

NSW Mining Statutory  
Positions Training  
Process Improvement  
Review Project  
**Learning Best  
Practice Guide**  
**EMPLOYERS**

The NSW Mining Statutory Positions Training Process Improvement Review Project<sup>1</sup> is an industry driven, collaborative response to the low success rate of candidates for the examinations conducted in NSW for Statutory Positions. This issue is a significant contributing factor to the identified skills shortage for Statutory Positions in the Coal Mining, Metalliferous Mining and Quarrying sectors of the Resources & Infrastructure Industry in NSW, putting mine sites and production targets at risk.

This initiative is being carried out with funding provided by the NSW Department of Education and Communities, Industry Programs, through the Skills Enhancement Program with advice from the Project Steering Committee. Contributions have also been made to the project from the NSW Minerals Council, NSW Department of Trade, Investment, Regional Infrastructure & Services and SkillsDMC.

<sup>1</sup> Appendix 1 provides an overview of the stages of the Project

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# Introduction

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# The NSW Mining Health and Safety legislation requires Certificates of Competence for the following 9 Statutory Position roles, which involve both oral and written exams:

## **two (2) for metalliferous mining/extractive/quarrying operations<sup>2</sup>:**

1. production manager for an above ground mine
2. production manager for an underground mine

## **seven (7) for coal operations<sup>3</sup>:**

1. manager of an open cut mine
2. manager of a mine
3. mine electrical engineer
4. mine mechanical engineer
5. deputy
6. under manager of a mine
7. examiner of an open cut mine

Candidates for these exams have typically successfully completed relevant, and often pre-requisite courses before attempting exams (e.g. a degree or diploma in mining engineering from a university, Diploma of Surface Operations Management or Certificate IV in Underground Coal Operations)<sup>4</sup>. Yet, the success rate for the Statutory Positions exam is quite low, especially for the oral exam, which can only be attempted after success at the written exam.

Even though the exams cover similar knowledge and skills that are addressed in the courses, between 2008 and 2010, only 59% of candidates were successful at both the written and oral exam<sup>5</sup>.

Given the low success rate, the NSW industry is concerned about the resulting shortage of qualified people for these roles and took part in an industry – and government-funded research project to investigate the reasons and ways of improving the success rate of candidates. This project was called the *NSW Mining Statutory Positions Training Process Improvement Review Project*. (abbreviated as the *NSW Statutory Positions Project*)<sup>6</sup>.

2 Clause 109 of the Mine Health and Safety Regulation 2007

3 Clause 162 of the Coal Mine Health and Safety Regulation 2006

4 Information on exam requirements, including pre-requisites can be found at the NSW Department of Trade and Investment website: <http://www.resources.nsw.gov.au/safety/consultation/coal-competence-board/qualifications>

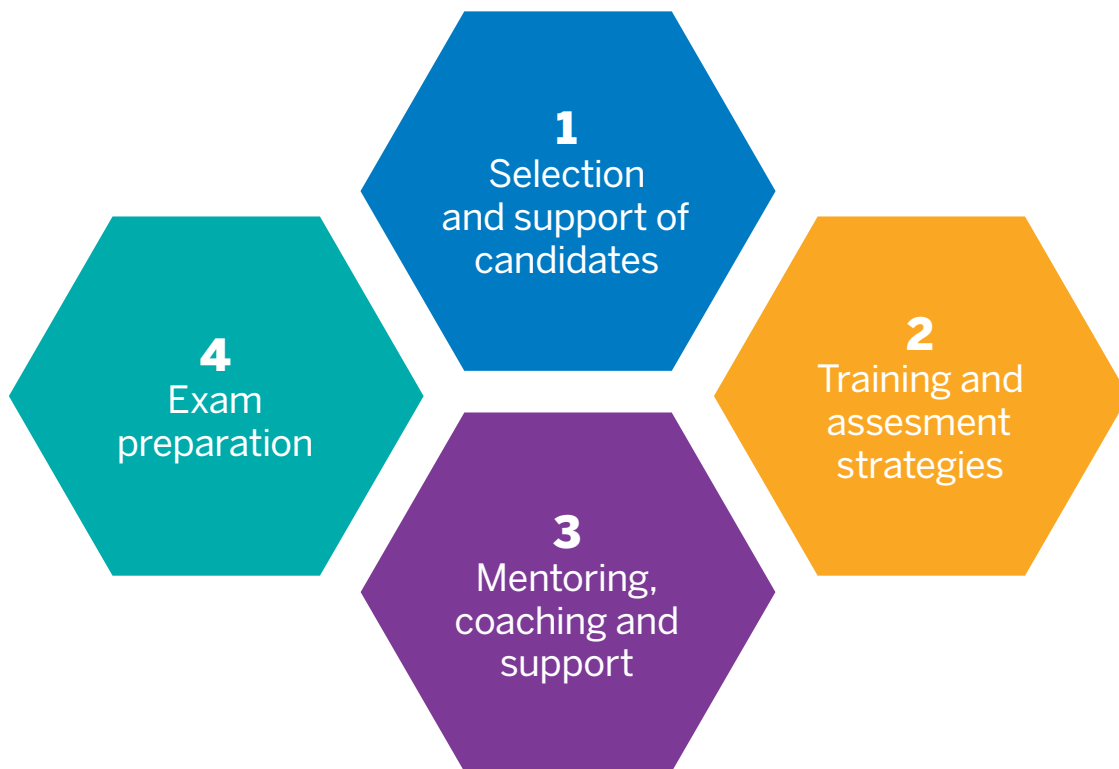
5 Calculated from statistics on number of candidates taking exams and number of successful candidates across the 9 positions during the years 2008-2010 as obtained from the NSW Department of Trade and Investment website

6 **Appendix 1** provides an overview of the stages of the Project. A full report of Stages 1 and 2 of the project can be accessed at: [www.skillsdmc.com.au/file\\_manager/NSW\\_Mining\\_Statutory\\_Positions\\_Training\\_Process\\_Improvement\\_Review\\_Project.pdf](http://www.skillsdmc.com.au/file_manager/NSW_Mining_Statutory_Positions_Training_Process_Improvement_Review_Project.pdf)

# Key Factors

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## The *NSW Statutory Positions Project* identified the following factors as key to successful completion of both the pre-requisite courses and the Statutory Position exams:



Based on these four key factors, Learning Best Practice guides have been produced for the three groups having the most impact on success rates – Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), employers and candidates.

