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 money because you will not have to buy other learning material

- complete your qualification in a shorter time

- advance to a higher level qualification in a shorter time if desired.

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**. These units are grouped together to form a specific industry qualification.

Each unit of competency is divided into elements (a set of activities that lead to an overall achievement or demonstration of competence). Each of these elements is further broken down into a set of performance criteria which give a more detailed description of the skills and knowledge you need to be able to demonstrate.

Matching your evidence against each of the elements/performance criteria will help you to reach your qualification more quickly.

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.

    Bring a copy of 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, e.g. forklift, chainsaw
    •   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.

    Is your employer happy to support your aim to become qualified?

    Would you feel comfortable if the Assessor contacted your current workplace or previous workplace/s to validate your skills and spoke to your supervisor/s or employer/s?

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 confidentially issues – see below) or any other relevant documents.

Confidentiality issues

It is important that sensitive information is not included as part of your Supporting Documentation (as identified in Section 6 and any other documentation you wish to use as evidence). You may need authorisation from your supervisor to use some of your evidence, so it is always best to check the privacy and confidentiality policies of the organisation. Client names should be deleted and financial figures or other personal details should be blacked out and made unidentifiable.