

Unit of Competency Writers Guide

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Purpose

This document provides guidance to technical writers on (re)writing units of competency.

Background

Artibus Innovation helps Industry Reference Committees review and renew training packages. We talk to employers, workers, trainers, regulators and other industry stakeholders to see what is and isn’t working, and—based on this—we make recommendations for change.

Training packages include a number of different qualifications (e.g. Certificate II in Shopfitting, Certificate III in Painting and Decorating), and qualifications are made up of units of competency (units).

Units outline the skills and knowledge needed to perform work tasks. They have a code number and a title (e.g. CPCCPD3021A Prepare surfaces for painting). Units break a task down into elements (e.g. ‘Remove wallpaper’) which are, in turn, broken down into performance criteria.

Overview

Units must comply with the 2012 [Standards for Training Packages](#),¹ and with the Artibus templates ([Unit of Competency](#) and [Assessment Requirements](#)).

In the past, Artibus used a different template; consequently, many units need to be updated. The primary structural difference is that we are now not using the Range of Conditions field. Content from that field is now contained in the Knowledge Evidence field (in Assessment Requirements). There are also a lot of changes to the standard text we use (see [templates](#)).

As a technical writer, you may have to transfer content into the appropriate section, or you may have this done automatically by the template generator. In many cases, the content will require significant adjustments and removal of duplication in order to be incorporated into the new fields.

In previous templates, key terms were marked in bold italics, with further explanation of these terms provided in the Range of Conditions field. We no longer do this. You need to remove this bold italic formatting. Further explanation for the terms is still usually provided (in the Knowledge Evidence field) but the meaning of the key terms should be clear enough in isolation. Rephrase them if this is not the case.

Process for updating a unit

Read through the unit. Does it make sense? Are the Elements and Performance Criteria clear? They should follow a logical (generally chronological) sequence. Are there too many or too few? Do the Title and Application fields align with the rest of the unit?

Do some quick online research on the task to get an understanding of what it involves and see if the unit is missing anything. Have a look at current and superseded equivalent units. These can be viewed at training.gov.au/Home/Tga.

The Project Register contains industry advice and feedback on qualifications and units. Examine this to see what changes have been recommended. You may need to check with the project manager to establish how these recommendations should be addressed.

As you update the units, corrections and minor changes can simply be made without the need for any further record. The Writer's Issues Register is the place to record any more substantial changes, proposed changes or requests for further advice.

¹ <https://docs.education.gov.au/documents/standards-training-packages-2012>

In all sections, aim for clarity, accuracy, precision and brevity. Remove any unnecessary words or repetition. If any sentence takes more than one read-through to understand, it needs restructuring. Correct any spelling, punctuation or grammatical mistakes.

Aim for simplicity and plain English. If you can convey the same meaning in fewer words without reducing clarity, do so.

In many cases, specialist industry knowledge is required. For example, in the Performance Evidence field (Assessment Requirements) we need to provide specific details of the assessment task(s)—size of task, number of repetitions, etc. If the existing unit has only vague details, you may need industry advice to identify what would be appropriate. See the [Writer's Issues Register guidelines](#) at the end of this document for information on how to flag issues such as these.

Templates

Formatting

Try to achieve consistency in format—font size, spacing, dot points, indents, etc.—but don't waste too much time on this. We will standardise formatting when the finished unit is uploaded to training.gov.au.

Unit of competency template

Red has been used to mark text that is used in all or most units, black is used to provide examples of typical text or as a placeholder, and blue is used for comments. A template with just the core text is available on the Artibus website.

UNIT CODE	CCCCXX2222
UNIT TITLE	Do xxx and yyy
APPLICATION	<p>This unit specifies the skills and knowledge required to do xxx and yyy.</p> <p>↑ This first sentence can be a simple copy-and-paste of the title, but you could choose to add some more detail. For example, a title 'handle</p>

	<p>xxx materials' could be paraphrased/expanded into 'safely move and store xxx materials'.</p> <p>It includes ... doing this first bit of the task, doing this second bit and doing the final bit.</p> <p>↑ A succinct breakdown of the task. This can be kept to a single sentence, but use more (and/or dot points) if needed. These can be (but don't have to be) the chronological sequence of steps. Don't try to include everything from Elements/Performance Criteria here.</p> <p>This unit is designed for those working under close supervision on residential or commercial building projects ...</p> <p>↑ Provide some useful information on <i>how, where & who</i> – the work environment and work role this unit is designed for. Give an indication of how much supervision, support, independence is required.</p> <p>Some of this info could be added in the first part of this section if you can do it neatly ('This unit specifies the skills and knowledge required to do xxx in the residential or commercial construction industry'.)</p> <p>No licensing, legislative or certification requirements apply to this unit at the time of publication.</p> <p>↑ If they <i>do</i> apply, then delete this and specify what they are.</p>
PREREQUISITE UNIT	Nil
ELEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE CRITERIA	
Elements describe the essential outcomes.	Performance criteria describe what needs to be done to demonstrate achievement of the element.
1. Prepare for task.	<p>1.1 Obtain task requirements and clarify with client or supervisor.</p> <p>↑ Active and usually starting with a verb. (i.e. <i>not</i> 'Task requirements are obtained and clarified') Use capitals and full stops as these are full (imperative) sentences. Note that we are no longer marking key terms using bold italics.</p> <p>1.2 yyy</p> <p>1.3 zzz</p> <p>If possible (and relevant), specify the level of performance required (i.e. how well this aspect of the task should be done), perhaps by describing the purpose of this aspect. For example, '2.2 make sure</p>