This guide has been developed for:

- Employers sponsoring/supporting employees seeking a Statutory Position certificate of competency or considering doing so;
- Mentors/coaches used by employers to support candidates for Statutory Positions.

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# Key Factors

## 1.0 Selection and support of candidates

### 1.1 Selection of candidates

#### Why is this an Issue?

- Not all employers are using good selection processes and providing career pathways and support for people sitting for the Statutory Position exams.
- Where selection processes are being used, there is little or no assessment of candidates' 'foundation skills', such as reading, writing and oral communication, which are key to success.
- Both employers and candidates are often poorly informed regarding the study and preparation requirements of the qualifications and exams.
- Employers do not generally identify potential barriers to success, or "reality check" candidates on study and preparation requirements.

Employers often have a formal process for selection of potential candidates with the objectives of:

- a. providing a pathway for development from mineworker to supervisor to manager
- b. ensuring candidates are aware of the requirements of the qualifications and examinations
- c. ensuring candidates have the required 'foundation skills' needed to complete the examinations, and identify strategies with the RTO to improve those skills where required.

*A minimal level of foundation skills should be a pre-requisite.*

#### Workplace mentor for a recent candidate

For employers who are sponsoring candidates, a formal process for selection of potential candidates has several advantages as it:

- reduces the subjectivity of choices
- reduces time spent in training for candidates who are not suitable for Statutory Positions
- provides potential candidates with the information to make decisions about their career pathway.

Selection of a potential candidate for a statutory position is usually based on two factors— future business requirements and suitability of the candidate for the statutory position.

Since the requirements for statutory officials needed in a mine is mandated by legislation, business plans have direct implications for the number of Statutory Positions required, for example, plans for future expansion or contraction of the mine and associated production areas.

Other factors which also need to be considered in planning for future Statutory Position needs include:

1. Changes in legislation:
  - changes to the legislative requirement to have Statutory Positions
  - changes in other State legislation which may have an impact on demand/supply.
2. Workforce profile
  - age of existing Statutory Officials
  - turnover.
3. Geographic location of mine
  - economic and social factors can cause migration of workers in or out of the area
  - other mining operations may be opening in the area, creating demand pressures on the existing pool of Statutory Officials
  - ability of a mine to offer "lifestyle" benefits – e.g. proximity to recreation avenues, family amenities, education facilities, etc.

One strategy used by employers to ensure an adequate supply of statutory officials is establishing professional development pathways. This encourages potential candidates to consider development from mineworker to supervisor to manager and identifies the individual's ideal career pathway before attempting study to become a Statutory Official. It also gives potential candidates the opportunity to self-assess before starting the process.





There are various ways that employers identify potential candidates for Statutory Position study, including:

- identification and encouragement by a supervisor or manager
- a potential candidate expressing interest in becoming a Statutory Official
- through formal “expressions of interest” and a recruitment/selection process.

Where a formal process is used, a preliminary training needs assessment may be useful to determine a potential candidate’s strengths or weakness in a particular area so it can be addressed as part of the training. Useful focus areas include:

- assessment of basic foundation skills – literacy and numeracy; ability to communicate effectively in writing and orally, computer skills

*In the oral exam I challenge the foundation skills.*

**Examiner**

- assessment of Associated Non-Technical Skills (ANTS) – situation awareness, leadership, teamwork, communication, decision making, and/or

Employers can also play a key role in making sure that potential Candidates are clearly informed about the roles and responsibilities of the Statutory Position, and what is involved in successfully completing the course and the exam before commencing study through strategies such as:

1. providing position descriptions, and the opportunity for potential candidates to discuss the roles and responsibilities of the position with existing Statutory Officials

2. discussing potential career opportunities, pathways and aspirations
3. ensuring that candidates understand the support/ sponsorship that the employer will provide, and any return obligations that the candidate may have
4. ensuring candidates understand the effort required to study for the qualifications and Statutory Position exams, and have the required Foundation Skills (e.g. written and oral communication, numeracy, etc) or can develop those skills during training.

Checklist for Employers – Selection of Candidates	
Ask yourself:	Things to consider
Does our organisation have a formal selection process?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is responsible for guiding the potential candidate through the process?</li> <li>• If there is not a formal process, should one be developed?</li> </ul>
What Statutory Positions does our business require? What Statutory Positions are projected to be required for the future?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business plan for future</li> <li>• Legislative responsibilities in the present</li> <li>• Changes in legislation</li> <li>• Workforce profile</li> <li>• Geographic location of mine</li> </ul>
Does our organisation offer potential candidate a career pathway?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop pathways to guide future Statutory Officials and aid existing Statutory Officials to advance</li> </ul>
Are there job descriptions for each Statutory Position?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What roles and responsibilities does each Statutory Position entail in our organisation</li> <li>• Roles and responsibilities of Statutory Officials is compliant with legislation</li> </ul>
Should there be a formal selection process for potential candidates?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who would perform the assessment</li> <li>• What strategies should be in place to strengthened any identified weaknesses</li> </ul>

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# Key Factors

## 1.0 Selection and support of candidates

### 1.2 Support of candidates

#### Why is this an Issue?

- Employers are often unaware of the study and examination preparation requirements, and/or the required interface between classroom and workplace learning.
- Employers are often not aware of the progress of candidates and any problems that the candidate may be experiencing.

