



Careerforce Assessment and Moderation Practice

Reflections, Learnings, and Future Direction

A White Paper for Registered Assessors, Moderators, and Staff

1. Purpose and Context

Careerforce works with a large and diverse network of registered assessors, employers, and ākongā | learners across Aotearoa. Collectively, we assess thousands of ākongā each year against tens of thousands of unit standards from domains as diverse as specialist cleaning to sensory support.

This white paper has been developed to:

- Acknowledge the significant commitment and professionalism of Careerforce's registered assessors and moderators
- Share what Careerforce has learned through moderation activity over the past six years
- Be transparent about where risk exists, why it exists, and how it is being managed
- Explain how these learnings are shaping future moderation focus and sampling decisions
- Demonstrate Careerforce's commitment to ongoing self-assessment and continuous improvement

This paper is intended to support shared understanding and confidence in Careerforce's assessment and moderation system.

2. Acknowledging Our Assessors and Moderators

First and foremost, Careerforce acknowledges the professionalism, care, and diligence shown by our registered assessors and moderators.

Across the past six years, moderation activity has consistently shown that:

- The vast majority of assessment decisions are sound, fair, and well-evidenced
- Assessors take their responsibility seriously, particularly where assessment outcomes relate to learner competence, workplace safety, and public trust
- Workforce Capability Advisors and moderators play a critical role not only in quality assurance, but in professional learning, development, and consistency
- As standards, and expectations increased, assessors followed suit.

Moderation findings have rarely pointed to intent or negligence. Where issues have arisen, they have more commonly reflected:

- Complexity in standards
- Ambiguity in evidence requirements
- Rapid sector or qualification change
- Variability in workplace contexts

This is important, because it reinforces that quality assurance is a shared system responsibility. This also informs our product development practices and helps to close the feedback loop that exists from product delivery to product review.

This result also highlights the quality of assessor training and continuous development which has been supported by the Learning Engagement Advisors (and now Workplace Capability Advisors), bringing this training in house and steadily increasing the acceptable standard has ensured ongoing improvement of Careerforce registered assessors.

3. What We Have Learned from the last Six Years of Moderation

Looking across moderation activity over time, several consistent learnings have emerged from the analysis of our moderation data.

3.1 Most Risk Sits with Standards and Contexts, Not People

One of the strongest learnings is that risk is not evenly distributed across unit standards and is mitigated by continuous improvement of assessment practice.

Risk clusters around:

- Certain unit standards
 - (specifically in Peer Support, Mental Health and Addiction and Orderly contexts)
- Certain types of evidence
 - (Observation evidence proves difficult to obtain and can be of lesser quality)
- Certain workplace contexts
 - (Some workplaces struggle to organise and provide high quality observation evidence)

It does **not** consistently cluster around characteristics of our assessors; for example

- Length of time registered
 - Newly registered and long-standing assessors are equally good! >80% agreement rate
- Region of operation
 - >80% agreement rate all across the motu, training is consistently good across the country
- Demographic information
 - There is no meaningful difference in agreement rates across any demographic information (all ~80%)

This has been a key insight in moving Careerforce away from blanket or uniform moderation approaches.

3.2 Complexity and Judgement Drive Risk

Moderation outcomes show higher rates of discussion, clarification, or “not met / more evidence required” findings where unit standards involve:

- Complex practice rather than discrete tasks
 - Where there is high integration of assessment criteria across multiple tasks agreement rates drop
- Significant assessor judgement or reduced assessor guidance
 - Where assessor guidance is lacking or is open to broad interpretation agreement rates drop
- Observation or third-party attestation as primary evidence
 - When assessment evidence is reliant on a third party the quality of that evidence can drop and poorer assessment decisions are made
- Variable workplace practices across regions or organisations
 - Practices in one workplace may be well documented and well structured but are not in another, despite operating under the same banner.

These are not “problem units” — they are instead higher risk by nature; credit value is *not* a meaningful predictor of greater risk.

