
TAE50111 Diploma of Vocational Education and Training

TAEDES505A Evaluate a Training Program

NMIT
Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE
77-91 St Georges Road
Preston, Victoria 3072
Australia

Tel: 03 9269 1481

Fax: 03 9269 1428

www.nmit.edu.au/bec

Issue date: January 2013

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writers: Jeff Prentice & Pauline Stewart
Editors: Jeff Prentice & Pauline Stewart

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All requests and enquiries regarding use and availability should be directed to:

Business Enterprise Centre (BEC)

77-91 St Georges Road

Preston, Victoria 3072

Australia

Ph: (03) 9269 1481/1478

Fax: (03) 9269 1428

www.nmit.edu.au/bec

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EVALUATE A TRAINING PROGRAM

Introduction

In general terms, evaluation processes provide information about an organisation that will assist with planning and hopefully present opportunities for improvement. Evaluations per se are systematic, can be applied to different processes at different stages; can be applied to the whole organisation or selected parts of it; and lead to action based on evidence.

For this Unit, participants need to address the following Elements and Performance Criteria as specified in the Training Package.

Element 1: Plan and Prepare Evaluation

The performance criteria focus on the need to document the aim and scope of the evaluation under consideration. The aim of the evaluation may include:

- Evaluating the effectiveness of the training in meeting workforce needs
- Estimating the cost effectiveness of the training provided
- Evaluating outcomes of a learning or assessment process
- Establishing client satisfaction
- Providing solutions to organisational performance problems.

Also in focus is the need to identify the data and information required, establish a project plan and timelines which identify tasks and stakeholders in the evaluation process, scoping workforce training needs, seek employer feedback and trainee feedback. Staff need to be selected and briefed.

Element 2: Collect and collate evaluation data and information for a training program

The performance criteria focus on identifying the most appropriate techniques for gathering quantitative and qualitative data and information from surveys, group discussion sessions, interviews with supervisors and managers, trainers, facilitators and assessors; developing evaluation instruments to gather data and information; arrange workplan visits and meetings; collect and store data and information in line with organisational policies; collate and process data relevant to the evaluation.

Evaluation instruments may include surveys, feedback forms, questionnaires, diaries, logs and discussion group questions.

Element 3: Analyse evaluation data and information and make conclusions

The performance criteria focus on analysing the data and information to identify the outcomes of training and their impact on workforce capability. It helps to cross-check

findings where possible by comparing with the results from different evaluation instruments. Conclusions need to be developed about the effectiveness and efficiency of the training program and improvements noted. Then, if necessary, alternatives need to be found to the training program or enhancements as required.

Alterations to the training program may include:

- Job redesign
- Change in supervision arrangements or work support
- Individual mentoring
- Communication and information campaign
- Job aids, eg manuals
- Standard operating procedures (SOPs).

Element 4: Report on the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation

The performance criteria focus on documenting issues and conclusions arising from the analysis conducted, and making recommendations to stakeholders on areas of possible improvement. These may include:

- Analysis of skills requirements and training needs
- Design of training and assessment strategies
- Training materials development
- Training delivery methods and resources
- Assessment methods and tools
- Employer and trainee liaison and management.

It is imperative that preliminary findings are discussed with stakeholders and an evaluation report be distributed to all stakeholders.

EVALUATION IN CONTEXT

The specific focus of an evaluation can vary. Generally the focus will be on one or more of the following areas:

Performance – to provide periodic checks of effectiveness and efficiency. This can result in improved outputs and outcomes.

Resource – this type of evaluation provides information to inform decisions about the allocation of resources and personnel

Accountability – to highlight performance and compliance issues for organisations and their stakeholders.

TYPES OF EVALUATION

Planning Evaluation – Planning evaluations occur in the planning stage and can involve factors such as the development of plans and feasibility studies for future programs or training. For example, the development of a business case is an evaluation tool for making decisions about a future project.

