

SOUTHERN SCHOOL OF NATURAL THERAPIES

ASSESSMENT DESIGN AND CONDUCT POLICY AND PROCEDURES

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Purpose

This procedure describes the processes undertaken by SSNT to ensure that its services in training and assessment of training packages and accredited courses on its Scope of Registration are planned, designed and implemented in a valid, fair, reliable and flexible manner.

Related AQTF standards

St 1: The RTO provides quality training and assessment across all of its operations.

Scope

This procedure applies to all lecturers/trainers and assessors, Co-ordinators and HODs employed by or contracted to SSNT for the delivery of training and assessment services.

Responsible parties

The relevant Heads of Department (HODs) or Co-ordinators are responsible for the control and implementation of this procedure.

Definitions

Competency-based assessment is concerned with the demonstration of knowledge and skills to industry standards. The purpose of assessment is to confirm that an individual can perform to those standards expected in the workplace as expressed in the relevant endorsed industry/enterprise competency standards. The assessment process involves the collection of evidence and making judgments as to whether competency has been achieved.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is the process of determining whether an individual's prior learning, including formal learning and life experience, has provided for the development of competencies. SSNT may only consider applications for prior learning relevant to competencies tied to the School's Scope of Registration. Learning and assessment strategies identify the proposed target groups, delivery and assessment modes, assessment validation processes and learning pathways for each training package qualification or accredited course. (Refer to Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy and the RPL Application Form).

Learning and assessment strategies are developed for each course on the SSNT's Scope of Registration or for courses subject to application for registration or extension to scope of registration.

POLICY STATEMENT

The SSNT is committed to ensuring that the requirements for all training package and accredited courses on its Scope of Registration are met through the use of appropriate assessment processes and instruments.

The SSNT has in place and implements procedures to ensure that:

- Assessment guidelines are interpreted, communicated and applied by assessors in all accredited programs.
- Assessments will lead to the attainment of an AQF award (certificate, diploma or statement).
- Assessment principles (fairness, flexibility, validity and reliability) will underpin all assessment processes (design and conduct),
- Students are informed of the assessment processes, will be offered assessment feedback, and an opportunity to appeal against an assessment outcome and request re-assessment.
- Cultural diversity is considered in the design and delivery of assessments, and where necessary “adjustments” may be applied,
- Judgments of competence are based on the evaluation of sufficient evidence of performance collected over time.
- The design and development of assessment instruments are tested and validated by industry peers prior to implementation and reviewed or moderated regularly to maintain currency and relevance to target needs and industry standards.
- Students and prospective students understand the assessment pathways offered by RTOs including Mutual Recognition, Recognition of Prior Learning and Recognition of Current Competence and Training and Assessment pathways.

PROCEDURES

Assessment Design

Assessments are to be designed by staff qualified and skilled in the analysis of training package requirements or accredited course guidelines, have an appropriate level of qualifications as an assessor and have the vocational expertise in the area under assessment. Assessment design must include consideration of:

- Target group, diversity of cultural experience, language, literacy and numeracy skill levels underpinning the course of study.
- The application of knowledge and skill to the standard of performance prescribed within the assessment curriculum guidelines.
- The clinical work place aspect of performance including task skills, management skills and job role environment skills.
- Each principle of assessment: fairness, flexibility, reliability and validity across the assessment environment (ie clinic, classroom).
- The range of instruments to be used to collect evidence of competence.

Assessment products are to be developed for each unit in each AQF qualification appearing on the SSNT’s Scope of Registration. While assessments may be integrated, in basic terms the assessment products for each qualification should include:

- Assessment strategy (how the program is to be assessed).
- Assessment instruments (what modes/pathways of assessment are to be offered).
- Assessment tools (the actual assessment to be implemented).
- Assessment solution/benchmark (standard of performance a student is measured against).

Each component of assessment is to be mapped to the AQF qualification and be recorded in summary format in an Assessment Matrix.

The design is to be tested and verified as meeting all principles of assessment. This is to be performed prior to implementation, and again at least annually, using formal validation processes.

Assessment Validation

Assessments can be validated using several methods. SSNT incorporates a range of strategies to ensure the design, conduct and review of assessments provide for feedback and analysis of currency, consistency, fairness and flexibility. These inform the continuous improvement targets for the SSNT in assessment and training services. Quality improvements are based on feedback and evaluation by students and trainers/assessors.

Assessment validation is to be implemented by:

- Reviewing assessment outcomes of each unit/module by each assessor. These are to be reviewed and compared by the relevant Co-coordinator to determine any apparent variations in judgments formed.
- Seeking feedback from supervisors on student's performance in areas where SSNT assessors have judged the student to be competent.
- Seeking feedback from students in relation to the assessments and to the use of language, literacy and cultural references, both within classes and across classes under assessment,
- Reviewing assessments internally, on a semester by semester basis on matters of validity, reliability, flexibility and fairness.
- Gaining external validation of assessments on design and implementation, as a means to ensure reliability, validity and currency. This may be achieved using parties who are contracted by SSNT but who are also conducting professional practice outside of the organization.

All validation activities are to be documented and monitored by HODs or Co-ordinators and changes are to be reported to the Quality Assurance Manager as opportunities for improvement or corrective action. The Q.A. Manager will then ensure that changed activities are recorded for consideration at audit against the appropriate AQTF Standard.

Conduct of Assessment

The conduct of assessment requires consideration of the role of the assessor and the environment in which the assessment event occurs/is offered. SSNT is required to ensure that all assessors are familiar with their obligations under the AQTF Standards for RTOs and their responsibility to ensure that all students have a fair and equitable chance to successfully undertake the assessment and demonstrate their skills and knowledge.

