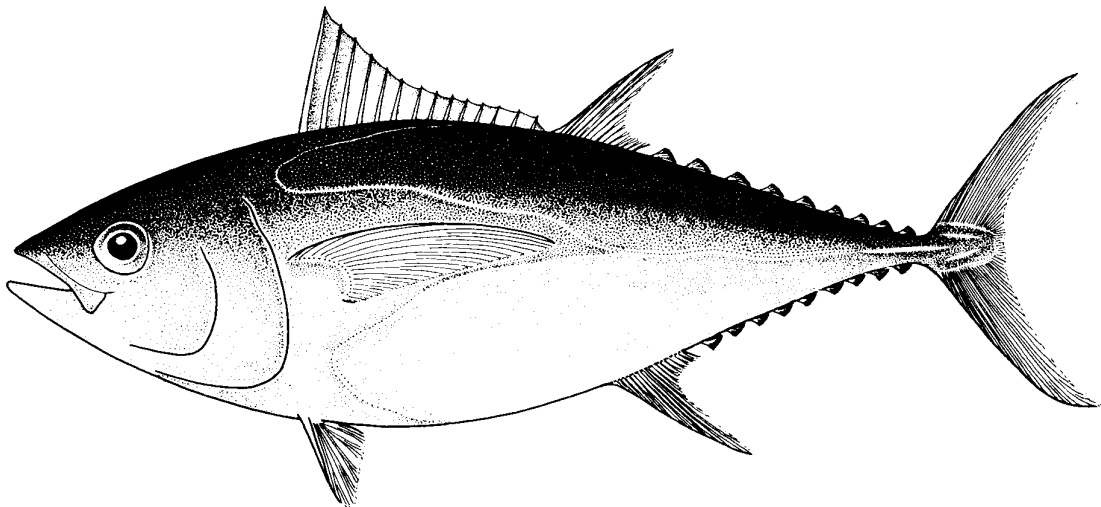




# PACIFIC ISLAND REGIONAL FISHERIES OBSERVER (PIRFO)

## Certification and Training Policy Manual



Oceanic Fisheries Programme  
Secretariat of the Pacific Community  
Noumea, New Caledonia



**FFA**  
Forum Fisheries Agency  
Honiara  
Solomon Islands

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## **Fisheries Observer Competencies:**

- PIRFO 3 - 1.01 Personal Safety
- PIRFO 3 - 1.02 Take emergency action on board a vessel
- PIRFO 3 - 1.03 Administer first aid procedures
  
- PIRFO 3 - 2.01 Port sampling workplace hazards
- PIRFO 3 - 2.02 Port sampling protocols and procedures
- PIRFO 3 - 2.03 Port sampling purse seine and pole & line
- PIRFO 3 - 2.04 Port sampling longline
  
- PIRFO 3 - 3.01 Identify and manage workplace hazards on board fishing vessels
  
- PIRFO 3 - 4.01 Demonstrate basic use of navigation equipment and fishing electronic aids
- PIRFO 3 - 4.02 Demonstrate knowledge of the use and function of electronic communications equipment commonly installed on fishing vessels
  
- PIRFO 3 - 5.01 Demonstrate knowledge of the role of the fisheries observer within the Western and Central Pacific framework for fisheries monitoring and management
  
- PIRFO 3 - 6.01 Ethical issues and preparations for sea
- PIRFO 3 - 6.02 Keep a daily record & complete an Observer Trip Report
- PIRFO 3 - 6.03 Correctly identify fish and marine species
- PIRFO 3 - 6.04 Collect and estimate volumes & weights of fish
- PIRFO 3 - 6.05 Carry out biological catch sampling
- PIRFO 3 - 6.06 Species of Interest
- PIRFO 3 - 6.07 Use and maintain allocated equipment
- PIRFO 3 - 6.08 Complete official debriefing and reporting of completed trips
- PIRFO 3 - 6.09 Observer Trip Monitoring
- PIRFO 3 - 6.10 Observer Trip Surveillance
  
- PIRFO 3 - 7.01 Accurately complete observer forms for purse seine operations
- PIRFO 3 - 7.02 Accurately complete observer forms for longline operations
- PIRFO 3 - 7.03 Accurately complete observer forms for pole & line operations
  
- PIRFO 3 - 8.01 Monitor and report on vessel performance in terms of MARPOL
  
- PIRFO 4 - 1.01 Communications and interview skills required for debriefing
- PIRFO 4 - 1.02 Value and applications of data obtained from debriefing
- PIRFO 4 - 1.03 Use the templates and protocols provided to complete debriefing

## ACCREDITATION PROCESS

### Introduction

The intention is to set out the nature of the accreditation process for training providers and the requirements of the Observer Certification Management Committee (CMC) with regard to the quality systems that the training provider has put in place.

