Recognition of Prior Learning
Policy and Procedure

Effective Date: March 2013
Review Date: March 2014

Introduction

RPL has been defined in a number of ways by practitioners, researchers and policy makers. Nationally agreed, accurate and current definitions of all terms can be found in the AQTF2010 and the Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard (AVETMISS) publications.

The AQTF Users’ Guide to the Essential Conditions and Standards for Continuing Registration defines RPL as: “… 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”

Similarly, the national AVETMISS (V:6.1) definition for RPL states: “RPL involves the assessment of previously unrecognised skills and knowledge an individual has achieved outside the formal education and training system. RPL is an assessment process that assesses the individual’s non-formal and informal learning to determine the extent to which that individual has achieved the required learning outcomes or competency standards”.

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 a 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.

Purpose of Policy:

This policy and procedure supports:
- NVR Standards for Continuing Registration*
- VET Quality Framework

It’s purpose is to outline and establish a standard method for identification of RPL.

Relates to:

This procedure applies to:
- all students enrolled in Sage Institute of Education programs that lead to a nationally recognised Vocational Education and Training (VET) qualification or statement of attainment
- all students who seek recognition for skills and knowledge previously gained through experience in the workplace, volunteer work, social or domestic duties, or through formal and informal studies.

Responsibility of:

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

Guidelines:
The RPL Assessor:
A qualified assessor is a person who has the competencies required under the NSSC Determination 2011.
That is, to be entitled to undertake assessment of nationally recognised training, an assessor must hold, as a minimum, the TAE10 Assessor Skill Set as of 1 July 2013.
If one person does not have all of the required competencies, assessment may be conducted by a team who, between them, have all of the required competencies.
It is recommended that assessors assessing RPL applications undertake training in RPL procedures and practices.
The RPL Assessment Process
To recognise prior learning, trainers must:
• ensure that students know that RPL provides an alternative pathway to course attendance
• determine in consultation with students, the learning, skills and knowledge that they are able to demonstrate against the learning outcomes or competency outcomes of the course or qualification for which the student is seeking entry or the award of credit
• determine whether any further evidence is needed to support the claim of competence and arrange for appropriate additional learning experiences or gap training where appropriate
• conduct an assessment that confirms competence.

In line with the new streamlined approach to RPL, 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 to by 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.
The Sage Institute of Education RPL process is interactive and personal so as to meet the needs of its students, many of whom have had limited or distant experience of formal learning systems and their requirements.

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

General Principles
1. Information about RPL should be actively promoted and accessible to a diverse audience of students.
2. RPL should recognise learning acquired in any context.
3. RPL assessment should be conducted according to the principles of assessment and in conformity with the rules of evidence.
4. There is no one RPL model that is suitable for all qualifications and all situations. The model of RPL that is implemented must be aligned with the outcome, goals and objectives of the qualification.
5. RPL processes should be timely, fair and transparent.
6. RPL assessment processes should be quality assured to the same level as training-based assessment.
7. RPL policies, procedures and processes should be explicitly included in quality assurance procedures within institutions.
8. RPL decisions should be accountable, transparent, and subject to appeal and review
9. RPL assessment should be structured to minimise cost to the individual.
10. Institutions and providers should develop advice and information about RPL for employers of students/ potential students to promote RPL among employers.
11. Institutions and providers should include RPL in access strategies for disadvantaged groups.
12. Funding models should not impede the implementation of RPL.

Examples of Evidence
Each industry has unique documents that can provide evidence of experience and competence. However, the focus of the new streamlined holistic assessment process is on demonstrated skills and knowledge and not on documentary evidence as the main source of evidence.
Some examples of documentary evidence that can support the process include:

- 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.

These items may be used to support students’ claims to competency throughout the RPL process. However, they must not be seen as a sole or sufficient determinant of competence, which is more properly and effectively assessed through interaction, dialogue and the practical demonstration of tasks.

Process
Preparatory Stage
During this stage the RPL assessor will:

- Check the applicant has an RPL Fact Sheet
- give the applicant course specific RPL advice
- give the applicant an Application for Recognition of Prior Learning Form to complete and sign.

The Application for Recognition of Prior Learning must be given to the Compliance and Administration Department within seven (7) days of being completed by the applicant.

The Compliance and Administration Department will upload this signed and completed form to a student file created on Sharepoint.

The following information may also be provided:
- Unit content from training.gov.
- RPL assessment process for specific unit

Any department providing information to prospective students must include RPL information in all marketing materials including on websites and in brochures.

