VET Trainer interview questions

careertips.com.au: common questions and what they're really testing

What to expect

Interviews for VET Trainer roles are usually run by an RTO training manager or TAFE program coordinator, sometimes with an industry representative on the panel. Expect a strong focus on how you actually deliver and assess against units of competency, how you handle compliance obligations under the VET Quality Framework, and how you work with learners who aren't all at the same skill level or engagement stage.

- **Process/technical:** Questions about how you design lessons and assessment tasks against training package requirements and deliver both theory and practical content.
- **Behavioural (STAR):** Questions about past experience supporting struggling or disengaged learners, giving feedback, and adapting delivery for mixed cohorts.
- **Scenario/judgement:** Hypothetical situations testing how you'd handle an assessment dispute, a compliance gap, or a difficult learner interaction.
- **Compliance/regulatory:** Questions probing your understanding of VET Quality Framework requirements, record-keeping, moderation and ASQA audit expectations.
- **Client-facing/industry engagement:** Questions about liaising with employers, work placement hosts or industry advisory contacts to keep training relevant.

Most panels open with a general background and motivation question, move into two or three competency-based questions covering delivery and learner support, then test compliance knowledge directly. Many RTOs also ask candidates to walk through or briefly present a sample lesson plan or assessment tool, and some include a short practical demonstration relevant to the training package on offer.

1. Walk us through how you'd design a lesson and assessment task for a unit of competency you haven't taught before.

Why they ask

This tests whether you actually work from the training package documentation rather than improvising content, which is central to compliance and quality.

How to structure your answer

Walk through your process step by step: reading the unit of competency and performance criteria, mapping required knowledge and skills, choosing delivery methods, then designing an assessment tool that matches the evidence requirements.

> **Example answer**
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> *“I'd start by reading the unit of competency in full, including the performance criteria and assessment requirements, so I know exactly what evidence a learner needs to produce. Then I'd map that against the cohort, working out which parts need theory input and which need hands-on demonstration. For the assessment task, I'd build something as close to a real workplace scenario as I can, with an observation checklist tied directly to the performance criteria, rather than relying only on written questions. Before I run it with students, I'd check the draft against a similar validated tool from the training package if one exists, to make sure I'm not missing anything an ASQA audit would flag.”*

2. Tell me about a time you supported a learner who was disengaged or struggling to keep up.

Why they ask

VET cohorts often include mature-age students, people returning to study, or learners with low prior engagement, and trainers need to show they can adapt rather than just push content harder.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: describe the situation and the learner's specific barrier, the task you were responsible for, the action you took to adjust delivery or support, and the result for that learner.

Example answer

“I had a mature-age student in a trade unit who had strong practical skills from years of informal work but was falling behind on the written components and had started missing classes. I spoke with him one-on-one to understand the barrier, which turned out to be confidence around writing rather than lack of knowledge. I adjusted his assessment approach to let him talk through his answers with me first before writing them up, and broke the written tasks into smaller chunks he could complete across sessions. He finished the unit and went on to complete the full qualification, and he later told me the check-in was what kept him from dropping out.”

3. A student disputes an assessment outcome, insisting they demonstrated competency even though your observation checklist says otherwise. What do you do?

Why they ask

This checks your judgement under pressure and your understanding of fair, defensible assessment practice, which matters both for compliance and for learner trust.

How to structure your answer

Talk through the immediate response, how you'd review the evidence objectively, and how you'd resolve it in line with the RTO's appeals and reassessment process.

Example answer

“I'd stay calm and treat it as a legitimate concern rather than a confrontation. First I'd go back to the observation checklist and my notes from the assessment and walk the student through exactly which criteria weren't met and why, using specific examples rather than a general impression. If they still disagreed, I'd let them know about the RTO's formal appeals process and offer a reassessment opportunity where appropriate, since a single missed criterion often just means the student needs another attempt rather than a dispute. I'd also flag the interaction to my supervisor and keep clear records, because a pattern of disputes on the same assessment task might mean the tool itself needs review.”

4. How do you keep your training and assessment materials compliant with the VET Quality Framework and current training package requirements?

Why they ask

This is a direct compliance check, since outdated or non-compliant materials are one of the most common issues ASQA audits pick up.

How to structure your answer

Give a factual, practice-based answer covering how you track training package updates, how you handle validation and moderation, and what records you keep.

Example answer

“I check training.gov.au regularly for updates to the units I deliver, since training packages get reviewed and superseded, and I update my materials as soon as changes are published rather than waiting for an audit to force it. I keep my assessment tools mapped clearly against performance criteria so validation sessions are straightforward, and I take moderation feedback seriously rather than treating it as a formality. I also keep my own record-keeping tidy, marking guides, learner evidence and feedback all filed consistently, because that's what an auditor or a colleague doing validation actually needs to see.”

5. How do you build and maintain relationships with employers or industry contacts to support work placements or keep training relevant?

Why they ask

VET Trainers are expected to maintain industry currency and often coordinate work placements, so panels want evidence you can operate outside the classroom too.

How to structure your answer

STAR works here too: describe a specific relationship or placement arrangement, what you did to establish or maintain it, and the outcome for learners.

Example answer

“In a previous training role I kept in regular contact with a couple of local employers who took our students on placement, checking in with them about placement logistics and about what skills gaps they were seeing in new workers. That feedback directly shaped how I sequenced some of my practical sessions, putting more emphasis on the workplace habits employers said graduates were missing, like following safe work procedures without prompting. It also meant when placement spots came up, those employers came back to us first because they trusted the students were prepared.”

6. Tell me about a time you had to adapt your teaching approach for a cohort with mixed skill levels or ages in the same class.

Why they ask

VET classes frequently mix school leavers, career changers and mature-age students in one room, and trainers need a real strategy for that rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

How to structure your answer

STAR: set out the mixed cohort you were working with, the specific challenge it created, what you changed in your delivery, and how it played out.

Example answer

“I once had a class that ranged from recent school leavers to a couple of students in their fifties changing careers, and the pace that suited one group was either too slow or too fast for the other. I restructured some sessions to include a core group activity everyone did together, then broke into smaller groups for practical work so I could pitch instructions differently depending on prior experience. The mature-age students got more one-on-one troubleshooting time, while the younger students worked through structured practice tasks in pairs. Overall engagement improved across the group, and I stopped losing the slower group's attention while the faster group waited around.”