



**APPLICANT'S GUIDE  
TO THE  
RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING**  
(In Vocational Education and Training)

# APPLICANT'S GUIDE TO RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

## Introduction to this Guide

Congratulations, the first step is generally the hardest and you have taken that by considering the opportunity to have your skills, knowledge and experience assessed through our Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) process in order for you to gain full or partial completion of a qualification in your area of expertise.

This Applicant's Guide will take you through a number of steps associated with undertaking an RPL assessment. The steps are listed below and answer many of the questions we know you will have and indicate the range of support we will give you on your journey to achieving recognition in your chosen vocational area. You should ensure you read the guide completely.

## Steps

- The Application process
  - Preliminary discussion with your lecturer or the RPL Unit regarding the RPL process, fees and exploration of suitable courses
- Completing the RPL Self-assessment Tool and VET121 RPL Application Form
  - Personal requirements to work in your chosen vocational area
- Tips and hints to prepare for RPL
- The initial interview process with your assessor
- The subsequent RPL Assessment

At the end of this guide are some frequently asked questions whose answers may also help you to further understand our RPL process.

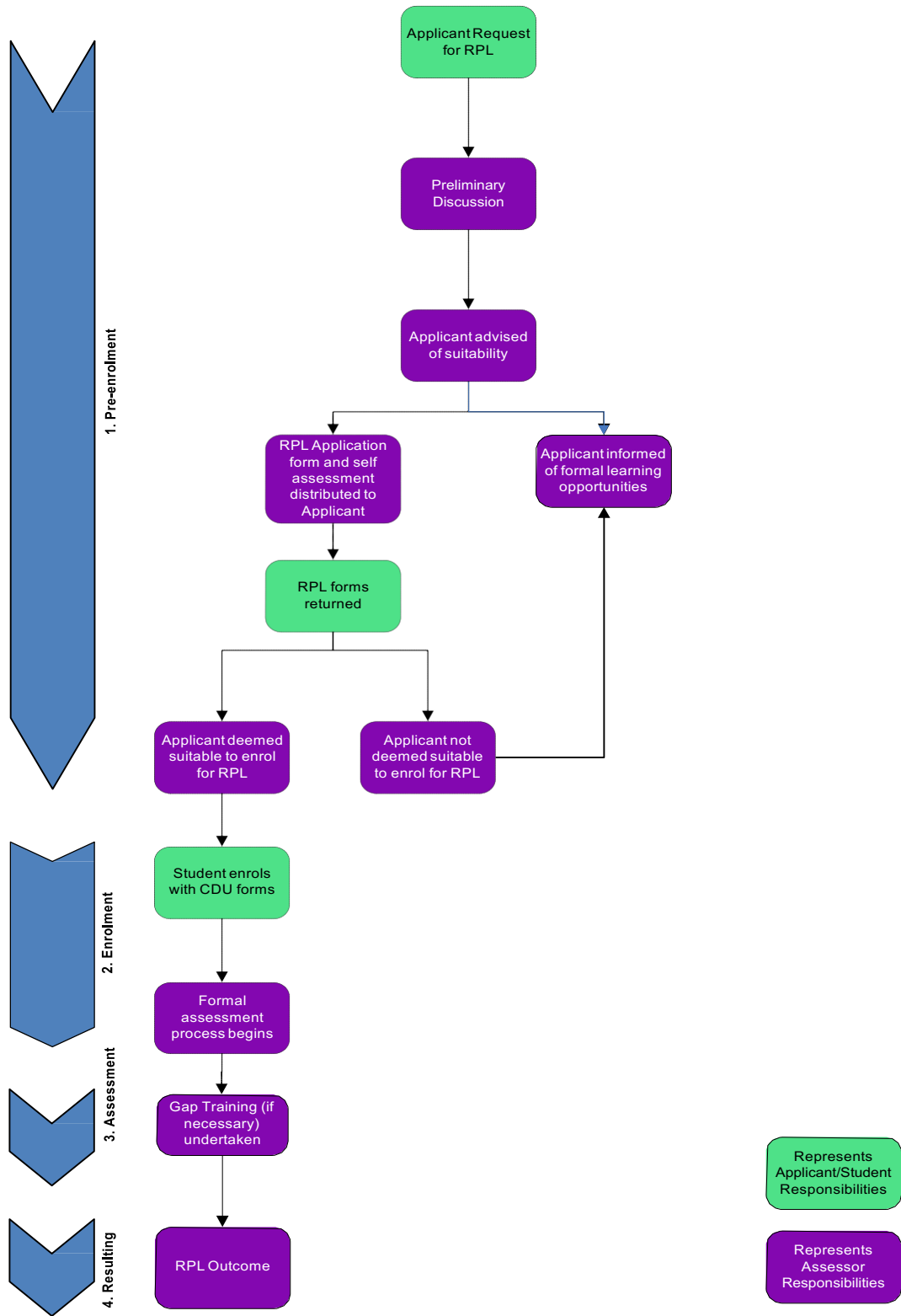
## The Application Process

The diagram on the following page indicates the steps involved in applying for RPL. The step-by-step process indicates where your application may be at any one time and where you are on the journey towards the qualification. The last page of this guide provides contact details should you wish to enquire about any aspect of the process at any time.

The first step in the application process (when you have decided to proceed with seeking RPL) is to fill in and submit the VET RPL Application Form (VET121) and then lodge it at the RPL enquiry email address: [vet.rpl.enquiries@cdu.edu.au](mailto:vet.rpl.enquiries@cdu.edu.au), alternatively you can speak directly to your lecturer or the RPL unit. Your lecturer or the RPL Unit will discuss any applicable fees and provide you with a course specific Self-Assessment Tool to complete. These forms collect some information to allow us to record your details on our student management system. It will also help us plan the initial interview and save as much time as possible during the subsequent RPL assessment. This step will generate any application fee associated with your seeking RPL. Please see the CDU student guide for further information.

# RPL Flowchart

The flowchart describes the procedure to be followed in determining RPL.



