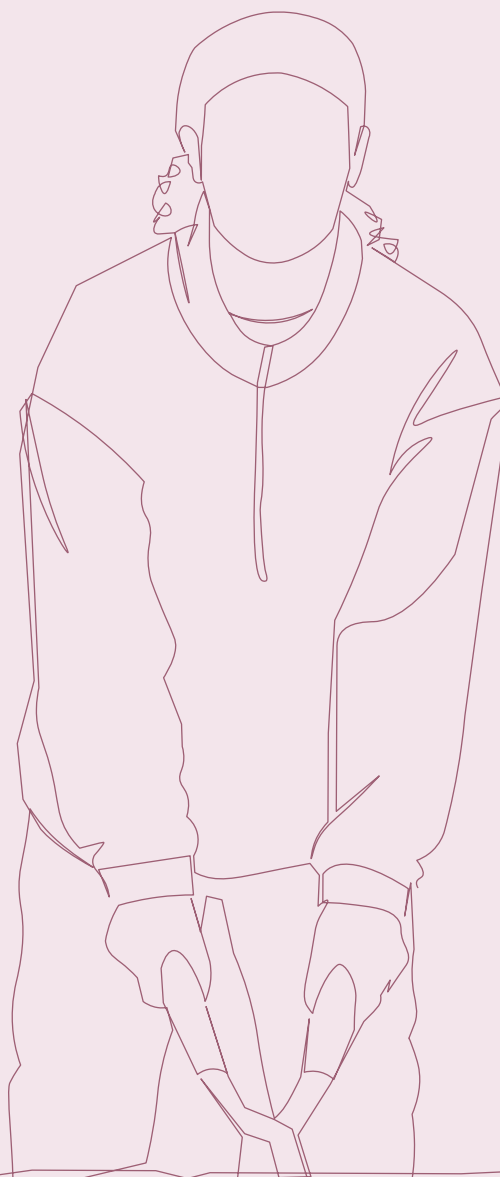




MUKA TANGATA

People, Food and Fibre

Workforce Development Council



Guidelines for providers:

Skill Standards

Key guidelines for understanding and utilising skill standards

Introduction

The Aotearoa New Zealand education system is transitioning from unit standards to skill standards.

This document provides detail about **skill standards**, including the definition, components, differences to unit standards, guidance on assessment design and the moderation process.

Who is this guidance for?

Resource developers, assessors, and kaimahi involved in the moderation process.

Here are the key areas to consider when using skill standards:

- 1) What is a skill standard? page 4
- 2) What is the difference between skill and unit standards? page 4
- 3) Components of skill standards page 6
- 4) Skill standards and assessment design page 7
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1) What is a skill standard?

1.1) What is a skill standard?

Skill standards detail the skills to be taught, the level of proficiency expected, and the outcomes ākongā (learners) should reach.

Skill standards set expectations for learner performance and include information that will help providers to plan content for programme delivery and assessment.

Learning outcomes form the core of skill standards, outlining what learners are expected to achieve. Assessment should be carried out at the learning outcome level, ensuring that ākongā are demonstrating competence around the required skills and knowledge they need.

2) What is the difference between skill and unit standards?

2.1) Unit standards

Unit standards can be prescriptive and provide detailed criteria for an assessment such as performance criteria and range statements.

Skill standards focus on the “doing” of the skills whereas unit standards focus on the process behind the “doing”. Many unit standards are inherently prescriptive and provide detailed criteria for assessment such as performance criteria and range statements.

2.2) Skill standards

Skill standards focus on learner’s overall abilities, rather than just individual tasks. Skill standards allow education providers to design and deliver training that aligns with the learner’s needs, using contexts and methods that best suit the learning environment.

Focussing on skills rather than processes reduces the likelihood of over-assessment because the learner does not need to be assessed against multiple similar processes. Clearly identifying and assessing skills makes learning and competence more transferable into other contexts.

Skill standards establish a clear connection between the title, purpose statement, learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

One of the biggest differences between skill and unit standards is the combination of knowledge and skills within one standard.

