



QUALITY APPROACH

A systems management approach
to RTO operations

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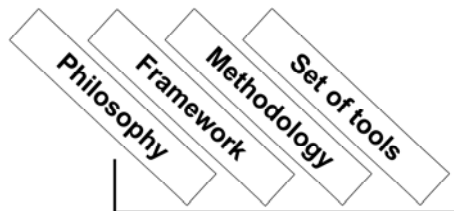
THE QUALITY APPROACH

The RTO Quality Framework™ is designed to assist an RTO to:

- embed management systems across its operations
- continuously improve operations to achieve quality outcomes
- meet the requirements of AQTF

It can be applied to the operations of any RTO regardless of size or scope.

This Quality Approach document sets out the philosophy, framework and methodology for the RTO Quality Framework. RTOs are able to create their own processes and set of tools that would flesh it out into a full quality management system.



The philosophy

The philosophy that underpins this approach to quality is captured by these principles:

1. An organisation is a system
2. Continuous improvement is a cycle
3. An RTO has a unique Business process
4. Management systems provide support for the Business process
5. AQTF standards provide the criteria for measuring quality

The framework

The framework is a structure – the bones of the quality approach. The way the quality approach works can be understood by following the flow of the conceptual model.

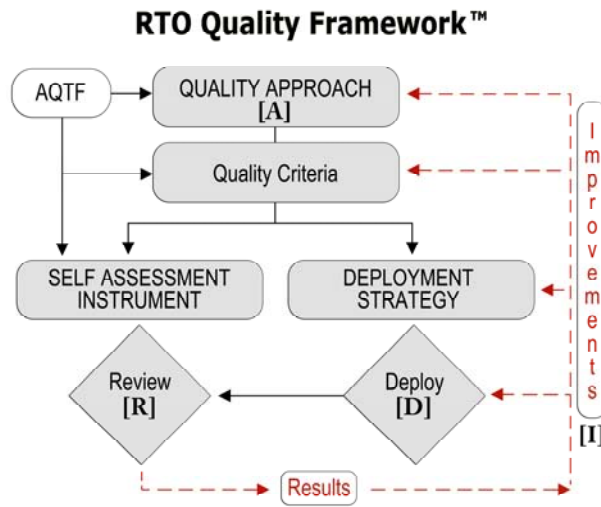
The methodology

The Approach-Deploy-Results-Improvements [ADRI] cycle is applied to the Business process of an RTO.

Quality is not an act, it is a habit.

Aristotle (384BC-322BC)

THE FRAMEWORK



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QUALITY APPROACH

Quality approach [A]

The system wide approach to operating efficiently and effectively as an organisation is set out in the document *Quality Approach*.

Quality criteria

Quality criteria

These are derived from the evidence guides associated with each Element in the AQTF standards. The quality criteria are used to guide deployment and also to measure the effectiveness of operations.

DEPLOYMENT STRATEGY

Deployment Strategy

This is the plan for establishing the quality approach. Each step of the Business process has a set of key actions. Responsibility for each key action is allocated to a specific role and major documents relevant to the actions are also named.

Deploy

Deployment [D]

Once the quality system has been set up a staff induction is conducted so that everyone is aware of their role. Then it is implemented across the business. The deployment of both the quality approach and compliance with AQTF is monitored systematically.

SELF ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT

Self Assessment Instrument

The SAI is based on the quality criteria drawn from the AQTF standards. This instrument is used to check compliance with AQTF requirements and to rate progress towards excellent practice.

Review

Review [R]

There are mechanisms for reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of the quality system. The Self Assessment Instrument is used to measure progress at the strategic level and it also provides results.

Results

Results

Reviews provide data that reveals how to improve the quality approach, and operations generally, to achieve even better outcomes.