Process Evaluation – A process evaluation gives information about how a program or system is performing or progressing. It can involve, for example, a cost analysis of a current training program.

Outcomes Evaluation – This is conducted during or at the end of a given cycle or process to assess how well-defined outcomes are being achieved. If the evaluated cycle or process is active, the evaluation can give direction and opportunity to improve the processes during the remainder of the active period.

If the evaluation occurs at the end of a given cycle or process, it provides an opportunity to plan for improvement next time around.

Whatever type of evaluation is conducted, it can support the process of continuous improvement and ensures that processes remain focussed and relevant to organisational and stakeholder needs.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGIES

There are a variety of successful methodologies that can be used to undertake a review of a training program, including assessment. Three major methodologies for evaluation are:

- Benchmarking
- Audit
- Self-assessment.

Benchmarking

Benchmarking involves:

- Comparisons with other organisations to identify and then implement strategies for improvement
- Identification of superior performance or practices and adopting them into the organisation.

There are two major forms of benchmarking which may be relevant to a review of training/assessment systems:

- Performance benchmarking – comparison of performance against agreed performance measures such as efficiency
- Procedure/process benchmarking – comparison of procedures/processes.

Organisations can use both performance and process benchmarking to establish what needs to be improved and how this can be done. Examples of processes include functions such as:

- Enrolment
- Student selection
- Marketing information and strategies
- Records management
- Staff selection, induction, professional development and monitoring processes.
- Audit
- An audit is a systematic, independent and documented process for obtaining evidence to determine whether the activities and related outcomes of a training organization comply, or continue to comply with the relevant standard – AQTF Standard for Registered Training Organisations.

Auditing

Auditing provides ongoing monitoring of the training/assessment system and can identify factors that may have changed or that affect the overall system.

Auditing can be conducted:

- On a continuous basis (with an identified sample)
- By exception (spot checks, at random, following a complaint)
- Periodically (such as annually).

Self-assessment

The regular conduct of an organisational self-assessment is another strategy for implementing a review of the training/assessment system. The use of disciplined self-assessment process enables an organisation to assess the current quality of the system and its services to develop an action plan. It is also a means of identifying, prioritizing, implementing and celebrating achievements and providing an improvement plan as part of the overall strategic planning process.

The Right Strategy

The strategy and framework that best suits the training/assessment organisation will depend on a range of factors. The decision to adopt a particular strategy will be dependent on:

Regulatory Requirements – Requirements related to AQTF Standards for RTO's, licensing, state and/or territory legislative requirements, or state and/or territory registering body requirements.

Business Considerations – Considerations include the organisations quality systems, strategic planning processes, and compliance with broader quality management systems, eg ISO, TQM (Total Quality Management)

Organisational Characteristics – Type, size, scope, location and complexity of the training/assessment organisation and the industry/enterprise involved.

Resources – Considerations include time, commitment, people to undertake the review, access to stakeholders (if required), physical resources, costs, and timing within the training/assessment cycle.

Adapted from quality Assurance Guide for Assessment DETYA/ANTA 2001

EVALUATING TRAINING PROGRAMS

Two leading exponents of evaluating are Donald and James Kirkpatrick who published their edition of their book of the above title in 2005. Much of what they say is very relevant today and the following material comes from their book, under the heading Evaluating: Part of a Ten-Step Process.

The main reason for evaluating learning programs is to determine their effectiveness and relevance in a learning environment. The ten factors needed to ensure training is evaluated correctly are:

- Determining needs
- Setting objectives
- Determining subject content
- Selecting participants
- Determining the best schedule
- Selecting appropriate facilities
- Selecting appropriate teachers/trainers
- Selecting and preparing electronic aids
- Co-ordinating the program
- Evaluating the program.

