stage helps the person know that their future in the sector matters and that career conversations are a normal part of their professional life here.

In the longer term, do you see yourself continuing as a trainer and assessor, or do you aspire to move into other areas such as leadership, management, curriculum or specialist roles? It is fine not to know yet; this is just an early conversation.

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Establishing

About this stage

Teaching practice is developing, the TAE is typically complete or near completion, and the immediate pressures of entry are easing. The person can now look beyond daily delivery for the first time. This is a good stage to explore what interests them, what they notice about the sector, and where they might want to take their career.

How are things going?

How do you feel your practice has developed over the past year or so? What are you most confident in, and where do you still feel you are growing? What parts of the role are you finding most satisfying? Is there anything that is less satisfying than you expected?

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Interests and aspirations

This is a good opportunity to find out what the person is noticing and what is starting to interest them. The goal is to understand their aspirations, not to make commitments on behalf of the organisation.

Are there aspects of VET work beyond classroom delivery that interest you, for example, mentoring, curriculum, compliance, industry engagement or leadership? Have you had any exposure to those areas?

When you think about where you want your career to be in the next 2 to 3 years, what comes to mind? Do you have a sense yet of what kind of contribution you would like to be making?

Do you see yourself staying in a teaching role long term, or do you aspire to move into other responsibilities over time?

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Connections and development

Are you building connections with colleagues and with industry contacts? Is there anything that would help with that?

Is there any professional development that would be useful to you right now?

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Advanced

About this stage

Confident teaching and assessment practice is established, and contributions have often broadened to include mentoring, curriculum development, compliance work, or industry liaison. This is the stage when the gap between what a person contributes and what is formally recognised is most often felt. Career conversations at this stage matter more than at any other. Without them, capable and experienced people may quietly disengage or leave, and the organisation may never understand why.

Recognising what they are already contributing

Start by naming what the person is doing. Advanced practitioners often shoulder significant responsibilities that go unacknowledged. Naming them opens the door to an honest conversation about recognition and aspirations.

Beyond your teaching load, what additional responsibilities are you currently carrying? How do you feel about how that contribution is recognised?

Is there work you are doing, for example, mentoring colleagues, contributing to compliance, developing resources or engaging with industry, that you feel is not yet formally part of your role?

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Career aspirations

The goal here is to understand what the person wants, without implying the organisation can necessarily deliver it. Knowing what someone wants is still valuable even if the pathway is not immediately clear.

When you think about the next stage of your career, what appeals to you? Are you interested in taking on new responsibilities, deepening your current expertise, or something else?

Do you see yourself moving into leadership or management at some point, or is your preference to remain in a teaching and specialist role? Both are valid directions.

Are there roles or responsibilities, here or more broadly in the sector, that you would like to explore or learn more about?

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Recognition and development

What would make the most difference to your experience of your career right now?

Is there professional development that would support where you want to go?

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Expert

About this stage

Expert practitioners have built knowledge, relationships, and professional standing that cannot be quickly replaced. Their contribution typically spans teaching, mentoring, compliance, curriculum, industry engagement and often leadership. The primary risk at this stage is not departure but disengagement. This conversation is about making sure the person feels seen, and about understanding what will keep them engaged and contributing on their own terms.

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Contribution and recognition

How do you feel about your contribution to this organisation and to the sector right now? Do you feel that your contribution is visible and recognised?

Are there aspects of your role or your broader contribution that you feel are not sufficiently acknowledged?

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What is sustaining and what is draining

Understanding what energises and what wears you out is important at this stage. The aim is to hear honestly what the person needs.

What aspects of your work are giving you the most satisfaction right now?

Is anything about your current role or workload making it harder to stay engaged? What would make a difference?

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Aspirations and sector contribution

Are there things you would still like to do or contribute, here or more broadly in the sector, that you have not yet had the chance to pursue?

Are there ways you would like to contribute beyond your current role, for example, through mentoring, advisory work, training package development or sector representation?

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Knowledge transfer and the longer term

Expert practitioners carry knowledge and relationships that are difficult to replace. This part of the conversation is about planning, in a way that works for the person as well as the organisation.

Is there specialist knowledge or capability that sits primarily with you right now? Have you thought about how that might be shared with others over time?

As you think about the next few years, what would you like your contribution to look like? Are there arrangements that would help you stay engaged on your own terms?

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Standing agenda items

The following areas work well as standing items across career conversations, regardless of stage. Using a consistent structure helps normalise career conversations as a regular part of working life rather than a response to a problem.

Area	Notes

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