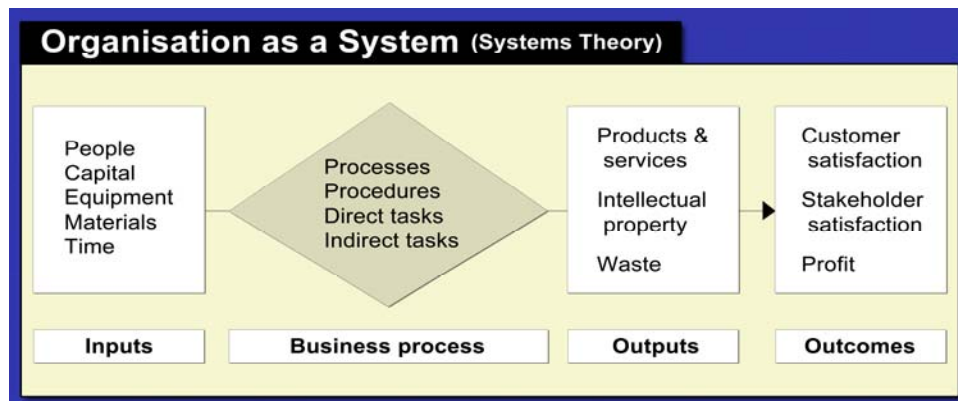
Improvements

Improvements [I]

These improvements are implemented at the appropriate time and the cycle begins again.

ORGANISATION AS A SYSTEM

Principle 1: An organisation is a system



Systems theory fundamentals

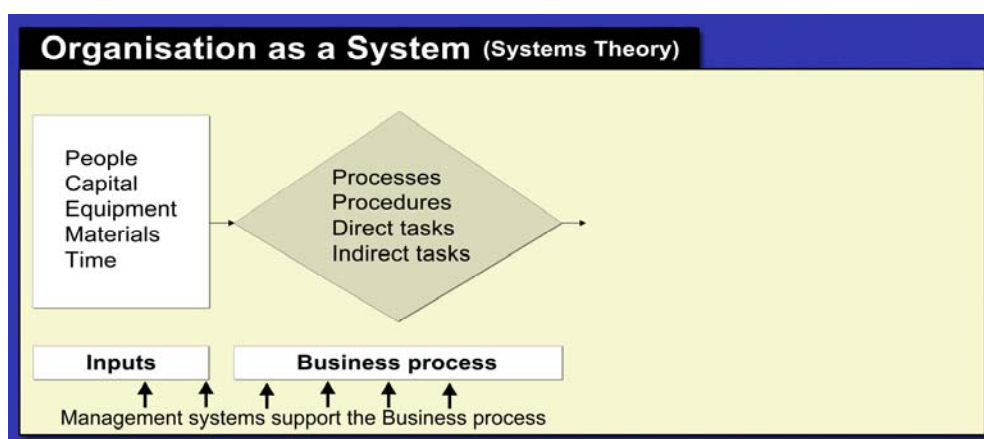
Systems theory views an organisation as a system which always works in a pre-determined way. An organisation:

1. has varying amounts of the resources listed in the first column at its disposal
2. takes these resources and applies their own processes to them

This results in outputs, which are the products and services of the organisation. However, there will also be intellectual property and waste.

3. provides customers with products and services

This results in outcomes, which are what customers think of the products, services, how happy stakeholders are and also the financial return. These determine the effectiveness of the organisation.

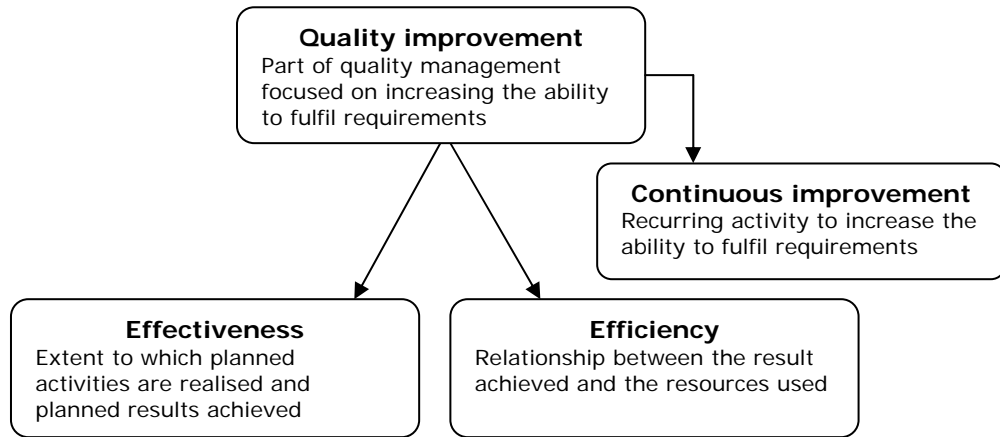


Improvements

An organisation cannot control the outcomes – it can only influence them by what it does. It can get better outputs, and better outcomes, by controlling the quality of both inputs and the Business process. Therefore, emphasis should be on continually improving the inputs and Business process, which are under the control of the organisation. This is done by improving the management systems that support the Business process.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Principle 2: Continuous improvement is a cycle



