RPL Handbook

Vocational Education & Training
1. **Introduction**

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a process which acknowledges the skills and knowledge that a person already has, whether gained from life, work, community involvement, home or formal training and study. The RPL process identifies the knowledge and skills that a person has learned from these experiences and matches this against competencies and elements in the course of study.

ALC VET has a policy for recognising prior learning of its students enrolled in the Certificate IV in Christian Ministry and Theology (10433NAT) (Cert IV CMT):

**Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)**

RPL is a process for giving students credit for skills, knowledge and experience gained prior to enrolling in the selected course. These skills can be gained through formal and informal learning, in Australia or overseas, through work or other activities such as volunteering, and at any age. RPL is available for all units of competency within the Cert IV CMT and should be requested during the application process or before enrolling in any subjects. The process will require the student to provide documented evidence against the units of competency for which they are requesting RPL. To apply for recognition, students use the application for admission form or the subject enrolment form to receive the RPL package.

This RPL Handbook describes the working of this policy in detail, outlines the process students must go through, and supports students to undertake an initial self-assessment prior to an RPL interview.

2. **Some starting questions**

Before embarking on any RPL activity it can be useful to take a step back and note down a few things about your background and experience. Below are some helpful questions to think about:

- What work have you done?
  - What dates were you in these jobs?
  - What were the duties expected of you?
- What volunteer roles have you performed?
  - What dates were you in these roles?
  - What were the duties expected of you?
- List all courses, workshops, seminars, conferences, training and study you can think of
  - Provide the dates of these—it is rare to give recognition for training that is more than 7 years old.
  - What topics were covered in each of these courses?
  - Find and make copies of all the certificates/transcripts/statements of attainment you can muster
- What other relevant life experience do you have (e.g. travel, relationships, family background, hobbies)?
  - List the skills you have acquired in these experiences.

The RPL Application Package outlines these questions in Part B: Self Analysis.

3. **RPL process**

The RPL process is initially discussed with a student as part of the enrolment and subject selection process.
The specific steps for the RPL process are:

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<th>Step</th>
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| Step 1: Understanding the process | • Students receive the RPL handbook in order to understand − the RPL process; − the purpose and outcomes of the RPL process; − the types of evidence; − the appeals process.  
• Students request the application package for the qualification or unit of competency in which they are interested.  
• Students complete Part B: Self Analysis.  
• Students determine which units for RPL. |
| Step 2: Student self-assessment | • Students complete the application package by gathering evidence and completing the RPL worksheet for relevant unit of competency  
• Students should liaise with ALC VET staff where necessary |
| Step 3: Submit evidence | • If a student chooses to apply for RPL, the student submits to ALC VET:  
a. Completed RPL worksheet for each unit of competency being applied for  
b. Copies of all relevant evidence for each unit  
c. Payment of non-refundable RPL fee per unit applied for |
| Step 4: RPL interview | • The ALC Director of VET (DVET) will peruse the application, then contact the student to discuss the application  
• Discussion with the DVET can be done by Skype/phone/face to face  
• Action plan developed (if further evidence required) |
| Step 5: If required, gather further evidence and submit | • The student needs to make sure that they are clear about what evidence is still required |
| Step 6: Completion of course plan and subject enrolment | • Ideally this occurs as the conclusion of the RPL interview  
• The DVET and student agree on the assessment and sign the completed worksheet for each unit of competency being applied for  
• Course plan and subject enrolment is revised and confirmed  
• The DVET arranges for results to be appropriately recorded. |

4. Completing RPL worksheets

In order to complete the RPL worksheets, you must first understand how the ALC VET subjects work toward National Accredited units. This relationship is outlined in the ALC VET Student Handbook. RPL works on a unit basis (NOT a subject basis). Our subjects will often cover material that is not part of the VET unit outcomes but which are important to personal,
spiritual or ministry outcomes. You will find the worksheet document is made up of one worksheet per unit (some worksheets go over more than one page).

**CAUTION—common trap!** The most common mistake people make when completing RPL worksheets is not clearly understanding the difference between subjects and units. It doesn’t matter if you are competent in the subject, you must prove you are competent in the unit. There is usually a close connection between the subject and the unit—but not always!

