

# Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy

## CPL036



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<b>Review Cycle</b>	Annual
<b>Applicable To</b>	All staff, students, agents and contractors

### Purpose

The Centre of Professional Learning and Education (Shafston) has established and implemented this policy to support the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) 2025 Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs). This policy ensures candidates can access recognition assessment pathways through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) arrangements, with previously unrecognised skills and knowledge that a student has achieved outside the formal education and training system. For the purpose of this policy, recognition of prior learning (RPL) will be referred to simply as RPL.

### Policy Statement

RPL is another form of assessment and requires the same application of rigour as outlined in the Training and Assessment Policy and Procedures. RPL involves the assessment of previously unrecognised skills and knowledge an individual has achieved outside the formal education and training system. RPL assesses this unrecognised learning against the requirements of a unit of competency, including the elements, performance criteria, foundation skills, performance evidence, knowledge evidence, and assessment conditions. By removing the need for duplication of learning, RPL encourages a candidate to continue upgrading their skills and knowledge through structured education and training towards formal qualifications and improved employment outcomes.

RPL assessment must demonstrate the same rigour as any other form of assessment conducted by the RTO. RPL is not a shortcut to qualification attainment; it is a thorough assessment process that verifies a candidate's current competency against all training product requirements.

This policy addresses Recognition of Prior Learning only. For the recognition of formal qualifications, statements of attainment, or units of competency issued by other RTOs or previously completed under the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), refer to the Credit Transfer Policy.

### RPL Assessor Credential Requirements

All personnel involved in RPL evidence collection, competency conversations, and final assessment judgements must meet the credentialing requirements set out in the 2025 Standards for RTOs and Shafston's Credential Policy. Specifically:

- All assessors making RPL assessment judgements must hold a current and recognised training and assessment credential, including TAE40122, TAE40116, TAE40110, or a relevant assessor skill set (e.g.

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TAESS00019 or TAESS00011), or a diploma or higher-level qualification in adult education, in accordance with ASQA's Credential Policy. Assessors must be able to demonstrate current assessment competency.

- RPL assessors must hold vocational competency in the units of competency being assessed and have current industry skills and knowledge relevant to the assessment being conducted.
- Persons working under the direction of a qualified assessor may assist with administrative tasks and evidence collection, but must not make final RPL assessment judgements.
- Where a second assessor is involved (e.g. for moderation or authenticity verification), that person must also meet the credentialing requirements above.

All RPL assessments are conducted by Shafston's directly employed or contracted trainers and assessors. RPL assessment judgements are not outsourced to unregulated third parties. Where any third party is engaged to support RPL evidence collection, Shafston retains full responsibility for the assessment judgement and ensures the third party complies with all applicable Standards. Students will be made aware of the role any third party plays in their RPL assessment.

### Recognition Guidelines

The following guidelines are to be followed when an application for recognition is received:

- Any candidate is entitled to apply for RPL in a course or qualification in which they are currently enrolled.
- Candidates may not apply for RPL for units of competency or qualifications which are not included in Shafston's scope of registration.
- Whilst candidates may apply for RPL at any time, they are encouraged to apply before commencing a training program or qualification. This will reduce unnecessary training and guide the student towards a more efficient path to achieving qualification competence.
- Candidates who are currently enrolled in a training program are eligible to apply for RPL but additional fees and charges may apply. All RPL-related fees and the assessment process will be clearly communicated to the candidate prior to commencement. RPL assessment fees are non-refundable regardless of the outcome of the RPL assessment, as the fee covers the cost of the assessment service provided.
- Assessment via RPL is to apply the Principles of Assessment:
  - **Fairness:** The individual learner's needs will be considered in the assessment process. Where appropriate, reasonable adjustments are applied by the RTO to take into account the individual learner's needs. The RTO will inform the learner about the assessment process and provide the learner with the opportunity to challenge the result of the assessment and be reassessed if necessary.
  - **Flexibility:** Assessment will be flexible to the individual learner by reflecting the learner's needs; assessing competencies held by the learner no matter how or where they have been acquired; and drawing from a range of assessment methods and using those that are appropriate to the

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context, the unit of competency and associated assessment requirements, and the individual learner.

