

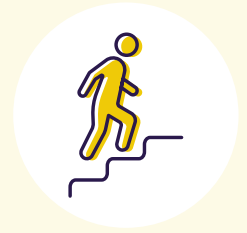
AUSMASA Trainer and Assessor VET Career Framework Guidance Manual

Career

Transition from industry
to VET



Transition from industry to VET



This section is part of theme 4: Career pathways

This section is primarily relevant to trainers and assessors at the new entrant stage. Some content on phased transition and maintaining industry connections also applies to those at the establishing stage.

Entry into the VET workforce is experienced as a significant transition rather than a simple role change.

What is it

New trainers and assessors arrive with strong vocational expertise but limited teaching experience. Most also face the challenge of learning to teach while simultaneously completing the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAE) requirements, navigating registered training organisation (RTO) systems and managing teaching workloads.



Good entry, transition, and onboarding strategies can help alleviate some of the challenges that new trainers and assessors experience during their transition from industry to Vocational Education and Training (VET).

Why it matters

How organisations support entry and transition directly affects whether capable industry professionals succeed in VET roles or leave within the first 12 months.

Understanding this transition and the supports that underpin it matters for organisations seeking to build sustainable, capable training workforces in the automotive and mining sectors.

What we found

Structured induction and onboarding variation across sectors

- Onboarding experiences vary widely across the sectors, with some trainers and assessors placed in front of a class within days, while others have highly structured 6-month onboarding processes.
- The length of onboarding provided mattered less than whether new trainers and assessors felt supported. Particularly, if they were provided with an environment that enabled them to ask questions without judgement and were reinforced that uncertainty is normal.
- Effective induction was found to occur progressively over time, not in a single intensive session.

Buddying and mentoring at entry

- Buddying and mentoring are important supports during entry, with each serving distinct purposes, impacting upon how they are set up and supported.
- Buddies were described as peer touchpoints providing immediate, informal support for practical day-to-day questions, such as how systems work, where to find things and how things are done in this organisation.
- Mentors were described as providing scheduled developmental guidance, focused on longer-term capability development, teaching practice, professional identity and reflection.
- Mentoring at entry.
 - Mentoring was identified as the single strongest retention factor across all career stages.
 - Mentoring was described as most effective during this period, particularly when it was:
 - structured and scheduled rather than ad hoc
 - clearly developmental rather than evaluative

- able to connect TAE concepts to real teaching practice
- focused on building confidence as well as capability.
- Expert to novice transition.
 - Strong vocational confidence doesn't automatically transfer to teaching confidence.
 - Many experienced the shift from highly competent expert to novice educator as destabilising.
 - Some display high confidence in practical workshop delivery but significant uncertainty about classroom-based theory delivery.
 - When transitioning to VET, completing the TAE is often their first time as formal students since apprenticeship completion, and this created anxiety for some.
- Thrown in the deep end.
 - Trainers and assessors used strikingly similar language to describe their entry into the VET environment as being 'thrown in the deep end', having to 'sink or swim'.
 - Trainers and assessors had full or near full teaching loads from early on, were provided with an induction focused on administrative procedures rather than teaching preparation and were given limited access to experienced colleagues for support.
 - Patterns of many entry, transition and onboarding strategies reflect operational necessity (teaching demands, timetables, resource constraints) rather than deliberate design.
 - Some described it as a catalyst for rapid learning when informal support existed; others experienced it as overwhelming.

Phased workload and progressive teaching exposure

- Protected and reduced workloads.
 - The inclusion of protected and reduced workloads assists in facilitating the transition process.
 - Reduced teaching hours were the most commonly described strategy used, with typical patterns involving limited initial teaching loads (for example, half to two-thirds of the standard teaching load in the first term), which then increase progressively through the first year.
- Shadowing and progressive teaching exposure.
 - Shadowing and observation are widely used to support transition into VET, but experiences can be mixed.
 - Extended shadowing without doing increased anxiety for some, while others valued longer observation periods.

