Procedural Guideline
Vocational Assessments

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1. Overview

Procedural Guidelines outline DVA's requirements and supporting guidance for Rehabilitation Providers (providers) and their Rehabilitation Consultants (consultants) working with DVA clients. Consultants are expected to follow this guideline when considering vocational assessments for DVA clients. This guideline also discusses the use of functional capacity evaluations, work environment assessments and ergonomic assessments to inform DVA Rehabilitation plan goals and activities. Providers are responsible for ensuring DVA requirements are followed by their consultants.

DVA clients on a return to work plan with an active vocational goal can benefit from a Vocational Assessment. Vocational counselling can also be used instead of, or as well as, a Vocational Assessment to help identify a client’s vocational goals and capacity.

The purpose of a vocational assessment is to assist the client to clarify and define vocational options that are consistent with their skills, experience, aptitude, physical capability, and personal preference with regard to the type of work that they find satisfying.

A key feature of a Vocational Assessment that makes it valuable is that it is a professional, objective process that identifies recommendations about suitable, sustainable job options.

The referral from the consultant for the vocational assessment must not ask the assessor to consider a predetermined option or client preference. The assessment must be an independent assessment that produces a recommendation of suitable options, not a verification of the suitability of an outcome the client has already requested. It is the responsibility of the consultant, when requesting the assessment, to ensure that the language used in the request does not lead or influence the assessor.

The following assessments can also be used to assist in making decisions about vocational capacity and options:

- functional capacity evaluations
- work environment assessments, and
- ergonomic assessments.

The above assessments are not done as part of the Vocational assessment, and need to be approved separately as activities on the rehabilitation plan.

2. Vocational assessment requirements

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<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Requirement</th>
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<td>Vocational Assessment</td>
<td>Consultants must ensure Vocational Assessments are:</td>
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<td>o objective and thorough in the assessment of the client’s vocational options</td>
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<td>o undertaken by suitably qualified professionals (psychologist or vocational counsellor) who complete assessments to DVA’s standards</td>
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Table 1: Vocational Assessment requirements
### Requirement
- approved as an activity by the delegate prior to being undertaken
- requested using language that does not influence or lead the assessor to a pre-determined outcome

- Vocational assessments should include:
  - Transferrable skills analysis
  - Recognition of prior learning assessment
  - Psychometric testing
  - Labour market analysis

- Vocational assessments may consider the results of other assessments including:
  - Functional capacity evaluation
  - Work environment assessment
  - Ergonomic assessment

- Assessments can be undertaken as part of a, or independently of, a vocational assessment. Where specific assessments are undertaken independently they must be costed and approved by the delegate as an activity, prior to the assessment occurring.

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<tr>
<th>Vocational Counselling</th>
<th>Consultants must ensure Vocational counselling is:</th>
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<td>• an approved activity on the client’s rehabilitation plan</td>
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<td>• Undertaken by an appropriately qualified professional</td>
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<td>• Used separately from a full Vocational Assessment where appropriate.</td>
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Vocational counselling is used to:
- counsel a client in adjusting to change and transition to alternate employment
- counsel a client to adjust to their new circumstances/disability
- to identify suitable new employment options taking into account their new circumstances
- engage the client in the vocational assessment process

### 3. When a Vocational Assessment is performed

Where the consultant has proposed a return to work plan for the client, a Vocational Assessment is often included as an activity under the client’s vocational goal. However, a full Vocational Assessment may not always be required. For example, where the client has recently separated from the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and has a recent vocational assessment. Similarly a combination of vocational counselling and functional capacity assessments may be used where the client has a clearer focus and strong motivation towards their vocational goals.
Vocational Assessments are performed after the rehabilitation plan has been approved by the delegate, and at a time when the client has had capacity identified by a medical professional for vocational activities. They are not undertaken as part of the Initial Rehabilitation Assessment.

3.1. Vocational Assessment purpose

A vocational assessment is used to assist in identifying or confirming vocation options for a client, and where relevant identify training and education recommendations to support the client’s identified vocation options.

