

CONSIDERATION OF LITERACY AND NUMERACY SKILLS AS PART OF THE PRE-TRAINING REVIEW

This fact sheet provides guidance for training providers on the requirement in the VET Funding Contract to consider literacy and numeracy skills as part of the Pre-Training Review.

This fact sheet does not contain any new or additional requirements for this aspect of the Pre-Training Review, but is intended to address specific questions that the Department of Education and Training (the Department) has received from training providers in some detail. It aligns with existing guidance, including advice provided as part of the *Skills First* professional development program offered by the Department.

THE PURPOSE OF THE PRE-TRAINING REVIEW

The VET Funding Contract obliges training providers to undertake a Pre-Training Review to ensure that *Skills First* students are enrolled in training that is suitable and appropriate for them.¹

The Pre-Training Review helps you to understand the student's objectives for training and steer them towards a course that:

- meets their needs;
- links to likely job, participation and/or further study opportunities;
- is vocationally relevant and reflects industry requirements and the workplace setting; and
- minimises duplication of existing competencies.

Consideration of literacy and numeracy skills is just one element of a holistic Pre-Training Review, but it is an important one as it helps to decide the right level of study for a student, and whether they will need any additional support or adjustment.

Pre-Training Review business process

While the Department is not prescriptive about how to consider each element of the Pre-Training Review, the VET Funding Contract requires a training provider to:

- have a clear and documented business process that shows they are meeting the intent of the Pre-Training Review to enrol students in suitable and appropriate training; and
- for each student, document the reasons for a decision that the training is suitable and appropriate.

The Department provides a Pre-Training Review sample template as an optional tool to help you to record your Pre-Training Review decisions.

¹ Clauses 5.1-5.7 of Schedule 1, 2018-19 VET Funding Contract, extended to 31 December 2020

HOW DO I CONSIDER LITERACY AND NUMERACY AS PART OF A PRE-TRAINING REVIEW?

As with all elements of the Pre-Training Review, the Department encourages training providers to apply their professional expertise in identifying the best way to consider an individual student's literacy and numeracy skills.

Use of the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) is considered best practice and is encouraged as a robust, uniform and valid way to identify literacy and numeracy skills. However, **the Department does not prescribe a particular assessment, tool or process that training providers must use to assess literacy and numeracy as part of the Pre-Training Review.**

There is a range of methods for considering literacy and numeracy skills that can be used including adopting an established, validated assessment tool, modifying an established tool or developing your own tool or process.

Whatever method you choose, it needs to be flexible enough to cater to different student cohorts, and provide enough reliable, fair, and valid, information on the student's capabilities in the context of the intended study.

The Department's Pre-Training Review sample template contains some (non-exhaustive) suggestions for the types of information you might take into account as part of considering literacy and numeracy skills, including:

- results of any literacy and numeracy assessment including any assessment done for previous enrolments with your organisation;
- any literacy and numeracy/entry requirements of the qualification;
- secondary school results; and
- qualifications previously issued to the student by your organisation.

SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

Where the Pre-Training Review finds that accredited training is not suitable for the student, consider whether a pathway program would be a good first step. Options include engaging in pre-accredited training in a supported environment.

If the Pre-Training Review finds that the training is suitable, but the student will need support, your organisation should have educational support options in place, in line with regulatory standards.² For example, you might consider modification of training materials or methods, or additional units of foundation skills training to complement their chosen course of study.

² For example, under Clause 1.7 of the *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015*: "The RTO determines the support needs of individual learners and provides access to the educational and support services necessary for the individual learner to meet the requirements of the training product as specified in training packages or VET accredited courses".

Literacy and Numeracy Support Program

Under *Skills First*, there is an option for many training providers to offer up to 95 hours of additional subsidised training to students who require assistance with basic foundation skills to successfully complete vocational qualifications. The Literacy and Numeracy Support program enables you to package together units of competency from a variety of accredited courses and Training Package Qualifications.

[The Literacy and Numeracy Support Implementation Guide](#) provides more information including the list of units, and which qualifications a training provider must have on their scope of registration in order to deliver Literacy and Numeracy Support units to *Skills First* students.

