



## Dental Nursing Australia

# RECONITION OF PRIOR LEARNING POLICY AND PROCEDURES

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to outline the procedure for application for recognition of prior learning.

## SCOPE

This policy applies to all students enrolled within Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses of study offered by the Registered Training Organisation, Dental Nursing Australia.

## TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)** is an assessment process that involves assessment of an individual's relevant prior learning (including formal, informal and non-formal learning) to determine the credit outcomes of an individual application for course credit.

**Formal Learning** is the learning that takes place through a structured program of learning delivered by a registered education provider, and which leads to the full or partial achievement of an officially accredited qualification.

**Informal Learning** is learning gained through work, social, family, hobby or leisure activities and experiences.

**Non-formal learning** refers to learning that takes place through a structured program of learning, but does not directly lead to full or partial achievement of an officially accredited qualification.

**Currency** relates to the applicant's ability to demonstrate current industry skills, knowledge and understanding, so the evidence provided should be from either the present or recent past.

## POLICY

The Dental Nursing Australia applies a systematic institution-wide approach to the granting of course credit which does not unfairly advantage or disadvantage any existing or prospective student.

Students are not required to repeat learning activities, regardless of how or where the learning was acquired, providing that the learning is current and relevant to the competencies within a unit applicable to the qualification in which they are or seek to be enrolled. These learning experiences include the individual's relevant formal, informal and non-formal learning.

Credit applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis and in a timely manner to ensure that all candidates are able to make well-informed choices about study options, pathways and alternatives by taking into account the credit they can expect.

Dental Nursing Australia provides a RPL assessment process for students and standard RPL fees will apply. Dental Nursing Australia performs the **Recognition of Prior Formal Learning** function with a fee charge, with its enrolment service. Irrespective of outcome, a service fee applies to each subject within an application received on or after the day of commencement of the relevant unit, unless the candidate is eligible for the VET FEE-HELP deferred payment option.

Where the process relates to the **Recognition of Prior Informal or Non-formal Learning**, a service fee applies to each subject, irrespective of outcome or time of submission, unless the candidate is eligible for the VET FEE-HELP deferred payment option.

Candidates are required to complete the appropriate section of the *Application for Skills Recognition* and provide supportive evidence appropriate to the type of prior learning. This evidence will be assessed and, if necessary, an interview held at which the candidate may provide additional evidence of the relevant competencies or demonstrate the relevant skills. For overseas applicants and those not living within reasonable travel distance to a College campus, this interview and/or demonstration may be conducted by telephone or on-campus after arrival.

Dental Nursing Australia reserves the right not to recognise part or all of any previous experience if the assessor believes that the competencies or knowledge demonstrated and recorded fall significantly short of the industry standard as stated within the relevant National Training Package or accredited course. In such a case, the candidate will be required to complete further training in the unit.

There is no limit to the amount of RPL that can be granted to any one student. A full qualification can be attained in this way, and a special RPL fee would apply in such circumstances, based on 40% of the private standard course cost.

## VET FEE-HELP COURSES

A Unit of Study within a VET FEE-HELP (VFH) eligible program may consist of one or more Learning Units, into which is embedded one or more national Units of Competency. Applications for RPL may apply to an entire VFH Unit of Study, or target specific embedded subjects. As stated below, differing conditions will apply, depending on whether the RPL involves assessment of formal, or informal and non-formal prior learning. Irrespective of the type of prior learning or the outcome of the application, if the application is received after the commencement of Unit of Study, a service fee will be charged. The RPL Unit of Study's published tuition fee will apply, unless Special Consideration is applicable. This is the case, whether or not the eligible local student selects the VFH option of deferred payments.

### Prior formal learning

Applications for recognition of prior formal learning for an entire unit of competency will be processed with a fee. The student will not be required to participate in any of the subjects embedded within that unit of competency, and no standard tuition fee will apply.

However, a student may also apply for recognition of prior formal learning for one or more unit of competency.

If he/she provides appropriate evidence against those Learning Units, but still needs to attend class for the other embedded Learning Units, then the published tuition fee for the RPL Unit of Study will apply. The student will not be required however to attend the Learning Unit(s) for which credit has been granted. Normal fees apply for the standard tuition.

### Prior informal or non-formal learning

If credit is granted on the basis of informal or non-formal learning for all Learning Units within an entire Unit of Study, and substantial time/effort was involved in the assessment process, the RPL estimated Fee shown on the relevant published Schedule of Fees will apply. (Case by case as circumstances are unique for each application)

A student may apply for recognition of prior informal or non-formal learning for one or more of the Learning Units embedded within a Unit of Study. If he/she is able to demonstrate competency within those Learning Units, but still needs to attend class for the other embedded Learning Units, then the published tuition fee for the RPL Unit of Study will apply. The student will not be required however to attend the Learning Unit(s) for which credit has been granted.