Many employers provide some level of support (guidance, mentoring/coaching) and sponsorship (monetary, time off work) to candidates who are studying and preparing for the examinations. Employers need to be clear about what will be provided in terms of cost, time off work for study/examinations, mentorship/coaching, site visits etc.

*Studying and working full time is hard to manage especially when on night shift*  
**OCE candidate**

Because obtaining a Statutory Official competency can be a lengthy and costly process, there are obligations of sponsorship that should be discussed before the process begins. Obligations for support may include, a time frame for the completion of the Statutory Examination, conditions on sponsorship arrangements (e.g. must work for employer for 2 years after completion), or must pass examination to be reimbursed for costs. Candidates need to be aware of their entitlements and any associated conditions relating to the support offered.

A contract between the Employer and Candidate can eliminate misunderstandings and define what each party is responsible to contribute. The relationship works best when there is a clear understanding of the obligations of both parties for example:

- the employer ensuring that the candidate fully understands the commitment they have to make to obtain a Statutory Position, especially in regards to study/work/life balance, including:
  - the course and examination structure and time to complete process
  - time requirements – study time, site visits, mentoring and exam preparation
  - company commitment, support and career pathway once completed.
- the candidate providing regular communication to the employer regarding any problems encountered, especially in terms of needing time off to study or attend classes or workshops.

*If you're not going to commit to it 100% then you're wasting your time and (your workplace's) money. The course isn't rocket science but if you haven't done the work you'll get found out if not in the written then certainly in the oral.*

**Deputy candidate**



Employers should establish regular contact with candidates, mentors and supervisors. This regular contact should be the role of a specific person, and could be done by a supervisor, HR person or Training Coordinator. The purpose of this regular contact is to:

- a. identify issues regarding study and time off
- b. identify mentoring/coaching gaps
- c. discuss with candidates issues regarding rosters and family life balance
- d. address issues early before they are a major problem – e.g. coaching with study habits, changes of roster, etc.
- e. provide avenues to discuss concerns
- f. maintain awareness of upcoming exam dates, including planning for time off.

### Best practice for support of candidates:

1. An information pack for potential candidates to address key issues before they start their studies:
  - time requirements for the obtaining the qualification – on the job and in personal time, site visits and mentoring and exam preparation
  - individual attributes required to pass
  - structure and time taken to complete the process and consequences if fail
  - company commitment and support and pathway once completed.
2. Appoint a specific person with accountability for establishing and maintaining regular contact with candidates, mentors and supervisors.
3. Regular communication between the candidate and employer to monitor progress and/or solve problems or concerns.

### Best practice for support of candidates:

#### Ask yourself:

How can the company better support candidates?

#### Things to consider

- Develop a contract with the candidate outlining the responsibilities and obligations of
  - the company, and
  - the candidate
- Appoint a specific person with accountability for establishing and maintaining regular contact with candidates, mentors and supervisors
- Encourage the candidate to communicate regularly with company contacts, especially if problems arise
- Encourage mentors/coaches to communicate progress of the candidate, especially if there is a lack of progress or gaps in the candidate's knowledge

Should an information pack be developed for potential candidates?

Information pack to ensure that potential candidates fully understand:

- roles and responsibilities of the Statutory Position
- the support/sponsorship that the employer will provide, and any return obligations that the candidate may have
- the effort required to study for the qualifications and Statutory Position exams

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# Key Factors

## 2. Training and assessment strategies

### 2.1 Employer's Relationship with RTO

#### Why is this an Issue?

- Employers generally have little say in the electives or focus of courses delivered by the RTO and some employers found current delivery is not flexible enough.
- In most cases, employers are not engaging RTOs on the basis of a Training Plan and there is no formal evaluation of training effectiveness, yet these were found to be key factors for success.

#### Flexible Delivery and Electives

Employers often state that they want more flexibility to be offered by RTOs in the structure and duration of the course or the training and assessment methods and materials used.

Even though "flexible delivery" is a great concept, there are practical constraints on the extent to which courses can be customized to meet particular needs. For example, while there is some flexibility, electives which can be offered by an RTO are limited by:

1. the packaging rules in the Training Package qualification
2. the requirements which the Mining Competence Board may specify for the units of competence required for a qualification to be accepted as meeting the requirements to sit for the Statutory Positions exam
3. the ability of an RTO to offer a wide range of electives, which may mean, if all electives are able to be chosen, having small numbers undertaking some electives.

Employers should be able to rely on the RTO delivering training for the Statutory Positions exam to remain aware of the specified requirements of the Mining Competence Board, and to communicate these requirements to candidates and employers.

#### Choosing an RTO

Key factors which the employer may wish to consider in selecting an RTO include:

1. availability of an RTO in the mine's location
2. course structure and resources – are resources up-to-date, relevant and user-friendly?
3. use of trainers who have current industry experience and knowledge
4. selection of electives to meet requirements of:
  - a. Statutory Official exams
  - b. the organisation
  - c. the candidate
5. delivery options suitable to the employer and candidates – e.g. shift and roster arrangements
6. practical focus and integration of classroom and on-the-job learning
7. integration of Associated Non Technical Skills (ANTS) and real work scenarios as part of the course
8. RTO processes to measure and report progress of candidates during the learning and exam preparation processes:
  - a. progress against course outcomes
  - b. identification of learning issues (such as literacy, numeracy issues) and specific actions for the employer to take (i.e. arrange computer courses, arrange "English as second Language", etc)
  - c. mentoring/coaching that will be required and how it will be provided
  - d. advice on recommended actions, depending on candidate's progress



9. RTO use of a Training Plan
10. RTO proposed communication processes with the employer and workplace mentors/coaches
11. role of the RTO in preparing candidates for the Statutory Position exams:
  - a. What preparation is needed and how it will be accomplished?
  - b. Working with the workplace mentors/coaches on learning and assessment strategies to effectively prepare candidates for their examination.

