

AUSMASA Trainer and Assessor VET Career Framework Guidance Manual

VET Capability

Developing teaching and
assessment practice



Developing teaching and assessment practice



This section is part of the VET capability theme.

This section applies across all career stages. The development of teaching and assessment capability is most needed at the new entrant stage, but continues to evolve through to the expert level.

What it takes to teach and assess well, and how that develops across a career.

What is it

Technical expertise and a formal qualification provide a necessary foundation, but they do not, on their own, produce confident and effective trainers and assessors.



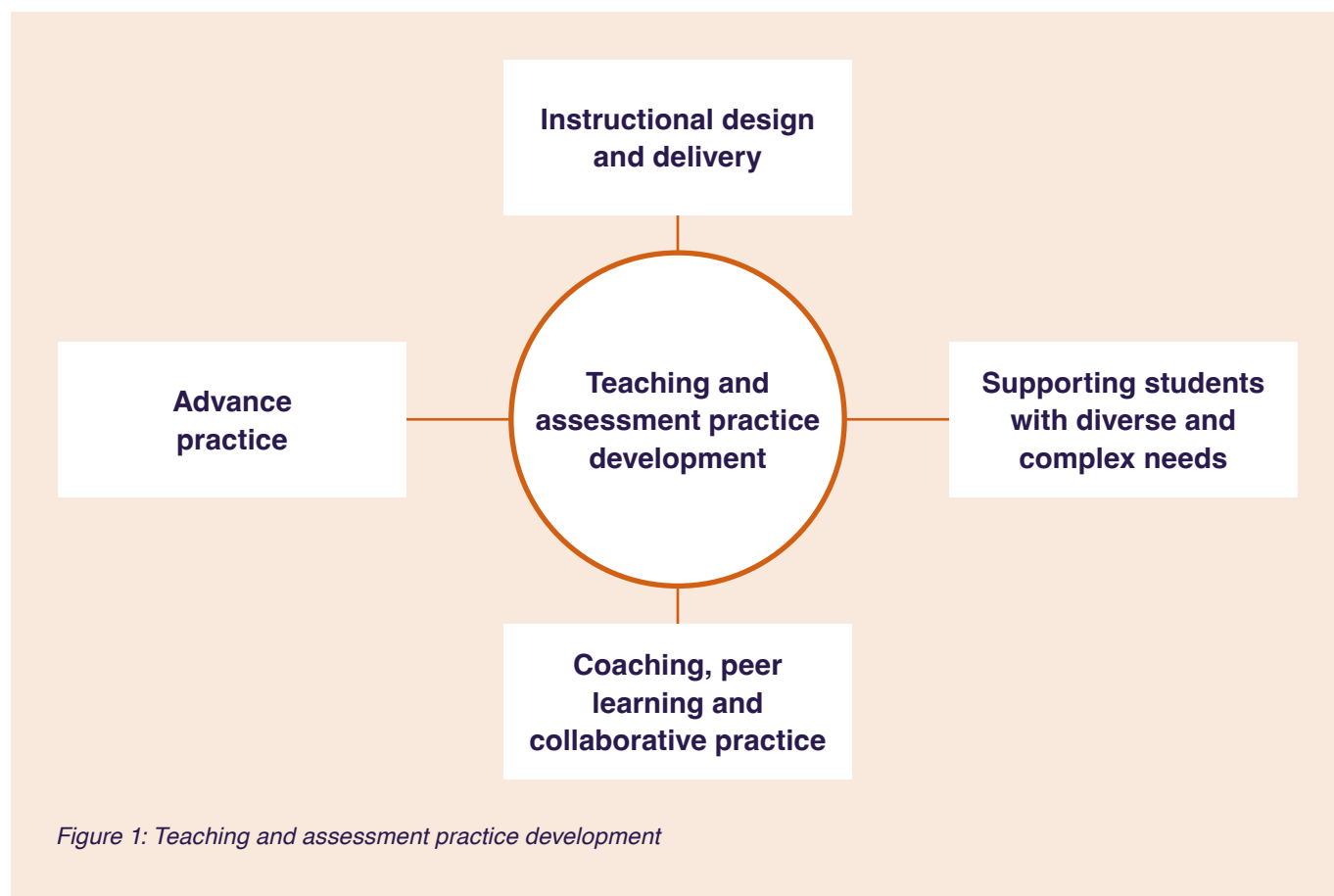
Developing teaching and assessment capability is a distinct professional journey and how well it is supported has a direct bearing on trainer and assessor confidence, student outcomes and long-term retention in the role.

