



SKILLSIQ

CAPABLE PEOPLE MAKE CLEVER BUSINESS

IMPROVING QUALITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE TRAINING

**A DISCUSSION PAPER IN RESPONSE TO THE
AUSTRALIAN SKILLS QUALITY AUTHORITY
(ASQA) STRATEGIC REVIEW**

OCTOBER 2016

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Background

SkillsIQ is a Skills Service Organisation (SSO) funded by the Department of Education and Training to support the Industry Reference Committees (IRCs) responsible for the development and maintenance of training packages in the following sectors:

- Community Services
- Health
- Local Government
- Public Sector
- Floristry
- Hairdressing and Beauty Services
- Funeral Services
- Retail Services
- Sport, Fitness and Recreation
- Tourism, Travel and Hospitality

Overview

In August 2015, the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) released the strategic review, *Training for early childhood education and care in Australia*. The review was prompted by two Productivity Commission reports (2011, 2014), which expressed significant concerns about the quality and variability of early childhood education and care training. The ASQA review made ten recommendations for action.

SkillsIQ has been commissioned by the Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC) to complete the necessary research and consultation to develop a Business Case setting out the strategic and evidentiary case for change within the CHC Community Services Training Package in response to the ASQA recommendations, including in relation to the following qualifications:

- *CHC30113 Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care, and*
- *CHC50113 Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care*

There are twenty-eight early childhood education and care units of competency linked to the above qualifications. Those units of competency are also integral to other qualifications as follows:

- *CHC40113 Certificate IV in School Aged Education and Care*
- *CHC50113 Diploma of School Aged Education and Care*
- *CHC30213 Certificate III in Education Support*
- *CHC40213 Certificate IV in Education Support*

Appendix A provides a full list of early childhood education and care units of competency and related qualifications.

The AISC has asked SkillsIQ to seek industry views on all ten ASQA recommendations, while acknowledging that responsibility for implementing some of the recommendations rests with other agencies.

The Children's Education and Care Industry Reference Committee will guide and direct the work of SkillsIQ. In its deliberations to date, the committee has identified the need to consult about quality issues beyond those highlighted by ASQA. This applies to possible issues with the CHC Community Services Training Package, and to those industry challenges not directly related to the training package, but which may have a major impact on the quality of graduates.

SkillsIQ will consult with industry in the following ways:

- This discussion paper canvasses views about quality in general, and about each of the ten ASQA recommendations.
- Targeted online surveys for employers and students will seek brief and specific information from these two crucial groups
- SkillsIQ will use existing industry forums and conferences as opportunities to engage with the sector.

The outcomes of these consultation activities will inform the development of the Business Case to be submitted to the AISC for consideration.

The Children's Education and Care Industry Reference Committee has also recommended that all six qualifications referenced above be reviewed concurrently should the need for change be confirmed.

How to provide feedback

Key consultation questions are found with the discussion of each ASQA recommendation in this paper. A full list of these questions also appears separately as Appendix A. Please complete the answer boxes in the document or make a separate word submission.

This discussion paper will be available on the SkillsIQ website www.skillsiq.com.au for a period of four weeks, from Tuesday 4 October to Friday 28 October 2016.

Please provide your feedback in writing to feedback@skillsiq.com.au by **COB Friday 28 October**.

We look forward to your input.

Key factors influencing quality

The Children's Education and Care Industry Reference Committee discussions have highlighted that many factors beyond those referenced in the ASQA strategic review impact quality training outcomes in the sector. Some of these may relate to the CHC Community Services Training Package, and others are linked to broader marketplace and industry workforce challenges.

Examples of issues that have been raised include:

- the relationship between regulatory requirements and the training package (e.g. educator to child ratios, qualification requirements, and the 'actively working towards' provisions)
- the impact of state and territory vocational education and training initiatives on the training marketplace (e.g. the Higher Level Skills program in Queensland)
- the recent alarmingly low level of qualification completions and the need to identify why this is occurring
- the overall structure of training package qualifications (e.g. the relationship between the Certificate III and Diploma qualifications)

SkillsIQ is keen to hear different perspectives on the range of factors influencing training outcomes. Feedback on the quality of the training package will help inform the business case for change. Industry views on broader issues will allow us to place any training package review work in its proper context and communicate other key concerns to the AISC.

Your feedback

1. In your view, what are the overarching factors (both within and outside of the training package), that have the biggest impact on the quality of training outcomes? How would you rate the relative importance of those factors?

Snapshot of ASQA review and recommendations

The ASQA review outcomes were based on the following activities:

- analysis of substantial information from the Productivity Commission reports
- conduct of 77 RTO audits
- consultation with stakeholders, including a comprehensive RTO survey (289 RTOs), roundtable meetings and interviews
- review of early childhood education and care-related complaints submitted to ASQA.

The two major findings of the review related to the overly short duration of many courses (seen by ASQA as the biggest threat to the overall quality of VET) and inadequate or poor quality assessment. For example:

- 70% of delivery at Certificate III level was found to be occurring in programs of less than one year's duration with nearly three quarters of programs being less than 750 hours in duration (based on RTO survey)
- only 26% of RTOs were fully compliant with the required national training standards on initial audit. 68% were compliant by the completion of the audit process and 89% were compliant after various regulatory actions. ***In all cases where non-compliance was identified, the RTOs experienced difficulties in achieving compliance with the standard concerning assessment*** (ASQA, 2015, p3).

From this, ASQA highlighted its main concerns:

- learners are not being fully skilled and properly assessed, which in turn means that employers are not able to access skilled workers
- the prevalence of unrealistically short and inexpensive courses means that those RTOs working to provide high-quality programs are faced with unfair competition in the marketplace.

It is important to note that the ASQA review took place during a period of transition to the current early childhood education and care qualifications, which were released in 2013. Many RTOs were still delivering the superseded qualifications with nearly 70% of Certificate III enrolments and nearly 60% of Diploma enrolments being in older qualifications. Less than one sixth of RTOs delivering early childhood education and care qualifications were audited (total number of RTOs at August 2016 is 482 according to training.gov.au). It is the view of the Children's Education and Care Industry Reference Committee that these factors should be taken into account when considering the review outcomes. For example, the full impacts of training package changes such as the requirement for 120 hours of work and other strengthened assessment requirements would not be evident.

In addition, the 2013 qualifications and their associated units of competency were some of the first developed under the *Standard for Training Packages*. In many cases, therefore, RTOs delivering the new qualifications were dealing with materials in completely new formats and with radically different approaches to assessment requirements. ASQA acknowledges this in its report. However, it still expresses concern that so many RTOs were non-compliant on initial audit.

The ten review recommendations are detailed below:

Recommendation 1

It is recommended that—as a matter of urgency—the new training package arrangements which are currently being developed include minimum benchmarks around the amount of training required for each unit of competency and each VET qualification across the whole VET system.

Recommendation 2

It is recommended that ASQA, Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, and other relevant stakeholders work with the peak bodies that represent the providers of early childhood education and care to improve the process for, and coverage of, early childhood education and care providers informing ASQA of concerns they may have about the quality of training and assessment provided by registered training organisations.

Recommendation 3

It is recommended that ASQA—working with the relevant training package developer—develop and implement a systematic communications strategy to engage with registered training organisations delivering early childhood education and care, in order to explain and reinforce the key findings of this review.