The PIRFO Certification Management Committee (CMC) is comprised of:

- The Port Sampling and Observer Coordinator of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC)
- The Observer Programmes Manager of the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA)
- Representatives from Micronesian, Melanesian and Polynesian states (currently fisheries observer program managers for Papua New Guinea, Federated States of Micronesia and French Polynesia)
- an invited advisory role for the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Observer Program Coordinator

CMC will be co-chaired by the FFA and SPC representatives for an initial three years beginning 2009. Representation and the chair of CMC will be reviewed after three years in 2012 to ensure fresh perspectives and equitable regional representation are retained

CMC operates as a shared regional entity resourced and funded via SPC and FFA. It is tasked with developing training programs, formal certification and effective quality assurance processes with regard to the competencies and specific tasks of regional fisheries observers.

### CMC involvement in accreditation process

This consists of evaluation of documentation and visit from CMC to confirm assessment, moderation and quality assurance systems the training provider has in place.

CMC involvement in the accreditation process is usually free of charge. However, CMC reserves the right to charge a portion of its costs to applicant organisations if the accreditation application is particularly complex or time consuming.

Where, in the opinion of CMC, the applicant has established a credible background and history of providing training and assessment for fisheries observers, and the quality systems operated by the applicant are known to CMC, the visit requirement may be waived.

## General requirements for accreditation

CMC specifies particular requirements for accreditation. Applicant organisations are encouraged to contact CMC at an early stage to discuss these accreditation requirements. The following is an outline of the general requirements for accreditation of organisations wishing to provide training for fisheries observers.

### *Criterion 1 Development and evaluation of teaching programmes*

There is a system for developing coherent teaching programmes and for their evaluation, which should include evaluation by learners/consumers.

The applicant organisation must have policies, procedures, and review mechanisms in place to ensure its programs are designed and delivered to meet the needs of the relevant regional fisheries stakeholders and prospective employers.

The applicant organisation must have policies and procedures to ensure that feedback is obtained from employers and observers once they have completed their training program and this feedback is to be used to inform future adult education and training programmes for fisheries observers.

### *Criterion 2 Financial, administrative and physical resources*

Adequate and appropriate financial and administrative resources are maintained to enable all necessary activities in support of the training to be carried out.

Adequate, appropriate and accessible physical resources are available for supporting students to meet the required standards.

The applicant organisation must have policies and procedures to ensure access to specific equipment necessary to support learning and assessment activities for the observer standards and qualifications. CMC also maintains and provides specific teaching resources to assist this requirement. Please contact CMC for further information.

### *Criterion 3 Staff selection, appraisal and development*

A teaching staff with the necessary knowledge and skills is recruited and maintained through staff selection, appraisal, and development.

The applicant must have policies and procedures to ensure that:

- Staff have the necessary skills, knowledge and experience for the level of training and assessment being undertaken. CMC generally expects this to be at a level higher than the level of training being delivered and assessed.
- Staff who are carrying out assessment have demonstrated competency for the specific modules and skills they will assess against, or are able to demonstrate equivalent or greater knowledge and skills.
- Staff are trained in the use of competency or standards-based assessment;
- Staff have opportunities for professional development, related to teaching, assessment and current practice for fisheries observers.
- Assessing staff will have regular contact with industry partners and national or regional stakeholders and are able to obtain information about the latest developments in technology, industry practice and legislation.

The following PIRFO competencies involving personal safety are based on sea safety training widely promulgated by SPC.

PIRFO 3 - 1.01 Personal Safety

PIRFO 3 - 1.02 Take emergency action on board a vessel

PIRFO 3 - 1.03 Administer first aid procedures

The applicant is required to have policies and procedures to ensure that the relevant minimum requirements of the SPC Regional Maritime Program (RMP) with regard to delivery and assessment of the basic STCW 95 safety training are met

#### *Criterion 4 Student entry*

There is a system for establishing and clearly publicising student entry requirements that include no unreasonable barriers.

