# ITO WORKPLACE ASSESSMENT STRUCTURES AND SYSTEMS: SURVEY AND FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

Report prepared for the
**Industry Training Federation Research Network**

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# Executive summary

## The ITO Workplace Assessment Structures and Systems project

This is a report on findings from a survey of 33 Industry Training Organisations (ITOs) and five focus groups with 19 ITO representatives – the second phase of a three-phase project entitled ITO Workplace Assessment Structures and Systems.

The overall purpose of the project is to explore the different models of workplace assessment used around the world and by ITOs in New Zealand, and to consider the kinds of arrangements that are, and could be, used to support workplace assessors. We first produced a paper based on a targeted review of the most relevant literature on workplace assessment structures and systems in the context of understanding the *roles* and *purposes* of assessment and workplace learning (Vaughan & Cameron, 2009). That paper informed the design of the survey and focus groups. The findings from these activities will in turn inform the final phase—focus groups with ITOs and the production of a guide to assist ITOs to think about how they could make their workplace assessment structures more robust, more effective and promoting of high-quality learning.

## Key findings

Our key findings are based on an analysis of the perspectives gathered through the survey in which 33 ITOs participated, and the focus groups in which 16 ITO staff and three assessors participated. The findings highlight that ITOs have different understandings or practices related to apparently common terms across ITOs. They also highlight the way in which systems for assessor recruiting, training and managing impact upon the actual practice (and quality) of assessment. Our final suggestions for improving structures and systems are based on this point: that systems exist to support practices, and that systems issues (such as supporting assessor development) cannot be sorted out separately from practice issues (such as whether assessment is a compliance activity or a learning investment).

### Assessor recruitment

ITOs have trouble finding enough assessors with the right attributes and then supporting them. It seems that assessors have a range of different motivations for wanting to become assessors—from being nominated by supervisors, to wanting the status of being an assessor, to seeking the position as a form of professional and career development. These motivations impact on how well suited assessors are to the job and on how well they can be supported to do a good job, as do ITO recruitment and management practices which range from training managers hand-picking assessor candidates to training all-comers.

### Assessor training

ITO training policies and practices also impact upon assessors' ability to do a good job and ITO capacity to support them. Most ITOs accredit assessors after successful completion of training to Unit Standard 4098 (Use Standards to Assess Candidate Performance). Few ITOs have any requirements around further professional development for assessors, except participation in moderation activities which is sometimes considered a professional development activity. Some ITOs have questioned the adequacy and relevance of Unit Standard 4098 for their particular industry and prefer to arrange their own assessor training. ITOs also appear to have few policies in place to manage the scope of assessor accreditation. In some cases this has resulted in a general overabundance of assessors, or too many assessors accredited in particular fields or accredited to assess a far wider range of standards than they regularly have cause to assess in reality. This can leave ITOs scrambling to address issues of quality at the moderation stage. Some ITOs are attempting to address this with more support materials for assessors and policies to limit assessor numbers and accreditation scope. This would allow them to better manage their own resources, improve some aspects of quality and better support the assessors.

### Moderation

ITOs reported several approaches to, and understandings of, moderation. In the main, moderation involved pre-moderation of assessment tasks to ensure that assessments were assessing the right things and were connecting training goals to assessment, and post-moderation of assessments. Some ITOs considered that more work was required to enhance the "fit" between unit standards and their assessment. In some cases moderation was understood to be about ensuring that specific standards have been consistently and reliably assessed. In other cases it was understood to be about checking the assessment process.

### Verification

There were mixed views about the use of workplace verifiers in checking performances that could not be observed in a single assessor visit or when it was not practical for an external person to do so. Some unit standards can only be observed when an opportunity presents itself, so verifiers are needed to document the achievement of these standards. Verifiers are often in a position to provide corrective and supportive feedback to trainees. People considered that quality assurance is stronger when verifiers also are trained to understand how the separate unit standards contribute to the qualification and are given the time and opportunity to assess. Without some investment in verifiers, the quality of their judgements was seen to be variable, and frequently based on a cursory tick-off approach. Although some ITOs were not in favour of verifiers, others believed that they were a valuable source of evidence if they were trained and supported in the workplace. However, the relationship between assessors and verifiers seems to vary widely and sometimes seemed unclear, even to ITO staff.

## Some general suggestions for improving assessment structures and systems

All structures and systems are a means to an end. In this case structures and systems need to be understood as being for the purposes of supporting assessment, which in turn should support learning in the workplace. The scope of this project—focusing only on structures and systems and not assessment practice—means that we cannot know what actually happens with assessment, and therefore how well it is actually supported by the structures and systems. It does seem, however, that there is an overall tussle between ITO staff who take a technical view of assessment as being about compliance and something that anyone (who knows the industry knowledge content) can do, and ITO staff who take an educational view of assessment and see it as deeply connected to learning and requiring a high-quality investment.

Although the research is limited to assessment structures and systems (and leaves out practices), we make several suggestions for ITOs to consider under the next four sub-headings.

### Target investment in assessors more tightly

While we do not know ITOs' reasons for having a lot of workplace-based assessors, it is likely to be a result of legacy systems that have supported a proliferation of assessors and widening of accreditation scope. This is unmanageable for many ITOs and the ways they deal with this are discussed in the report. We suggest that reducing the assessor pool to manageable levels makes it more feasible to provide the training and ongoing professional development required or desired to develop and maintain assessor competency levels. Investing in assessors is investing in the skills base of the industry. A wise investment in assessors means that they will have more to offer the industry as a whole.

### Develop career pathways for assessors

It is worth considering the development of a career pathway within the industry for assessors. Assessors have or will have specialised content knowledge as well as higher level skills that they learn through well-designed and implemented assessor training. This combination of industry knowledge and skill, together with assessment knowledge and skill, could be more formally recognised. Perhaps it should be harder to become an assessor, and once this investment has been made, assessors should be valued and supported because they have a role to play in building a high-capability workforce. But there needs to be an understanding of the ways in which learning and assessment and teaching are all interlinked. A focus on assessment only is attending to only one part of building workplace capability.

### See assessment as part of an infrastructure for workplace development

This report shows that attending to the selection and training of assessors, while important, is only part of the challenge of developing workplace capability. Assessment and moderation provide information such as whether trainees are achieving standards, and which standards are proving more difficult to assess. They can also be used as part of the evidence base for how workplaces are building capability over time. Ensuring that workplace structures and processes support trainees, assessors and moderators to get better at what they do appears to be a route to enhancing longer term organisational goals, including quality control, worker motivation and retention and organisational success.

## Address gaps in knowledge about assessment in the workplace

While this research has given us a picture of current ITO workplace assessment structures and issues, it has also revealed what we do not know, and what we need to know, in order to improve those structures and systems. This research is the beginning of mapping the knowledge about how assessment works in ITOs. It is a useful start, and it has generated areas for further research that are needed before a comprehensive picture of assessment will be generated. It is based on the perceptions of key industry stakeholders, and has revealed the need to include perspectives of learners and a wider range of assessors before we could have confidence in the trustworthiness of our findings. It would seem essential to focus more deeply on a sample of workplaces—taking a careful look at how assessment structures and practices support or constrain the completion of qualifications would be a valuable first step. This sort of research would require that researchers spend time on site observing, analysing documentation and talking to trainees, trainers, assessors and anyone else who contributes to assessment decisions. It might involve several visits over the course of a trainee's progression through a qualification to obtain a deeper understanding of the impact of training and assessment on their achievement and motivation to learn and contribute to their industry. When there is a clearer picture of what works for learners, the implications for workplace assessment structures and what assessors need to do their jobs well will also be clearer.

# 1. Introduction

- This report analyses a survey of ITOs (response rate 87%) and five focus groups with staff and/or assessors from 16 ITOs.
- The report structure covers: assessor recruitment and training; assessor support and ongoing development; and management of assessors and assessment processes (including moderation).

This report discusses findings from the second part of a three-stage project on ITO Assessment Workplace Structures and Systems. The overall purpose of the project is to explore the different models of workplace learning assessment used around the world and by ITOs in New Zealand, and to consider the kinds of arrangements that are, and could be, used to support workplace assessors in their assessment role. ITOs have a leadership role in arranging and supporting training. This makes their structures and systems for the assessment of that training particularly important because assessment impacts directly on the learning that can take place and be measured.

The first part of the project resulted in a paper based on a targeted review of the most relevant literature. *Assessment of learning in the workplace: A background paper* (Vaughan & Cameron, 2009) examined workplace assessment structures and systems in the context of understanding the roles and purposes of assessment and workplace learning.

The paper also informed the design and conduct of the next phase of the project—a survey of key ITO staff, and focus group conversations with ITO managers and assessors. The final phase of the project is intended to be writing, publishing and dissemination of a guide to good structures and systems that can support assessment in the workplace. It will be designed to assist ITOs to think about how they could make their workplace assessment structures more robust, effective and promoting of high-quality learning that fosters trainees' and employers' confidence in industry training.

This report covers responses from a survey of all 38 ITOs who manage workplace assessment structures and five focus group discussions with ITO representatives. At the time of the survey there were 39 ITOs. However one ITO acts purely as a standards-setting body, and thus was beyond the scope of the survey.

