

Guiding part-time trainers regarding employability skills

Following the inclusion of employability skills in Training Packages, some training providers are focusing on how best to induct and guide their trainers and assessors.

Case study

One group of trainers and assessors that has a major role to play around Australian VET are those people variously described as non-permanent or part-time or sessional staff. The Australian Institute of Management South Australia (AIM SA) calls this cohort of staff 'associate consultants'. A valuable case study of how to guide these staff in relation to assessing employability skills is provided by AIM SA's **Rose Vallen** (pictured), Manager Higher Education/Curriculum Services, AIM SA Centre for Management Development.

AIM SA held a workshop on Employability Skills for all of its associate consultants in 2007. The seventeen participants were experienced and new facilitators who work for AIM on a contract basis.

"These consultants are subject matter experts," says Vallen, "and they are diligent in keeping up-to-date with their vocational professional development".

The AIM workshops are an important part of that professional development ensuring that they maintain their Training and Assessment competencies and keep up to date with the vocational education and training sector.



The goals of the workshop were to:

- build skills and knowledge about employability skills
- establish any changes necessary in professional practice
- establish a plan for implementation of employability skills into delivery and assessment strategies.

At the workshop the trainers and assessors investigated, discussed and unpacked the document *Employability Skills from Framework to Practice, An Introductory Guide for Trainers and Assessors*, DEST, 2006.

The participants discussed the practices that were already part of their delivery and assessment strategies and began the process of working out the changes needed in their everyday training and assessment practice and for future course development at AIM.

The consultants concentrated on employability skills in delivery and assessment. They were pleased to note, says Vallen, that existing AIM delivery methods and principles facilitated demonstration of many of the employability skills.

The mixture of delivery methods common in most courses – experiential learning, cooperative learning, reflective learning, problem solving, team work – allow ample opportunity to emphasise employability skills in delivery.

Audit exercise

On examination of the current AIM assessment model, says Vallen, it was decided that although consultants were “fairly sure employability skills were assessed holistically along with the competencies, they would like to make sure in each individual case”.

So it was decided that an audit exercise should be completed where each course is mapped to the employability skills summary for its qualification. The audit would demonstrate “where in delivery/course content and in the assessment employability skills were covered and where there were gaps”.

The audit document could then be attached to individual assessments and used to:

- provide specific information to the learner and assessor about how employability skills are being assessed
- provide information about employability skills – what they are and why they are important
- provide a record of assessment of employability skills
- provide a simple way to ensure new trainer/assessors are informed about employability skills – including how they are covered in delivery and assessment.

Audit tools were subsequently developed by AIM SA.

Links to model

The AIM SA approach to employability skills models good practice in a range of ways. Its good practice includes inducting part-time trainers and assessors into the issues arising from the embedding of employability skills in Training Packages. Its good practice also includes developing customised audit tools which provide many benefits, including specific information for the learner and assessor about how employability skills are being assessed.

These good practice strategies of AIM SA are compatible with the model for assessing and reporting employability skills which advocates the development of a range of different assessment strategies such as exploring with learners the full range of assessment techniques and designing and using valid assessment strategies and tools that suit the relevant employability skills.

The model for assessing and reporting employability skills was developed by a project undertaken by the National Quality Council from 2006-2008 and is set out as handout No.11 of the resource: ‘Level 1 workshop for implementing the model for assessing and reporting employability skills’, which is available at www.employabilityskillsresources.com

The model is a generic framework which can stimulate the type of context-specific investigations conducted on a collegial basis by VET professionals at AIM SA.

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