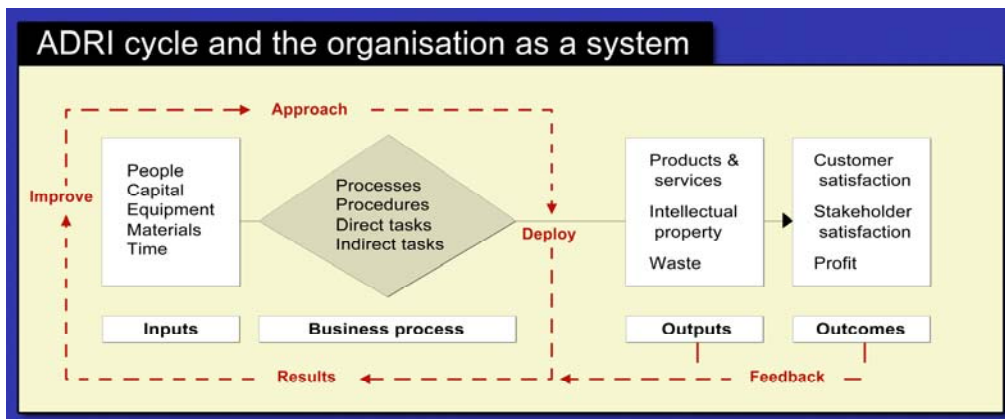
Defining continuous improvement

'AS/NZ ISO 9000:2005: Quality management systems - Fundamentals and Vocabulary' is globally recognised as containing the accepted definitions of quality terms. It defines continual improvement as *'recurring activity to increase the ability to fulfil requirements'*.

The intention of a quality approach is to implement a way of operating that will help the organisation achieve its' goals effectively and efficiently. The guiding principle is that it is possible to increase quality by practicing continual improvement, which is an ongoing effort to improve products, services and processes.

A process for continually improving

This ongoing effort to improve is embedded in the RTO Quality Framework using the Approach-Deployment-Results-Improvement **[ADRI]** Cycle. It focuses on the quality of both inputs and the Business process. The ADRI cycle is used to drive improvements within the organisation. It is also the focus of Step 7 of the Business process.



RTO BUSINESS PROCESS

Principle 3: An RTO has a unique Business process

RTO Business process

1. Plan business direction
2. Engage clients
3. Provide client services
4. Deliver training
5. Conduct assessment
6. Manage records
7. Embed quality processes
8. Ensure compliance

A Business process is a collection of interrelated tasks that deliver a specific outcome. The Business process outlined here applies to any Registered Training Organisation, regardless of size or scope. These steps are the starting point for a systematic approach to the RTO's core business of training and assessment.

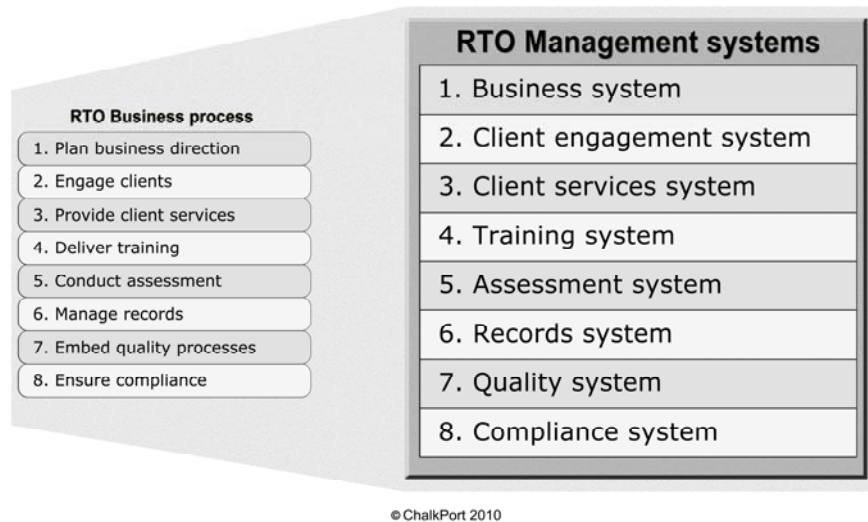
Quality objectives

A systematic approach to operations requires that the organisation have objectives so that goals can be set in key areas. These are the four key areas in the RTO Quality Framework and the quality objectives for each area. Effective and efficient operation of the related management system/s helps achieve these objectives.

