



Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Candidate's Information

What is Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)?

RPL is the acknowledgment of skills and knowledge obtained through learning achieved outside the formal education and training system and includes work and life experience including paid and volunteer work and skills attained through leisure pursuits such as musical, mechanical or linguistic abilities.

RPL recognises any prior knowledge and experience and measures it against the qualification in which students are enrolled. The individual may not need to complete all of a training program if he or she already possesses some of the competencies taught in the program.

Why you should apply for RPL

If you apply for RPL and your application is successful you could:

- reduce or eliminate the need for any training in skills and knowledge you already have
- save time by not needing to attend any or a reduced number of classes and completing unnecessary work
- save time and money because you will not have to buy textbooks and other learning material
- complete your qualification in a shorter time
- advance to a higher level qualification in a shorter time if desired
- use your qualification to meet licencing requirements

Some terms you need to understand

It is important that you understand the following terms to assist you with your RPL application.

Competence

Competence is the demonstration of skills and knowledge that you have gained through life and work experiences as well as any training that you have successfully completed that can be matched against a set of industry performance standards referred to as units of competency.

How to prepare for your RPL assessment

In order for your skills to be formally recognised as part of a national qualification, Assessors must make sure that you (the candidate) have the required skills and knowledge to meet the industry standard as specified in the relevant Training Package.

You must be involved in the RPL process so that all the experience, skills and knowledge you have gained over time can be correctly identified and suitably demonstrated. This evidence is gathered and used in recognition of all or some of the units for the qualification you wish to gain.

All assessment requirements will be discussed with you in advance and you will be given the opportunity to ask questions and clarify requirements. Being prepared for the assessment process and knowing what you need to provide can save you valuable time and ensure that the RPL assessment is as simple and stress-free as possible.

Here are some tips to make the application process and interview easier for you.

1. Your Assessor will ask you to talk about your work roles and your employment history.

Update your résumé. You might like to write down any work you have done in the past (paid or unpaid) and where this took place.

2. If you have certificates from any training courses you have completed, bring along either certified copies or the originals to the interview with the Assessor and they can make a copy of them.

3. Bring along any other documentation that you think would support your claim that you have done this work over time.

The following is a list of some of the documents you can provide as examples of your work history:

- Brief CV
- Certificates/results of assessment
- Any licences
- Tickets held, eg forklift, crane
- Photographs of work undertaken
- Diaries/task sheets/job sheets/logbooks
- Site training records
- Site competencies held record
- Membership of relevant professional associations
- Hobbies/interests/special skills outside work
- References/letters from previous employers/supervisors
- Industry awards
- Any other documentation that may demonstrate your trade or industry experience or support your claim.

Depending on where you have worked and what the work may have included, you may or may not have documentary evidence. Do not be put off if you do not have documentary evidence, as the Assessor will work with you during the assessment process.

4. Think about who you would consider to be your workplace contact or referee.
5. You will need to supply the contact details of work referees who can confirm your skills in the industry.

Think about who the best person to confirm your skill level would be.

Think about current or recent supervisors or employers who have observed your work and who would be able to confirm your previous work skills and experience. The Assessor will need to contact them.

6. You can speak with your Assessor about other ways you can show your skills for the trade or industry in which you are seeking recognition.

These could include letters from employers, records of any training courses or professional development sessions attended, employers or clients in related industries or government agencies, acknowledgements, workplace forms (as long as there are no confidentiality issues – see below) or any other relevant documents.

The four steps in the RPL assessment process

Below is a summary of the four steps to complete the process.

Step 1 Self-Assessment

Complete the self-assessment forms provided with as much information of your previous work experience as you can.

This will allow for an initial assessment of your experience and a check to see whether you can demonstrate the required skills and knowledge. You can discuss this with an RPL Assessor if you want.

It is not enough to simply state that you possess the skills and knowledge required. You must be able to demonstrate competence.

Depending on the trade or industry you have worked in, you may or may not have documentary evidence available. This should not deter you from seeking RPL, as your Assessor will work with you throughout the RPL process.

You will also need to supply the contact details of work referees who can confirm your skills in the industry.

Step 2 Interview with the Assessor

An interview with an Assessor who understands your industry will be organised for you. They will review – usually with you – the information and supporting documentation you have provided and match up your skills to the units/subjects in the qualification.

During your RPL interview, your Assessor will discuss with you your self-evaluation and any evidence you have provided.

It is at this point that you will be able to identify any previous work experience and discuss this with your Assessor.

During this conversation, you will be required to answer questions relating to your work experience. This questioning forms part of the assessment, as it will identify your current knowledge and skills regarding the area of industry in which you are applying for recognition.

It is at this stage that a decision will be made whether you are able to proceed to the next step or whether you need to undergo gap training.

Step 3
Practical
demonstration
of your skills

Your Assessor may request to conduct a practical skills test. This is your opportunity to demonstrate your level of competence on a practical level. The assessment will focus on the skills required in the work activities which relate to the qualification in which you are applying for recognition.

Your Assessor will identify the skills they want you to demonstrate by asking you to complete certain tasks.

Step 4
Provision of further
supporting evidence

Your Assessor will need to confirm your previous work experience with someone (such as your supervisor or employer) who can vouch for your skills over a period of time.

They will contact the referees you have provided as part of the candidate information.

Your Assessor will ask you to give your selected workplace contacts or previous employers the Third Party report to complete. Authentication of these reports by the Assessor will then be completed.

After the assessment

After the assessment, your Assessor will advise you of the units of competency you have successfully completed. You will also be advised whether you have gained the full qualification or if gaps have been identified during the recognition process. If you do have skill gaps, these may be addressed through additional training. If you have any questions during the RPL process, you should contact your Assessor.