

Tips and Hints to help you prepare for Recognition of Prior Learning

What is RPL?

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is an assessment process that looks at the skills and knowledge you already have, from work, life experience and previous study, and compares them against the requirements of a nationally recognised qualification or unit of competency. Prior learning may have been gained through:

- formal learning (courses that led to a qualification or Statement of Attainment)
- non-formal learning (workshops, in-house training, vendor courses, etc.)
- informal learning (on-the-job experience, volunteering, community roles, self-directed learning).

RPL enables you to have these existing competencies recognised and may reduce the time and cost required to complete a qualification. To be recognised, you must show that your current skills and knowledge meet the industry standards in the relevant national training package. This means providing quality evidence of your experience and taking part in a structured assessment process.

Before You Apply: RPL Readiness

When you first enquire about RPL, Mars Institute will help you work out whether RPL is likely to be a good pathway for you. We will ask you to complete an RPL Expression of Interest Form and to provide an overview of your work history and relevant qualifications.

At this stage, the information you provide does not have to be perfect or complete. It is used to decide whether RPL is appropriate for you and which units might be suitable, not to make a final assessment decision.

General Preparation Tips

To get the most out of RPL, it helps to spend some time thinking about your experience and gathering documents that show what you can do:

- 1) **Document your work history.** Be prepared to talk about your job roles and your work history. Prepare a resume or a detailed summary that outlines your work history, job roles, and responsibilities, both paid and unpaid.
- 2) **Gather position descriptions and appraisals.** Bring your position description and any performance appraisals you have from any enterprises or facilities you have worked in.
- 3) **Identify possible workplace contacts.** Your assessor may need to contact past or current supervisors, colleagues, or clients to validate your skills.
- 4) **Think about who can confirm your skill level.** Think about current or recent supervisors who have seen you work in the past 18 months and will be able to confirm your skills. The assessor will need to contact them. You may also have community contacts or even clients themselves who can vouch for your skill level.
- 5) **Collect past certificates or training records.** Include records from in-house or formal training, safety inductions, tickets (e.g., forklift), or club-based certifications.
- 6) **Prepare supporting documents.** These could be letters from employers, records of your professional development sessions, employers or clients in related industries or government agencies, acknowledgements, workplace forms (as long as they don't show client details) or other relevant documents.

You do not need to have everything ready before you speak with an assessor. RPL can feel overwhelming at first, and your assessor will help you identify what evidence is most useful and how to present it.

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Types of Evidence You Might Submit

Your collated evidence must eventually meet the rules of evidence:

- Valid - clearly related to the unit/s of competency
- Sufficient - enough to support a judgement of competence
- Authentic - it must be your own work
- Current - it should reflect recent experience (within 2 years) and current industry practice

Below are some recommended documents you can prepare and submit:

Type	Examples
Work and Employment Documentation	• Resume or work history summary • Position descriptions • Employment contracts • Work diaries, task sheets, job sheets • Logbooks • References or letters from previous employers or supervisors • Records of professional development (e.g., workshop or seminar attendance)
Training and Qualification Evidence	• General Safety Induction certification • Licences (e.g., forklift, crane, RSA, white card) • Statement of Attainment or Qualification • Results/certificates from previous assessments • Tickets or competency cards • Industry certifications • In-house or formal training records (internal or external) • Certificates from interstate or overseas training • Certificates from universities or tertiary institutions • Site competencies held record • Site inductions • Industry awards
Alternative Learning and Informal Education	• Vendor training courses • Workshops, symposiums, and informal learning events • Attendance records or completion evidence from employer-based learning
Visual and Demonstrative Evidence	• Videos or photographs of work you've undertaken • DVD/CD/USB evidence of job tasks • Work samples or completed projects • Portfolio of work • Project briefs or reports
Verification and Testimonial Evidence	• Third-party reports • Letters of support from clients or community members • Contact details of referees who can verify your skills and experience • Membership of relevant professional associations • Hobbies or special skills related to the qualification area

Your assessor will help you match these types of evidence to specific units of competency.

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Steps in the RPL Process

Step 1 – Provide information about your skills and experience

Should you wish to apply for RPL, you may contact Mars Institute Admissions and request an RPL Application Kit. Complete the forms and provide as much information of your previous experience as you can. This helps us understand your background and determine whether RPL is a suitable pathway for you.

Depending on the industry you have worked in, you may or may not have documentary evidence available. This should not deter you from seeking RPL, as the Assessor will work with you during the RPL process to identify the suitable evidence sources to support your application.

If you are eligible to apply for RPL, you will be asked to complete Mars Institute's RPL Application Kit and submit supporting evidence. You will also need to supply contact details of one or two work referees who can confirm your skills in the industry.

In some cases, after your Assessor has reviewed your RPL Kit and discussed your evidence with you, they may identify evidence gaps. If this happens, the Assessor will record the gaps and may allow you to submit one supplementary set of evidence by a specified due date.

Step 2 – Conversation with Assessor

An assessor will review the information you have provided (usually with you) and begin to match up your skills to the units/subjects in the qualification. At this point, you will have the opportunity to discuss and identify your previous experience with the assessor who will understand your industry experience and conduct a competency conversation with you. You will be required to answer industry related questions to identify your current skills, and your assessor may contact your referees or employer to help confirm your experience.

Step 3 – Practical demonstration of your skills

The assessor will conduct a practical skills test (challenge test) at your workplace (if appropriate) or at another suitable venue. This, again, is an opportunity to demonstrate your level of competence. This assessment will be focused on skills that are required in the qualification. Your assessor will identify the skills that he/she will want you to demonstrate and will observe you performing these tasks.

Step 4 – Gap training and further steps

After the assessment, your assessor will give you information about the skills that have been recognised. If you do have skill gaps, these may be addressed through gap training and assessment, which may be delivered through flexible training.

It is important to note that RPL may not be granted for 100% of a qualification. Where gaps in competency are identified, additional training and assessment may be required. Once you have successfully completed any required gap training and assessment, and all units in your course have been achieved, you will be issued with the applicable certification documentation in line with Mars Institute's Issuing Certifications Policy and Process.

If you do not agree with the outcome of your RPL assessment, you may appeal any RPL decision through Mars Institute's Complaints and Appeals process.

For further information, please refer to Mars Institute's [RPL Policy](#).