



FACT SHEET FOR STUDENTS

Recognition of prior learning – frequently asked questions

1. What is recognition of prior learning?

RPL is a way to use your existing skills and knowledge to get a formal qualification. Previously, the term was skills recognition.

It involves getting your current experience and knowledge assessed and taking into account other qualifications you may already have. It means you don't have to waste time learning things you already know how to do.

2. Does my registered training organisation have to offer RPL?

Yes. It is a requirement under the *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015*.

3. Can anyone apply for RPL?

Yes. Anyone can apply for RPL.

4. I have no qualifications from my industry but I have skills, knowledge and experience gained from working in that industry. What can I do to have these skills recognised?

The RPL process takes into account all relevant skills, knowledge and experience that you have.

Through the RPL process, you may be able to gain a complete qualification or, if you have gaps in your knowledge, parts of a qualification. If you need to, you can complete the rest of the qualification through training.

5. Why would I bother with RPL?

RPL is generally faster than completing a qualification from scratch and provides you with the opportunity to get:

- entry into a different career or job;
- entry to or credit in another course; and
- satisfaction from having your skills formally recognised.

The qualification you get is the same that you would get if you completed a full training qualification but with the added bonus that you won't spend time in the classroom going over things you already know, making it faster.

6. Does RPL have the same requirements as other assessments?

Yes. The RPL assessment process is as rigorous as any other assessment. However, the type of evidence that you need to provide may be different from normal class assessments.

Importantly though, the RPL process is flexible. You and your RTO assessor will discuss and determine the evidence you can provide.

7. What will RPL cost?

- **Australian citizens/residents**

Check with your preferred RTO what fees will apply. If you need to find an RTO, a list of RTOs contracted by the Department of Training and Workforce Development can be found at www.futureskillswa.wa.gov.au.

- **Non-Australian citizens/residents**

If you are not an Australian citizen or resident but would like to discuss having your skills and knowledge recognised contact the Career Centre T: 13 23 98.

8. How long will it take?

This will depend on how much RPL you are applying for. Your RTO assessor will be able to advise how much time it is likely to take you to complete your RPL process.

9. Is it easier just to enrol in the subjects?

Going through RPL can save you time and effort. It will also mean you avoid spending time in classroom going over things you already know.

If you do have gaps in your skills and need to attend classes, you will have to pay all the normal fees for those units.

10. How difficult is it for me to apply for RPL?

If you decide RPL is right for you, applying for RPL and going through the assessment process should be straightforward.

The RTO or Career Centre will be able to assist you with the RPL process.

11. What is involved in the assessment process?

Once you and your assessor agree that RPL is suitable for you, you will be required to gather evidence which proves your competence. You may also be required to:

- answer questions about your work experience in an interview;
- demonstrate your skills and knowledge by completing practical tasks or showing your assessor how you would complete a task; and
- provide supporting evidence such as a résumé, job description, reports from employers/supervisors.

This evidence must confirm that you have shown competence over a period of time and can work under different conditions.

12. If I need help at any time during the process, what can I do?

Your RTO assessor is there to help you. Contact your assessor at any time if you are not sure what to do or if you need help to gather evidence.

13. Is study I completed many years ago acceptable as evidence for RPL?

Yes, but you will need to show how you have applied and maintained the skills and knowledge.

14. What if I can't find my old qualifications?

Contact the organisation where you completed your studies as they may be able to provide you with a copy of your qualification.

If you cannot get a copy of your qualification, you can still go through a RPL process. However, you will need to show your competence in some other way.

15. Can I just show the assessor my skills rather than have to dig out old qualifications?

Yes. You can demonstrate your skills and knowledge without having to present your qualifications.

16. It's hard for me to get supporting evidence as I don't want my employer to know I am applying for RPL. Can I still apply?

Yes. Although assessors usually use supporting evidence from your current or past employers or supervisors, there is another way. If you cannot provide this supporting evidence through your employer, your assessor may ask you to complete several practical tasks to demonstrate your competency.

17. What if I enrol in a class and then realise that I already know the work – can I use the RPL process rather than continue that class?

Yes. If this happens to you, talk to the class trainer immediately. If you do this very early in your training program, your enrolment can be converted to RPL.

18. What can I do if I am not happy with the result of my RPL application?

If you are not happy with the outcome of your RPL application, you should discuss this with your RTO.

19. If my RPL is unsuccessful, will I have to pay if I enrol in the class?

Yes. Your RPL is the same as any enrolment. If you are unsuccessful and want to enrol in a class, you will need to pay.

20. I am in Australia on a 457 visa. Can I apply for RPL or training here?

If you are a primary holder of a 457 visa you can apply for RPL and training but the cost will be calculated on a commercial basis. Some occupations may be available to be assessed through the skills assessment program outlined in Question 21 below. You are not eligible for apprenticeship or traineeship training under a training contract.

If you are a secondary holder (e.g. spouse, partner, dependent) of a 457 visa, you can apply for government subsidised RPL and training.

21. I want to migrate to Australia. What can I do to have my skills and knowledge recognised?

Trades Recognition Australia approved RTOs assess a range of trade occupations for overseas skilled people who intend to migrate to Australia. TRA also offers assessments in a number of metal and electrical trades through their Trades Recognition Services program for Australian residents and citizens who have gained skills overseas.

If you plan to migrate to Australia, you may need to have your skills assessed by the relevant Australian assessing authority before you lodge your application with the Department of Immigration and Border Protection.

There are several TRA approved RTOs that assess trade occupations for migration purposes. If your skills assessment is successful you will be issued with a successful outcome letter and an Australian qualification (for non-licensed trades) or an Offshore Technical Skills Record (for licensed trades).

More information on TRA's programs and a list of TRA approved RTOs can be found at www.tradesrecognitionaustralia.gov.au.

For further information about skills assessments contact the Department of Training and Workforce Development by email skillsassessments@dtwd.wa.gov.au or telephone (08) 9224 6540.