Key areas: Quality objectives	Related Business process steps
<p>1. Business direction Clear expectations and results related to purpose and performance as an organisation.</p>	<p>1. Plan Business direction 2. Ensure compliance</p>
<p>2. Training and assessment High level of customer satisfaction with products and services.</p>	<p>4. Deliver training 5. Conduct assessment</p>
<p>3. Client relationships Productive and mutually beneficial relationships with clients and stakeholders.</p>	<p>2. Engage clients 3. Provide client services</p>
<p>4. Management systems Quality approach is underpinned by a culture of continuous improvement.</p>	<p>6. Manage records 7. Embed quality processes</p>

MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Principle 4: Management systems provide support for the Business process



There are eight management systems that provide operational support for the Business process. They align with the Business process steps and underpin and enable them. Therefore, effective management systems mean an effective Business process. The management systems are:

1. Business systems
2. Client engagement system
3. Client services system
4. Training system
5. Assessment system
6. Records system
7. Quality system
8. Compliance system

Management system tools

Each management system has a set of tools, which are procedures and forms.

Procedures

A process has well-defined inputs, outputs and purposes. It is very specific and there may be many processes as part of a workflow. Processes are articulated in procedures.

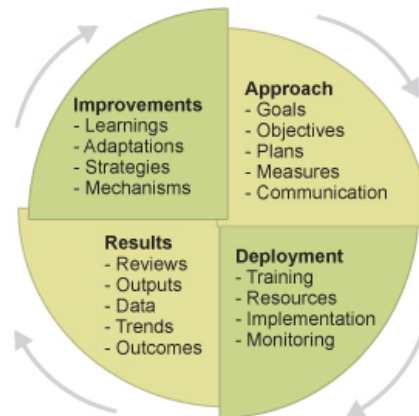
Documents/forms

Each management system has documents that support the procedures and allow personnel to act as required by the procedures. Most documents will be forms.

Management system monitoring

Personnel interpret the procedures and, through their actions, create work practices. Therefore, work practices are included when a system is monitored. Each management system must be monitored at least once a year, using an appropriate Monitoring checklist.

MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS AND ADRI CYCLE



Approach: Thinking and planning [A]

How this is embedded into organisational processes:

- A documented approach
- A Business process
- Seven management systems
- Strategic Plan

Deployment: Implementing and monitoring [D]

How this is embedded into organisational processes:

- Calendar of key dates
- Key procedures
- Key documents
- Monitoring checklists
- Quality system induction
- Staff compliance check

Results: Reviewing and evaluating [R]

How this is embedded into organisational processes:

- Performance Summary
- Competency completion data
- Employer surveys
- Learner surveys
- Quality review meetings
- Staff feedback

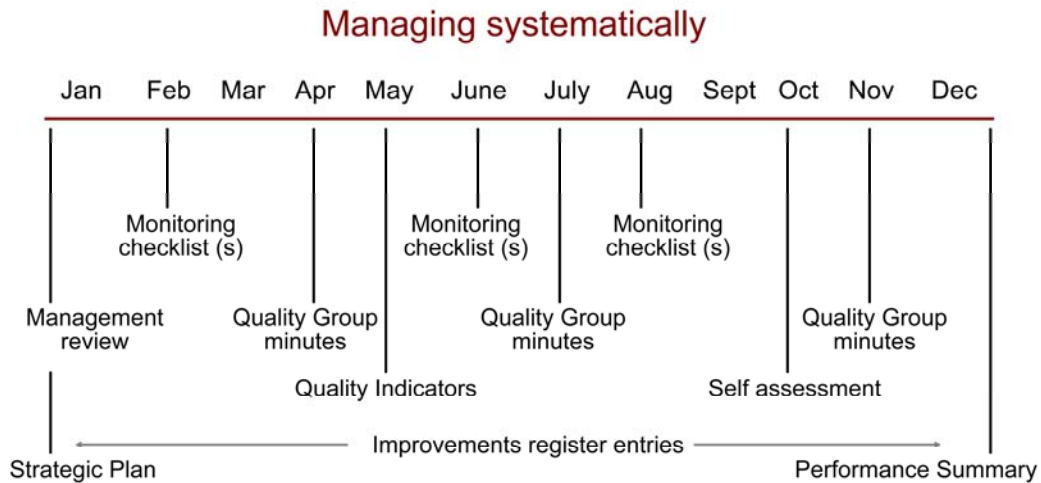
Improvements: Learning and adapting [I]