Each self-assessment document is focused on a particular course, or set of courses with a common thread. At the beginning of your journey, you may not know what course would be best for you – that is fine, just submit the VET RPL Application form and one of our staff will contact you to discuss your options. Once the correct course is identified, you will be sent the appropriate self-assessment document.

## **VET RPL Application Form**

The VET RPL Application form is available from your lecturer or the RPL Unit. It can also be downloaded from <http://www.cdu.edu.au/sites/default/files/student-portal/docs/VET121-RPL-Application-Form.pdf>. It needs to be completed to the best of your ability. Apart from the basic details that are needed to issue your student identification number, further information is requested so that we can plan your initial interview with an assessor and determine the most effective way to support you through the RPL process. If you know which course you are seeking RPL for, the VET RPL Application form should be returned with the appropriate self-assessment document. If you do not know what course is best suited for you, just return the VET RPL Application form.

We have tried to ensure that we are not requesting too much from you at this initial stage but the more information you provide the more it will assist us to assist you. Nevertheless we understand that some information about previous employers, etc. is not always easy to obtain so do the best you can and at least provide your personal details and information on what occupation you are seeking and we can commence from there.

## **Completing the RPL Self-assessment**

The RPL Self-assessment Tool for your chosen qualification has been supplied as a separate document for you to complete and return. It will only take you about 15 minutes to complete as it has been designed to indicate what you have already been doing in the workplace.

The RPL Self-assessment Tool is an important starting point for the overall RPL assessment process that once you have successfully completed will enable us to issue you a qualification in your chosen area. The other benefit is that the RPL self-assessment will assist you to prepare for the subsequent RPL assessment, as the assessor will be focusing on the same statements that you have responded to and will assess activities that demonstrate the skills, knowledge and experience you have in your chosen vocational area.

## **Tips and Hints to Prepare for RPL**

Our assessors must make sure you have the skills and knowledge to meet the industry standard. This means you must be involved with us in a comprehensive quality process that covers the content of the qualification you want to be recognised for.

Assessment will happen in a variety of ways and being prepared can save you valuable time and also make the recognition process stress-free for you.

