Australian Government
Australian Skills Quality Authority

ASQA

Practice Guide

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Credit Transfer Practice Guide

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Standard 1.6: VET students with prior skills, knowledge and competencies are supported to seek recognition of prior learning to progress through the relevant training product

Performance indicators:

An ***NVR registered training organisation*** demonstrates:

a. VET students are offered opportunities to seek ***recognition of prior learning*** and are made aware of the organisation's policies for seeking recognition of prior learning;

b. decisions relating to recognition of prior learning are based on evidence of prior skills, learning and experience, and are undertaken in accordance with the organisation's ***assessment system***; and

c. decisions relating to recognition of prior learning are documented and decided in a way that is fair, transparent, consistent amongst VET students, and maintains the integrity of the training product.

Example activities and considerations for compliance

- You can demonstrate how your ***recognition of prior learning*** (RPL) policies, processes and tools are designed and applied with the same rigour as your assessment system, including that they:
  - are consistent with, and maintain the integrity of, the ***training product*** requirements
  - ensure currency of evidence provided by the ***VET student***
  - meet the requirements of the principles of assessment and rules of evidence (Standard 1.4), including where artificial intelligence (AI)-generated evidence is used
  - result in transparent, defensible and documented decisions.
- You can demonstrate how you make students aware of:

    - their right to have their prior learning recognised (where it is not prevented by any ***industry regulator*** or licensing requirements), and
    - your organisation's RPL policy and process.
- You can demonstrate how your RPL approach accommodates the variety of experiences and learning pathways that students present.
- You can demonstrate how students are made aware of the role any ***third party*** will play in their RPL assessment.
- You can demonstrate how you ensure that the ***assessor*** responsible for assessing the RPL evidence, including those engaged through third parties, meet the requirements of Standards 3.2 and 3.3.
- Your policies, systems and processes ensure that your staff understand that granting RPL where the student does not meet the requirements of the training product may have serious consequences for the VET student, and for public safety, industry confidence and the reputation of the VET sector.
- You can demonstrate how you validate and assure your RPL practices and processes to be confident that decisions are being made in accordance with the Standards, and where third parties conduct RPL on your RTO's behalf, you can demonstrate how you monitor and validate the quality of their RPL practices with the same level of rigour.
- Where assessment of a VET student's RPL evidence identifies gaps, you can demonstrate how you work with them in relation to the amount of gap training required, how that training will be delivered and any costs associated with it.

Known risks to quality outcomes

- Using inadequate assessment practices or business models that cut corners in issuing RPL which can lead to persons without the expected competencies entering critical roles, including in industries with mandatory qualifications such as aged care, disability services and early childhood education and care.
- Promoting RPL as an easy, quick or guaranteed path to qualifications.
- Using RPL systems that do not apply the same rigour as the organisation's assessment system, including not upholding assessment record retention requirements.
- Making inadequate inquiries with students seeking RPL, or agents seeking RPL on their behalf – for example, not being wary of non-genuine students that may be seeking RPL as a vehicle to facilitate other objectives.
- Failing to verify that RPL evidence submitted by students is authentic, including where AI tools have been used to create evidence of skills and knowledge (e.g. resumes, portfolios or summaries)
- Outsourcing RPL assessments to unregulated third parties that do not understand or apply the Standards to their practices – for example, using third parties that do not engage properly qualified or trained ***assessors***.
- Failing to ensure RPL assessment practices are robust enough to meet the applicable threshold for high-risk work licencing, where applicable.
- Failing to ensure that RPL evidence of overseas qualifications or competencies has been mapped to Australian legislative and regulatory requirements – for example Australian Work Health and Safety legislation or other industry-specific laws.

- Failing to robustly assess or test RPL evidence for currency against training package requirements, or against the rules of evidence.
- Automatically granting RPL for students that hold a higher Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) level qualification in the same industry.
- Having insufficient systems for identifying and addressing a student's RPL gaps.

Standard 1.7: VET students who have completed an equivalent training product are supported to obtain a credit transfer.

Performance indicators

An ***NVR registered training organisation*** demonstrates:

a. VET students are offered opportunities to seek credit transfer and are made aware of the organisation's policies for seeking ***credit transfer***;

b. decisions on credit transfer are based on evidence of prior completion of an equivalent training product demonstrated by AQF certification documentation or an authenticated VET transcript (unless prevented by licensing or regulatory requirements of the training product); and

c. decisions relating to credit transfer are documented and decided in a way that is fair, transparent, consistent amongst VET students, and maintains the integrity of the training product.