How this is embedded into organisational processes:

- Quality Group
- Self assessment
- Comments log
- Improvements register

SYSTEMATIC APPROACH

AQTF Essential Standards require that an RTO have a systematic and continuous improvement approach to the management of operations. This is a visual representation of how the RTO Quality Framework embeds a systematic approach in the RTO's operations. Each of the items on the diagram is explained on the following pages.



Evidence presented at audit to support this timeline **for each year**:

- Completed Strategic Plan
- Management review report
- Completed monitoring checklists
- Minutes of Quality Group meetings
- Quality Indicator results
- Self Assessment Instrument results
- Completed Performance Summary
- Improvements register entries

PLANNING & EVALUATION

Planning: Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan is a forward projection that documents the organisation's preferred direction for the year. In some instances it may be appropriate for this to be a sub-set of a wider organisational plan. A Strategic Plan helps by:

- Establishing a 'roadmap' for the year
- Setting targets that can be reported against in the Performance Summary
- Articulating preferred practices

Management must hold a strategic planning meeting once a year to decide on goals for the coming year. The audience for the Strategic Plan is RTO personnel. The completed document is filed in *Quality documents: completed*.

Evaluation: Performance Summary

The Performance Summary reports on how effective the organisation was at achieving annual goals as set out in the Strategic Plan. It completes the quality cycle for the year. The Performance Summary for a current year is completed in time to inform quality planning for the coming year. The completed document is filed *Quality documents: completed*.

Structure

Both the Strategic Plan and the Performance Summary are structured around the four key areas and their quality objectives:

1. Business direction

Clear expectations and results related to purpose and performance as an organisation.

2. Training and assessment

High level of customer satisfaction with products and services.

3. Client relationships

Productive and mutually beneficial relationships with clients and stakeholders.

4. Management systems

Quality approach is underpinned by a culture of continuous improvement.

Efficiency is doing things right; effectiveness is doing the right things.

Peter F. Drucker

MONITORING

Monitoring

Monitoring is simply a system check to see that everything is going as planned. If systems are running well, monitoring will be relatively quick and non-invasive. A spot check can be called at any time, especially in response to a complaint or a suspected variation from procedure.

Monitoring checklists are needed for each of the systems. Three things are checked:

- Procedures: checking these are still suitable for purpose
- Practices: checking that what is stated is what is actually happening
- Documents: checking these are still suitable *and* are being used.

Quality calendar

Monitoring and review dates, and several other dates important to the quality system, are set out in an annual calendar for publication to personnel.

Month	Monitoring schedule	Planning and review schedule
January		Management review (Managing body) Release Strategic Plan
February	Business system Conditions of Registration risk check Compliance system	Quality Group meeting
March		
April	Training system Assessment system	
May		
June	Client engagement system Client services system	Quality Group meeting
July		Managing body meeting
August		
September	Quality system Records system	
October		Self assessment Quality Group meeting
November	Partnership agreements (if any)	
December		Collate Completion data Complete Performance Summary Strategic planning session

A bad system is better than a good person every time.

W. Edwards Deming

IMPROVEMENTS

Quality Group

Membership of the Quality Group should reflect the size of the RTO and members are most appropriately people with an interest in the wellbeing of the RTO. The focus of the group is:

- Act as a reference group for the RTO Manager
- Review results of quality assurance and improvement processes
- Recommend policy decisions to Managing body with regard to continuous improvement and resourcing

Meetings of the Quality Group are held three times a year and these dates are added to the annual quality calendar. Minutes of the meetings are filed in *Quality documents: completed*.

