

Guide to
MANAGING YOUR
APPRENTICE



Manufacturing and
Associated Industries

2010

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Ai Group's State Education and Training Advisers

This booklet was designed as a national guide to assist companies who are employers of apprentices and includes information on a range of topics including the apprenticeship system, delivering the apprenticeship, employing an apprentice and communicating with your apprentice. Training providers in each State will develop their own set of procedures to comply with the requirements of the training system.

Ai Group's Education and Training Advisers can assist employers to further understand the national training system and how it is implemented in their particular state. For further information contact your local adviser.

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Useful contacts and websites

Australian Industry Group

aigroup.com.au

Australian Apprenticeships

australianapprenticeships.gov.au

Find an Australian Apprenticeship Centre 13 38 73

Industry Skills Councils

isc.org.au

National Training Information Service

ntis.gov.au

McCrindle Research

mccrindle.com.au/resources.htm

Training Packages Explained

www.tpatwork.com

State Training Authorities

Australian Capital Territory det.act.gov.au	02 6205 8555
New South Wales skilling.nsw.gov.au	13 28 11
Northern Territory det.nt.gov.au	08 8901 1357
Queensland training.qld.gov.au	1800 210 210
South Australia skills.sa.gov.au	1800 673 097
Tasmania skills.tas.gov.au	1800 655 846
Victoria skills.vic.gov.au	1300 722 603
Western Australia trainingwa.wa.gov.au	13 19 54

Glossary

AAC	Australian Apprenticeship Centre - contracted by the Australian Government to provide one-stop shops for employers and Australian Apprentices
RTO	Registered Training Organisation - training provider recognised by the State Training Authority e.g. TAFE Institute, private training provider.
STA	State Training Authority – State government body with legislative responsibility for apprenticeships in that state.
Training Contract	An agreement between an employer and apprentice/trainee detailing training conditions and the type of training the apprentice/trainee will receive.
Training Plan	An agreement between an employer, RTO and apprentice outlining what competencies will be obtained, and where and when training and assessment will take place.
Training Package	A set of nationally endorsed standards and qualifications used to recognise and assess people's skills in a specific industry, industry sector or enterprise.

Part 1

The apprenticeship system

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Part 1 - The apprenticeship system

Introduction

The apprenticeship system, in some form or other, has been around for hundreds of years. In that time it has evolved from an informal means of training young craftsmen on the job to the highly structured system we have today. The first legislation concerning apprentices in Australia was enacted in NSW in 1894, and stated that apprenticeships could be no longer than seven years duration, and finished at the age of 21. Terms were reduced to five years after the First World War, and then to four years in the 1960s. Over the past 40 years we have seen a system evolve whereby most apprentices complete the formal component of their training in the first three years of the apprenticeship, allowing the fourth year to be spent practising and refining those competencies in the workplace.

In the past 60 years, we have seen the introduction of technical colleges, pre-apprenticeship courses, adult apprenticeships, group training schemes, incentives for employers, school based apprenticeships, VET in schools and a host of other changes.

The apprenticeship system, while being one of the oldest forms of employment, continues to evolve to meet the needs of an economy that continually grows in complexity. But it's evolution rather than revolution.

Recent initiatives

Over the past decade, Governments have been developing strategies to deal with the ongoing shortages of skilled tradespeople in Australia and the need to make trade apprenticeships more attractive to young people without diminishing the quality of training outcomes. In February 2006, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) reached agreement that apprenticeships should be completed once an apprentice has achieved competency, and that reference to fixed durations in Awards and legislation should be removed.

The Australian Industry Group is a strong supporter of the COAG decision as a key element in helping to make apprenticeships better meets the needs of the modern economy.

In March 2006, the Metal, Engineering and Associated Industries Award 1998 was amended to enable engineering apprentices to progress through the four stage wage structure and complete their apprenticeship on the basis of achieving competency rather than serving a fixed term of four years.

In January 2010, Modern Awards were introduced. Clause 15.8 (b) of the Manufacturing and Associated Industries and Occupations Award 2010 allows for apprenticeships to be completed in less than four years provided the apprentice completes the relevant trade training and the apprentice has the necessary practical experience to achieve competency in the skills covered by the training agreement.

The determination as to whether this condition has been met shall be by agreement between the Registered Training Organisation (RTO), the employer and the apprentice. Where there is a disagreement concerning this matter the matter may be referred to the relevant State/Territory apprenticeship authority for determination.

Competency-based wage progression and completion of apprenticeships is a win-win for employers and apprentices of all ages:

- Industry demand for skilled labour is met through adequate supply
- Young people are rewarded with qualifications and pay based on competency achieved rather than time served – this leads to more apprenticeship completions
- Mature apprentices are rewarded with recognition of valued skills brought to the industry and credit is given towards achievement of competency and progression towards qualifications.

The benefits of competency based progression and completion

Ai Group has long been advocating the need to link competency with qualification achievement. The supply of people commencing apprenticeships has not met the demand of industry for many years. One of the key reasons for this gap between supply and demand is the perceived unattractiveness of apprenticeships and trades jobs to young people. In a modern, booming economy, the prospect of accelerating a career through personal achievement rather than time serving meets the career demands of today's youth and positions trades as a competitive career option.

Competency-based wage progression and completion of apprenticeships sends a clear message to young people that the industry values their skills and is prepared to reward those who work hard to learn their trade as well and as quickly as they can. It shows young people that the industry is in tune with the times and understands that it needs to compete to find good people to work in it. For older apprentices, it demonstrates that the skills and knowledge brought to the job are valued and recognised in a practical sense, by enabling them to gain credit for what they can already do.

State administrative arrangements

All states are in the process of implementing competency based apprenticeship systems. While arrangements will vary to some extent around the country, the key element will be that RTOs will contact employers when they intend to sign off apprentices as competent. This will happen at key stages of the apprenticeship; namely where it will trigger wage rises or completion. The employer is required to confirm achievement of competency before the RTO can record the assessment.

What has changed?

It has been the role of RTOs to assess the competence of apprentices for years however this has not always happened in consultation with apprentices' workplaces. The determination of competence, and the awarding of a qualification, previously was not necessarily linked to the completion of the apprenticeship. Now when an RTO signs off an apprentice's competence and the stage progression requirements have been met, the apprentice's wage will rise. When all competencies are completed, the apprenticeship will be completed. The Modern Award requires the agreement of the employer, the RTO and the apprentice. The RTO cannot determine this alone. This requirement has been included in State Training Authority directions to RTOs, including TAFE.

RTOs must make an assessment of an apprentice's competence against competency standards and if the apprentice is deemed competent the RTO must contact the employer for confirmation of the apprentice's competence. The three parties must agree for the apprentice to be signed off and the wage adjusted.

Old System	New System
Training Contract signed with apprentice (and parent if required).	Training Contract signed with apprentice (and parent if required).
RTO contacted for enrolment.	RTO contacted for enrolment.
Training Plan agreed between RTO, employer and apprentice.	Training Plan agreed between RTO, employer and apprentice.
Apprentice assessed against competencies by the RTO and eventually receives qualification.	RTO contacts employer to confirm apprentice's competence before finalising assessments.
Apprentice's pay rises on each anniversary.	Apprentice's pay rises on attainment of 25%, 50% and 75% of competency points or on each anniversary, whichever comes first.
Apprentice receives 'trade papers' after the qualification is received and term of apprenticeship is finished.	Apprenticeship completed and qualification received when employer, RTO and apprentice agree that all competencies have been attained. Trade papers may be issued by the STA.

Employer's responsibilities under the new arrangements	RTO's responsibilities under the new arrangements
<p>Negotiate a Training Plan with the RTO that is appropriate for both the workplace and the trade.</p>	<p>Negotiate a Training Plan with the employer that is appropriate for both the workplace and the trade, and that aligns the training to when tasks are performed in the workplace.</p>
<p>Provide the apprentice with work that is relevant to the trade and in accordance with the Training Plan, including synchronising the work with training for a particular competency.</p>	<p>Provide training in accordance with the Training Plan within the agreed time frames.</p>
<p>Confirm the apprentice's competence when contacted by the RTO or have appropriate evidence if disputing the apprentice's competence.</p>	<p>Contact the employer for confirmation of competence at appropriate stages of the apprenticeship, and especially where confirmation will trigger a pay progression.</p>
<p>Ensure the apprentice's pay accurately reflects the correct stage for the competencies achieved.</p>	<p>Issue qualification.</p>

The apprenticeship training program

How can an employer make competent and confident judgements about an apprentice's competence? The following information is designed to help you make those judgements.

All apprentices, whatever industry they work in, are required to enrol in a formal training qualification as part of their apprenticeship.

Key facts about apprenticeship training programs in any industry

- Apprentices must be enrolled in a formal training qualification
- This qualification is made up of a list of competency units that relate to the apprentice's work
- In the Metal and Engineering Industry, these units of competency are the same as those used for determining pay classifications according to the Award
- At the commencement of an apprenticeship, a Training Plan must be developed and signed off by the RTO, the employer and the apprentice
- The Training Plan lists
 - (i) units of competency to be undertaken by the apprentice, and
 - (ii) where and when the training will take place (e.g. TAFE or in the workplace)

The Manufacturing and Associated Industries and Occupations Award 2010 allows for an apprentice's wage to progress through each of the four stages (formerly years) of the apprenticeship on achievement of 25% of the total competency points in the training qualification, and for the apprenticeship to be fully completed when 100% of competencies are achieved.