Determining Needs

If training programs are going to be effective, they must meet the needs of participants. There are some ways to determine these needs as follows:

- Ask the participants: do they know what they want and can they assist in putting a program together?
- Ask the supervisors, managers of the participants: do they know their workers and can they offer advice?
- Ask other stakeholders, peers, customers who are familiar with the job and how it is being performed
- Test the participants in advance on their knowledge and skills
- Analyse performance appraisal results.

Setting Objectives

Once the needs have been determined, it is necessary to set objectives in the following order:

- a) What results are we trying to accomplish? And in what context or area, eg quality
- b) What behaviours are required to accomplish these stated results?
- c) What knowledge, skills, and attitudes are necessary to achieve the right behaviours?

Determining Subject Context

Trainers and teachers need to ask the question, what topics should be presented to meet the needs and the objectives? Some modifications may be necessary depending on the qualifications of the trainers/teachers who will present the program and on the training budget.

Selecting Participants

When selecting participants for a program, four decisions need to be made.

- a) Who can benefit from the training?
- b) What programs need to be implemented as per training packages?
- c) Should the training be voluntary or compulsory?
- d) Should the participants be segregated by level in the organisation, or should two or more levels be included in the same class?

Determining the Best Schedule

The best schedule takes three things into consideration:

- a) The trainees/participants
- b) The supervisors/trainers/teachers
- c) The best conditions for learning.

An important scheduling decision is whether to offer the program on a concentrated basis – for example, one week or spread out over one month. The day of the program and the specific time should be established to meet the needs of both trainees/participants and the trainers/teachers.

Selecting Appropriate Facilities

Facilities should be comfortable and convenient. Computing facilities, refreshments and breaks should also be taken into consideration.

Selecting Appropriate Trainers/Teachers

Just who conducts a program is critical to its success. The trainers/teachers/instructors should be well qualified with a comprehensive knowledge of the subject being taught, an ability to communicate effectively and relate to the participants. Above all, they should be “learner oriented”. Selecting appropriate trainers requires much care as organisations can sometimes make mistakes with sessional staff who are unable to conduct the program according to the right objectives.

Selecting and Preparing Electronic Aids

A common feature of delivery of programs is the over-use of PowerPoint presentations. However, using a blended approach to the right technology can assist greatly in the learning process.

Co-ordinating the Program

Just how a program is co-ordinated needs careful preparation and reflection. Sometimes the trainer/teacher co-ordinates and conducts the program, this can be very effective. Other times the co-ordination is left to the trainer and this can bring negative outcomes.

Evaluating the Program

Just what entails evaluating has already been discussed early in this resource guide.

Planning the Evaluation

Regardless of regulatory or compliance requirements, the evaluation of a training/assessment system is based on a commitment to continuous improvement.

The person responsible for undertaking an evaluation should:

- Promote the importance of continuous improvement and the purpose of evaluation
- Ensure that all stakeholders are consulted and a communication strategy implemented
- Co-ordinate the selection and professional development of the evaluation team (if relevant)
- Determine the scope, objectives and outcomes of the evaluation
- Ensure the efficient planning, conduct and review of the evaluation.

When planning an evaluation of the training/assessment system/program, it is important to:

- Undertake research about the organisation and its training/assessment services, including previous evaluations
- Identify areas of risk for the organisation in terms of quality provision
- Think about how to minimise the impact of evaluation activities on core business
- Estimate resources, personnel and time required to undertake the evaluation.

Gathering and analysing documentation and evidence

Gather any documentation and evidence that contains what you are looking for. In your planning, you should have identified a list of documents that you want to check. However, there may be other documents or evidence that you come across (apart from what you have identified) that can provide extra information for the evaluation.

Conducting an Evaluation

Once all the planning is completed and ready to go, the next task is to gather the evidence you are seeking against the standards you have defined.

Getting Started

- a) Introduce yourself – briefly explain what your purpose is and how you will go about the evaluation
- b) Reassure stakeholders – make it clear that the evaluation is concerned with evaluating the system, not the person.

Conducting the evaluation

Conducting an evaluation is all about checking, interviewing, questioning, examining, observing and analysing to collect the evidence needed as identified in your agreed criteria.

