

Assessment of rail safety worker competence

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Rail transport operators must ensure that each rail safety worker, who is to perform rail safety work in relation to its railway operations, has the knowledge and skills necessary to enable the worker to carry out the work safely.

Requirements are set out in s117 of the *Rail Safety National Law* (RSNL) and r30 of the *Rail Safety National Law National Regulations*.

In determining their competency needs, operators need to:

1. Identify the competency requirements that are required for the rail safety work, and
2. Identify Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) qualifications or units of competence applicable to that rail safety work, and
3. Identify what additional skills, experience and knowledge are required.

If there are no applicable AQF qualifications or units of competence or there are no Registered Training Organisations available to train and assess in the identified units of competency, the rail transport operator will need to implement alternative means for assessing competence.

Identify competency requirements

The first step is to identify the competencies required by a rail safety worker to carry out specific rail safety work through a task analysis and risk assessment.

This involves consideration of what is required of the task, the risks associated with it and what competencies, knowledge and skills are required to undertake these tasks and to manage these risks.

Identify applicable qualifications and units of competence under the AQF

Rail transport operators must review the AQF to identify any qualifications or units of competence recognised under it that are applicable to the rail safety work. Use of the AQF is expected unless it is not reasonably practicable to do so.

AQF qualifications and training providers in the Vocational and Educational Training (VET) sector are listed in the National Register on Vocational Education and Training

www.training.gov.au/Home/Tga

Identify what additional skills, experience and knowledge are required

Following the AQF alone may not be sufficient to ensure the competency of a rail safety worker. To ensure that the rail safety worker is competent in their specific work and operating environment, it may be necessary for rail transport operators to also ensure additional qualifications or competencies. This may include in-house training and instruction.

Determining whether it is reasonably practicable to assess in accordance with the AQF

There may be cases where it is impractical and not beneficial to use the AQF. General reasons may include (but are not limited to):

- > Unavailability of appropriate registered training organisation or unit of competence (for example, qualifications for a unique piece of equipment)
- > Cost is prohibitive
- > Geographic distance
- > Restricted workforce (i.e. not able to send workers away)

If any of these circumstances apply, operators may consider an alternative approach. This approach must ensure that the worker has:

- > the necessary qualifications and competencies applicable to that rail safety work, and
- > the necessary knowledge and skills to carry out that rail safety work safely.

Alternative approaches may include recognition of prior experience, use of industry qualifications or training and assessment packages/ standards, modifying existing AQF competencies, or in-house training and/or assessment (called 'enterprise attainment') – or a combination of these.

Evaluate the worker's knowledge and skills

Whether assessing in accordance with the AQF or not, rail transport operators must conduct their assessment by reference to the knowledge and skills of the worker against the competencies required for the rail safety work being undertaken.

Documentation of process

Irrespective of the method chosen, operators must fully document their assessment of the competency decision making process, noting this assessment must always reflect operators' current circumstances.

Further information

Detailed guidance on the responsibilities of a rail transport operator to ensure competency and document the assessment is available in the *ONRSR Preparation of a rail safety management system guideline*.

The *ONRSR Application of the AQF to rail safety worker competence assessment policy* details the ONRSR's approach for assessing compliance.