M A C E

POLICY AND PROCEDURE: **Recognition of Prior Learning**
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Contents

Introduction

MACE Incorporated recognises that every candidate has the right to apply for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), and on request will be given the necessary tools to do so.

Policy

Encouraging and supporting candidates

Effective marketing and promotion of RPL is essential. Assessors need to encourage and assist candidates to see where their current skills match the competency standards. Published documents, web site content, and staff customer service skills should all be reviewed to ensure that potential clients are getting genuine encouragement, straightforward options and the support they need to undertake RPL.

RPL should be regarded as part of the learning and assessment cycle. All students approaching training should have a genuine opportunity to have skills recognised beforehand so that the entire learning and career journey can be better informed by their current skill status and goals.

Access and Equity

RPL, like other forms of assessment, needs to be appropriate to the unit assessed. By enabling skills learned in work and life to be recognized, RPL can open the door for many who have previously been marginalized by the education and training system. There are many ways that inappropriate RPL processes can exclude clients.

Barriers

- Processes requiring language and literacy skills beyond the demands of the job to which the qualification, unit or competency applies
- Expecting students to map their own skills directly to the training package/accredited course qualification or unit/s of competency with limited assistance
- Limiting assessment options to a narrow set of collection methods
- Insisting that itinerant, casual or redundant workers provide evidence from all former workplaces
- Not providing flexible methods of RPL assessment Not providing alternative methods of assessment for clients with a wide variety of backgrounds, including clients with a disability or limited education

Flexible and Fairness

Many clients who apply for RPL have to provide a "hard copy" portfolio of evidence to support the application. Although this method is appropriate in some circumstances, it can limit which clients can apply for RPL in some qualification areas. In RPL, as in all forms of assessment, it is important that options are available to the greatest number of clients.

Communication

Much of the confusion surrounding RPL for clients and for RTO's can be traced to communication difficulties. Every point of contact with potential clients provides an opportunity for supporting and informing choices. Published documents, internet content and staff customer service skills should all be reviewed to ensure that potential clients are getting a consistent message, genuine encouragement, straightforward options and the support they need to undertake RPL.

Client-focused approach

The key success factors for a truly, client-focused approaches to RPL are:
- Genuine and positive encouragement for clients enquiring about RPL
- Advice on RPL that is in plain English and in a range of formats
- Staff who have had sufficient training in RPL and in dealing with client diversity
- Assessors who know the requirements of particular industries and employers
- Staff who have an understanding of the needs of clients and of the factors which may discourage them from undertaking an RPL assessment or further training
- Assessors who are able to assess the client's case for RPL using flexible approaches
- Support for clients through each stage of the RPL process, including feedback
- Alternatives for clients to demonstrate competence
- Career planning and learning advice integrated throughout the RPL process
- Assessors who know the training products and options available
- A final assessment and feedback process that provides clients with options for further training and career opportunities

Clients who may need encouragement and support may include clients who:
- Have had limited previous education
- Are mature aged
- Are returning to the paid workplace after a long absence
- Are unfamiliar with training and education systems
- Have experienced failure in the past
- Have limited literacy skills

Holistic Assessment
A "holistic" assessment occurs when several related competencies are assessed at the same time. This approach focuses on the assessment of a "whole-of-job or function that may draw on a number of units of competency or on different parts of one or more competencies.
When assessing a unit holistically, activities focus on whole activities that integrate a number of aspects of the competency. When clustering competencies assessment is focused on how a number of competencies can be integrated and assessed holistically, rather than as separate items.

The benefits of holistic assessments are that they:
- Reflect the real world and skill requirements of industry
- Save time and reduce costs
- Streamline processes and optimize evidence opportunities

Managing Risk
All assessment involves risk. Being able to identify and manage risk is important. A risk management approach is a positive and effective way to deal with many key concerns arising from competency-based assessments.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide a framework for the assessment and recognition of various types of prior learning. It is designed to enhance best practice thinking across a range of areas where RPL processes should be considered. Training at MACE Incorporated is competency based. Consequently, students are entitled to exemptions from units in which they are already competent. (NOTE: Credit transfer/Mutual Recognition.