Why it matters

The shift from workshop or site to classroom is one of the least anticipated aspects of entering Vocational Education and Training (VET).

The assumption that someone who explains things well on the shop floor will be equally comfortable delivering theory to a mixed cohort was a common source of early difficulty.

Consultation consistently distinguished between being qualified to train and being confident and effective in front of a group. Trainers and assessors frequently described completing the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAE) and still feeling underprepared for the realities of teaching, including managing a room, reading a group, adapting delivery in the moment and responding to students who are disengaged, struggling, or disruptive.



Consultation identified four areas where this development matters most:

- instructional design and delivery, which includes the practical skills of teaching, such as managing a room, pacing a session, engaging a mixed cohort and adapting in the moment
- supporting students with diverse and complex needs, which incorporates responding effectively to students with language, literacy, numeracy and digital skills (LLND) challenges, neurodiversity, mental health needs and complex personal circumstances
- coaching, peer learning and collaborative practice, which includes developing through structured reflection, peer observation and communities of practice
- advanced practice, incorporating curriculum design, assessment leadership, validation and continuous improvement contribution at the advanced and expert stages (refer to Figure 1).

Consultation identified that supporting students with diverse and complex needs is one of the most significant and growing capability challenges for trainers and assessors in the automotive and mining sectors. Despite this, developing staff capability in this area ranked among the lowest priorities in roundtable consultations. A disconnect that was raised directly as a concern in targeted interviews.

What we found

Instructional design and delivery

TAE leaves a gap that teaching practice must fill

- The TAE provides a foundation in assessment requirements and regulatory understanding. However, the practical demands of teaching, including classroom management, student engagement, theory delivery, and managing disruption, were consistently described as learned through experience rather than through preparation. This gap is exacerbated by organisational-level induction and support arrangements and is not solely a function of the qualification.
- Trainers and assessors with strong workshop and site credibility often described the shift to classroom-based theory delivery as genuinely unfamiliar territory.
- Targeted support specifically for theory delivery is required rather than assuming skills transfer automatically from operational settings. This was among the most valued forms of development described.
- Access to instructional design and delivery support was inconsistent across the sector. Many trainers and assessors report relying primarily on trial and error, peer observation, or informal advice rather than formalised training.

Supporting students with diverse and complex needs

Student diversity is a growing and under-supported challenge

- Automotive and mining training is disproportionately delivered to students from regional, remote and low socio-economic backgrounds, with meaningful representation of First Nations students and students from language backgrounds other than English.
- Consultation described a noticeable increase in diverse and complex student needs following the return to face-to-face delivery. Including reduced LLND levels, reduced social

skill levels in some cohorts and broader entry parameters for apprenticeships.

- Trainers and assessors are routinely working with students who have LLND needs, limited prior formal learning experience, disability or neurodiversity, complex personal circumstances or cultural and language backgrounds that are different from those of students who tend to dominate the training environment
- The gap between what this requires and what the TAE and standard induction prepare trainers for is substantial.
- Supporting students with diverse and complex needs is increasingly a core part of the trainer role in these sectors, rather than a specialist add-on.
- Pastoral investments: Accidental counsellor training and mental health first aid were described as practical capability investments. Trainers are not expected to provide counselling. However, recognising when to refer a student is a realistic part of the role.
- Pedagogical investments: Flexible assessment approaches and contextualised resources were also identified as practical capability investments. Supporting neurodivergent and LLND students requires these teaching adjustments rather than pastoral triage.
- Open communication between the trainer and assessor, student support and the employer, particularly in apprenticeship contexts, was described as requiring active maintenance over the full learning journey. Not just at enrolment.