Recommendation 4

It is recommended that, towards the end of 2015, ASQA undertakes:

- a targeted strategic audit on the implementation of *CHC30113 Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care* and *CHC50113 Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care*, and
- a targeted strategic audit of distance learning, including online delivery, of early childhood education and care training.

Recommendation 5

It is recommended that any revisions of the Community Services Training Package include reviewing the clarity of wording and expectations of assessment evidence in the units of competency, in order to ensure that advice is unambiguous, clear and aligned with the definition of competency and the rules of evidence.

Recommendation 6

Given that most RTOs reviewed did not effectively embed structured work placement into the learning and assessment strategies—and given the high level of non-compliance against the assessment standard (Standard 15.5 [Standard 1.8 of the 2015 Standards])—it is recommended that RTOs strengthen their engagement with industry employers to ensure that structured workplace learning and assessment is embedded in course delivery.

Recommendation 7

It is recommended that any revisions to training packages clearly identify any requirements in each unit of competency for:

- workplace delivery and assessment
- delivery and assessment to be undertaken in a simulated workplace context (including what constitutes an appropriate workplace assessment in each case), and
- repeated demonstration of competencies in the workplace (including what that means for each unit of competency).

Recommendation 8

It is recommended that at the next review of the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment:

- the assessment-related units of competency emphasise the analysis and interpretation of competencies, and
- consideration is given to the development of qualifications in VET assessment that could be introduced to supplement the current assessment capabilities of many assessors who currently hold the *TAE40110 Certificate IV in Training and Assessment* (or other qualifications that are considered to be equivalent).

It is recommended that when RTOs develop training materials for a revised Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, that they strengthen the learning and formative assessment activities related to the analysis and interpretation of competencies, in order to enhance the skills and knowledge of assessors in this area

Recommendation 9

Given the issues with assessment that have been identified in this and the 2013 strategic reviews (ASQA 2013a and 2013b), it is recommended that ASQA:

- continue to focus on assessment and the implementation of validation strategies in its regulatory work, and
- continue to monitor the effectiveness of the strengthened validation requirements in the *Standards for RTOs 2015*.

Recommendation 10

It is recommended that RTOs develop or enhance their ongoing professional development processes by:

- providing advice on relevant professional development for trainers and assessors, and
- investigating more systematic models that will assist trainers and assessors to demonstrate compliance with the Standard.

The full ASQA Report can be found at

http://www.asqa.gov.au/verve/resources/Strategic_Review_2015_Early_Childhood_Education_Report.pdf

Discussion of ASQA recommendations that directly impact the CHC Training Package

Minimum benchmarks for amount of training

ASQA Recommendation 1

It is recommended that—as a matter of urgency—the new training package arrangements which are currently being developed include minimum benchmarks around the amount of training required for each unit of competency and each VET qualification across the whole VET system.

The first and most strongly expressed of ASQA's recommendations reflects the key finding that too many courses are being delivered in too short a timeframe, with durations often falling well short of the 'typical' volume of learning nominated in the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF).

The volume of learning of a Certificate III is typically 1-2 years

The volume of learning of a Diploma is typically 1-2 years

The AQF explains volume of learning as follows:

The volume of learning allocated to a qualification should include all teaching, learning and assessment activities that are required to be undertaken by the typical student to achieve the learning outcomes. These activities may include some or all of the following: guided learning (such as classes, lectures, tutorials, on-line study or self-paced study guides), individual study, research, learning activities in the workplace and assessment activities.

The teaching, learning and assessment activities are usually measured in equivalent full time years. The generally accepted length of a full time year, used for educational participation, is 1200 hours.

Potential for change in the Training Package

The current *Standards for Training Packages* do not allow for the inclusion of requirements about training duration, and the AISC has acknowledged that full implementation of this recommendation would require a Ministerial Council decision. ASQA has written to the AISC to progress its recommendation.

The AISC is keen to hear industry views and recommendations about this issue, and there are some actions that could be taken to partially address the concerns raised.

Qualifications

It may now be possible to include a statement about typical volume of learning in the qualification descriptions. While there is no specific provision for this, and, in the past, training package developers have been asked to remove references to volume of learning, more recently, qualifications have been endorsed with the inclusion of these references (e.g. *TAE40116 Certificate IV in Training and Assessment*). This may reflect the ongoing concerns about the prevalence of overly short courses being offered in the VET sector.

The approach would be a simple one, and involve the addition the AQF advisory statement to the qualification description as a way of communicating to RTOs the broad expectations around course duration. This would not mandate a minimum duration or be an auditable requirement, meaning RTOs would retain the flexibility to design programs to meet specific learner needs.

Another potential initiative would be the development of more comprehensive guidance materials, such as model training programs for different learner groups, to support RTO practice. Again, these would not be mandatory and flexibility could be retained.

For an initiative such as this to have real value, materials would need to be detailed and specific. A broad, generic national resource, such as many of those which have been developed across many industry sectors in the past is likely to have limited impact.

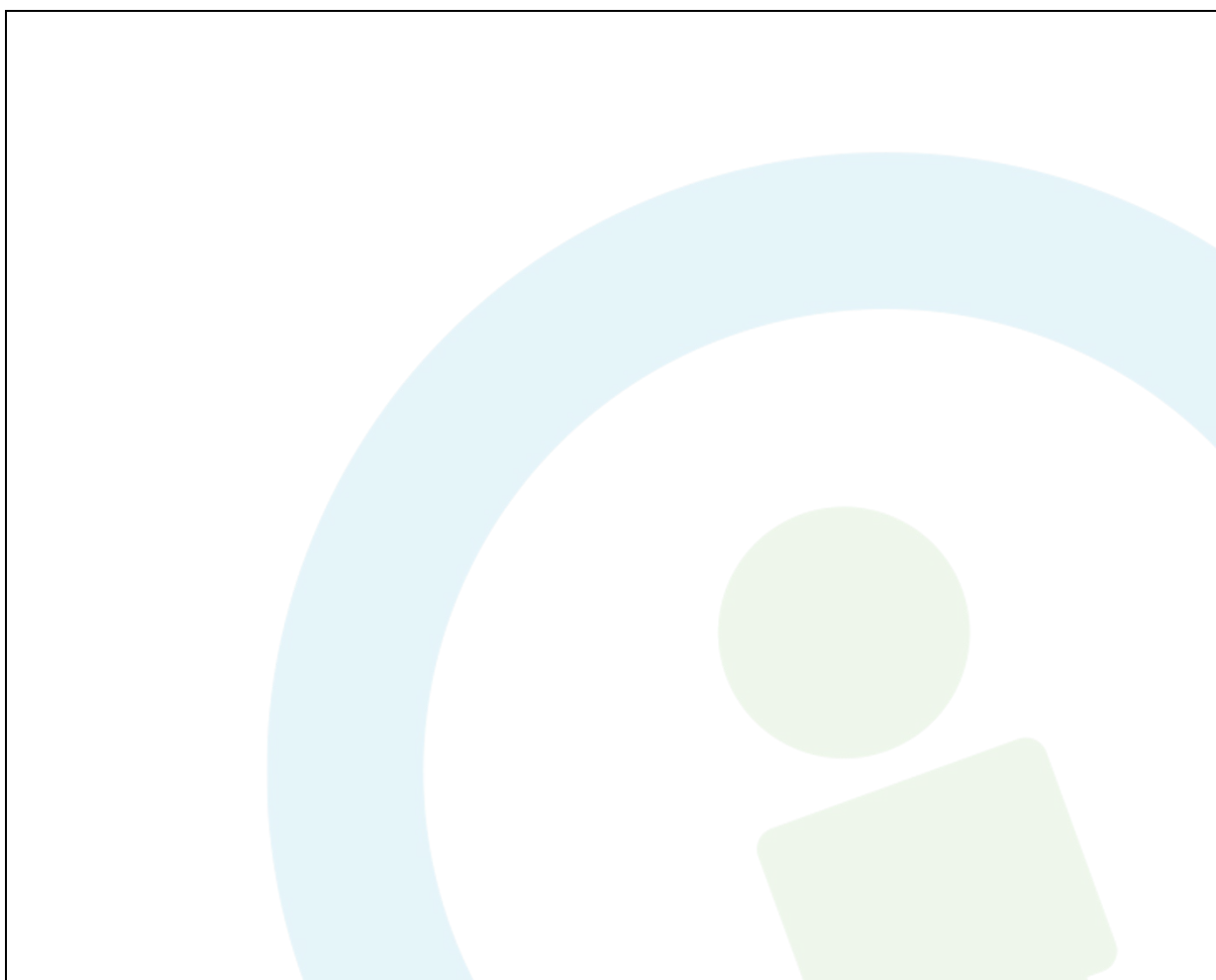
Units of competency and assessment requirements