## Here are some tips and hints for you to consider:

1. Be prepared to talk about your current job roles and your work history particularly if you are not currently employed. Hopefully you have provided some details on your application form about where you have worked, either paid or unpaid, and what tasks you performed there. These will make a good starting point and put you at ease with the RPL process.
2. If you have a position description, and even though you may not be able to bring it with you, be prepared to talk about the responsibilities and duties you have in your current role
3. If you are in a workplace that is supporting your application to get qualified be prepared to discuss the opportunity for your assessor to contact your workplace or previous workplace so your skills can be confirmed by someone that works or has worked with you.
4. You may also have community contacts from unpaid or volunteer work you have done that may not appear to be related to this application but you will be surprised at how far our assessors will go to find evidence to support your claim.
5. In-house training conducted by in-house staff or suppliers to your industry or service area is generally of a high quality. Be prepared to talk about any opportunities you have had in this area, and if you were issued with a certificate for your attendance at the training bring it with you for your interview.
6. Be prepared to discuss with your CDU assessor about other ways you can demonstrate your skills, for example if you have any references from employers or diary notes from when you attended in-house training or trade shows. Sometimes even photographs of projects you have worked on that you can use to 'trigger' discussion with your assessor may be valuable contributors to your assessment.
7. Other items or documents, if you have them readily available, you should consider supplying copies of with your application may include but not be limited to:
  - ◆ any licences or tickets held, e.g. forklift, working with children, etc.
  - ◆ brief CV or work history
  - ◆ Job Safety Analysis (JSA) that you may have completed
  - ◆ certificates – supplier training courses, in house courses, workshops, seminars
  - ◆ Certificates – club courses e.g. first aid, surf lifesaving, etc.
  - ◆ photographs or DVD's of work undertaken
  - ◆ technical drawings or site plans you have worked with
  - ◆ workplace inductions

- ◆ performance appraisals
- ◆ membership of relevant associations
- ◆ hobbies, interests outside of work
- ◆ references or letters from previous employers or supervisors
- ◆ any other documentation that may demonstrate industry experience

## **Personal Requirements to Work in your Chosen Vocational Area**

The RPL Self-assessment Tool includes information of some of the personal requirements to work in your chosen vocational area. Many personal requirements you already know from your previous experience but it is important that you review this list to confirm this is the vocation you wish to be in.

## **So what will I have to do next?**

You have now read through just about all of the Applicant's Guide and the following points will guide you through what to do next:

- Complete the VET RPL Application Form, return it to us, and retain a copy. An invoice for the appropriate application fee will be issued within 5 working days of processing. Please note that the official assessment cannot commence until payment is received for the application fee.
- If you have the appropriate self-assessment document, please read through it and complete the self-assessment that details what a competent person does in the workplace. Return this form with the VET RPL Application form.
- If you do not have the appropriate RPL Self-assessment form, simply return the VET RPL Application Form and one of our staff will contact you to determine the appropriate self-assessment document for you. Once you receive it, please fill it in and return.
- Gather any extra documents or information that supports your application.
- Please see the CDU VET Student Guide (<http://www.cdu.edu.au/current-students/adminforms>) for information regarding RPL fees and student support services.
- Forward all of the extra documents to the address on the final page of the RPL Self-Assessment Tool or by email if you have them electronically. We would prefer that you send copies rather than originals as they could go missing in-transit to us.
- Wait a few days to hear from CDU and be prepared to discuss a time and place for your initial application interview.

## Frequently Asked Questions

The following list of common questions and answers has been developed to illustrate to you that the RPL process is effective and user-friendly whilst still maintaining the quality required by industry for competent staff. If you have any other questions please do not hesitate to ask by using the contact details at the bottom of the application form.

### **Question 1:**

What is Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) all about?

### **Answer 1:**

Recognition of Prior Learning is about determining whether the skills, knowledge and experience you've gained in the past partially or completely qualify you for a qualification offered by CDU without having to undertake any further study.

When you first enquired about applying for Recognition of Prior Learning, you may have received this Applicant's Guide, and other documents containing statements that describe, in a user-friendly way, the skills and knowledge that is contained in the qualification you are applying for. All you have to do is simply respond to each statement by indicating whether you can perform the skill to the level described and submit it to CDU along with any other information that you think may support your application for the qualification. Information on the type of supporting information you may supply is detailed in this Applicant's Guide and the other documentation.

If you feel that your prior experiences already indicate that you possess the skills and knowledge in one or more of the statements for the units, then an RPL application may be worth your while.

### **Question 2:**

*What happens when I apply for RPL?*

### **Answer 2:**

This Applicant's Guide details the complete RPL process and indicates a range of additional information that you may want to compile and submit to support your application for RPL. The process also requires you to complete the Self-assessment for the qualification or course you are applying for and forward it with any supporting information to the address in the form.

Once we have received your RPL application, self-assessment and any supporting materials we will contact you and arrange a date for you to have an interview with an RPL Assessor. This interview may be in person or by telephone in the first instance.