## Survey

The survey ran online and asked about assessor backgrounds and qualifications, ITO expectations for assessor training, ongoing support and professional development for assessors, timing and assessment initiation and the timing of, and forms of, moderation. We designed questions throughout the survey to distinguish between roving or multi-workplace assessors (contracted to the ITO) and workplace-based (WPB) assessors, in order to follow up on the issue of the different strengths and challenges facing different kinds of assessors which came through in the first phase (Vaughan & Cameron, 2009).

All survey questions were closed, with multiple options for responses but also included an "other" option for responses that did not fit any other category. Very few "other" responses were received, and many that were received fitted a pre-existing category. However, in these cases we could not know whether these were additional to a category response already made or instead of a category response.

We received responses from 33 ITOs, out of a possible 38 – a response rate of 87%.

We report the survey results through column graphs showing a numerical value of responses to each question, as well as nonresponses to questions. The graphs also show the spread of responses, calculated out of the total responses to each question. For example, although 33 ITOs responded to the survey, only 29 ITOs indicated that they have roving or multi-workplace assessors so we calculate the proportion of responses to questions to them about their about roving assessors as being out of 29, rather than 33. Similarly, 19 ITOs indicated that they have WPB assessors, so proportions are calculated as out of 19 for questions to the ITO about their WPB assessors. Responses to questions that are not specifically about the roving or WPB assessors are calculated out of 33—the number of ITOs responding to the survey. The reader can read the graphs in terms of numbers of actual responses and/or proportion or spread of responses, including nonresponses.

## Focus groups

We ran five focus groups with staff and/or assessors from 16 different ITOs – a list of these ITOs can be found in the Appendix. Participants were identified by each ITO. We had more than one representative from each ITO for some focus groups. One of these focus groups was dedicated to assessors; the others involved quality assurance managers, business development managers, moderators, learning and assessment consultants and deputy chief executives.

All focus groups except the assessors' group began with ITO representatives drawing a pictorial representation of their respective assessment systems and then presenting these back to the rest of the focus group. This achieved two important outcomes. First, it provided the researchers with some basic data on each ITO's structures and systems. Second, it focused participants on the issues arising from the operation of these structures and systems and prompted participant-to-participant discussions, as well as participant–researcher discussion.

## Structure of this report

The overall structure of the report is organised so that we address in turn:

- assessor recruitment and training
- assessor support and ongoing development
- management of assessors and assessment processes (including moderation).

The report puts the issues involved in setting up and operating assessment structures and systems at the centre. Often focus groups are used to "give life" to, or extend, the findings of an initial survey. However, in this case the focus groups raised new and deeper issues than those covered by the survey. The survey tends to provide some of the basic detail about structures and systems.

Therefore rather than organising the report according to the type of data collection (i.e., first reporting all the results of the survey and then all the results of the focus groups), we have integrated findings from both kinds of data collection in order to discuss the key issues.

In some places the initial survey findings begin a discussion on a particular point, then points made in the focus groups provide a more complete picture. In other instances, discussion of a particular issue arising out of the focus groups is used to lead off a discussion, to which the survey findings illustrate the picture across a larger set of ITOs.

# 2. Assessor backgrounds and recruitment

- Nearly all ITOs responding to the survey had roving or multi-workplace (contracted) assessors and most also had workplace-based (WPB) assessors.
- ITOs generally rated the knowledge and skills of roving assessors ahead of those of WPB assessors and particularly recognised roving assessors' experience from visiting a range of different workplaces. However they also recognised that WPB assessors had an important strength in their knowledge of specific workplaces and trainees.
- ITOs reported having trouble finding enough assessors *and* finding assessors with the right attributes. Some ITOs had *too many* assessors without the right attributes. Others had reluctant assessors (directed into it by supervisors) or assessors motivated more by status than by desire to develop and practice assessing.
- Some ITO staff wanted to be more discerning in their recruitment of assessors and more targeted in their ongoing support of assessors.

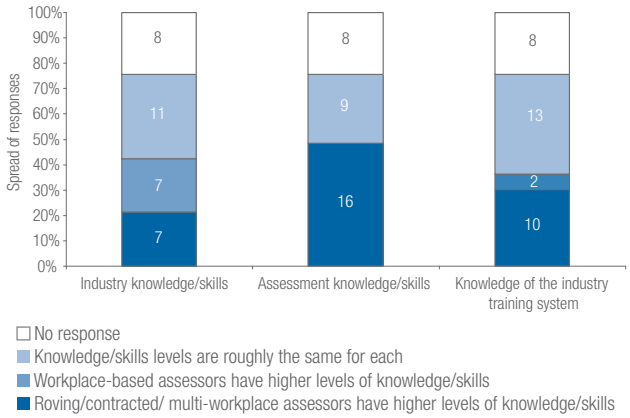
## Types of assessors

Of the 33 ITOs who responded to the survey, 29 indicated that they had roving or multi-WPB assessors on contract to their ITO. Nineteen ITOs indicated that they had WPB assessors. Four ITOs had no roving assessors and had *only* WPB assessors. Focus group respondents told us that some ITOs did not have roving assessors because workplaces were sensitive to outsiders being onsite. None of the ITOs responding to the survey had only roving assessors.

ITOs reported paying roving assessors in a range of different ways. Just over a quarter of ITOs reported paying roving assessors on a fixed rate contract or salary. Another quarter reported paying on an hourly rate per assessment. Just under a fifth paid by number of assessments. One ITO reported paying by the number of credits reported and another reported that they were paid by the Tertiary Education Organisation on whose behalf they performed assessments. Others reported arrangements which varied according to individual assessors—depending on their individual charges and whether they were providing assessment only or training and assessment.

We asked all ITO survey respondents, regardless of whether they had roving and/or WPB assessors, to judge the knowledge and skills levels of each type of assessor. On the whole, ITOs rated roving assessors ahead of WPB assessors or thought both groups were about the same.

**Figure 1.** How do you think the level of knowledge/skills of *roving* and *WPB* assessors compares?




Respondents did pick out some particular strengths that they believe roving or WPB assessors have. As Figure 2 shows (next page), just half (n=17) of the 33 respondents with roving assessors believe that "experience gained from visiting a wide range of workplaces" is a strength of roving assessors. Perhaps not surprisingly just under half also believe that "close links and engagement with the ITO" is a strength. However, only just under a third (n=10) think that having "no work/personal relationship with the trainee" is a strength. We wrote this question item to probe issues raised in our background paper about the critical role of assessor judgement in highly contextualised settings such as the workplace (Vaughan & Cameron, 2009). Some research suggests that daily workplace relations might make it tricky for assessors to carry out impartial and robust assessments on their colleagues (Clayton, Roy, Booth, & House, 2004) or pass trainees by default in the absence of negative evidence (Postgraduate Medical Education and Training Board, 2005). However, other workplace assessment research and general educational research show that assessors must be

able to make judgements about performance and competence and a relationship with the learner or a role which combines training and assessment provides opportunities to enhance learning and authentic, robust assessment (see Vaughan and Cameron, 2009). On balance, our respondents lean towards seeing knowledge, of the workplace and of the workers themselves, as a strength rather than a weakness for assessors. By implication, this lack of workplace-specific knowledge/experience is a disadvantage of using roving assessors.

**Figure 2.** Particular strengths of *roving* assessors

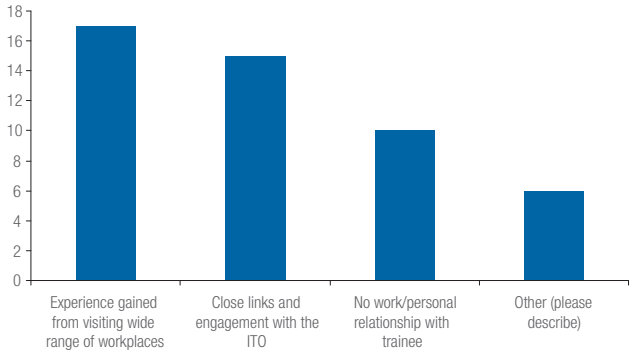
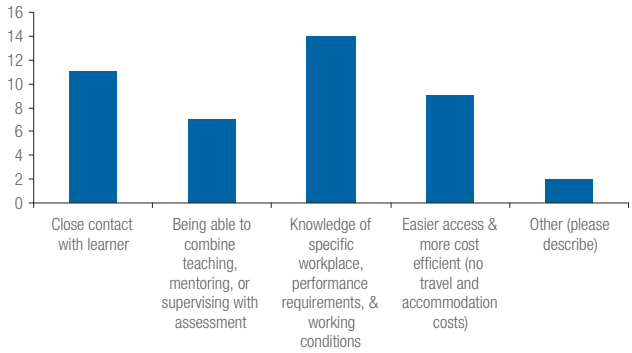



Figure 3 shows survey respondents' views of particular strengths for WPB assessors. Almost three-quarters (n=14) of the 19 ITOs with WPB assessors picked out "knowledge of the specific workplace" as a strength. Matching the pattern of responses reported for roving assessors, almost as many also picked out "close contact with the learner" as a strength. However, this close contact did not necessarily equate to "being able to combine teaching, mentoring or supervising with assessment", which only around a third (n=7) picked as a strength. WPB assessors can potentially contribute to their organisation's culture of learning, especially if their knowledge of "how things are done" is used to identify where training and supervision practices can be strengthened.