### **Best practice employer relationship with RTO:**

1. explore options of flexible delivery with RTO
2. choose an RTO that best meets the needs of the organisation and the candidate in terms of delivery method and electives offered
3. training Plan established with the RTO that includes evaluation and reporting of the candidate's progress
4. communication between RTO trainers and workplace mentors/coaches is established.

In selecting an RTO and ensuring that there is effective integration of classroom and on-the-job learning, employers need to remember that developing competence involves the four (4) Dimensions of Competence:

1. task skills
2. task management skills
3. contingency management skills, and
4. job or role environment skills.

### **Working with the RTO**

Employers need to establish and maintain good communications with their selected RTO to:

- develop an understanding of the RTO's business and constraints/opportunities that this provides for training delivery
- select appropriate electives which meet the requirements of:
  - the packaging rules for the Training Package qualification, and
  - the Mining Competence Board
  - the practicality of delivery by the RTO, and
  - the needs of candidates and employers
- negotiate training delivery which best meets the needs of candidates and employers.

There is often a lack of understanding of the roles that the RTO and employer should be performing in the learning process. This is a critical issue for candidates for the Statutory Position exams, as the learning occurs both in the classroom (delivered by the RTO) and in the workplace (typically by mentors/coaches).

*Examiners will typically aim to assess a candidate's ability to solve a workplace-based problem.*

### **Examination Guide – Certificate of Competence to be a Manager of an Open Cut Mine – p8**

The most effective way to define these roles and the responsibility for the components of learning is to have some form of contract. This could be a formal contract, but could also be adequately addressed in most cases by a letter or basic "memorandum of understanding". Whatever the form used, the contract needs to define how each party contributes to and is accountable for:

1. off-the-job learning and assessment (e.g. RTO responsible for all classroom training and the issuing of the RII09 qualification, employer contributing some workplace examples or documents for contextualisation)
2. on-the-job learning and assessment (e.g. the employer-appointed mentor/coach responsible for application of the theory to the workplace; RTO responsible for organising visits to other mines)
3. preparing candidates for exams (e.g. RTO responsible for preparation for the written exam, the employer-appointed mentor/coach responsible for preparation for the oral exam)
4. communication and reporting (e.g. specific feedback milestones at specific intervals)
5. monitoring and evaluation (e.g. determine quality indicators to be applied and monitored throughout, and who is responsible for the evaluation processes).

# Key Factors

## 2. Training and assessment strategies

It is very important to agree on the arrangements for RTO trainers to liaise with workplace mentors/coaches, as this aspect of communications has been shown to be key to the success of candidates. So the terms of engagement between RTOs and employers, should specify how appropriate contact to be established and maintained between trainers and workplace coaches/mentors assisting candidates to prepare for the examinations.

Specific attention also needs to be focused on the following two aspects, as these are areas where there may be confusion in roles/

responsibilities, quite often to the detriment of the candidate:

- accountabilities of each party for preparation of candidates for examinations
- the availability of workplace mentors/coaches – RTOs need to ensure that mentors/coaches are assigned to a candidate or group of candidates before the course commences.

The best way to manage training involving both classroom and on-the-job learning components is to use a Training Plan. This needs to be a different document to the contract

referred to in the previous section. The Training Plan involves the RTO and the employer in planning and monitoring of training and should identify:

1. how training is delivered
2. the on-the-job application of classroom training
3. liaison between trainers and workplace mentors/coaches
4. how candidates are prepared for the exams, and
5. any learning issues and how they will be addressed.

Checklist for Employers – Relationship with RTOs	
Ask yourself:	Things to consider
What factors should be addressed when choosing an RTO?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate course structure, methods and resources?</li> <li>• Use of trainers with current industry experience and knowledge?</li> <li>• Selection of electives to meet requirements of Statutory Official exams, the organisation and the candidate?</li> <li>• Delivery options suitable to the employer and candidates – e.g. shift and roster arrangements?</li> <li>• Practical focus and willingness to engage with employer?</li> <li>• Use of Training Plan?</li> <li>• Active role of the RTO in preparing candidates for the exams?</li> </ul>
How important is it to establish a contract with the RTO?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define who is responsible for aspects of:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– off-the-job learning and assessment</li> <li>– on-the-job learning and assessment</li> <li>– preparing candidates for exams</li> <li>– monitoring progress</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Define communication processes between employer/RTO and RTO/Mentor about candidate's progress?</li> </ul>
What should a Training Plan include?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How training is delivered?</li> <li>• How training in the classroom will be applied on-the-job?</li> <li>• Liaison between trainers and workplace mentors/coaches?</li> <li>• How candidates are prepared for the exams?</li> <li>• Any learning issues and how they will be addressed?</li> <li>• Monitoring and communication arrangements.</li> </ul>



## 2.2 Specific Training and assessment areas

### Associated Non Technical Skills (ANTS)

A common criticism from examiners is that candidates lack the ability to apply what they know to specific situations, and that they are unable to demonstrate Associated Non Technical Skills (ANTS) which are critical to Statutory Positions. Effective learning and assessment strategies enable candidates to apply what they have learnt to real-life situations, and in this way also assist them to demonstrate their competence to examiners.

Both employers and RTOs can assist in this process by working together to develop these skills. In some cases, ANTS competencies may have already been gained by particular candidates, through internal supervisor skills development programs, or attendance at a course such as a Frontline Management Program.

However, more typically, there is a need to focus on developing candidates' skills in ANTS, and employers can work in conjunction with the RTO to develop candidates' skills in such areas as:

- a. detecting changes in mine environment/conditions and interpreting the meaning of those changes (ANTS – situation awareness)

- b. analysing a situation and developing an appropriate response (ANTS – situation awareness and decision making)
- c. involving team members in hazard identification and control (ANTS – team work)
- d. taking into account legal and operational factors (ANTS – decision making)
- e. identifying hazards and prioritising risk (ANTS – decision making)
- f. developing and communicating a clear plan (ANTS – decision making and communication)
- g. organising people in a crisis (ANTS – leadership).

