



# Four Activities to Support Continuing Professional Development in VET

*By Marc Ratcliffe*

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is used across many industries all over the world and is considered the primary means by which professionals maintain and enhance their knowledge and skills. With the ever-changing face of VET, on-going CPD is essential to support practitioners in their current roles and assist them in maintaining a pathway of career progression. CPD is all about remaining effective and compliant through the upgrading of knowledge, skills and capabilities. However, whilst the mind is willing, time is often the enemy, as the modern VET practitioner juggles the competing priorities of instruction, assessment, administration and other day-to-day operational activities.

The key to success is to have a systematic process in place to both initiate and record the CPD activities undertaken. The reality is, trainers and assessors are likely to be already participating in learning activities which contribute towards the Continuing Professional Development without realising it. Below are four simple actions training organisations can take to achieve their CPD goals:

**1. Log Books** – this tracks the acquisition of VET knowledge and skills development over time. Its key advantage is that it is maintained by the trainer on an on-going basis and thus the accountability of CPD is shared between them and their organisation. It is also a benefit for practitioners due to its portability, which facilitates easier regular completion and when the trainer concludes employment in one organisation, the log book can leave with them. Examples of activities that can be recorded in the log book include:

- The names, dates and times of relevant workshops attended (both internal and external).
- Verified release time back to industry.
- Moderation or assessment validation activities.
- Industry engagement activities.
- Participation in mentoring or peer assessment.
- To provide greater authenticity it is important that the log book contains the name and signature of the workshop facilitator, industry liaison, lead assessor, mentor or the like.

## 2. Subscription to VET industry newsletters, magazines and other publications

- most of these are available in an electronic format and can be pushed to mobile communications devices via email. Simply create folders in your Email client (e.g. Outlook or Gmail) and keep copies of the updates as proof of maintaining VET industry currency.

**3. E-portfolios** – these are collections of electronic evidence assembled and managed by a user. There are a number of free options online (e.g. [www.mahara.org](http://www.mahara.org), [www.foliofor.me](http://www.foliofor.me) and [www.foliospaces.org](http://www.foliospaces.org)). An e-portfolio is a great way to maintain records of industry currency and could include:

- Statements of Attendance from industry workshops, conferences and other training events.

- Samples of work completed in the development of courseware or assessment materials.
- Photographs of work in industry (either industry release or industry engagement).
- Testimonials from supervisors, colleagues and clients.
- Copies of any relevant industry or training awards and recognition.

**4. Podcasts** – these days there is so much content available via podcasts, both industry specific and VET-related. They are particularly useful for busy VET professionals stuck on the long commute to and from work. For a place to start, review the following sites:

- <http://player.fm/featured/australia-education/series-> a selection of Australian Education Podcasts
- <http://www.astd.org/Digital-Resources/Podcasts/TD-> a selection of learning and development podcasts from the American Society of Training and Development
- [http://blog.ted.com/2010/06/17/audio\\_podcasts/](http://blog.ted.com/2010/06/17/audio_podcasts/) - a full list of podcasts available from the inspiration TED talks

Again, it is important for organisations to have a system in place to provide evidence of trainers' engagement with the podcasts. This could be as simple as creating a dedicated bookmark on their web-browser or a folder on their listening device (e.g. within the "Podcasts" App on the iPhone or "Beyond Pod" on android devices).

In the Australian RTO world, Continuing Professional Development is more than just a good idea, it is a requirement issued by the National Skills Standard Council (NSSC). Depending on the RTO's jurisdiction, the competencies to be held by trainers and assessors will need to be maintained in accordance with either **Standard 1.4a of the AQTF Essential Conditions and Standards for Initial and Continuing Registration or SNR**

**4.4 and 15.4 of the Standards for NVR Registered Training Organisations.** A summary of the relevant sections related to ongoing professional development, are listed below:

**AQTF Standard 1:** The RTO provides quality training and assessment across all of its operations.

**Element 1.4:** Training and assessment are delivered by trainers and assessors who:

c) can demonstrate current industry skills directly relevant to the training / assessment being undertaken, and

d) continue to develop their Vocational Education and Training (VET) knowledge and skills as well as their industry currency and trainer/ assessor competence.

## Standards for NVR Registered Training Organisations 2012 of the VET Quality Framework

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RTO's need to collect proof of industry currency for the fields each trainer/assessor is involved in (e.g. Business Services, Health) as well as documented evidence of their professional development in VET knowledge and skills. As such, the four tips highlighted in this article will put trainers and training organisations on the road to success in meeting their Continuing Professional Development requirements.

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