Transcript - TAC TALK SHORTS

Fraudulent Certificates

Welcome to TAC Talks Shorts. My name is Mel Hartley from the Training Accreditation Council or TAC and today we are going to have a short talk about the risks associated with counterfeit certifications and discover how safeguarding the integrity of your RTO's qualifications can make a significant impact.

Before we do I wish to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are recording on, the Whadjuk people. We wish to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

Today's topic relates to the serious issue of fraudulent certificates which can affect the reputation of your RTO and undermine the quality of the VET sector. It's essential to have strong measures in place to ensure the authenticity of certificates and to minimise fraudulent use. After all, the competence of individuals holding qualifications undertaken at your RTO, plays a significant role in how industry and employers perceive the quality of training provided by your organisation. So, let's explore the risks associated with counterfeit certificates and the importance of safeguarding the integrity of your RTO's qualifications.

In this episode, we'll explore two key strategies to limit the occurrence of fraudulent certificates. First, we'll discuss what your RTO can do when producing certificates to ensure their integrity and authenticity. Then, we'll delve into the importance of verifying any certificates that you receive, so you can confidently assess the qualifications of individuals presenting them.

When producing your certificates, sufficient information must be provided to ensure that the documentation is able to be authenticated and to reduce fraudulent copying and use. Printing certificates on plain paper using templates from common word-processing applications makes it very easy for someone to recreate a document that looks identical to your certification.

If you are printing certificates, there are a number of ways that you can enhance your security features.
1. The first is printing your certificates on security paper. Certificates can be printed on special security paper that includes features such as watermarks, security fibres, and chemical reactive materials. These features make it difficult to reproduce or alter the certificate.
2. You could also include a hologram or seal on the certificate to make it difficult to replicate.
3. Another options is adding Microtext, which is small text that is difficult to read without a magnifying glass, can also assist with security as it can be difficult to reproduce.
4. If you want to get really high tech, you can use special inks which will fluoresce under ultraviolet light or change colour when exposed to heat.
5. Or, you can simply design the certificate with elements that are difficult to replicate, such as with intricate patterns or designs.

Using all or some of these features make it more difficult for fraudsters to replicate the certificate or even alter its contents.

Another option is providing certificates electronically, which is easier, cost effective and more environmentally friendly. It is also easier to recreate an electronic document if your document is not protected. A digital certification system can help to reduce the risk of fraudulent certificates by

providing a secure and tamper-proof way of verifying qualifications. This system could include the use of digital signatures and encryption to ensure the authenticity of the certificates.

Whether electronic or paper based, it is good practice for RTOs to not allow third parties to create and issue certificates on their behalf.

The second way to mitigate fraudulent certificates is by verifying or authenticating any certificates that you receive from a learner. This can be done by either contacting the issuing RTO directly to confirm the authenticity of the certificate or if the training was completed after 1 January 2015, you can access the student's transcript via the Unique Student Identifier also know as the USI, website.

If the RTO no longer exists and there is no information on the USI website, contact the VET regulator as the RTO may have provided student records before it closed.

If you come across a fraudulent certificate contact the affected RTO with details of the fraud so that they can take it further.   If you are the RTO who has been affected, the best course of action is to contact the Police for further guidance. If you are a TAC Regulated RTO, please also let us know.

By implementing these measures, RTOs can help to prevent fraudulent certificates and maintain the integrity of their qualifications.

Thank you for listening to this TAC Talks Shorts on fraudulent certificates. Additional information on this topic is available in the Users' Guide to the Standards for RTOs and in the Fact Sheet Issuing Testamurs and Statements of Attainment both available on the TAC website wa.gov.au/tac.