The vocational options recommended must be appropriate, suitable and sustainable employment options. They should primarily be options where:

- The client will obtain job satisfaction
- Where there is a reasonable availability of jobs/roles
- Where an appropriate amount of retraining is required
- Where the client’s aptitude, skills and previous experience are utilised

The vocational options or retraining and education recommendations must not be limited to what the client requested. As a professional with specialised skills the person undertaking the vocational assessment should be able to identify an appropriate breadth of suitable options even if the client has a singular vocational or training/education focus.

The consultant must ensure that the professionals that are being utilised to undertake vocational assessments complete them in line with the above DVA expectations.

3.2. Professionals who can undertake vocational assessments

Vocational Assessments, including the assessments that occur within a vocational assessment such as psychometric testing, must be completed by:

- a DVA registered consultant whose professional scope of practice includes vocational counselling (i.e. a qualified psychologist or rehabilitation counsellor), or
3.3. Requesting a vocational assessment

The language that the consultant uses when requesting a vocational assessment be undertaken either by another consultant or a third party is very important. This is because the vocational assessment must be objective and the outcome must reflect the fact that an independent review of the client was undertaken.

Therefore the referral must not contain leading questions or wording that directs the person undertaking the vocational assessment towards a pre-determined outcome.

Consultants must:

- Ensure the vocational assessment is approved as an activity on the rehab plan, or a plan amendment, prior to obtaining the assessment.
- Where utilising a third party, ensure they select a third party that undertakes the assessment in line with DVA’s expectations.
- Ensure the person undertaking the assessment understands the role of the DVA Rehabilitation Program, which is to return the client to suitable employment through the most effective activities possible. For example, where a Certificate IV would enable the client to obtain a role, and so would a tertiary degree, the Certificate IV should be recommended.

3.4. Vocational assessment inclusions

A vocational assessment report will discuss:
- a client’s transferrable skills, experience and other attributes
- the client’s motivation and goals,
- the client’s capacity for particular vocations
- possible education and training pathways
- the labour market (jobs) that exist in the recommended vocation in the client’s location
- whether any further specific assessments are required
- whether any additional activities may be required, based on the client’s specific needs, to achieve the recommended vocational options
- other relevant factors which can influence the attainment of suitable and sustainable employment.

The assessment will use the following tools and activities to identify the above:

- transferrable skills analysis, including looking at existing qualifications
- psychometric testing, including aptitude and personality testing, and
- labour market analysis.

A Vocational Assessment report provides a brief summary of the individual’s personal, medical and vocational circumstances. It needs to include a comprehensive executive summary and recommendations detailing the client’s circumstances, the identified occupations and a brief overview of the labour market (or a detailed review only if required). Additionally if training or education is recommended in order to attain the recommended vocations, the report needs to clearly state why the training is required to obtain those roles.

Consultants must use the headings below in a vocational assessment report. The information below should be used as a guide to ensure that the report contains all the information required.

(1) Executive Summary:
   (a) Identified vocational options (including codes and relevant commentary)
   (b) Brief overview of relevant personal, medical and vocational circumstances including
      (i) Situation, age, location
      (ii) Medical/Health capacity and prognosis
      (iii) Brief statement of work capacity/training history, performance and skills
   (c) Client interests and expectations
   (d) Objective findings – current and future job prospects including an objective statement of work capacity as determined by the professional undertaking the assessment.
   (e) Key recommendations and rationale

(2) Purpose and Method of Assessment:
   (a) Referral details [What DVA requested]
   (b) Review of documents

(3) Medical Circumstances
   A detailed medical history is not required, but rather, how the relevant medical/Health conditions effect current and future employment prospects
   (a) DVA accepted conditions
(b) Brief statement of current and planned treatment
(c) Statement of capacity and prognosis by the GP and treating specialists (Allied Health Professionals)
(d) Self-reported functional capacity
(e) Psychological assessment and analysis by assessor
(f) Psychological and cognitive status (self-reported or medical evidence)
(g) Other relevant medical conditions