### Specific Technical Areas

Examiners report that candidates are weak in some content areas with an inability to apply knowledge and skills to specific situations. The key areas they identified were:

1. knowledge and application of legislation, and
2. knowledge and application of mine ventilation principles (for underground Statutory Positions).

*An emphasis should be put more on legislation & Ventilation plans/calculations & use of MRS 'Blue Book'.*

**Undermanager candidate**

Employers and RTOs could improve learning in all content areas by working together on strategies such as:

- use of real-life scenarios with examples from the candidate's workplace
- integration of the Health and Safety Management System (HSMS) from the candidate's workplace (this could be a learning strategy for the legislation content area)
- ensuring that resources used are current, up-to-date and relevant to the training by using current mine plans and current mine HSMS documents
- (for the applicable underground Statutory Positions) enabling candidates to apply the fundamentals of ventilation by working.

*Candidates must be able to describe the statutory or legislative framework in which NSW coal mines are operated. Some candidates could not apply this in scenarios presented, e.g. the requirements for dealing with certain notifiable incidents.*

**Undermanager examination panel report – May 2011**

### Checklist for Employers – Specific Training and Assessment areas

#### Ask yourself:

Can I work with the RTO on Associated Non Technical Skills (ANTS)?

Are candidates able to demonstrate their ability to apply their knowledge and skills in real life situations?

#### Things to consider

- Understanding of requirements for ANTS in the Statutory Position exams?
- Recognition of ANTS competencies gained through employer courses?

Working with the RTO on:

- integrated assessment approaches – classroom and on-the-job?
- problem and scenario based assessment in the workplace?
- use of real-life scenarios from the candidate's workplace?

# Key Factors

## 3. Mentoring and coaching support

### Why is this an Issue?

- Why is this an issue?
- Mentoring/coaching is consistently identified (by candidates, trainers, examiners) as the critical factor in success at the Statutory Position examinations.
- Yet, trainers typically have little if any contact with workplace coaches or mentors involved in preparation of candidates for the Statutory Position exams.
- Workplace mentoring/coaching is:
  - generally unstructured
  - often organised by the candidate, utilising the time and goodwill of work colleagues
  - sometimes organised and coordinated by the employer
  - rarely organised or coordinated by the RTO.

The terms Mentoring and Coaching are used interchangeably in the mining/ extractive industries and in this Guide, but do have different meanings:

- **Mentoring** focuses on the person, their career and support for individual growth and maturity
- **Coaching** tends to be job-focused and performance oriented.

*Coaching/mentoring  
“...takes away the fear”  
“...is very critical”.*

### Candidates

A majority of candidates identify having an effective mentor/coach as the critical factor in success at the Statutory Position examinations. The main roles of mentors/coaches are to assist candidates to:

1. bridge the gap between theory and practical application during coursework, and
2. prepare for the exams.

*Without coaching most candidates will have difficulties passing the exams.*

### Examiner

There are a variety of models of mentoring/coaching used to assist candidates, including:

- workplace mentors/coaches, either organised by:
  - the employer or
  - the candidate.
- the RTO's trainer performing the role of mentor/coach (typically used where the candidate is not supported by their employer)

- an external mentor/coach (typically the external person would be a very experienced senior Statutory Official, or a past examiner), either organised by:
  - the employer or
  - the candidate.

*Coaching focuses on the exam rather than them having to fit it in with work and personal commitments.*

### RTO Trainer

Candidates, employers, trainers and examiners consistently reported that they found workplace mentoring/coaching is:

- generally unstructured
- often organised by the candidate, utilising the available time and goodwill of work colleagues, or using their trainer as a coach.

### Workplace mentoring/coaching

Workplace mentoring/coaching has been found to work best where the mentor/coach:

1. is located at the candidate's workplace
2. has available time to devote to the role
3. has regular communication with the trainer, and
4. is able to relate the classroom training to the practical application on the job.





The employer has a key role in ensuring the effectiveness of this form of support by:

1. allocating a specific mentor/coach for a candidate or a group of candidates
2. being aware of shift requirements and availability of mentors on "off" shifts (night shifts, weekends, etc)
3. ensuring mentors/coaches have current knowledge of examination process, materials and methodologies
4. ensuring there is allocation of regular time to apply theory to practical experiences
5. providing ways for the mentor/coach to liaise with the RTO/trainer on progress and issues
6. encouraging mentors to provide formal mentoring/coaching, but make resources/mentors available for additional individual support as required
7. monitoring progress with the mentor/coach by:
  - requiring mentor/coach and candidates to keep a log book of areas where mentoring assistance was sought/provided
  - using this information to develop strategies to close gaps in knowledge and evaluate amount of actual time spent in the mentoring process to aid future candidates.

### **Choosing Mentors/Coaches**

Key selection criteria for mentors/coaches include current knowledge of:

- training provided by RTOs, including the requirements of the RII09 Training Package qualification
- mining processes, hazards and management of risks, how legislative requirements affect mine processes
- examination processes, materials and methodologies (a requirement may be to attend Examiner Information Sessions)
- the role and responsibilities of a Statutory Official.

Employers may seek guidance from RTOs to assist them to select appropriate mentors/coaches, and to train them in their role/responsibilities. A meeting/workshop/briefing by the RTO may be a useful way to explain the role to potential mentors.

### **Effective mentoring/coaching**

RTOs often do not organise and coordinate mentors/coaches, with the assumption being made that the employer or the candidate will do so.

A disturbing finding from the research for the Statutory Positions project is that where the mentoring/coaching occurs in the candidate's workplace, RTO trainers generally have little or no contact with the mine-based coaches or mentors. This results in a lack of structured integration of the class-room and on-the-job training components.