Coaching, peer contribution and collaborative practice

Coaching and peer learning are underutilised but highly effective

- Workshop-based professional development (PD) was consistently described as having limited impact when disconnected from real delivery contexts. Professional learning was most effective when job-embedded,

practice-connected, and supported through peer discussion and reflection.

- Coaching was described as a particularly effective development mechanism when clearly separated from performance management. This was also the case when participation was invitational rather than mandated and when coaches were experienced trainers and assessors with strong facilitation skills.
- Feedback from multiple sources described coaching conversations as the first time trainers and assessors felt genuinely heard as educators rather than evaluated against compliance requirements.
- Peer observation in non-evaluative settings was consistently valued. They provide the opportunity to notice different approaches, build shared professional vocabulary and reflect on practice without judgement.
- Communities of practice provided collective professional standards and shared language that individual reflection cannot produce alone. Where they functioned well, they increased trainers' and assessors' confidence, reduced isolation, and improved assessment consistency.

Advanced Practice – curriculum design and innovation

Advanced trainers and assessors carry curriculum and assessment work without recognition

- Experienced trainers and assessors who develop strong instructional capability and assessment judgement often find themselves drawn into curriculum development, validation, moderation and quality assurance work.
- These contributions are significant. They are how organisational capability is built, sustained and improved. Yet they were frequently described as additions to full teaching loads, rather than recognised elements of an advanced role. This carries structural implications for workload, recognition, and retention, which are explored further in Section 4.3, *Progression, leadership and contribution*.

- Sound assessment judgement, making consistent, defensible decisions about competency, particularly in borderline cases, takes time to develop. Furthermore, it requires structured exposure to moderation and validation processes rather than independent development.
- Moderation and validation processes were most effective when genuinely collaborative and focused on building collective standards. Rather than being treated as administrative compliance activities.
- Curriculum development linked to emerging industry technology drew on both deep vocational expertise and advanced teaching capability simultaneously. Yet these contributions were described as going largely unrecognised in formal career and remuneration structures.

What undermines capability development

Without clear structure and support, teaching practice development in VET is inconsistent and difficult to apply

- Professional development can be disconnected from delivery realities. Generic workshops without connection to the actual teaching context were described as offering limited value.
- Trainers and assessors who are given a lack of time to practise, reflect and adapt are unable to apply useful learning.
- An unclear separation between developmental support and performance judgement created environments where trainers and assessors were reluctant to acknowledge difficulty or seek help.
- The persistent assumption that industry expertise alone equates to teaching capability meant some organisations did not invest in instructional development at all, treating the TAE as sufficient.
- Teaching capability development requires intentional organisational design. It does not happen reliably through experience alone.

What helps

Strengthening Teaching Capability Through Structured Development, Support, and Recognition.

Invest in teaching practice development beyond a TAE accreditation

- Provide explicit, practice-focused development in facilitation, presentation, student engagement and classroom management. The skills that the TAE does not adequately cover.
- Use co-delivery and supported delivery to build confidence through active practice. Sharing session responsibility with an experienced colleague is more effective than extended passive observation.
- Support structured observation of experienced trainers and assessors in non-evaluative settings, followed by a conversation about what was observed and why choices were made.
- Provide targeted support specifically for theory delivery. Do not assume workshop or site skills transfer automatically to classroom contexts.