(4) Personal Circumstances
(a) Current daily schedule - ADL
(b) Client presentation
(c) Social
(d) Family responsibilities & support
(e) Other

(5) Vocational Analysis - Skills analysis
(a) Employment history - employer, position, duration, duties
(b) Preinjury Role (ADF) – employer, position, rank, salary, duration, tasks
(c) Education & Qualifications – course, level, RTO, dates, [skills learned (if relevant)], tickets / licences and certificates
(d) Transferable Skills - Identified skills, aptitude, interests including computer skills
(e) Vocational and Psychometric Assessments and Occupational Inventory Optional (dependent on individual circumstances and needs)
   (i) Assessments of personality, work aspect preferences, motivation
   (ii) Aptitude, Educational or Skills Assessments (as relevant to support vocational or training recommendations)
   (iii) Psychological Inventories (as relevant)
   (iv) Statement of Attainment (as relevant)- to support retraining recommendations including educational attainment, recent STAT test or university admission (sited), RPL review and opportunities, retraining potential.
(f) Labour Market Analysis (summary here with details included in the appendix).
   (i) 3 Options (otherwise with approval).
   (ii) Job title, ANZSCO codes, duties, training, job prospects, labour market, vacancies, sample advertisements and/or employer contact, functional requirements.
(g) Referencing (including most recent performance)

(6) Vocational Counselling & Guidance
(a) Review of occupations
(b) Vocational considerations
(c) Ability to adapt to new employment and sustain employment
(d) Medical opinion of identified employment options, contraindicated vocational options, or job stressors for example
(e) Employment options excluded
(f) Clients strengths, perceptions, motivations and benefits to be gained from employment
(g) Potential [Clients possible] barriers to employment and management strategies

(7) Recommendations
Detailed recommendations to direct vocational rehabilitation and support the client to return to suitable and sustainable employment in a timely and appropriate manner.
(a) Key steps to support RTW
(b) Medical or treatment recommendations
(c) Approvals required (avoid presumptive language)
(d) Vocational rehabilitation recommendations
(e) Vocational counselling needs
(f) Other identified assessment needs
(g) Preparatory or job-search activities
(h) Placement or post-placement support needs [Recommended rehabilitation support required during employment commencement]

Consultants must ensure the Vocational Assessment report considers and reports on the following:

- the full range of relevant skills, knowledge, experience and abilities of the client
- the full range of people, management, systems and technical skills of the client
- any alignment of identified skills with specific employment areas, certifications or qualifications, towards what can be considered a suitable and sustainable career option obtained via cost effective activities
- the client’s interests, motivations and career aspirations
- any specific certifications, endorsements or qualifications relevant to the client’s interests, motivations and career aspirations
- any non-alignment between what can be considered a suitable, sustainable career option obtained via cost effective activities, and one which the client is seeking to pursue
- vocational strengths and weaknesses
- current and prospective opportunities in the applicable labour market (local or otherwise).
- any limitations, specific to the client, that may impact on future work activities (eg: transport, location, other)
- career potential, opportunities and risks, based on all of the above, and
- as applicable, training and further education options which present value for money for the department to achieve suitable and sustainable employment for the client. This includes objective assessment of the relative merits of different employment and training options.

3.5. Assessing transferable skills and experience

3.5.1. Transferable skills analysis

As part of a vocational assessment, the consultant must complete a mandatory transferable skills analysis (TSA), which is an assessment of the skills and knowledge a person acquires from the actual performance of a job and from learned situations, community, work and school environments.

This tool is used to define a person’s skills and experience for new job placements or role changes within an existing employer.
TSA is beneficial in assessing people who have a wide range of experiences, skills and employment history to identify the client’s skills and experience to allow them to re-enter the workforce without the need for retraining.

Where existing skills, knowledge and experience is not being considered in the vocational and retraining recommendations the vocational assessment report must explain why.