ConCOVE Tūhura has recently published a set of ‘good practice guides’ centred around skill standard implementation. The toolkit includes assessment and consistency measures, and programme development and delivery resources. **Access [the toolkit](#).**

2.3) Comparison of unit standards, skill standards, and provider-designed modules

| Component | Unit Standard | Skill Standard | Provider Designed Module |
|---|--|--|--|
| Title | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Level | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Credit | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Purpose | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Prerequisites | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Available Grade | Most common grade is “Achieved” | Some skill standards may have grades Achieved / Merit / Excellence | Achieved / Merit / Excellence |
| Legislation, definitions etc | Listed under explanatory notes / Guidance information | Listed under assessment information | Listed under assessment conditions (this is based on providers’ template a will differ from provider to provider) |
| Outcomes | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Criteria | Listed as performance criteria | Listed under assessment criteria | N/A |
| Range | Listed under performance criteria / outcome statement / guidance information | Listed under assessment specification (where required) | N/A |
| Content | N/A | Listed under indicative content | Listed under content (this is based on providers’ template and will differ from provider to provider) |
| Resources | Listed under explanatory notes / guidance information | Listed under resources | Listed under resources (this is based on providers’ template and will differ from provider to provider) |
| Review dates, CMR, version history | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

3) Components of skill standards

| Skill standard component | Explanation |
|---|--|
| Taitara Title | The title reflects the outcomes of the standard . The title explains clearly what a learner can do, and in what context. |
| Whiwhinga Credits | Credit value indicates how much time it takes to learn the skills. One credit represents a notional ten hours of learning and assessment activities. |
| Kaupe Level | Level indicates the degree of knowledge and skills learners must demonstrate to achieve the skill standard. More detail here: Level descriptors |
| Whāinga Purpose statement | A purpose statement describes who the standard is for and what the learner will be able to do after achieving the standard. |
| Hua o te ako Learning outcomes | Learning outcomes are clear, measurable, achievable and realistic statements that show the skill(s) a learner will have once they meet the standard. These outcomes are generally practical and linked to skills. |
| Paearu aromatawai Assessment criteria | Assessment criteria outline the required performance levels of each skill in the standard and are linked to the learning outcomes. Assessment tasks should cover all elements of the assessment criteria. Based on the assessment criteria, assessment tasks may include knowledge-based questions and practical tasks. All practical tasks must be verified by an assessor or verifier with adequate comments from the assessor/verifier. |
| Pārongo aromatawai Assessment specifications / information | Assessment specifications provide additional context for the assessment, and may include the assessment environment, definitions, and assessment conditions/evidence required. Resource developers should consider all the elements listed in the assessment specifications when designing assessment tasks. |
| Ngā momo whiwhinga Grades available | Skill standards may be awarded with the following grades: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieved / Paetae • Merit / Kaiaka • Excellence / Kairangi. All skill standards require a minimum passing grade of 'achieved', which means the learner must meet each of the learning outcomes. The standard will state the criteria required to award each grade. |
| Ihirangi waitohu Indicative content | This section includes recommended content that should be covered during the delivery. This content, along with learning outcomes, helps providers develop learning activities and assessment tasks. |
| Rauemi Resources | This section includes useful guidance such as, relevant legislation, Rules, Codes of Practice, textbooks, and links to online material. |
| Pārongo Whakaū Kounga Quality assurance information | The table shows the Workforce Development Council (WDC) name, skill standard domain, and Consent and Moderation Requirements (CMR) number. |

4) Skill standards and assessment design

4.1) Assessment design

The introduction of skill standards presents an opportunity to focus on assessment design that meets the needs of both ākonga and the food and fibre industry.

Skill standards include guidance for developers on what to assess (learning outcomes) and the level of performance expected from learners to demonstrate the required knowledge and skills (assessment criteria).

It is important that assessment designers read and fully understand the assessment specifications. They provide clear guidance, instructions, and key assessment information. Additionally, skill standards provide guidance on the content to be included in delivery, helping learners achieve the learning outcomes.

The **Food and Fibre Centre of Vocational Excellence** conducted a research project, [21st Century Delivery and Assessment](#), which provides recommendations for assessment design. Key recommendations from the research include the integration of relevant technology in assessment design and collaborating with stakeholders throughout the design process.

To maintain high-quality and fair assessment practices, it is essential that assessment tasks are clear, valid, and consistent. Effective assessment design supports learners to easily demonstrate their knowledge and skills and provides a framework for assessors to make informed and consistent judgments.

4.2) Key principles for designing assessment materials:

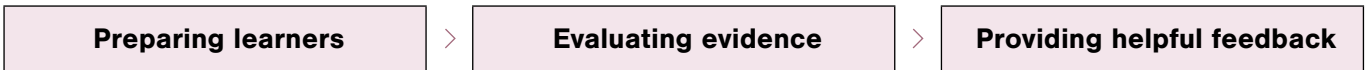
- **Assessment is clear:** Assessment tasks should be clear and easy for learners to understand.
The assessment material should also clearly explain the assessment conditions, for example, where the assessment will take place, the type of assessment, what will be assessed, the duration or due dates, resubmissions, how results and feedback will be given, and the process for appealing the assessment.
- **Assessment is valid:** Assessment tasks should match the learning outcomes of the standard.
A practical task may include written questions to assess the underlying knowledge and understanding of the skill demonstrated. Indicative content will provide guidance for designing learning activities and assessment tasks.
- **Assessment enables consistent outcomes:** Assessment tasks should be clear and help learners respond in a way that shows their learning accurately. The assessment schedule and marking guide should have clear statements so that assessors can evaluate learners consistently.

