# RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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| **POLICY TITLE:** | RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING POLICY AND PROCEDURE |
| **POLICT NUMBER:** | **WIP0910 - 029  POLICY** |
| **RESPONSIBILITY:** | OPERATIONS MANAGER |

## Scope of Policy and Procedure

This document outlines WAIFS policy and process for students to be granted recognition of prior learning if they have suitable prior training and/or experience.

## Background

Recognition of Prior Learning (or RPL) is an assessment process aimed at confirming and recognising the competencies a candidate has obtained outside of a formal education and training environment. These competencies might have been gained through informal or non-formal training, or they may have been gained through life or work experience.

According to the AQF National Principles and Operational Guidelines, RPL can be used in two ways:

- As an alternative mechanism for gaining access to a course or qualification. A candidate 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. An example of this is a candidate who obtains a place in a diploma course using RPL (based on life or work experience) when they have not completed the relevant prerequisites; and/or
- 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 no less and no more rigorous than conventional methods of assessing competence in the VET sector.

To recognise prior learning it is necessary to:

- Ensure that candidates know that RPL provides an alternative pathway to course attendance (through the availability of this policy on the WAIFS website and in the student handbook).
- Determine in consultation with the candidate, the learning, skills and knowledge that the candidate is able to demonstrate against the learning outcomes or performance criteria of the course or qualification for which the candidate 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.

To make RPL a user-friendly assessment pathway, assessors need to adopt a flexible and interactive approach, and provide information, advice and feedback to RPL candidates in the same way that they provide support and assistance to all candidates seeking to have their skills developed and assessed.

It is particularly important when candidates are not engaged in a structured learning program that they receive advice about what is required of them and that they not be constricted by inappropriately applied paper-based or knowledge-based assessment methods.

The nature of the support provided may differ from that which is made available to other candidates but the level and quality of that support will influence outcomes for candidates seeking RPL in the same ways as it influences other candidates.

**Policy and Procedure**
Applications for recognition of prior learning will only be accepted if:
- The student is enrolled in an approved course of WAIFS, **and**
- The appropriate fee has been paid.

**How does a candidate start the process?**
An application for Recognition of Prior Learning/Course Credit form is available from the Manager, Student Administration Services.

As noted in "Recognition of Prior Learning: An Assessment Resource for VET practitioners" 4th Edition 2012 http://www.voced.edu.au/content/ngv%3A65728 it is better to use plain English (not training package terminology) and the application form is therefore a simple one (see Appendix B). It is intended that if an applicant *thinks* they may be eligible for RPL they complete the form and are given a self-evaluation tool where they can more accurately assess their 'prior learning' against the training package requirements for the unit/s in which they are applying for RPL. This more detailed self- assessment will enable applicants to decide whether to proceed with the process.

**Preparation/information provision to candidate**
In planning for any assessment, assessors need to provide adequate information prior to, throughout and after a training and assessment experience. They need to be fully aware of the needs of the candidate, any relevant workplace personnel and the requirements of the Training Package unit of competency or qualification.

**Information is to be provided to the candidate about the assessment process**
It will give particular advice regarding how the candidate can demonstrate their competence and any documentary evidence a candidate may wish to gather to support their application.

Each industry has unique documents that can provide evidence of experience and competence. *However, the focus of the new streamlined holistic assessment process is to focus on demonstrated skills and knowledge and not to rely on documentary evidence as the main source of evidence.*

Some examples of documentary evidence that can support the process include:
- Licences
- Brief CV or work history
- Certificates/results of assessment
- Tickets held eg forklift, crane etc

- Photographs of work undertaken
- diaries
- Task sheets/job sheets
- Log books
- 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 the candidate's claim to competency throughout the RPL process. However, they should 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.

First, it is necessary to extract from the Training Package the job tasks involved in the demonstration of competence, and then to group these job tasks into clusters or "skill sets". These will form the basis of the content of the assessment templates to be used throughout the different steps in the assessment process (as set out below).