	lifting equipment is clean enough to be inspected for defects ...2.3 inspect lifting equipment for defects, including ...'
2.	2.1 xxx 2.2 yyy 2.3 zzz.
3.	3.1 xxx 3.2 yyy 3.3 zzz
<p>FOUNDATION SKILLS</p> <p>Foundation skills include <i>writing, reading, speaking, listening and numeracy</i> skills as well as 'employment skills'—skills such as <i>communication, teamwork, problem solving, initiative and enterprise, planning and organising, self-management, learning and technology</i>.</p> <p>Try to make these skills explicit in performance criteria (PC) (and don't repeat them here). If you can make all foundation skills explicit in PC, then just include this statement.</p> <p>Foundation skills essential to performance are explicit in the performance criteria of this unit.</p> <p>Otherwise:</p> <p>This section describes the language, literacy, numeracy and employment skills essential to performance in this unit but not explicit in the performance criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • writing skills to ... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↑ no capital at start or full stop for list items that are not sentences • reading skills to interpret: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ xxx ○ yyy ○ zzz. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↑ Use dot-point sub-lists if required, but simple, short lists don't have to be in dot points: 'speaking and listening skills to aaa, bbb and ccc'. • speaking and listening skills, including the use of questioning, to clarify and confirm client requirements. • numeracy skills to calculate ... 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communication and teamwork skills to ensure that anticipated delays in task completion are conveyed to team members likely to be affected • technology skills to ... 	
UNIT MAPPING INFORMATION	<p>Supersedes and is equivalent to ...</p> <p>or</p> <p>No equivalent unit</p>
LINKS	<p>Companion volumes to this training package are available at the VETNet website: http://</p>

Assessment requirements template

TITLE	Assessment Requirements for CCCCXX2222 Do xxx and yyy
PERFORMANCE EVIDENCE	
<p>To demonstrate competency in this unit, a person must prepare the following surfaces for painting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a new plasterboard surface of at least eight square metres • a previously-coated metal or masonry surface of at least one square metre ... <p>↑ Be specific about the activity, the number of separate occasions on which it should be done, the amount or quantity, etc.</p> <p>There is no need to repeat or summarise detail from Elements/Performance Criteria (PC). In Performance Evidence we list the particularities of the assessment task, but the details of what should be done every time you do that kind of task (e.g. read the specifications, set up the safety signs and barriers, tidy up afterwards) are contained in PC and don't need to be repeated here.</p> <p>The final statement makes it clear that all PC need to be addressed through assessment. ↓</p> <p>In doing this, the person must meet the performance criteria for this unit.</p>	
KNOWLEDGE EVIDENCE	

↓ This section contains detail that was previously in other sections. (Details previously in Range Statement / Range of Conditions are now here.) It will likely take a bit of time to organise this content in a clear and logical fashion and remove repetition.

To be competent in this unit, a person must demonstrate knowledge of:

This wording implies demonstrating the knowledge through task performance (a core principle of VET assessment). However, it's not always possible for everything listed in KE to be demonstrated this way. The wording is designed to give some wriggle room to RTOs, allowing the candidates breadth of knowledge to be tested through questioning (e.g. in a security unit, the assessor might ask 'how would you have dealt with that situation if the person seemed [intoxicated/a minor/non-English-speaking]' rather than the assessor having to assemble all these types of people.

- requirements for safe performance of this task under WHS laws, regulations and codes of practice.
- hazards typically encountered during performance of this task, including:
 - overhead wires
 -
- principles and processes of hazard identification and management, including the hierarchy of control
- equipment for hazard management, including:
 - signs
 - barricades
 - xxx
- the use and limitations of paint-stripping chemicals
- the use and limitations of materials and tools and equipment used to prepare surfaces for painting:
 - drop sheets
 - duster brushes
 - xxx
- techniques for removing coatings:
 - chemical stripping
 - grinding
 - sanding
 - xxx
- techniques for removing wallpaper:
 - dry stripping
 - soaking
 - steam stripping.

