

Understanding Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is an assessment process that involves making a judgement on the skills and knowledge an individual has gained as a result of past study and/or experience. This applies irrespective of how, when, and where the learning was achieved.

The goal of RPL is to formally recognise existing competencies without the need for a complete process of training and assessment. For this reason, RPL is sometimes referred to as an 'assessment-only' pathway to a qualification. As such, RPL can significantly reduce the time taken to gain a qualification.

Despite being an 'assessment-only' pathway, RPL still requires students to provide evidence that aligns with the Rules of Evidence and Principles of Assessment, and that meets the requirements of the relevant Training Package or Accredited Course. Typical methods used in an RPL assessment process include observations in the workplace, professional conversations, work samples, and portfolios.

Standards for RTOs 2015

As per Clause 1.12 of the Standards for RTOs 2015, all RTOs must offer RPL to individual learners. Consequently, it is recommended that all RTOs have established assessment procedures and tools for RPL, along with trainers and assessors who are well-versed in conducting the process in line with the organisation's policies and procedures.

Key Principles of RPL Assessment

- **Expert Evaluation:** RPL assessments should be conducted by academic or teaching staff with expertise in the subject, content, or skill area, and who also possess knowledge of and expertise in RPL assessment.
- **Standardisation:** RPL assessments should be on par with other assessments for the same qualification in terms of quality and rigor.

- **Recognition of Learning:** Learning, regardless of how, when, and where it was acquired, should be recognised provided it is relevant to the learning outcomes in the qualification.
- **Ensuring Validity:** The evidence provided by the individual must be valid, authentic, current, and sufficient. The assessment process should be fair, flexible, reliable, and valid.

RPL Assessment Methods

RPL assessment methods should incorporate several important considerations to ensure a comprehensive and fair evaluation:

- **Reasonable Adjustment:** The process should take into account the literacy levels, cultural background, and experiences of students, avoiding proxies for skill assessments like literacy unless these are intrinsic to the qualification's learning outcomes.
- **Specific Evidence Requirement:** Assessment methods should address the specific evidence needed to demonstrate prior achievement of the learning outcomes and assessment requirements for which credit is sought.
- **Range of Evidence:** The methods should allow individuals a variety of ways to demonstrate that they have met the required outcomes and thus can be granted credit.

By adhering to these principles and methods, RPL assessments can provide a fair and effective way of recognising an individual's prior learning and competencies and provide them with the credit they deserve.

Note: This VET Fact Sheet provides general information and should not be considered as legal advice.