

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is consistent with the concept of competency-based training (CBT) in that the emphasis is upon the learner and their current knowledge and skill/ competencies, and not on how the learning took place. Their competencies may have been achieved through experience in the workplace, in social or everyday activities, or through informal or formal training. RPL provides recognition for people's knowledge and skills and provides the opportunity and encouragement to enter or re-enter the vocational education and training system.

RPL also provides an opportunity for Adelaide Training and Employment Centre Inc. (ATEC) to increase access and participation in vocational education and training, and the provision of time and cost efficient learning delivery to the South Australian public and industry.

2. BACKGROUND

The Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) places an imperative on all registered training providers to demonstrate commitment to the RPL of individuals through establishing and maintaining:

- assessment systems which ensure the collection of evidence to recognise prior learning for achievement of unit outcomes or competence;
- appropriate processes and systems for the RPL.

AQTF also demands the inclusion of RPL provisions in course design as one of the requirements for course accreditation.

RPL also reflects good education practice through the recognition of the learning needs of individuals based upon their **current** knowledge and skills.

3. POLICY

ATEC is committed to giving formal recognition for prior learning through assessment processes and appropriate reporting and certification of the outcomes as a normal and integrated part of all competency-based accredited or recognised training programs.

ATEC will implement systems and processes to assess and recognise an individual's skills and knowledge gained through previous training and education, work and life experience.

4. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ATEC RPL SYSTEM

The following processes and systems characterise RPL for ATEC:

- recognising learner's current knowledge and skills by assessing evidence of learning, life and work experiences;
- a process to be implemented in all competency-based courses;
- an integrated component of competency-based course delivery and assessment;
- Credit Transfer will be effected for all nationally accredited training that has been resulted after ATEC has validated that the student is capable of performing the skills in a safe and competent manner to workplace standards in the workplace.

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- a cost and time efficient assessment process for both client and ATEC which in determining assessment processes, establishes a connection between the level of risk and the extent of recognition sought;
- a fair and equitable process consistent with the principles of equal opportunity and social justice;
- a supported process in all stages of course delivery and administration systems, including the promotion and provision of course information and counselling;
- a quality process which maintains course statements through review and monitoring;
- using recording and reporting processes consistent with other competency-based assessment procedures.

5. DEFINITIONS

As described by the Australian Quality Training Framework 2007(AQTF):

RPL is an assessment process that assesses the individual's non-formal and informal learning to determine the extent to which that individual has achieved the required learning outcomes, competency outcomes, or standards for entry to, and/or partial or total completion of a qualification.

RPL recognises this prior knowledge and experience and measures it against the course in which students are enrolled. A student possessing some of the skills and/or knowledge taught in the course may not need to complete all of its units.

6. SCOPE**6.1 Competency-based courses**

This policy covers the provision of all RPL services offered by ATEC as an integrated component of all competency-based accredited award courses or recognised training programs.

The policy covers the processes which lead to the formal recognition of an individual's knowledge, skills/competence achieved through previous training and education, work and life experiences - except where formal automatic credit transfer arrangements exist for the formal education and training component (see section 6.3)

Where curriculum is not in competency-based format or competency standards do not exist, RPL services will not be expected to be delivered. In these cases the necessary assessment criteria, from which assessment of prior learning and experiences can be reliably determined, will not be documented.

6.2 Fee for service activities

The policy equally applies to services provided in response to enterprise or industry needs and to a fee for service activity for a corporate body. In providing these services, ATEC will observe the intent and principles of the policy and adapt the procedures to meet the specific requirements and outcomes of the request. (Section 11.2 outlines more detail on charging and contractual arrangements.)

Such requests may be to respond to the following special needs:

Recognition of qualifications and experience gained overseas. An individual may be seeking the right to practise in a regulated occupation or seeking a certification of competency on the basis of their competencies gained overseas through education and

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training and/or work experience. And/or, they may wish to have their present competencies recognised for part or all of a set of competency standards, an accredited course or recognised training program.

Employment related-industrial awards. Individuals may wish to have their present competencies recognised as achievement of part or all of a set of competency standards.