Minimum hours of work have been specified in some units of competency, however this relates only to assessment and not training. At this point in time, it is not possible to add information about minimum mandatory amounts of training into units of competency or their assessment requirements.

As for the qualifications, unit-specific guidance materials could also be developed. A key challenge would be the creation of guidance that is sufficiently meaningful to individual RTOs while retaining national relevance.

Your feedback

2. Do you agree with the ASQA recommendation?
3. What are your views on the value of including an advisory statement about volume of learning in the description of early childhood education and care qualifications?
4. Do you believe that the development of additional guidance materials for RTOs delivering early childhood education and care qualifications would assist in supporting training of an adequate duration? What sort of materials would achieve the most impact? What other initiatives could be considered?



Training package requirements

For clarity of discussion, this section covers the two recommendations that most directly affect the content of the CHC Training Package and the work of SkillsIQ.

Recommendation 5

It is recommended that any revisions of the Community Services Training Package include reviewing the clarity of wording and expectations of assessment evidence in the units of competency, in order to ensure that advice is unambiguous, clear and aligned with the definition of competency and the rules of evidence.

Recommendation 7

It is recommended that any revisions to training packages clearly identify any requirements in each unit of competency for:

- workplace delivery and assessment
- delivery and assessment to be undertaken in a simulated workplace context (including what constitutes an appropriate workplace assessment in each case), and
- repeated demonstration of competencies in the workplace (including what that means for each unit of competency).

As per the *Standards for Training Packages*, units of competency and their associated assessment requirements are silent in relation to training delivery. The discussion below therefore focuses on assessment.

Key issues identified by ASQA

In summary, ASQA identifies the need for:

- clear and unambiguous advice about evidence expectations aligned with the definition of competency and the rules of evidence
- clear identification of which aspects of each unit must be assessed and/or demonstrated in the workplace, and which aspects may be assessed and/or demonstrated in a simulated workplace environment
- clear information about whether repeated demonstration in the workplace is required
- clear information about what constitutes an appropriate simulated workplace environment

At the heart of the above is the varying interpretation by RTOs about how to meet the workplace component of the assessment requirements for the early childhood education and care units of competency. Through its audits, ASQA identified differing methods, including:

- expecting an assessor to observe performance of the candidate while on work placement
- using only third-party reports as evidence of workplace performance
- requiring that candidates submit a portfolio of workplace documents and note how they have completed the tasks

This variation reflects a more general lack of common understanding across the VET sector, and of course the fact that expectations and requirements do indeed vary across industry sectors. The key challenge for any training package is to articulate industry expectations and requirements as clearly as possible.

It is also important to remember that the assessment requirements for units of competency are not a training and assessment strategy of themselves. Their purpose is to articulate mandatory industry requirements, and it remains the role of the RTO to use its expertise to determine how to meet those requirements.

Analysis of issues identified by ASQA

SkillsIQ has completed an initial desktop review of the early childhood education and care units in the CHC Training Package to determine if and how the assessment requirements wording needs to be changed. The outcomes of this analysis are presented below.

| Issue in ASQA review | Summary analysis of units of competency and assessment requirements |
|---|---|
| <p>Clear and unambiguous advice about evidence expectations aligned with the definition of competency and the rules of evidence</p> | <p>Alignment with the definition of competency</p> <p>The ASQA review expresses some concern that a focus on observation of specific tasks in evidence requirements ignores other attributes that underpin competent performance (ASQA, 2015, p88).</p> <p>The SkillsIQ analysis suggests that there is a sound focus on the holistic nature of competency. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is an overarching requirement that reflects the holistic nature and dimensions of competency in the assessment requirements of all units: <p style="margin-left: 40px;"><i>evidence of the ability to complete tasks outlined in elements and performance criteria of this unit, manage tasks and manage contingencies in the context of the job role</i></p> • the inclusion of the requirement for 120 (Cert III) or 240 (Diploma) hours of work in a regulated education and care service as a key piece of evidence places the candidate's holistic engagement with the real world of work at the centre of the approach to early childhood education and care training and assessment. <p>The requirement for observation of some tasks fits within this overall approach and would form one part of the evidence gathering strategy used in assessment.</p> |
| | <p>Evidence sufficiency</p> <p>The ASQA review comments on the requirement in some units of competency for completion of tasks <i>at least once</i>, noting that <i>once</i> may not provide sufficient evidence of competency.</p> <p>A review of individual performance evidence requirements indicates an opportunity to improve clarity, as in most cases the requirement is not actually for a single demonstration of skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in many cases the use of the lead-in wording about completion of tasks once is actually followed by a statement at odds with doing something only once: <p><i>Example</i></p> |

| Issue in ASQA review | Summary analysis of units of competency and assessment requirements |
|----------------------|--|
| | <p><i>CHCECE003 Provide care for children</i></p> <p><i>There must be demonstrated evidence that the candidate has completed the following tasks at least once:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>provided care and responded appropriately to at least three children of varying ages....</i> <p>Note that the inclusion of wording <i>at least once</i> may be a hangover from a time when the National Skills Standards Council was requesting its inclusion.</p> <p>This could be addressed when units of competency are revised.</p> |
| | <p>Clear performance evidence expectations</p> <p>The review of individual performance evidence requirements indicates an opportunity to further improve clarity in two ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • better clarifying the boundaries of industry expectations where possible: <p>Feedback suggests that wording in the example below has been interpreted as a requirement to address all 18 standards and 58 elements of the 7 areas of the National Quality Standards, when the regulator does not have this expectation of industry. This is also an example where use of the term <i>at least once</i> is redundant.</p> <p><i>Example</i></p> <p><i>CHCECE019 Facilitate compliance in an education and care service</i></p> <p><i>There must be demonstrated evidence that the candidate has completed the following tasks at least once:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>developed at least one quality improvement plan ...</i> • making it clearer how the performance evidence relates to the elements and performance criteria. <p>In some units, it is not immediately clear why some aspects of the elements and performance criteria are reflected in the performance evidence and why some are not. As the performance evidence is designed to focus on the volume, frequency and sufficiency of evidence needed to show the performance criteria have been met rather than a rework of elements and performance criteria themselves, there is potential to simplify and clarify some content. Note that improvements of this nature would likely lead to changes in elements and performance criteria as well as assessment requirements.</p> |