It is usually appropriate to cluster competencies into more holistic assessment tasks, or task-based clusters, to generate accurate evidence. Competencies that are conceived as separate in the Training Package might, for some candidates, be intimately connected in practice, and thus not easy to separate out from one another. An approach that clusters units of competency where there is commonality in content prevents duplication of assessment, and can provide for a more realistic demonstration of competence. This requires looking at a whole picture of a particular job role as it happens in industry and assessing holistically. This approach saves valuable time in the assessment process.

After reviewing all the information, the candidate may still decide not to progress with the formal RPL assessment process by not applying for RPL.

**The steps**
Following this preparatory stage of providing information to the candidate about the assessment process, and determining the job tasks and any clustering of competencies appropriate for the candidate, four steps toward RPL assessment are to be followed:

- Step 1: Self evaluation completed by candidate
- Step 2: Interview with trainer/assessor
- Step 3: Demonstration/observation of tasks
- Step 4: Provision of further supporting evidence.

*Step one: Student's self evaluation*
Upon first applying for RPL, the candidate is supplied with a self evaluation tool—such as a checklist or proforma—with questions/criteria based upon real job tasks, as interpreted from the Training Package unit/s of competency, and written in plain English (not Training Package terminology).

The self evaluation tool provides an opportunity for the candidate to self-determine their level of experience and knowledge in the relevant industry. It also provides an overview of the level of the

candidate's background experience to assist the assessor to determine if the candidate is likely to be a successful candidate for RPL. It is also an important first step in identifying where the candidate may have gaps in training skills and knowledge.

If a written self evaluation form is not appropriate to the task, or does not suit the particular needs of the candidate, they should be given the option of providing a verbal self evaluation before the WAIFS assessor. In some cases, a support person may also be used.

Useful sample self evaluation tools are made available through vetinfonet. All WAIFS trainers/assessors should ensure that they read the following document available by download at the following link: https://www.education.gov.au/recognition-prior-learning-toolkit and http://www.dtwd.wa.gov.au/trainingproviders/vet/resources-tools/Pages/default.aspx

The website also includes a variety of useful RPL tools, forms and information e.g. template self-evaluation form for candidate, template 3$^{rd}$ party evidence report, template evidence matrix. These documents are available on the WAIFS shared drive for adapting by assessors and through the vetinfonet website link: http://www.dtwd.wa.gov.au/trainingproviders/vet/resources-tools/Pages/default.aspx

WAIFS trainers/assessors can also access a considerable amount of useful information on RPL on the link above and should regularly check for updated information relating to RPL.

### Step two: interview with lecturer

If, according to the information provided by the self evaluation, the candidate demonstrates potential for recognition of prior learning, the next stage involves undergoing further evidence gathering via an interview. The purpose of the interview steps is to determine that the candidate is in fact entitled to skip the training process and is ready to be assessed.

This component of the RPL assessment process provides an opportunity for the candidate and the assessor to have a professional conversation about the candidate's required knowledge and skills.

It may comprise a series of direct questions or could be a list of topics for discussion drawn from the list of required skills and knowledge. Discussion around topics may provide an opportunity for candidates to demonstrate a broader area of knowledge and experience and may elicit more information than direct questioning. Appropriate responses to questions or topics that should be covered in the conversation should be included as these will support the assessor in probing for more specific information.

If applicable, it is preferable to conduct this interview process in a workplace or work- related environment, so that the candidate is able to refer to examples or draw upon their environment to further support the verbal expression of their competency.

Assessor instructions should indicate which questions/topics are critical to the assessment. An appropriate recording mechanism should be included—such as a purpose-built form and/or a digital recorder—to create a reliable record of the interview for later reference.

It is very difficult for the assessor to take comprehensive notes, ask questions and listen at the same time. To overcome this problem, it is a good idea to use a digital recorder to record the interview. These are small, unobtrusive and easy to carry around if you conduct the interview on the move. The interview can be then stored by the assessor on the WAIFS shared drive. The assessor needs to remember to ask for the candidate's permission to record the interview and to remember to turn the recorder off if the candidate is discussing anything that may be sensitive or have security issues.

Recording the interview means that if the assessor is unsure after the interview that all aspects were covered adequately, they can easily check and arrange to reassess those topics. It also provides a good source of evidence if there is any dispute about the outcome of the RPL process.