(<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/training/providers/rto/Pages/courses.aspx#link96>)

The need for literacy and numeracy support will either be identified (and documented) as part of a Pre-Training Review for a course or qualification, or become apparent when the student is part way through their course. For this reason you don't need to do a further Pre-Training Review to justify enrolling the student in Literacy and Numeracy Program units. Provision of units under this program does not count towards your organisation's commencement allocation, but does count towards the student's 'two courses in a year' limit on subsidised training.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The following questions and answers provide more detail on how to approach the 'consideration of literacy and numeracy skills' in the Pre-Training Review. This section reflects questions that training providers have asked the Department.

Do I have to put every *Skills First* student through a formal literacy and numeracy assessment?

No. You must consider literacy and numeracy skills as part of the Pre-Training Review, but you do not have to formally assess each prospective student. For example, you may receive sufficient information from a student's recent results from school or other study (and the relevant competencies achieved) and/or other forms of assessment.

Some training providers have a policy to use a formal assessment or 'test' because it is administratively efficient and can provide consistent and comparable results. You will need to be sure you are aware of your own organisation's policy and process.

Bear in mind that a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to formal assessment may not work for all students. For example:

- Some training providers may deal with disengaged learners who are unwilling to participate in a formal literacy and numeracy assessment.
- A formal written assessment may also disadvantage students who are not used to and under-perform in formal, exam-like conditions.

In such instances there are other indicators which, when considered in combination, might provide enough information about relevant literacy and numeracy skills. For example:

- how easily the student navigates an application process to read instructions and complete written information;

- a discussion with the student to gauge their speaking and listening skills; and
- the result of informal assessment activities.

In particular, literacy and numeracy testing can be a barrier to Koorie participation in the VET sector. Some Koorie students may be better assessed using informal activities (for example, asking students to respond to some Pre-Training Review questions in writing, asking them to read a document or provide samples of recent written work).

Whether a formal assessment is used or not, you will need to make sure you document how you considered the student's literacy and numeracy skills.

Why doesn't the Department specify or mandate a particular literacy and numeracy assessment?

Skills First training providers operate in a range of different contexts and there is enormous diversity in VET course offerings. The Department would prefer training providers to be free to invest in the tools that suit their students, their context and their business process. For example:

- literacy and numeracy assessment tools that are contextualised for their industry,
- Commonwealth Government approved literacy and numeracy assessment tools for those that administer VET Student Loans.

Will the Department consider funding literacy and numeracy assessments?

The Department already contributes to the costs associated with considering literacy and numeracy as part of the Pre-Training Review though the existing *Skills First* subsidy.

Is the Department's requirement to consider literacy and numeracy skills different to the requirements in the National Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015?

The Department's requirement for considering literacy and numeracy skills is broadly in line with the Regulatory Standards, in that both aim to make sure training providers enrol students in training that is appropriate for their abilities. Clause 5.1 of the Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015 (relating to informing and protecting students) requires that:

“Prior to enrolment or the commencement of training and assessment, whichever comes first, the RTO provides advice to the prospective learner about the training product appropriate to meeting the learner's needs, taking into account the individual's existing skills and competencies.”

The Department's requirement for a detailed Pre-Training Review goes a step further than the Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015. This asks you to consider a range of specific factors that go to determining that training is 'suitable and appropriate', with literacy and numeracy skills being just one of those factors. You would then make (and document) a decision about suitability on balance, considering all the factors.

Can considering a student's year 12 results meet the requirement to consider literacy and numeracy skills?

If you feel confident that the student's year 12 results provide enough recent information to demonstrate the required literacy and numeracy skills for the particular course and you have documented this decision, then you have met the requirement to consider literacy and numeracy skills.

However, current senior secondary qualifications in Victoria do not provide explicit information about the literacy and numeracy attainment levels of school graduates measured against common standards like the ACSF.³ So while Year 12 results may provide enough information for some students, for others it might not provide enough information to be sure that the course they want to enrol in is a suitable option. For example, a student who has studied only humanities subjects and now wants to enrol in a Certificate III in Surveying and Spatial Information Services may benefit from an additional assessment of numeracy skills.