| Issue in ASQA review | Summary analysis of units of competency and assessment requirements |
|---|--|
| | <p><i>Example</i></p> <p><i>CHCECE017 Foster the holistic development and wellbeing of the child in early education</i></p> <p><i>There must be demonstrated evidence that the candidate has completed the following tasks:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>planned and provided at least three opportunities for children of varying ages to develop in a range of areas, including:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>facilitating and supporting emotional and psychological development in children</i> • <i>encouraging self-help and independence of children</i> • <i>planning opportunities to foster children’s positive self-concept and self-esteem</i> • <i>providing a positive and safe environment to encourage children to express thoughts, feelings and ideas</i> <p>(only part of the unit content is reflected in the list above)</p> <p>This could be addressed when units of competency are revised.</p> |
| | <p>Clear knowledge evidence expectations</p> <p>Knowledge evidence requirements in early childhood education and care units of competency are generally quite clear, specific and easy to interpret.</p> <p>The initial desktop review did identify a small number of instances where the knowledge expectation could be expressed with a greater level of specification. For example, in the unit CHCECE005 - Provide care for babies and toddlers, what is the scope and depth of the knowledge expectation around the following statements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>food safety guidelines?</i> • <i>attachment theory?</i> <p>This could be addressed when units of competency are revised.</p> |
| <p>Clear identification of which aspects of each unit must be assessed and/or demonstrated in the workplace, and which aspects may be assessed and/or</p> | <p>Workplace demonstration</p> <p>The vast majority of early childhood education and care units of competency require skills to <i>be demonstrated in a regulated education and care service</i>.</p> <p>There is no explicit statement about the requirement for the assessor to directly observe skills in the workplace.</p> <p>The original training package developer, Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council (CS&HISC) has advised ASQA that assessors must observe performance in the workplace (ASQA, 2015 p87).</p> <p>There is an opportunity to re-confirm this requirement with industry and clarify wording. Potentially, additional information could be added</p> |

| Issue in ASQA review | Summary analysis of units of competency and assessment requirements |
|---|---|
| <p>demonstrated in a simulated workplace environment</p> | <p>to clarify the extent to which assessors can rely on third party reports and portfolios of evidence from the workplace.</p> <p>Note that two units use the slightly different wording - <i>must be assessed in the workplace</i>. It is not clear whether this is deliberate or a possible typographical error, and this should be checked.</p> <p>This could be addressed when units of competency are revised.</p> |
| | <p>Simulation</p> <p>The following statement in assessment requirements implies that only aspects of the unit relating to emergency or unplanned procedures may be assessed through the use of simulations and scenarios.</p> <p><i>In addition, simulations and scenarios must be used where the full range of contexts and situations cannot be provided in the workplace or may occur only rarely. These are situations relating to emergency or unplanned procedures where assessment in these circumstances would be unsafe or is impractical.</i></p> <p>There is an opportunity to re-confirm this requirement with industry and clarify wording when revising the units of competency.</p> |
| <p>Clear information on whether repeated demonstration in the workplace is required</p> | <p>Repeated demonstration in the workplace</p> <p>Clear guidance is provided in the performance evidence of many units.</p> <p><i>Examples</i></p> <p><i>CHCECE003 Provide care for children</i></p> <p><i>There must be demonstrated evidence that the candidate has completed the following tasks:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>provided care and responded appropriately to at least three children of varying ages...</i> <p><i>CHCECE004 Promote and provide healthy food and drinks</i></p> <p><i>There must be demonstrated evidence that the candidate has completed the following tasks:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>planned and provided food and drink for children on at least three occasions...</i> <p>Given CS&HISC advice that assessors must observe performance in the workplace, there is no reason to infer that any required repeated</p> |

| Issue in ASQA review | Summary analysis of units of competency and assessment requirements |
|--|--|
| | <p>demonstrations should be observed other than in the workplace by the assessor.</p> <p>There is an opportunity to re-confirm this requirement and its implementation challenges with industry and make any necessary adjustments when revising the units of competency.</p> |
| <p>Clear information about what constitutes an appropriate simulated workplace environment</p> | <p>Appropriate simulated environments</p> <p>The following general statement is used to describe the requirements for simulations.</p> <p><i>Simulated assessment environments must simulate the real-life working environment where these skills and knowledge would be performed, with all the relevant equipment and resources of that working environment.</i></p> <p>In most units there is an additional requirement for use of the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care and the relevant approved learning framework under the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care.</p> <p>A single unit makes additional specification of <i>interactions with actual babies and toddlers under the age of 24 months under the supervision of an early childhood educator, with two others nominating a small number of additional requirements.</i></p> <p>The extent to which environments, equipment, resources and other people to be involved in assessment are specified is a decision for industry. There is huge variation from the quite general approach taken in early childhood education and care units to the very specific (e.g. in hospitality units, where there are detailed lists of all requirements).</p> <p>The fact that candidates must work for a period of 120 hours and demonstrate their skills in a regulated education and care service is likely to have informed this more general approach as it mitigates the risk of people receiving qualifications without exposure to real work environments.</p> <p>There is an opportunity to re-confirm this requirement, and how it is expressed, with industry when revising the units of competency.</p> |

Implications of analysis

The above analysis suggests that there are some opportunities to re-confirm evidence and assessment requirements with industry and enhance the clarity of wording in the early childhood education and care units.