SSNT therefore requires that:

- All staff implementing assessments meet the minimum qualification requirements for assessors or are supervised by the Co-ordinator.
- All assessors have participated in an induction program at SSNT and become familiar with relevant policies and procedures, forms and processes.

- All assessors have access to the current assessment tools in use at SSNT and are able to distinguish version control information.
- All assessors have access to training package or accredited course guidelines and have ready access to implementation guidelines for assessments designed by SSN.
- All assessors participate in the moderation of assessment activities as part of their own professional development activity and to ensure the reliability of assessments.
- Assessors provide opportunities for assessment in a variety of environments, over a period of time, and collect sufficient evidence to make judgment as to a student's competence.
- Assessors provide students with feedback following assessment and provide opportunities for re-assessment where warranted under appeal or failure to meet competency standards. (supplementary assessments).
- Assessors collect and record evidence of competence for each student, and maintain such evidence until unit requirements are met. On completion of units, evidence, as appropriate and results are forwarded to the Student Administration Officer for filing and eventual archive.
Evidence may include examination papers, assignments, clinic reports, and log books. Records of feedback may be kept where assessment materials are returned to students.
- All disciplinary actions for breaches in assessment rules will be dealt with under the broader regulations of the SSNT. (Refer to SSNT diary/handbook)
- Assessment appeals are dealt with using the SSNT Complaints and Appeals process.

Skills Recognition

SSNT is required to provide students with a means for determining competence. This can be achieved through training and assessment pathways, but also through the demonstration of competence gained through assessment with another RTO, gained through previous experience from life, work or formal training, or gained through current and consistent work tasks/functions. All applications are to be kept on file, in confidence, and made available to auditors to determine the fairness of process and validity of judgment.

Reference should also be made to the current policy for:

Recognition of Prior Learning

- Prior to enrolment, prospective students are to be made aware of their right to apply for recognition of prior learning against an AQF qualification/unit and the opportunity of exemption in the same qualification/units offered under the Scope of Registration at SSNT.
- Applications for RPL are to be made according to the RPL Policy and are to be made on the appropriate RPL Application Form (available on the SSNT website and at Student Services) and submitted to the Administration Officer together with all relevant supporting information. The Officer will review the content of the application and advise the applicant if further evidence is likely to be called for, or provide guidance if the applicant is unsure of the application requirements and processes.
- The Administration Officer will refer completed applications to the relevant HOD or Co-ordinator to assess. Each application will be reviewed against the

requirements of the Training Package or accredited course, and a decision will be based on the evidence provided.

- The HOD/Co-ordinator will provide in writing, the outcome of the application, and will remind the applicant that if necessary, appeal processes are available. If the decision cannot be reached conclusively, the Co-ordinator may request the applicant to provide more information, eg more details, verification of experience, etc.
- The applicant may be invited to attend an interview with an RPL assessor and/or course expert and may be accompanied by an advocate.
- The applicant may be invited to undertake a challenge assessment.
- An initial assessment and/or a request for further information is to be made within 21 days of the receipt of the application.
- An applicant may appeal in writing against a decision in accordance with the grievance, complaints, and appeals procedure.

Mutual Recognition

- Prior to enrolment, prospective students are to be made aware of their right to present AQF qualifications from another RTO and expect credit standing in the same units offered under the scope of registration at SSNT.
- This obligation is to be made clear in course brochures, web-based materials, student diaries, course information sessions, at course enquiry and at course selection interviews.
- Applicants under Mutual Recognition are to present the original qualification for verification by the Administration Officer. The Officer must take a copy of the qualification, signing and dating the copy as “Original Sighted”. The original is to be returned to the client. The copy is to be placed on the student’s file and entitlements recorded on the enrolment form.
- The outcome of the application for Mutual Recognition must be provided in writing to the applicant on enrolment or within seven days of application.

Current Competence

- Prior to enrolment, prospective students are to be made aware of their right to apply for recognition of current competence against an AQF qualification/unit and the opportunity to apply for exemption in the same qualification/unit offered under the scope of registration at SSNT.
- Student’s presenting with industry-based certificates may be considered for credit standing in units that require certificates of currency – ie. First Aid.
- Applicants are to present the original qualification for verification by the Administration Officer. The Officer must take a copy of the qualification, signing and dating the copy as “Original Sighted”. The original is to be returned to the client. The copy is to be placed on the student’s file and entitlements recorded on the enrolment form.
- Applications are to be forwarded to the relevant HOD or Co-ordinator for approval. HODs are to verify the relevance of the content and verify the currency of competence against the unit of study offered under the scope of registration at SSNT.
- The outcome of the application for Current Competence must be provided in writing to the applicant on enrolment or within seven days of application.
- The result of the application may be appealed. Appeals must be stated in writing and forwarded to the Principal. The Principal shall consult with the appropriate Industry agency (ie AMTA) to determine entitlement based on

currency of skill, and will consult with the relevant Curriculum Maintenance Manager or external Curriculum Advisor regarding entitlement under equivalence.

- The appeal outcome will be provided in writing.

ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTATION:

- Diversity Strategy
- Grievances, Complaints and Appeals Policy & Procedures
- Validation reports/minutes of meeting
- Stakeholder evaluation of assessment instruments
- Student evaluation/feedback on assessment process
- Assessment Instruments for each module/unit in each qualification registered
- Learning and Assessment Strategies for each qualification registered
- Language Literacy Numeracy Policy
- Continuous Improvement Register
- Resource and Equipment Register
- RPL Policy and Application form and Appeals Form
- Appeals Policy
- Clinical assessment requirements' and external supervision reports, as appropriate.