The interview conducted in this manner is an informative and enjoyable experience that provides the assessor an opportunity to network with industry and communicate the RPL concept with others.

It quite often encourages others at the workplace to also enrol in RPL. It shows the professionalism of the well-prepared RPL assessor and the connection of WAIFS to the real workplace.

### *Step three: demonstration/observation*

If the interview demonstrates the candidate's verbal and theoretical knowledge to a sufficient standard, the next stage is to observe and assess the candidate's performance in practice, through the observation of practical tasks performed either in the workplace or simulated workplace environment.

Practical tasks provide the opportunity for the candidate to demonstrate the application of skills and knowledge of a qualification. These practical assessments must be designed to reflect job tasks and be developed using the elements extracted from the units of competency. Developers will need to refer to the Training Package for specific industry requirements. To assess in actual workplace situations, processes will need to be put in place to enable assessors to gain permission to access workplaces.

A list of resources required for the practical tasks also needs to be included. Observation and questioning on the job will speed up and streamline the assessment process.

As stated earlier, in some cases it might be more effective to group separate competencies into certain task-based clusters.

Observation checklists should be used to provide a record of the practical assessment. The checklists must provide opportunity for sufficient detail of the on the job assessment to be recorded.

This documentary evidence provides sources of evidence to external sources, (eg auditor, fellow assessors) that support the assessor judgement.

Again, assessors can find template documents at vetinfonet for tailoring to meet the particular circumstances of the RPL.

*Step four: provision of further evidence*

To complement the record of steps 1-3, the candidate might provide further documentary evidence to support their competency profile as demonstrated in the prior stages of assessment. The types of documentary evidence that may be provided to further support the candidate's claim to competency are the same as those listed at the preparatory stage above, for instance, third-party verification reports, job logs, or photographs of work undertaken.

**Finalisation of RPL process**

Once the steps have been completed, the trainer can complete the Record of RPL/Course Credit Granted Form, which will include reasons for the amount of RPL given.

Students are required to sign (or otherwise accept) the Record of RPL/Course Credit Granted. (If a student does not accept the amount of course credit granted, they are informed that they can access the WAIFS Complaints and Appeals process).

Students will be given a copy of the Record of RPL/Course Credit Granted Form for their records, and a copy will be kept on the student's file. If necessary the duration of study will be adjusted accordingly.

If WAIFS grants the student course credit for RPL which leads to a shortening of the student's course before the student visa is granted, the eCoE will indicate the actual net course duration for the course.

If the RPL/course credit granted **will not affect the duration** of the course, WAIFS records the RPL/course credit in the student's file but does not need to take any other action.

If the RPL/course credit granted **will affect the duration of the course**, the Manager, Student Administration (MSA) records a change of course duration on PRISMS. To do this, the MSA uses the Student Course Variation function, and indicates that the student has requested a change to the existing enrolment. The MSA then chooses 'transfer student into same course' and then changes the end date of the course. This process will result in the creation of a new CoE (with the revised end date) and the cancellation of the original CoE.

The MSA will report the change of course duration to DEEWR via PRISMS within 14 days after the event as specified under Section 19 of the ESOS Act.

If RPL is granted, tuition fees to the value of that subject's worth will be deducted from the total course cost.

*Recognition of prior learning (RPL) - and any course credit given as a result of the RPL process - are applicable only to the course in which the student is enrolled at the time of*

*applying for RPL. If a student changes courses, any RPL/course credit granted will be reassessed to ensure that it still remains appropriate.*

**Fees for RPL process**

It is anticipated that fees will vary as each RPL application will be unique. However, WAIFS will not charge more than the current WAIFS' stated tuition fee for the unit/(s) for which RPL is requested by an applicant.

**Additional information for Assessors**: See Appendix A

### Developing RPL assessment tools

In accordance with the AQTF, RPL assessment tools must:

- be designed in accordance with the principles of assessment and the rules of evidence
- meet the requirements of the relevant Training Package or accredited course
- meet workplace and, where relevant, regulatory requirements.