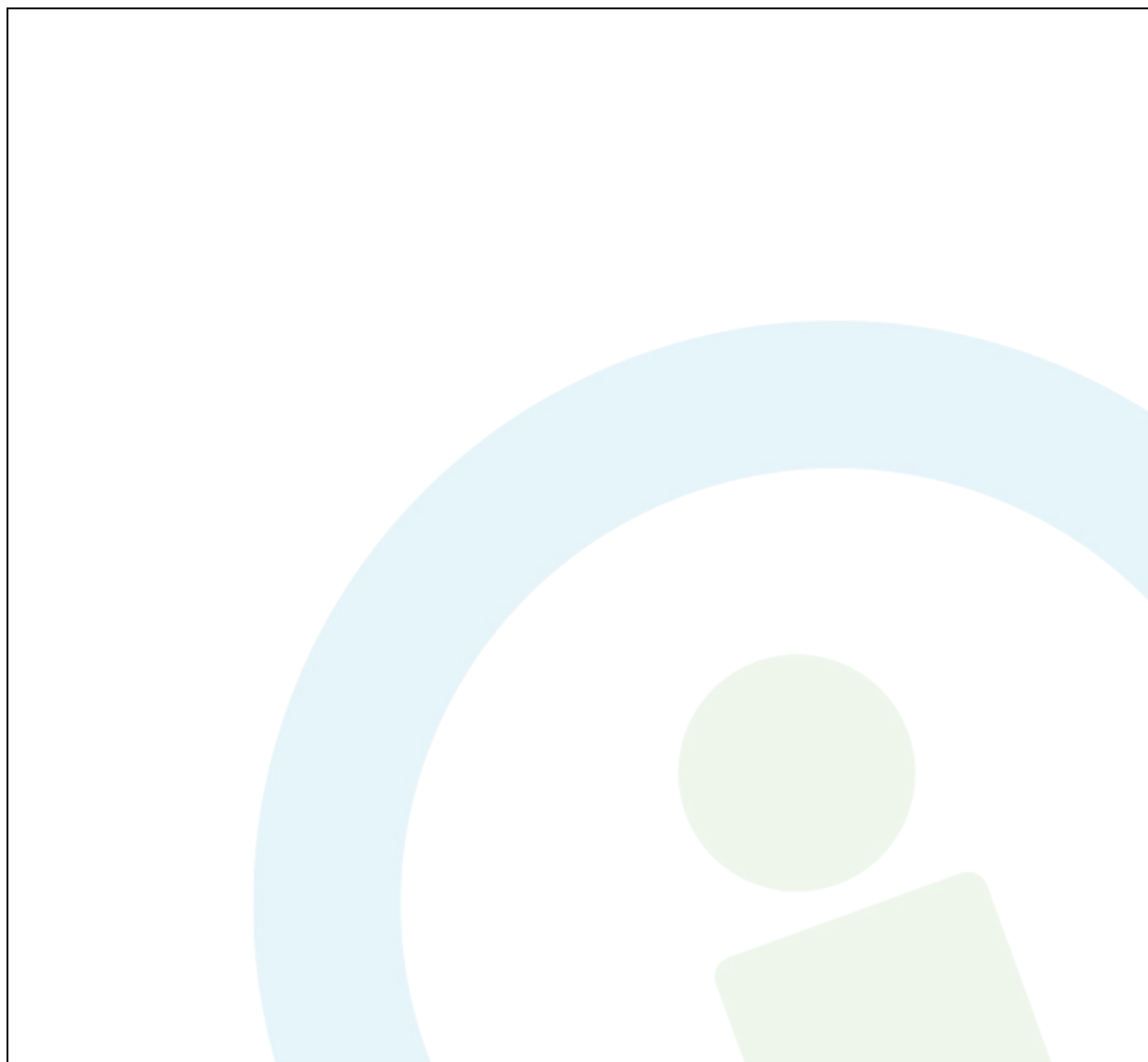
Given the fact that it is four years since the substantive development work for early childhood education and care content, the opportunity for this type of review could be timely. Determining the scope of that review will be a key decision for industry.

There are some balancing factors that also need to be considered:

- the importance of making sure that there is a clear benefit in any proposed changes and that change for change's sake is avoided
- ensuring that the CHC Training Package provides clear guidance but does not become so prescriptive that it hampers innovation and quality in RTO practice
- acknowledging that while wording in the training package is extremely important, the expertise and professional judgement of an RTO and its assessors remain at the heart of quality assessment practice
- the potential to encourage the use of existing guidance material provided in companion volumes and to develop additional materials, in particular national assessment materials, to support consistency in assessment practice across Australia – this would be subject to funding availability for such development.

Your feedback

5. Do you agree with the ASQA recommendation?
6. If you believe change is needed to clarify wording in the assessment requirements of early childhood education and care units of competency, what are the most important changes to be made and why?
7. If you have experience in implementing the early childhood education and care qualifications (as an employer or RTO), what are your broader observations about how candidates are being, or should be, assessed?
8. Would you support the development of national assessment materials for early childhood education and care qualifications?
9. What are your broader views about the need for review of the early childhood education and care qualifications and units of competency? For example:
 - a. Do the qualifications accurately reflect the skills and knowledge required for current job roles? If not, why not?
 - b. Does the content accurately reflect workplace needs? Is it too much or too little? What, if anything, needs to be changed?
 - c. Do the units of competency reflect the requirements of tasks? Could some of the language be improved to better reflect real work requirements? Please provide examples.



Discussion of other ASQA recommendations

Reporting quality concerns

ASQA Recommendation 2


It is recommended that ASQA, Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, and other relevant stakeholders work with the peak bodies that represent the providers of early childhood education and care to improve the process for, and coverage of, early childhood education and care providers informing ASQA of concerns they may have about the quality of training and assessment provided by registered training organisations.

ASQA and the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) jointly met with employer groups in March 2016 to discuss how to leverage ASQA's current complaints system and make better use of intelligence about quality concerns in early childhood education and care training and assessment.

The industry engagement arm of ASQA will take responsibility for ongoing industry liaison and organisation of future meetings. It will also represent ASQA at key stakeholder meetings to collect intelligence and complaints information (e.g. Inter-Jurisdictional Family Day Care Meeting, ACECQA Forum). This initiative will allow ASQA to directly collect information and feed it into the organisation's risk management process. ASQA will also develop Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with state and territory child care regulators.

Your feedback

10. What are your views on how ASQA may better collect and use information about training and assessment quality concerns in early childhood education and care?



Education and communication

Recommendation 3

It is recommended that ASQA—working with the relevant training package developer—develop and implement a systematic communications strategy to engage with registered training organisations delivering early childhood education and care, in order to explain and reinforce the key findings of this review.

This recommendation links with other outcomes of the ASQA review, in particular those relating to:

- improved professional development processes in RTOs both in relation to vocational competence and training and assessment competence and currency, most notably around the skills and knowledge required to interpret training package requirements
- encouraging RTOs to strengthen their engagement with industry employers to ensure that structured workplace learning and assessment is embedded in course delivery.

At the time of releasing this discussion paper, ASQA and SkillsIQ are working collaboratively on a series of RTO webinars for providers of early childhood education and care qualifications. Those webinars will be available on ASQA's YouTube channel for those not able to attend.

A systematic communications strategy could include the webinars and a range of other initiatives.

The potential range of activities could include:

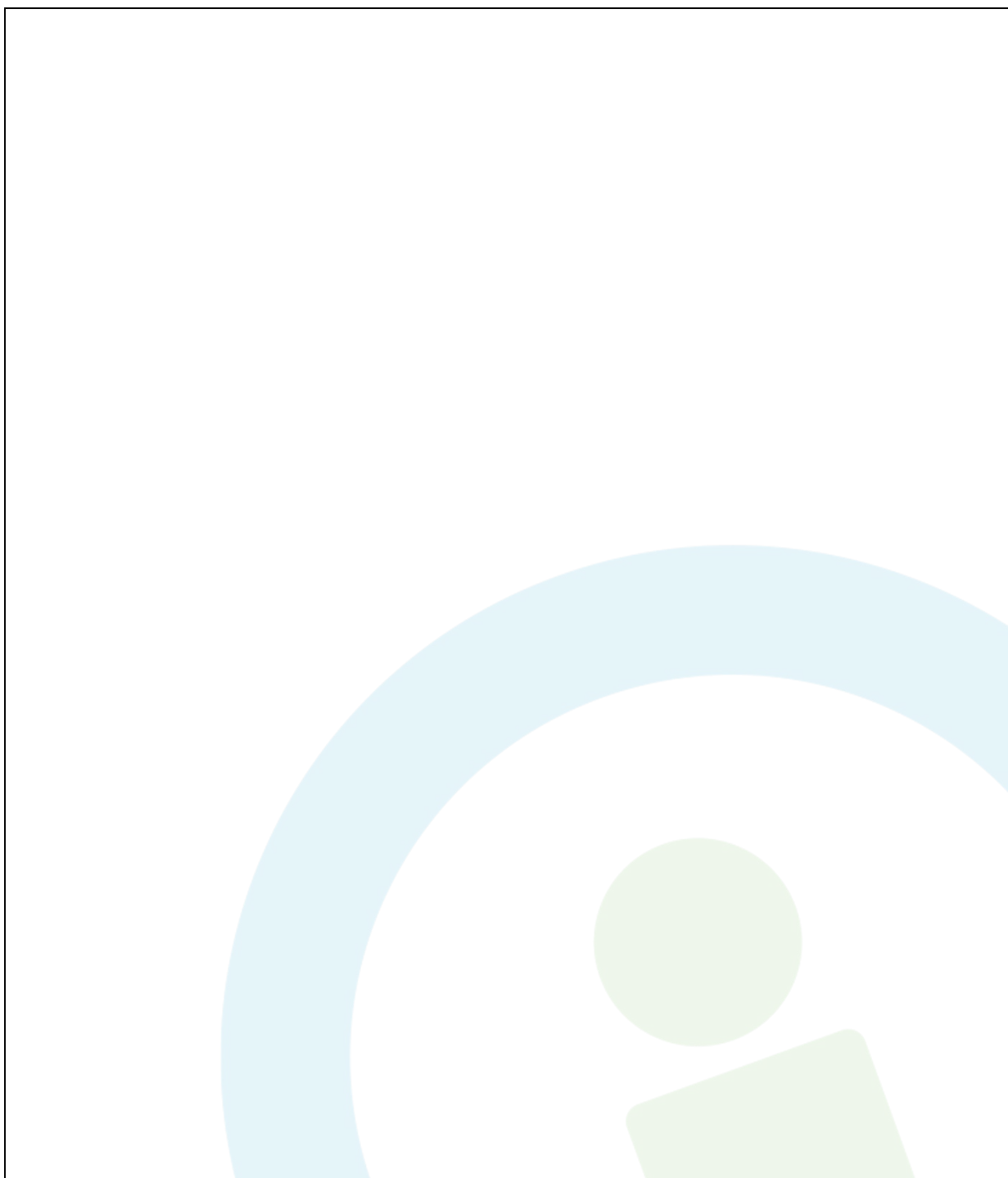
- information bulletins / fact sheets
- webinars
- face-to-face sessions
- moderated online forums
- best practice modelling

However, initiatives like these would require the application of significant resources.

The upcoming webinars (scheduled for October 2016) will provide some opportunity for both ASQA and SkillsIQ to engage with RTOs about preferred approaches to communication and education activities.

Your feedback

11. What are your views on **how** ASQA should engage with RTOs delivering early childhood education and care qualifications?
 - What is the preferred method and regularity of communication?
 - Which agency or organisation is best place to communicate on the nominated issues?
12. What do you consider to be the most important issues to be addressed in any education or communication strategy with RTOs delivering early childhood education and care qualifications? Do you agree with those suggested above?



ASQA targeted audits

ASQA Recommendation 4

It is recommended that, towards the end of 2015, ASQA undertakes:

- a targeted strategic audit on the implementation of *CHC30113 Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care* and *CHC50113 Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care*, and
- a targeted strategic audit of distance learning, including online delivery, of early childhood education and care training.

Since the release of the strategic review report, ASQA has continued to audit the early childhood education and care qualifications and will do so for the next twelve months. This ongoing action replaces the need to undertake another strategic audit. ASQA's decision about continued audit requirements will be informed by its 2017 environmental scan.

RTO engagement with industry

ASQA Recommendation 6

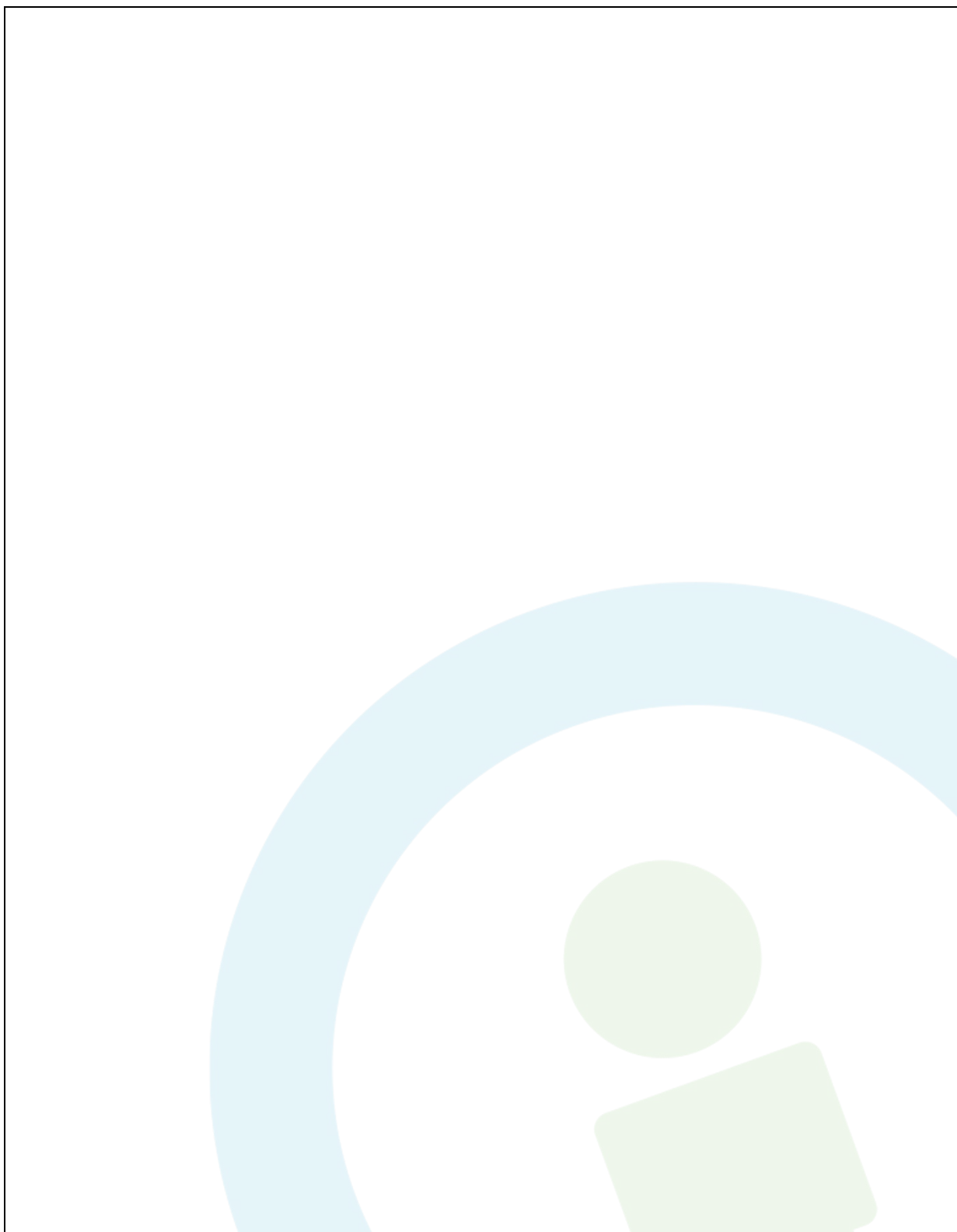
Given that most RTOs reviewed did not effectively embed structured work placement into the learning and assessment strategies—and given the high level of non-compliance against the assessment standard (Standard 15.5 [Standard 1.8 of the 2015 Standards])—it is recommended that RTOs strengthen their engagement with industry employers to ensure that structured workplace learning and assessment is embedded in course delivery.