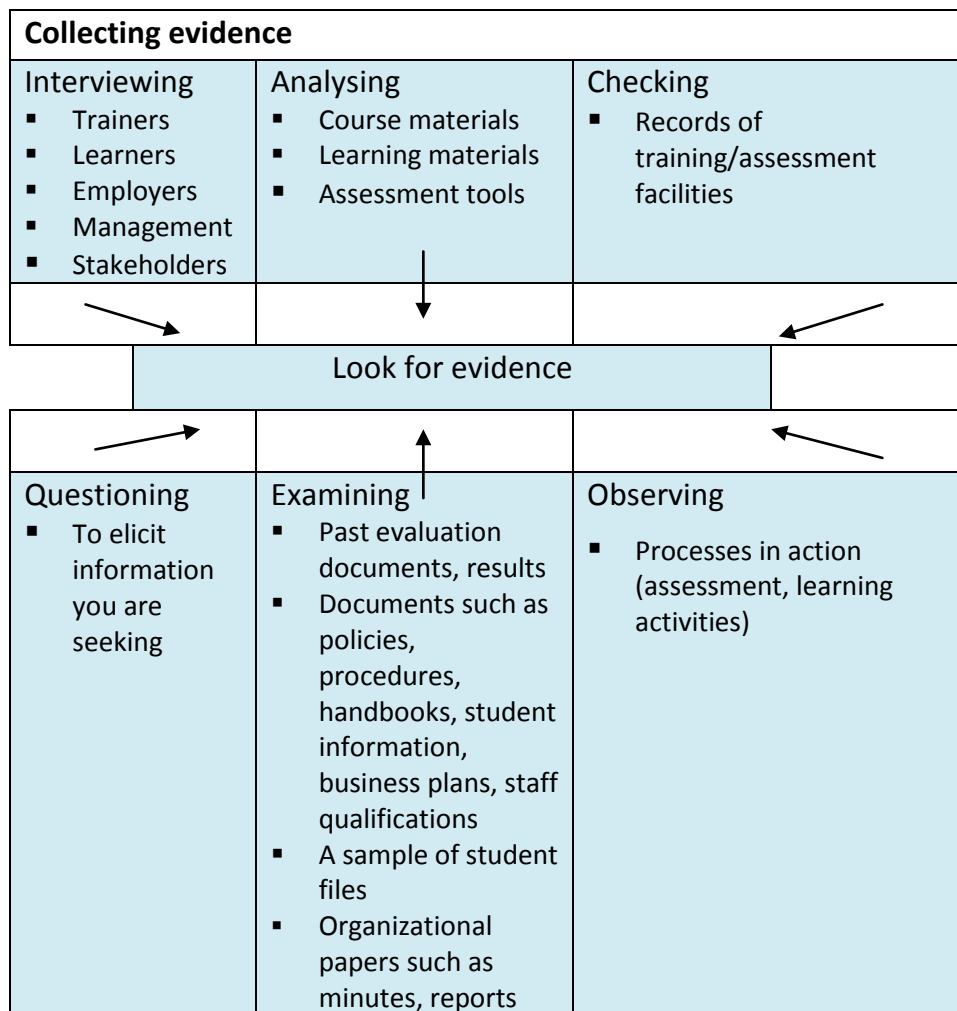


Figure 6: Collecting evidence, adapted from *Guide to Good Practice in AQTF Auditing*, 2001, p. 10

Focussing on Evidence

Not all training/assessment systems will be the same, but if you are evaluating compliance against a defined standard, then you need to ensure that your evidence is:

- Valid
- Current
- Consistent and
- Sufficient.

Remember to look for:

- Evidence that the assessment/training system (program) is operating in accordance with the standards you have identified
- Indications that the system (program) is working effectively
- Any areas of improvement that you immediately evident.

