



Fact Sheet for Students – Recognition of Prior Learning

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Don't risk your qualifications being cancelled by the Australian Skills Quality Authority

Why you need to be informed about Recognition of Prior Learning

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a legitimate part of the vocational education and training (VET) sector and the Australian education system.

Performed well, RPL recognises skills built from prior learning experience – including skills and knowledge obtained through formal and informal learning – and provides a robust framework to ensure people can have their skills recognised. Under RPL individual competency-based assessment must be undertaken by qualified assessors and can identify training needed to fill gaps in your knowledge and skills to meet the requirements specified in a training product.

As the National VET Regulator, the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) has ongoing concerns about the inadequate RPL practices of some registered training organisations (RTOs) who exploit vulnerable students and compromise the integrity of qualifications.

It's ASQA's role to ensure quality education and training is provided so that students, industry, government and the community have confidence in the integrity of qualifications issued by training providers.

If your RTO does not ensure you have successfully satisfied all requirements of the course you're undertaking prior to issuing a VET certification, your qualification may be at risk of being cancelled by ASQA.

For more information about ASQA's program of work targeting inadequate or fraudulent RPL practices, see our website about [recent regulatory actions](#).

What does quality RPL practice look like?

An appropriate RPL process involves detailed consideration of your individual experience and circumstances, including as it relates to language, literacy and numeracy, and requires comprehensive assessment and mapping processes. Through this process you should expect significant engagement with your chosen RTO and should expect them to demonstrate how they have undertaken that assessment and mapping, as well as identified any gaps. Below is a case study of what an appropriate process might look like:

Case study

Joe has lots of experience working in plumbing and picked up skills from previous study. He approaches an RTO about find out about RPL and gaining a Certificate III in Plumbing. The RTO arranges an initial consultation to explain the RPL process to Joe and discuss his prior experience and study. Joe applies to have his previous formal and informal skills assessed, and the provider helps him put together a portfolio of evidence. Joe undertakes a self-assessment, an interview with the RTO, and a skills assessment in a simulated workplace environment to demonstrate his practical skills and knowledge. The RTO then maps all 3 of these against the requirements for a Certificate III in Plumbing and provides him with an assessment which identifies the need for some further study. Joe enrolls with the RTO for some training to address the gaps in his skills and experience. When completed, the RTO awards him with a Certificate III, including a statement to demonstrate how his skills have been assessed.

Be alert to unethical and misleading marketing of RPL

Unethical and misleading marketing of RPL can be used to lure students into enrolling with a non-genuine RTO through the promise of fast-tracked qualifications, often without the need for any training or assessment.

You should be careful when you see marketing from RTOs, brokers and agents that includes phrases such as 'no classes to attend', 'no study or exams required', 'no time off work', 'receive your qualification in 7 days', '100% guarantee of a successful qualification' and 'fast tracked pathway to skilled migration'.

Inadequate assessment practices and business models that are cutting corners in issuing RPL puts you and others in the workplace at risk and can adversely impact community safety.

You should also be aware of marketing and sales tactics that promote an easier path to qualification by outsourcing RPL assessments to unregulated third parties.

RTOs are required to inform you about any third-party arrangements they are using, including who is providing training and assessment, and who is responsible for issuing qualifications.

If you have concerns about the quality of RPL practices of your provider

If you have concerns about your provider's RPL practices, ASQA encourages you to call the VET tip-off line (1300 644 844 within Australia, + 61 2 5933 2022 from outside Australia) or report your concerns using the [ASQA Portal](#).

The VET tip-off line and ASQA Portal provide a safe and confidential avenue for current and former students, staff and other whistleblowers to report alleged illegal and serious non-compliant activity. Tip-offs can be made anonymously.