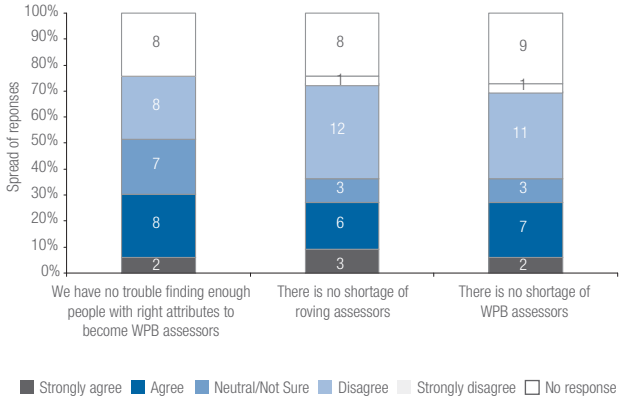
**Figure 3.** Particular strengths of *WPB* assessors




## Assessor backgrounds and motivation

Our survey findings suggest that ITOs have concerns about finding *enough* assessors, with half of the responding ITOs disagreeing with statements about not having any trouble with this. A third of ITOs disagreed with a statement that they had no trouble finding enough WPB assessors *with the right attributes*.

**Figure 4.** Level of agreement with ease of finding assessors




Several of our informants in focus groups were from ITOs that covered industry areas where the role of assessor is sought-after and carries status. These ITOs also tend to have a huge number of assessors. However, ITO representatives in focus groups described their frustration over the quality of these assessors and assessor candidates, saying that some assessors did not have the right attributes or skill sets to make good assessors. They attributed the problems they were having here to the misguided motivations of those wanting to become assessors. However, we note that the selection of assessors is likely to be a management responsibility.

In other cases, the role of WPB assessor was reportedly taken up by people who had been directed into it by their supervisor or manager, making their motivation levels fairly low for assessing, and assessor training and ongoing development. The three assessors we interviewed, as well as some other informants, felt that being an assessor was attractive to individuals who were committed to their industry, and who enjoyed interacting with and encouraging the next generation of workers. They also pointed out that workplace conditions and cultures had a big impact on how well they were able to carry out the assessment role.

Recruitment motivation was another issue we identified in the background paper. Hase and Saenger's research (2004) suggested that workplace assessors were often nominated by others on the basis of their technical expertise rather than for any other attributes essential for being a good assessor (e.g., communication skills, literacy, thoroughness, trustworthiness, confidence) and that assessors were often interested in the status that being an assessor could bring and in assessing as a form of their own professional development. Thus it seems that there is a range of reasons for becoming an assessor, and these can be an important consideration in attracting the right people to the job.

## Can recruitment processes solve motivation dilemmas?

Representatives from several different ITOs described the way in which training advisors and relationship managers recruit assessors more deliberately.

For some industries, training advisors will identify a need in a particular region and select potential assessors from workplaces that they think would do a good job. Those assessor candidates undertake Unit Standard 4098 training, with the training advisor supporting them to complete a post-classroom/on-the-job project in order to meet the requirements to become a registered assessor. In one ITO, relationship managers identify potential assessors and continue to maintain close connections with them after completion of training.

One ITO described getting around some motivation issues for volunteers, with a new needs-based recruitment process. Several other ITOs described wanting to bring in such a process. One representative was attracted to the efficiency such a process might deliver, saying "it would be better for us to select assessors, rather than training all-comers". Another felt that having fewer assessors would in itself give management greater control over the quality of the assessors and assessments. One participant described wanting to be more "discerning" in their ITO's selection of assessors, and wanting to figure out the right attributes for assessors and to specify these in a sort of job description. The ITO could perhaps advertise for assessors in particular industry areas, perhaps avoiding the current situation of having too many assessors, and sometimes of dubious quality, in some areas.

Recruiting the right people to be WPB assessors is a challenge. Ideally, they need to enjoy encouraging and interacting with the next generation of workers, and they need relevant workplace-specific knowledge to combine teaching, mentoring and supervising with assessment. Accepting all volunteers, or conscripting reluctant assessors, are unlikely to fulfil these needs. Some ITOs have more deliberate recruitment structures in place, to ensure they get people with the qualities needed, and they support them to continue to develop the right skill mix to become good assessors.

# 3. Training programmes and ongoing development

- Some ITO management staff felt frustrated by resistance to assessor training and professional development by those who did not see assessing as involving skills and knowledge distinct from training or from doing the job being assessed.
- Unit Standard 4098 is the main requirement for assessors. However some ITOs see this as *sufficient* training (with no further professional development) and others see it as *initial* training (followed by further professional development, often through meetings and post-assessment moderation activities)
- Most ITOs report that all their assessors hold Unit Standard 4098. Expectations that assessors have, or develop, other desirable characteristics, knowledge and experience run slightly ahead of the achievement of these things for assessors.
- Very little formal ongoing development is required of assessors by ITOs. However assessors said it was vital that they meet together to discuss ITO assessment policy and to develop consistency of judgement and validation of practice within the ITO.

Our ITO management-level informants were clear that the ability to assess involved an additional skillset to that required of a trainer. Informants described their frustrations with workplace supervisors and managers who often resisted assessor training on the grounds that their general industry experience and experience in training people for their workplace meant they already knew how to assess someone's competence.

Our informants also suggested that there might be some general ITO-wide disagreement about the experience and training needed to be an assessor. However, most of the ITOs involved in our focus groups had systems based on training assessors to Unit Standard 4098 level in a two-day course. In most instances this was enough to qualify someone as an assessor. The two-day course was seen as a significant time commitment for WPB assessors and not all ITOs were able to make this commitment, especially if they had 1,000+ assessors. Some ITOs preferred to tailor their assessor training to the specific requirements of their own industry. This could include training advisors who supported assessors in the workplace, and visited them quarterly until they were assured that assessment was valid and reliable. One ITO made extensive use of workplace advisors who looked at the whole learning infrastructure in workplaces, rather than just supporting assessors. This model involved helping to design training resources that aligned with how particular workplaces were organised, and working through the steps of the learning–assessment process with the workplace to identify and iron out any wrinkles that were getting in the way of the learning that the workplace was seeking.

The following two figures from the survey show the qualifications and characteristics expected of *roving* assessors and the proportion of roving assessors who have these qualifications and characteristics. Unit Standard 4098 is the main requirement for assessors and most ITOs report that all their roving assessors hold this standard. However, proportions of assessors with most of the other desired characteristics lag slightly behind the expectations that they should have them. The exception is "previous teaching experience". This is generally desirable, rather than required, but more than half of responding ITOs with roving assessors report that all or most assessors have this.

**Figure 5.** Qualifications, background and characteristics that *roving* assessors have or are expected to have

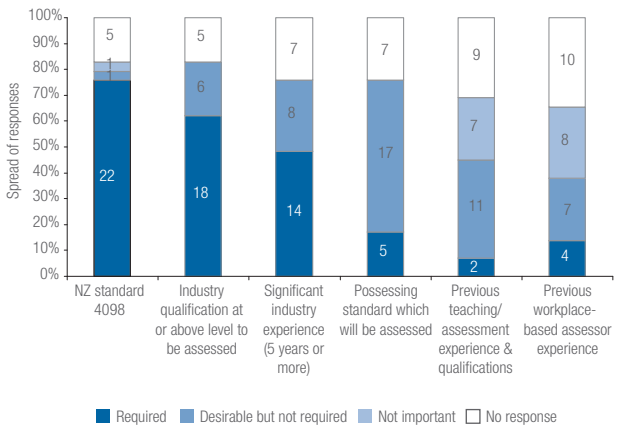


**Figure 6.** The proportion of *roving* assessors who have the specified qualifications and background

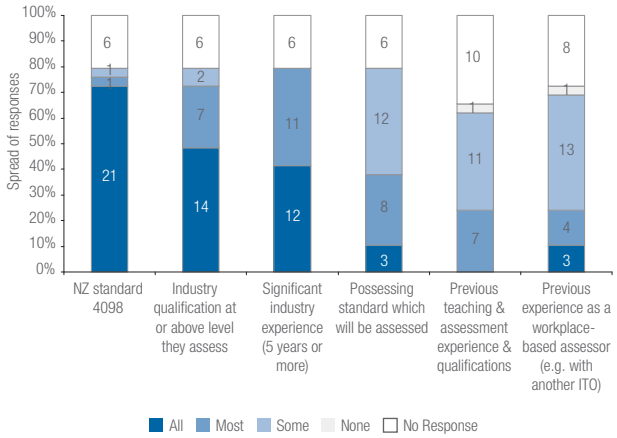
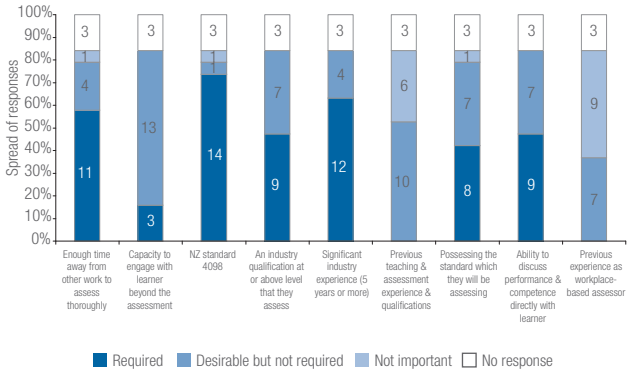



**Figure 7.** Qualifications, background and characteristics that *WPB* assessors have or are expected to have.




The next two figures show the qualifications and characteristics expected of *WPB* assessors and the proportion of WPB assessors who have these qualifications and characteristics. Respondents again pick out Unit Standard 4098 as the main requirement and most report that all their WPB assessors do hold this standard. Again, proportions of assessors with most of the other characteristics lag slightly behind the expectations that they should have them. For WPB assessors the exception is "capacity to engage with the learner beyond the assessment". This is generally seen as desirable, rather than required, but almost three-quarters of responding ITOs with WPB assessors report that at least some of the assessors are able to do this (though we cannot comment on whether or not they actually do).