## General Process

Applications for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) are administered by the Admissions team during the enrolment process, and by the Manager of Studies if submitted after the commencement of the VET course of study. Candidates are encouraged to discuss any prior learning they may have with the Admissions Team and Manager of Studies or International Manager who can provide further guidance if needed in relation to the process shown below.

- a. Candidates should think carefully about what expertise has been acquired over time, in particular whether they have 'depth' of knowledge and/or strong skills in specific areas.
- b. If the candidate wishes to proceed with the application, he/she should obtain a relevant application form from International Manager at Dental Nursing Australia.
- c. Candidates already on campus should consult with the Manager of Studies, who will provide the appropriate application form and additional guidance.
- d. Once the application form has been completed by the candidate, it should be submitted as part of the *Application for Admission* for prospective students or to the Manager of Studies for current students. It is expected that such applications would occur by the end of the first week of the relevant subject.
- e. Applications must be accompanied by original or certified copy documents (e.g. Awards, Statements of Attainment, subject descriptors from other education providers, work samples or letters on letterhead from current and/or previous employers.)
- f. The RPL assessment will include the verification of the currency, equivalency, and authenticity of the documents submitted. Overseas and domestic academic qualifications presented for an application for course credit will be authenticated by:
  - Original documents (i.e. award and transcript of results) being provided by the candidate to the authorised College representative; or
  - Copies of the original documents (i.e. award and transcript of results) being provided by the candidate which have been either:
    - Notarised by a Justice of the Peace or equivalent authority; or
    - Verified as a true and correct copy of the original documents by an authorised College representative.

Should the College representative suspect that the academic document presented has been altered or fraudulently created, contact will be made with the conferring institution to validate the claims of the candidate.

All claimed work experience must be relevant to the qualification, and should be within the last five years of the date of application. Candidates must provide Statements of Service on official company letterhead providing contact details of the employer. Past employers are contacted to verify work experience on a case-by-case basis.

- g. This evidence will be assessed, and if necessary, an interview will be held at which the candidate may provide additional evidence of the relevant competencies or demonstrate the relevant skills. For overseas candidates or others not living within

reasonable travel distance to the College campus, this interview and/or demonstration may be conducted by telephone or on-campus after arrival.

h. After this assessment process, the Manager of Studies will provide a written notification explaining the units for which credit has been granted, and those which have been declined and why.

i. If the candidate is dissatisfied with the outcome, he/she has the option to appeal against the decision, but must do so within twenty (20) working days of the date nominated on the written notification.

j. If the candidate is currently enrolled, he/she must attend all scheduled classes until the written notification is received, and until he/she has signed and returned that to the Manager of Studies.

## Procedures

This policy and procedure has been developed with reference to the following sources:

[http://www.vetinfonet.det.wa.edu.au/progdev/docs/rpl\\_3rd\\_edition.pdf](http://www.vetinfonet.det.wa.edu.au/progdev/docs/rpl_3rd_edition.pdf)

This document outlines Dental Nursing Australia policy and process for students to be granted recognition of prior learning if they have suitable prior training and/or experience.

### According to the AQF National Principles and Operational Guidelines, RPL can be used in two ways:

- As an alternative mechanism for gaining access to a course or qualification. A candidate may gain entry to a course or qualification using RPL as an alternative to possessing the prerequisites for entry based on formal education and training. An example of this is a candidate who obtains a place in a diploma course using RPL (based on life or work experience) when they have not completed the relevant prerequisites; and/or
- For the award of unit/s of competency that form part of a qualification, leading to the partial or full completion of the requirements for that course or qualification.

RPL may use different assessment methods, but they should be no less and no more rigorous than conventional methods of assessing competence in the VET sector.

### To recognise prior learning we ensure:

- That candidates know that RPL provides an alternative pathway to course attendance (through this policy provided on orientation day, web site, student handbook, acceptance contract and contacting the Manager of Studies or International Manager at our Head Office.
- In consultation with the candidate, the learning, skills and knowledge that the candidate is able to demonstrate against the learning outcomes or performance criteria of the course or qualification for which the candidate is seeking entry or the award of credit.

- Whether any further evidence is needed to support the claim of competence and arrange for appropriate additional learning experiences or gap training where appropriate.
- Conduct an assessment confirms competence. To make RPL a user-friendly assessment pathway, assessors need to adopt a flexible and interactive approach, and provide information, advice and feedback to RPL candidates in the same way that they provide support and assistance to all candidates seeking to have their skills developed and assessed.

It is particularly important when candidates are not engaged in a structured learning program that they receive advice about what is required of them and that they not be constricted by inappropriately applied paper-based or knowledge-based assessment methods.

The nature of the support provided may differ from that which is made available to other candidates but the level and quality of that support will influence outcomes for candidates seeking RPL in the same ways as it influences other candidates.

