

QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORKS

Overview

Below is a sample of some program specific quality descriptors that were developed for the Dispute Settlement Centre Victoria (DSCV) These four quality descriptors are from a set of 19 descriptors that were used to identify the current level of skill of a mediator and develop targeted professional development goals.

Using the QAF

When using a QAF, the assessor typically observes a live mediation and identifies the statement that best reflects the mediator's practice.

SAMPLE DESCRIPTORS OF QUALITY

1. **Maintains impartiality**
 - 1.0. Appears partial or biased towards one of the parties (e.g. facilitates from an assessment of who is right)
 - 1.1. Provides each party with the same time and information etc.
 - 1.2. Maintains the appearance of impartiality despite the need to engage differently with the parties
2. **Assists parties with perspective taking and adopting a problem-solving mindset**
 - 2.0. Does not provide advice/explore alternative view
 - 2.1. Creates opportunities for party to consider the perspective of the other party
 - 2.2. Assists parties to consider the ways in which they may be able to compromise in order to reach agreement
 - 2.3. Assists parties to consider the interests of the OP and possible options for resolution which are focused on optimising mutual benefits
 - 2.4. Tailors strategy re. perspective taking/problem solving to target needs of conflict style or profile
3. **Helps parties to identify BATNA and/or WATNA**
 - 3.0. Does not help parties to identify their BATNA and WATNA
 - 3.1. Advises parties of the disadvantages of proceeding to hearing
 - 3.2. Assists parties to consider their best and world alternatives to a negotiated agreement
 - 3.3. Draws on jurisdictional knowledge to guide parties' considerations of their BATNAs and WATNAs
 - 3.4. Tailors strategy re. BATNA and WATNA to target needs of conflict style or profile
4. **Reality tests parties' proposals/assumptions**
 - 4.0. Does not reality test proposals/assumptions
 - 4.1. Asks parties questions to check if they have thought through possible consequences of proposals/assumptions
 - 4.2. Challenges party thinking to assist them to identify strengths and weakness of proposals/assumptions (e.g. is there evidence to support assumptions?)
 - 4.3. Draws on jurisdictional knowledge to guide reality testing of proposals/assumptions
 - 4.4. Tailors strategy re. proposals/assumptions to target needs of conflict style or profile

Following the mediation, the mediator is asked to conduct a self-assessment using the same set of criteria. The assessor and the mediator then discuss and compare their assessment of the mediation. The assessor may take the opportunity to seek clarification or further information about the mediator's practice and make adjustments to their assessment if necessary. Following this discussion, the assessor and mediator collaboratively develop three targeted professional learning goals.

Language used in the descriptors of quality

You may notice that the language is a little different what you may be used to. There has been a deliberate attempt to avoid comparative language such as poor, average, good etc. These words have different meanings to different people and one person's 'good' may be another person's 'great'. By specifying explicit behaviours, the quality criteria are as transparent as possible and both the assessor and mediator know exactly what is being assessed. Another reason for writing the descriptors in this way is to allow the quality criteria to serve as an instructional tool that can help practitioners conceptualise the knowledge, skills and attitudes required at the highest levels of quality.¹

¹ Hutchinson, D., Francis, M., Griffin, P. et al. (2014). Developmental teaching and assessment. Assessment for Teaching. P. Griffin. Melbourne, Cambridge University Press: 26-57