Now let’s have a look at the worksheets. The ALC VET subject name is at the top left of the unit worksheet. The unit name (and code) is at the top right of the unit worksheet. The unit worksheet is then divided into four main columns:

a. Column 1 is the most important. It shows the name of the elements that make up the unit. You need to assess whether you have prior learning for EACH element in the unit.

b. Column 2 is the performance criteria of each element. Sometimes the element names are a bit hard to understand. If you want to have a better idea of what each element means, you can see the performance criteria for the element in the second column. They reflect the essential knowledge and skills required for competency.

c. Column 3 is where you make a comment about why you think you should get RPL or credit for EACH element. You might put something like ‘I’ve done this unit at another RTO’ or ‘I’ve done a similar course at another RTO/university’ or ‘I do this in my job’ or ‘I’ve done a professional development course on this last year’. Relate this to the relevant self-assessment section.

d. Column 4 is the evidence for the previous columns. Think of this as how to PROVE columns 1 and 2 by using what you have stated in column 3. The more evidence the better, so for a particular element you might have a certificate for a 1 hour training course you went to, PLUS a document you wrote at work that shows you’ve applied the training, PLUS a third party declaration. Column 4 (Evidence) is divided into three sub-columns that refer to the types of evidence. You need to label each piece of evidence (A, B, C, D and so on) and describe what the evidence is. Put this in the column next to the element that the evidence refers to and then CLEARLY label this reference on the evidence itself. For example, you might have an academic transcript you want to use as documentary evidence for CMTTHE401A 1.2. You put A: Transcript—Eastern Siberia University in the document column. You then make a photocopy of your transcript and put the letter ‘A’ clearly on the top.

e. Once you have completed the worksheets for the units you wish to apply for RPL, you should send a copy of these worksheets AND ALL evidence to ALC VET. At this time you must pay the RPL fee or request an invoice if your employer is paying.

5. **Types of evidence**
Some evidence is more ‘weighty’ than others and you should use the best evidence you can gather. When gathering evidence you should think about the need to PROVE you are COMPETENT at the element.

**RPL—Credit**
**Academic record:** The strongest evidence is a transcript or statement of attainment from another accredited training provider showing you have passed a unit of training or study. In an ideal world you will have studied precisely the same VET unit with another RTO. This is automatic credit. Often, however, you will have completed a similar (but not the same) unit with another RTO or Higher Ed provider. This is good too but in this case you must provide...
proof you have successfully completed the unit AND some description of the course content (the name of the unit is usually not enough). Where we can give you recognition from another institution or course, we call this ‘Credit’. There is no fee for this type of RPL.

RPL—Other
To prove this type of RPL we all need to do a bit more work gathering and assessing the evidence which is why we charge you an RPL fee for each unit.

Documents: Often academic record types of evidence as described above are useful here, but typically we look to other areas as well to build the case. This might be a policy you have written or an essay you have produced, a paper you have published, a project report, minutes of a meeting or anything similar that demonstrates you are competent in this area. Projects, essays, case studies and portfolios are all valid examples.

Practical: This is anything you have produced that is non-written, including work tasks. For example if you have presented a message that has been audio recorded or captured on DVD, you can provide a copy of this. On occasion it may be possible or appropriate for the student to simply show the DVET they are competent in a skill during the RPL interview. You could also visually or digitally record work tasks.

Third Party Report: It is possible for the student to claim proof of competence by virtue of the fact that someone else (a third party) has seen the competence demonstrated. This may be recorded in the form of a checklist, a supervisor’s report, work references, video of work tasks. In this case the details of the competence, the demonstration and the contact of the third party must be provided in order for the DVET to be able to check with the third party. Third parties who themselves have training and assessment qualifications will be held in high regard.

Questioning and discussion with the DVET: It may be the case that even if a critical knowledge or skill is not demonstrated, after some oral questioning and discussion the DVET may be satisfied that the student is competent.

Some comments about evidence
Some evidence can be used repeatedly, especially if it is multi-dimensional. For example, an audio recording provided from a presentation that was delivered may demonstrate competence in more than one element, even in more than one unit.

Always think about the need for proof. For example, an experienced youth group leader may seek leadership recognition for past experience on camps. Listing their experience is helpful, but it still doesn’t prove competence (the student may have been a hopeless leader). To provide a certificate that shows a person went to a half day ‘camp leader training course’ is a step in the right direction, but it still doesn’t prove anything (the student may have fallen asleep during the course). To say that the campers said they really enjoyed themselves doesn’t prove anything either. However, if formal feedback was asked for from the campers and they wrote a positive thing, this is getting closer. If there is a video of a session the student ran as a leader that is looking more like proof. A list of experience PLUS a certificate for a half day course PLUS formal positive feedback PLUS a video is now forming a compelling case for RPL.

6. Complaints and appeals process
Should any applicant hold a grievance in regard to decisions made about their application for RPL, they should follow the procedure for complaints and appeals as outlined in the Grievance Policy found in the VET student handbook.