

Core Skills Profile for Adults

Information Pack



Language, Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Assessment Tools for the VET Sector

About ACER

The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) is an independent, not-for-profit organisation recognised globally for educational research and assessment.

ACER works with Universities, TAFEs, RTOs, Schools, industry and government to deliver research initiatives, evidence-based assessment and learning solutions, including literacy, numeracy and digital literacy testing, professional learning, and evaluation services.

About the Core Skills Profile for Adults (CSPA)

The CSPA is a suite of secure online assessments that measure language, literacy, numeracy and digital literacy (LLND) skills. It is primarily used as a pre-training assessment tool in vocational education and training (VET) to identify learners' strengths and development needs.

Assessments are mapped to the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) and the Digital Literacy Skills Framework (DLSF), and provide reliable data to support learning plans, course suitability, and compliance with VET Student Loan requirements. CSPA includes Reading, Numeracy, Writing, Digital Literacy, Snapshot Reading & Numeracy Indicator (SRNI), and a Practice Test.

CSPA components

Reading – Measures comprehension using real-world texts in workplace, education, and personal contexts, providing diagnostic feedback at the ACSF indicator level. Questions are presented to students in a split screen format, which displays the text on one side, and the questions in a separate area opposite. Candidates can scroll through longer texts and still retain sight of the question they need to answer because the question area remains fixed.

Writing – Two short online writing tasks scored using ACER's Intellimetric® automated essay technology, providing instant diagnostic feedback. After candidates type their responses directly into the CSPA assessment platform advanced analysis techniques provide instant feedback outlining writing strengths and weaknesses.

Numeracy – Assesses understanding across Number and Algebra, Measurement and Geometry, and Statistics and Probability. Feedback links directly to ACSF indicators. Questions are set in a range of situations relevant to adult learners, focused on workplace and employment, education and training, and personal and community contexts.

Digital Literacy – The Digital Literacy component is a static assessment which consists of 20 questions designed to assess the candidate's digital skills across a broad range of digital contexts. The questions reflect contemporary use of digital skills in a variety of contexts across three domains: personal and community, workplace and employment, education and training.



Reading



Writing



Numeracy



Digital
Literacy



Snapshot
Reading &
Numeracy
Indicator
(SRNI)

Questions are provided as multiple choice, true and false, matching phrases and images, aligning a sequence of tasks, and using drop down menus. The Individual candidate report indicates the estimated exit level and the level the candidate is working at aligned to the Digital Literacy Skills Framework (DLSF) Pre-Level 1 to Level 3.

Snapshot Reading & Numeracy Indicator (SRNI) – A 15-to-20-minute screener that identifies learners at risk of low LLN skills (below ACSF Exit Level 2) and flags those needing full CSPA assessment. The SRNI is not approved for VET Student Loans LLN entry requirements.

Practice assessment – A short introductory test to familiarise learners with the online platform.

Test development and quality assurance
ACER follows a rigorous development process involving field trials with VET learners, psychometric validation, and empirical mapping to ACSF and DLSF levels. This ensures CSPA assessments are fair, valid, and reliable.


Mapping to frameworks
CSPA assessments are empirically mapped to both ACSF and DLSF levels, allowing educators to identify learners' exact working and exit levels. Psychometric data ensures precise alignment and confidence in skill-level interpretation.

Learners	Test questions
XXXX	
XXXXXXXXXXXX	18
XXXXXXXXXXXX	9
XXXXXXXXXXXX	27
XXXXXXXXXXXX	30
XXXXXXXXXXXX	29
XXXXXXXXXXXX	2
XXXXXXXXXXXX	20
XXXXXXXXXXXX	1
XXXXXXXXXXXX	
XXXXXXXXXXXX	16
XXXXXXXXXXXX	26
XXXXXXXXXXXX	4
XXXXXXXXXXXX	13
XXXXXXXXXXXX	14
XXXXXXXXXXXX	10
XXXXXXXXXXXX	21
XXXXXXXXXXXX	7
XXXXXXXXXXXX	6
XXXXXXXXXXXX	47
XXXXXXXXXXXX	3
XXXXXXXXXXXX	27
XXXXXXXXXXXX	18
XXXXXXXXXXXX	8
XXXXXXXXXXXX	24
XXXXXXXXXXXX	53
XXXXXXXXXXXX	54
XXXX	
XXXX	33
XXXX	55
X	44
X	
X	