Wage progression and apprenticeship completion in the Award

Implications of changes

The changes to competency based pay progression and completion mean that unless employers fully understand the implications of signing off competencies, they may mistakenly authorise an increase in pay levels or an early completion of the apprenticeship.

Clause 25.6 (a) of the Manufacturing and Associated Industries and Occupations Award 2010 reads as follows:

Stage of apprenticeship	Entry, exit and progression requirements
Stage 1	<p>Entry Nil entry requirements</p> <p>Exit There is no exit point at this stage</p>
Stage 2	<p>Entry An apprentice enters Stage 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • on attainment of 25% of the total competency points for the relevant AQF Certificate III qualification specified in the training plan ; or • 12 months* after commencing the apprenticeship; whichever is earlier <p>Exit There is no exit point at this stage</p>
Stage 3	<p>Entry An apprentice enters Stage 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • on attainment of 50% of the total competency points for the relevant AQF Certificate III qualification specified in the training plan; or • 12 months* after commencing Stage 2; whichever is earlier. <p>Exit There is no exit point at this stage</p>

Stage of apprenticeship	Entry, exit and progression requirements
Stage 4	<p>Entry An apprentice enters Stage 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • on attainment of 75% of the total competency points for the relevant AQF Certificate III qualification specified in the training plan; or • 12 months* after commencing Stage 3; whichever is earlier <p>Exit Upon the attainment of 100% of the total competency points for the relevant Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Certificate III qualification specified in the training plan and subject to clauses 15.6, 15.7, 15.8 and 15.17 an apprentice will exit with the relevant AQF Certificate III qualification</p>

* Subject to clause 15.17 – Lost Time

What is competency?

The broad concept of industry competency concerns the ability to perform particular tasks and duties to the standard of performance expected in the workplace. Competency requires the application of specified skills, knowledge and attitudes relevant to effective participation in an industry, industry sector or enterprise.¹

¹ (definition from Metal and Engineering Training Package)

What is the standard and who decides what it is?

Training Package qualifications are based on standards designed in consultation with industry. RTOs are required to:

- ensure that assessment of competency is based on those industry agreed standards and
- provide assessment tasks which require the apprentice to demonstrate skills, knowledge and attitudes to the level expected in the workplace.

If you, as the employer, are to make an informed judgement about the competence of your apprentice, you must firstly have a clear and consistent understanding of the industry standards and also what you expect to see demonstrated in your workplace.

What is in a competency standard?

Each unit of competence in a Training Package qualification specifies the knowledge and skills required to perform a particular task or function to the required standard in the workplace. It outlines how that knowledge and skill is applied in the workplace and the various situations that might allow for that knowledge and skill to be demonstrated. The apprentice is assessed against the specifications in the competency unit.

There are a number of different components contained in a unit of competence, but an employer making a judgement about the competency of an apprentice needs to concentrate on two parts:

- the elements and performance criteria
- the required skills and knowledge

Elements of competency

The *elements* list the essential outcomes of the competency. The apprentice **MUST** be able to satisfactorily demonstrate all of these things. For example, the elements of the **unit of competency: MEM07006B Perform lathe operations** are:

1. Observe safety precautions
2. Determine job requirements
3. Mount job
4. Perform turning operations
5. Check components for conformance with specifications

Performance Criteria

The *performance criteria* specify the standard to be achieved in each of the elements. The performance criteria for element 4 (Perform turning operations) of the unit of competency Perform lathe operations are:

- 4.1 Speeds and feeds are calculated using appropriate mathematical techniques and reference material.*
- 4.2 The full range of accessories on a centre lathe are used including three and four jaw chucks, centres, face plate, steadies, cross slide and tailstock.*
- 4.3 Turning operations are performed to specification.*

Key consideration in determining competency

Can the apprentice perform these tasks to the standard expected in your workplace?

Required skills and knowledge

The *required skills* and *required knowledge* provide further information for the assessor to make an informed judgement about competence.

Continuing with the same example, the **required skills** are:

- interpreting technical drawings/specifications in relation to turning
- setting up jobs using appropriate equipment
- calculating and setting cutting feeds and speeds appropriate to the job
- checking that job is concentric, running true etc.
- safely operating lathes
- performing turning operations.

The required knowledge is:

- sequence of operations to achieve the job requirements
- tool type and geometry to achieve the required specifications and for work pieces of different materials
- numerical operations, geometry and calculations/formulae within the scope of this unit
- the consequences of varying speeds and feeds from the optimum rates calculated
- characteristics of different materials and their effects on cutting speeds and feeds

- application of lathe accessories
- techniques, tools and equipment to measure materials and machined components
- use and application of personal protective equipment
- safe work practices and procedures
- hazards and control measures associated with lathe operations.

Understanding what should be known and demonstrated by an apprentice so that he or she can be signed off as competent can help an employer make an informed judgement about an apprentice's performance in the workplace.

Verifying the RTO's assessment

Two things are critical if an employer is to verify the RTO's assessment of an apprentice's competence:

- the list of competency units contained in the apprentice's Training Plan must be relevant to what the apprentice is doing in the workplace, and
- the employer must give the apprentice enough opportunities to apply his/her skills in the workplace in order to become competent.

Competency Standards must be relevant to the job

The RTO is required to tailor a Training Plan to meet the needs of the apprentice's workplace. It is important that you take an active interest in the choice of competency units to make sure they are relevant to your business. Sometimes there will be situations where you are not able to offer the full range of experiences for an apprentice to properly learn the trade, or where you want the apprentice to learn skills in new technologies not yet introduced to your workplace. In these situations you will need to rely on the RTO's assessment of the apprentice's competence.

Under the Training Contract it is the employer's responsibility to provide work that is relevant and appropriate to the vocation and also to the achievement of the qualification.

Therefore, as far as possible, the competency units in a Training Plan should be ones that can be applied and assessed in the workplace. It is your responsibility to agree on the list of competency units in the Training Plan with the RTO and the apprentice. It is in your interest to ensure that they cover all of the skills you want your apprentice to learn.

If you do not have a copy of the Metal and Engineering Competency Standards, the RTO will be able to provide the specifications listed in each of the units selected. Ai Group's Education and Training Advisers can provide advice on obtaining copies of the Competency Standards.

Training Plans

The employer, RTO and apprentice negotiate and agree about the training and assessment that will take place during the apprenticeship. This agreement is known as the Training Plan and is legally binding on all parties.

A training plan outlines some of the major areas that you as the employer need to focus on in negotiations with the RTO. Key areas include:

- competencies selected,
- expected starting and completion dates for each competency and
- delivery and assessment methods chosen.

Before signing off on the Training Plan, all parties need to have come to a common understanding and agreement about the assessment process. This includes a detailed plan of assessment of all relevant units of competency both on the job (in the workplace) and off the job (at the RTO).

This is also the time to identify:

- how competency based progression will be applied and
- the opportunities for progressing through the training faster than the nominal duration of the apprenticeship.

It is important to understand that the extent of acceleration in an apprenticeship depends not only on the capability of the apprentice but also on the capacity of the employer and the RTO to assist and encourage the apprentice's accelerated progress.

Apprentices need to practise their off-the-job training

Apprentices attend off-the-job training to learn the theory behind trade skills, and to start developing and honing their practical skills. However, an apprenticeship is a full time job. They may attend training one day per week or in blocks of weeks, but the rest of the time they are learning how to apply that training in the workplace.

It is when the theory and skills learnt in the RTO are supported by workplace practice, repetition of tasks and guidance from supervisors that competence is most likely achieved. As discussed previously, competence is being able to perform to the standard expected in the workplace. Tradespeople are so highly valued in the labour market because of the confidence that industry has in the training they have undertaken with an RTO supported by workplace learning and application over a number of years. This important aspect of apprenticeship training has not changed. Apprentices continue to undertake formal training and they will continue to apply their training in the workplace. *The change is that they can progress according to their ability, rather than time served.*

Apprentices can now progress according to their ability rather than the time they serve.

This serves to reinvigorate the apprenticeship system while continuing to provide the best trade training industry can offer.

The employer's role in maintaining quality outcomes

Progressing apprentices according to their achievement of competency provides an opportunity to reinvigorate the apprenticeship system while continuing to ensure apprentices receive the best trade training the industry can offer. However, it requires active participation on the part of the employer to ensure quality outcomes. You need to ensure that the Training Plan is right for the job, and the apprentice is given appropriate on-the-job training relevant to the competencies listed in the Training Plan.

For example, if the Training Plan indicates that the apprentice will be undertaking the unit Perform lathe operations in the second semester in off-the-job training, the second semester would be a good time to give the apprentice some experience in using a lathe in the workplace. This would enable you to make an informed judgement about whether the apprentice is competent to the standard expected in the workplace when the RTO seeks agreement on the apprentice's readiness to be signed off.

Alternatively, if you are aware that the apprentice won't be using a lathe at work until the following year, then the Training Plan should be amended to ensure that the off-the-job training for the use of the lathe is delivered at that time.