### 3.5.2. Recognition of Prior Learning

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is a process that involves assessment of an individual’s prior learning, including formal, informal and non-formal learning to determine what formal qualifications this prior learning equates to. The process to have these qualifications formally assessed and issued is done by the College for Law, Education and Training. Having prior learning formally assessed to identify formal qualifications, and having these qualifications issued, should only be pursued where the client is actively seeking employment, and qualification they are seeking to have recognised relates to the client’s vocational and employment goals.

It is not done as part of the vocational assessment, however it may be a recommended activity arising out of the vocational assessment to assist the client in being competitive in obtaining the recommended role/s. RPL must be approved by the delegate as part of the rehabilitation plan. This will require a plan amendment if RPL is not on the initial rehabilitation plan.

In some instances the prior learning will provide credit towards a qualification. Credit through the RPL process may also allow for entry into a further qualification and/or reduce the time required for a client to achieve a qualification.

RPL is not about considering what prior learning they have undertaken and could use in future employment. This is done as part of the transferable skills analysis. The RPL is the process to get the prior learning recognised.

### 3.6. Psychometric Testing

Psychometric assessments are used to assess a client’s strengths and preferences for a position or job type. It examines a person’s abilities, personality, motivations, values and interests under standardised conditions in line with a particular role. Psychometric testing must be undertaken by a qualified professional, such as a psychologist. The qualified professional can be either employer by the provider or a third party.

There are multiple different types of assessment all with the aim of helping the assessor build an overall profile of the client and, importantly, how that client might fit within a specific job or workplace. It is up to the professional judgement of the assessor to determine which testing will add value to their overall assessment.

The assessor must utilise their professional skills to select and administer testing in ways that are unbiased and don’t lead or influence the client.

These tests define the critical characteristics needed for success in a position, to determine the match between the person's profiles and the "ideal" profile for a specific job or workplace.
Psychological assessment (psychometric testing) can add value to the whole-of-person assessment approach by:

- developing a picture of an individual's aptitudes and attributes, and
- predicting how these will affect their performance in a particular situation.

There are a large number of psychometric testing tools available and the test required will depend on the goals and circumstances of the client. Psychometric assessments typically fall into two categories: aptitude tests and personality tests.

There are aptitude tests for:

- general problem solving
- numerical reasoning
- verbal reasoning
- critical thinking
- mechanical, clerical, linguistic, musical or artistic abilities
- manual dexterity
- reaction time, and
- hand/eye coordination.

There are personality tests for:

- interpersonal style
- work/team style
- leadership style, and
- motivational style.

Psychometric tests should not be the sole instrument used for the assessment and placement of clients. They must be used in conjunction with other assessment tools.

### 3.6.1. Aptitude tests

Aptitude tests are an important tool to independently assess a client's skill and ability level for certain tasks. The following are some commonly used aptitude tests that are utilised as part of a vocational assessment.

The Congruence Occupational Reading Test (CORT) is used to assess the reading ability of individuals in relation to work reading demands at different levels.

The specific skills assessed by CORT include:

- identifying material through basic sign and word recognition
- determining the main information presented in graphs, diagrams, tables and text
- finding specific information in work and general documents
- interpreting graphs, tables, diagrams and text to deduce conclusions not specifically given, and
• comprehending and critically evaluating information.

The content of the tests are based on materials used in a variety of occupations. The sorts of material include work environment signs, words from labels, invoices or tickets, written job instructions, memoranda, factory signs, traffic signs, diagrams, plans and street directories, tables, reports, work-related legal documents, and policy statements.

The Congruence Arithmetic Test (CAT) is an aptitude test designed to assess the basic arithmetic skills used in sales, clerical and technical occupations.

The ACER Short Clerical Test is designed to measure two aspects, speed and accuracy, of aptitude for routine clerical work.

3.6.2. Personality Tests

Personality tests assess how a person prefers to relate to others, how people react to pressure, how dependable they are in performing tasks, how they approach problem solving and how they behave in a group. They are valuable in identifying vocational options which will be sustainable and satisfying for a client.