The RPL assessor will arrange an RPL information and briefing session between themselves and the applicant to provide an opportunity to:

- ask questions and clarify their objectives in seeking RPL
- obtain guidance and support in the RPL process
- discuss knowledge, competencies and experience being claimed
- discuss cost of application

This session needs to be arranged within seven (7) days of lodgement of the Application for Recognition of Prior Learning Form.

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

Step 1 Student’s self-evaluation

1. Student is given RPL Assessment Tool Kit 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 within the RPL Assessment Tool Kit gives students the opportunity to determine their level of experience and knowledge in the relevant industry. It also provides the RPL Assessor with an
overview of the level of the student's background experience to help them determine if the student is likely to
be successful in the RPL process.

Once the RPL Self-evaluation Tool is completed it is uploaded to the student's file on Sharepoint.

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 the
particular needs of the student, he/she 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 the student has potential for RPL, further
evidence is gathered via an interview.
2. The student and the trainer/assessor have a professional conversation about the student's 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 so that the student can refer to examples or draw upon their
environment to further support the verbal expression of their competence.
5. Extensive notes are used at interview to create a reliable record of the interview for
later reference. Both 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.
6. These notes are scanned and uploaded to the candidate's file on Sharepoint by the Compliance and
Administration Department.

Step 3 Demonstration/observation of tasks

If the interview demonstrates the student's verbal and theoretical knowledge to a sufficient standard, the student's
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 and uploaded to the student's file on Sharepoint.

Step 4 Provision of further supporting evidence

A student might provide further documentary evidence to support their 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 the RPL
applicant has 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 the RPL applicant's previous manager/supervisor to clarify or
validate evidence that has been submitted to support claims of competency.
- The RPL Applicant is either “Granted” or Not Granted” a recognition of prior learning.
- The RPL Evidence and Results Record is passed on to the Compliance and Administration Department for
uploading to the candidate's electronic file on Sharepoint.
- The RPL Assessor will notify the Academic Director of the outcome of the student's RPL application.
Step 6  Post-Assessment

The aim of this stage is to:

- Encourage the RPL applicant to reflect on the RPL outcomes and set appropriate learning targets.
- Inform the RPL applicant, if unsuccessful, of the appeals process.
- Obtain feedback from the RPL applicant about the RPL process and ways to improve it.

Notification and feedback

- The RPL applicant is 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 the RPL Applicant. They should retain this information for future reference.
- The RPL applicant has the right to appeal an assessment decision.
- The RPL applicant will receive prompt and constructive feedback at the time of the assessment.
- A meeting may be arranged and a learning plan devised for the RPL applicant which takes into account the results of the assessment and sets out how the RPL applicant can complete the outcome requirements for competencies that were not achieved during the assessment.
- In addition, the RPL applicant should seek assistance to set further learning targets. These may relate to other courses or to other skill development opportunities.

RPL Appeal (only if necessary)

When a person undertakes an RPL assessment, he/she has the right to appeal the decision of the RPL Assessor.

Grounds for appeal

(i)  The assessment decision is considered inappropriate
    o  use suitable assessment methods to determine outcomes of the applicants request
    o  understand the responses given by the RPL applicant.

(ii) The assessment decision is considered inadequate
    o  ask the RPL applicant sufficient questions to determine experience
    o  document the evidence correctly before, during and after the assessment process.

(iii) Conditions of the assessment were inappropriate and inadequate
    o  ensure that the assessment conditions and resources required are appropriate and adequate against the performance criteria.

(iv) Special needs were not met
    o  cater for an RPL applicant's special needs ensuring that the needs does not compromise the integrity of the assessment outcome.

(v)  Other reasons
    o  within reason, consider the RPL applicant's personal situation at the time of assessment.

The Sage Institute of Education Student Appeals Policy and Procedure would be followed at this point.

Related Policies

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

Reference Documents and Forms

1. RPL Fact Sheet
2. Application for Recognition of Prior Learning Candidate Information Form
3. Application for Recognition of Prior Learning Self-Evaluation Checklist
4. Recognition of Prior Learning Tool Kit
5. RPL Evidence and Results Record
6. NVR Standards for Continuing Registration
7. National Vocational Education and Training Reform Act 2011
8. AQF National Principles and Operational Guidelines for Recognition of Prior Learning

Policy & Procedure Directory Requirements:

Sage Institute of Education > Policies and Procedures
*AQTF 2010 & VRQA VET Guidelines when registered in Victoria.

Version Control and Change History

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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>6 March 2013</td>
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