

# Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Guide



## What is Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)?

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is a formal assessment process aimed at determining credit and recognising the competencies individuals have obtained in formal and informal education, as well as in the work environment.

RPL assessment enables individuals to forego the training process and move directly to having their competencies assessed, thus avoiding the need for unnecessary training that may have additional cost, time and effort.

RPL aims to provide individuals who do not require learning with a faster and flexible way of having their skills and knowledge assessed against the competencies required for the qualification or individual units of competency.

The RPL process is a sound assessment process that requires assessment of valid, authentic, current and sufficient evidence. Evidence must be collected and documented to show that you have the knowledge and understanding, as well as the practical skills required for competence to be achieved.

The RPL process will assess whether you are competent in some or all of the requirements for full or partial completion of a qualification or accredited course.

## What are the general principles for RPL?

These general principles for RPL are to assure that the quality of assessments delivered through RPL processes are provided to applicants.

1. Information about RPL is actively promoted and accessible to a diverse range of students enrolled in VET courses.
2. RPL recognises acquired learning in any context provided that the learning is relevant to the competency outcomes in the training package and that it is still current.
3. RPL assessment is conducted according to the principles of assessment (validity, reliability, flexibility and fairness) and in conformity with the rules of evidence (validity, sufficiency, currency and authenticity) and is no different from those that apply to regular assessment processes.
4. There is no one RPL model that is suitable for all qualifications and all situations. The model of RPL that is implemented will be aligned with the outcome, goals and objectives of the qualification.
5. RPL processes will be timely, fair and transparent and students will be kept informed of their status at reasonable intervals.
6. RPL decisions will be clearly explained to students and subject to appeal and review.
7. Costs for RPL processes will be consistent with the current VET fees and charges policy.
8. The benefits of RPL will be promoted to employers where they will be made aware of the opportunity to have skills recognised through RPL.

## Who can apply for RPL?

Mature-aged job seekers or existing workers with a history of life and work experiences are good candidates for RPL. If you think you already have knowledge and experience relevant to the qualification or program you are interested in, you may apply for RPL. RPL may be undertaken for a single unit of competency or a number of units of competency leading to a qualification.

## What is the cost of RPL?

The cost for RPL will vary depending on the units you select and the type of qualification you are seeking to apply for. Once you make your preliminary unit selection, we can provide you with an estimated cost for RPL.

## What is evidence?

In the vocational training and assessment (VET) industry evidence is what supports your proof of competency or your achievement of a competency standard, learning outcome or performance criteria.

There are three main forms of evidence. A combination of all three types of evidence will usually provide a sufficient picture of the applicant's capability and overall level of competence.

**Direct Evidence** – where an assessor observes the applicant's actual performance in a workplace. The assessor will make a judgement about whether the applicant is competent in the skills and knowledge required for each unit of competency. For example, the assessor may:

- Observe the applicant performing a range of skills at work
- View a video of the applicant's performance
- Examine a product made in the workplace by the applicant
- Use simulations, role-plays and projects to observe actual performance of skills where direct workplace observation is not possible

**Indirect Evidence** – where evidence is provided and submitted by the applicant. This may include work samples and documents produced by the applicant, e.g. reports, materials and products, previous certificates and qualifications and documented work history.

**Supplementary Evidence** – evidence that allows the assessor to make further judgements on the applicant's competency. Evidence may include:

- Written or oral questioning
- Tests or assessments conducted on or off the job
- Third party sources, e.g. testimony from work supervisor or manager
- Self-assessment reports

## What is the RPL process?

The following provides advice for the candidate on the step-by-step process to assist the candidate to gain recognition for competencies and skills already acquired.

**Step 1 – Preparation and information about RPL:** Discuss the RPL process with a trainer and assessor to determine if RPL is an appropriate pathway to gain competencies. Information will be provided about the RPL assessment process, including advice on how competency can be demonstrated and the documentary evidence required to support their RPL application. The focus will be on demonstration of skills and knowledge to meet the required criteria in the training package.

Some examples of documentary evidence that can support the RPL process include:

- Resume or work history
- Certificates / results or assessment
- Diaries and log books
- Site training records
- Memberships of relevant professional associations
- Industry awards
- Presentations conducted
- Licences or tickets held (e.g. forklift)
- Photographs of work taken
- Task sheets, job sheets
- Pay slips
- References, letters, 3<sup>rd</sup> party reports from previous employers / supervisors
- Performance appraisals
- Any other documentation that may demonstrate industry experience

After reviewing all the information provided, the applicant may then decide whether or not to progress with the formal RPL assessment process.

**Step 2 – Applicant self-evaluation:** A self-evaluation provides the applicant the opportunity to determine their level of experience and knowledge in the relevant industry and provides the assessor with an overview of the background experience of the applicant to help them determine if the applicant is likely to be successful in the RPL process. This self-evaluation process helps to identify any potential gaps in training skills and knowledge. The aims of self-evaluation include:

- Self-evaluating suitability for RPL after reviewing the unit/s of competency and performance criteria.
- Understanding the training package requirements for the qualification ([www.training.gov.au](http://www.training.gov.au)).
- Matching (or mapping) prior skills and knowledge to the performance criteria, and identifying where evidence can be provided to substantiate this.