- **Validity:** Any assessment decision of the RTO will be justified based on the evidence of performance of the individual learner. Assessment will be against the unit(s) of competency and the associated assessment requirements covering the broad range of skills and knowledge that are essential to competent performance. Assessment of knowledge and skills will be integrated with practical application. Judgement of competence will be based on evidence that the learner could demonstrate these skills and knowledge in other similar situations, aligned to the unit(s) of competency and associated assessment requirements.
- **Reliability:** Evidence presented for assessment will consistently be interpreted and assessment results are comparable irrespective of the assessor conducting the assessment.
- RPL may only be awarded for whole units of competency. However, where a candidate demonstrates competence in some but not all requirements of a unit, Shafston will identify the skills gap and offer targeted gap training (see Gap Training section below), rather than requiring the candidate to re-enter the full training and assessment pathway.

### Managing Student Expectations

Shafston is committed to providing accurate, honest, and transparent information about RPL to all prospective and current students. The following requirements apply:

- RPL must never be promoted, marketed, or represented to students as a simple, quick, easy, or guaranteed pathway to qualification attainment. Any such representation by staff, agents, or marketing materials is strictly prohibited.
- Admissions, student support, and agent personnel must accurately communicate the RPL process, timelines, evidence requirements, associated fees, and the possibility that RPL may not be granted. Education agents are strictly prohibited from conducting any form of RPL pre-assessment, making RPL eligibility determinations, or providing guarantees of RPL outcomes on behalf of Shafston.
- Trainers and assessors must be trained to effectively manage the expectations of students who seek RPL or credit transfer, ensuring students understand the level of evidence and engagement required.
- Shafston cannot guarantee that, by participating in the RPL process, candidates will receive a Competent outcome for any of the units assessed. No guarantee of success is to be provided at any stage.
- Holding a higher-level AQF qualification in a related field does not automatically exempt a candidate from the RPL evidence requirements for lower-level units of competency. All RPL applications must be assessed on a unit-by-unit basis against the specific training product requirements, regardless of the candidate's existing qualification level.

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### Forms of Evidence

RPL acknowledges that workplace skills and knowledge may be gained through a variety of ways including both formal and informal learning or through work-based or life experience. In evaluating assessment evidence, Shafston applies the following Rules of Evidence:

- **Validity:** Assessors must be assured that the candidate has the skills, knowledge, and attributes as described in the unit of competency, including the elements, performance criteria, performance evidence, knowledge evidence, and assessment conditions. If there are doubts based on the evidence presented by the candidate, a second assessor may be involved in the RPL process to ensure fairness and rigour.
- **Sufficiency:** The assessor must be assured that the quality, quantity, and relevance of the assessment evidence enable a judgement to be made of a candidate's competency. Candidates will be given guidance on the types and quantity of evidence required to meet these assessment criteria within relevant RPL assessment tools.
- **Authenticity:** The assessor must be assured that the evidence presented for assessment is the candidate's own work. Authenticity will be verified through a combination of methods including: direct verification with the candidate at the time of evidence submission; contacting current or former employers, supervisors, or referees who have provided third-party reports or references to confirm the information; identity verification during the competency conversation; and cross-referencing evidence items to ensure consistency. Assessors must also take reasonable steps to verify that written evidence, project outputs, portfolios, and other submitted materials are not independently generated by artificial intelligence (AI) tools. Where AI-assisted drafting has been used, the candidate must demonstrate genuine understanding of and personal contribution to the evidence during the competency conversation. See Authenticity Verification in the Procedure section for detailed steps.
- **Currency:** The assessor must be assured that the assessment evidence demonstrates current competency. Currency is determined by whether the evidence demonstrates that the candidate currently possesses the relevant skills and knowledge, not by a fixed time period alone. The determination of currency will take into account the nature of the industry, the rate of change in the relevant field, and whether the candidate has been continuously applying the skills in question. For example, in rapidly evolving industries such as information technology, more recent evidence may be required, whereas in industries with stable practices, evidence from a longer period may be acceptable provided the candidate demonstrates ongoing application. The assessor will exercise professional judgement in determining currency on a case-by-case basis.