The Congruence Personality Scale Form 1 (CPS-1) is an example of a personality test used to facilitate career decision-making. It is designed to assess the following personality traits:

• Social Orientation - assesses individual differences in people's preferences for social activity and social interaction;
• Cognitive Orientation - assesses individual differences in people's preferences for thinking about and solving problems;
• Interpersonal Orientation - assesses individual differences in people's preferences for relating to other individuals and how they handle conflict with others;
• Task Orientation - assesses individual differences in people's preferences for how they approach tasks; and
• Emotional Orientation - assesses individual differences in people's reaction to stress and pressure.

3.7. Labour Market Analysis

Consultants must undertake a Labour Market Analysis as part of a vocational assessment, as it evaluates whether the identified vocational options are viable giving consideration to the client’s location, qualification level, functional capacity, income potential and labour market trends.

A labour market analysis may include:

• evidence based on the client’s place of residence and capacity for commuting
• number of jobs currently being advertised for the employment position
• whether qualifications are required to enter the employment position
• physical and cognitive skills required to complete the role
• documentation regarding the employment positions outlook over the future 5 years. In other 
  words, will the role be in demand now and in the future 
• nature of the work, whether it is likely to be full time, part time or casual, and 
• average wages and conditions of the employment position. 

The vocational assessment recommendations must incorporate the findings of the labour market 
analysis to ensure close alignment between the identified vocational goal/s and the client’s 
prospects of obtaining work in their location. 

DVA expects that the vocational assessment report will list what research has been undertaken 
about current available jobs, including where they obtained the information (eg. www.seek.com), 
and how many jobs are currently listed in the client’s location. 

Consultants must ensure that the roles that are investigated as part of the labour market are 
appropriate with regard to the amount of retraining that is required. For example, the 
recommended jobs under the analysis should not all require tertiary education, where the client has 
the skills and capability to perform, and obtain, a role that requires less retraining. 

4. Vocational Counselling 

Vocational Counselling can be employed separately or as part of the Vocational Assessment process 
to: 
• counsel a client in adjusting to change and transition to alternate employment 
• counsel a client to adjust to their new circumstances/disability 
• to identify suitable new employment options taking into account their new circumstances 
• engage the client in the vocational assessment process 

Vocational counselling utilises an assessment of a client’s skills, abilities and aptitudes through 
similar tests to those used as part of a full vocational assessment. It must be undertaken by a 
qualified professional. The vocational counsellor can be employed by the provider or can be a third 
party. 

If vocational counselling is undertaken independently of a vocational assessment it must be specified 
as an activity on the rehabilitation plan, and approved by the delegate. 

5. Assessment tools to support Vocational Assessments 

Other assessment tools can be used in addition to vocational assessments to support the vocational 
assessment and obtain a full picture of the client’s vocational capacity. These include functional 
capacity assessments, ergonomic assessments and work site assessments. These assessments must 
each be approved as an activity on the rehabilitation plan. 

These assessments may be undertaken before the vocational assessment to provide scope to the 
vocational assessment, in the case of functional capacity evaluations. In the case of ergonomic 
assessments and work environment assessments, these may be undertaken after the vocational
assessments if further information is needed about a client’s ability to operate in specific environments identified in the vocational assessment.

The professional judgement of the consultant must be used to determine which assessment tools will be utilised. Where these assessment tools are utilised details of the assessment and resulting outcomes must be reported to DVA.

For more information about work environment and ergonomic assessments refer to the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Provider Procedural Guideline.

6. **Once the Vocational Assessment has been completed**

Once the Vocational Assessment has been completed the consultant must:

- provide the report resulting from the vocational assessment to the delegate for review.
- Liaise with the delegate where the delegate would like clarification or changes in relation to the report
- Utilise professional skill to identify the most appropriate recommendations in the assessment report taking into consideration the cost effectiveness of the pursuit of a particular recommendation.
- Work with the client, including managing the sharing of the report results and the client’s expectations, to take appropriate action in relation to the assessment report recommendations.

The vocational assessments provide valuable information to inform and progress the client’s vocational goals and activities. The consultant must make it clear the reasons that they have utilised a particular recommendation/s or option/s from the assessment.