Build capacity to support diverse and complex students

- Invest in accidental counsellor training and mental health first aid as a practical baseline capability. These are realistic role requirements.
- Develop contextualised learning resources for different cultural and language backgrounds. These benefit entire cohorts, not just students with identified needs.
- Adopt flexible assessment approaches that maintain rigour while accommodating diverse demonstrations of competency.
- Embed student support structures that work alongside trainers and assessors rather than expecting staff to manage complex needs in isolation.
- Maintain active communication between the trainer and assessor, student support services and the employer throughout the apprenticeship or traineeship journey.

Embed coaching and peer learning as normal practice

- Treat coaching as a distinct PD mechanism. Separate it clearly from performance management and make participation invitational.
- Ensure coaches are experienced trainers and assessors with strong facilitation skills, not simply senior staff.
- Create peer observation opportunities in non-evaluative settings. The value is in noticing different approaches and building shared vocabulary, not in confirming compliance.
- Support communities of practice for trainers and assessors working in specialist or complex delivery environments. Shared problem-solving and professional dialogue produce collective standards that individual reflection cannot.

Recognise and resource advanced practice contributions

- Treat curriculum development, validation and assessment leadership as recognised elements of an advanced trainer and assessor role, not additions to full teaching loads.
- Provide dedicated time and workload consideration for experienced trainers and assessors contributing to quality assurance, moderation and continuous improvement.
- Support further teaching study (Graduate Certificates, Diplomas in Vocational Education) with workload adjustment, mentoring and formal recognition of achievement, rather than expecting it to be completed in personal time.

Industry impacts

Automotive contexts

Automotive industry impacts

- The theory delivery gap is particularly acute in automotive. Trainers and assessors with deep workshop credibility often find classroom-based instruction a genuinely different challenge.
- The electric vehicle (EV) transition is creating new curriculum development demands. Advanced trainers and assessors with current EV knowledge are being drawn into program development work that sits alongside and often beyond, their teaching responsibilities.
- Apprentice cohort complexity is increasing. Trainers and assessors are managing a wider range of LLND levels, learning differences and personal circumstances than in previous years, with limited preparation for this dimension of the role.
- Recognition of prior learning (RPL) assessment is a specialist skill in automotive contexts. The ability to make sound assessment decisions requires development beyond what the TAE provides.

Strategies to assist staff

- Provide structured support to help trainers and assessors transition from workshop expertise to effective classroom teaching, including practical pedagogy training, mentoring and opportunities to co-teach.
- Allocate dedicated time, resources and collaborative support for trainers and assessors involved in EV curriculum development, ensuring this work is recognised and not added on top of existing teaching loads.
- Build trainer and assessor capability to support diverse students through practical LLND and inclusive teaching strategies, alongside access to specialist support and adaptable teaching resources.
- Develop advanced, industry-specific RPL capability through targeted training, clear assessment frameworks and moderation processes, recognising RPL as a specialised function beyond the base qualification.

Industry impacts

Mining contexts

Mining industry impacts

- Safety critical training contexts place particular demands on assessment judgement. Decisions about competency carry direct operational implications and require high levels of consistency and defensibility.
- Enterprise RTO trainers and assessors in mining often operate with greater autonomy and less peer support infrastructure than TAFE based colleagues. Peer learning and communities of practice carry particular value where trainer and assessor networks are thin.
- Student diversity in mining contexts includes a high proportion of students from outer regional and remote areas and First Nations communities. Trainer and assessor capability to support these cohorts requires deliberate development beyond standard induction.
- The shift toward autonomous systems and digital operations is creating curriculum development demands for advanced trainers and assessors. Staying current with what needs to be taught, not just how to teach it.

Strategies to assist staff

- Strengthen assessment quality through robust moderation, clear benchmarks and decision support frameworks to ensure consistency, defensibility and confidence in competency decisions.
- Establish structured peer networks and communities of practice to enable knowledge sharing, support and professional connection where teams are small or dispersed.
- Build cultural capability and inclusive teaching practices through targeted development and access to specialist support, ensuring trainers and assessors can effectively support diverse student needs.
- Actively maintain industry and technological currency by supporting access to emerging systems, industry partnerships and structured curriculum development time.

