

Introduction

All nationally recognised qualifications in Australia are based on demonstrating competence against set criteria. The various industries, government and employer/employee representatives endorse the criteria used.

Various assessment procedures are available for people who wish to obtain nationally recognised qualifications but do not believe they need to attend formal training such as face to face, on the job or distance learning. These other assessment procedures are known as Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), Recognition of Current Competency (RCC) and Credit Transfer.

All qualifications, regardless of the assessment procedure chosen, are issued after a person submits evidence and that evidence is assessed against set criteria.

The purpose of this information is to assist you in determining if you may be a candidate for Recognition and also to assist you in compiling a portfolio of evidence for undertaking a Recognition assessment.

What is Recognition?

Recognition is a term that covers Recognition of Prior Learning, Recognition of Current Competency and Skills Recognition. All terms refer to recognition of competencies currently held regardless of how, when or where the learning occurred. Under the Standards for NVR Registered Training Organisation 2015, competencies may be attained in a number of ways.

This includes through any combination of formal or informal training and education, work experience or general life experience. In order to grant recognition of prior learning/current competency the assessor must be confident that the candidate is currently competent against the endorsed industry or enterprise competency standards or outcomes specified in Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) accredited courses.

Why should I use the Recognition process?

Recognition has many potential benefits for candidates. Benefits include:

- Saving time undertaking unnecessary training
- Saving money paying for unnecessary training
- Gaining formal qualifications faster
- Identification of training gaps
- Using job information to assist candidates
- Flexibility – the process can be tailored to the individual
- Support provided by the assessor and the RTO

What does the Recognition process involve?

Recognition is a process which varies and you will find there are differences in how individual Registered Training Organisations (training providers) offer recognition. Typically the process involves some kind of assessment of your existing skills and knowledge to determine the competencies you have. The process begins by first identifying the need for Recognition and then contacting a Registered Training Organisation. The Mid North Coast Community College Recognition process takes the following steps.

1. The prospective candidate contacts the Training & Compliance Manager who will provide the candidate with a Recognition Guide.
2. An interview with the Training & Compliance Manager is arranged to discuss the nature of the evidence required and how it might be obtained, including the costs involved in obtaining Recognition.
3. The candidate decides if they have some or all of the required evidence to prove competency.
4. An RPL Application Form is to be completed and fees paid before proceeding.
5. The candidate identifies what evidence could be used for each criterion to substantiate the claim of competence.
6. An interview may be arranged with the assessor to construct evidence through questioning or observation.
7. The candidate collects all evidence and organises into a portfolio.
8. The candidate submits the portfolio for assessment.
9. The evidence is reviewed and assessed against the performance criteria
10. The assessor makes a decision about competency which is communicated to the candidate.
11. Depending on the outcome of the assessment, a next step plan may be discussed such as 'gap' training, pathways to other qualifications or an action plan for further skill development.

Who will assess my portfolio?

Your assessor will hold at least the same level of qualification that you are seeking RPL for eg: if you are seeking RPL for the Certificate III in Business (Office Administration) then your assessor will also hold that qualification. They will also have current competence in that qualification. Additionally, your assessor will be a qualified Assessor ie: they will hold Statement of Attainment for Assessment from TAE40110.

Sometimes it is not possible for the one assessor to hold all the necessary qualifications. In that instance, team assessors will assess your portfolio. This is where a person holding the industry qualification eg: Cert III in Business (Office Administration) teams with a qualified Assessor to assess your portfolio.

Both methods of assessing are acceptable under the National Assessment Principles as endorsed by State, Territory and Commonwealth Ministers. These Principles are designed to ensure quality of assessments.

What is evidence?

Evidence for recognition is not limited to existing documents you already have. Evidence can take a number of forms and might include any combination of:

- Questioning** – the assessor may give you written questions or interview you and ask questions verbally.
- Observation of practical tasks** – the assessor may observe you performing tasks in the workplace, in a simulated environment, in the classroom or any combination of locations.
- Finished Products** – items you have produced in your work, which could vary from food you have cooked to reports you have written.
- Presentations** – the assessor observing presentations made by you.
- Video and/or audio taped evidence** – showing you completing tasks.
- Third Party Reports** - references or answers given by third parties to questions from the assessor providing examples of your work ability relating to the standards – this can be verbal or on writing.
- Documents** – such as relevant qualifications/transcripts, project plans and reports, minutes of meetings, correspondence, resources developed, performance appraisals.