The biggest gap between holding expectations and meeting them occurs with "enough time away from other work to assess thoroughly". This is a requirement for over half of the responding ITOs with WPB assessors but generally only most or some WPB assessors are reported to have enough time to devote to assessment. This would appear to reflect organisational issues rather than assessor competency.

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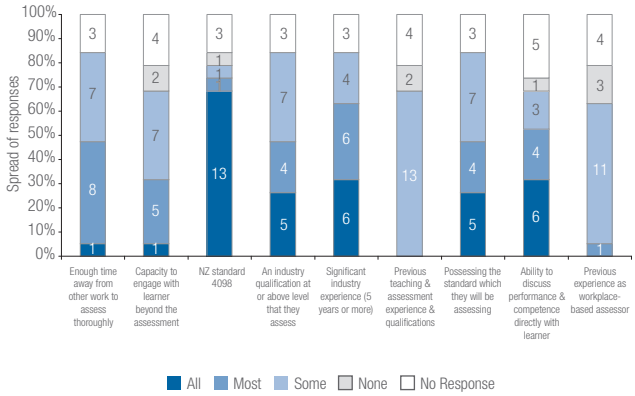
**Figure 8.** The proportion of WPB assessors who have the specified qualifications and background




Overall, the gap between expectations and actually having required or desired assessor qualifications and characteristics appears to be greater for WPB assessors than roving assessors. This might be because in some industry areas, the WPB assessor role appears to be burdensome. ITOs struggle to find enough assessors of the calibre needed. A related reason could be that the link between assessment and mentoring, which seems to be part of the role of WPB assessors but not to the same extent as roving assessors, requires quite a complex skill set that extends well beyond knowing how to assess accurately.

ITOs rated both types of assessor similarly in relation to *industry* knowledge and skills, with a smaller equal number rating one or other type of assessor more highly here. ITOs rated roving assessors ahead of WPB assessors when it came to *assessment*. Some rated each group's skills and knowledge as the same but none rated WPB assessors more highly. ITOs mainly rated both assessor groups the same on *knowledge of the industry training system.* However, almost as many rated roving assessors ahead of WPB assessors, here and only two rated WPB assessors more highly.

## The role of Unit Standard 4098

Survey findings on training requirements in the previous subsections indicate that ITOs generally regard Unit Standard 4098 as the gateway to being an assessor. However focus group discussions went into more detail about Unit Standard 4098 and suggest that it acts as a "gateway" to becoming an accredited assessor in two different ways, depending on ITOs' views on what accreditation actually means. In the first interpretation of accreditation, Unit Standard 4098 serves as initial training for assessors, with the expectation that further learning will be required of assessors. In the second interpretation, and for other ITOs, Unit Standard 4098 serves as sufficient training, with nothing more required of assessors.

In most cases, focus group informants reported that roving or WPB assessors who complete training to Unit Standard 4098 will be registered for two years, although some register their assessors for a three-year period. We note that focus group participants did *not* differentiate between roving and WPB assessors and several participants emphasised their ITO's policies and practices for training made no distinction either – and also because there were often other more important distinctions to be made during discussions (for example, between industry work settings and conditions).

At least one of our focus group ITOs was phasing out Unit Standard 4098 as a requirement, saying that it simply did not work for their industry area as it did not fit the needs of their industry. Instead they planned to create their own assessor training. Several other ITO informants said that they did not like the generic nature of Unit Standard 4098 and the assumption that having Unit Standard 4098 qualified people to assess in any subject area. Some ITOs described training their own assessors, helping them to understand the levels and criteria related to standards relevant to the ITOs' own assessor qualifications. One ITO described teaching the principles of Unit Standard 4098 to others in the industry area who would be responsible for teaching these principles to the trainers who would also themselves assess the learning.

### Unit Standard 4098 and different systems within the same ITO

The training and requirements for assessors sometimes vary within the same ITO and across different industries covered by that ITO. For example, one of our ITO representatives described four distinct models for its different industry areas; another described three different models designed to meet the needs of differently-sized industry workplaces.

In one of these ITOs, Unit Standard 4098 courses had been abandoned for one specific industry area, in favour of having the training advisor take responsibility for training the assessor. The training advisors already have a deep industry knowledge, having in nearly every case been in the role of the WPB person they train as an assessor. This helps set up a good relationship for the assessment training, based on mutual respect of industry experience and knowledge. The ITO representative felt that this training better suited the holistic nature of that industry and the kind of assessments required. He also suggested that training advisors were well placed to become roving assessors.

However, this ITO also had several other systems designed for its various industries. One was based on an old legacy system (inherited by the ITO but set up before ITOs came into existence) with an external training provider acting on an on-job assessor, after reviewing evidence sent from the workplace. Another system involved using one assessor for a few assessments across a cluster of workplaces, with most assessment done off-job by an external training provider. And the fourth system involved assessment through logbooks with occasional workplace visits.

Legacy systems such as the three just outlined have operated according to the characteristics of a specific industry and were formerly managed by industry boards or associations predating the establishment of ITOs. Where the industry characteristics that drove the legacy system remain in place, it becomes challenging to change the legacy system or bring it into line with an ITO-wide system covering a number of different industries, even though more appropriate models are both available and in use.

## Ongoing support and development for assessors

Given that there is frequently no absolute achievement standard, apart from that evidenced in basic technical tasks, assessor judgement is always required. This means that assessors need ongoing support to develop confidence in their own ability to judge the quantity and quality of evidence required to say that a standard has been achieved. Focus group respondents from different ITOs told us how important it was that, once qualified, assessors develop confidence and capability through on-the-job experience and feedback, especially in their initial work as assessors.

Some ITOs invested in observing assessors in action, especially in their first year of being an assessor. Some ITOs were looking towards strengthening assessor induction, by providing peer mentoring and feedback. This would seem to be a very useful investment of time, which would contribute to ensuring that assessment is reliable, as well as reducing the moderation requirements.

Even after the first year, ongoing assessor professional development was seen as essential for the consistency of assessment practices. Respondents in our assessor focus group said they wanted to be kept in the loop with regard to changes in policy or recommended assessment practices. They viewed "ongoing contact for skills updates" as key to maintaining consistent assessment practices. While this group was small and represented only three ITOs, these assessors reported that they valued formal and structured opportunities to get together with training advisors and other assessors who were assessing the same standards, so they could test out their judgements and decisions with peers. Although these meetings focused on products of assessment (such as documentation of decisions) they were also seen to provide opportunities to develop consistency of judgements and validation of practice within the ITO. Assessors found it helpful to exchange ideas about the meaning of specific standards, evidence of achievement of a standard (or group of standards) and ways of gathering this evidence.

Another valued form of feedback came from formal moderation systems. Some of the focus group informants told us that their assessors did not always welcome feedback on their assessment practice. By contrast the experienced assessors told us that they valued regular feedback from moderators to prevent "drift" from the actual standards over time and to develop and maintain their competency as assessors.

In addition to peer feedback, and opportunities to learn from moderation practices, several ITOs described providing ongoing support to assessors through their training managers and relationship managers, who acted as mentors for the assessors.

How common are the practices just outlined? The following figures show that little formal ongoing development is expected of either roving or WPB assessors. Informal refresher courses are only required by around a third of ITOs, although just under half of ITOs think this is desirable. ITOs do expect assessors to take part in discussion and collaboration (just under half for roving assessors and just over half for WPB assessors) but overall it seems that planned assessor training is viewed as an injection of knowledge that is expected to last for life. As the experienced assessor comments above show, this view reflects a relatively less sophisticated understanding of the need for learning to be constantly refreshed and developed over time.