The applicant must have policies and procedures to ensure students are aware of minimum age and other requirements for employment as a fisheries observer as outlined below:

- The minimum age for student entry is 21 years
- The observer must be able to engage in conversation in clear English
- The observer will be expected to write comprehensive reports in English on the activities onboard a vessel
- The observer will need a suitable level of education so that they can carry out calculations on catch and other fisheries related statistics. As a minimum they must have successfully graduated from at least three years of high school.
- The observer will need to successfully complete a pre-selection evaluation of abilities developed and approved by CMC
- The observer must be able to go to sea for long periods in a foreign and sometimes unfriendly environment. Sea time can be from 7 to 100 days but is generally from 30-50 days on purse seiners and 10 to 15 days on longliners
- The observer must be physically and mentally capable of carrying out their duties and must be able to pass a sea-going medical clearance certificate if required at any time.

#### *Criterion 5 Student guidance and support systems*

Students have access to appropriate guidance and support systems.

The applicant must have policies and procedures to ensure that students have access to reasonable guidance and support when they encounter difficulties during their learning experience.

#### *Criterion 6 Off-site practical or work-based components*

There are arrangements for ensuring that any off-site practical or work-based components are fully integrated into the relevant programs.

The regulated environment in which the fishing industry operates means that applicants must have policies and procedures that ensure that work experience is conducted through partnership with workplaces that comply with the industry's legislative framework as related to health and safety practices in general port operations and on fishing vessels.

*Criterion 7 Assessment*

There is a system for ensuring that assessment is fair, valid, and consistent.

The applicant must have policies and procedures that ensure that assessment activities and material are consistent with their accreditation scope.

CMC recommends that applicants use the assessment resources it has developed. These are free and available on its website <http://www.CMCFFASPC>

CMC recognises that an applicant may enter into sub-contracting or collaborative arrangements for assessment against standards outside of their own current accreditation scope. In these instances a formal written agreement is required. Any proposed collaborative arrangement between accredited organisations must ensure that these arrangements are fair, transparent, and consistent, assure quality learning, and protect the interests of the learner. Any collaborative arrangement will also need to reflect and be consistent with CMC requirements.

*Criterion 8 Reporting*

There is a system for providing students with fair and regular feedback on progress and fair reporting on final their achievements, with an associated appeals procedure.

There is a reliable system for reporting student achievement to CMC and for archiving information on final student achievements.

**Non-compliance with accreditation requirements**

Where there is evidence of non-compliance with the requirements for accreditation CMC will seek remedial action. In cases where this action is ineffective and non-compliance continues, or in cases of repeated non-compliance, CMC will take action that can ultimately lead to the withdrawal of accreditation.

## MODERATION INFORMATION

A centrally established regional moderation system has been set up by CMC to ensure that assessment decisions of accredited training providers are consistent with regional standards. All accredited training providers assessing against the standards in this Accreditation and Moderation System must meet the requirements for moderation as outlined.

### Moderation System

CMC has a responsibility as the organisation that defines standards to ensure that the Accreditation and Moderation System accurately reflects current requirements, and is relevant to aspects of existing regional education and training audit requirements for quality assurance.

CMC encourages open communication with accredited training providers and recommends that they use the assessment resources CMC has developed. However, if an accredited training provider chooses to develop their own assessment materials, CMC will require them to submit self-developed assessment materials for pre-assessment moderation. In instances where this pre-assessment moderation will be required, please contact CMC well before the time of intended assessment to facilitate this process.

The CMC moderation policy can be downloaded from the website:

<http://www.CMCFASPC>

Accredited training providers are required to participate in external moderation of their assessment process annually by CMC. Training providers who meet moderation requirements consistently for 3 years may then be exempted from this annual cycle and engage in the regional external moderation process every 2 years.

An annual plan will be developed by the CMC regional moderator and the accredited training provider will be advised in writing of the relevant dates and venue. Assessment evidence for moderation must be made available on request to the CMC Regional Moderator.

Moderation processes that CMC may use include:

#### *Regional workshops*

Moderation may be conducted through regional workshops where accredited training providers are close enough geographically to warrant such an approach.

Each accredited training provider will send at least one assessor to such workshops, which will be convened and facilitated by the CMC regional moderator. The purpose of the regional workshop is to discuss the standard of assessed work, evidence guides and/or other assessment tools, or other assessment and moderation issues as identified by CMC.