The assessor will assist you in deciding what types of evidence could be collected.

In assessing your portfolio, your assessor will be guided by what are known as the Rules of Evidence. These four rules are:

- Valid
- Sufficient
- Current
- Authentic

What these rules mean to you is that the evidence you present must be:

- **Valid** – the evidence must address the standard. Evidence that you drove a car from Sydney to Darwin would not establish your competence in “Undertake Routine Vehicle Maintenance”. Your assessor would need evidence of your knowledge and skills in actually performing the routine maintenance.

Please also consider that nationally recognised qualifications are based on workplace requirements. So your evidence should reflect your ability to perform the standards in a workplace or simulated workplace environment. Workplaces require us to not only perform tasks but do a number of tasks (often at once), solve problems, work with others and in teams, use technology and mathematical ideas, communicate with others, organise information and activities and transfer skills from one area to another. Your assessor will also be looking for these things. Therefore, you must consider how you can demonstrate this. The easiest way is to describe what you do, how you do it and then provide evidence of situations where you used the skills/knowledge (see Evidence in the definitions for some examples of evidence you could use).

- **Sufficient** – To establish competence you must provide evidence, that matches each of the criteria, where your competence is demonstrated on more than one occasion. You wouldn't want the Pilot of an aircraft to have shown only once before you got on that they could land a plane! Remember that qualifications are all about working to the required standard in the workplace. Having performed a task just once is not evidence of consistent performance. Hint: submitting evidence of performance on four occasions for one criterion does not balance submitting evidence of performance on one occasion for another criteria!
- **Current** – Is the evidence you are submitting current? If the last time you used a particular skill was twenty years ago, then that wouldn't be current evidence. However, currency of evidence can vary between qualifications. An Industrial Relations Certificate from 1990 is certainly not current but the Certificate and work-based evidence from that time forward could satisfy currency. As a general rule, any industry experience related to the qualification, conducted in the last two years, is considered current.
- **Authentic** – The work you submit must be your own. Please do not submit original qualifications or work samples however you must have a Justice of the Peace certify any copies. Where the evidence you submit demonstrates your input in a team project, please attach a Statutory Declaration from each of the other team members attesting to your claim to the work. For any workplace documents submitted, please ensure firstly you have approval from work to release them and then have a supervisor sign the document as an authentic record of your work. Please note that any work you submit that cannot be identified as authentic will not be included as assessable material.

Definitions

Assessment: Process of collecting evidence and making judgements on whether competency has been achieved.

Candidate: Person seeking assessment.

Competency Standard: Defines the competencies required for effective workplace performance. Standards are expressed in outcome terms and have a standard format including; Units, Elements of Competency and Performance Criteria.

Unit: Describes a particular job or function. Qualifications are made up of one or more Units. Units are worded so that they start with a verb, an action word eg: *Customise* and *maintain* software, *Process* client complaints to ensure the goals of the enterprise are met.

Element: Describes the tasks that make up the particular job or function (Unit). Each Unit has one or more Elements. Elements also start with verbs eg: *Prepare* for training, *Maintain* effective performance of hardware and software, *Clarify* the nature of the complaint.

Performance Criteria: Specify what is to be assessed and the required level of performance. Each Element has one or more Performance Criteria. Eg: In the unit TAADEL301A Provide training through instruction and demonstration of work skills, Element 1 is "Organise instruction and demonstration". Performance criteria 1.3 for that element is, "Learners are notified of the training details." This essentially means you must provide evidence that the learner has received information about the training. Evidence could be an email communication, memo or copy of the training plan that was discussed and given to the learner. This evidence may satisfy more than one performance criteria from the same unit or another unit or element.

Certificate: Qualification issued when all Units of a Competency Standard have been successfully completed.

Statement of Attainment: Qualification issued upon successful completion of one or more units eg: if a person successfully completed four units from a total of eight units required for the full qualification then they would be awarded a Statement of Attainment for the four units.