Entry and transition – the first year

- The first 12 months in a VET trainer and assessor role represent a period of significant professional adjustment.
- It is the period during which most of the critical decisions about whether to stay in the role are made and when the conditions created by organisations have the most influence on outcomes.
- Psychological safety and learning conditions.
 - The provision of a safe learning environment was strongly linked to confidence development and retention.
 - Clear separation between developmental support and performance management was found to support the transition process.
 - Permission to admit struggles, make mistakes and ask ‘basic’ questions without judgement assisted in creating a safe learning environment.

- Maintaining industry connections.
 - Maintaining industry connections assists in supporting confidence and professional identity during the transition, particularly for trainers and assessors concerned about losing industry credibility or currency by moving into VET.
- Reducing early administrative friction.
 - Implementing approaches that help to reduce the early friction that new trainers and assessors have with the administrative process used in VET can assist the transition process.

Train the trainer – foundational teaching and assessment practice

- TAE completion creates significant pressure.
 - Completing the TAE while commencing teaching was described as one of the most challenging aspects.
 - It can produce additional time pressure and can lead to trainers and assessors feeling disconnected from the role when the teaching context is not adequately provided.
 - Some reported assessment anxiety for industry professionals who are unfamiliar with academic writing.
 - Completing TAE independently without peer support made concepts harder to grasp.

What helps

The following strategies can help to support new trainers and assessors when they transition from industry to VET.



How to embed effective entry and transition support

Protected workloads during the entry period

- Reduced teaching loads (50–60% first term, 70–80% second term, and full by the third term were typical).
- Smaller class sizes or less complex cohorts initially.
- Protected non-teaching time explicitly scheduled for planning and TAE study.
- Gradual increase in delivery load, assessment responsibilities and compliance expectations.

Structured but progressive onboarding

- Week 1: organisational orientation, critical systems, meeting mentor, workplace familiarisation.
- Weeks 2–4: detailed systems training, shadowing, TAE planning and understanding teaching expectations.
- Weeks 5–12: ongoing induction delivered progressively as readiness develops.
- Ongoing: Information delivered just in time rather than front-loaded in overwhelming orientation sessions.

Effective shadowing and observation

- Observing multiple trainers (not just one) to see varied approaches.
- Structured debrief after observations. What did you notice? What surprised you? What questions emerged?
- Permission to observe critically: not everything experienced trainers do represents best practice.
- Clear progression criteria. Explicit discussion about when shadowing ends and independent teaching begins.

Co-teaching as a middle ground

- Active teaching practice without full session responsibility.
- Immediate support when challenges arise.
- Real-time feedback and adjustment.
- Build confidence faster than extended observation alone.

Train-the-trainer alongside TAE

- Practical delivery and presentation skills development.
- Managing group dynamics, engaging diverse students and explaining complex concepts clearly.
- Pacing sessions and reading the room.
- Voice, presence and delivery style coaching.
- Using technology effectively (presentation software, audiovisual tools and facilitation platforms).

Flexible TAE support strategies

- Protected study time in workload (not just personal time expectation).
- Offering a settling-in period of 4 to 8 weeks before TAE commencement.
- Mentor support actively connecting TAE concepts to teaching practice.
- Peer study groups where multiple new trainers and assessors commence simultaneously.
- Extended completion timeframes (12 to 18 months rather than rushed 6 to 9 months).
- Recognition that TAE experience varies by RTO context (in scope vs external completion).

Buddy systems and mentoring

- Buddy: peer touchpoint for day-to-day practical questions about systems, processes and questions such as, How do things work here?
- Mentor: developmental focus on teaching practice, career guidance, and professional growth.
- Regular check-ins during early delivery.
- Clear distinction between developmental support and performance management.

Creating psychological safety

- Explicit messaging that early uncertainty is normal, not evidence of inadequacy.
- Access to informal advice without formal request processes.
- Recognition that mistakes are part of learning, not performance failures.
- Safe spaces to discuss challenges and admit struggles.