The CMC regional moderator will direct participants on the assessment material they are required to bring to the moderation workshop and will produce a report detailing accredited organisations represented, issues raised, decisions made, and points of agreement.



### *External moderation visits*

External moderation visits enable CMC to build effective working relationships and networks. The focus of the moderation visit will be agreed between the CMC Regional Moderator and the accredited training provider, and may include verification of assessors' judgements when assessing practical skills. A site visit at a maximum every two years is considered adequate, however where evidence of poor performance indicates, additional visits will occur at the cost of CMC.

The same procedures apply as for regional workshops including the provision of a report by the CMC Regional Moderator.

### *Postal submission of assessment material*

This type of moderation may be used for assessment activity that is largely paper-based.

## **Reporting**

Moderation reports will communicate whether assessment outcomes are fair and valid, and whether the assessor decisions are at the regional standard.

Where the moderator does not validate the assessment decisions, feedback from the moderation process will professionally support the accredited training provider, and give constructive feedback into the assessment process.

Where issues identified relate to the quality or relevance of the competency standard (e.g. the need for review of the competency standard) the moderation report will identify to CMC the issues for review and recommend the means by which this will be carried out.

The CMC regional moderator will be responsible for ensuring that the results of the moderation reports are forwarded to the accredited training provider and are centrally documented and filed.

## **Funding**

Accredited training providers will be required to meet costs for travel and accommodation for attending regional moderation meetings/workshops but there will be no charge for attendance at the workshops.

All other moderation processes, including site visits, will be funded by CMC.

## **Non-compliance with moderation requirements**

Failure to meet requirements in this moderation system will result in further action by CMC.

Where non-compliance is identified, the CMC regional moderator will specify the non-compliance and the corrective action to be taken and the timeframes for compliance, in writing, to the accredited training provider.

Ongoing unresolved non-compliance will be referred to the appropriate national and regional training and education agencies by CMC, and ultimately CMC may withdraw accreditation.

## **Appeals and complaints**

Any accredited training provider may lodge an appeal against the decision of the CMC Regional Moderator. An accredited training provider wishing to appeal a moderation decision should first discuss the decision, and the reasons for disagreeing with the CMC Regional Moderator. The Moderator will seek to resolve the dispute, but if it is unable to be resolved it will be referred to the Chair of the Certification Management Committee.

Any formal appeal must be made in writing within three weeks of the date of receipt of the moderation report. The appeal must state the accredited training provider, a clear outline of the grounds for the appeal, and provide any supporting documentation.

Any costs incurred in this process will be charged to the accredited training provider.

If the accredited training provider feels that the appeal has not been adequately resolved they can lodge a complaint. All complaints will be dealt with professionally, fairly and as quickly as possible to resolve the grievance and will use the following means:

- In the first instance, informally and as close as possible to the point of origin.
- Formally by the Chair of CMC if not resolved informally.

The next Accreditation and Moderation system review is planned to take place during 2011

Associated Policies:

    Assessment  
    Recognition of Current Competency  
Quality Assurance

## COMPETENCY-BASED ASSESSMENT

The purpose of assessment is to gather and consider evidence that demonstrates that the learner has met the specified competencies required. Assessment enables the learner to receive formal recognition of competencies that lead to the award of regionally established qualifications for fisheries observers.

Competency based assessment is criterion based; where learners are assessed against a standard specified in an evidence guide.

Competency based assessment is evidence based; where the evidence may be demonstrated or produced by the learner or gathered by the assessor.

There are four key requirements of competency based assessment:

- Valid: assessments must cover the range of knowledge and skills needed to demonstrate competency and integrate these with their practical application.
- Reliable: there has to be consistency in the interpretation of evidence from one assessment to the next.
- Flexible: assessments should provide for the recognition of competencies in a range of situations and contexts.
- Fair: assessment procedures and practices must be clear and not disadvantage any learner.

The information that is collected during an assessment can be used in three main ways:

1. Diagnostic: to identify educational or training needs. This is usually in the form of a pre course test.
2. Formative: to provide feedback on how a learner is making progress towards achieving competency. This is usually in the form of self-assessment questions and exercises, such as those provided in the learning materials for fisheries observers.
3. Summative: to evaluate performance at the end of a period of learning or practice.