Evidence: Information gathered which, when matched against the Performance Criteria, provides proof of competency. Evidence can take many forms and be gathered from a number of sources. Evidence can be categorised into three types:

- **Direct: Assessor observations of candidate's performance under real or simulated work conditions, includes documents and other products prepared for the workplace eg: Memos, reports, models, charts.**
 - **Indirect:** Evidence gathered from a third person eg: supervisor report, staff appraisals, customer feedback form, colleague comments.
-
- **Supplementary:** Documented evidence of past and current achievements eg: Certificates, countersigned logbooks, video records of prior performance, answers to written or oral questions asked by an assessor.

Ideally a portfolio of evidence will include all three types of evidence with evidence being taken from a variety of sources.

Case Study

The following is an example of how someone could obtain a Statement of Attainment for the Unit TAEDEL301A – Provide work skill instruction, based on their past work experience.

Amanda left school and started work as a Junior Office Assistant in a small business. As the business expanded new staff were employed in the office and Amanda was tasked with training each new staff member in various office procedures.

In completing this training Amanda trained each person on the job and had also prepared outlines of what was required to be delivered. These outlines (or session plans) could be used over and over again.

Included in Amanda's Job Description was the requirement to train new staff in office procedures. Each annual Staff Appraisal included comments by Amanda's supervisor relating to Amanda's satisfactory training of new staff. A few staff members had also written thank you letters to Amanda expressing their appreciation for the patient and informative way Amanda had trained them.

Amanda had also started a logbook that included how many people were trained, over what period and the training that each person received. Amanda then obtained a supervisor's signature next to each entry to verify the records.

To gather some feedback on the training delivered to staff, Amanda requested each trained staff member complete a feedback form that Amanda used to evaluate the training delivery. This feedback could also be obtained orally. Where appropriate the feedback was used to modify the training.

Q. What evidence could Amanda use to support an RPL application in relation to the unit TAEDEL301A?

A. Job Description,
Outlines of training (session plans),
Staff Appraisals,
Thank you letters from trainees,
Business training records that reflect number of employees trained,
Logbook,
Feedback forms,
Memos to supervisor re: results of training, record keeping and any amendments to training as a result of feedback from trainees or supervisors.

The above scenario could be adapted to all workplaces where you have been required to train new staff. The key is what evidence can you use. Often these processes will have occurred without all supporting documentation being available. If this is your situation you could approach your supervisor and request they complete a letter which addresses your skills and knowledge as they relate to the Performance Criteria. It's a good idea to actually write the letter yourself and then ask your supervisor to sign the letter. You could then submit that letter together with session plans, feedback and other documents you have access to.

Remember that if you have completed tasks it would be rare for there not to be a way to obtain some evidence in relation to that task.

Presenting Your Evidence

Allow yourself plenty of time. It's a good idea to set up a "Training" folder at home where you can keep certified copies of qualifications and other relevant documents eg: logbooks, staff appraisals, letters of commendation, thank you letters etc that may assist you in any future Recognition applications.

Include a copy of your Resume as it relates to the qualification you are seeking ie: tailor your Resume to the qualification sought. Please also ensure that your evidence is presented in an organised manner. Some of your evidence will relate to a number of criteria.

Remember that your portfolio reflects your claim to competence in the qualification you are seeking. A well organised portfolio that directly addresses the criteria will far better reflect your competence.

An efficient and clear way of presenting your portfolio is to start with an 'Evidence Matrix'. This is a document that is set out in a table format listing all the evidence and matching the evidence with the elements of the Unit/s of Competency.

For Example:

The Unit TAEDEL301A has three elements, each with a set of performance criteria.

| Evidence | Index | TAEDEL301A | | |
|-----------------|-------|------------|---|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Job Description | A | | x | |
| Session Plans | B | | x | |
| Memos to staff | C | x | | |
| Logbook | D | | x | |
| Feedback forms | E | | | x |

Each piece of evidence is numbered or labelled in order and then marked to show which element and performance criteria it satisfies. The RTO can provide the Elements and Performance Criteria for each Unit of Competency for which you are seeking Recognition.