ASSESSMENT CONDITIONS

Assessors must satisfy the requirements for assessors contained in the Standards for Registered Training Organisations.

Assessment must be conducted in the workplace or in a simulated workplace environment. Tasks are to be performed to the level of proficiency and within the time limits expected in a workplace.

↑ If there are more specific requirements, include them.

Assessors are responsible for ensuring that the person demonstrating competency has access to:

- industry-standard tools and equipment for doing xxx:
 - xxx
 - yyy
- materials used in doing ...:
 - zzz
- manufacturers' specifications and safety data sheets (SDSs) for materials.

↑ Specify tools and equipment (& materials) that must be present. Make sure all items listed in Performance Evidence are included (e.g. if candidates have to prepare a type of surface, list that surface).

It's not usually necessary to list 'instructions for assessment task', but do list any plans or diagrams or other essential paperwork or information required.

LINKS	Companion volumes to this training package are available at the VETNet website: http://
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Language style

General principles

We generally follow the recommendations of the [Commonwealth Style Manual](#) and the spelling used in the [Macquarie Dictionary](#), but you don't need access to these to write or update units. Some frequently encountered issues of spelling, punctuation and word choice are looked at in the following sections.

Consistency

Use consistent wording and general structure across units, especially those within a particular sector or qualification. Don't use *plans* in one unit and *strategies* in one unit if you're referring to the same type of thing. If you are using different terms for different things (e.g. *plant*, *equipment* and *tools*) make sure you are doing this accurately and consistently and in ways that are commonly understood by industry.

This point of the spelling and punctuation advice in this section is to provide uniformity. We not saying, for example, that ‘single’ quotation marks are better than “double” ones or that *program* is better than *programme*, but—just like deciding which side of the road to drive on—it’s best when we’re all doing the same thing.

Spelling

Use Macquarie Dictionary spelling. Sometimes alternative spellings are given. Use the first spelling that is provided, not the alternative spellings following ‘also’ or ‘or’:

- program not ~~programme~~
- per cent not ~~percent~~ (but more often we’d use the symbol, %)
- a licence, a licensing authority
- You need to practise. She has had a lot of practice.
- usually -ise not -ize (realise, organisation, etc.)
- traveller, travelling not ~~traveler, traveling~~
- focused, focusing

There is a lot of variety between dictionaries as to whether compound words are open, hyphenated or closed (e.g. *time frame*, *time-frame* or *timeframe*) (it’s the first one, apparently). If you don’t have Macquarie Dictionary access, pick the option that seems most standard in Australian English, and be consistent.

Punctuation

- Use ‘single’ quotation marks.
- Generally, don’t use a comma before *and* in a list of items: *apples, oranges and bananas*.
- Full stops with e.g. and i.e. *They had fruit (e.g. apples, oranges and bananas)*. Don’t use e.g. and etc. in the same list.
- Generally, don’t use apostrophes for plurals. *1990s, IRCs*. But there are some cases where they may be necessary for clarity. *A’s are better*.

Numbers

- Generally, use words for numbers up to nine rather than using numerals, but keep a consistent style when numbers are close together. *Courses run for 4, 8, 12 or 16 weeks*.
- Use numerals for numbers that have a symbol or abbreviated unit of measurement: *3%, 8 km*

Bullet points

The phrase introducing the bullet points ends with a colon. If the bullet point items are not full sentences, don't start them with capitals, and don't end them with commas or semicolons. Leave them blank, except for a full stop after the last dot point item.

The process involves:

- consulting stakeholders
- providing feedback
- making recommendations.

Use normal sentence punctuation for bullet point items that are complete sentences.

Capitals

Capitals are not used for states, territories, units of competence, training package, real estate sector.

Use a capital for Commonwealth.

Use capitals for the specific names of standards, policies, agreements: The case will be assessed by the department against the activity order as well as the Standards for Training Packages and ...

Plain English

Simple words are often better—clearer, more precise, just as correct. Use concrete terms rather than abstract, and specific terms rather than general.

~~Implement safety equipment.~~ Put safety equipment in place *or* Erect barriers and signs to ...

~~Situate panels in an area appropriate to the job task.~~ Position panels ready for installation.

Parallel structure

Use parallel construction where possible—that is, use the same grammatical construction for two or more joined or listed items.

Rather than ~~processes for risk assessment and controlling risks~~ [two items with different grammatical forms], use *processes for risk assessment and control* ✓ *or* *processes for assessing and controlling risks* ✓

Parallel structure should be followed in dot points.

Strategies include:

- Industry focus [= noun phrase]
- ~~Incorporate small business development~~ [= sentence] incorporation of ...✓
- ~~Collaborative~~ [= adjective] collaboration.✓

Precision

relating to / in relation to / relevant to / in the context of / associated with: These words convey that there is *some* kind of linkage between two things, but don't say much more. Sometimes these words are the best option, but often the link can be more specific.

