Contemporary Recognition Practice

Recognition has become part of our regular practice. It is a valuable service for students to enable them to get credit for what they already know and do, and to enable them to focus their study on what is new. Through recognition students can complete their qualifications in reduced time. As a Registered Training Organisation we are required to have effective recognition practices as an integral part of our delivery (RTO Standard 1).

Assessment for recognition is just another assessment where evidence of performance is judged against the requirements of units of competency. The strategies used for assessment may differ, but ultimately the assessment decision is based on the evidence.

The Institute’s Recognition Procedures (WSI Intranet) relate to the TAFE NSW Recognition Policy (DEC Intranet) and the NSW Recognition Framework (pdf – 630KB).

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<tr>
<th>Articulation</th>
<th>A process that enables students to progress from one completed qualification to another with credit in a defined pathway</th>
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<tr>
<td>Credit Transfers</td>
<td>Direct credit is provided to students for specified learning previously completed in TAFE NSW or another RTO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)</td>
<td>Credit provided to students for previously unrecognised skills and knowledge achieved outside the formal education system and/or currently being practised</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recognition of Current Competence (RCC)</td>
<td>This applies if a client has previously successfully completed a unit and is now required to be reassessed to ensure that the competence is being maintained. RCC may be applicable in situations where it is necessary for individuals to demonstrate that they have maintained competency in specific units in order, for example, to obtain a licence for their trade or profession.</td>
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All WSI students are encouraged to apply for credit at any time in the qualification in which they are enrolled and should be supported by staff in all aspects of this process. This process includes:
• Students will receive clear guidance about the requirements of the unit and the evidence needed to enable the assessor to make a judgement about competence
• The process should not be onerous for the student
• Assessors should avoid over-assessment

For more information, the procedures to be followed and the forms to be used, see the WSI Recognition Procedures (WSI Intranet). An important separate procedure provides guidelines about Managing Potential Conflict of Interest (WSI Intranet) in assessment practice, including recognition.

Strategies for assessment for Recognition

The traditional practice of requiring paper-based portfolios of evidence is not the preferred approach to gathering evidence for recognition. The table below describes some effective strategies for contemporary recognition practice.

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<th>Description</th>
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<td>Observation of performance</td>
<td>Where possible, the preferred strategy is for the assessor to observe the student demonstrating skills in the workplace. Where this is not feasible, demonstration of skills in a simulated workplace is the next best option. To minimise the amount of time required, the observation can be supplemented by consideration of work samples provided by the candidate and third party reports of workplace performance.</td>
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| Structured competency conversations      | A competency conversation between a candidate and the assessor is structured around key questions that are related to the units of competency. The key questions are open-ended and are designed to allow the candidate to discuss relevant examples of their work and experience. In competency conversations, the assessor guides the conversation to areas of the candidate’s experience that will shed the most light on relevant skills and knowledge. They are very different from oral exams. The assessor will probe and prompt to elicit more information as required. In order to conduct effective competency conversations, assessors need:  
  • A thorough knowledge of the units of competency as practised in the current work environment  
  • Experience in assessing those units  
  • A validated assessment tool designed for the purpose, containing appropriate trigger questions  
  • The ability to communicate effectively with a range of candidates |

A note of caution: When candidates are seeking recognition in very practical qualifications, say at Certificate II or III, assessors need to be sure that a candidate with limited communication skills is not disadvantaged. Perhaps observation of practical skills is a more valid assessment strategy.

Self-evaluation for RPL (website) from DET Queensland, and West1 (website) resources from WA DET have sample recognition tools for many different vocational areas including questions to use in competency conversations.
**Group Recognition** is an RPL model where a group of people are gathered together to gain recognition. *Usually* they are:
- Employed in the same or similar roles
- Seeking recognition for the same or similar competencies

Group Recognition is built around the value of ‘professional conversations’ – between candidate and assessor, but also between candidate and candidate. These conversations throw up evidence not always apparent in documentation or one-to-one RPL interviews.

In the past, the emphasis of Recognition processes has been on candidates preparing lengthy portfolios of documentary evidence. While this is no longer a key strategy for recognition, there will be times when documents, such as resumes, work samples and third party reports, will provide evidence to demonstrate the candidate’s skills and knowledge. These should be used sparingly. The process of recognition should not involve the candidate in amassing a weighty portfolio of documents (often of dubious relevance). The process should not become assessment by the kilogram!

Adapted from “Frequently Asked Questions about recognition of prior learning”, Qld DET

**What records need to be kept of Recognition processes?**

Similar to all assessments undertaken, documentation must be retained about the process of the assessment and a description of the evidence considered when the decision was made, as well as any items of evidence that are able to be stored. See the ASQA General Direction on [Retention requirements for completed students assessment items](https://www.asqa.gov.au/fileadmin/ASQA/Guidance_Directions/Retention/Retention_requirements_for_completed_students_assessment_items.pdf) (pdf – 325KB).

The process of conducting the recognition assessment can generate suitable documentation of the assessment process. For example:
- an observation of a performance will be recorded on a checklist
- a structured competency conversation will be recorded on an assessment tool that includes the unit requirements and the key questions to be asked
- consideration of workplace documents will be recorded on a checklist, where the relevant evidence provided by the documents will be noted

**Links to useful resources**

These resources cover a range of industry areas and recognition strategies. While some of the Training Packages and units of competency may be out of date, the tools and strategies can be adapted for current units:
- [State Training Services RPL Guides](http://www.training.qld.gov.au/rpl/) (website) for assessors and candidates
- [TAFE NSW Recognition Policy](http://www.teachers.nsw.edu.au/) (DEC Intranet)
- [NSW Skills Online RPL Catalogue](http://www.skills.nsw.gov.au/) (website)
- [WA Recognition Resources](http://www.wa.gov.au/wrcca) (website) – Complete kits for many qualifications
- [Queensland Self-evaluation for RPL](http://www.skills.qld.gov.au/) (website)
- [RPL Done Well](http://www.rpldonewell.com.au/) (website) – In particular, see the article "A common sense, client-centred approach" by Brian Spencer