When it is working

- New trainers and assessors receive explicit instructional development beyond the TAE. Including support specifically for theory delivery, classroom management and student engagement.
- Co-delivery and supported delivery are used to build teaching confidence through active practice before independent delivery begins.
- Coaching is available as a confidential, invitational development resource and clearly separate from performance review.
- Peer observation happens in non-evaluative settings, with structured conversation following, rather than assessment or compliance checking.
- Trainers and assessors working with complex student cohorts have access to practical capability support, including accidental counsellor training, mental health first aid and embedded student support services.
- Further teaching study is actively supported with workload adjustment, mentoring and formal recognition, not left to personal time and motivation.
- Advanced trainers and assessors contributing to curriculum development, validation and quality assurance have dedicated time and workload consideration for these responsibilities.
- Communities of practice exist for trainers and assessors in specialist or complex delivery environments. Shared problem-solving is a normal part of professional life.
- Training for diverse and complex student needs is treated as a priority capability investment. Not an afterthought.

What this looks like across the career stages

1. New entrant – getting started and finding your feet

- The dominant development need is teaching capability. Managing a room, pacing a session, engaging a mixed cohort and adapting delivery in the moment. New entrants typically arrive with current industry knowledge. It is the practical skills of teaching that are underdeveloped.
- Theory delivery is a particular source of early difficulty. Confidence and authority in workshop and site settings do not transfer automatically to classroom-based delivery.
- Co-delivery and supported delivery are among the most valuable early supports. Building confidence through active practice alongside an experienced colleague before independent delivery begins.
- A structured settling-in period with a reduced teaching load, a mentor or buddy and time for development (rather than immediate performance) was linked to higher confidence and reduced attrition. The capacity to support diverse and complex students is typically not yet developed at this stage. Awareness of the gap tends to emerge through experience rather than being anticipated at entry.

2. Establishing – building confidence and consistency

- Delivery confidence is building. However, assessment capability, validation and rules of evidence often remain underdeveloped and benefit from targeted attention.
- This is the phase where trainers and assessors encounter the full complexity of their student cohort. Recognising that initial preparation did not fully equip them for what they are dealing with.

- Development works best with greater agency. Genuine choice, peer observation, coaching and PD anchored in real delivery challenges rather than generic content.
- The capacity to support diverse and complex students becomes most pressing at this stage. Accidental counsellor training and mental health first aid are well timed here, after the initial entry period but before the demands of managing complex needs have accumulated without support.
- Communities of practice and coaching are particularly valuable at this stage. When trainers and assessors are ready to reflect on their practice, but may not yet have the confidence to seek informal help.

3. Advanced – handling complexity and informal responsibility

- Development shifts from building foundational capability to sustaining, deepening and broadening it. Advanced trainers and assessors are contributing beyond delivery, including leading validation, mentoring colleagues, contributing to curriculum design and participating in industry advisory activities.
- Assessment judgement in complex and borderline cases continues to develop through active participation in moderation and validation. These processes are most effective when genuinely collaborative and focused on building collective standards. Not treated as compliance activities.
- Curriculum design and assessment innovation draw on the combination of deep vocational knowledge and developing pedagogical capability that advanced trainers and assessors bring. Yet this contribution is frequently carried as an addition to full teaching loads rather than a recognised element of the role.
- Where organisations allocate time and formally acknowledge advanced practice contributions, trainers and assessors describe greater professional purpose and stronger engagement with the organisation.

- Leadership capability development becomes relevant for those moving into or being considered for coordinator or program leader roles. Strong teaching capability does not automatically translate into the ability to manage a team or lead an organisation.