Forms of evidence toward recognition may include:

- Work records and employment history
- Records of workplace training (formal and informal)
- Records of previous qualifications, statements of attainment, or transcripts
- Assessments of current skills and knowledge
- Records of competency conversations conducted by the assessor
- Third-party reports from current and previous supervisors or managers

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- Evidence of relevant unpaid or volunteer experience
- Examples of work products, portfolios, or project outputs
- Observation by an assessor in the workplace or simulated environment
- Performance appraisals and professional development records
- Position descriptions, duty statements, and resumes

Many of these forms of evidence would not be sufficient on their own. When combined, multiple evidence items will build a strong case for competence against the training product requirements of the unit of competency.

Where a candidate provides evidence against a superseded unit of competency, this does not automatically invalidate the evidence for recognition through RPL assessment pathways. Shafston trainers and assessors must ensure there is sufficient evidence of the candidate's competence at the time they make the assessment decision.

Shafston reserves the right to require candidates to undertake a practical assessment of activities to assess their skills and knowledge to determine the candidate's current competence.

### Overseas Qualifications and Experience

Where a candidate presents overseas qualifications, credentials, or work experience as RPL evidence, the assessor must take additional steps to ensure valid assessment. Specifically, the assessor must use recognised frameworks (such as guidance from the National Skills Commission, relevant industry regulators, or official country-specific qualification comparison tools) to evaluate the equivalence of the overseas qualification or experience and accurately map it to the relevant Australian training product requirements. The assessor must not assume equivalence based on the title of an overseas qualification alone. All mapping decisions and their rationale must be documented in the candidate's RPL assessment file.

## RPL Assessment Tools – Rigour and Quality

RPL assessment tools must demonstrate the same level of rigour as assessment tools used in standard training and assessment pathways. The following requirements apply:

- RPL assessment tools (including RPL kits, evidence guides, and competency conversation guides) must be specifically developed or contextualised for each unit of competency and the candidate's industry context. Generic tick-box checklists or one-size-fits-all tools are not acceptable.
- RPL tools must clearly map to the elements, performance criteria, performance evidence, knowledge evidence, foundation skills, and assessment conditions of the relevant unit(s) of competency.
- RPL tools must be fully documented, with clear instructions for both the candidate and the assessor on what constitutes acceptable evidence and how competency will be determined.
- RPL evidence collection and assessment methods must go beyond document review alone. The RPL process must incorporate multiple methods such as documentary evidence review, competency conversations, practical task assessments, and third-party verification, as appropriate to the unit being assessed.

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### Procedure

#### Step 1 – Initial Enquiry and Information

The student will request RPL and will receive support from the Trainer/Assessor. The student will be interviewed and have the RPL process explained to them fully, including the types of evidence required, the assessment methods that will be used (document review, competency conversation, practical tasks), the expected timeline, any applicable fees, and the possible outcomes (including partial recognition and gap training). The assessor will ensure the student has realistic expectations about the RPL process.

#### Step 2 – RPL Application and Guided Evidence Collection

If the student wishes to pursue RPL, they will need to complete the Recognition of Prior Learning Request Form. While the candidate is responsible for providing their evidence, the assessor will actively support the candidate throughout the evidence collection process by:

- a) Explaining the requirements of each unit of competency in plain language, including the elements, performance criteria, and assessment conditions;
- b) Guiding the candidate on how to map their prior experience and knowledge to the specific performance criteria and evidence requirements;
- c) Providing examples of the types of evidence that may be suitable;
- d) Identifying any gaps in the candidate's initial evidence submission and advising on what additional evidence could address those gaps.