The benefit for the apprentice is that relevant workplace reinforcement occurs simultaneously to what's being learned off-the-job. Achievement of competence is more likely if the work experience coincides with (or occurs shortly after) the off-the-job training. It can also mean that the underpinning theory is grasped more effectively, when the apprentice sees its application in a practical context as its being taught.

Keeping records

The employer is required to maintain records to confirm that effective training is occurring. The records to be kept may vary depending on workplace requirements however some basic records that are likely to be kept are:

Examples of basic records to be maintained to confirm effective training is occurring

- Approval letter from State Training Authority stating the Australian Apprenticeship Training Contract has been approved;
 - Copy of the Australian Apprenticeship Training Contract;
 - Copy of the full Training Plan;
 - Copy of any amendment to the Training Contract or Training Plan;
 - Record of the time the RTO spends with you and the apprentice at the workplace, what activities were undertaken and what was discussed;
 - Records of time worked and wages paid;
 - Apprentice workbooks, log books or records of training supplied by the RTO;
 - Results of any on-the-job training undertaken by the apprentice or any other evidence of competence in the workplace; and
 - Records of progress meetings or performance feedback sessions.
-

Working with your RTO

Most RTOs want the same for your apprentice as you do. They also want to develop tradespeople who will become highly skilled and valued members of Australia's workforce. RTO staff will want to work with you to achieve this.

Good communication with the RTO is the key to managing your apprentice's training properly. A good relationship with the RTO should mean that employers will not be taken by surprise when they are contacted to sign the apprentice off. Some ways you might set up this communication are:

- Talk to the apprentice's teachers about what he or she is doing, and about how he or she is progressing;
- Suggest areas where you think the apprentice may need some extra attention.

What if you don't consider the apprentice to be competent?

Apprentices all learn at different rates. Some develop skills quickly, while others will take a lot longer. You have the right to dispute an RTO's judgement that an apprentice is competent.

During off-the-job training, an apprentice may be required to complete one or two exercises or projects as well as a theory exam to meet the requirements for a particular unit. However, the conditions off-the-job under which the exercise is completed, including time constraints, tooling, associated tasks and commercial realities will be different from those in the workplace. This could mean that application of the skill in the workplace is not up to industry standard.

It is entirely appropriate to say to the RTO that an apprentice needs more time to develop skills in the workplace before competence can be agreed. However, it's important that there is some evidence to support such a view.

Dispute mechanisms have been put into place to deal with formal disagreements between the employer and the RTO. Where necessary, you should contact the relevant State or Territory Training Authority to access information on the disputation process. Ai Group's Education and Training Advisers can assist with this.

Part 2

Delivering the apprenticeship

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Part 2- Delivering the apprenticeship

Setting up an environment for success

Setting goals and understanding aspirations

Supervisors should play a major role in identifying and supporting the goals and aspirations of apprentices. Goals are what the apprentice strives to achieve or wants to accomplish. Aspirations embrace a series of short, intermediate and long term goals which enable an individual to reach an ambition. Supervisors should constantly reinforce the goals and aspirations of their apprentices focusing on the end goal of becoming quality tradespersons by completing their training plan. Goals give direction and focus to action and can be used as a compass by the supervisor to skilfully guide the apprentice through tough times. Supervisors need to be aware of the goals and aspirations of their apprentices and support them accordingly.

A supervisor should:

- Be familiar with the Training Plan
- Know the delivery mode and schedule of training
- Allocate workplace tasks to coincide with the theory and knowledge being

Planning the training

Every apprentice has a training plan that outlines the what, when and how regarding their formal (RTO) training. Competence is best achieved when the theory and skills learnt in the RTO are supported by workplace practice, repetition of tasks and guidance from supervisors. As discussed previously, competence is being able to perform to the standard expected in the workplace.

It is the responsibility of the supervisor, wherever possible, to align the topics being formally studied with tasks that the apprentice is performing on the job. To achieve this you need to become familiar with the training plan, including the delivery mode (day a week, block release, on site delivery), and allocate workplace tasks at a time that supports the underpinning theory and knowledge being delivered by the training provider (RTO).

This means for example that if an apprentice undertakes formal training in welding aluminium during his or her second stage of the apprenticeship, then the workplace duties should be planned to allow practice at welding aluminium on the job at that time. Alternatively, if you are aware that the apprentice won't be performing the task at work until much later, then the Training Plan should be amended to ensure that the off-the-job training relevant to the task is delivered at that time. Where an apprentice undertakes off the job training via block release (up to 7 weeks at a time), you should develop an on-the-job work plan to support the knowledge aspect of the competencies being undertaken during the period of block training.

Allocating resources and time

Adequate resources must be allocated by companies to ensure that apprenticeships are implemented effectively.

Resources to be considered when implementing apprenticeships.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervision. • allocating time off the job to undertake training, assessment and administrative support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support systems for the apprentice (mentors/coaches). • Equipment.
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Resources need to be identified and reviewed regularly in each area where apprenticeship objectives and targets are to be achieved. *A lack of resources can cause the apprentice to under perform and not meet the standards to achieve competency at the first attempt.* Management must be committed from the outset and secure adequate resources to make the apprenticeship work.

Providing training through instruction and demonstration of work skills

Much of the on the job training undertaken by an apprentice is based on observing and learning from tradespeople as they are undertaking workplace tasks. Apprentice supervisors therefore need to have highly developed instructional and demonstration skills.

Instructional and demonstration skills

These skills focus on providing a visual display of how something works or how to do something. Whilst demonstrating, you should explain the reasons for and significance of each step. When practical, you should allow apprentices to repeat the procedure in a “hands on” practice session to reinforce the learning process. Make every effort to get apprentices to observe correct procedures the first time they try a new task. By immediately correcting the apprentice’s mistakes and reinforcing proper procedures, you can help them learn the task more quickly.

On the job assessment practices

Determining Competency – Employer responsibilities

Under the system of competency based progression and completion employers now play a vital role in determining the competency of an apprentice. For your apprentice to be deemed competent in any unit, he or she must pass two separate and distinct assessment requirements.

1. The first requirement is to successfully undertake the relevant training provided by the RTO.
2. The second requirement is that your apprentice must demonstrate, to the employer’s satisfaction, that he or she can apply the skills and knowledge learnt to an industry standard in the workplace.

When, and only when, an employer is confident that the apprentice has achieved this second requirement should you sign off the paperwork to confirm that your apprentice is competent.

You should be aware that it is your signature on the competency documentation that will trigger possible early pay increases or the early completion of the apprenticeship itself. ***For this reason it should be clearly understood exactly who within a company has the authority to sign off on competency-related paper work.*** If practical, to help eliminate confusion, this task should be allocated to only one person in the organisation.

Gathering evidence and keeping records

Keeping accurate records of the work your apprentice has undertaken is an effective way to support competency decisions. Many apprentices are issued with log books by their training providers. It is the apprentice's responsibility to complete the log book but supervisors should also ensure that the apprentice is filling them out correctly. In addition to the standard apprentice log book employers may choose to use other forms of evidence such as knowledge and/or observation check sheets to support their competency decisions.

Using knowledge checks and observation sheets

Knowledge checklists outline a range of questions that apprentices can be asked to show that they understand relevant theories and the application of those theories in the workplace. Observation checklists allow a supervisor to document the performance levels of an apprentice when undertaking a particular task. Each checklist is drafted to reflect the assessment requirements of the particular competency in question. Examples of both Knowledge checklists and observation sheets are attached in *appendix A*.

Competency disputes – moving forward with a plan

As the employer, you may eventually find yourself in a position where either the apprentice and/or the training provider approach you to sign off on a competency or series of competencies which you don't believe the apprentice is competent in.

As discussed in Part 1, there is nothing wrong with insisting that an apprentice needs more time to develop his or her skills in the workplace before you are prepared to confirm that he or she is competent. Most times, the training provider will accept this and agree to review the matter at a later date. It may arise, however, that a training provider will challenge your opinion and, when this occurs you will need to be able to clearly articulate your views on the competency of the apprentice.

Guidelines for dealing with competency disputes

When communicating the message to the training provider or apprentice it is recommended that the following guidelines be followed:

- base the argument on factual examples that can be substantiated, and
- directly link deficiencies in performance to the assessment elements detailed in the competency in question (refer to the training package for a copy of the competency)
- when all parties are aware of the issues put a plan in place to work through the identified gaps

There is no single correct method for moving forward from this point. A suggested approach is as follows:

- work with the training provider to design a workplace task or series of tasks to assess the competency of the apprentice
- give the design task/s to the apprentice so that he/she might demonstrate his/her level of competency in the area/s that are being challenged

If the apprentice completes the task to the satisfaction of all parties then you should sign off the competencies in question.

If the apprentice is found not to have the skills required you should work together with the training provider to develop a range of on the job activities that will enable the apprentice to improve his/her skills over a set period of time.

At the end of the stated period of time the apprentice would once again undertake a relevant task and be re-evaluated against the output. Another option could be that the training provider may, with your approval, allocate the apprentice a task to complete at the training provider's facilities.

In either case, if the apprentice can demonstrate competency in the chosen task to your satisfaction then he/she should be signed off. If the apprentice is found to be lacking in some area then a plan should be developed to provide more opportunities to practise and develop skills.