- Clarifying any evidence requirements or gaps to support your RPL application.

**Step 3 – Interview with the assessor:** Once the applicant decides to proceed with the RPL process after a self-assessment, the next step involves further discussion about evidence gathering with the assessor. The purpose of this step is to determine that the applicant is ready to proceed with the RPL assessment only process.

The assessor will provide the applicant with an RPL Kit and discuss specific evidence required to satisfy the required skills and knowledge for each unit of competency. Discussions will provide an opportunity to discuss a broader area of knowledge and experience and may elicit more information to satisfy the performance criteria. The interview may include:

- A face-to-face discussion, email conversation or on the telephone to discuss the RPL process
- Provision of additional information to support the RPL process
- Clarification and evidence required to be presented in a portfolio
- Demonstration of the applicant's working knowledge and/or skills and experience relating to specific performance criteria
- The capacity for the applicant to cover the range of contexts demanded by the qualification and training package

**Step 4 – Complete the enrolment application, RPL Kit and attach evidence:** The applicant must enrol in the qualification or units of competency they seek for RPL. On enrolment, the applicant will be provided with a cost for RPL based on the units selected.

The RPL Kit will outline the evidence required for submission for RPL assessment. Evidence must be collated in a way that will make it clear for the assessor to assess and determine if sufficient and valid evidence is provided for the criteria in each unit of competency.

Evidence provided must clearly match (or map) to the performance criteria and must satisfy the rules of evidence (validity, sufficiency, currency and authenticity). Evidence is often presented in a Portfolio. Original documentation must not be submitted.

All required documentation for RPL assessment is then submitted, together with your RPL evidence and any fees payable.

**Step 5 – Assessor makes assessment decision and provides feedback:** The RPL assessor will review all the evidence provided and advise the candidate whether they were successful or not. Candidates with insufficient evidence will be provided with further options, which may include:

- Further discussion and submission of evidence
- Enrolment in a learning or training and assessment pathway to meet gaps in evidence
- Completion of work based activities or projects to meet gaps in evidence
- Offer of Statement of Attainment for units of competency achieved

## What will the assessor be looking for?

The RPL assessor will review your portfolio of evidence to ensure that it complies with the Rules of Evidence (validity, sufficiency, currency and authenticity). It is the assessor's responsibility to evaluate whether or not the evidence supplied is sufficient for the applicant to be awarded competency in the units applied for. In making their assessment, they will consider the following questions:

- How valid is the evidence? Is it relevant, does it meet the performance criteria for each unit of competency?
- How sufficient is the evidence? Is it enough, does it provide evidence to demonstrate the applicant's skills and knowledge in a variety of work contexts?
- How current is the evidence? Is it up-to-date, is the applicant's skills and knowledge recent, e.g. demonstrated in the last 12 months? Are licences, permits, etc. current?
- How authentic is the evidence? Is it the applicant's own work, can the applicant provide proof of ownership of work?
- Can the evidence provided demonstrate skills and knowledge in a range of contexts and work environments?
- Does the evidence match (or map to) each element of competency?
- Can the same piece of evidence be used across a number of units or elements?

## What are the applicant's rights and responsibilities?

As part of our commitment to customer service excellence Australian College of Training actively assists applicants to understand their rights and responsibilities in the RPL process. There are a number of obligations the applicant must be made aware of:

- The rights and responsibilities of the applicant, as outlined in the College's Student Handbook. This includes understanding the rights of appeal against any summative decisions made by the assessor/s.
- The applicant's primary responsibility for identifying, gathering and presenting evidence to confirm their competence.
- The right to receive advice, guidance and assistance with evidence gathering.
- Australian College of Training will ensure that all information related to applicants and their portfolio of evidence is handled with sensitivity and confidentiality and in accordance with the Privacy Act.

## Privacy and confidentiality

As an RTO we undertake to keep all records in a secure and safe environment in accordance with regulatory and legislative requirements. However, as well as being assessed by the assessor your portfolio may be examined by State / Territory training authorities for purposes of audit, accountability and registration.

It is important that sensitive information is not included as part of your Supporting Documentation or any other documentation you wish to use as evidence. You may need authorisation from your supervisor to use some of your evidence, so it is always best to check the privacy and confidentiality policies of the organisation. Client names should be deleted and financial figures or other personal details should be blacked out and made unidentifiable, where applicable.

## Reasonable adjustments

We recognise the need to make reasonable adjustments within the RPL process to meet your individual needs. If you need to speak confidentially to someone about your individual needs, please contact your RTO.

## Appeals

If you feel that the process used to assess your application for recognition of prior learning (RPL) was unfair you can lodge an appeal in writing within fourteen (14) days of receiving the result of your RPL application. Your appeal must be sent to the RTO of your course.