#### Step 3 – RPL Kit Distribution

The trainer/assessor will provide the appropriate RPL assessment tools and information to the student. These tools will be contextualised to the relevant unit(s) of competency and the candidate's industry context.

#### Step 4 – Evidence Submission

The student is to complete the RPL assessment tools along with all supporting documentation and submit these to the trainer/assessor.

#### Step 5 – Authenticity Verification

Before proceeding to the competency conversation, the assessor must conduct authenticity verification of the submitted evidence. This includes:

- a) Verifying the candidate's identity through appropriate documentation;
- b) Contacting referees, current or former supervisors, or other third parties who have provided reports, references, or letters to confirm the accuracy and authenticity of the information;
- c) Cross-referencing evidence items (e.g. comparing employment dates across multiple documents) to check for consistency;
- d) Recording all verification activities and outcomes in the candidate's RPL assessment file.

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- e) Where written evidence, project outputs, or portfolios are submitted, taking reasonable steps to assess whether the materials have been independently generated by artificial intelligence (AI) tools rather than reflecting the candidate's own work. This may include targeted questioning during the competency conversation to verify the candidate's depth of understanding and personal involvement in producing the evidence.

### Step 6 – Competency Conversation and Practical Assessment

After initial assessment of the documentary evidence and completion of authenticity checks, the student will undertake a Competency Conversation with the assessor. During this conversation, the assessor will probe the candidate's depth of knowledge, confirm the candidate's identity as the person who performed the work described in the evidence, and assess the candidate's ability to apply their skills and knowledge in different contexts. Where relevant, a Practical Tasks Assessment will also be conducted.

### Step 7 – Assessment Decision

After the assessment, the trainer/assessor will make a determination. One of the following outcomes will apply:

- a) **RPL Granted (Full):** The candidate has demonstrated competency across all requirements of the unit(s) of competency. The candidate will be issued the relevant AQF certification documentation (e.g. Statement of Attainment).
- b) **Partial Recognition with Gap Training:** The candidate has demonstrated competency in some but not all requirements of a unit. The assessor will identify the specific skills gap(s) and develop a targeted gap training plan. The candidate will only need to complete training and assessment for the identified gap areas, rather than re-entering the full training pathway for the entire unit. See Gap Training section below.
- c) **RPL Not Granted:** If the candidate is unable to provide sufficient evidence of competency after reasonable opportunity (including up to three attempts to provide additional evidence), the candidate will be advised to enrol in the relevant training and assessment pathway.

### Step 8 – Post-Assessment Interview and Feedback

There will be a post-assessment interview to advise the student of the outcome. A written rationale will be provided if RPL has not been granted (in full or in part). The student will be issued the relevant AQF certification documentation (e.g. Statement of Attainment) for any units of competency for which RPL has been granted, or will be provided with a gap training plan, or will be provided with information about further action they may take if the result is not to their satisfaction.

### Step 9 – Appeals

Should students wish to take further action, they are able to discuss the RPL results with the Education Manager. If the student is not satisfied with the outcomes of their RPL application, they may appeal the outcome in accordance with the Appeals Policy and Procedure available on the Shafston website.

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### Gap Training

Where the RPL assessment identifies that a candidate has met some, but not all, requirements of a unit of competency, Shafston will:

1. Clearly identify and document the specific skills gaps – the elements, performance criteria, or evidence requirements that have not been sufficiently demonstrated;
2. Develop a targeted gap training plan in consultation with the candidate, specifying what additional training and/or assessment is required to address the identified gaps;
3. Deliver the gap training using appropriate methods, which may include classroom sessions, workplace activities, online learning, or a combination;
4. Assess the candidate's competency only on the identified gap areas upon completion of the gap training;
5. Record the RPL outcome and gap training outcomes together in the student's academic record.

