ONRSR Fact Sheet
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 competence to carry out that 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 2012*.

In establishing competence requirements, operators need to:

1. Identify the competencies that are required for the rail safety work for each relevant role.

2. Source applicable units of competence, skills sets and/or qualifications from Australia's system of nationally recognised training (which is underpinned by the Australian Qualifications Framework [AQF]) wherever possible.

3. Source providers who can deliver assessment

    - or training and assessment and/or Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) pathways

    - which result in the issue of qualifications regulated by the AQF. Or, where this is not reasonably practicable, determine other alternatives.

4. Employ a system to maintain records of training and of assessment decisions, including the evidence to be retained to support this.

Identify competencies

The first step is to carry out a task analysis and a risk assessment for each role involving rail safety work:

- Determining all the activities that must be performed competently and consistently in order to carry out the rail safety work.

- Identifying hazards and risks associated with these activities to inform appropriate training

and/or assessment outcomes e.g. external AQF qualifications (including vocational competency-based outcomes), internal unaccredited training and assessment, one-off activities, refreshers etc.

Source applicable units of competence, skills sets and/or qualifications

Competency-based training (CBT) and assessment relates to a range of AQF certificate outcomes. In the VET sector CBT assessment can also lead to issuance of nationally recognised skills set certificates and statements of attainment for achieving one or more units of competence.

It is common for operators to source information from Vocational Education and Training (VET) industry training packages developed and maintained by Service Skills Organisations (e.g. Australian Industry Standards).

To meet all the competence requirements of the rail safety worker in their specific work and operating environment it may be necessary for operators to supplement whatever AQF based qualifications, skills sets or competencies have been selected (e.g. enterprise-based in-house training or instruction not covered by the AQF).

Where whole qualifications, skills sets and/or particular units of competence (UOCs) do not apply or exist, the operator can adapt existing UOCs or develop new enterprise standards for their own training and assessment arrangements.

Sourcing registered providers

CBT is provided by many registered training organisations (RTOs) throughout Australia, including rail operators who are also RTOs and VET providers such as vocational divisions of

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universities or the Technical and Further Education Sector (TAFE). The usual starting point is to go to www.training.gov.au to search for VET qualifications, training package components and providers.

Maintaining records and evidence

Operators must ensure assessments are conducted against nationally recognised competencies and/or enterprise-based competencies (or similar standards) which are identified by the operator as the knowledge and skills required for the rail safety work being undertaken.

Irrespective of the standards chosen, assessment must always reflect operators' current circumstances. Nationally recognised or alternative achievements must be evidenced (e.g. records, certificates etc.) and any enterprise based training and/or assessment must be fully documented and recorded.

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

There may be cases where it is impractical to use nationally recognised training and assessment service providers. Alternative approaches may need to be sought where:

> a whole qualification is not necessary

> a suitable qualification, units of competence, skills sets or nationally recognised providers are not available

> suitable providers are too far away (*and remote delivery methodologies are not offered, or suitable for the purpose*)

> the need relates to a licensing requirement or other professional certification/registration requirement outside of the AQF

> cost is prohibitive

> the workforce is restricted (i.e. not able to send workers away).

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

> competencies applicable to that rail safety work

> knowledge and skills to carry out rail safety work safely.

Alternative approaches may include RTO third party arrangements or using RTOs or other types of providers, and/or enterprise/in-house training and instruction to deliver unaccredited training and/or assessment.

About the AQF

The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) is Australia's national policy for regulated qualifications underpinning the school, VET and higher education sectors. It applies broad discipline-free terminology to describe each category of AQF qualification *(i.e. Certificate I – Doctoral Degree)*. Education providers that issue AQF qualifications have been authorised to do so under law. And all subsequent discipline-based AQF qualifications delivered by these providers are quality assured through government accreditation processes.

Registered training organisations (RTOs) operate under the VET Quality Framework which incorporates the AQF. Only RTOs can deliver nationally recognised courses and accredited Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) VET qualifications. RTOs may offer anything from Certificates I-IV right up to diplomas, advanced diplomas, and vocational graduate certificates or vocational graduate diplomas in specific

disciplines *(n.b. depending on their current 'scope of registration').*

For a further understanding of the language used in this field you can consult relevant glossaries for example within the AQF publication or search for up to date VET related online glossaries e.g. VOCED plus.

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

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

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