Example activities and considerations for compliance

- Your policies and processes clearly outline that you provide students with a copy of your organisation's policy for seeking credit transfer, including when and how ***credit transfer*** will be administered.
- You can show that your organisation's credit transfer policy includes clear rules on the use of AI tools in verifying AQF documentation or transcripts, and that human oversight is maintained for all decisions.
- You can demonstrate that you authenticate ***AQF certification documentation*** provided by students (including ***authenticated VET transcripts***) in support of credit transfer requests by directly accessing the USI transcript service, contacting the issuing organisation and checking the National Register to verify authenticity.
- You ensure that any AI tool used for document verification complies with applicable privacy, data protection and governance requirements.
- You can demonstrate that when considering requests for credit transfer, equivalence[1] is clearly evidenced before granting credit.
- You can demonstrate that where you do not grant credit transfer because the unit of competency is not deemed equivalent, you provide students with an appropriate alternative pathway, such as RPL.

[1] *Equivalence may be determined by the following:*

- *a unit of competency with the current unit code and title*

- *a superseded unit of competency that the training package developer has determined to be equivalent (as published on the National Register).*
    - Note: although not required, you may conduct a mapping analysis for units that have been 'superseded equivalent' twice or more to assure yourself that the assessment of competence is still relevant. If you find there is a gap in either the training or the assessment, you may refuse the credit transfer.

Known risks to quality outcomes

- Failing to make your credit transfer policy and process available to students prior to enrolment.
- Failing to explain to students your rationale if you decide not to grant credit transfer and the available options to the student such as RPL or gap training.
- Becoming overly reliant on AI tools to verify documentation.
- Failing to check the authenticity of the student's original AQF certification before granting credit transfer.
- Having inadequate processes in place to identify and mitigate risks associated with the use of AI tools for verification purposes – for example, failing to detect fraudulent documents or incorrectly flagging legitimate documents due to biased or incomplete training data that AI tools are unable to discern.
- Issuing a VET qualification or VET statement of attainment via credit transfer based on training wholly completed through RPL or credit transfer at a different RTO.
- Failing to consider the contextual elements (e.g. relevant licensed or regulated outcomes) when assessing a student's evidence for credit transfer.

Self-assurance questions

1. How do you ensure students know about and understand when RPL or credit transfer is a valid option for them?
2. How are you testing the authenticity of evidence supplied by students seeking RPL or credit transfer?
3. Have you checked that any AI tool used for document verification complies with privacy laws and protects student data?
4. Have you applied the same approach to AI-assisted verification across all students to ensure fairness and transparency?
5. How do you ensure that your RPL and credit transfer policies and processes are consistently and rigorously applied?
6. How are you ensuring that staff can recognise when a request for credit transfer becomes a request for RPL?
7. What systems and processes do you have in place to determine RPL and credit transfer, including equivalency?
8. What training do you provide to your trainers and assessors, including third parties, to assist them in managing expectations of students seeking 'easy' RPL or credit transfer?

Case study

Supporting students to access appropriate RPL

NNN Training Pty Ltd (NNN) is approached by an individual seeking Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for the *HLT33115 Certificate III in Health Services Assistance*.

At the initial enquiry stage, NNN gives the prospective student clear information about RPL, including its policies, processes and evidence requirements. During a pre-enrolment interview, a qualified assessor explains how RPL works and how they determine whether it is a suitable pathway for a student.

The student then applies for RPL and is guided by the assessor to compile a portfolio of evidence, including workplace documents, third-party reports, and authenticated records of prior study. The RPL assessment is conducted in accordance with the provider's assessment system and uses multiple methods: a self-assessment, competency conversation, portfolio review, and a practical skills assessment in a simulated workplace environment. These methods ensure decisions are based on sufficient, valid, authentic and current evidence of skills, knowledge and experience.

Assessment outcomes are then mapped against the requirements of the training product and where gaps are identified, these are clearly explained to the student along with suggested gap training that will address the identified shortfalls. Following successful completion of the gap training and reassessment, competency is confirmed. NNN issues the qualification along with documentation that clearly outlines how competency was achieved through RPL and supplementary training.

Frequently asked questions

1. **Where a student holds certification for a unit/s of competency from one training package e.g. TLI, am I able to provide Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) that student for a unit in an alternate training package e.g. RII where the unit criteria are equivalent?**

   RPL assesses the competency/competencies of an individual that may have been acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning to determine the extent to which that individual meets the requirements specified in the training package or VET accredited course. Where a student holds a similar unit of competency from another training package, the provider can recognise the relevant skills and competencies obtained to form part of the RPL evidence for another training product. Where there are gaps in a person's knowledge and skills, the student will be required to undertake gap training and assessment to meet the requirements specified in a training product.

