

Document Number: PCARPLP

Effective Date: 31/01/20024

Approval Date: 31/01/2024

Revision due: 31/01/2025

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Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) means an assessment process that assesses the competency/s 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 courses.

- *Formal learning* refers to learning that takes place through a structured program of instruction and is linked to the attainment of an AQF qualification or statement of attainment (for example, a certificate, diploma or university degree);
- *Non-formal learning* refers to learning that takes place through a structured program of instruction, but does not lead to the attainment of an AQF qualification or statement of attainment (for example, in-house professional development programs conducted by a business); and
- *Informal learning* refers to learning that results through experience of work-related, social, family, hobby or leisure activities (for example the acquisition of interpersonal skills developed through several years as a sales representative).

RPL assesses this prior learning against the requirements of a qualification, in respect of both entry requirements and outcomes to be achieved. RPL encourages an individual to continue upgrading their skills and knowledge through structured education and training towards formal qualifications and improved employment outcomes. RPL keeps the system of qualifications open to recognition of the value of learning achieved outside the formal system, as part of everyday living in a continuum of learning throughout one's life.

Patrick's College Australia (PCA) is committed to and has implemented an effective skills recognition process in line with the requirements of the *NSW Recognition Framework*:

www.training.nsw.gov.au/forms_documents/skills_recognition/recognition_framework.pdf

In order to recognise prior learning it is necessary to:

- Compare the informal or non-formal learning the individual has achieved against the learning outcomes or performance criteria of the course or qualification for which the student is using as a basis for seeking entry or the award of credit; and
- Determine appropriate evidence to support the claim of prior learning.

The processes used to assess RPL applications may take several (not mutually exclusive) forms, for example:

- Participation in exactly the same or modified versions of the assessment the student would be required to complete as part of the full course;
- Assessment based on a portfolio of evidence;
- Direct observation of demonstration of skill or competence;
- Reflective papers, journals or portfolios that relate past learning to the learning or competency outcomes of the current course or qualification;
- Provision of examples of the student's work drawn from the workplace, social, community or other setting in which the student applies their learning, skill or competence;
- Testimonials of learning, skill or competence; and
- Combinations of any of the above.

PCA ensures that trainers and assessors remain current in their professional development and in their knowledge and understanding of issues related to recognition.

RPL Process

As a component of the student recruitment and enrolment process, PCA implements a robust RPL process to ensure that:

- The uptake of RPL is encouraged and RPL processes are reviewed to streamline the RPL application process;
- Where possible, the student is able to complete the qualification in less time;
- RPL information is provided to students prior to enrolment and prior to commencement of formal training delivery in a course program;
- RPL processes offered provide adequate information, support and opportunities for students to engage in the RPL process;
- RPL decisions are made prior to the commencement of the course, subject or unit for which the RPL is being claimed; and
- RPL assessment processes and procedures meet the same delivery and quality assurance requirements as all other assessment arrangements.

RPL Requirements

To achieve RPL, students must:

- Apply for RPL;
- Provide appropriate RPL evidence (including documents, demonstrations and interviews as may be relevant); and
- Have this evidence assessed as meeting all of the requirements of the entire Unit of Competency.

Where students have gaps, or require additional mentoring and support, RPL is not applicable. In these cases *learning* is occurring, and a 'Competent' result is achieved on completion of assessment.

RPL Applications

It is *mandatory* that students wishing to achieve RPL with PCA complete a *Credit Transfer / RPL Application Form* and provide this form with their evidence submission for assessment. This application form ensures:

- The Application for RPL is recorded effectively;
- The start date for each Unit of Competency is correctly identified; and
- The appropriate declarations of authenticity of prior work are recorded.

Start Dates

The official start date for a Unit of Competency through RPL is determined (by NCVET) as the date that the student submitted their evidence portfolio for assessment. This is the start date that all PCA personnel are to record on the student's training and assessment plan (actual start date section for each unit).

This date is critical for compliance in cases where financial subsidies are being received for the student's course.

The RPL result date is the final date that the student provided all evidence required and was deemed to have achieved the unit 'RPL-Granted' result.

Financial / Regulatory Implications

All PCA personnel must ensure they are aware of RPL implications with regard to financial / regulatory impacts in their region and projects. RPL in some jurisdictions is:

- Fully subsidised;
- Partially subsidised; or
- Not subsidised.

Depending on the region, when students are applying for RPL, it is critical that PCA personnel understand any financial implications that may apply and discuss correct fees and charges with the student concerned.

Student Information

Students can find out more about Recognition of Prior Learning in the *Candidate Guide to Skills Recognition*:
www.training.nsw.gov.au/forms_documents/industry_programs/skillsonline/rpl_candidate_guide.pdf