This recommendation strongly links with recommendation 3, and the need for RTO communication and education.

The fact that the early childhood education and care qualifications require significant hours of work in a regulated education and care service of itself necessitates strengthened RTO engagement with industry. However, effectively embedding structured learning and assessment into course delivery is a detailed and complex process that involves significant levels of tailoring to individual students and workplaces. Development of best practice models, templates and guidance materials may assist RTOs to create a more structured experience. This could include items such as workplace log books and third party reports along with guidance on process. As with other guidance materials, a sufficient level of specificity would be important. It is also worth noting that even the very best guidance cannot replace the need for skilled RTO personnel able to develop creative approaches and nimbly and effectively adapt to varying employer and student needs.

Your feedback

13. How would you describe the key skills and knowledge required by an RTO delivering early childhood education and care qualifications to effectively embed structured learning and assessment? What do you consider to be the key skills gaps to be filled?
14. What types of support materials and other initiatives would be most useful to RTOs delivering early childhood education and care qualifications?



Certificate IV in Training and Assessment

ASQA Recommendation 8

It is recommended that at the next review of the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment:

- the assessment-related units of competency emphasise the analysis and interpretation of competencies, and
- consideration is given to the development of qualifications in VET assessment that could be introduced to supplement the current assessment capabilities of many assessors who currently hold the *TAE40110 Certificate IV in Training and Assessment* (or other qualifications that are considered to be equivalent).

It is recommended that when RTOs develop training materials for a revised Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, that they strengthen the learning and formative assessment activities related to the analysis and interpretation of competencies, in order to enhance the skills and knowledge of assessors in this area.

There was a new release of the Training and Education Training Package (TAE) in April 2016, and ASQA contributed its views about the need for a strengthened focus on assessment during the review period.

Two initiatives in the updated TAE Training Package reflect in part the ASQA recommendations above:

- inclusion of the unit TAEASS502 Design and develop assessment tools in the core of *TAE40116 Certificate IV in Training and Assessment* (note this is one of two additional core units, with the other being *TAELLN411 Address adult language, literacy and numeracy skills*)
- inclusion of a new assessment skill set, *TAESS00010 Advanced Assessor Skill Set*, comprising the following units:
 - *TAEASS501 Provide advanced assessment practice*
 - *TAEASS502 Design and develop assessment tools*
 - *TAEASS503 Lead assessment validation processes*
 - *TAEASS504 Develop and implement recognition strategies*

ASQA has also recommended to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Industry and Skills Council that consideration be given to a requirement for the existing workforce to undertake the two additional core units in the *TAE40116 Certificate IV in Training and Assessment*. ASQA is also undertaking a project to monitor and implement the new TAE Training Package in line with its regulatory strategy.

The analysis and interpretation of competencies is explicitly and implicitly included in a range of TAE units of competency, and should therefore be adequately covered by those completing TAE qualifications. Whether those units *emphasise* this aspect, and perhaps whether they should, is open to debate. Given the outcomes of ASQA and other reviews in recent years expressing concerns about the quality of assessment practice in the VET sector, this topic is likely to remain a focus at a national level.

Your feedback

15. What specific strategies could be employed to encourage RTOs delivering the *TAE40116 Certificate IV in Training and Assessment* to ensure an adequate focus on the analysis and interpretation of competencies?
16. How might RTOs delivering early childhood education and care qualifications in particular be better supported to enhance assessment practice?

ASQA focus on assessment and validation

ASQA Recommendation 9

Given the issues with assessment that have been identified in this and the 2013 strategic reviews (ASQA 2013a and 2013b), it is recommended that ASQA:

- continue to focus on assessment and the implementation of validation strategies in its regulatory work, and
- continue to monitor the effectiveness of the strengthened validation requirements in the *Standards for RTOs 2015*.

Many of the issues raised in the early childhood education and care review apply more broadly in the VET sector, and ASQA continues to focus on the key areas of assessment and validation in its regulatory work. This is likely to continue into the future.

Your feedback

17. What are your views about how ASQA might enhance its work in the areas of assessment and validation?

RTO professional development

ASQA Recommendation 10

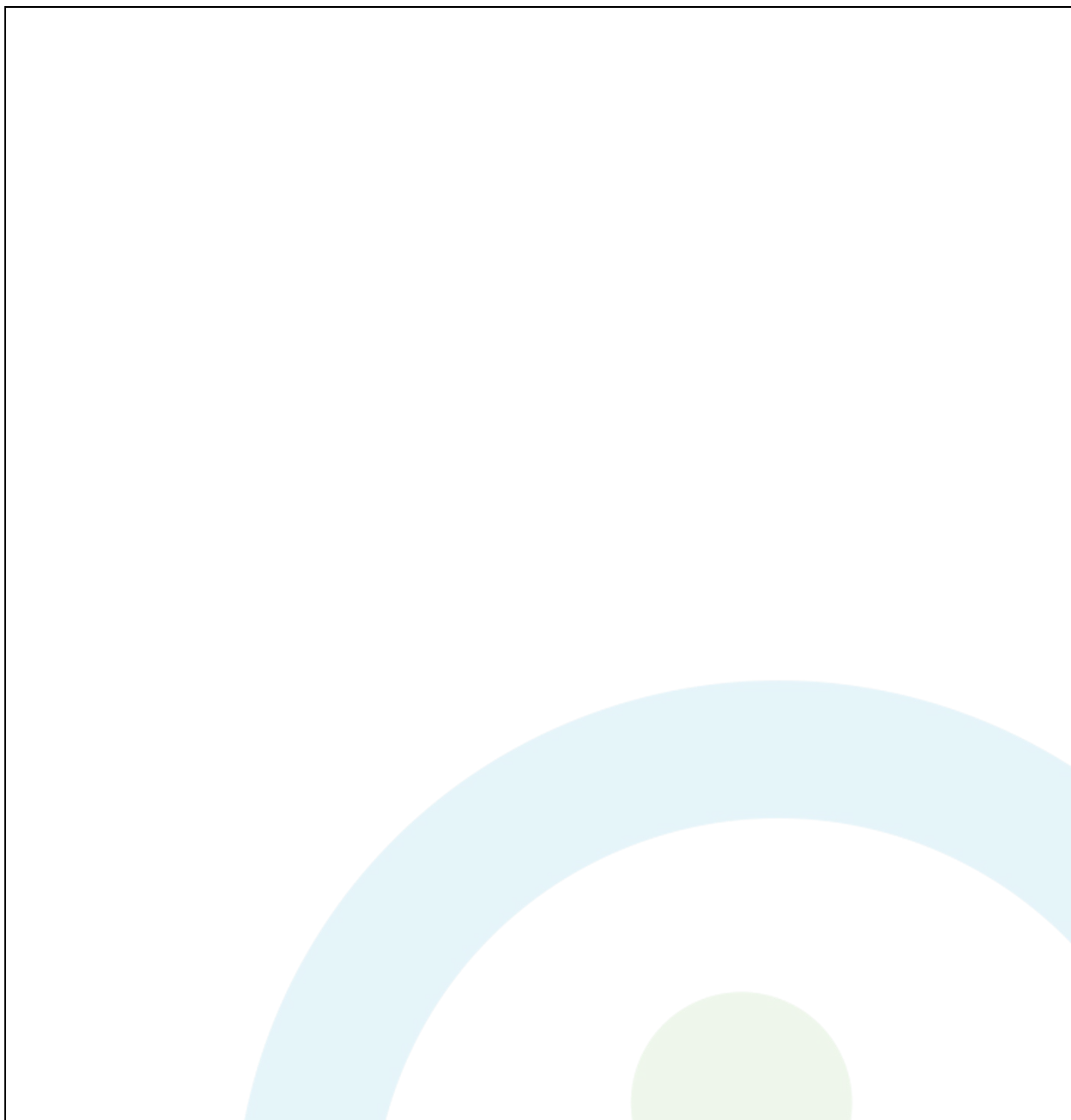
It is recommended that RTOs develop or enhance their ongoing professional development processes by:

- providing advice on relevant professional development for trainers and assessors, and
- investigating more systematic models that will assist trainers and assessors to demonstrate compliance with the Standard.

ASQA found a high level of non-compliance with the standards related to adequacy of trainers and assessors with over 59% of RTOs non-compliant at initial audit. Issues mainly related to industry currency and ongoing development of VET skills and knowledge. Again, this links with recommendation 3, and the need for RTO communication and education. ASQA highlights that this issue is not unique to the early childhood education and care sector. Its communication and education team will work with its regulatory operations area to help develop and enhance professional development tools for RTOs.

Your feedback

18. What are the challenges facing RTOs delivering the early childhood education and care qualifications in the professional development of trainers and assessors, and what are your ideas to address those challenges?
19. Are there best practice examples of systemic professional development models that could be considered?



Next steps

Skills IQ will gather feedback from stakeholders through this discussion paper and other targeted surveys between August and October 2016. An analysis of feedback will form the basis of the Business Case for any change. The Business Case will be developed under the guidance and direction of the Children's Education and Care Industry Reference Committee, and be submitted to the AISC for consideration.

We look forward to your feedback and ideas.

Appendix A: Early childhood education & care units of competency & related qualifications

Full details of unit and qualification content can be found on training.gov.au

Units of Competency

- CHCECE001 Develop cultural competence
- CHCECE002 Ensure the health and safety of children
- CHCECE003 Provide care for children
- CHCECE004 Promote and provide healthy food and drinks
- CHCECE005 Provide care for babies and toddlers
- CHCECE006 Support behaviour of children and young people
- CHCECE007 Develop positive and respectful relationships with children
- CHCECE009 Use an approved learning framework to guide practice
- CHCECE010 Support the holistic development of children in early childhood
- CHCECE011 Provide experiences to support children's play and learning 1864
- CHCECE012 Support children to connect with their world
- CHCECE013 Use information about children to inform practice
- CHCECE014 Comply with family day care administration requirements
- CHCECE015 Attend to daily functions in home based child care
- CHCECE016 Establish and maintain a safe and healthy environment for children
- CHCECE017 Foster the holistic development and wellbeing of the child in early childhood
- CHCECE018 Nurture creativity in children
- CHCECE019 Facilitate compliance in an education and care service
- CHCECE020 Establish and implement plans for developing cooperative behaviour
- CHCECE021 Implement strategies for the inclusion of all children
- CHCECE022 Promote children's agency
- CHCECE023 Analyse information to inform learning
- CHCECE024 Design and implement the curriculum to foster children's learning and development
- CHCECE025 Embed sustainable practices in service operations
- CHCECE026 Work in partnership with families to provide appropriate education and care for children
- CHCECE027 Promote equity in access to the service
- CHCECE028 Collaborate with families to plan service and supports
- CHCECE029 Respond to problems and complaints about the service

Qualifications

- CHC30113 Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care, and
- CHC50113 Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care
- CHC40113 Certificate IV in School Aged Education and Care
- CHC50113 Diploma of School Aged Education and Care
- CHC30213 Certificate III in Education Support
- CHC40213 Certificate IV in Education Support

Appendix B: Consultation questions

Questions on key factors influencing quality

1. In your view, what are the overarching factors (both within and outside of the training package), that have the biggest impact on the quality of training outcomes? How would you rate the relative importance of those factors?

Questions on ASQA recommendations that directly impact the CHC Training Package

ASQA recommendation 1

2. Do you agree with the ASQA recommendation?
3. What are your views on the value of including an advisory statement about volume of learning in the description of early childhood education and care qualifications?
4. Do you believe that the development of additional guidance materials for RTOs delivering early childhood education and care qualifications would assist in supporting training of an adequate duration? What sort of materials would achieve the most impact? What other initiatives could be considered?

ASQA recommendations 5 and 7

5. Do you agree with the ASQA recommendation?
6. If you believe change is needed to clarify wording in the assessment requirements of early childhood education and care units of competency, what are the most important changes to be made and why?
7. If you have experience in implementing the early childhood education and care qualifications (as an employer or RTO), what are your broader observations about how candidates are being, or should be, assessed?
8. Would you support the development of national assessment materials for early childhood education and care qualifications?
9. What are your broader views about the need for review of the early childhood education and care qualifications and units of competency? For example:
 - o Do the qualifications still accurately reflect the skills and knowledge required for current job roles? If not, why not?
 - o Does the breadth and depth of content accurately reflect workplace needs? Is it too much or too little? What, if anything, needs to be changed?
 - o How well does the language in units of competency reflect the actual requirements of task? Could some of the language be improved to better reflect real work requirements? Please provide examples.

Questions on other ASQA recommendations

ASQA recommendation 2

10. What are your views on how ASQA may better collect and use information about training and assessment quality concerns in early childhood education and care?

ASQA recommendation 3

11. What are your views on **how** ASQA should engage with RTOs delivering early childhood education and care qualifications?
 - o What is the preferred method and regularity of communication?

- Which agency or organisation is best place to communicate on the nominated issues?
- 12. What do you consider to be the most important issues to be addressed in any education or communication strategy with RTOs delivering early childhood education and care qualifications? Do you agree with those suggested above?

ASQA recommendation 4

- No specific questions

ASQA recommendation 6

- 13. How would you describe the key skills and knowledge required by an RTO delivering early childhood education and care qualifications to effectively embed structured learning and assessment? What do you consider to be the key skills gaps to be filled?
- 14. What types of support materials and other initiatives would be most useful to RTOs delivering early childhood education and care qualifications?

ASQA recommendation 8

- 15. What specific strategies could be employed to encourage RTOs delivering the TAE40116 Certificate IV in Training and Assessment to ensure an adequate focus on the analysis and interpretation of competencies?
- 16. How might RTOs delivering early childhood education and care qualifications in particular be better supported to enhance assessment practice?

ASQA recommendation 9

- 17. What are your views about how ASQA might enhance its work in the areas of assessment and validation?

ASQA recommendation 10

- 18. What are the challenges facing RTOs delivering the early childhood education and care qualifications in the professional development of trainers and assessors, and what are your ideas to address those challenges?
- 19. Are there best practice examples of systemic professional development models that could be considered?