Gap training ensures that candidates are supported to achieve full competency without unnecessary duplication of training for skills and knowledge they have already demonstrated.

### High-Risk Work and Regulated Outcomes

For training products that lead to high-risk work licences or other regulated outcomes (e.g. forklift operation, confined spaces, first aid, aged care, early childhood education and care), RPL assessment must satisfy any additional evidence thresholds imposed by the relevant industry regulator or licensing authority, in addition to the requirements of this policy. Assessors must confirm that the RPL evidence and assessment methods meet the specific regulatory requirements before granting RPL for such units of competency. Where regulatory requirements preclude or restrict RPL for certain competencies, Shafston will comply with those requirements.

### Quality Assurance – Pre-use Review and Validation

In accordance with the 2025 Standards for RTOs, Shafston applies the following quality assurance mechanisms to RPL:

#### Pre-use Review

All RPL assessment tools (including RPL kits, evidence guides, competency conversation guides, and practical assessment tasks) must undergo a pre-use review before being issued to candidates. The pre-use review must confirm that the tools:

- Accurately reflect the current training product requirements, including elements, performance criteria, performance evidence, knowledge evidence, foundation skills, and assessment conditions;
- Are contextualised to the relevant industry and candidate context;
- Apply the principles of assessment and rules of evidence;
- Are not generic tick-box instruments and require substantive evidence of competency.

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### Validation

RPL assessment decisions and associated assessment tools must be included in Shafston's systematic validation schedule. A representative sample of RPL assessment outcomes will be validated at a frequency determined by the RTO's risk profile and the volume of RPL assessments conducted. Validation activities will assess whether:

- RPL assessment judgements are consistent, fair, and reliable across different assessors;
- Sufficient and valid evidence was collected to support the assessment decision;
- Authenticity verification was properly conducted and documented;
- RPL tools remain current and aligned to the latest version of the training product.

Outcomes of validation activities will be used to inform continuous improvement of RPL tools and processes.

### Data Reporting

All RPL outcomes must be accurately recorded and reported in accordance with AVETMISS/Total VET Activity (TVA) data reporting requirements. RPL enrolments and completions must not be under-reported or misclassified.

### Evidence Retention

RPL assessment evidence — including documentary evidence submitted by the candidate, competency conversation records, authenticity verification records, practical assessment records, gap training plans, and assessor judgement records — must be retained for a minimum of two (2) years from the date of the assessment decision, in accordance with the Compliance Requirements of the 2025 Standards for RTOs.

## Related Documents

- Training and Assessment Policy and Procedures
- Assessment Policy
- Credit Transfer Policy
- Appeals Policy and Procedure
- Complaints and Grievances Policy
- Credential Policy
- Student Handbook

## Version History

Date	Summary of Modifications Made	Version
17/02/2023	Version 1 finalised.	1.0
08/10/2025	Major revision to align with 2025 Standards for RTOs. Key changes: updated regulatory references; replaced rigid 12-month currency definition with flexible, industry-appropriate currency assessment; added Gap Training mechanism; strengthened	2.0

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	<p>student support in evidence collection; added Authenticity Verification procedure with AI-generated evidence safeguards; added RPL Assessor Credential Requirements (aligned to ASQA Credential Policy, including TAE40122/40116/40110 and skill sets); added third-party RPL arrangement statement; prohibited education agent RPL pre-assessment; added RPL Assessment Tools quality standards; added Quality Assurance (pre-use review, validation, data reporting, and evidence retention) section; added Managing Student Expectations section including higher AQF auto-exemption warning; clarified RPL fee non-refundable policy; added Credit Transfer cross-reference; added Overseas Qualifications and Experience mapping requirements; added High-Risk Work and Regulated Outcomes section; updated AQF certification documentation terminology throughout; updated all terminology to align with current training package conventions; added Related Documents section.</p>	
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