

Monitoring quality data over time

This guide looks at monitoring results from your learner and employer surveys over time.



Monitoring – What are the benefits?

Your learner and employer survey results are very powerful when you compare how they change over time. Monitoring your results over time allows you to:

- identify areas that need improvement
- identify areas where performance seems to be getting weaker
- set improvement targets
- target areas where your trainers and assessors may need professional development
- monitor whether improvements you introduce are making a difference
- help you tell your positive quality improvement story to your learners, to employers and to relevant authorities.

Your story

Let's look at these percentage agreement scores from one of the Learner Questionnaire (LQ) scales – the Effective Assessment Scale – as an example. Assume these are the outcomes over five years for one area of your RTO's operations.

Scale	Year				
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Effective Assessment	67	69	78	77	83

Your results in 2009 and 2010 are much lower than for 2011–2013. Only you can explain what happened to bring about the marked improvement. The story might be something like this.

Towards the end of 2009 you got your first learner survey results. The outcome on the Effective Assessment Scale surprised and disappointed you. You thought your RTO's assessment practices were good. You decided that in 2010 you'd spend time on the job with your learners and with their supervisors to gather their views. You discussed assessment practices with your trainers and observed assessment as it happened, off and on the job.

By mid-2010 – with input from trainers, assessors, supervisors and learners – you discovered two areas needed improvement. First, the practical link between off the job training and on the job assessment needed strengthening. Second, learners were getting good feedback from your well-designed checklists that monitored progress on elements of competency. But they got the checklists three or even four weeks later, when they next came for off the job training. There was too much time between feedback and assessment. Learners wanted feedback within a few days, while the off the job training was fresh in their minds.

You planned the changes and introduced them towards the end of 2010. Your 2010 Effective Assessment Scale results didn't change much, probably because the changes started just six weeks before the annual survey. Too late to influence learners' views. And, of course, there were some teething problems.

You checked with learners, trainers and supervisors during 2011 and you were confident the changes were making a difference. The 2011 employer survey results proved you right. The 2012 and 2013 results were further evidence. The additional changes you made early in 2013 seemed to lift performance again. You're waiting on the 2014 results to see if the improvement holds.

Only you know the story behind the numbers. Only you can tell it. Every RTO is different.

Using other data to unlock the story

Your learner and employer survey data will sometimes tell you where to look for good news, or for problem areas. But the data won't tell you exactly what to look for. You will need to analyse your data thoughtfully. You will need to involve others in exploring what seems to be working and what's at fault. Trainers, assessors, learners, supervisors, enterprise training managers, and others will all have important information that helps unlock the story behind the numbers.

Unlocking the story may mean running follow up surveys, holding discussion groups, spending time observing what's happening in classrooms or on the shop floor. Analysing your data with benchmarking partners may help you see your RTO's practices in a new way, give you useful ideas for tackling areas of apparent underperformance.

Getting the foundations right in 2009

In the first year or two, you won't be able to see clear performance trends. That doesn't mean the first two years' results are useless. The first two years' data need to be seen in the context of your long term quality improvement cycle:

- there will be a long-term benefit from the surveys only if you start a sound collection in 2009
- a sound collection requires you to ensure that your sample sizes are large enough in 2009 to enable you to make solid comparisons with data from later years
- making a determined start in 2009 demonstrates to learners and to employers that your quality improvement strategy will use the data that flows from the nationally approved, tested and standardised survey resources
- your 2009 data will still give you a good idea of what needs work and what is going well.

In the first year you will need to rely more heavily on other data to help explain the data. This is time well spent, because the expertise you build in gathering complementary information will be useful for your quality improvement practices over the long term.

Things to do

1. Make sure your data collection is well-planned, well-administered, and that you analyse results thoughtfully. Plan your annual learner and employer survey cycles to ensure your sample size will reliably support analysis, and reliably support comparison with data from later years.
2. Use the data to set improvement targets for following years. Get in touch with your stakeholders to find out what kind of changes you need to make so performance improves.
3. Establish benchmarking partnerships so you can develop an understanding with your partners about how to benchmark effectively for mutual benefit.

About this guide

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

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

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