Employers need to liaise with RTOs to:

1. ensure that all candidates have a qualified and committed mentor/coach – this may involve the RTO providing a mentor/coach where one is not available in the workplace
2. ensure that mentors/coaches understand their role/responsibilities (this should be detailed in the Training Plan)
3. provide mentors/coaches with a formal process involving a Training Plan or check sheet of areas to be covered during the mentoring process targeted to key areas identified for an individual or across the qualification
4. ensure that there is a clear understanding of the interface between classroom and on-the-job training, and the mentor's role in on-the-job training (this should be detailed in the Training Plan)
5. establish processes to ensure that communication is established and maintained between trainers and all coaches/mentors
6. identify progress of learning for all candidates, and make additional resources/mentors available for additional individual support as required.

RTOs may be able to provide resources and workshops for workplace mentors/coaches. This will ensure that mentors/coaches are fully aware for the requirements of the role, and establishes the communication with the mentor/coach at the beginning of the training of candidates.

# Key Factors

## 3. Mentoring and coaching support

It is important for the employer to facilitate communication between the RTO's trainer and the workplace mentor/coach and to monitor progress against a Training Plan. Information gained from this can be used to develop strategies to close gaps in knowledge and evaluate amount of actual time spent in the mentoring process to aid future mentors/coaches and candidates.

Employers may wish to encourage the use of a log book to assist the mentoring/coaching process, and provide a useful record when preparing for the exams. Examiners report that a log book can be useful for the candidate during the oral exam to demonstrate to examiners the amount of practical experience the candidate has obtained<sup>7</sup>.

Additional issues which employers may wish to consider regarding workplace mentoring/coaching include:

1. establishing the mentor/coach role as part of the Position Description for certain roles
2. evaluation of a mentor/coach's role as part of Performance Management systems
3. encouraging mentors/coaches to attend Examiner Information Sessions, which is part of maintaining current knowledge of examination process, materials and methodologies.

Additional issues which employers may wish to consider regarding workplace mentoring/coaching include:

1. establishing the mentor/coach role as part of the Position Description for certain roles
2. evaluation of a mentor/coach's role as part of Performance Management systems

### Examples of best practice Mentoring/Coaching:

- A senior Statutory Official at a mine performing the role of workplace mentor/coach, as part of their accountability to develop employees.
- Employers hiring an external past examiner to perform the role of mentor/coach.
- Regular communication between the trainer and mentor/coach.

### Checklist for Employers – Mentors/Coaches

#### Ask yourself:

Are workplace mentors/coaches available?

#### Things to consider

- Mentor/Coach has available time to devote to the role
- Any shift requirements and availability of mentors/coaches "off-shift"
- Ensure there is allocation of regular time to apply theory to practical experiences
- Mentor/Coach needs to be knowledgeable in mining processes, hazards and management of risks, and how legislative requirements affect mine processes
- Mentor/Coach should be knowledgeable in examination processes, materials and methodologies
- Mentor/Coach needs to be knowledgeable in the role and responsibilities of a Statutory Official.

What should be the RTO's responsibility in the mentoring/coaching process?

- Working with the RTO on:
- RTO can assist in choosing appropriate mentor/coach for the candidate
- RTO can provide training for mentors/coaches to define their role
- Communication between RTO and mentor/coach is essential to monitor candidate's progress and identify gaps in learning.

<sup>7</sup> A sample log book is included in each of the Examination Guides developed by the Coal Competence Board. These can be accessed at: <http://www.resources.nsw.gov.au/safety/consultation/coal-competence-board/qualifications/coal/coal>

# Key Factors

## 4. Preparation for Statutory Position Examinations



### Why is this an Issue?

- Examiners have strongly expressed the view that RTOs and their trainers need to develop learning and assessment strategies which provide targeted and effective preparation for the examinations (both written and oral).
- Some RTOs focus only on delivery of the VET qualification, and provide little or no examination preparation.
- Where the requirements of the Statutory Position examinations are addressed, the methods used vary considerably, with past examination papers generally the only resources used.
- During examination preparation, there is generally no link between the trainer, the employer and workplace mentor/coach.

The main customers of an RTO delivering training for a pre-requisite qualification for the Statutory Positions exam are:

1. the candidate for the Statutory Positions exam, and
2. the employer of the candidate, especially where the employer is funding the costs of training and exam preparation
3. indirectly, the Statutory Positions examiner who assesses the RTO's graduates.

Most candidates and employers expressed the view that RTOs did not typically acknowledge the expectation of both customers that the course offered would enable candidates to successfully gain both the vocational qualification and the certificate of competence to be a Statutory Official.

*I had to organise meetings, visits and mock orals for myself.*  
**Undermanager candidate**

RTOs may see their role as solely to train and assess a candidate as competent against the requirements of the particular Training Package qualification being delivered. Yet, the critical requirement in Training Packages is to develop competence<sup>8</sup>. This does not just involve developing knowledge, but also involves the following key aspects of competence:

- the ability to apply, demonstrate the knowledge and skills in a workplace context
- Employability Skills as identified in the Training Package.

Examiners are looking for all four Dimensions of Competence. A review of their comments reveals dissatisfaction with candidates' demonstration of all or some of these dimensions, which may in turn point to gaps in RTOs' training and assessment strategies.

Most individual trainers understand the broader view of competence and the expectations of their direct customers (the candidates) and take it upon themselves to prepare candidates for the Statutory Positions exams, generally using their own resources, or publicly owned resources such as past written exam papers and examiners reports. However, many RTOs are largely leaving this to individual trainers rather than developing training and assessment activities specifically for exam preparation.

*(the trainer) provided a whole range of information electronically throughout the course as well as advice on exam techniques and how to set out your answers and make the most of the time you have.*

**Deputy candidate**

Employers need to clearly communicate their expectations to RTOs regarding examination preparation. Employers need to ensure that RTOs take responsibility to achieve two objectives:

- the Training Package ("pre-requisite") qualification, and
- targeted and effective preparation for the Statutory Position examinations.