RPL services for employment related purposes will only be delivered where the national competency standards are available.

6.3 Relationship with credit transfer

This policy provides arrangements for recognition when formal automatic credit transfer does not apply. Credit transfer is also defined by ACTRAC as:

“Advanced standing obtained on the basis of prior agreements between institutions or organisations as to the credit value of specific course/programs. It is available automatically to those who have documented evidence of achievements in the relevant courses/programs”.

7. PRINCIPLES

RPL is based on the following five principles which are consistent with the national principles for RPL.

Principle 1-Competence

RPL shall focus on the competencies held as a result of both formal and informal training and experience, not how, when or where the learning occurred.

- The RPL process will be competency based and assess the individual’s knowledge, skills/competence against the competency standards.
- Assessment procedures will provide for the recognition of knowledge, skills/competencies no matter how, where or when they have been acquired and as such, are an integrated part of learning and assessment strategies.
- There are no limits to the amount of recognition that can be given.

Principle 2-Commitment

RPL underpins a system of competency-based training: Training providers must have a demonstrated commitment to recognising the prior learning of adults.

- The recognition of prior learning will focus on the individual and ensure that individuals will not have to spend unnecessary time in gaining formal RPL and experience.
- ATEC will adopt processes for RPL that recognise previous formal and informal education and training, work and life experience.

Principle 3-Access

RPL shall be available to all potential applicants.

- RPL will be accessible to all ATEC clients within the scope of this policy.

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- ATEC will promote RPL processes through marketing and promotional strategies, in all student and course information, and in advice and counselling - especially during enrolment and at all other times.

Principle 4-Fairness

- Every individual may have his or her competencies recognised and be confident that the processes are fair.
- The processes will provide for review and appeal mechanisms.

Principle 5- Support

RPL shall involve the provision of adequate support to potential applicants.

- Personnel involved in the assessment process must be trained to support applicants so that an efficient and effective service is maintained.
- The counselling and support should inform all applicants about the RPL process, help applicants prepare their documentation and help applicants enter appropriate formal education and training.
- Feedback should be provided throughout the assessment process.

8. PROCEDURAL FRAMEWORK

ATEC is committed to the following framework for RPL which has been identified nationally as constituting a framework for best practice. All aspects of this framework will be incorporated into the relevant components of course and program delivery.

8.1 The information stage

Objectives:

- to let people know that RPL services exist;
- to attract applicants;
- to provide sufficient information to help them decide whether or not to seek recognition

This stage begins before selection into a course.

It is expected that ATEC will provide:

- relevant and accurate information regarding RPL processes through promotion and advertising of courses, printed course information (ie handbook, brochures), information sessions and counselling opportunities;
- administrative support staff, information officers and student services officers who are adequately trained to provide information and referrals.

8.2 Initial support and counselling stage

Objectives:

- To assist prospective applicants to clarify their expectations in seeking RPL;
- to consider what they know and can do in relation to the competencies required for a relevant accredited curriculum and recognised training program.

This stage begins before selection into a course.

It is expected that ATEC will provide:

- opportunities for prospective applicants to clarify their expectations with appropriately trained counsellors;
- opportunities for prospective applicants to seek further in-depth support and counselling from appropriately trained lecturers;

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- ready access to unit descriptors containing learning outcomes and performance criteria, and/or competency standards through learning resource centres.

8.3 The application stage

Objectives of this stage are to enable applicants:

- to provide evidence of knowledge and skills/competency in sufficient detail to help the assessor reach an assessment decision;
- to identify how to best prove competency or claim credit;
- to select and organise evidence which will be acceptable and complete, and submit the application.

The application is formally lodged after enrolment into a course.

It is expected that ATEC will provide:

- Ready access to application material and processes which incorporate self-assessment techniques and which are suited to the client groups;
- ready access to appropriately trained lecturers to provide support;
- information regarding actual lodgement of the application and the next stages in the process;
- written acknowledgment of the application.

8.4 The assessment stage

Objective:

- assessor(s) determine, through methods and processes according to the level of risk and the systematic assessment of evidence, whether the candidate has the knowledge, skills/competency as described in the standards or in the unit of learning.

