

## Frequently Asked Questions about recognition of prior learning (RPL)

### 1. How can a registered training organisation (RTO) efficiently manage recognition of prior learning (RPL) candidates?

In general, client services staff or the RPL coordinator facilitates the recognition processes in RTOs and is often the first point of contact for the candidate. Their role may include assisting the candidate with the RTO's processes and organising the interview/assessment with the assessor. The assessor will conduct the interview/competency conversation, practical observations and make all assessment decisions. A thorough pre-assessment will make the process more efficient.

### 2. Can I RPL someone through the whole qualification?

Yes. RPL is a valid form of assessment and a candidate can receive RPL for an entire qualification if the assessor believes they are competent in all the units required under the packaging rules. The RPL assessment should be valid, reliable, flexible and fair, just like other forms of assessment. Where the candidate appears to have the full set of skills to RPL through an entire qualification, it may not be appropriate to enrol the candidate as an apprentice or trainee. Alternative funding arrangements should be considered.

### 3. What happens between the time the assessor receives the candidate's application and the competency conversation takes place?

On receiving the candidate's application, the assessor should begin the assessment process by analysing the application, particularly the work history, and any additional documentation against the units of competency/qualification applied for in order to identify where the candidate may have strengths and weaknesses.



This allows the assessor to plan the best approach to gathering evidence through questioning, practical tasks and observations, and to prepare the questions for the competency conversation.

#### 4. Are there resources to assist with RPL assessment?

Yes. RPL Assessor Kits are designed to facilitate ease of note taking around these conversations. Over 80 different qualifications have a RPL Assessor Kit available, and these can be accessed free of charge at

<http://www.vetpd.qld.gov.au/rpl>

#### 5. What are competency conversations? What skills are needed?

A competency conversation is a structured conversation conducted around key questions that are related to the units of competency. These key questions (e.g. Section C of the RPL Assessor Kits) are designed to allow the candidate to discuss examples of their skills and knowledge as they have practised them in their work environment. Competency conversations are very different from oral exams as the assessor can be flexible in guiding the conversation to areas of the candidate's experience that will shed the most light on relevant skills and knowledge. The assessor should not use questions simply as a form of test or exam.

Some of the skills required by the assessor to conduct a competency conversation are:

- a thorough knowledge of the units of competency as practised in the current work environment
- experience in assessing against those units
- the ability to communicate effectively with a range of candidates
- the ability to empathise with diverse clients.





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**6. How should an assessor interpret Australian Quality Framework (AQF) levels when judging responses to questions?**

The RPL Assessor Kits are developed at the appropriate qualification level. All training package qualifications have been assigned an AQF level according to the average level of the AQF criteria for the job role in that particular industry, hence the responses should demonstrate evidence functioning at those AQF levels. The detail within the individual units provides the standard to which the particular unit must be assessed with respect to the various AQF criteria.

For further information refer to:

*Australian Qualifications Implementation Handbook*  
[www.aqf.edu.au/implem.htm](http://www.aqf.edu.au/implem.htm)

**7. How many questions need correct answers to show someone is competent?**

The questions in the RPL Assessor Kit are there as a guide for the assessor. There is no predetermined number of correct answers since the candidate may neglect to mention in their answer something that they always cover in practice. It is the responsibility of the assessor to bring out any missing information through further probing. The purpose is to discover whether the candidate has covered the key points listed in the kit under each unit of competence so that the assessor can be confident the candidate has the appropriate vocational skills and knowledge. The assessor should not expect more from the candidate than they would expect from questioning a person who had successfully completed the qualification through a non-RPL pathway.







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**11. How do we include third party verification?**

The candidate’s application form (e.g. Section B of the RPL Assessor Kit) requires the candidate to nominate referees. These can be used for third party verification. The kit contains a form for referees to confirm the candidate’s skills and experience (see Section F of the RPL Assessor Kit).

If the assessor believes they need further verification for whatever reason, they may continue to collect evidence until they have gained sufficient evidence to make a judgement.

**12. What is the best way to record professional judgements?**

The RPL Assessor Kit contains opportunities for the assessor to record the reasons for their professional judgements. These can be found in the comments section on the question recording sheets (see Section C of the RPL Assessor Kit) for each unit of competency, in the practical observation checklists (see Section D of the RPL Assessor Kit) and in your RTO’s assessment record forms. In the space provided in the recording sheets, assessors should note down key information that they have gained during the assessment that has helped them to make their assessment decision.

**13. Should the type of evidence collected be included on an assessment summary?**

Many RTOs use assessment summaries to show at a glance the types of evidence used in assessment. Check your own RTO’s processes.

**14. Do all documents need to be certified?**

Check your own RTO’s quality processes when making decisions about certification of documents.





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**15. Why do professional assessors need to record assessment evidence?**

There are many reasons why assessment evidence must be recorded. These are:

- to enable assessors to conduct moderation
- to respond to a candidate appeal regarding an assessment
- to provide an information trail in case of future litigation
- to allow auditors to verify the RTO is conforming to the AQTF and the training package or accredited course requirements
- as a quality process to maintain stakeholder confidence in the overall VET system.

**16. What result does a candidate receive if he/she is deemed not yet competent in an RPL assessment?**

The candidate would receive **Recognition of Prior Learning – not granted** (52 AVETMISS) (in the TAFE system the code for this is an “M” result).

An **RPL - not granted** result for an RPL assessment is recorded when a reasonable RPL assessment process has been followed, but the responses/evidence provided by the individual are insufficient to deem that individual competent in those particular units.

**17. Can I award RPL or credit transfer for part of a unit?**

No, only whole units can be given results. However, you can give an RPL result for a **combination** of credit transfer documentation and RPL assessment that fully covers a unit. Also candidates who proceed on to training in units in which they failed to gain full recognition can have the training and assessment within those units accelerated by taking into account what they have already demonstrated.





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**18. How much of a unit does a candidate need to be competent in?**

To be competent, the candidate needs to satisfy the requirements of the unit. You have to make a judgement that they do or do not satisfy the requirements. If questioning and observation reveal gaps in knowledge and skills you have the situation in 17 above. If you do not find gaps **and your assessment plan covers all the key points** you might reasonably judge that the candidate satisfies the requirements. Remember that candidates are presenting evidence favourable to their own cause; you have to test this evidence and examine the areas they have left obscure.