**Figure 9.** Ongoing or further development activities expected of *roving* assessors

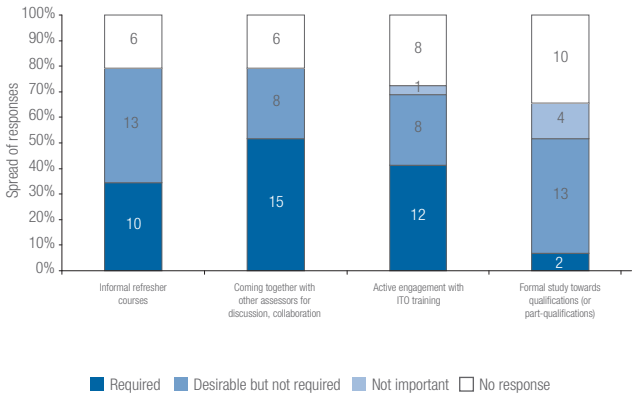
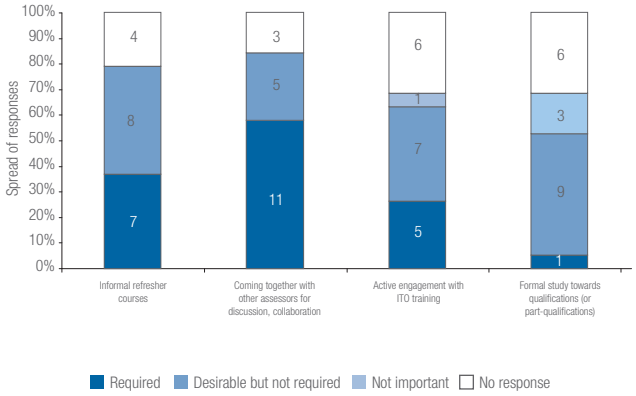
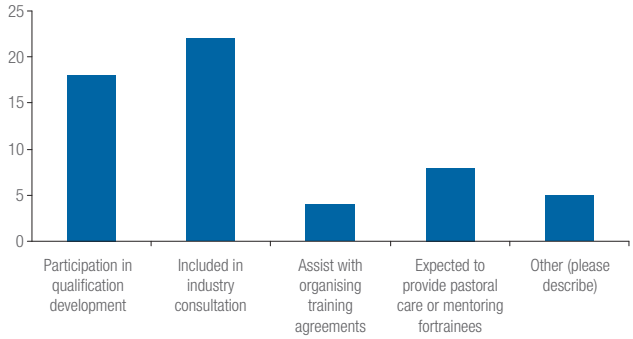



**Figure 10.** Ongoing or further development activities expected of *WPB* assessors



Another part of the ongoing development of assessors may occur through their involvement in nonassessment activities of the ITO. For example, two-thirds of the 33 responding ITOs (n=22) indicated that their assessors participated in industry consultation, and more than half (n=18) that they were involved in qualification development. Just under a quarter (n=8) reported that assessors were expected to provide pastoral care or mentoring for trainees, and just 12 percent (n=4) that their assessors assisted with organising training agreements.

**Figure 11.** Integration of assessors into ITO nonassessment activities




One respondent commented that assessors participated in policy and resource development, and another that roles vary, with some assessors providing pastoral care and not others.

## Support materials

Well-designed support materials were seen to contribute to a learning infrastructure where trainers, supervisors, assessors and moderators were focused on aligned teaching, learning and assessment. Assessors reported that standard training materials and moderated lesson plans were key to helping assessors to do their jobs well.

Good support materials can act as scaffolds for learning and make it more likely that assessors and trainees will engage productively with them. One ITO representative reported that the embedded literacy and numeracy programmes in some workplaces were impacting both on learner motivation and completion rates, and that the literacy instructors were helping supervisors develop their own understandings of workplace literacy.

Well-written support materials were typically seen to reduce the need for extensive external moderation, because participants became better informed about the standards and what they looked like in practice. We were shown two examples of information booklets for assessors and trainees that clearly detailed the requirements and provided examples of trainee behaviour that met specific standards. However, it appeared that the language used in the trainee manual was unnecessarily complex and it could have been written more simply.

Some informants dismissed the usefulness of written support materials for their trainees because they were not “paper people” and would therefore not value or use them. The people who said this were from ITOs where generally the same person was the employer, trainer, supervisor and assessor of a single trainee. The view was that this person was well aware of the real-world standard required for a trainee to demonstrate competence in action, and therefore support materials were not necessary.

There was no mention of use of support materials other than paper-based resources—for example, access to online demonstrations of specific competencies in action. Further exploration is needed to learn more about how support materials are used in different workplaces.

In conclusion, on-job assessment is a skilled activity that entails the exercise of considerable judgement. Although the “basics” can be learnt during early formal “one-off” training (such as learning to assess to Unit Standard 4098 level), assessors who have access to ongoing learning support, both formal and informal, are more likely to keep getting better at the job. Early on, more deliberate and planned supervision seems desirable. As assessors become more experienced, opportunities for peer learning, or for strengthening insights via related workplace and ITO activities, become more important. Although formal learning activities take time, and hence money, they can ultimately also save time in decreased moderation costs.

# 4. Quality assurance, moderation and assessor regulation

- Some ITOs are considering how to assure assessment quality by limiting the number of assessors and scope of their accreditation.
- ITOs most commonly use sample-based moderation (after assessments have taken place) to check for consistency of assessments. However focus groups pointed out that it is difficult to moderate assessments after the fact if they are narrow and "tick-based".
- Some ITOs are turning to pre-moderation to ensure quality – i.e. checking that assessment tasks are set up to validly capture the important skills and knowledge in the different unit standards and that they meet training goals. Some ITOs hold assessor workshops to discuss moderation issues prior to assessments taking place.
- Around half of the ITOs use verifiers but focus group discussions suggested mixed views about their value unless they have specific assessment training. Verifier roles included checking performances that cannot be observed in a single assessor visit or when it is not practical for an external assessor to do it, providing support and feedback to trainees, and acting as defacto assessors (carrying out assessments in all but the final sign-off).

## Management of assessment quality

Workplace assessment carries high stakes for learners and for assessors. Consequences when workers are judged capable of tasks they actually cannot yet accomplish could include causing an accident, or wastage of resources and time if tasks need to be redone for quality assurance reasons. Where unsatisfactory work is seen by an outside client, loss of reputation is another risk to a business. The ITO also risks losing credibility if its assessors are not seen to be up to the job, or if its assessments are seen as insufficiently rigorous. This section looks at how ITOs handle these challenges.

One ITO described taking a risk management approach to training and managing its assessors. This approach makes no distinction between WPB and roving assessors. All of them are rated on a 1–10 scale for risk of making poor assessments. This ITO's protocol makes professional development or extra training mandatory for assessors rated level 8 or higher on the scale. This ITO would like to make refresher courses for all assessors mandatory in the future, regardless of their risk level rating.

ITO informants also described culling the scope of unit standards that individual assessors are accredited to assess. For example, one ITO was dealing with assessors who had a history of applying for accreditation to assess entire domains of unit standards but rarely assessed all of those standards. Not surprisingly, in view of the comments about the part experience plays in making good judgements (Section 3), this was seen as an issue of assessment quality. Although assessors were accredited for three years, any inactivity around certain unit standards within that time rendered them even less able to assess those areas accurately and reliably. This ITO had taken the initial step of asking its assessors to self-cull. One ITO representative felt that extensions of scope had historically been awarded to assessors too easily because people failed to understand the real responsibility entailed: "People expect you to just quickly do things, like extending scope, simply because there's a learner graduation coming up", and the assessor wants to assess a few more standards so the learner can graduate. This type of reasoning assumes that general assessment expertise transfers unproblematically between contexts and tasks, and consequently discounts the role of ongoing experience in making good judgements in a specific area.

Having large numbers of assessors had become unwieldy according to representatives from several different ITOs, who were focused on making the most of limited ITO resources to support assessors. Some ITO informants described culling the number of assessors—in one case, from 1,200 four years ago to 400 now. In another case the ITO has reduced total numbers from 3,000, many of whom were "inactive", to 42 active assessors.

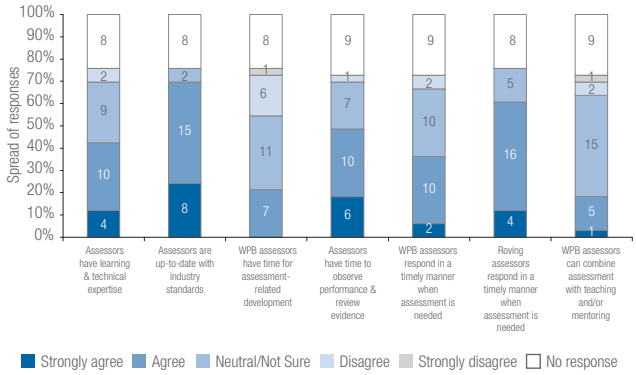
### Knowledge required of skilled assessors

Despite the prescriptiveness of some unit standards, assessment always involves collecting evidence and making judgements about whether candidates meet the required standards. Focus group respondents said that good assessors had a thorough knowledge of the knowledge and skills they were assessing, had a good understanding of the qualification and the standards used and displayed a commitment to the integrity of the qualification. These attributes contributed, in their view, to more robust assessment.

Despite these aspirations, as the next figure shows, many survey respondents were not sure about the extent to which assessors had the necessary knowledge and skills mix they needed, or the time to do their job well.

It is not surprising, then, that reducing the number of assessors, and more careful selection of assessors with characteristics that made it more likely that they would assess effectively, were seen as essential components of quality assurance and of manageability of assessment.

