

Working with learner and employer expectations

This guide covers the kinds of things you can do to make the most of the learner survey and the employer survey.



Why do learner and employer expectations matter?

Learners and employers who complete the Learner Questionnaire (LQ) and the Employer Questionnaire (EQ) will respond to the questionnaire items with expectations in mind. They will use those expectations as a standard against which to assess your RTO's practice.

Your survey results will be positive if your RTO has met or exceeded the expectations they have in mind. If you don't meet those expectations, your results may be disappointing.

The most productive way to deal with learner and employer expectations is to address them on an ongoing basis through your quality improvement cycle. To be confident you are meeting their expectations you need to constantly refine your understanding of them.

Learners and employers need to understand your perspective, too. If you build regular dialogue and feedback opportunities into your quality improvement plans, you also create opportunities to explain what you can do and are planning to do. You can also explain why there are some things you can't reasonably or quickly do. If your explanation is sound, your learners and employers will adjust their expectations. If there are no opportunities for dialogue and feedback, then the process of adjusting expectations can't occur.

What does this mean in practice?

Let's take two straightforward examples using single items from the LQ and the EQ.

There are 35 items on the LQ. One of them is: 'I usually had a clear idea of what was expected of me.' Learners are asked to indicate their level of agreement with this statement by choosing one of four options – strongly disagree, disagree, agree or strongly agree.

This item is based on the understanding that good learning is most likely to occur if a learner is aware of, for example, what the learning outcomes are, what the assessment will be like, and what level of performance they need to achieve. Learners can develop understanding of how to monitor their performance and improve.

You know this item is on the LQ. If you have prepared the ground, your answers to the following questions will be 'yes':

- Does your quality improvement cycle check that learning outcomes, assessment designs and level of performance are communicated to learners at the beginning?
- Do you check that learners are reminded about expectations from time to time – for example, at the beginning of each training interaction, or before an assessment is completed?
- Do you check that communication about learning outcomes and level of performance is effective? How do you know that learners clearly understand what is being communicated?
- Do you ask your learners for ideas about how this kind of communication might be handled better?
- Do you let learners know how you are responding to their feedback?

Let's turn to the EQ. There are 30 items on the EQ. One of them is: 'The training reflected current practice.'

Again, you know this item is on the EQ. If you have prepared the ground, your answers to the following questions will be 'yes':

- Does your quality improvement cycle check that the training you deliver is appropriate for each enterprise?

- Do you check that trainers have current industry skills?
- Do you regularly ask employers about the kind of training they need?
- Do you regularly ask learners who are existing workers if the training you provide is relevant to their workplaces?
- Do you let employers know how you are responding to their feedback?

Reviewing your quality improvement activities

Because you know what items are on the LQ and the EQ, you can audit your quality improvement plan and activities to see if each of the items is covered appropriately. If there are items that are not covered:

- you can adjust your training and business processes, practices and plans to make sure they are covered
- you can build extra checks into your quality improvement cycle to ensure your processes, practices and plans are effective.

Your processes, practices and plans will usually deal with a number of items on the LQ and the EQ. You won't need a separate process, practice or plan for every item.

Perhaps you provide a learner's guide to each learner about a qualification, or a unit of competency. A learner's guide would usually make clear statements about learning outcomes, assessment designs, and expected level of performance. It's likely the learner guide will be one consideration that influences the response to 'I usually had a clear idea of what was expected of me.'

A learner guide will also influence the response to other items on both the LQ and the EQ, including these:

- 'I usually had a clear idea of what was expected of me'
- 'The training organisation had a range of services to support learners'
- 'Trainers made it clear right from the start what they expected from me'
- 'The training had a good mix of theory and practice'
- 'Overall, I am satisfied with the training'
- 'Our employees gained the knowledge they needed from this training'.

Of course, a learner guide by itself won't be sufficient to secure a positive response to any of these items. You will have a range of processes, practices and plans in place that will influence the way in which learners and employers respond to each item.

Things to do

1. Review your quality improvement plan to make sure it covers each item on the LQ and EQ. Are you confident your quality improvement plan identifies which learning and business processes, practices and plans will influence responses to each item?
2. Test your processes, practices and plans to ensure that they are positive influences on responses to each item.
3. Build in to your quality improvement cycle dialogue and feedback opportunities that invite learners and employers to identify how your RTO can do things better.

About this guide

This Continuous Improvement Guide forms part of the AQTF 2007 Quality Indicators Resources Package. This package contains information and materials for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) to use to collect, analyse and act on data about their training and assessment.

The Australian Quality Training Framework 2007 (AQTF 2007) Quality Indicators are part of the AQTF 2007 Essential Standards for Registration for training organisations that wish to deliver nationally recognised vocational qualifications and competencies. Three Quality Indicators have been endorsed by the National Quality Council (NQC): Learner Engagement, Employer Satisfaction and Competency Completion. These are designed to help RTOs conduct evidence-based and outcomes-focused continuous quality improvement, and assist Registering Bodies assess the risk of an RTO's operations.

Visit www.training.com.au for further information on AQTF 2007 or the Quality Indicators Resources Package.