

New training packages on the horizon



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Competency-based training and assessment has been a cornerstone of the national training framework for a decade. It has gone through a number of changes during that period. For the library and information services sector the latest change is the development of national training packages. Industry plays a central role in this and CREATE, the national industry training advisory body covering the library sector has the brief for developing the packages, and has been working with the industry for the past two years to do so.

The training packages comprise endorsed competency standards, qualifications and assessment guidelines which meet industry skill and qualification requirements. The competency standards are the sets of knowledge, skills and attributes needed for an individual to meet required performance levels in the workplace. Qualifications are the formal awards given to people demonstrating the required knowledge, skills and attributes. Assessment guidelines set out ways of measuring these. The packages offer several pathways to a qualification, they can be implemented flexibly to meet the needs of enterprises, individuals and training providers, yet they still provide a nationally-recognised qualification, and offer a range of assessment options for the workplace and formal training.

The library industry training packages have recently been endorsed by the National Training Framework Committee — a body of the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) — and are awaiting the agreement of federal, state and territory ministers with responsibility for vocational education and training. The library industry packages will also include three components which do not require endorsement — learning strategies, assessment materials and professional development materials for training providers. These non-endorsed products will include guidance for training providers on the relationship of the current Certificate III and Diploma courses to the new training packages. ALIA will be working with CREATE on the marketing of the packages to individuals, employers and training providers, with consideration of a number of areas as yet unresolved or defined (such as the realignment of vocational education and training programs; the role of competency within enterprise agreements; individual and employer responsibilities for assessment; costs of implementing competency-based training and/or assessment in the workplace).

The most significant differences between these training packages and the 1995 Library Industry Competency Standards which they replace are in the linking of the standards to qualifications, the provision of more detail in each unit, and changes in content.

The link to qualifications

Competency standards are now linked to the vocational education and training qualifications of the National Qualifications Framework — Certificates I-IV, Diploma and Advanced Diploma. The library industry standards have been packaged against qualification levels Certificate II, III and IV, Diploma and Advanced Diploma.

Some higher level competencies from the previous Standards have been retained and updated but have not been packaged against a qualification. They are seen as having potential as professional development training programs.

The library and information qualifications in this range are the Certificate III and the Diploma, currently offered by TAFEs around Australia. However other qualifications have been packaged to accommodate a need by industry for further qualifications and the willingness of a training provider to offer a program to meet that need.

Once the training packages are in place an individual may be assessed as competent at a qualification level either by completion of the course through formal study or through a process of recognition of prior knowledge, skills, experience and current competence. This latter process requires the submission of evidence matching this to the units of competence within the particular qualification, and will often require some additional formal coursework.

Assessors must meet the requirements set out in the packages and qualifications may only be issued by registered training organisations (RTOs).

The detail

Importantly the units of competency now include 'Evidence guides' and 'Range of variables' components, both of which are essential for devising assessment strategies.

The evidence guide relates directly to the performance criteria listed for each element in the unit. Its purpose is to guide assessment of the unit of competency in the workplace and/or training program. It refers to: critical aspects of evidence to be considered; concurrent assessment and interdependence of units; underpinning knowledge; method of assessment; and key competencies.

The range of variables contextualises the competency, provides a link to knowledge and enterprise requirements, assists in providing a focus for assessment, and assists with the updating of standards as they are reviewed. The range of variables relates to the unit as a whole.

Content

The standards have been revised to bring in all the areas previously identified as gaps. Many of these, such as information technology, ethics, proactive client service, legal knowledge/skills (for example copyright, OHS) have been incorporated throughout the units as intrinsic to work in the sector. Other areas, such as information literacy and lifelong learning of workers and clients, evaluation and marketing have been strengthened. To allow for more diversity in the range of knowledge and skills the packaging provides the opportunity for the inclusion of units of competency from other areas.

General information on training packages is available from ANTA [<http://www.anta.gov.au>] and general and library package information from CREATE [<http://createaust.com.au>]. ■

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