

VERIFICATION OF COMPETENCY (VOC)

Frequently Asked Questions for Individuals

What is Verification of Competency (VOC)?

Current industry regulations require employers and persons conducting a business undertaking (PCBU) to ensure their workers can clearly demonstrate their ability to perform the tasks related to their job role when plant is used.

A Verification of Competency (VOC) is a method of assessment that can be used to demonstrate the ability to operate equipment and/or undertake the responsibilities of these roles. It is commonly used by employers during their pre-employment checks, site requirements and contract negotiations. In fact, a VOC is often required by employers before individuals are even allowed on site.

Why do I need a Verification of Competency (VOC)?

Employers take their responsibilities very seriously, and often require workers to demonstrate competency in the tasks they are to perform before they are allowed to commence work on site. This also applies to contractors and their employees operating plant and conducting high risk work.

Obtaining a VOC will allow you as an employee or contractor to demonstrate your abilities to perform the tasks and duties allocated to you in a certain job role, as well as your knowledge of current industry regulations and policies. By providing this certification to a prospective employer, you will be clearly demonstrating your skill level and giving yourself the best chance of scoring the job or contract.

I already have my licence – do I still need a VOC?

Holding a licence or a Qualification Card **does not** necessarily infer competency, but is a pre-requisite to be eligible to undertake the assessment for a VOC.

Persons who have recently received a licence, or received their licence/ticket many years ago, may not be able to immediately verify their competency against the industry standard without some form of basic refresher training and assessment. An example of this shortfall may be demonstrating a sound knowledge of the current regulations, policies and procedures relating to the work they are required to do.

As part of your VOC Pack, you will be supplied with training resources to bring your knowledge up to date. The VOC Learners Guide is accessible online at any time during your 28 day VOC assessment, so you can complete your training at your own pace, at a time convenient to you. A range of free refresher courses are also available online which can be viewed in our course library.

What about licences for earthmoving equipment, small cranes and other types of plant?

Some states and territories previously issued a licence for some or all of this equipment, however Regulators stopped issuing these licences in 2012. The only licences now issued by Regulators are for High Risk Work.

As part of their Duty of Care requirements, employers and PCBU's are required to ensure competency of the operator when plant is used, so far as is reasonably practicable. Holding a previously accredited Licence for this plant displays that you have undertaken training and been assessed to the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (NOHSC) standard. Even though this may have been the applicable standard at the time of issue for your licence, this standard has been superseded by the Industry Standards.

For this reason, your original licence or 'ticket' may not be enough to demonstrate competency to the current industry standard. This is the standard that is required by many employers around the country across a number of industries, including mining, construction and transport. A major part of this 'skills gap' usually includes a lack of knowledge about the current Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) regulations and how these are relevant to the work you do. This can be readily remedied as part of the Your Licence VOC process.

How often do I need to verify competency?

It is recommended that you undertake a VOC certification every 30 months, or 2.5 years, to ensure you are kept up to date with new industry regulations, workplace safety standards and any new technology or policies related to your industry and job role.

How long do I have to complete my VOC assessment?

Your Licence allows 28 days from enrolment to complete the process. This is in accordance with the timeframes allowed by some Regulators for completion of Construction Induction training and lodgement of an application to obtain a White Card or Licence.

Can I work on site prior to completing my VOC?

Yes. It is entirely reasonable and legally compliant to allow an operator to carry out their normal duties whilst undertaking VOC if the risk is assessed and an appropriate level of supervision is exercised. This is a standard industry practice during training and instruction, and is practiced across the country every day. Enrolment with an accredited Registered Training Organisation to complete your VOC is formal evidence of the provision of information, instruction and training as required by regulations.

Regulators allow inexperienced persons to conduct high risk work under training on a work site as long as the risk of operation is assessed and the operator is supervised at the appropriate level. For example, workers who are experienced, ticketed, and undertaking VOC would obviously be at much lower risk than a trainee rigger or excavator operator. Whether you will be able to work in this manner will be dependent upon the policies and procedures on the site. Please check with the onsite Training Manager or your Supervisor to find out the process on your site.

What are the varying levels of supervision? How are they worked out?

There are three levels of supervision normally applied to high-risk work activity, whether on construction, mining or other sites.

These are determined by the responsible persons onsite and must be based on risk that has been properly assessed. These levels of supervision are:

- Direct supervision
 - All operations take place in sight and earshot of a competent, qualified supervisor.
 - Usually applied to an operator who is assessed to have a minimum level of former experience or exposure to the plant or specific tasks.
 - Particularly important for those who demonstrate a lower level of ability and need intensive instruction.
- Periodic supervision
 - Operations which require the supervisor to make regular checks on safety and progress.
 - Supervisor is required to ensure the risks continue to be within pre-determined parameters.
 - Normally applied where the operator is experienced with the plant or specific tasks and demonstrates at least a good level of aptitude.
 - Requires that good communication systems are in place and that there is good accessibility to other licensed or qualified operators that the operator can seek advice from as needed.
- Minimal supervision
 - A lower level of supervision, requiring the supervisor to attend intermittently, to ensure that additional, greater or different risks have not surfaced due to environmental factors or unforeseen issues.
 - Requires the workplace to have good communication systems, good access to; licensed and qualified persons, a high level of instruction and training, and/or stable risk control measures in place to protect the operator.
 - Strong administrative controls would also be relevant in this case, such as exclusion zones for workers from mobile plant operations.