Students who have demonstrated a particular competence by successfully completing a unit or units at another RTO receive automatic recognition of that achievement, provided the Code and Title of the unit are identical (Credit Transfer). The unit may have been completed as part of another qualification. Where the unit is similar but has a different code the assessor must map the unit against the elements of the unit for which recognition is requested. Any gaps may be filled by additional training.)

Processing of applications for RPL must be completed before the start of a course.
The definitions used in this policy are consistent with the AQTF definitions. The AQTF prescribes standards that govern vocational training in Australia.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
Students and Assessors should be aware that onerous, exclusively paper-based portfolios are not the only acceptable form of evidence for RPL. Nor is a reductionist assessment where large quantities of evidence are matched to micro aspects of units acceptable. Assessors should aim for a holistic practice.

Authorisation

Chief Executive Officer
MACE Incorporated

Objectives

The objectives of this policy are:
- To promote flexible ideas, thinking and practices;
- To explore ways in which the need for onerous paper based portfolios generated by candidates can be minimized thereby reducing the workload for candidates and assessors;
- To explore more flexible options to gather evidence of prior learning;
- To still maintain a rigorous assessment; and
- To make RPL processes accessible to a greater diversity of individual and industry clients.

RPL is a process of collecting evidence and making judgments on whether competence has been achieved. Competence can be exhibited in different ways due to the diversity of experiences and learning opportunities that candidates bring to the recognition process.

All assessments need to be equitable, fair and valid - a candidate should not be disadvantaged by narrow, inflexible assessment procedures. Evidence gathered needs to be sufficient, reliable and current.

RPL assessments need to be streamlined, user-friendly, high-quality, transparent and value adding.

RPL assessments need to meet an individual's needs and requirements. Choices in the ways of collecting, presenting and reviewing evidence need to be available for RPL, as for other forms of assessment. Ideally a combination of methods will be available to meet the needs and situation of individuals seeking recognition.

RPL assessments must take account of the differences in the needs of entry-level candidates and skilled (experienced workers). For entry-level candidates, assessment activities can be planned and integrated with industry training requirements allowing for greater flexibility.

An assessor must communicate his/her judgment clearly, rationally and comprehensively.

The AQTF Standards for RTO's are quite clear in the demand for appropriate student information and support around all training and assessment activities, including RPL.

Candidates need accurate, clear information about competency standards, in language that is accessible and understandable. Avoid using technical jargon.

Procedure

- Students must give notice that they are seeking RPL at the time of enrolment. Students will be provided with an RPL Application Kit upon this notice.
- An RPL application form must be completed by the student and lodged with Administration prior to course commencement.
- Processing of applications must be completed prior to course commencement.
- An application for RPL must be accompanied by supporting documents.
- Processing of RPL applications will vary according to the unit and nature of the evidence provided. Processing may involve assessment by interview, examination of documentary evidence, written examination or demonstration. Documents submitted should be checked for authenticity, currency and verification sought from sources such as previous employers where appropriate.
- Students must be given written notice of the decision to grant or not to grant RPL. This notice must be signed by the student and assessor, and placed on the students file.
- As RPL is a form of assessment, the policies and procedures applying to re-assessment and appeals apply.
- Students are required to pay $100 for the RPL application fee and $2.00 per credit hour (as per the Victorian Purchasing Guide) to a maximum of $250.00 per Unit of Competency per Qualification. Additional fees apply for practical challenge tests.
- Students have the right of appeal if they are dissatisfied with the assessment outcome for RPL. This appeal process must follow the procedure that is in place for all assessment matters.

Related Documents

- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Application Kit
- Enrolment Policy and Procedure
- Credit Transfer Form