

It's a judgment call: the significance of 'rugged individualism' and 'assessor communities' in making assessment judgements

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The researcher explored the role of judgement in TAFE teachers' and industry trainers/assessors' work. The researcher was interested in questions like:

- defining the types of judgement and knowledge needed in assessment of vocational competence
- identifying who should perform assessments of competence, and
- developing models for training assessors.

Teachers in different TAFE institutes, veterinary practitioners who assess student nurses and chemical plant supervisors who assess plant operators were interviewed about their assessment experiences. A number of themes emerged from this research.

One such theme concerned the role of social context in assessment of competence. As the research progressed, it became clear that the community of practice within which an assessor works has a strong influence on how that assessor makes assessment judgements. Strong communities of practice tend to 'normalise' the standard of competence required of learners undergoing assessment.

Conversely there are circumstances in which the individualism of the assessor may be expressed in making assessment judgements. Some assessors are proud of making judgements that differ from those of their peers. These two apparently contradictory themes will be explored in the workshop.