The [Vocational Excellence framework rubrics](#) support various delivery modes and assessment in the food and fibre sector. These have been developed by the **Food and Fibre Centre of Vocational Excellence**.

5) Assessing skill standards

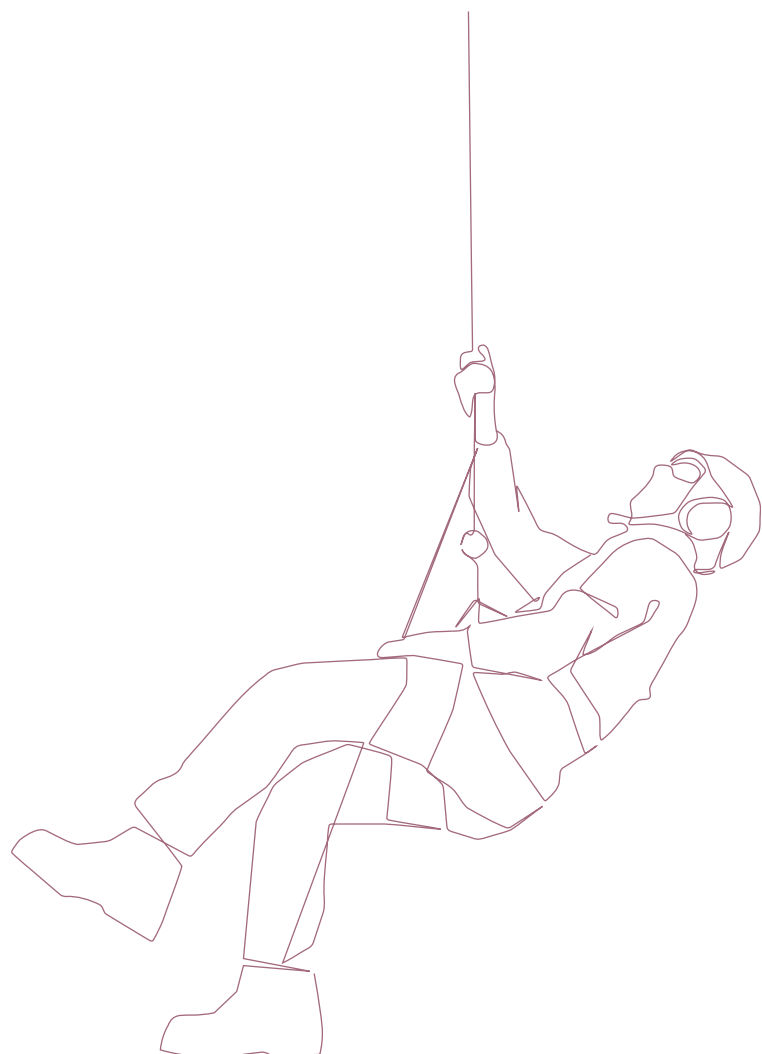
5.1) Assessing skill standards

Assessors should follow a clear process from start to finish when assessing skill standards.



A well-designed skill standard assessment should allow assessors to gather evidence from various sources and use professional judgment to decide if the learner has demonstrated the required level of competency.

Assessment against skill standards requires learners to demonstrate competency against each learning outcome. For example, while a learner may fail to complete some smaller tasks, they may still demonstrate the required skill or competence in the broader context. Assessors should approach the assessment holistically, focusing on the skill standard purpose statement and learning outcomes, rather than each individual assessment criteria. An assessor should make clear comments and document the evidence that shows how the assessment decision was made.



5.2) Steps for assessors to help learners meet skill standards

- **Check whether the assessment is current:** The assessor should ensure that the most recent version of the assessment is being used. It is also recommended that the assessor confirms that the assessment material has been pre-moderated and approved by the relevant standard-setting body.
- **Understand the criteria:** The assessor should familiarise themselves with the skill standard requirements and assessment content to understand the learning outcomes, assessment criteria and the type of evidence to be collected as part of the assessment process.
- **Prepare ākonga for the assessment:** The assessor should provide clear assessment instructions, including details about assessment duration, environment, assessment method, evidence to be submitted, feedback mechanisms, and the resubmission process.
- **Conduct the assessment:** Skill standards assessment happens over time, rather than it being 'an event'. When possible, the assessor should observe learners performing tasks that demonstrate the required skills. Assessors should provide (or should ensure that a verifier provides) detailed comments on the learner's performance.
- **Collect assessment evidence:** Where possible, the assessor should gather evidence from multiple sources, including on-job evidence, verification or attestation, practice and work documents. The assessor should ensure that the evidence provided accurately reflects the skill set that is being assessed.
- **Mark assessments:** Based on the evidence submitted by the learner, the assessor will decide whether the learner meets the skill standards/assessment requirements. The assessor should refer to the assessor guide and judgement statements while marking the assessments. The assessor should also ensure that all sections are completed, marked and signed as required.
- **Provide re-submission opportunities:** If the evidence submitted is insufficient, the assessor should provide an opportunity for re-submission after additional training. The assessor should provide feedback on what is missing from the learner's response/s.
- **Provide feedback:** The assessor should provide constructive feedback by highlighting areas where learners have done well, and where needed, suggest further development opportunities to strengthen learner skills.