### Process in summary

Applications for recognition of prior learning can be accepted if:

- the student is enrolled in an approved course of Dental Nursing Australia, and
- the appropriate fee has been paid.

### To start the process

An application for Recognition of Prior Learning/Course Credit form is available from the Manager of Studies or International Manager, or Administration Staff [admin@dnakingston.com.au](mailto:admin@dnakingston.com.au).

### An Assessment Resource for VET practitioners Support for Lecturing and Assessing Staff

[http://www.vetinfonet.det.wa.edu.au/progdev/docs/rpl\\_3rd\\_edition.pdf](http://www.vetinfonet.det.wa.edu.au/progdev/docs/rpl_3rd_edition.pdf)

it is better to use plain English (not training package terminology) and the application form is therefore a simple one. It is intended that if an applicant thinks they may be eligible for RPL they complete the form and are given a self-evaluation tool where they can more accurately assess their 'prior learning' against the training package requirements for the unit/s in which they are applying for RPL. This more detailed self assessment will enable applicants to decide whether to proceed with the process.

### Preparation/information provision to candidate

In planning for any assessment, assessors need to provide adequate information prior to, throughout and after a training and assessment experience. They need to be fully aware of the needs of the candidate, any relevant workplace personnel and the requirements of the Training Package unit of competency or qualification. Information is to be provided to the candidate about the assessment process. It will give particular advice regarding how the candidate can demonstrate their competence and any documentary evidence a candidate may wish to gather to support their application.

Each industry has unique documents that can provide evidence of experience and competence. However, the focus of the new streamlined holistic assessment process is to focus on demonstrated skills and knowledge and not to rely on documentary evidence as the main source of evidence.

Some examples of documentary evidence that can support the process include:

- Licences
- Brief CV or work history
- Certificates/results of assessment
- Tickets held eg forklift, crane etc
- Photographs of work undertaken
- Diaries
- Task sheets/job sheets
- Log books
- Site training records
- Pay slips
- Membership of relevant professional associations
- References/letters/third party verification reports from previous employers/supervisors
- Industry awards
- Performance appraisals, Duty statements

These items may be used to support the candidate's claim to competency throughout the RPL process. However, they should not be seen as a sole or sufficient determinant of competence, which is more properly and effectively assessed through interaction, dialogue and the practical demonstration of tasks.

First, it is necessary to extract from the Training Package the job tasks involved in the demonstration of competence, and then to group these job tasks into clusters or "skill sets". These will form the basis of the content of the assessment templates to be used throughout the different steps in the assessment process (as set out below).

It is usually appropriate to cluster competencies into more holistic assessment tasks, or task-based clusters, to generate accurate evidence. Competencies that are conceived as separate in the Training Package might, for some candidates, be intimately connected in practice, and thus not easy to separate out from one another. An approach that clusters units of competency where there is commonality in content prevents duplication of assessment, and can provide for a more realistic demonstration of competence. This requires looking at a whole picture of a particular job role as it happens in industry and assessing holistically.

This approach saves valuable time in the assessment process. After reviewing all the information, the candidate may still decide not to progress with the formal RPL assessment process by not applying for RPL.

## The stages

Following this preparatory stage of providing information to the candidate about the assessment process, and determining the job tasks and any clustering of competencies appropriate for the candidate, four stages toward RPL assessment are to be followed:

- Stage 1: self evaluation completed by candidate
- Stage 2: interview with assessor
- Stage 3: demonstration/observation of tasks
- Stage 4: provision of further supporting evidence.

### Stage one: Candidate Self Evaluation

Upon first applying for RPL, the candidate is supplied with a self evaluation tool—such as a checklist or proforma—with questions/criteria based upon real job tasks, as interpreted from the Training Package unit/s of competency, and written in plain English (not Training Package terminology).

The self evaluation tool provides an opportunity for the candidate to self-determine their level of experience and knowledge in the relevant industry. It also provides an overview of the level of the candidate's background experience to assist the assessor to determine if the candidate is likely to be a successful candidate for RPL. It is also an important first stage in identifying where the candidate may have gaps in training skills and knowledge.

If a written self evaluation form is not appropriate to the task, or does not suit the particular needs of the candidate, they should be given the option of providing a verbal self evaluation before the College assessor. In some cases, a support person may also be used.