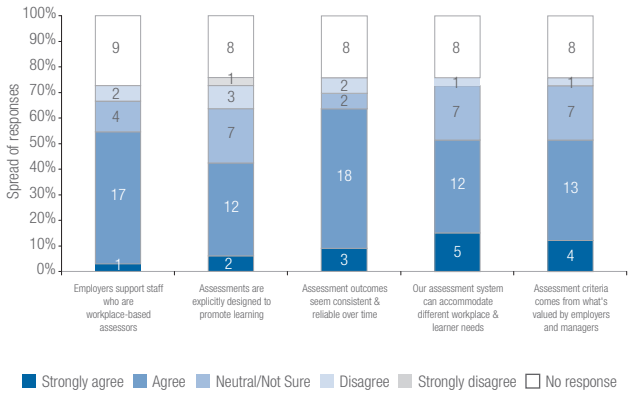
**Figure 12.** View of assessor knowledge and practice




## How well do resources and practices support quality assessment?

The challenge of ensuring quality should not be seen as the sole responsibility of assessors, trainers and systems to ensure the quality of their work. Factors such as the appropriateness, adaptability and reliability of assessment tasks and expected performance descriptors also contribute to quality assurance. Support from management also has an impact on quality. The next figure shows the extent to which survey respondents agreed these features were present in their workplaces. Given the importance attached to formative assessment (i.e., assessment for learning) in education generally, it is interesting that there was least overall agreement (just over 40 percent) that assessment supports learning in these workplaces.

**Figure 13.** Expectations of assessment tasks and practices




## The role of workplace verifiers in quality assurance

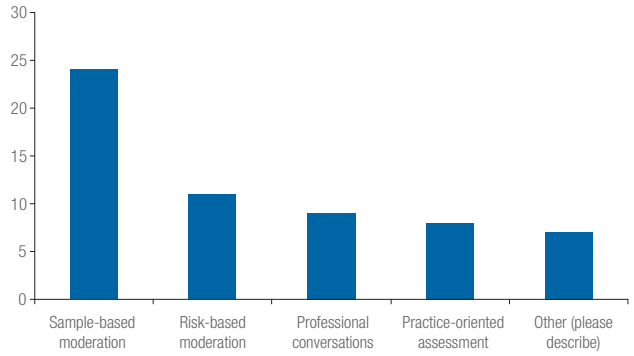
There were mixed views about the use of workplace verifiers. They are used in some ITOs to check performances that cannot be observed in a single assessor visit or when it is not practical for an external person to do it. Some unit standards can only be observed when an opportunity presents itself, so verifiers are needed to document the achievement of these standards. Verifiers are often in a position to provide corrective and supportive feedback to trainees. People considered that quality assurance is stronger when verifiers are also trained to understand how the separate unit standards contribute to the qualification and are given the time and opportunity to assess. Without some investment in verifiers the quality of their judgements was seen to be variable, and what was described as the "tick, tick, sign 'em off syndrome" or the "cuppa and a tickbox" practice were more likely to occur. Although some ITOs were not in favour of verifiers others believed that they were a valuable source of evidence if they were trained and supported in the workplace.

# Moderation as quality assurance

The more that participants in training and assessment share understandings about what they are trying to achieve, and what this looks like in practice, the more likely it is that the qualifications serve the needs of learners and workplaces. However, not everyone has the same understanding of what moderation is intended to achieve—is it ensuring that specific standards have been consistently and reliably assessed, or is it a check of the assessment process, or both? While moderation is usually directed towards the products of assessment, it may also reveal areas where moderation structures and processes can be improved.

The following figure shows survey responses on the types of moderation used. The most popular form is post-moderation of achievement (often called sample-based moderation, as in the following graph). Post-moderation may refer to ensuring consistency in assessing of the same standards over time or between different assessors (assessment process). Risk-based moderation, reported by 11 ITOs, is also a form of post-moderation. Practice-oriented conversations or practice-oriented assessment may occur as post-moderation or pre-moderation or during assessment—and we discuss these in the next subsections.

**Figure 14.** Types of moderation used




## Pre-moderation of tasks and expectations

Some ITOs use pre-moderation to ensure that assessment tasks are assessing the right things (i.e. that the tasks validly capture the important skills and knowledge in the different unit standards). Checking that there are connections between training goals and assessment is also part of pre-moderation. Some ITOs considered that more work was required to enhance the "fit" between unit standards and their assessment.

Assessor workshops are used by some ITOs to moderate assessors' understanding of what is required for particular standards. Group moderation is seen as a very useful way to develop consistent assessment judgements. However, this is easiest to do for paper-based responses, which some ITOs see as too narrow. One possible solution is to capture actual trainee performances on video so that they can be more readily assessed and moderated. Some ITOs expressed interest in doing this.

## Post-moderation of achievement

Moderation approaches reported after the assessment event included scrutiny of written assessments and workbooks. However, post-moderation may not be possible for judgements of actual performances, depending on how the evidence is captured. As one informant said "you can't moderate ticks". This raises the challenge that narrow assessments with atomised yes/no tick-sheet criteria may not be easily moderated after the event. Yet some participants took the opposite quality assurance perspective, believing that the more black and white assessments are, the more reliable they can be in the judgements they make.

When weighing these two conflicting types of view, another perspective to bear in mind is that while some things can be readily assessed, they may not be the things that are valued by the industry. This brings to mind the quote by Einstein: "Not everything that counts can be counted and not everything that can be counted counts."

Survey responses suggested that in most ITOs moderation is mainly based on evaluating samples of learner "products" (e.g. things they have made or designed or done as a result of their learning) which provide a measure of how well trainees can demonstrate their propositional knowledge (knowing "what"). Eleven ITOs moderate standards or assessors where they perceive likely sources of error (e.g. the work of new assessors, new standards or standards that have not been moderated for some time).

## Moderation during assessment

It is not clear how trainee demonstrations of procedural knowledge (knowing "how" or practice-orientated assessments) are moderated, but this is reported by only a quarter of respondents.

Nevertheless, direct observation of assessors when they are assessing could be one way to address the "tick-sheet" post-moderation challenge outlined above. One ITO visits all new assessors and provides feedback on their assessment. When the moderator (or training advisor) is satisfied that the assessor is consistent and capable they are visited on a three-year cycle. However, this is not feasible for ITOs where there are large numbers of assessors and where workplaces are widely geographically spread.

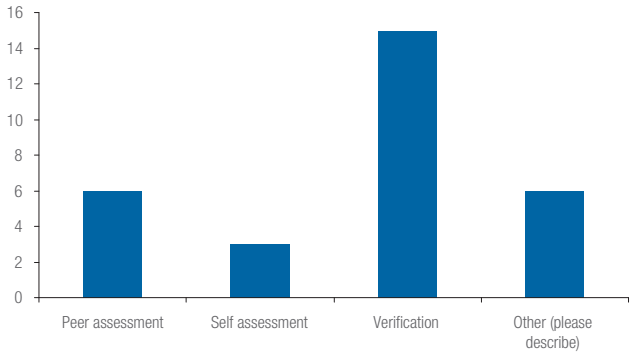
Some ITOs that were moving to more "embedded" assessment were developing approaches that enabled assessors to recognise and assess several unit standards in authentic contexts. For example, demonstrations of correct hand washing, safe lifting and applying the patient code of rights can be assessed in one performance. This partly addressed some of the manageability issues as well, in that when assessment is part of day-to-day workplace practices rather than an "add-on", judgements of competency can be made by the team, thus increasing the reliability of assessor judgements. One ITO has developed an embedded model where both training and assessment are part of everyday practice. This model has recently been evaluated very favourably (Ryan, 2009). Where several

people in the workplace take responsibility for learning and high workplace standards, assessor judgements can be scrutinised on a day-to-day basis, as well as more typical moderation of other assessments.

## Gaining another perspective on judgements

Input from other informants can also contribute to quality assurance. The role of verifiers has already been discussed and as the next figure shows, of the 33 responding ITOs, nearly half (n=15) report using verification. Learners can contribute assessment and learning insights that might be missed by assessors. For example, one person's large knowledge or skill gain might simply be "more of the same" for another worker. If judgements about attitudes and dispositions are involved (as for example in dealing with safety challenges) assessors need to make inferences based on how they interpret the actions they see. Someone who knows the trainee well is more likely to be able to do this accurately but consulting the person being assessed can increase validity of the judgement. In light of these considerations, it is interesting that so little use is made of peer assessment (n=6), and self-assessment (n=3).

**Figure 15.** Other forms of assessment

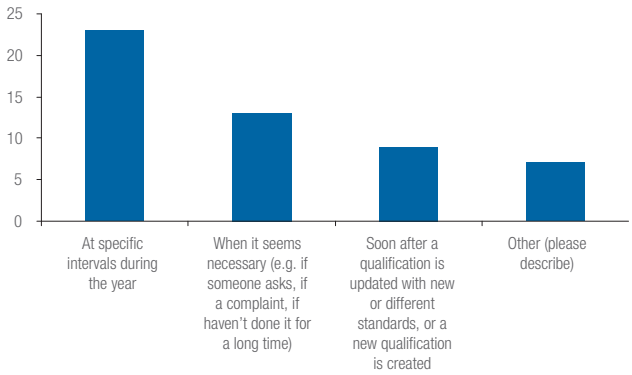



Comments that individuals added to the survey reported the use of professional conversations, embedded assessment within in-house programmes that are assured by the ITO and use of attestations, as forms of quality assurance. Five comments were made about additional assessment practices: self-assessment as part of learning (but not for summative assessment) and "embedded assessment" which in some cases appeared to be a variation of formative assessment.