During the evaluation, record all evidence impartially against the standards as you find it, whether it indicates compliance or non-compliance with the agreed standards.

It is a good idea to tick the evidence as it is sighted and make extra notes about things you need to check up on. Relying on your memory is not adequate, as an evaluation deals with a lot of detail that is not easily recalled later.

Evaluation is not easy, so it is imperative to:

- Maintain your focus and not be diverted from your planned strategy
- Maintain your professionalism at all times and maintain impartiality in all your actions
- Be rigorous but fair and take into consideration that organisations have diverse ways of ensuring their own compliance, but be flexible in your approach
- Use effective communication skills and remember you are not finding fault or catching people out. So be a good listener, ask open questions, be attentive and use the words, 'show me' often.

Concluding the Evaluation

At the end of the evaluation, check that you have collected the evidence you set out to collect. Go back and review any issues you identified in your initial analysis to make sure that you have all the information to make a judgement.

If your evaluation is face-to-face:

- Talk briefly with the person being evaluated to convey your immediate findings
- Ask for feedback about the evaluation process if appropriate, but do not get too involved here and just ask for comment on the way it was conducted.
- Conclude on a positive note, if possible, mentioning that there will be a written report identifying opportunities for improvement if required.

Reporting

Analyse the Results

Firstly it is important to ask the question, how does the training/assessment system (program) measure up against the agreed standards/units of competency? This is the crux of the analysis. You must interpret and synthesise your findings so that you can make a

judgement. Not everything is clear-cut and you may be required to make a professional judgement, just as assessors are required to make in competency-based training.

Making Judgements

Your considered judgement is based on the evidence. Is it:

- Valid
- Current
- Consistent
- Sufficient
- Authentic.

Writing the Evaluation Report

Whatever format you use for your analysis report, it should include:

- Details of the evaluation strategy used
- Completed record and reporting documents that were used in the conduct of the evaluation
- A list of evaluation team members as well as persons interviewed
- The draft report and analysis of findings
- Consultation on the draft report with stakeholders
- Appendices with any extra information you consider necessary.

Some evaluation reports include information about strengths as well as weaknesses. Identifying strengths is a positive process and can lead to a sense of satisfaction within an organisation. When the evaluation report is in draft form, it should be circulated to stakeholders for comment.

Developing an Action Plan

No evaluation is complete without an action plan to implement meaningful change and strengthen the process of continuous improvement within organisations.

An **Action Plan** identifies:

- Priorities
- Actions
- Responsibilities
- Timelines.

Recommendations should reflect priorities in an organisation's business plan, mission and objectives. It should also be aligned with quality management strategies that operate within the organisation.

Reviewing your Evaluation Process

Quality assurance is about continuous improvement, so any evaluation process should include a review of the overall process. There are various ways to review the evaluation process, including informal discussions; follow-up interviews with participants; feedback from the evaluation team; and observations from stakeholders.

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

While instructional design has a vital place in developing learning resources and strategies, it is also crucial for evaluation purposes.

Instructional design simply means using a systematic process to understand human performance.

If you have conducted or attended training programs, you probably noticed that some are well planned, using instructional design techniques, whilst others are thrown together.

The three reasons for developing an instructional design program (resource) are:

- to deliver new knowledge
- to build skills and
- to change attitudes.

Creating an instructional design takes in developing learning objectives, selecting an instructional method to your subject (unit of competency), preparing the session/learning plans, and managing the learning experience.

The instructional design process revolves around four steps:

1. **Planning** – establishing the design framework; stating the learning objectives; analysing the cohort to be trained; determining the subject content, method of delivery, sequence of content and overall instructional approach – face-to-face, on-line, group interaction etc.
2. **Preparing** – structure the subject content – introduction main content, conclusion and style of training delivery eg e-learning, audience participation and questions.
3. **Conclusions** – action component of the design, including the delivery of a comprehension and cohesive training program.
4. **Evaluation** – read the content on Evaluating a Training Program in this resource.