*There must be a component of exam preparation in course modules.*

**Employer sponsoring candidates**

8 The four Dimensions of Competence are: 1. Task skills 2. Task management skills 3. Contingency management skills, and 4. Job or role environment skills.

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# Key Factors

## 4. Preparation for Statutory Position Examinations

The most effective way for employers to ensure that RTOs provide specific preparation for the Statutory Exams, is by:

- a. establishing contracts with RTOs specifying a practical, workplace focus for the course which includes preparation for the Statutory Position exams
- b. working with the RTO on learning and assessment strategies to develop the required skills and effectively prepare candidates for the examination, and
- c. facilitating ongoing communication between the trainer and workplace mentors/coaches.

Best Practice exam preparation involves the trainer working in conjunction with the workplace mentor/coach. The lead role must be taken by the trainer. The RTO has a key role to ensure that trainers liaise with mentors/coaches to identify any weaknesses or gaps in training and knowledge of candidates and to develop strategies to address these gaps.

Workplace mentors/coaches perform their role effectively, by completing the requirements of the Training Plan and (if used) log books, identifying issues which may impact on the candidate's exam preparation and maintaining ongoing communication with the

candidate's trainer. Without detracting from the primary role of the RTO for exam preparation, the employer may wish to:

1. provide information to candidates and mentors regarding available resources and where to find them – e.g. past written exam papers, Examination Guides and results and key issues from exams on DTI website
2. encourage candidates and mentors to attend Examiner's Information Sessions
3. help with mock oral exams, host visits by candidates and/or putting the RTO/trainer in touch with other workplaces through their networks.

Prior to most Statutory Position exams, the examiners conduct an Information Session which provides information on their expectations and feedback on past exams. This is not only essential to candidates, but is very useful for others involved in preparing candidates:

- trainers, and
- mentors/coaches.

Details of these Information Sessions are sent to all candidates who have applied to undertake the exams, employers who are registered on the Department web site and RTOs delivering pre-requisite courses.

*Undermanager's Certificate of Competence Information Sessions conducted by the DPI have to be the best start to preparation as it gives a clear expectation of what the examiners are looking for.*

### **Undermanager candidate**

Another aspect of exam preparation that needs to be addressed is visits to mine sites that deal with hazards different to the candidate's workplace. Examiners will focus on the candidate's breadth of industry knowledge and that may well extend beyond their workplace. It would be advantageous for mine site visits to be arranged by the RTO for a various reasons:

- mines that are visited could be prepared in advance for the group rather than have each person arrange their own visit
- post-visit discussions in the classroom can be used to enrich the candidate's knowledge and ensure they are getting the proper information from the visits.



## Best practice regarding Preparation for Statutory Examinations.

### Employers:

1. clearly communicating their expectations to RTOs regarding examination preparation
2. establishing contracts with RTOs specifying preparation for the Statutory Position exams
3. ensuring that trainers liaise with mentors/coaches
4. ensuring that mentors/coaches complete the requirements of the Training Plan and (if used) log books
5. identifying issues which may impact on the candidate's exam preparation
6. encouraging candidates and mentors to attend Examiner's Information Sessions
7. facilitating mine visits, assisting with mock oral exams.

### Checklist for Employers – Mentors/Coaches

#### Ask yourself:

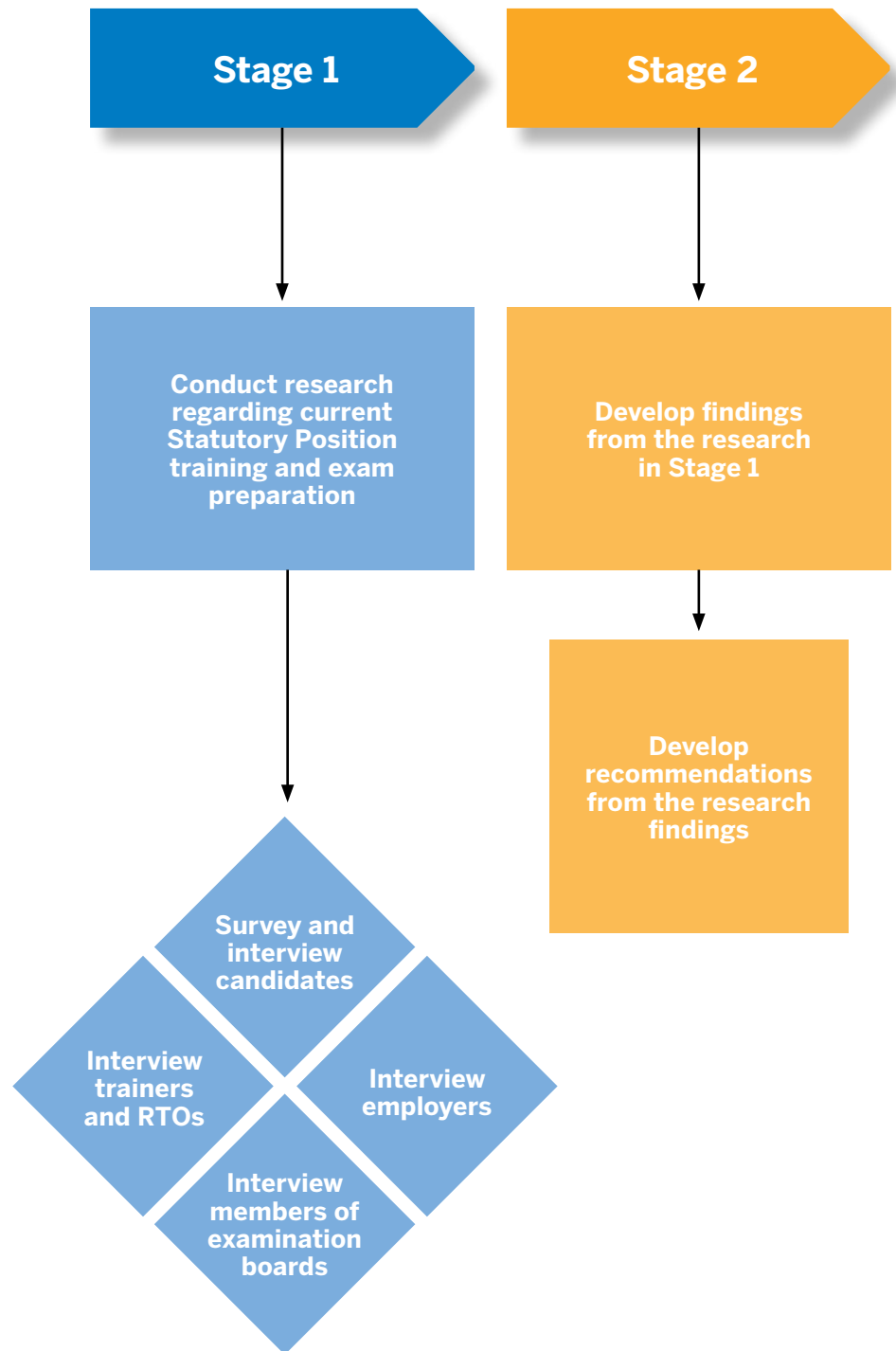
Who is responsible for exam preparation?