Minimising the risk of disputes

There are some simple steps that you can take to minimise the potential for disputes. Case studies have shown that many situations arise due to a lack of understanding of the processes around early progression and completion. The best form of protection is to ensure that everyone is fully aware of the process.

Communication strategy

The competency based pay progression and early completion process should be clearly explained to all apprentices, apprentice supervisors, HR managers and anybody else who is involved in administering or supervising the apprentice. Apprentices should be initially given the message at the very beginning of their apprenticeship. It could also be beneficial to repeat the message on a regular, perhaps annual basis.

The main message to get across to the apprentice is that early pay progression and/or early completion are not guaranteed elements of an apprenticeship. The potential for early pay progression and/or completion does exist but the apprentice must achieve certain performance levels in order to qualify.

You should also discuss with your training provider how disputes will be resolved before they occur. Resolution processes should be agreed upon and implemented when the situation arises.

Part 3

Employing the apprentice

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Part 3 - Employing an apprentice

Introduction

The following is an edited extract from a report produced by Australian Industry Group Training Services (AiGTS) in 2007. The Australian Industry Group engaged AiGTS (through funding from the then Department of Education, Science & Training) to research and report on the significant issues impacting on the first 100 days of an Australian Apprenticeship.

The project had its origins in concerns that apprenticeship attrition rates remain high in Australia. According to the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), around 30% of apprenticeships are terminated in the first six months and the majority of these are terminated in the first three months.

A full copy of the report can be downloaded at www.aigts.com.au.

Key questions for employers to consider:

- Can the business meet the costs of employing an apprentice for up to four years?
- Is the business able to provide the level of supervision required?
- Is the business able to meet the training obligations associated with an apprenticeship?
- Are you able to provide a safe working environment for the apprentice?

Can the business afford an apprentice?

It is important that your business is able to afford the three to four year commitment to apprentice employment and is able to meet the training and other contractual agreements.

There are many considerations – depending on the type of business and industry. Information guides on costs and commitment of employing an apprentice may be available from industry associations and apprenticeship centres.

Finding the right employee

There are many ways to find a new apprentice. Selecting the right one for your enterprise can be hard.

- Newspaper advertisements and street signage at the worksite are age-old practices for manufacturing companies looking to employ an apprentice, but in recent times these have been complemented by, or replaced by, internet-based job-search sites.
- Group training organisations provide a convenient way of finding an apprentice, while deeper engagement with communities by employers (for example offering work experience) is an increasingly popular means to an end.

When advertising for staff does your advertisement describe:

- *the industry sector*
- *its fit in the Australian or local economy*
- *the products your firm makes*
- *the job role or*
- *any career-building opportunities for the potential applicant.*

Advertising

Parents of school leavers can have a significant influence on the career path their children take, so it is wise to design a job advertisement that sends the right messages to both mum, dad and the potential applicant.

'Wanted: Apprentice Fitter and Turner. Good wages and plenty of overtime. Immediate start. Ring Bill...' doesn't describe the industry sector, its fit in the Australian or local economy, the products your firm makes, the job role or career-building opportunities for the potential applicant. Check out the employment advertising styles and media others are using successfully and if appropriate adapt them to your recruitment promotions.

Group Training

Group Training has proven to be a relatively easy way to take on apprentices. This arrangement eases the burden of paperwork for wages, allowances, workers' compensation and superannuation, which allows employers to invest more time in supervising and monitoring the performance and well-being of the new apprentice.

Group Training makes it as simple as possible for businesses and workplaces to take on apprentices and trainees through providing the following support:

- Apprentices and trainees are carefully selected;
- Paperwork and payroll is handled on the host employer's behalf;
- Continuous support is provided by a team of field officers for both the employer and the apprentice; and
- Apprentices are educated by the recruitment team to take safety issues seriously. All the necessary information, instruction and training to help them perform their work safely without risk to their health are provided.

Engaging schools and training providers

Your future apprentice may be attending the local high school now. There are many networks which provide access to him/her. There is a significant need and opportunity for employers to engage schools (careers advisors, teachers, parents and students), and to develop community awareness of the excellent career opportunities available within the trades leading to ongoing employment at competitive remuneration levels. Careers Advisors know which students want to leave school to gain employment.

The Australian School-based Apprenticeship (ASBA) may be an option for your firm. These apprentices may attend work 1-2 days per week, either on block release, during school holidays, or both.

Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), primarily TAFE Colleges or Institutes, often run Pre-Apprenticeship programs – where learners will benefit from integrated work experience. It is useful to get to know the main teachers of your student.

Obligations

The Apprenticeship Contract is a legally binding agreement between the employer and the apprentice. It outlines the obligations employers have to apprentices. The apprenticeship is usually a mix of off-the-job and on-the-job training and work. Employers are responsible for ensuring that apprentices have access to the full range of work required to develop the skills and knowledge they need to complete the apprenticeship.

To be successful the apprenticeship needs the full participation and commitment of apprentices' employers, the supervisors and the partnering Registered Training Organisation. While these things cannot be forced, they can be encouraged and developed and the sections below provide some advice on how this can be achieved.

National Code of Good Practice for Australian Apprenticeships

This Code of Good Practice has been developed to assist both employers and apprentices entering into a Training Contract with a clear understanding of each other's obligations and expectations.

A copy of this Code is available from the Australian Apprenticeship Centre or on-line at:

www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/documents/publications/2009/NCofGPP.pdf

A copy of this Code should be retained by the employer and the apprentice. This would make a good poster for the workplace. A copy is also available at the back of the Guide to Managing your Apprentice.

Recruitment and selection

Screening

It is essential to get recruitment and selection processes right so that valuable organisational resources are not wasted and that young people are not inconvenienced and disappointed.

Screening processes for new apprentices should include aptitude testing together with written application reviews, interviews and reference checking. The following are some general guidelines for the recruitment and selection process:

- Establish a recruitment process that is fair, open and relevant to the apprentice;
- Determine the key competencies of the role to be filled by an apprentice;
- Use a proven, practical method of selecting the best candidate;
- Prepare interview questions to gain the best understanding of each candidate;
- Demonstrate and practice interviewing techniques to finding the right apprentice.

Aptitude testing

Aptitude tests are usually only one part of the overall assessment procedure. They can be an important tool to be used to develop a shortlist of candidates and to understand the basic skills and orientations of those candidates. Mechanical reasoning tests are the main aptitude tests used for apprentices in the traditional trades.

Short-listing applicants

Criteria must be developed for the purpose of short-listing candidates, preferably in consultation with the other interview panel members. In developing the criteria it is important to remember that candidates will need to be able to demonstrate how they meet those criteria in a written application. As some attributes cannot be demonstrated in this format, it is best to explore them at another stage in the selection process, such as at interview.

Appropriate shortlist criteria might include:

-
- | | |
|--|--|
| • <i>Minimum educational requirements</i> | • <i>Written communication skills</i> |
| • <i>Related work/volunteer experience</i> | • <i>Evidence of teamwork abilities</i> |
| • <i>Technical skills</i> | • <i>Understanding of policies and procedures.</i> |
-

Recruitment panel

A team interviewing approach produces more reliable results than relying on the findings of a single interviewer. Ideally there should be no more than three people on the interview panel. Exactly who should be on the panel will in some cases be determined by the size of the company. It can be helpful to include the on-the-shop-floor supervising tradesperson in the selection process. There is no 'correct' number of interviews to hold. Some employers hold as many as three interviews, for example:

- A screening interview to determine basic suitability. In many cases, this first interview is conducted over the telephone;
- A preliminary interview of a short-list of suitable candidates; and

- A final interview with the full selection panel, which should include the tradesperson who will be supervising the apprentice.

Good recruitment processes are supported by speedy communication with the applicants post interview. Companies may also benefit from involving a professional recruiter on the selection panel. Group training companies can be engaged to provide an independent, external perspective to the decision process.

Interviewing minors (under 18 years of age)

Under Australian Law, any child or adolescent below the age of 18 is a minor. The approach with minors is the responsibility of the employer managing the appointment. Parents/legal guardians do not have to give their consent for the young person to be interviewed if the employer is confident the young person understands the application process. If there is any doubt in the employer's mind about the level of understanding, the employer would be well advised to obtain the consent of a parent/legal guardian. It is often helpful if an appropriate adult attends the interview.

Preparing the applicant

Interviewers need to be mindful of the youth and lack of experience in job seeking of most apprentice applicants. A panel approach can be particularly daunting for young candidates who, even when they are alerted in advance, can become very agitated during the interview. The following strategies assist in putting nervous candidates at ease:

- provide the names and titles of who will be on the interview panel to each applicant at the time the interview is being arranged.
- provide candidates with details of when, where and, if necessary, how to get to the interview.
- encourage the applicant to ask any questions they may have about the position, and provide some guidance on how to prepare. Young applicants in particular should be encouraged to find out about the employer or workplace, trade or industry.

Traditional interviewing

Generally panel interviews are led by the chair of the panel who puts the applicant at ease with general information about the organisation and/or the position. The applicant can then be asked to give some information about himself/herself.