### Principles of assessment and rules of evidence

Your assessments are required to conform to the principles of assessment. Will your assessment methods result in outcomes that are:

- Valid (assesses what it says it does)?
- Reliable (other assessors would make the same judgement with the same evidence)?
- Flexible (the needs of the candidate are taken into account in terms of the methods, the time and the place)?
- Fair (for all candidates, avenues of appeal should be open to candidates)?
- Your evidence gathering needs to comply with the rules of evidence, ie your assessment methods,
- and the tools that you design to accompany them must ensure that your evidence is:
  - Valid (covers all requirements of the unit of competency)
  - Sufficient (enables you to make a decision about competence over time and in different situations)
  - Current (competent performance is contemporary)
  - Authentic (is the candidate's own work).

### Evidence matrix

An evidence matrix should be developed to demonstrate how units of competency are assessed within the RPL assessment tool. The components of the units of competency are to be cross-matched in this table with the corresponding component of the assessment tool (self evaluation if appropriate, interview questions, practical tasks and supporting evidence).

The evidence matrix validates the assessment process against the qualification. Developers are to include records as required to provide evidence of the assessment process.

### Industry consultation and validation

WAIFS Training Manager/trainers should consider forming partnerships with local enterprises who might provide access to a workplace or equipment, authentic workplace documents or advice on how to create a realistic simulated environment.

### Validation processes

To ensure the overall quality and consistency of RPL assessment practices, it is necessary to submit the RPL assessment records to the same process of self-auditing and validation as all other assessment procedures.

With respect to RPL, it is important that assessment conducted as part of RPL is validated alongside samples of regular assessment processes, to ensure consistency and parity of assessment across all instances of assessment, whether undertaken at the end of a course of training, or as a result of RPL application.

These validation processes should aim to ensure the transparency, accountability and consistency of RPL procedures in terms of the provision of information, the preparation and assessment of candidates, and the delivery of assessment outcomes, and their parity with regular assessment procedures in terms of confidence and rigour.

**Continuous Improvement**

At least annually, the Training Manager and any trainers who have been involved in  applications for recognition of prior learning in the semester will meet to review the  records of RPL granted. They will review the applications made and the level of RPL  granted to applicants and ensure that fair and consistent levels of RPL have been  granted. They will also ensure validation alongside samples of regular assessment processes, to ensure consistency and parity of assessment across all instances of  assessment, whether undertaken at the end of a course of training, or as a result of RPL  application.

A record of the review (and its outcomes) will be completed by the Training Manager  and, where improvements to the RPL application process are identified, these will be  implemented with immediate effect. The record of the review and implementation of  improvements will be maintained by the Training Manager in a file in their office.

**Applicant to complete Name and Student ID and section (A) OR Section (B)**

| Name: | Student ID: |
|---|---|
| **SECTION A: IF YOU ARE APPLYING FOR RPL/COURSE CREDIT IN THE WHOLE QUALIFICATION** | |
| **Qualification code e.g. BSB50207** | **Qualification title e.g. Diploma of Business** |

| SECTION B: IF YOU ARE APPLYING FOR RPL/COURSE CREDIT IN A FULL/PARTIAL UNIT TOWARDS A QUALIFICATION | |
|---|---|
| UNIT CODE e.g. FNSI6CGEN301B | *UNIT TITLE e.g.* Communicate in the Work Place |
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|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
| **Student  signature:** | **Date:** |

Please send all completed forms and supporting information / evidence to:  Manager, Student Administration, WAIFS, 2 Onslow Place, Joondalup, WA 6027 or  email:  admissions@waifs.wa.edu.au

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***(To be completed by WAIFS' Training Manager/ Trainer)***

| Name of Student | Student ID |
|---|---|
| Qualification Code | Qualification Title |
| Unit Code | Unit Title |

Full Credit ☐    Partial Credit ☐    No Credit ☐

If partial credit, list which elements/competencies/skills etc are to be granted course credit:

_____
_____
_____
_____
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_____
_____
_____
_____

Reason for Amount of Course Credit Granted:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

| | |
|---|---|
| Training Manager/Trainer: | Date |

I agree with the amount of course credit granted:

| | |
|---|---|
| Student's signature: | Date: |

I DISAGREE with the amount of course credit granted and have been provided with information on the WAIFS Complaints and Appeals Policy:

| | |
|---|---|
| Student's  signature: | Date: |

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