People are considered to be competent when they are able to apply their knowledge and skills to successfully complete activities in a range of situations and environments, in accordance with the standard of performance expected of them in the workplace.

## PRINCIPLES

The aim of this policy is to clearly set out the requirements and expectations of the PIRFO Certification Management Committee (CMC) regarding the assessment of competency of fisheries observers by accredited training providers. The modules or units of learning that make up the qualifications for fisheries observers fall into three broad categories:

1. General maritime safety and emergency response
2. Personal safety of observers with regard to the operational hazards on fishing vessels
3. Professional skills of a fisheries observer

While CMC has requirements regarding assessment activities in the first two categories, they are confined to meeting the standards already specified by other national and regional agencies that have the mandate to set principles of training and assessment in those areas of learning.

This assessment policy is largely concerned with outlining the principles and requirements for assessment activities in the third of these broad categories – the professional skills of a fisheries observer. CMC encourages open communication with accredited training providers and recommends that they use the assessment resources CMC maintains. Each individual assessor contributes assessment material to this pool as part of the development and recognition process for assessors of fisheries observers that is managed by CMC.

However, if an accredited training provider chooses to develop their own assessment materials in accordance with the following general principles, CMC will require them to submit those assessment materials for pre-assessment moderation. In instances where this pre-assessment moderation will be required, please contact CMC well before the time of intended assessment to facilitate this process.

### Principle 1: Assessment Design

The modules are statements of what a learner knows and/or can do, expressed as outcomes.

The learning outcomes identify the outcomes against which the trainee is assessed.

The assessment criteria do not express outcomes. They indicate the minimum evidence to consider when making a judgement as to whether the trainee has achieved the learning outcomes and, therefore, the standard. The nature of the evidence required is described in the assessment and evidence guide for each module.

Assessment should be designed where possible to focus on the complete performance against learning outcomes rather than each individual assessment criteria. Assessment designed for individual assessment criteria may lead to over-assessment.

Assessment of related or similar learning outcomes should be integrated, where possible. Assessment must include a marking schedule clearly showing the evidence the trainee is expected to provide, and the basis on which assessment decisions are to be made.

**Principle 2: Assessment Decisions**

The assessment criteria are important guidelines to the type of evidence that must be collected to make a judgement about performance.

When making an assessment decision, enough evidence must be provided so that the assessor is confident that the trainee can do what the standard requires. This evidence can be drawn from a range of sources, e.g. set tasks, naturally occurring evidence, recognition of prior learning (RPL) and current competency (RCC). The key question must always be, "Is the assessor confident the trainee knows or can currently do what is required by the standard being assessed?"

Assessment decisions based on consideration of only some of the assessment criteria will lead to assessment that is not at the regional standard.

The use of exemplars, discussions with other assessors and moderation processes assist assessors in making consistent judgements whether there is sufficient evidence of competence.

**RECOGNITION AS PIRFO ASSESSORS**

1. All assessors in the PIRFO programme must be familiar with the general principles and practices of assessment, have recognised technical competence at or above the level of competence they are assessing, and be approved as an assessor by the CMC.
2. In order to be qualified as a PIRFO assessor, they will be required to conduct a minimum of three separate assessment exercises supervised in a manner determined by the CMC.
3. All assessors are required to develop written and/or oral assessments as part of their professional development and recognition process with CMC. This assessment material should reflect their personal experience (e.g. purse seine, pole & line) and be supported by a marking guide, notes for other assessors and model answers. The material is then added to the regional pool of assessments maintained and administered by CMC.
4. Development of new assessment tools for observers is a key requirement for gaining and maintaining recognition as an assessor. CMC requires that each year assessors develop and submit four assessments against four different training standards chosen from the range 3 – 6.01 - 6.10 and 3 – 7.01 – 03. Systematically developing assessments for standards is seen as critical to the continuing professional development of observers.
5. All assessors are required to participate in annual external moderation of their assessment practice as requested by the CMC Regional Moderator. This external moderation may be in the form of a visit by CMC representatives, a regional workshop, or postal submission of assessment material.

With regard to the areas of maritime safety training and safety during fishing and associated operations, CMC will make use the standards already specified by other national and regional agencies that have the mandate to set principles of training and assessment in those areas of learning. Effectively this gives acknowledgment to the process of registration and recognition already in place for fisheries and maritime training institutions to deliver established national and regional training packages such as Basic STCW-95 and the range of SPC Safety at Sea programmes.