Some traditional interview questions

- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
 - Why are you interested in working for us?
 - How would you describe yourself?
 - What do you expect to be doing in three years?
 - What did you like most/least about school?
-

Open ended questions give the panel an opportunity to observe the candidate's ability to respond and address the questions. The interview panel is looking for as close a match as possible between the candidate's responses and the company's specifications.

Behavioural interviewing

Behavioural interviewing is based on the premise that the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour. This means finding out how candidates have behaved in similar situations to those they will face in the new job to ascertain how well they are likely to handle the job and the workplace. This technique is generally considered more effective than just relying on responses to traditional questions.

Companies that invest the time and energy in developing behavioural interviews often attract top candidates. This technique can be useful in screening applicants' abilities in the following areas:

- decision making;
- problem solving;
- leadership;
- motivation;
- communication;
- interpersonal skills;
- planning and organisation.

Ability	Questions which elicit information to assess this ability in behavioural interview
Personal and interpersonal skills – people skills	Describe a situation when you were able to have a positive influence on the action of others.
	Have you ever had difficulty getting others to accept your ideas? What was your approach? Did it work?
	Have you ever had to 'sell' an idea to your classmates, colleagues, team or group? How did you do it? Did they 'buy' it?
	How do you decide what gets top priority when scheduling your time?

Behavioural interview questions such as those outlined above should also be adapted to the unique behavioural characteristics of traditional trade apprenticeship roles, such as being mechanically minded, methodical, and capable of paying close attention to detail. Try to develop questions which explore these aspects of applicants' past behaviour.

Clarifying expectations and wages

Mismatched expectations are a key factor in the non-completion of apprenticeships. Below is a summary of employers' expectations of their apprentices:

Vision	Eye for their future and hunger for growth
Initiative	Take charge of their job roles, get on with the job and work independently
Teamwork	It is important to get on with the team as well as the tasks. Being able to follow and take an order is an essential part of every apprenticeship
Attitude	A positive perspective, an openness to learn and a willingness to change
Leadership	Those who can work well with others and bring the best out in others will move quickly from being a worker to being a manager

It is important that skilled recruitment staff take the lead in interviews to ensure that their expectations of the successful candidate are clearly communicated and that the candidate's expectations are aligned with their own. Careful processes at this point will prevent mismatches of expectations further into the employment cycle.

Information on wages, how they will be paid and any other incentives should be provided to applicants in clear written form at the interview for them to take away with them. This is important because candidates will not necessarily remember the salary if it is simply mentioned in passing. It is important to encourage the applicant to give careful consideration to how they will live on a training wage for the period of the apprenticeship.

Information on wages is available from your industry association or state industrial relations body. Information relating to Commonwealth Government incentives can be found at www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/.

Refer to your State Training Authority for any State Government incentives.

Many employers choose to pay above the stipulated minimum wage to ensure that they:

- attract the best candidates when recruiting;
- retain their apprentices for the full term of the apprenticeship;
- retain their apprentices' services after the completion of the training period.

You should also explain at the interview any other benefits or requirements such as leave entitlements, allowances, superannuation, workers' compensation and where internal company policies can be viewed. It is important that applicants understand that employers will treat them the same as all other workers.

Making the employment decision

Whilst careful selection methods and criteria add significantly to the integrity and effectiveness of the selection process, in the end your decision will always involve a degree of subjectivity. Indeed, selection is not a science and there is no absolute 'right' way of going about selecting a new staff member. You can only methodically work through all the steps and make your decision on the balance of the information you have gained. With practice and experience it will become evident how consistently you are achieving a close match between your candidates' competencies and attitudes and those required for the job. Be mindful that, if the Interview Panel does not feel they have a good fit, then the appointment should not be made.

Pre-Employment medical testing

Pre-employment medical tests can be a useful component of the selection process for jobs that require certain physical or mental attributes. It is best to only test people who meet all the other requirements of the job. Test everyone regardless of age, experience etc. It is important that all apprentices in traditional trades are tested. Age or experience is not a factor in determining who is tested.

It is vital that a pre-employment medical test relates exclusively and directly to the particular duties of the job and does not discriminate against people with disabilities. *You could be liable for discrimination if you misuse pre-employment medical tests.* You could also be liable under privacy laws if you disclose results of a medical test to others, such as other employees.

Designing a pre-employment medical test requires a thorough analysis of what the job entails and a careful matching of tests to the required physical attributes. This task requires a high level of expertise.

Signing the Training Contract

Before an RTO can register an apprenticeship, it must provide both the apprentice and the employer with induction information, which must cover:

- the rights and responsibilities of all parties to the Australian Apprenticeship
- the supervising RTO's grievance procedures.

The RTO must lodge the training contract and declaration that the induction information has been provided with an Australian Apprenticeships Centre (AAC). The AAC will forward the documents to the relevant state or territory training authority.

What makes an outstanding apprentice?

Employers agree on a number of attributes which can be used to describe an outstanding apprentice. Overall, outstanding apprentices were considered to be those who:

- Ask questions and grow their skills;
- Show interest and enthusiasm;
- Support their colleagues;
- Work on their technical and people skills;
- Listen to instructions and advice;
- Work towards discussing and resolving concerns;
- Take responsibility;
- View their apprenticeship as the start of their career more so than seeing it as 'just a job for now';
- Perform duties that may seem menial such as cleaning and maintenance of tools and equipment;
- Work safely at all times.

Starting out on the right foot

Feedback from employers highlights that the footing on which an apprentice starts his or her new job makes a significant difference to how things play out with the employer over the long-term.

Understanding the role that their tasks play in the broader production process gives apprentices a sense of clarity and purpose that will strengthen their commitment to the process.

New apprentices may have little or no experience of a working environment. Setting aside time to help him/her settle into the business and become familiar with the workplace and the people at any other workplaces they will be in regular contact with, will be of great value.

Activities in the first weeks should include:

- Introductions to the team, particularly those working closely with the new apprentice in the first few weeks
- Clarification of expectations of the apprentice and other workers and tradespeople to ensure they are understood
- Daily checks by the supervisors to ensure the working relationships between the apprentice and the other workers are productive and positive
- Observations by apprentices over their first days of OH&S procedures and the tasks they will be expected to perform in the near future. *(Supervisors and qualified tradespeople responsible for demonstrating these tasks should explain where the work comes from, where it should lead and ensure that apprentices understand how their contributions will be measured and will benefit the overall business).*
- Discussions between the apprentice and the employer about short-term expectations and progress against allocated task completion.

Induction

Induction programs are essential for the introduction of all apprentices into an organisation. Effective induction motivates workers, reduces staff turnover, addresses health and safety issues and prevents disputes. It builds reputation and goodwill between the employer and the employee. Everyone involved in recruiting and settling in a new apprentice should be aware of these principles.

Through the induction process, the new apprentice should gain a solid understanding of the following:

- Legislation that applies to their everyday work
- Layout, structure and purpose of the business they are working for
- Line of authority and who to report to
- Company Policies and Procedures (Duty of Care)
- Rules about Equal Employment Opportunity, Harassment and Bullying
- Workplace Safety (such as manual handling, chemical handling, protective clothing)
- Competency based apprenticeship completions and pay progression.

Apprentices have a large amount of information to absorb before actual work begins. An induction booklet or handout will assist them in retaining and using this information.

<p>Job outline and expectations</p>	<p>Provide a clear structure of the apprentice’s job that clearly show tasks, duties and responsibilities in the first three months. New apprentices must be constantly supervised and monitored in the first 100 days. They need to understand exactly what they are expected to do and how to work with constant supervision.</p> <p>You should focus on the apprentice’s ability to listen and learn. Provide them with the appropriate guidance and support to know how to follow basic and clear instructions. In many cases, this needs to be reinforced in the first week to ensure the apprentice is ready to be in ‘learning mode’ for the next four years.</p>
<p>Emergency procedures and First Aid</p>	<p>Apprentices should be taken through emergency procedures and shown first aid stations. It is important that clear written information on procedures is provided.</p>
<p>Performance appraisals</p>	<p>You should explain how the performance appraisal system works and the criteria by which the new apprentice will be assessed.</p>

Probation

Probation is a period of time when an apprentice works and trains with the employer before each party decides whether to continue with the apprenticeship. Probation is usually the first three months of an apprenticeship and is the most important time for the apprentice and business to establish a suitable working relationship.

It is important that time is taken to formally provide feedback to the apprentice before the end of probation, so that the apprentice's future can be discussed. The employer and apprentice must both decide whether the contract should continue and, if so, to complete the training contract.

Do not let the end of the probation period pass unnoticed. This is the time to set short and medium term goals and to frankly discuss any areas in which improvement is needed. Many companies also use this milestone as an opportunity to have a celebration to publicly mark the transition from probation to ongoing employment.

Consultation with the Registered Training Organisation

Workplace supervisors should be involved with the Registered Training Organisation (RTO) in the selection of the apprentice's competencies (that form the Training Plan) and oversight the implementation of workplace training to match the apprentice's learning outcomes.

Apprentices gain skills in their trade both at work and at the RTO, which is why it is very important that the employer and the RTO consult closely with each other regarding the progress and welfare of the apprentice. You should develop with the RTO a training agreement that includes reporting on apprentice learning progress and other issues such as absenteeism and lateness. This is particularly important in supporting competency based progression arrangements for apprentices employed under the Manufacturing and Associated Industries and Occupations Award.