The level of supervision and instruction must be suitable and adequate at all times. The responsible person must assess the required level of supervision that is needed according to the nature of the work being performed and the risks present.

Who can conduct VOC assessments?

VOC assessments should only be undertaken by trained, professional assessors, with an understanding of the requirements of the industry competency standards in the national training packages. Your Licence Pty Ltd works in conjunction with Registered Training Organisation partner, AITAC Pty Ltd. and our partnership brings together two teams of professional, qualified assessors who can undertake VOC.

We are currently the only organisation in Australia who is able to deliver VOC assessments online, saving you time, hassle and money. We also offer a range of free refresher courses that can be completed online, as well as a comprehensive online Learners Guide which is provided as part of your VOC Pack. These online resources mean you can train for your assessments whenever and wherever you like!

What does RPL mean and why is it relevant to me?

RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning) is a mandatory part of the duties of every RTO involved in the VET system. The current skills and knowledge of a person are required to be taken into account when determining competency against the national Competency standards.

How or where the skills were gained is not as important as the fact that they exist. Correspondingly, only an RTO can formally apply RPL findings against the national Industry Competency Standards.

An RTO has no choice but to take the current skills and experience of an operator into account when conducting training and arranging assessment or VOC. Ignoring the current skills of an operator (taking everyone back to a common base point) is wasteful, costly, inefficient and insulting. Requiring highly skilled individuals to unnecessarily display the basic elements related to their duties does not extend those persons in any way. There is no "gain" from the opportunity, which is unfortunate and not very clever.

Is the new licensing standard the same as the latest industry standard?

No. The Industry Standards detail what an operator is expected to be able to competently perform on the job. The Licensing standards are the entry point to industry, and the minimum requirement to be met for the Regulators to issue a Licence.

How is VOC conducted? What do I have to do?

There are two ways to conduct VOC – the traditional way, and the Your Licence way!

1. Traditionally, VOC is conducted onsite on a face-to-face basis. An assessor conducts theory and practical assessments and makes a decision regarding competency based solely on that meeting.

This process required that the operator turns up at a predetermined place and time and undertake a theory and a practical assessment. If you are successful, you can go to work. If not, you will be required to undertake gap training and be reassessed.

A major issue with this process is that you are given little opportunity to study or undertake gap training until after the assessment is completed – which means that if you don't pass your assessment the first time around, you may be delayed in your return to work. This process is also totally dependent on the availability of an assessor – often involving high cost and long delays if the worksite is in a remote location.

2. The unique VOC process developed by Your Licence involves a blended approach to the training process. This includes providing you with access to online training material as part of your VOC Pack so that you can update your knowledge before you undertake your assessments.

The gap training (to the latest industry standard) is provided via online presentations in the form of a "Learners Guide". Learning is entirely self-paced and can be completed and then assessed very quickly (without the need for an assessor to be on site). Practical skills assessment may then be conducted via a range of options – onsite, prior to entry, at our training site in Tullamarine VIC or another site convenient to you, etc. In some cases an assessor may not be required to visit the site at all.

When undertaking your VOC, we recommend that as a first step, you access the online training material and refresh your knowledge of the subject. When you feel confident, informed and are ready, you can undertake the theory assessment online. At the same time you can be preparing for your practical self-assessment and reference declaration (Recognition of your Prior Learning) information, gaining testimonials and references.

Provided that your evidence is sufficient, factual, and can be substantiated, you may not have to undertake any further assessment (this may vary with some employers).

The benefit of this method is that you are assessed when you are ready for it. It is not site- or time-specific or dependent upon the availability of an assessor, and you can do it immediately if you wish.

How can you deliver VOC's online?

After years of face-to-face training, we have developed a more streamlined and efficient process of delivering VOC training assessments.

Using the latest technology, our Online Learning System allows you to access training materials 24/7 wherever you can access the internet - making our online training delivery the most convenient and accessible way to do your training. As the only online business in Australia currently able to do this, we are proud to be pioneering the way in the industry.

All of our nationally accredited training materials are mapped to the industry standard relevant units of competence and are backed and audited by our RTO training partner, AITAC (Reg. No. 3591).

Is an on-site VOC assessment more accurate than one conducted another way?

No. Both methods have different merits.

On site assessments are basically a 'snap shot' of your performance on that day at that time. Your performance may be considerably different on another day in a different scenario. You could perform better or worse than normal under more stressful, exam-like conditions.

The Your Licence VOC process allows you to approach the assessments entirely differently. The RPL practical references and testimonials you gather will be related to your performance in the field over a considerable period of time. This is often a more accurate check of your long-term performance ability.

How do you ensure that the right person is actually completing the assessment?

We take the issue of fraud very seriously and have implemented stringent measures to ensure the accuracy of our assessments. We are happy to discuss and demonstrate these internationally accepted measures in detail to alleviate any concerns.

There are several checks carried out to ensure the validity of tickets and testimonials. These cannot be outlined here for obvious reasons, but we would be happy to discuss them with you over the phone on 1800 695 423.

What action is taken if an operator supplies unauthorised tickets, or arranges false references?

Fraud is a criminal offence and any attempts to obtain a fraudulent qualification or ticket incur stiff legal penalties.

Any applicant engaging in unlawful behavior of this type will immediately be deregistered from our process, forfeiting any fees paid, and their employer and/or Regulator will be informed of this action.