## The timing of moderation

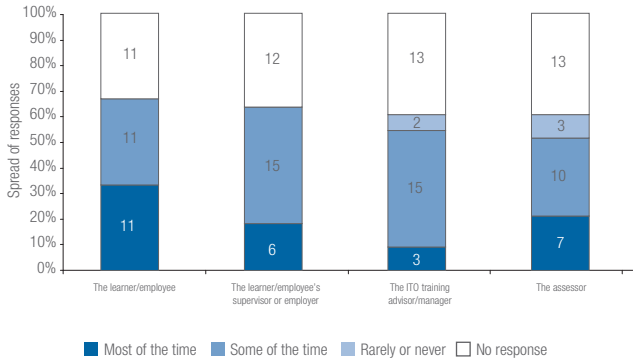
The next two figures report on matters of timing and its relationship to quality assurance. Most respondents reported that moderation occurs at "specific intervals during the year". Less than half moderate on an as-required basis and less than a third after a new qualification or qualification update. The few comments made (n=7) gave more specific information about when and how moderation occurs. For example, one response specified random moderation throughout the year in addition to fixed-timing moderation. Others described moderation timing as tied to specific markers such as assessor and unit standard risk categories, newness of assessors, a two-year moderation cycle, an annual moderation plan specifying particular units to be moderated and "cyclic events". One comment was not about moderation timing but the way moderation was conducted and assessors supported: the respondent described the ITO's plan to shift away from structured cluster meetings to a moderation programme especially for WPB assessors, and an assessor forum which combined a mix of moderation, resource feedback, assessment feedback and assessor upskilling.

**Figure 16.** Timing of moderation




Matters of timing also draw attention to the relationship between timeliness and quality. If learners are assessed before they are ready, they may be discouraged from making progress in their learning, or it may appear they have learnt less than is actually the case. On the other hand, if they have to wait too long, they may either give up, or slip into bad habits that become harder to correct as time goes on. In view of these considerations, it is encouraging that learners are often involved in making decisions about the timing of their assessment. This does, of course, have implications for flexible availability of moderators.

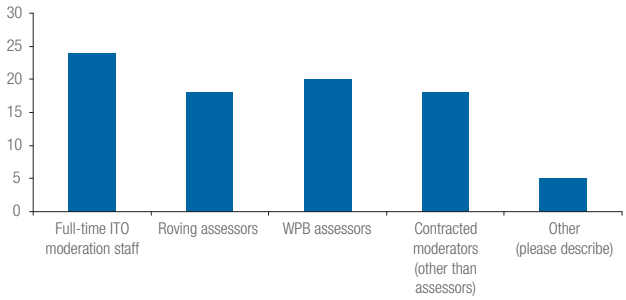
**Figure 17.** On the whole, who initiates assessments?




## Availability of moderators

As the next figure shows, nearly three-quarters of ITOs (n=24) have full-time moderation staff who participate in moderation. Most responding ITOs reported having one or two full-time moderation staff members (nine had one staff member; another eight had two; one reported having one or two staff members). Around half have similar proportions of roving assessors (n=18) and WPB assessors (n=20) participating in moderation. Almost as many indicated that they have contracted moderators (n=18). One respondent indicated that their assessors rarely carried out moderation and another reported that assessors moderate each other. Other comments were about education providers also participating in moderation and the use of both internal and external moderators.

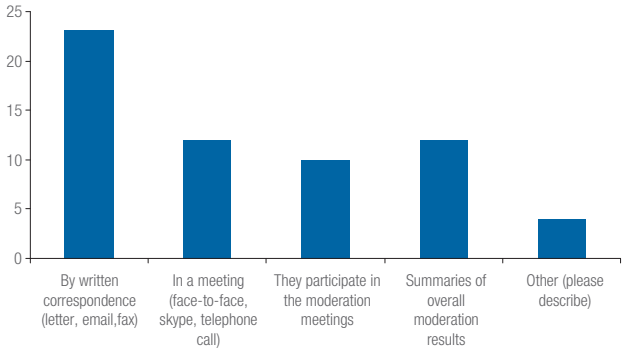
**Figure 18.** Moderation participants




## Learning from moderation

Most commonly, assessors are informed of moderation outcomes by written correspondence, with just under three-quarters (n=24) of responding ITOs reporting this. The next most common way that assessors were informed of moderation findings was through result summaries (i.e., summaries of moderation judgements and assessor alignment with these)—which may or may not be distributed directly with written correspondence.

**Figure 19.** How assessors find out about moderation outcomes



# 5. Conclusion

## Assessment structures and systems *for* learning

Our survey and focus groups have provided a picture of how assessment structures and processes work from the perspectives of 16 ITO staff and three WPB assessors. Many of the ITO staff we spoke with described being actively engaged in identifying weaknesses in their structures and systems. Some were also involved in pursuing strategies and mechanisms to deal with those weaknesses. In other instances there are things that we can identify as weaknesses or potential weaknesses through a consideration of the survey, focus groups and our analysis of assessment themes in relation to research on workplace learning and workplace assessment in the background paper (see Vaughan & Cameron, 2009).

We now have one piece of the big picture of assessment structures and systems. But structures and systems must exist *for* something—in this case, that "something" is workplace or on-job assessment. Without any evidence and analysis of the assessment practices themselves, we can only guess at how well the structures and systems really function to support assessment. Stakeholders involved in this phase of the research have provided their perceptions of their own ITO's structures and systems, and the issues they face in maintaining and improving these. However, we still know very little about whether those structures and systems are fit for purpose—because the purpose, and the details of the assessment that the structures and systems are designed to support, are beyond the scope of this study.

The further work that would contribute the remaining pieces might involve document analysis to help provide evidence of the written policies that support the structures and policies, as well as contributing information about the training materials that support assessment. We did not examine any workplace training agreements (WTAs) and compare these with what trainees actually received and were assessed on and these, too, would give a better sense of what actually happens regarding assessment. Direct observation would also provide another lens for understanding what assessment looks like in practice as opposed to what people think it looks like. The views of the learners are also missing from this analysis. Learners are the recipients of the structures and systems that are designed for them. Ideally we would like to know the extent to which they feel supported by the ITO structures and systems and how things might work to improve their learning, including assessment that supports their learning.

## Some general suggestions for improving assessment structures and systems

Given the limitations we raise about having only one of three possible pieces of the assessment structures and systems picture, we can make several suggestions for ITOs to consider.

### Target investment in assessors more tightly

Keeping the assessor pool to manageable levels makes it more feasible to provide the training and ongoing professional development required or desired to develop and maintain their competency levels. Investing in assessors is investing in the skills base of the industry and a wise investment in assessors means that they will have more to offer the industry as a whole.

### Develop career pathways for assessors

It is worth considering the development of a career pathway within the industry for assessors. Assessors have or will have specialised content knowledge as well as higher level skills that they learn through well-designed and implemented assessor training. This combination of industry knowledge and skill, together with assessment knowledge and skill, could be more formally recognised. Perhaps it should be harder to become an assessor, and once this investment has been made, assessors should be valued and supported because they have a role to play in building a high-capability workforce. But there needs to be an understanding of the ways in which learning and assessment and teaching are all interlinked. A focus on assessment only is attending to only one part of building workplace capability.

### See assessment as part of an infrastructure for workplace development

This report shows that attending to the selection and training of assessors, while important, is only part of the challenge of developing workplace capability. Assessment and moderation provide information such as whether trainees are achieving standards, and which standards are proving more difficult to assess. They can also be used as part of the evidence base for how workplaces are building capability over time. Ensuring that workplace structures and processes support trainees, assessors and moderators to get better at what they do appears to be a route to enhancing longer term organisational goals, including quality assurance, worker motivation and retention and organisational success.

### Address gaps in knowledge about assessment in the workplace

While this research has given us a picture of current ITO workplace assessment structures and issues, it has also revealed what we do not know, and what we need to know, in order to improve those structures and systems. This research is the beginning of mapping the knowledge about how assessment works in ITOs. It is a useful start, and it has generated areas for further research that are needed before a comprehensive picture of assessment will be generated. It is based on the perceptions of key industry stakeholders, and has revealed the need to include perspectives of learners and a wider range of assessors before we could have confidence in the trustworthiness of our findings. It would seem essential to focus more deeply on a sample of workplaces —taking a careful look at how assessment structures and practices support or constrain the completion of qualifications would be a valuable first step. This sort of research would require that researchers spend time on site observing, analysing documentation and talking to trainees, trainers, assessors and anyone else who contributes to assessment decisions. It might involve several visits over the course of a trainee's progression through a qualification to obtain a deeper understanding of the impact of training and assessment on their achievement and motivation to learn and contribute to their industry. When there is a clearer picture of what works for learners, the implications for workplace assessment structures and what assessors need to do their jobs well will also be clearer.

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# Appendix A: Survey questionnaire

## ITO assessment systems and structures survey

### 1. Roving or contracted or multi-workplace assessors

This section asks only about roving or contracted or multi-workplace assessors – assessors your ITO pays to assess trainees at different workplaces (these are assessors that do not work for the businesses or organisations with the trainees being assessed).