Trade awareness

Trade, industry and OHS awareness is imperative for all apprentices to become effective employees for the business and the industry.

Apprentices should have opportunities to accompany supervisors to trade shows, OHS programs and presentations. This will engage and promote a learning culture within the business. It will provide apprentices with an opportunity to observe, listen and learn about how their apprenticeship and workplace relates to the industry more broadly.

Occupational Health & Safety Training

The provision of traditional classroom style Occupational Health & Safety (OHS) training is still the norm, however apprentices who belong to what is known as Generation Y are looking for training that is more interactive, more varied and faster-paced. OHS Training should be viewed not only as a tool for productivity but also a tool for apprentice retention.

For safety purposes, it is not appropriate for apprentices or unqualified employees to be responsible for training and supervising apprentices. This applies most strongly to the use of dangerous machinery or work of a hazardous nature. Apart from the fact that few apprentices have the experience and life skills to teach, the danger is that in practice bad habits or deficient practices might inadvertently be passed on.

Minimise risks

Every employer is obliged to ensure that appropriate steps are taken to identify all reasonably foreseeable hazards arising from work. If a hazard is identified, you must make an assessment to ensure adequate risk control is in place. Implementing reasonable, practical operating controls will minimise risks. If such measures are not reasonably practicable or do not sufficiently minimise the risk, administrative controls such as safe operating procedures **MUST** be implemented.

Control procedures

Safe operating procedures are a practical measure that provides a reminder to all operators of the risk of injury when using machinery. Combined with signs that are permanently placed in prominent locations, these controls should provide apprentices with sufficient information to use the machinery un-supervised.

Before apprentices are deemed competent to operate machinery they need to demonstrate their skills and knowledge on more than one occasion to a qualified tradesperson. Companies may choose to develop formal in house systems to record and monitor each individual apprentice's ability to safely operate machinery.

Employer support

Where apprentices are employed through a Group Training Company, field officers of the Group Training Company will ask to see and evaluate the Host Employers' safe operating procedures and hazard identification/risk assessment documentation. Should the documentation be inadequate, it would be expected through agreement that a proper hazard identification or risk assessment be conducted.

It is the responsibility of employers to clearly define work that is inherently dangerous and **NOT PERMISSABLE** until appropriate training is completed and competency is evident.

Supervision

Supervisors from senior management level through to frontline managers and qualified tradespeople must guide, support and assist apprentices to work safely and do the best job they can.

Qualities of a good supervisor

Good leaders and supervisors need to have strong and positive interpersonal skills and must have undergone at least basic supervisory training. They must motivate, manage conflicts, resolve problems and emergencies and do their best to meet their own performances and ensure others contribute to meeting business goals. For safety purposes, it is **NOT** appropriate for apprentices or unqualified employees to be responsible for training and supervising apprentices. Supervisors may select qualified tradespeople (or a number of qualified tradespeople in a variety of sections for larger companies) for supervising apprentices.

Attributes of good leaders and supervisors

- Strong and positive interpersonal skills
- Training in basic supervisory skills

Able to:

- Motivate
- Manage conflicts
- Resolve problems and emergencies
- Meet own performances indicators
- Ensure others contribute to meeting business goals

Constant supervision in the first 100 days

It is important that guidelines describing the meaning of different types of supervision (direct, general and broad supervision) are provided to ensure the direct supervisor, qualified tradespeople (working alongside the apprentice) and the apprentice fully understand the expectations and levels of supervision to be applied.

Direct Supervision

Providing the apprentice with direct supervision during the first 100 days is an essential part of the business' duty of care. Direct supervision means the tradesperson is to work with the apprentice, constantly reviewing the work practices and standard of the apprentice's work. The tradesperson shall be readily available in the immediate area, within audible range (earshot) and where possible within visual contact of the apprentice.

General Supervision

This means the apprentice does not require the constant attendance of the onsite supervising tradesperson but requires face to face contact on site during the day with the supervising tradesperson to check on the work being performed and to provide the apprentice with additional instructions and assistance.

As part of General Supervision, the supervising tradesperson shall provide the apprentice with instruction and direction for the tasks being performed with progressive checks and tests being made during the work being undertaken.

Broad Supervision

This means the apprentice does not require the constant attendance of a supervising tradesperson but requires ongoing face to face contact with the supervising tradesperson to check on the apprentice and the work being carried out by the apprentice.

Managing apprentices

If the apprentices are located some distance from the supervisor there is the potential for the supervision to be inadequate. It will be more challenging to identify all the problems and issues with apprentices as they arise, as well as pose difficulties spending valuable time with the apprentice.

Employers need to be specific and selective about who is assigned to be 'in charge' of an apprentice. Every business needs a supervisory system that will guide supervisors appropriately in planning, delegating, controlling and monitoring the performance of their apprentices. The extent to which this is documented will vary between firms and will vary with firm size. It is the primary responsibility of the leading supervisor to keep track of all things that need to be done and how they are controlled and monitored in the sections.

Monitoring

On a regular basis check how things are going with the apprentice and their supervisor, or the tradespeople working most closely with the apprentice. Once the apprentice commences off-the-job training, regular contact should be made with the RTO. *It is important to also continually encourage the apprentice to come to supervisors and employers with any problems.* If problems arise when monitoring apprentices, be supportive and do not let the problems escalate, rather ensure the RTO and the worksite deals with them immediately.

An important part of monitoring is the appropriate scheduling and recording of work and training commitments:

- Make sure the apprentice is free to attend off-the-job training;
- Take the apprentice's skill levels into account when planning work;
- Provide opportunities for the apprentice to practice new skills under proper supervision;
- Allow the apprentice to gain as broad a variety of experience as possible;
- Keep training records up-to-date.

Effective communication

Regular supervisory sessions (for example, toolbox talks) with all apprentices should be carried out. This is regardless of whether they are working in the same location or at another site. Regular sessions must be held with all apprentices to enable the supervisor to get timely feedback on any technical and/or interpersonal issues so that they can be dealt with as soon as they arise. Employers should be flexible and vary the time spent with apprentices as their needs require. To make sure supervisory sessions have the greatest impact, supervisors must think very carefully about what is to be done and plan how the time together is best used.

Motivating

Apprentices are motivated in different ways. While one person will feel rewarded by a pay rise, another will value praise and recognition above all else. Structured on-the-job training will be a strong motivating factor for apprentices. It helps them grow in the company and the trade and gain new skills. This will boost their performance at work and make them more valuable employees.

Considerations when motivating apprentices:

- Recognising and encouraging responsibility can have a big impact on motivation.
- Increasing autonomy, discretion and personal accountability will increase motivation.
- Using rewards appropriately.
- Addressing poor performance to new apprentices positively and professionally.
- Using discipline effectively.
- Providing job rotation.

To ensure a new apprentice is given an opportunity to develop a broad range of skills across a wide range of trade areas a rotation plan should be put in place even if the areas are not a core aspect of the trade. A rotation plan will also assist the apprentice to retain their energy and eagerness to learn about all aspects of the business. Any promises made in the interview about job rotation or gaining different experiences **MUST** be fulfilled.

Mentoring

All new apprentices should receive immediate mentoring support to prepare them for what will be an unfamiliar workplace environment and to provide ongoing support for their professional development. Mentors should be formally appointed to take a personal interest in the apprentice's development.

Attributes of effective mentors

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate well and develop a rapport; • Provide feedback and progress reports; • Be a good role model; • Explain how to develop a good relationship with other workers; • Give carefully thought-out instructions and take time to demonstrate correctly and explain; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow time for the apprentice to practice new skills; • Ask questions to confirm their understanding; • Check progress and provide feedback; • Seek feedback; • Provide variety; • Give recognition.
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Building a training culture

While today's apprentices bring 21st century education and views to the job, supervisors and tradespeople bring a great deal of knowledge and experience to the workplace. The only way for an apprentice to be successful in the long run is to be given advice and mentoring from their more experienced colleagues. This requires good listening and a positive attitude about the job, the business and people.

Building a solid understanding in the workplace of the merit of taking on apprentices is an important contributor to the success of an apprenticeship. This starts with establishing a training culture in the workplace by demonstrating a commitment to training, including the training of apprentices. Companies need to recognise that investing in the training of an apprentice has the potential to help the business to improve, grow and remain competitive.

Part 4

Communicating with your apprentice

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Part 4 - Communicating with your apprentice

Bridging the generation gap

Over recent years there has been a lot of talk about the generation gap and its impact on our workforce. What are the myths and what is reality?

<i>Year of Birth</i>	<i>Your 'generation'</i>	<i>Emerging trend</i>
1946 – 1964	Baby boomer	Having up to 3 jobs and 1 career
1965 – 1981	Generation X	Having up to 8 jobs and 3 careers
1982 – 2000	Generation Y	Having up to 15 jobs and 5+ careers

This snapshot highlights some core differences between groups and the challenges of not only managing, but retaining staff in another generation.

Recent studies debunk some of the myths around Generation Y. Research has found that generation Y-ers actually want the same things as the older generation. The key difference is they are not willing to wait around for them to happen.

Have you ever thought the following about the ‘younger’ generation?