Improvements register

A significant change that improves the operation of a management system is recorded in the Improvements register against the name of the relevant system. There should be a follow-up check done, at an appropriate interval after implementation, to see that the improvement has been effective. These changes are likely to be in response to:

- Monitoring activity results
- Management review
- Self assessment results
- Quality Indicator results
- Audit recommendations

The principle of self assessment

A basic assumption of a continuous improvement cycle is that self assessment at appropriate points will provide data to improve operations. Self assessment is outlined overleaf.

Review

Operations should be formally reviewed once a year when the Managing body considers results from monitoring activity, customer questionnaires and completion data. Recommended improvements, or previously made improvements, are noted in the Improvements register. It is the responsibility of the RTO Manager to ensure improvements are deployed appropriately.

Quality Indicators

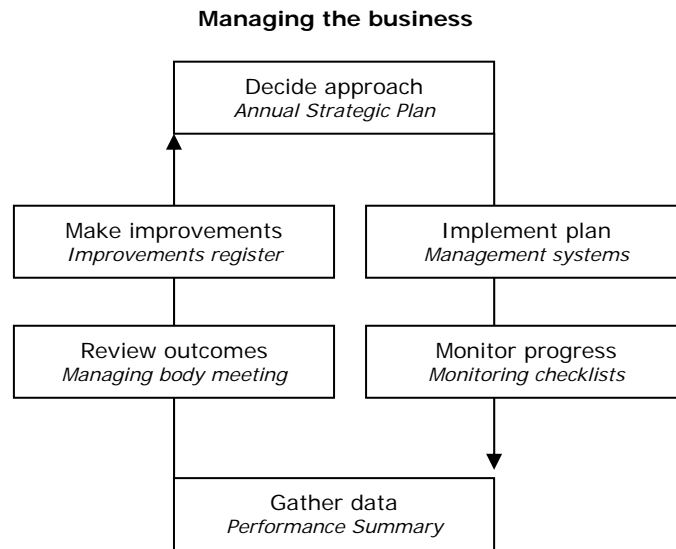
The RTO is required to collect, analyse and act on relevant data for continuous improvement of training and assessment and also client services (Elements 1.1, 2.2). The data that is collected for the mandatory Quality Indicators is to be used to monitor and improve the quality of operations.

Quality means doing it right when no one is looking.

Henry Ford

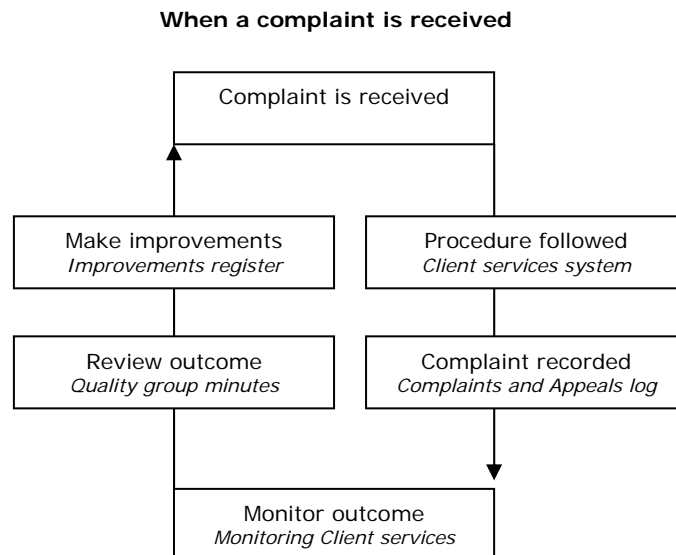
EVIDENCE: CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Two examples of how the cycle of continuous improvement is embedded in the organisation.



Evidence presented at audit to support this cycle:

- Quality Plans since last audit
- Online/folder systems
- Completed monitoring checklists
- Performance Summaries since last audit
- Minutes: Managing body meetings
- Improvements register with entries



Evidence presented at audit to support this cycle:

- Record of the complaint
- Procedure as part of Client services system
- Record of complaint outcome
- Minutes: Quality Group meeting mentions complaint/outcome
- Evidence that it has been used to improve quality system

SELF ASSESSMENT

This process is intended to indicate how well the organisation is travelling, rather than be a fault finding mission.