Must have all PPE ~~relevant to~~ [required for] the task.

Redundancy, repetition and wordiness

Don't use a list of synonyms when there is no need to. For example, don't write 'perform tasks/processes/activities' unless you—and the reader—have a reason for differentiating between these.

Muphry's Law

This guide contains mistakes and inconsistencies and breaks its own rules.

Writer's Issues Register guidelines

Unit section	Issue	Action				
		Record Issue	Recommend Action	Make change	Do not make change	Record rectification
Code & Title	Title does not reflect the content of the unit	Record & describe issue	Recommend Action: e.g. new title wording / change to other part/s of unit		Do not make change	
	Any other issues with Title	Record & describe issue	Recommend Action		Do not make change	

Unit section	Issue	Action				
		Record Issue	Recommend Action	Make change	Do not make change	Record rectification
Application	Application content does not align with title	Record & describe issue	Recommend Action: e.g. new title or application wording / change to other part/s of unit		Do not make change	
	Application wording is clumsy, poorly constructed, unclear and/or imprecise	Record & describe issue		Edit to improve readability without changing intent		
	Application does not cover all of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • summary of unit content • application of unit (where & who) • licensing 	Record & describe issue		Edit in line with intent of unit title and content		Record & explain rectification
	Any other issues with Application	Record & describe issue	Decide whether to recommend action or make change and record rectification			
Elements	An element is described generically with a tenuous link to the unit focus	Record & describe issue		Decide whether the element can be aligned to the unit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make simple changes to clarify the element focus if this aligns it with the unit content & the associated performance criteria • If the 'fix' is complex, make recommendation/s 		Record & explain rectification

Unit section	Issue	Action				
		Record Issue	Recommend Action	Make change	Do not make change	Record rectification
				for rectification but do not make change		
	An element is included inappropriately	Record & describe issue	Recommend action		Do not make change	
	An element does not provide the focus addressed by the related performance criteria	Record & describe issue		Decide whether the element can be re-written to cover the PCs & make simple changes to clarify the element focus <u>OR</u> leave unchanged & flag for consultation		Record & explain rectification
	The title, application, structure and/or content of the unit indicate that an element may be missing	Record & describe issue	Recommend action		Do not make change	
	The elements appear to be in the wrong order	Record & describe issue	Recommend action		Do not make change	
	Any other issues with elements	Record & describe issue	Decide whether to recommend action or make change and record rectification			
Performance Criteria (PC)	The wording of a PC is clumsy, poorly constructed, unclear and/or imprecise	Record & describe issue		Improve readability without changing intent		

Unit section	Issue	Action				
		Record Issue	Recommend Action	Make change	Do not make change	Record rectification
	A PC includes redundant words are used (e.g. 'relevant' in 'select relevant equipment')	Record & describe issue		Improve readability without changing intent		
	A PC has a tenuous link to the element	Record & describe issue		Decide whether the PC can be re-written to link to the element & make <u>OR</u> leave unchanged & flag for consultation		Record & explain rectification
	A PC is wrongly placed within an element or is part of the wrong element	Record & describe issue	Recommend action		Do not make change	
	The title, application, structure and/or content of the unit indicate that a PC may be missing	Record & describe issue	Recommend action		Do not make change	
	The PCs appear to be in the wrong order	Record & describe issue	Recommend action		Do not make change	
	Any other issues with PCs	Record & describe issue	Decide whether to recommend action or make change and record rectification			

Unit section	Issue	Action				
		Record Issue	Recommend Action	Make change	Do not make change	Record rectification
Performance Evidence (PE)	The source unit does not specify product &/or process evidence	Record & describe issue (could be generically)		Suggest wording based on unit title		Record rectification (could be generically)
	The source unit does not include 'frequency or volume' of evidence	Record & describe issue	Recommend action (number of tasks or products)		Do not make change	
	Any other issues with PE	Record issue code & item	Decide whether to recommend action or make change and record rectification			
Knowledge Evidence (KE)	One or more PCs are not underpinned by appropriate KE	Record & describe issue		Create suggested KE item/s based on PC/s		Record all new KE items
	Items in 'Required Knowledge' in source units appear not to link to PCs	Record & describe issue		Delete items		Record deleted items
	Any other issues with KE	Record & describe issue	Decide whether to recommend action or make change and record rectification			

Unit section	Issue	Action				
		Record Issue	Recommend Action	Make change	Do not make change	Record rectification
Assessment Conditions	Assessment Conditions in source unit appear inappropriate/unworkable	Record & describe issue		Do not include items in Assessment Conditions		Record items not included (could be generically)
	Any other issues with Assessment Conditions	Record & describe issue	Decide whether to recommend action or make change and record rectification			