They think it’s all about them

This may appear to be the case because the communication habits of younger people show they have large but hidden social networks, (think facebook, myspace, msn, pda’s etc) and are more likely to reach out to peers than strangers or authority figures such as their manager or supervisor.

They ask for more money than I did at that age

They have better access to immediate market information so they know who earns what and where. If your employee knows what they are worth and are not getting it, they may go elsewhere.

They don’t have the same work ethic as I did at that age

Gen Y-ers like to work collectively, and won’t tend to stand for bureaucracy. Their communication network is wide so they are tuned into where workplaces conditions are better – potentially your competitors.

They are impatient and want to know what you, the employer, can do for them now. However, the environment they thrive in is not dissimilar to what their older peers also desire. Gen Y-ers seek immediate and constructive feedback; leaders that are caring and aware; to be continually informed about the business and have personal goals linked to business goals. They love new experiences, being coached and like to be included.

So are Gen Y-ers too impatient, or has the older generation been too patient? Listen to the different generations in your workforce and you might be surprised by the similarities that arise and what can be learned to improve the business and retain staff.

Local Research

Four issues of most concern to employers when dealing with Generation Y.*

<p>1. Attraction and retention:</p>	<p>How can I employ them and how can I keep them once they join?</p>
<p>2. Management and leadership:</p>	<p>What management style works best and how can I get the best from them?</p>
<p>3. Training and development:</p>	<p>How can I best communicate with them and what is the most effective training style to get results?</p>
<p>4. Motivation and recognition:</p>	<p>What will inspire them to work more effectively, to keep them engaged, and how can I reward them for a job well done?</p>

****“Bridging the Gap – An employer’s guide to managing and retaining the new generation of apprentices and trainees”; Mark McCrindle***

These are important questions and need to be considered by employers of Generation Y apprentices.

To gain further information and explore ways in which to address any issues that may arise in these areas, visit the website of McCrindle Research at www.mccrindle.com.au .

Adult Learning Principles

The principles of adult education are quite different to those that are commonly used to teach young people. This section will describe how and why adults learn and how these principles can be applied to improve the effectiveness of training sessions.

Learning starts with a need and desire to learn. This focuses our mind on a particular problem and we become open to thinking and acting differently to solve that problem. The greater the need or desire to learn, the greater will be the motivation. Once ready to learn, the next step is to collect information about how to solve the problem. Adults may do this by asking questions, talking to others, reading, observing and relating all of this information to the problem.

While collecting information, adults will start testing new knowledge to see if it helps solve the problem. They will relate the information to past experience and try applying that information to solving the problem. As adults go through the process of collecting and testing information, they gradually build up new knowledge and understanding.

At this stage they will have integrated past experience and new learning to arrive at a new level of knowledge about a particular problem. The final step is when adults apply the knowledge about a particular problem to other situations. They generalise their particular knowledge to fit in with other uses and situations.

The adult learning process incorporates *three* important principles that should be remembered when running a training session:

- *Adults bring a lot of experience with them to training sessions and they therefore have something to contribute and something to lose.*
- *Adults prefer to focus on real life, immediate problems rather than on theoretical situations.*
- *Adults are accustomed to being active and self-directing.*

Implications for effective training

Each of these principles encompasses a number of points, which then lead to some suggestions for running effective training programs.

Adult learning is unique to each individual. Everyone learns at their own pace and in their own way. Adults value their own experience and don't want to be treated as stupid or ignorant. You cannot force an adult to change.

Suggested practices:

- Adults want to test what they learn with what they already know. Encourage them to answer questions from their own experience, don't just present information. Use people's different experiences to encourage questioning and discussion so that they can arrive at the answer for themselves.
- Adults don't want to risk looking stupid. Treat everyone equally and respect their input and ideas. If someone makes a mistake treat it as a means to create discussion and so enable learning.
- Adults need to understand as they learn and gradually come to master a task. For learning to occur, material has to be provided in manageable steps.
- Adults want feedback on their progress and how they can improve. However, don't be overly critical, as positive reinforcement is also needed when you are training someone in a new task.
- Adults prefer to focus on real life, immediate problems rather than on theoretical situations.
- Adults see learning as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. Learning is voluntary and they only learn what they want to learn and do what they want to do.

Adults need to feel that what they learn is of personal meaning and be of direct or immediate value.

Suggested practices:

- Provide useful information that is relevant to adult needs. Adults would rather focus on current issues, rather than material that may be useful in the distant future.
- Inform adult learners about the purpose and benefits of the session, and about the process you intend to follow. That way they will know what's in it for them.
- Summarise and review regularly so they can see that progress is being made.

Adults are accustomed to being active and self-directing. The best learning is based on experience. Most adults like to work with others. Aim for a cooperative process that supports sharing of experiences.

Suggested practices:

- Encourage, support and expect participation. Don't embarrass them, but don't let them hide either.
- For learning to occur, adults have to do things. They must get involved and work at tasks and exercises. They learn by doing and making mistakes and then discovering solutions for themselves.
- Adults want to be consulted and listened to. Although trainers need to give direction at times, this should be the exception rather than the rule.

Best practice in training adult learners

In summary, treat adult learners with respect. Encourage discussion and participation. Rather than being the "trainer" with all the answers, try and be the facilitator who helps them to learn for themselves. Both you and they will then have a much more rewarding and enjoyable training session.

Communication and interpersonal skills

Asking Questions

Acquiring skills in asking questions when training an apprentice is an important step towards becoming an effective trainer. A good questioning technique can:

- allow you to gather information about the level of your apprentice's knowledge
- actively involve your apprentice in the learning
- develop the communication skills and confidence of your apprentice
- encourage your apprentice to become a self-directed learner
- provide him/her with recognition and reward for achievement

Guidelines for effective questioning

A question-based style of training is easiest to manage with individuals or small groups. The following guidelines contain some hints for effective questioning:

- *Recognise and use different types of questions.*

Closed questions, such as "Do you think it is important to disconnect the power supply before you start work on repairing that machine?" would normally invite a 'yes' answer.

Open questions, such as "Why do you think it would be important to disconnect the power supply before you start work on repairing that machine?" would hopefully invite a more detailed response.

As a general rule endeavour to ask open questions, for they usually initiate a more productive conversation. Your apprentice may view closed questions as rhetorical or may respond with just a simple “yes” or “no”.

- *Pitch questions at an appropriate level.*

Apprentices are less likely to respond if a question is perceived as either too difficult or too easy. If in doubt, rephrasing or prompting may assist.

Remember that a slow response may indicate poor phrasing of the question, rather than lack of understanding on the apprentices’ part.

Vary the level of difficulty of questions to cater for the different learning ability of each individual.

- *Wait for a response.*

Not allowing sufficient time for him/her to answer is a common problem. Be prepared to wait a number of seconds, though you may find the silence awkward. Eye contact may encourage the apprentice who is uncertain to respond, or a simple “take your time” statement may also assist.

Respond positively to all answers that apprentices offer, with verbal and body language.

Respond with encouragement. An inaccurate or inappropriate response from an apprentice may require attention - it may be possible to reward correct elements within their answer whilst at the same time indicating where it was incorrect. Your apprentice may be able to correct their answer themselves if they are prompted and encouraged.

At worst, inappropriate questioning techniques may highlight any shortfall the apprentices may have rather than providing them the opportunity to build on their strengths.

- *Inviting questions from the apprentice*

As a trainer, you should not necessarily be the only one asking questions. It may be useful to create a learning environment in which the apprentice is able to ask questions confidently of you.

The apprentice may feel uncomfortable asking a question if they feel they could be demonstrating their lack of knowledge. Developing a climate in which the apprentice feels relaxed about asking questions requires patience, time and the demonstrated willingness of the trainer to invite such.

Some trainers are comfortable with the apprentice asking questions either at the start or end of a training session. Apprentices should be encouraged during their learning and reminded that they should not see any question as inappropriate. Remember, the most inappropriate question is that one that does not get asked!!

Listening

It is often said that the best communicators are those who spend more time listening than speaking. *People like to talk, and like to feel that they are being taken seriously.*

If you listen to people, they feel that you respect them, and are interested in what they have to say. They will be happier to share ideas and information with you, and are more likely to be co-operative. By listening effectively, you gain more information and knowledge.

Steps to becoming a good listener

Listening is about more than just keeping your mouth shut. A good listener will do more than just keep quiet.

Effective listening is about actively encouraging the other person to talk meaningfully about the topic under discussion.

- *You should encourage the speaker to speak.*

Keep conversations going until the relevant points have been covered.

Ask relevant questions to ensure that you have gained all the information you need and that the speaker has said everything he or she needs to say.

You can encourage the speaker by:

- Making good eye contact,
- Adopting positive body language,
- Allowing the speaker to speak without interruption,
- Concentrating on what the speaker has to say,
- Asking relevant questions (but not by 'butting in'),
- Give the speaker more time if you are having trouble understanding.

Making eye contact

By making plenty of eye contact, you are showing that you are interested in what the other person has to say. You can also send and receive subtle signals. People tend to smile slightly with their eyes, or widen or narrow them to emphasise a point.

Eye contact is one of the most important parts of oral communication.

Have you noticed that really important conversations seem to work best when you're in the same room as the other person and can look them in the eyes? This helps you to see what the other person really thinks and feels, even if he or she isn't saying much.