Process

This is a top level evaluation that is done once a year. However, if there have been significant system wide changes, or events such as a number of complaints, that indicate need for a range of improvements, the SAI may be carried out after improvements have been made.

Self Assessment Instrument (SAI)

Self assessment is based on the management systems. Quality criteria from AQTF standards are matched to the systems.

Evaluators

There may be one or more evaluators appointed by the organisation. It is useful for the evaluators to have a working knowledge of the RTO Quality Framework. If they do not, it would be important for them to read the Quality Approach document before commencement.

Evidence

Evaluators need to see evidence to enable them to make a professional judgement. Documents are best presented in bundles that match the management systems as this is the format of the Self Assessment Instrument.

The rating scale

A numbered scale from 0-10 provides a performance continuum for rating progress against the criteria. This allows room for improvement over time. Self rating for each of the seven steps can be totaled as a number to provide quantitative data.

Verbal descriptors

There is a written descriptor at three points on the continuum so that evaluators know what they are looking for in relation to the specific quality criterion.

Trends

Results from each SAI are recorded on a grid so that this data can be used to identify trends over time. These results are also considered by the Quality Group at appropriate times.

SAI Action plan

If there is a need for a significant number of improvements after a Self Assessment, an SAI Action Plan can be drawn up to record planned changes and timeframe. Therefore, it becomes a schedule for improvements.

QUALITY CRITERIA BY AQTF STANDARD

Principle 5: AQTF standards provide the criteria for measuring quality

A criterion is a reference point against which something can be evaluated. The quality criteria for guiding the establishment of the quality system, and also for evaluating progress with the Self Assessment Instrument (SAI), are drawn from the evidence guides that are listed for each Element in the *AQTF Users' Guide to the Essential Standards for Continuing Registration*.

Example: Extract from Users' Guide

Element 2.3

Before clients enrol or enter into a contract, the RTO informs them about the training, assessment and support services to be provided, and about their rights and obligations.

Guide to compliance

Information provided to clients is clear, accurate and sufficient to assist them to make an informed choice.

The agreement between the RTO and the client is clearly defined and accurate.

Improvements to client information services are demonstrated.

In the RTO Quality Framework the evidence required above becomes three criteria. These are observable and can be measured.

Clear and sufficient information is provided to clients prior to enrolment/contract	2
Agreement with client is clearly defined and accurate	2
Improvements made in client information	2

All three quality criteria in this example apply to the step before someone actually signs up for training or assessment: *Engage clients*. Therefore they are used to measure effectiveness in the Client engagement system.

The complete set of quality criteria is set out on the following pages.

STANDARD 1

The Registered Training Organisation provides quality training and assessment across all of its operations

Quality criteria	Step/System
------------------	-------------

1.1 Training and assessment

The RTO collects, analyses and acts on relevant data for continuous improvement of training and assessment.

Data is collected, analysed systematically and used to make improvements in training and assessment	8
There are demonstrated improvements in training and assessment	8

1.2 Training and assessment strategies (TAS)

Strategies for training and assessment meet the requirements of the relevant Training Package or accredited course and are developed in consultation with industry stakeholders.

For each qualification/unit/course on Scope of Registration:

Industry/enterprise is consulted during development of TAS	1
Learner profile is clearly articulated as part of TAS	1
Human and physical resources are specified in TAS	1
TAS is clearly articulated and meets Training Package requirements	1
TAS is monitored and improved	1

1.3 Training and assessment resources

Staff, facilities, equipment and training and assessment materials used by the RTO are consistent with the requirements of the Training Package or accredited course and the RTO's own training and assessment strategies.

For each qualification/unit/course on Scope of Registration:

Resources specified in T&A strategy are used by staff	4
Resources specified in T&A strategy are used by learners	4
Improvements made in staff, facilities, equipment and training and assessment materials	4

1.4 Training and assessment personnel

Training and assessment is delivered by trainers and assessors who:

- (a) have the necessary training and assessment competencies as determined by the National Quality Council or its successors, and
- (b) have the relevant vocational competencies at least to the level being delivered or assessed, and
- (c) can demonstrate current industry skills directly relevant to the training/assessment being undertaken, and
- (d) continue to develop their Vocational Education and Training (VET) knowledge and skills as well as their industry currency and trainer/assessor competence.