This stage occurs after enrolment.

It is expected that ATEC will provide:

- staff who are appropriately trained in RPL processes;
- opportunities for applicants to negotiate the methods of assessment;
- the opportunity for applicants to access additional learning before assessment;
- opportunities for applicants to discuss their evidence at a meeting with the assessor (if appropriate);
- consistent and valid assessment methods within programs in accordance with the risk management approach (section 9.2) and determined by an appropriate course standards group.

8.5 Post-assessment guidance stage

Objective

- to encourage the applicant to reflect on the RPL procedures and set further learning and development targets;
- to obtain client feedback about the RPL process and ways to improve the service.

It is expected that ATEC will provide:

- post-assessment guidance to applicants that will include, as appropriate:
 - ⇒ notification of the results of their assessment;
 - ⇒ advice about how to set further learning targets;
 - ⇒ a copy of the assessor's report;
 - ⇒ notification of their rights to an appeal and advice on grievance procedures;
 - ⇒ a form designed to gather applicant feedback on the RPL process.

TRN-POL-002**8.6 Reporting and certification stage**

Objectives:

- to award and report on the recognition of competency and/or the positive outcomes of assessment;
- annotation of student academic record, the issuing of a credential or formal notification of the outcomes for the applicant and/or employer.

ATEC will provide applicants with appropriate certification and reporting of academic achievement.

9. Assessment

A range of assessment methods will be used to determine whether a person has achieved standards of competency which have not yet been formally assessed or recognised.

9.1 Definition:

Assessment is the process of collecting evidence and making judgements on the extent of progress towards the performance requirements set out, and at the appropriate point, making the judgement as to whether competency has been achieved.

Assessment will measure the range of knowledge, skills and their application against accredited curriculum outcomes or endorsed national competency standards, or their equivalent.

9.2 A risk management approach

A risk management approach to a rigorous assessment process will be adopted to ensure cost and time effective methods which are appropriate to the level of risk involved are implemented.

This approach is an integrated part of the RPL procedures for assessment. It is founded on the concept that assessment for RPL must be resource and time efficient for the applicant and for ATEC, and establish a connection between the level of risk and the extent of recognition sought. The risk management approach proposes an increasing degree of rigour as the risk of assessment processes increases. Rigour is determined on two levels: the amount and quality of evidence required and the need for additional assessment strategies to review the evidence and make the final assessment decision

9.3 Assessment principles and policies

Assessment of evidence in the RPL process will conform to ATEC and national policies and practices for assessment to ensure valid, reliable, fair and flexible assessment of competence.

Training staff who meet the requirements of the national competency standards for trainers and assessors will be deemed to have the necessary competence to undertake the RPL assessment processes outlined in this policy.

10. Reporting and certification

Within award courses and recognised training programs the same reporting and certification processes will be used to report on the successful outcomes of the RPL process, as for other assessment processes. Reporting will be of competency achieved (CA) and will not include reference to the processes used to assess competency.

11 Charges for RPL in ATEC

TRN-POL-002**11.1 Award courses and recognised training programs**

In principle, any costs to an individual must recognise the investment the applicant has already made to learning. Therefore, in an education setting, RPL should not cost applicants more than if they completed the module of learning - and in fact should be **significantly** less.

11.2 Commercial fee for service activities

Consistent with government and departmental policies and procedures for fee for service activities, an institute may choose to conduct RPL services for a corporate body on a fee for service basis to meet the special needs of industry and/or enterprise. Under these circumstances, the policies and procedures for fee for service will be used to determine fees and charges and other operational requirements.

12 Productivity measures and result codes

RPL will be linked to productivity measures by recording credit hours for successful outcomes.

13. Review and monitoring

RPL processes will be appropriately monitored and evaluated in accordance with ATEC's existing policies and frameworks for maintenance of standards.

14. Appeals

Grievances and Appeals will be handled in accordance with the appropriate ATEC procedure.

Cross References:

[TRN-PRO-DOC-016 Assessment Appeals](#)

[SUP-PRO-DOC-010.1 Client Complaints Resolution](#)

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