- *Use positive body language*

Show your interest, and make the other person feel at ease, by using appropriate body language. Face the other person squarely and lean slightly forward rather than backwards.

- *Let the speaker finish before you reply*

If you interrupt, you give the impression that you don't respect the speaker, or you are not interested in what he or she is saying. You are also less likely to fully understand what is being said to you.

- *Don't jump to conclusions*

Sometimes people tune a speaker out when they think they have the gist of the conversation or know what he or she is going to say next.

However, the speaker might not be following the same train of thought as you, or is not planning to make the same point you think he or she is. If you don't listen through to the end, you might miss the real point the speaker is trying to get across. Not listening properly will also appear rude.

- *Avoid drifting off*

Make sure you are really listening. Don't drift off into daydreams. Don't use the time to think about your reply. If you're not listening properly, your reply might be irrelevant anyway. Give the speaker your full attention, and then take a moment to think about your reply.

If you do drift off and lose the thread, then it's best to confess as early as possible. Say *"Sorry, could you repeat that, I lost the thread for a moment"*.

- *Ask relevant questions*

If you ask relevant questions, based on what has just been said to you, then you are demonstrating that you have listened, and are interested. This is also a good way of keeping the conversation going, and of making sure you get all the information you need.

If you do not fully understand what has been said then let the speaker know. If you need clarification of a point, a good method is to say, *"Do you mean...?"*, and then rephrase the point in your own words.

- *Concentrate on the message, not the messenger*

Don't be put off by the speaker's hairstyle, clothes, mannerisms, etc. In the workplace, it is important for you to be professional, and to treat all your colleagues with respect. If a speaker has a different accent or strange clothing it is sometimes difficult to concentrate on what is being said, but it is important to do so. This may be particularly relevant if you are dealing with a Generation Y apprentice.

- *Listen to the tone of voice and observe body language*

People communicate through facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice. Don't just listen to the words being spoken. Listen to how they are being spoken. Is the tone particularly urgent? Are the speaker's eyes wide and worried looking?

If so, the speaker might be telling you something important, or might be feeling anxious. Perhaps you should offer some extra help? Sometimes the speaker's tone of voice is meant to indicate humour or sarcasm. In which case, they might mean the exact opposite of what they are saying.

Giving and receiving feedback

Feedback gives us the opportunity to communicate how we feel about another person's behaviour in which we have an investment and to receive information about how others feel about our behaviour.

As an Apprentice Supervisor, feedback allows you to develop your apprentice by sharing your views on how they go about accomplishing their tasks. In turn, feedback can assist you to learn how well you lead your team and highlight any areas which may require development.

Feedback can be given and received and can be both positive and negative.

Positive feedback

Positive (or constructive) feedback:

- Reinforces a behaviour that has already been displayed
- Highlights a behaviour that needs to be developed or modified

Positive feedback exists in an environment that encourages communication, is open, supportive and is built on trust. As a Supervisor, it is your responsibility to build and facilitate this environment.

Negative feedback

Negative (or destructive) feedback focuses on the individual rather than the behaviour displayed and is generally:

- Attacking and aggressive
- Indirect and vague
- Insensitive
- Judgmental

This type of feedback encourages defensiveness, is unhelpful in the development of team members, encourages an environment of distrust and should be avoided.

Giving feedback

The way in which feedback is given can often determine how effective it is and how well it will be received.

- *Keep feedback specific*

Avoid using general or sweeping comments. Describe the behaviour clearly and focus on a specific incident that you have observed.

- *Deliver feedback in a timely manner*

Feedback is most effective when requested. However, in situations where feedback has not been requested, it should be delivered immediately or as soon after the event as is possible. Take into account your readiness to deliver the feedback and whether your apprentice will be receptive to the feedback.

- *Focus on the behaviour*

One of the most important points in giving feedback is to focus on the displayed behaviour and not on the person. It is crucial to give feedback on behaviours that can be changed and factors for which the apprentice has control.

- *Own the feedback*

Discuss the behaviour in terms of how it affects you to enable the recipient to understand the full impact of their behaviour. This can be done by framing your comments using “I” statements. For example “I feel aggravated when you don’t arrive for work on time. Other members of the team have to work harder to pick up the extra workload”.

Receiving feedback

Before requesting feedback, you need to ensure that you are open to receiving it. You should be specific, in terms of the type of feedback you are requesting. This could be feedback about your specific behaviour or perhaps about your delivery of a particular leadership or training skill.

Why might apprentices have problems during training?

- *Concern about progress at work*
- *Discomfort with workplace relationships*
- *Under stress from doing too much outside work*
- *Getting behind in training*
- *Experiencing personal difficulties*
- *Problems with language, literacy or numeracy*

Listen actively

Allow the person giving the feedback to do so without interruptions or objections. Appreciate that it is not easy to give feedback, particularly if the person doing so is one of your team or more especially an apprentice you are supervising.

- *Don't take it personally*

It is important to remember that the feedback is about behaviour you display, not about you personally. Feedback gives you the opportunity to modify or develop your skills to assist with your growth as a trainer, a leader and a person.

- *Be aware of your actions*

Feedback is not about who is right or wrong, but about how your behaviour is interpreted and observed by others. Remain open to what is being said and avoid any display of defensiveness or anger, even if you don't necessarily agree with what is being said.

Dealing with problems and resolving conflicts

It is quite common for apprentices to have problems at some stage in their training. There can be various reasons why this may occur.

As a supervisor, it is important for you to be able to talk with your apprentice in a non threatening manner with a view to uncovering what the issues may be.

Do this by using some of the skills mentioned previously such as asking appropriate questions, allowing the apprentice time to answer, maintaining eye contact and displaying positive body language.

Once you know what the issue is, talk to your apprentice about it. Explain how their behaviours may be affecting their work, their fellow workers and you as their supervisor. Be specific, speak openly and honestly. Be willing to discuss the situation with your apprentice and jointly look for solutions that will work for you both.

What steps can you take to solve a problem?

When faced with problems, the hints listed in the following table may help to achieve acceptable resolutions:

<p><i>What is the problem?</i></p>	<p><i>Help the apprentice to recognise there is a problem and if necessary help them identify the behaviour that requires change</i></p> <p><i>Describe the problem or issue in full, for example “When you don’t arrive for work on time, other members of the team have to work harder to pick up the extra workload and this puts extra pressure on everyone, including me”.</i></p>
<p><i>Who does the problem affect?</i></p>	<p><i>You should be clear in your own mind about the impact and affect of the issue you are dealing with. Ask yourself the question “Why do I consider this is a problem”.</i></p>
<p><i>What are the consequences of this behaviour for the person concerned and for your company as a whole?</i></p>	<p><i>Who and/or what is the problem affecting?</i></p>
<p><i>Am I making the problem worse by any reaction I may have had?</i></p>	<p><i>for example anger, frustration, annoyance</i></p>

<p><i>Am I making the problem worse?</i></p>	<p><i>Is it possible the problem may improve if I change the way I react?</i></p>
<p><i>What are the possible solutions?</i></p>	<p><i>What is the outcome I would like to achieve?</i></p> <p><i>What do I need to do to make this happen?</i></p> <p><i>What does my apprentice need to achieve to make this happen?</i></p>
<p><i>If the conflict prevents me from discussing the problem with the apprentice, is there any independent person available to assist both of us in the problem solving process?</i></p>	

It is best if problems can be worked out directly between you and your apprentice, although, where appropriate, consideration should be given to alternative forms of dispute resolution.

Officers from your local State Training Authority are available to assist in the resolution of conflict or problems in the workplace. They are professional in their intervention and are trained to assist by encouraging the parties involved to identify problems in dispute, explore and determine outcomes and to reach mutually acceptable resolutions to any problems within the terms of the training contract.

Appendix A

Sample Observation Sheet

MEM07006B

Perform lathe operations

Description of work performed

Supervisor: _____

Apprentice: _____

Date of observation: ___ / ___ / ___

Description of equipment used

Elements	Performance criteria	Observation comments
Observe safety precautions	Correct safety procedures are observed and protective clothing and safety glasses worn	
Determine job requirements	<i>Drawings</i> are interpreted, sequence of operation is determined and <i>tooling</i> is selected to produce component to specification.	
Mount job	Job is set up using <i>instruments</i> such as dial test indicators, and digital read-out equipment	
Perform turning operations	<i>Speeds and feeds</i> are calculated using appropriate mathematical techniques and reference material	
	The full range of <i>accessories</i> on a centre lathe are used including three and four jaw chucks, centres, face plate, steadies, cross slide and tailstock	
	<i>Turning operations</i> are performed to specification	
Check components for conformance with specifications	Components are checked for conformance to specification using appropriate techniques, tools and equipment	

Feedback to apprentice

Sample Knowledge Check

MEM07006B

Perform lathe operations

Supervisor: _____

Apprentice: _____

Date of observation: ___ / ___ / ___

Required knowledge	Question asked	Rate answer
Characteristics of different materials and their effects on cutting speeds and feeds		
Application of lathe accessories		
Techniques, tools and equipment to measure materials and machined components		
Use and application of personal protective equipment		
Safe work practices and procedures		
Hazards and control measures associated with lathe operations		

Feedback to apprentice