Your RPL Assessor will discuss your responses to the Self-assessment and how your previous knowledge, skills and experience match the requirements of the course or qualification and where any gaps may appear to be present at this stage. They'll then organise a time and a place for you to meet so they can assess activities that demonstrate the skills, knowledge and experience you have. Once they've gathered the evidence from the activities that have taken place they will determine if there are any gaps in your knowledge or

skills that may have to be filled prior to you achieving the qualification or statement of attainment. They will discuss a range of options to fill these gaps with you.

**Question 3:**

*How long do I have to have been working before I can apply for RPL?*

**Answer 3:**

There is no set time to have been working prior to applying for RPL but experienced workers have generally applied their knowledge and skills, communicated effectively, understood and applied relevant legislation and solved workplace problems in a range of situations over time to become competent. The RPL Self-assessment Tool indicates the range of activities that people have been involved in to become competent. Have a read through these activities and make a decision based on them about whether you should apply. If you think you have most of them then we can discuss a range of options available to you so that you can take the opportunity to fill the gaps and gain a full qualification.

**Question 4:**

*Will any of the previous qualifications that I've gained count in the RPL process?*

**Answer 4:**

When you submit your application for RPL include certified copies of any qualifications that you have already obtained. The RPL assessor will consider a Credit Transfer if any of the units of competency in the course you have completed are the same as in the course you are applying for or approved to be equivalent to the unit/s of competency in the Training Package for the vocational area.

**Question 5:**

*I have been working for the same organisation for a number of years, is this sufficient evidence to gain RPL?*

**Answer 5:**

Not necessarily. The length of time in a workplace is not by itself sufficient evidence – you must be able to demonstrate that you have the knowledge and can perform the skills required to the standard expected in the workplace that is detailed in the units of competency in the qualification. Some people may work for many years in one place but still need to develop broader skills and knowledge. Nevertheless, through the Self-assessment process, you will be able to determine exactly what skills and knowledge you do have and what gaps may still exist. If there aren't many gaps, you may still consider RPL and receive options on how the gaps can be filled.

**Question 6:**

*How is it possible to get a qualification if I have not attended any formal training? Will it be as good as one gained through study at a TAFE anywhere else in Australia?*



**Answer 6:**

The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) recognises skills and knowledge irrespective of where you learnt those skills. You do not have to attend formal training in order to get these skills recognised. The qualification will be the same as any gained through study anywhere else in Australia.

**Question 7:**

*What are the benefits to my organisation if they are to support me through the RPL process?*

**Answer 7:**

Many organizations have come to realize that providing an employee with a 'piece of paper' is only one small benefit to both the candidate and the business. They have traditionally stated "our biggest asset is our people" but are also very conscious of the fact that words alone don't get the job done. Throughout the workplace, they acknowledge there are often gaps in people's knowledge and skills that they would desperately like to have filled in order for the business to be more productive, more responsive and more profitable. An RPL assessment will assist in identifying the gaps whether they are in planning, budgeting, service or production, and once filled will add value to the business as well as to the person.

**Question 8:**

*I was never too good at doing tests at school. Will I have to sit for practical and theory tests during my RPL?*

**Answer 8:**

The RPL assessment process is one that encourages you to discuss and demonstrate tasks that you do every day at work. It involves an assessor developing a relationship with you as a professional colleague as they encourage you to discuss what you have achieved over time as you have gathered the skills, knowledge and experience associated with your specialist area. It's not an assessment that requires you to 'state definitions' or 'list items' but is more about your practical application associated with real work examples.

**Question 9:**

*People who have been through an RPL have told me that I need to collect and supply a whole range of documents in order to be assessed. Many of the places I have worked at in the past no longer exist; people I worked with have moved on; and in some cases, I didn't get on with the boss or others and left without any reference. I didn't always have a documented job description and I don't know how to create a CV or resume. But I know how to do the job and why I make the decisions that I do on a daily basis, so how much documented information do I have to supply before I can go through the RPL process?*

**Answer 9:**

This Applicant's Guide to RPL contains a form for you to complete that asks for some basic information for us to help you begin your journey. The section on the self-assessment above also gives you examples of a range of documents that should be easy for you to assemble such as any 'licenses' or 'tickets' you hold; but if you can't supply them they are not a barrier to you applying and being interviewed to determine your ability.

## **VET RPL Enquiries**

Office of VET Business Improvement – Red 4.1.02

Charles Darwin University

Ellengowan Drive

CASUARINA

Northern Territory 0909

e. [vet.rpl.enquiries@cdu.edu.au](mailto:vet.rpl.enquiries@cdu.edu.au)

t. 1800 238 838