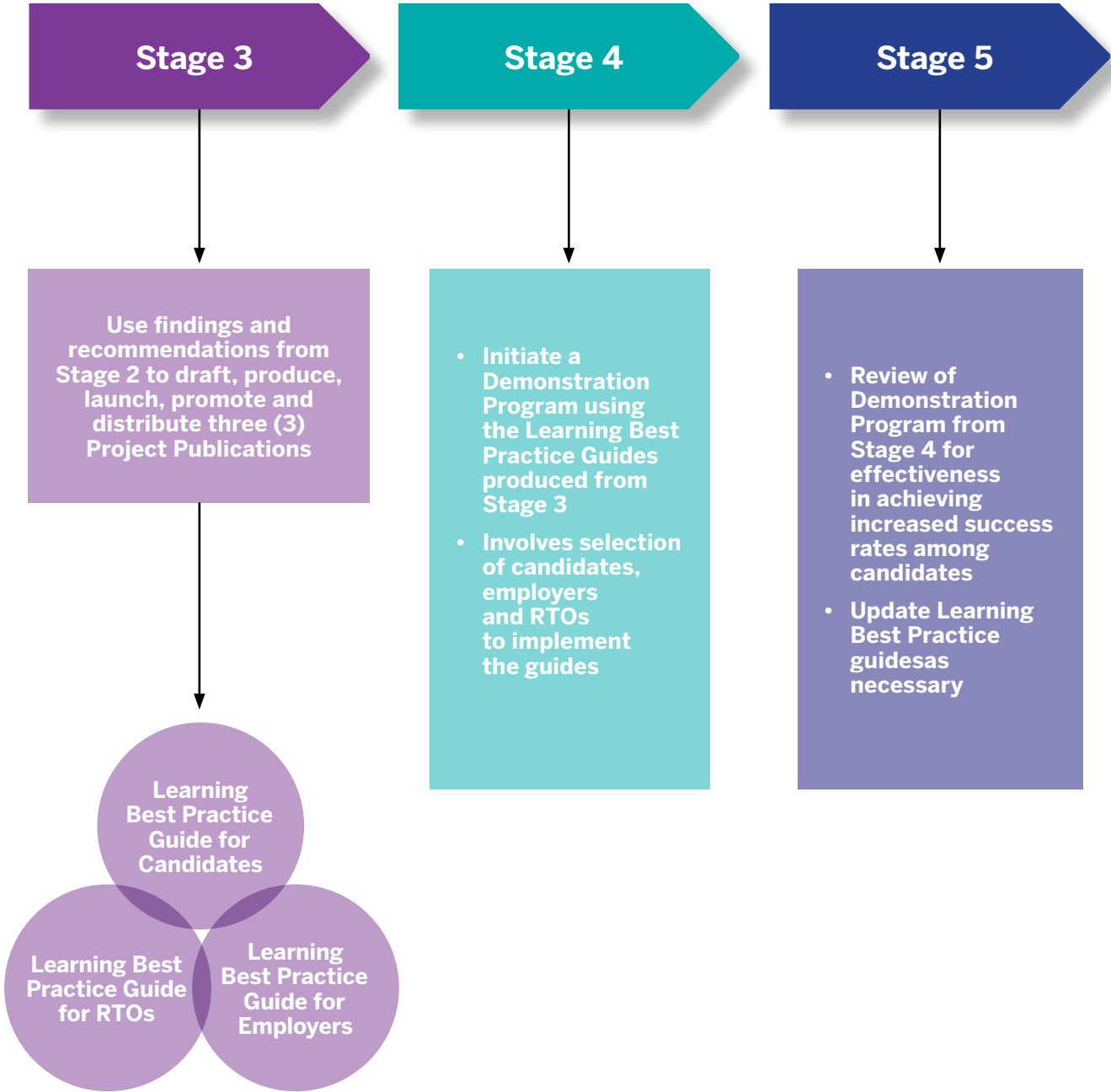
#### Things to consider

- Define the role of the RTO in exam preparation in the contract and Training Plan
- Liaise with mentor/coach to identify gaps in learning
- Arrange visits to mine sites with different hazards than candidate's workplace to increase breadth of industry knowledge
- Specific preparation for:
  - written exams
  - oral exams.

# Appendix 1

## Overview of NSW Statutory Positions Project







**NSW Mining**

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