4. Expert – drawing on deep experience and perspective

- Expert trainers and assessors are the most capable and experienced members of the teaching workforce. Yet they are the most likely to receive the least structured PD. Frequently overlooked by programs designed for earlier career stages.
- Teaching and assessment practice at the expert stage is characterised less by individual skill development. Instead, it is characterised more by contribution to collective capability, mentoring colleagues, leading communities of practice, contributing to training package review and modelling effective practice for peers.
- Where this contribution is recognised and resourced, expert trainers and assessors describe renewed professional purpose. Where it is absorbed into full loads without acknowledgement, the result is a growing sense of being taken for granted. A significant factor in decisions to leave the sector or organisation.
- The tacit knowledge expert trainers and assessors carry is not easily replaced once lost. This can include accumulated assessment judgement, deep familiarity with the training package's intent, and sustained industry relationships. Organisations that support expert trainers and assessors to remain engaged and pass on what they know are investing in their own long-term capability.

Success stories

Embedding coaching into professional learning

Targeted interview feedback described an organisation that used capability standards as a developmental tool rather than a compliance instrument. Prompting self-reflection and structured conversation between trainers and assessors and their professional learning coaches.

Experienced staff engaged confidentially to identify their own goals and reflected on delivery challenges, with the emphasis on educator-driven development, rather than externally imposed requirements.

A leader-as-coach approach was promoted across the organisation. Leadership is seen as part of every educator's role, rather than reserved for those in management positions.

The model was built over several years using a 'work with the willing' approach, expanding as trust and evidence of impact developed.

Trainers and assessors from trade backgrounds, including those well into their careers, described coaching conversations as the first time anyone had genuinely asked about and listened to their experience as educators.

Embedding student support alongside training delivery

Targeted interview feedback described a student support model built around dedicated support officers embedded across automotive and metals apprentice training.

Two support officers covered the cohort, conducting regular class walkthroughs, checking in with staff and triaging student needs as they arose, and were available to up to 120 students on any given day.

The officers were introduced to students at induction to establish a trusted presence before problems emerged. Their role was not to resolve issues directly but to identify them early and connect students to appropriate services, including tutoring and psychological support, with access to up to \$3,000 per apprentice without requiring pre-approval.

Funding was provided through the state training authority for apprentices rather than by the RTO itself.

The officers held social work qualifications. A deliberate design choice reflecting the difficulty that trade background trainers and assessors face in distinguishing between a student who needs vocational coaching and one who needs a different kind of support.

Success stories

Linking leadership development to teaching practice

Targeted interview feedback described a 2-semester leadership and teaching development program introduced for academic leaders. Structured to address both dimensions of the role.

The first semester focused on leadership capability, team management, navigating difficult conversations, and building organisational influence.

The second shifted to teaching and learning, with a focus on evidence-informed delivery, effective instructional techniques and improving student engagement.

Sessions were held as half-day workshops fortnightly. As part of the program, experienced lecturers demonstrating effective teaching approaches were filmed and the recordings shared across the teaching workforce. With a deliberate emphasis on trade-relevant settings and attire rather than generic educational contexts, the examples were designed to ensure they carried credibility with colleagues in similar roles.

Helpful resources



The following resources are provided as optional references for those seeking practical tools or further reading aligned with the information in this section.

- **ASQA's Good Practice Guide to Assessment** – current guidance on assessment quality, consistency and validation practice; relevant to the assessment judgement and moderation content in this section.
- **TAC Fact sheet – Assessment and assessment judgement**
- **Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership** – resources on coaching and professional learning – while developed for the school sector, the frameworks for embedded coaching and peer observation are broadly applicable and well-evidenced.
- National Centre for Vocational Education and Research (NCVER) – Building capability and quality in VET teaching: opportunities and challenges
www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/publications/all-publications/building-capability-and-quality-in-vet-teaching-opportunities-and-challenges
- NCVER – Continuing Professional Development for a Diverse VET Practitioner Workforce www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/publications/all-publications/continuing-professional-development-for-a-diverse-vet-practitioner-workforce



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