Student Fact Sheet

Recognition of Prior Learning

Definition and Guidelines

Sometimes people have acquired valuable skills in the course of their lives, which may not have been obtained in the classroom, yet which are relevant to the qualification they are seeking to obtain.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) recognises any prior knowledge and experience you may have in, even if you have had no formal training in this area. You may not need to complete all (or any) of a training program if you already possess some or all of the skills required by the qualification. RPL is an assessment process that assesses an individual's non-formal and informal learning to determine the extent to which that individual has achieved the required learning outcomes, competency outcomes, or standards for entry to, and/or partial or total completion of, a qualification.

Mature-age jobseekers or existing workers with accumulated life and work experiences are seen as primary students for RPL.

RPL can be used in two ways:

1. as an alternative mechanism for gaining access to a course or qualification. A student may gain entry to course or qualification using RPL as an alternative to possessing the prerequisites for entry based on formal education and training (for example, students who obtain places in a diploma course using RPL based on life or work experience when they have not completed the relevant prerequisites)

2. for the award of unit(s) of competency that form part of a qualification, leading to the partial or full completion of the requirements for that course or qualification.

RPL may use different assessment methods, but they should be just as rigorous as conventional methods of assessing competence in the VET sector.

Evidence

Evidence is anything which can help demonstrate that you are able to competently carry out the activities covered by the elements. Evidence can be written, verbal or demonstrated. It can be photographs or videos. Suggestions of the type of evidence being sought are provided. Please note that these are suggestions only, and it is not essential that you provide all the suggested evidence. You may also have other types of evidence that are not listed. Whatever evidence you can provide will assist you with your RPL process, and some of your evidence may cover several units.

Each unit of competency in a certificate is broken down into 'elements' of competency. An element describes the key activities that must be performed in order to demonstrate competence in the tasks covered by the unit. For example, CHCAC1C Provide support to an older person consists of the following four elements of competency:

- Element 1 Demonstrate an understanding of the physical and psychosocial aspects of ageing
- Element 2 Establish and maintain appropriate relationships with older people
- Element 3 Assist the older person to identify and meet their needs
- Element 4 Respond to situations of risk to the older person within work role and responsibilities.

For each of the elements there are suggestions for evidence which you may be able to provide in support of your ability to perform the tasks required.

It is important to remove all reference to client details when submitting evidence, and to obtain permission when using an organisation's forms or documents.

Lack of documentary evidence to support your industry experience is not a barrier to your gaining RPL. You will have the opportunity to provide verbal evidence during a conversation with your assessor, who will also discuss with you alternative ways of demonstrating your competence.

There are certain types of evidence which may indicate your skills across a number of units, and the following examples will get you started. This is a guide only. You do not require all items on the list. Each industry has unique documents that can provide evidence of experience and competence.

Some examples of documentary evidence that can support the process include:
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- licences
- brief résumé or work history
- certificates/results of assessment
- certificates held (for example, Manual Handling)
- photographs of work undertaken
- diaries
- task sheets/job sheets
- logbooks
- site training records
- pay slips
- membership of relevant professional associations
- references/letters/third-party verification reports from previous employers/supervisors
- industry awards
- performance appraisals
- voluntary work you may have done

The RPL Assessment Process

Sage Institute of Education encourages assessment methods that reduce the previous reliance on paper-based evidence and give students the opportunity to gather evidence of their competence in a range of ways that better match the requirements of the unit(s).

Methods used by a qualified assessor to gather evidence for RPL will mirror assessment methods that are used in a training program. These include self-evaluation, interview processes and/or direct observation either on the job in the workplace or in a simulated environment.

There are four possible outcomes of an RPL assessment:
1. Issue of a Statement of Attainment or a Record of Results that outlines units of competency recognised by the assessor. These may be used as credits toward gaining qualifications.
2. Issue of a Testamur or full qualification
3. Identification of the need for gap training
4. Inappropriate alignment against units of competency resulting in no formal recognition by the assessor

Preparatory Stage

The RPL assessor will:
- Check you have an RPL Fact Sheet
- give you course specific RPL advice
- give you an Application for Recognition of Prior Learning Candidate Form to complete and sign
- arrange an RPL information and briefing session between themselves and yourself to provide an opportunity to:
  - ask questions and clarify your objectives in seeking RPL
  - obtain guidance and support in the RPL process
  - discuss knowledge, competencies and experience being claimed
  - discuss cost of application

Once the preparatory stage has been completed, the following six steps need to be followed:

Step 1  Student's self-evaluation

1. You will be given a Self-evaluation Tool to complete. This will include questions/criteria based upon real job tasks written in plain English as interpreted from the training package unit(s) of competency.