Trainer competence is established and verified	4
Trainer supervision arrangements are effective	4
Trainers continuously develop their knowledge and skills	4
Assessor competence is established and verified	5
Assessors continuously develop their knowledge and skills	5

1.5 Assessment, including RPL

2 1.5 Assessment including Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL):

- 3 (a) meets the requirements of the relevant Training Package or accredited course
- 4 (b) is conducted in accordance with the principles of assessment and the rules of evidence
- 5 (c) meets workplace and, where relevant, regulatory requirements
- 6 (d) is systematically validated.

Assessment meets Training Package requirements	5
Assessment is consistent with T&A strategy	5
Assessment tools have been validated	5
Assessment is to workplace standard	5
Judgements against same competency standards are consistent	5
Improvements made in assessment systems, processes, tools and practices	5

STANDARD 2

The Registered Training Organisation adheres to principles of access and equity and maximises outcomes for its clients

Quality criteria	Step/System
------------------	-------------

2.1 Client needs

The RTO establishes the needs of clients, and delivers services to meet these needs.

Mechanisms for establishing clients' needs are implemented	7
Systematic monitoring of services to ensure clients' needs are being addressed	7

2.2 Client services

The RTO continuously improves client services by collecting, analysing and acting on relevant data.

Data is collected, analysed systematically and used to make improvements in client services	8
There are demonstrated improvements in client services	8

2.3 Client information

Before clients enrol or enter into an agreement, the RTO informs them about the training, assessment and support services to be provided, and about their rights and obligations.

Clear and sufficient information is provided to clients prior to enrolment/contract	2
Agreement with client is clearly defined and accurate	2
Improvements made in client information	2

2.4 Engagement in training and assessment

Employers and other parties who contribute to each learner's training and assessment are engaged in the development, delivery and monitoring of training and assessment.

Workplace personnel are consulted in development of workplace training and assessment processes	2
Workplace personnel are aware of their training and assessment roles and responsibilities	2
Workplace personnel support for each learner is monitored	2
Learner progress is monitored	2
Workplace personnel are consulted as part of the review of training and assessment	2

2.5 Individual needs of learners

Learners receive training, assessment and support services that meet their individual needs.

Learner needs are systematically assessed	3
Learners have access to relevant learning support services	3
Support services are consistent with T&A strategies	3
Training, assessment and support services are monitored	3
Improvements made in training, assessment and support services	3

2.6 Learner access to records

Learners have timely access to current and accurate records of their participation and progress.

Learners are informed about how to access their records	3
Participation data is systematically collected, recorded and stored	6
Progress data is systematically collected, recorded and stored	6
Records management practices are monitored	6
Improvements made in records management practices	6

2.7 Complaints and appeals

The RTO provides appropriate mechanisms and services for learners to have complaints and appeals addressed efficiently and effectively.

Processes for complaints and appeals are published	3
Staff are aware of processes for complaints and appeals	3
Complaints and appeals are resolved satisfactorily	3
Complaints and appeals are monitored by management	3
Improvements made on basis of complaints and appeals	3

STANDARD 3

The Management systems are responsive to the needs of clients, staff and stakeholders, and the environment in which the Registered Training Organisation operates

Quality criteria	Step/System
------------------	-------------

3.1 Consumer rights

The RTO's management of its operations ensures clients receive the services detailed in their agreement with the RTO.

Agreements are in place with each client	2
Clients' rights as consumers are protected	2

3.2 Management of operations

The RTO uses a systematic and continuous improvement approach to the management of operations.

There is a systematic approach to management and improvement of operations	8
Management systems are focused on providing quality services	8
Management systems are appropriate for size and scope of operations	8
Management systems are consistently implemented across operations	8
Management systems are monitored systematically	8

3.3 Partnership arrangements

The RTO monitors training and/or assessment services provided on its behalf to ensure that they comply with all aspects of the AQTF Essential Standards for Registration.

An agreement about T&A services is in place with each partner organisation	1
Partner organisation's T&A services are monitored and improved	1

3.4 Accuracy and integrity of records

The RTO manages records to ensure their accuracy and integrity.

Records management system is in place	6
AQTF compliance records are maintained	6
Staff meet their responsibilities for records management	6
Records management system is monitored	6
Improvements made in records management system	6