3.3 Repetition Builds Reliability

Conversely, moderation shows very strong consistency where:

- Assessors regularly assess the same unit standards
- Evidence expectations are well understood and stable
- The assessment task and assessor guidance are clear
- Moderation feedback has been embedded over time

This has provided confidence that repeated, consistent practice reduces risk, even in complex domains.

4. Areas of Risk and What Contributes to Them

Careerforce understands assessment risk as arising from a combination of factors, rather than a single cause.

4.1 Key Contributors to Risk

Risk increases when multiple factors are present, including:

- Safety-critical outcomes (e.g. moving and handling, restraint, personal care)
- High reliance on professional judgement
 - Tasks are less structured or the guidance is open to interpretation
- Limited opportunity for direct observation
 - Reliance on third party evidence

- Broad or loosely defined performance criteria
 - May include but not limited to statements being applied too openly
- Rapid changes to standards, guidance, or sector expectations
 - Change takes time to document, develop, and embed
- Evolving practices and understanding, especially around cultural knowledge
 - Shifting to practice and knowledge about Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the reo Māori text) over the Treaty of Waitangi for example in unit 32418
- Infrequent assessment of a unit by an assessor

These factors inform how Careerforce prioritises moderation activity.

5. Highest-Risk Units and Domains

Using accumulated moderation insight, Careerforce has identified domains of higher inherent risk. These domains will continue to inform which unit standards are prioritised for moderation in the coming years.

Units typically assessed as higher risk include:

- Health and wellbeing practice involving direct learner or client safety
- Units involving decision-making, judgement, or ethical practice
- Complex workplace observation and attestation models
- Specialist units from Youth Work, Peer Support, Mental Health and Addiction, and Orderly fields
- Units with a history of sector or regulatory scrutiny
- Units that are newly introduced or significantly revised

This does not imply poor performance by assessors working in these domains. It reflects the consequences of error, not the likelihood of error.

6. Rationalising Reduced Sampling for Some Assessors and Assessments

One of the most important shifts informed by moderation learnings is the move toward risk-based sampling.

Why Reduced Sampling Is Appropriate in Some Cases

Where moderation history shows:

- Consistent, high-quality assessment decisions over time
- Stable unit standards with clear evidence expectations
- Strong alignment between assessor judgement and moderation outcomes

It is both reasonable and responsible to:

- Reduce sampling frequency
- Shift moderation focus elsewhere and use moderation effort where it adds the most value

This approach:

- Respects assessor expertise
- Reduces unnecessary compliance burden
- Strengthens system-level quality assurance

Reduced sampling is earned through demonstrated consistency, not assumed. If we start to see agreement rates drop or other risk factors emerge, Careerforce will shift its focus or do further targeted sampling to understand that risk and rebuild confidence.

7. What This Means Going Forward

Based on these learnings, Careerforce will continue to:

- Focus on quality outcomes for our learners
- Apply risk-based moderation planning
- Focus moderation where impact and risk are highest
- Use moderation as a learning and improvement tool, not just a compliance mechanism
- Regularly review risk assumptions and adjust accordingly
- Apply what is learned in moderation to improve assessor training and development
- Regularly review products and make adjustments to improve learner comprehension and assessor consistency
- Be transparent with assessors about why certain units are called for moderation

This approach reflects a mature quality system that balances trust, evidence, and accountability.

Careerforce will continue to moderate **three** samples early in an assessors' tenure above any other sampling, and Careerforce will look to moderate **two** assessment samples one approximately 6 months and one approximately 3 months before the assessor registration review date.

8. Closing Statement

Careerforce's assessment and moderation system exists not only to protect learners, employers, and the integrity of qualifications but also our most vulnerable in Aotearoa | New Zealand. It recognises the professionalism of those who deliver assessment every day and seeks to continually improve our products and our practices.

This white paper reflects a system that has learned, adapted, and matured through aromatawai | reflection. It is offered in the spirit of transparency, partnership, and shared commitment to quality.