The following items outline CMC general requirements for recognition as PIRFO assessors of fisheries observer training.

### **PIRFO candidate eligibility**

Assessors must check that PIRFO candidates meet all the eligibility requirements for an assessment before the assessment takes place. Copies of all relevant certificates and documents submitted as evidence must be kept in the candidates file.

### **Record keeping**

- Assessors must record the results for each assessment and maintain a summary record for the candidate of assessment results.
- Assessments results must be kept on file for a minimum of two years prior to archiving.
- For filing, all assessment papers will be placed into envelopes labeled with the course, course dates, course location and names of students, the date the envelope was placed in the archives shall also be indicated.
- The envelope will be placed into an archive box with contents clearly labeled and dated.
- Completed assessments must be kept archived for a period of five years.

For the purpose of moderation of assessment some copies of actual student assessments will need to be retained for a period of two years. It is recommended that a sample of three is retained after each assessment event, selected by the assessor on the basis of:

- One showing above average ability
- One showing average ability
- One showing marginal or below average ability

Assessment material should be accompanied by any notes made by the assessor on that student's assessment process. The purpose of these records is to provide sufficient evidence to an external moderator on the professional basis for arriving at the assessment decision.

### **Assessing competence**

#### Written Assessments

- Written assessment papers shall have fully developed marking sheets, with marks assigned for sections of each question, to ensure consistency in marking between assessors.
- A written assessment paper shall be marked by someone other than the tutor of the subject/s being assessed.
- A candidate who does not achieve the pass mark, but whose score is within five percent of this mark may be considered borderline. In borderline cases the student may be questioned orally in the areas of identified poor performance, but the nature of questioning and basis of the assessment decision must be recorded in writing by the assessor on the candidate's paper.
- In all situations, the assessor must be sure that the required standard has been met before assessing a student as competent.
- A candidate who fails to achieve the pass mark outside the five percent borderline must resit the entire assessment.

**Practical Assessments**

- Practical assessments shall have clearly indicated assessment criteria included.
- In demonstrating skills a candidate must meet all requirements in the evidence guide.
- An assessor should also verbally question the candidate during the practical assessment in order to make a reasonable judgment of their competence.

**Oral Assessments**

- Oral assessments shall have model responses developed for each question.
- The assessor will compare the student's responses to the model when deciding whether their answer is satisfactory or not.

**Third Party Evidence**

- Assessors should confirm any third party evidence such as a supervisor's assessments or statement, and seek confirmation if in doubt of their legitimacy.

**Reassessment**

Learners are allowed two attempts at assessment of any particular competency. They should be given clear information on any gaps or failings in the initial assessment and what needs to be done to remedy it.

If the learner is unsuccessful after a second assessment the student shall be advised of the reasons and the assessor will discuss with the student a future pathway to gain the required competence including future training, timeframe and any additional costs.



Associated Policies:

Quality Assurance

Moderation

Assessment

## RECOGNITION OF CURRENT COMPETENCE OR PRIOR LEARNING

### Purpose:

The recognition of current competence (RCC) process involves identifying an observer's existing knowledge and skills and assessing them against PIRFO competencies. The policy is necessary to ensure that observers who have completed previous regional fisheries observer training with FFA and SPC and gathered experience working as fisheries observers can gain recognition for their skills and knowledge against the formal competencies that have been developed.

### Principles

The PIRFO Assessment Policy underpins this policy. The process includes an assessment of evidence supplied by the observer or learner against the learning outcomes of the relevant PIRFO competency.

The evidence provided must clearly show that the trainee or learner has consistently met the standard required.

Evidence supplied for RCC/RPL will be assessed against the following criteria:

**Authenticity** – Is there evidence of the skills and knowledge in relation to the competency? This can include formal qualifications, position descriptions, references and any other material that might support the application. The evidence must be authenticated by the relevant authority.

**Currency** – Does the evidence demonstrate currently competence in all the assessment criteria? This may include a requirement for proof of recent practical experience in the case of practical elements of the competency.

**Relevance** – Does the evidence relate to the learning outcomes of the competency?

**Transferability** – Is the evidence supplied in relation to the skills and knowledge gained elsewhere, relevant to this particular competency?

**Validity** – Does the evidence of skills and knowledge cover all aspects of the evidence guide for the competency?

Associated Policies:

Quality Assurance  
Moderation  
Assessment