6) Moderation of skill standards

6.1) Moderation of skill standards

The external moderation functions of Muka Tangata, and other Workforce Development Councils, ensure that ākonga meet the required industry standard when they are awarded a WDC-developed skill standard. Our new approach to quality assurance includes shifting the focus from “only moderating the standards”, to reviewing the systems and processes that support fair and consistent assessment decisions.

Internal (provider) moderation of skill standards will be important, especially as they are relatively new to providers. Internal moderation activities typically include discussions, meetings, and professional development opportunities. Good internal quality assurance processes and systems will help a provider to meet the Standard Setting Body (SSB) moderation requirements.

6.2) Pre-moderation requirements

Pre-moderation requirements are met when:

- assessment tasks align with the skill standard’s learning outcomes, assessment criteria and assessment specifications, and
- assessment materials are transparent, valid and consistent.

6.3) Post-moderation requirements

Post-moderation requirements are met when:

- the submitted learner assessment samples include sufficient evidence showing that the learner has met the skill standard requirements, and
- assessor decisions are fair, valid and consistent with the marking guide.

6.4) Support to meet moderation requirements

Muka Tangata also uses site visits, seminars, workshops and guidance documents to help support providers to meet SSB moderation requirements. Understanding the provider’s delivery and assessment model is key to good SSB moderation. This allows moderators to evaluate assessments in a more holistic way.

Our moderation feedback should be constructive and provide opportunities to improve assessment design or assessment practices.



Frequently asked questions

1) How can I access skill standards?

Skill standards are published on NZQA Qualifications and Credentials Framework. You can search for a skill standard by entering its number or key word here: [NZQA website](#).

2) Should all assessments written using Muka Tangata-developed skill standards be submitted to Muka Tangata for pre-moderation?

Yes, all assessments related to Muka Tangata skill standards must be submitted to Muka Tangata for pre-moderation and approval prior to assessing learners.

3) What is the skill standard post-moderation process?

The process is the same as unit standard post-moderation. Skill standards assessed by providers are selected for post-moderation using a risk-based approach.

Providers will be informed of the moderation plan at the beginning of the year. Please refer to our website for more details: [National External Moderation](#).

4) Are Consent to Assess and Moderation Requirements (CMR) applicable to skill standards?

Yes, CMR are applicable to skill standards.

5) What should be assessed?

Skill standard learning outcomes detail what should be assessed. The assessment criteria outline the level of performance expected from the learner to demonstrate the required knowledge and skills.

6) How are grades awarded to ākonga?

Where industry deem it a requirement, a rubric for the grade criteria will be included in the skill standards. It's likely most skill standards will remain an 'Achieved' or 'Not Yet Achieved' result.

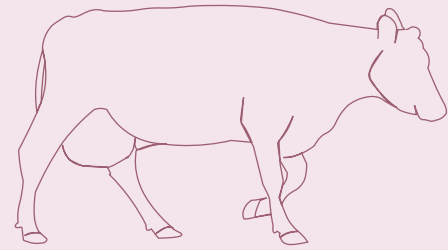
7) Who should I contact during the development phase of assessments?

For any questions or support during the development phase of assessments, please contact us at moderation@mukatangata.nz.

More information

1) Guidelines for listing standards and CMRS

New Zealand Qualifications Authority. (n.d.). *Guidelines for listing standards and CMRS*. www2.nzqa.govt.nz/tertiary/approval-accreditation-and-registration/listing-standards-and-cmrs/guidelines/.



2) Good practice guides toolkit

ConCOVE Tūhura. (2024). *Good practice guides toolkit* [Karen Vaughan and Andrew Kear] concove.ac.nz/concove-projects/skills-standards/.

3) Level descriptors for the NZQCF

Food and Fibre Centre of Vocational Education. (2024). *21st Century Delivery and Assessment: Full Report*. foodandfibreconve.nz/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/21st-Century-Delivery-and-Assessment-Full-Report.pdf.