**1. How many roving OR contracted OR multi-workplace assessors (excluding workplace assessors) are attached to your ITO?**

- ◯ None
- ◯ 1-10
- ◯ 11-40
- ◯ More than 40

### 2. Roving or contracted or multi-workplace assessors Cont.

**1. How are they paid? (tick all that apply)**

- ☐ fixed rate contract or salary
- ☐ by number of workplaces
- ☐ by number of assessments
- ☐ By an hourly rate per assessment
- ☐ by the number of credits reported
- ☐ Other (please describe)

**2. What sorts of qualifications, background and characteristics do roving/contracted/multi-workplace assessors have or are expected to have?**

| | Required | Desirable but not required | Not important |
|---|---|---|---|
| NZ standard 4098 | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| An industry qualification at or above the level that they assess | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Possessing the standard which they will be assessing | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Previous teaching and assessment experience and qualifications (e.g. school teaching, tertiary teaching) | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Significant industry experience (5 years or more) | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Previous experience as a workplace-based assessor (e.g. with another ITO) | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |

Other (please describe)

# ITO assessment systems and structures survey

### 3. What proportion of your roving/contracted/multi-workplace assessors have the following?

| | All | Most | Some | None |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| NZ standard 4098 | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| An industry qualification at or above the level that they assess | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Possessing the standard which they will be assessing | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Previous teaching and assessment experience and qualifications (e.g. school teaching, tertiary teaching) | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Significant industry experience (5 years or more) | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Previous experience as a workplace-based assessor (e.g. with another ITO) | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |

Other (please describe)

### 4. What kind of ongoing or further development activities, if any, are expected of roving/contracted/multi-workplace assessors?

| | Required | Desirable but not required | Not important |
|---|---|---|---|
| Informal refresher courses | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Coming together with other assessors for discussion, collaboration | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Active engagement with ITO training | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Formal study towards qualifications (or part-qualifications) | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |

Other (please describe)

### 5. What do you think are the particular strengths of roving/contracted/multi-workplace assessors?

- ☐ Experience gained from visiting a wide range of different workplaces
- ☐ Close links and engagement with the ITO
- ☐ No work/personal relationship with trainee
- ☐ Other (please describe)

## 3. Workplace-based Assessors

This section asks about workplace-based assessors – assessors that assess trainees in the workplace where the assessor and trainee both work (these assessors are not employed or contracted separately by your ITO).

# ITO assessment systems and structures survey

**1. How many workplace-based assessors work with your ITO?**

- ◯ None
- ◯ 1-100
- ◯ 101-500
- ◯ More than 500

## 4. Are there Roving or Workplace based Assessors at your ITO?

You have indicated that your ITO has neither roving/contracted/multi-workplace assessors nor workplace-based assessors. If you have made an error in completing the survey please answer the following question to be redirected to the correct section and change your initial answer.

**1. Please indicate the type of assessors at your ITO**

- ◯ Roving/contracted/multi-workplace
- ◯ Workplace-based
- ◯ Other (please describe)

## 5. Survey Incomplete

If your ITO has NO roving/contracted/multi-workplace assessors and NO workplace-based assessors you will be unable to complete this survey. In this instance please contact Ben Gardiner (survey manager) at ben.gardiner@nzcer.org.nz and click 'next' to exit the survey.

## 6. Workplace-based Assessors Cont.

# ITO assessment systems and structures survey

## 1. What sorts of qualifications, background and characteristics are expected of workplace-based assessors?

| | Required | Desirable but not required | Not important |
|---|---|---|---|
| Enough time away from other work to carry out assessments thoroughly | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Capacity to engage with the learner-employee beyond the actual assessment (e.g. mentoring) | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| NZ standard 4098 | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| An industry qualification at or above the level that they assess | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Significant industry experience (5 years or more) | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Previous teaching and assessment experience and qualifications (e.g. school teaching, tertiary teaching) | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Possessing the standard which they will be assessing | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Ability to discuss performance and competence issues directly with the learner/employee | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Previous experience as a workplace-based assessor (e.g. with another ITO or employer) | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |

Other (please describe)

## 2. What proportion of your workplace-based assessors have the following?

| | All | Most | Some | None |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Enough time away from other work to carry out assessments thoroughly | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Capacity to engage with the learner-employee beyond the actual assessment (e.g. mentoring) | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| NZ standard 4098 | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| An industry qualification at or above the level that they assess | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Significant industry experience (5 years or more) | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Previous teaching and assessment experience and qualifications (e.g. school teaching, tertiary teaching) | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Possessing the standard which they will be assessing | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Ability to discuss performance and competence issues directly with the learner/employee | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Previous experience as a workplace-based assessor (e.g. with another ITO or employer) | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |

Other (please describe)

# ITO assessment systems and structures survey

### 3. What kind of ongoing or further development, if any, is expected of workplace-based assessors

| | Required | Desirable but not required | Not important |
|---|---|---|---|
| Informal refresher courses | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Coming together with other assessors for discussion, collaboration | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Active engagement with ITO training | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Formal study towards qualifications (or part-qualifications) | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |

Other (please describe)

### 4. What do you think are the particular strengths of workplace-based assessors?

- ☐ Close contact with the learner/employee
- ☐ Being able to combine teaching, mentoring, or supervising with assessment
- ☐ Knowledge of the specific workplace and its issues, performance requirements, and working conditions
- ☐ Easier access and more cost efficient (no travel and accommodation costs)
- ☐ Other (please describe)

## 7. Assessment and Moderation

### 1. On the whole, who initiates assessments?

| | Most of the time | Some of the time | Rarely or never |
|---|---|---|---|
| The learner/employee | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| The learner/employee's supervisor or employer | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| The ITO training advisor/manager | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| The assessor | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |

Other (please describe)

# ITO assessment systems and structures survey

## 2. How are assessors integrated into ITO non-assessment activities, if at all?

- [ ] Participation in qualification development
- [ ] Included in industry consultation
- [ ] Assist with organising training agreements
- [ ] Expected to provide pastoral care or mentoring for trainees
- [ ] Other (please describe)

## 3. In addition to assessors (of any type), does your ITO currently use any of the following types of assessment?

- [ ] Peer assessment
- [ ] Self assessment
- [ ] Verification
- [ ] Other (please describe)

## 4. When does moderation occur?

- [ ] At specific intervals during the year
- [ ] When it seems necessary (e.g. if someone asks, if there is a complaint, if we haven't done it for a long time)
- [ ] Soon after a qualification is updated with new or different standards, or a new qualification is created
- [ ] Other (please describe)

## 5. Who participates in moderation?

- [ ] Full-time ITO moderation staff
- [ ] Roving/contracted/multi-workplace assessors
- [ ] Workplace assessors
- [ ] Contracted moderators (other than assessors)
- [ ] Other (please describe)

# ITO assessment systems and structures survey

**6. If full-time ITO moderation staff do participate in moderation, how many?**

## 8. Assessment and Moderation Cont.

**1. How are assessors informed of moderation outcomes?**

- [ ] By written correspondence (letter, email, fax)
- [ ] In a meeting (face-to-face, skype, telephone call)
- [ ] They participate in the moderation meetings
- [ ] Summaries of overall moderation results
- [ ] Other (please describe)

**2. Which of the following types of moderation do you use?**

- [ ] Sample-based moderation
- [ ] Risk-based moderation
- [ ] Professional conversations
- [ ] Practice-oriented assessment
- [ ] Other (please describe)

# ITO assessment systems and structures survey

### 3. Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about assessors, assessment, and moderation at your ITO

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral/Not Sure | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Assessors know about education and learning, as well as having technical expertise | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Assessors are up-to-date with industry standards and requirements | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Workplace-based assessors have enough time to engage in further assessment-related development | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Employers are generally supportive of staff who are workplace-based assessors | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Assessments are explicitly designed to promote learning | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Assessment outcomes seem consistent and reliable over time | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Assessors have enough time to observe task performance in the workplace and review other evidence of learner/employee competence | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Our assessment system is flexible enough to accommodate the different needs of all our industry workplaces and their employees | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| The criteria used for the assessment are those which are valued by employers, supervisors, and managers | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Workplace-based assessors are able to respond in a timely manner when an assessment is needed | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Roving/contracted/multi-workplace assessors are able to respond in a timely manner when an assessment is needed | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| We have no trouble finding enough people with the right attributes interested in becoming workplace-based assessors | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| There is no shortage of roving/contracted/multi-workplace assessors | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| There is no shortage of workplace-based assessors | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Workplace-based assessors are able to effectively combine assessment with teaching and/or mentoring of trainees | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |

### 4. How do you think the level of knowledge/skills of roving/contracted/multi-workplace assessors and workplace-based assessors compares?

| | Roving/contracted/ multi-workplace assessors have higher levels of knowledge/skills | Workplace-based assessors have higher levels of knowledge/skills | Knowledge/skills levels are roughly the same for each |
|---|---|---|---|
| Industry knowledge/skills | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Assessment knowledge/skills | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Knowledge of the industry training system | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |

## 9. Thank you for completing the survey

NZCER and the ITF appreciate your assistance in completing this survey. Have a nice day.

# Appendix B: Focus group questions

### For general group:

Using these large sheets on paper, please draw the assessment system at your ITO. Now please step us through your drawing and tell about the issues that come up in your ITO's system.

### For assessors:

What do you think are the most important attributes that assessors need? What knowledge do assessors require to fairly assess learners? What are the key ways that ITOs and workplaces can help assessors to do their jobs well?

### Final question for all groups:

If someone from your ITO were to join the group now, and ask you for one minute of advice on how to improve workplace assessment structures and systems, what would you tell them?

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