Reducing early administrative friction

- Gradual introduction to administrative and compliance tasks.
- Access to templates, exemplars and practical tools rather than creating everything from scratch.
- Guided introduction to digital platforms with scheduled training.
- Limiting exposure to multiple programs initially – start with a single program or a smaller range.

Maintaining industry connection

- Part-time or hybrid roles combining delivery with industry work.
- Continued involvement in enterprise or specialist training.
- Time allocated for industry visits and currency maintenance.
- Recognition of vocational expertise within training teams.

Industry impacts

Automotive contexts

Automotive industry impacts

- Practical workshop confidence typically high; classroom theory delivery creates more uncertainty.
- Need to maintain currency with rapidly evolving vehicle technology while learning to teach.
- May transition from dealerships, independent workshops, specialist roles with varied administrative exposure.
- Enterprise RTOs can support gradual transition through combined operational/training roles.

Strategies to assist the transition from industry to VET

- Bridging practical skills to classroom teaching.
- Maintaining technical currency.
- Structured administrative onboarding.
- Mentoring and staged responsibility.
- Blended operational and training roles.
- Clear career pathways and identity transition.

Mining contexts

Mining industry impacts

- Fly in fly out (FIFO) trainers and assessors need onboarding that accommodates roster patterns.
- Remote/isolated delivery contexts limit access to in-person mentoring and peer support.
- Enterprise RTOs identifying internal talent can structure phased transitions (50/50 operational/training splits).
- Simulation and digital systems add complexity to learning teaching alongside learning tools.
- Geographic isolation makes structured professional development access more challenging.

Strategies to assist the transition from industry to VET

- Provide access to automation and remote operations systems, including simulation platforms, digital safety monitoring and fleet management software.
- Build capability in safety critical digital systems, ensuring trainers can confidently monitor, assess and record safety outcomes
- Invest in accessible professional development for regional and remote trainers and assessors, using flexible, mobile or online delivery to overcome distance and cost barriers.
- Align digital development with emerging industry technologies, so training reflects current mining practice.

When it is working

Indicators that transition support is working

- Increasing confidence in delivery and assessment over time.
- Willingness to ask questions and seek feedback without fear of judgement.
- Reduced early attrition with trainers remaining beyond the critical first 12 months.
- Gradual assumption of responsibility as capability develops.
- Emerging dual professional identity (vocational expert and VET professional).
- Engagement with continuous improvement rather than remaining in survival mode.
- Building peer relationships and contributing to team dynamics.
- TAE completion within reasonable timeframes with understanding, not just compliance.

Success stories

Large public provider

A well-resourced and structured 12 to 18-month TAE support program was successfully implemented, featuring centralised mentorship, a dedicated capability team, regular progress check-ins and comprehensive access to teaching resources.

The extended timeframe reduced pressure on participants, enabling confident skill development and strong completion outcomes. This approach demonstrates the effectiveness of intentional, supported and strategically phased trainer development.

Mining provider

The organisation successfully engaged current industry professionals as casual trainers, providing a strong induction process and consistent check-ins to support their transition.

Trainers were empowered to progress at their own pace and had input into when they were ready to take on increased responsibility.

This flexible, self-paced approach, without a rigid program structure, demonstrated an effective and context-responsive model suited to a smaller organisation.

Success stories

Regional provider with isolation challenges

A dual-support model was successfully implemented, pairing new trainers with a buddy for day-to-day practical guidance and with a formal mentor focused on professional and teaching development.

This complementary approach ensured both immediate operational support and longer-term capability growth, effectively overcoming the challenges of geographic dispersal.

Mining enterprise RTO

The organisation successfully identified experienced operational staff with strong teaching aptitude and supported them through a phased transition model.

By implementing an initial 50/50 split between operations and training, staff were able to maintain industry connections and income stability while progressively building training capability.

This employer-supported, gradual pathway ensured sustained industry currency and confident development into education roles.

Continue exploring

You'll find additional tools, resources and related guidance in the **Career** section of the AUSMASA Trainer and Assessor VET Career Framework, including practical self-assessment tools, supporting guidance and links to related topics.



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