- Why use the CSPA?**
- ✔ **Nationally approved for use under the VET Student Loans scheme.**
 - ✔ **Adaptive and efficient** – automatically adjusts question difficulty to the learner's level.
 - ✔ **Valid and reliable** – mapped against ACSF and DLSF through psychometric and expert review.
 - ✔ **Comprehensive reporting** – supports learner diagnostics, planning, and compliance evidence.
 - ✔ **Powerful, efficient administration.**
 - ✔ **Inclusive** – online format is less intimidating, accessible, and instant in reporting.

Easy administration, powerful outcomes
CSPA assessment tools are delivered through the Online Assessment and Reporting Platform (OARS) providing seamless solutions for smarter administration. Candidates are invited to register via email and complete their assigned assessments. This can be done individually or in bulk. Administrators access several report generation options allowing efficient reporting to selection staff, education departments and student learning support.


Reporting options include:




Assessment Usage Report
For use across your whole organisation or any selection of candidates; this report allows you to monitor assessment administration progress and view the numbers of assessments that are assigned, started, completed or not yet assigned.




Skill Area Group Report



Individual Report



Candidate Certificate



Group Report

Cancel

Generate Report

CSPA provides a range of learner and group-level reports via the secure Online Assessment and Reporting System (OARS). When a learner completes an assessment a range of reports are available which can be accessed by administrators to develop individual learning plans, use the information to identify if targeted LLND support is required, and decide on suitable pathways and potential VET qualifications for candidates.

A two to three-page PDF report that shows which questions the candidate responded to correctly and those that were incorrect. It includes the scale score achieved by the candidate, which correlates with the ACSF Working At/Exit Level they have obtained.

Australian Council for Educational Research

Australian Council for Educational Research

Australian Council for Educational Research

The Learner Certificates have been created with specific, contextualised feedback on performance against each skill area. These are suitable to provide to candidates and may provide currency value for their development portfolio. Each Certificate will feature the ACSF Level estimate - Working At and Exit levels.

Australian Council for Educational Research

The CSPA Group Report shows one row in the spreadsheet for each individual candidate that has sat at least one assessment component. From left to right the columns begin with details of the candidate's demographic field responses, followed by a section for each assessment undertaken. Within each section there will be details on the number of questions attempted, scale score, ACSF Working At and ACSF Exit Level. Details of exact start and completed times for each assessment component of the CSPA for candidates is also logged as is the date of when the Candidate Certificates were released.

Skill area specific group report (Reading)

CSPA 2020 Reading - Group Report
Exported on 24/10/2025

[illegible]

This report also indicates which adaptive form the learner was directed into after the 10 screener questions. In the sample above all candidates were directed into Reading form B and Reading form C.

CSPA question metadata report:

The CSPA Group Question Performance report and the associated Question Metadata report enables LLN teachers and trainers to access data for a particular group of learners. It summarises the overall group performance on each individual question in the assessments they undertook. These can be used to identify if there are common questions or groups of questions that candidates had challenges with, hence being able to target instruction in a more structured way. The Group Question Performance report also provides the ability to get immediate access to see the questions themselves (via a pop up) so the teacher/trainer can see the actual question and identify any common misunderstandings.

Summary

The CSPA offers a comprehensive, validated and flexible approach to assessing core skills for adults. Designed and maintained by ACER, it provides reliable evidence for both compliance and learner support in the VET sector. With the suite of assessments covering Writing, Reading, Numeracy, and Digital Literacy, all with enhanced reporting, CSPA continues to meet the evolving needs of training providers and learners in Australia's changing education and employment landscape.

Key features

- Individual Candidate Report
- Learner Certificates
- Group Reports
- Diagnostic Reports
- Efficient administration through OARS

OARS user licence options

A variety of options are available to cater for low to very high volumes of candidate assessments commencing at 75 through to 15,000 annually. Licence types include three at standard level progressing through to Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum.

**For more information or to book a demonstration
please contact the CSPA Team**