2. **Can a provider decide not to offer Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) at all due to the nature of the course?**

   The 2025 Standards require that 'VET students are offered opportunities to seek recognition of prior learning'. If a student can demonstrate skills, learning and experience relevant to a training product (to the level required) the provider should advise the student on how they can seek to have such skills, learning and experience recognised. However, it is recognised that enabling RPL might not be appropriate or practical in all circumstances. For example, it may not be an efficient use of the student's time or provider resources to undertake assessment of prior competencies for short, low-cost courses. If this is the case, providers must demonstrate how they have formed this view and how this is transparently communicated to students prior to their enrolment.

3. **What are the expectations for RPL resources and assessment tools where RPL is rarely or never used? For example, for school-based RTOs with a large scope of registration, is there an expectation that a separate RPL kit be developed, maintained and updated for every unit of competency, or can these resources be developed if an RPL application is received?**

   There is no expectation that a provider must maintain a separate, fully developed RPL kit for every unit on scope where RPL is rarely or never used. However, providers must have a process in place to ensure that, if an RPL application is received, they can conduct an assessment that meets the requirements of the training product and supports valid, sufficient, authentic and current evidence.

4. **How will ASQA view Credit Transfer opportunities? Do students need to hold the previous equivalent version of a unit, or can a provider accept older versions of a unit if there is a history of equivalence on training.gov.au?**

   When a student presents a superseded equivalent unit of competency for credit transfer for the purpose of reducing the amount of learning required to achieve a qualification or skill set, as the training package has determined the unit of competency to be superseded equivalent, a provider can grant credit for that unit without needing to map unit outcomes. Although not required, providers may take a best practice approach and conduct mapping analysis, especially for those units that have been superseded twice or more despite still being deemed equivalent, to assure themselves the assessment of competence is still relevant.

5. **Can credit transfer be granted where a student completed a unit in a Certificate III and then enrols in a Diploma, but contextualisation may mean they lack the underpinning knowledge or skills needed for the higher qualification?**

   If the unit has been successfully completed and is eligible for credit transfer, the provider should generally grant it. Credit transfer recognises prior achievement and does not involve reassessing competency.

   If the provider has concerns about a student's readiness for the Diploma, these should be addressed through additional training, foundation support or contextualised learning activities, rather than by refusing a valid credit transfer. Where the unit is equivalent and the student provides appropriate evidence of completion, the achievement should be recognised and any learning gaps addressed through support and training.

6. **Can I refuse a Credit Transfer?**

   If a student provides legitimate AQF certification documentation and meets all requirements for a credit transfer, you are required to issue a credit transfer for the unit of competency the student has already completed, except where:
   - a student is unable to provide appropriate or adequate evidence that can be authenticated, or
   - there are licensing restrictions in place for the particular training product, or
   - a student is seeking to receive a full qualification through credit transfer only, or
   - a student’s qualification was cancelled.

7. **Can we refuse Credit Transfer if the units presented meet the training product’s packaging rules but not the provider’s selected elective units?**

   No. If a student can demonstrate they have competencies to meet the training product packaging rules this should be recognised. This will ensure students do not spend unnecessary time, nor accumulate unnecessary expense whilst undertaking VET.

8. **Is it the provider's responsibility to determine the genuineness of a certificate? Can a certificate be legitimate if it does not have an RTO code on it?**

   It is the provider's responsibility to determine if AQF certification documentation provided to them for the purposes of Credit Transfer is authentic. Before providing credit based on a qualification, statement of attainment or record of results, providers can authenticate the information by directly accessing the USI transcript online or by contacting the organisation that issued the document to confirm the content is valid. If the AQF certification documentation does not have an RTO code on it, it may not be legitimate, and if you are unable to determine its authenticity then you are not required to provide credit to the student.

9. **When we receive a statement of attainment from a student from an RTO that has been closed by ASQA, is there a requirement to check the skills and knowledge of the student for the units that have been marked as competent?**

   This depends on why the provider's registration ended. If the provider ceased operating for financial viability reasons, the skills and competencies of students may well be to the expected level. However, if ASQA cancelled a provider's registration due to non-compliance with assessment standards, there may well be concerns as to the level of competency achieved. If ASQA has cancelled a student/former student's qualification and/or statement of attainment following regulatory activity with a provider, the student should not receive a credit transfer for the relevant training product. If you are unaware of the reason for the provider's registration ceasing, you should confirm the student has the required skills and competency via an RPL process rather than credit transfer.