Also, some qualifications have a varied profile of foundation skills that a competent learner would need to demonstrate. For example, RII20713 Certificate II in Civil Construction maps core units to an ACSF exit level of 2 for writing and oral communication, 3 for learning and reading, and 4 for numeracy,⁴ so it may be advisable to undertake some additional assessment/consideration for the more demanding skill areas of a particular qualification.

Note: from 2021 in Victoria, all VCE and VCAL students' General Achievement Test (GAT) results will provide explicit information about the level of literacy and numeracy the student has attained (based on nationally recognised benchmarks such as those set out in the Australian Core Skills Framework). This will provide a clearer indicator of literacy and numeracy levels for students leaving school and undertaking VET.

But doesn't the VET Student Loans accept year 12 certificates to demonstrate academic suitability?

The VET Student Loans program sets minimum academic suitability requirements, with one option for demonstrating academic suitability being an Australian Senior Secondary Certificate of Education (year 12 certificate).

However, in relation to minimum suitability requirements for VET Student Loans, the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) provides the following advice in the Users' Guide to the Standards for RTOs 2015:

“...it is important to note that depending on the type, mode and amount of training your RTO is offering, individual students may need to have underpinning skills and knowledge in addition to these minimum requirements.”⁵

³ The Education State Fact Sheet: Explicit reporting of literacy and numeracy attainment
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/discipline/english/Pages/litnumstrategy.aspx#link50>

⁴ RII Resources and Infrastructure Industry Training Package -Companion Volume: Foundation Skills February 2015 sourced on VETNet <https://vetnet.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx>

⁵ Users' Guide to the Standards for RTOs 2015 <https://www.asqa.gov.au/standards/chapter-2/clauses-5.1-5.3>

How do I know whether my organisation is meeting the requirement to consider literacy and numeracy skills?

You should make sure that your organisation:

- has a clearly documented business process for conducting Pre-Training Reviews that includes a description of how you check literacy and numeracy skills;
- trains staff in how to follow the Pre-Training Review process; and
- documents the outcome of the Pre-Training Review for each *Skills First* student.

In documenting the Pre-Training Review outcome, you should give the reason(s) for a decision that training will be suitable and appropriate. One option for documenting your Pre-Training Review decisions is the Department's sample template, which helps you document information on each of the factors that make up the Pre-Training Review, including literacy and numeracy skills.

You should also flag any additional support that is identified and planned as part of the Pre-Training Review and ensure this information is made available to teachers (for example, in an individual support plan or Training Plan).

In developing your Pre-Training Review business process, you should think about whether your organisation's Training and Assessment Strategies for particular qualifications specify required literacy and numeracy skill levels, or whether your organisation otherwise has entry requirements for particular courses that will need to be taken into account in a Pre-Training Review.

What if I have already considered a student's literacy and numeracy skills for a previous enrolment and they now want to enrol in a new course?

You will need to do a Pre-Training Review for the new enrolment, but you can use the results of this initial consideration, along with the student's assessment outcomes for the previous course, as part of considering literacy and numeracy. As with using year 12 results, care should be taken to consider these results/outcomes in the context of the proposed new course of study.

Can a literacy and numeracy assessment be done online?

The Department is supportive of the use of technology that enhances and/or streamlines the enrolment experience for students. Online assessments may be administratively efficient and convenient for both training providers and students and provide consistent results. However, as with other methods of considering literacy and numeracy skills, you would need to think about how you confirm or reconcile those results using other information gathered during the Pre-Training Review (for example, conversations with the student). You may also need to think about how you might receive assurance that the student completed the test themselves, without help.

Useful information

- *Skills First* Pre-Training Review - Sample Template 2019 (issued via SVTS)
- The Learn Local website provides useful information in instances where you need a referral path to pre-accredited training <https://learnlocal.org.au/find-a-learn-local/>