   The RPL Self-evaluation Tool will give you the opportunity to determine your level of experience and knowledge in the relevant industry. It also provides the RPL Assessor with an overview of the level of your background experience to help them determine if you are likely to be successful in the RPL process.

2. Gaps in training skills and knowledge are identified.

   If a written self-evaluation form is not appropriate for the task, or does not suit your particular needs, you should be given the option of providing a verbal self-evaluation before a qualified trainer/assessor. In some cases, a support person may also be used.

Step 2  Interview with RPL Assessor

1. If the completed RPL Self-evaluation Tool demonstrates that you have the potential for RPL, further evidence
is gathered via an interview.

2. You will have a professional conversation with the trainer/assessor about your required knowledge and skills.

3. A series of direct questions and/or a list of topics for discussion is drawn from the list of required skills and knowledge.

4. This interview is conducted in the workplace or simulated environment so that you can refer to examples or draw upon the environment to further support the verbal expression of your competence.

5. Extensive notes are used at interview to create a reliable record of the interview for later reference. Both yourself as the student being assessed, and the RPL Assessor, sign at the conclusion of these notes to acknowledge that they are a true and accurate record.

Step 3 Demonstration/observation of tasks

If the interview demonstrates your verbal and theoretical knowledge to a sufficient standard, your performance in the workplace or a simulated workplace environment is observed and assessed.

1. The RPL Assessor completes an Observation Checklist to be used to provide a record of the practical assessment.

2. This Checklist is completed and signed by both parties.

Step 4 Provision of further supporting evidence

You might provide further documentary evidence to support your competency profile. The types of documentary evidence are the same as those listed under Examples of Evidence (above).

Evidence gathering by Sage Institute of Education trainers and assessors complies with the rules of evidence; that is, the evidence is:

- valid (covers all requirements of the unit of competency);
- sufficient (enables trainers and assessors to make a decision about competence over time and in different situations);
- current (competent performance is contemporary); and
- authentic (is the student’s own work).

Step 5 Final Assessment

At this stage, the RPL Assessor is able to determine, through a systematic review of the evidence, whether you have achieved the learning outcomes and/or experience to the level of performance required in the workplace.

- The RPL Assessor will complete the RPL Evidence and Results Record.
- The RPL Assessor may communicate with one of your previous manager’s/supervisor’s to clarify or validate evidence that has been submitted to support claims of competency.
- You will either be “Granted” or “Not Granted” a recognition of prior learning.

Step 6 Post-Assessment

The aim of this stage is to:

- Encourage you to reflect on the RPL outcomes and set appropriate learning targets.
- Inform you that, if unsuccessful, there is an appeals process you can follow.
- Obtain feedback from you about the RPL process and ways to improve it.

Notification and feedback

- You will be notified in writing by the Academic Director as to the outcome of the results of the assessment.
- All evidence and supporting documentation is returned to you. It should be retained for future reference.
- You have the right to appeal an assessment decision. The Sage Institute of Education Student Appeals Policy and Procedure would be followed at this point.
- You will receive prompt and constructive feedback at the time of the assessment.
- A meeting may be arranged and a learning plan devised for you which takes into account the results of the assessment and sets out how you can complete the outcome requirements for competencies that were not achieved during the assessment.
- In addition, you should seek assistance to set further learning targets. These may relate to other courses or to other skill development opportunities.

Monitoring

The Quality & Compliance Manager will conduct a yearly review of this policy and procedure as part of the continuous improvement cycle.
Responsibility

The Academic Director or qualified delegate and RPL Assessor shall be responsible for ensuring this policy and its process is followed.

The candidate is responsible for the application and gathering of information.

Related Policies

The process above is supported by the following policy:

Student Appeals Policy and Procedure
Credit Transfer Policy and Procedure
Privacy of Information Policy and Procedure

Reference Documents and Forms

1. Application for Recognition of Prior Learning Candidate Form
2. RPL Self-Evaluation Tool
3. Observation Checklist
4. RPL Evidence and Results Record
5. NVR Standards for Continuing Registration
7. AQF National Principles and Operational Guidelines for Recognition of Prior Learning

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