Useful sample self evaluation tools are made available through vetinfonet and Dental Nursing Australia. All Dental Nursing Australia Staff, attend staff development and orientation regarding RPL processes. Trainers/assessors are made sure that they read the following document available to download at the vetinfonet website:

[http://www.vetinfonet.det.wa.edu.au/progdev/docs/rpl\\_3rd\\_edition.pdf](http://www.vetinfonet.det.wa.edu.au/progdev/docs/rpl_3rd_edition.pdf)

The website also includes a variety of useful RPL tools, forms and information

Examples:

- Template self-evaluation form for candidate
- Template 3rd party evidence report
- Template evidence matrix

Dental Nursing Australia also has a number of documents available on the shared drive for adapting by assessors and through the vetinfonet website link:

<http://vetinfonet.det.wa.edu.au/progDev/RPL.aspx?menu=4&menuItem=2>

College trainers/assessors can also access a considerable amount of useful information on RPL on the link above and should regularly check for updated information relating to RPL.

## Stage two: Interview

If, according to the information provided by the self evaluation, the candidate demonstrates potential for recognition of prior learning, the next stage involves undergoing further evidence gathering via an interview. The purpose of the interview step is to determine that the candidate is in fact entitled to skip the training process and is ready to be assessed.

This component of the RPL assessment process provides an opportunity for the candidate and the assessor to have a professional conversation about the candidate's required knowledge and skills.

It may comprise a series of direct questions or could be a list of topics for discussion drawn from the list of required skills and knowledge. Discussion around topics may provide an opportunity for candidates to demonstrate a broader area of knowledge and experience and may elicit more information than direct questioning. Appropriate responses to questions or topics that should be covered in the conversation should be included as these will support the assessor in probing for more specific information.

If applicable, it is preferable to conduct this interview process in a workplace or work related environment, so that the candidate is able to refer to examples or draw upon their environment to further support the verbal expression of their competency.

Assessor instructions should indicate which questions/topics are critical to the assessment. An appropriate recording mechanism could be included—such as a purpose-built form and/or a digital recorder—to create a reliable record of the interview for later reference. Permission will be required should you wish to utilize a recording device.

## Stage three: demonstration/observation

If the interview demonstrates the candidate's verbal and theoretical knowledge to a sufficient standard, the next stage is to observe and assess the candidate's performance in practice, through the observation of practical tasks performed either in the workplace or simulated workplace environment.

Practical tasks provide the opportunity for the candidate to demonstrate the application of skills and knowledge of a qualification. These practical assessments must be designed to reflect job tasks and be developed using the elements extracted from the units of competency. Developers will need to refer to the Training Package for specific industry requirements. To assess in actual workplace situations, processes will need to be put in place to enable assessors to gain permission to access workplaces.

A list of resources required for the practical tasks also needs to be included. Observation and questioning on the job will speed up and streamline the assessment process. As stated earlier, in some cases it might be more effective to group separate competencies into certain task-based clusters. Observation checklists should be used to provide a record of the practical assessment. The checklists must provide opportunity for sufficient detail of the on the job assessment to be recorded. This documentary evidence provides sources of evidence to external sources, (auditors, fellow assessors) that support the assessor judgement. Template documents are available on vetinfonet for tailoring to meet the particular circumstances of the RPL.

## Stage four: provision of further evidence

To complement the record of stages 1-3, the candidate might provide further documentary evidence to support their competency profile as demonstrated in the prior stages of assessment. The types of documentary evidence that may be provided to further support the candidate's claim to competency are the same as those listed at the preparatory stage above, for instance, third-party verification reports, job logs, or photographs of work undertaken.

## Finalisation of RPL process

Once the stages have been completed, the trainer can complete the Record of RPL/Course Credit Granted Form, which will include reasons for the amount of RPL given. Students are required to sign (or otherwise accept) the Record of RPL/Course Credit Granted. (If a student does not accept the amount of course credit granted, they are informed that they can access the Dental Nursing Australia Complaints and Appeals process). Students will be given a copy of the Record of RPL/Course Credit Granted Form for their records, and a copy will be kept on the student's file. If necessary the duration of study will be adjusted accordingly.

If DNA Kingston grants the student course credit for RPL which leads to a shortening of the student's course before the student visa is granted, the eCoE will indicate the actual net course duration for the course. If the RPL/course credit granted will not affect the duration of the course, Dental Nursing Australia records the RPL/course credit in the student's file but does not need to take any other action.

If the RPL/course credit granted will affect the duration of the course, the International Manager, records a change of course duration on PRISMS. To do this, the uses the Student Course Variation function, and indicates that the student has requested a change to the existing enrolment. The International Manager then chooses 'transfer student into same course' and then changes the end date of the course. This process will result in the creation of a new CoE (with the revised end date) and the cancellation of the original CoE.

If RPL is granted, tuition fees to the value of that subject's worth will be deducted from the total course cost.

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) - and any course credit given as a result of the RPL process - are applicable only to the course in which the student is enrolled at the time of applying for RPL. If a student changes courses, any RPL/course credit granted will be reassessed to ensure that it still remains appropriate.

## Fees for RPL process

It is anticipated that fees will vary as each RPL application will be unique. However, DNA Kingston will not charge more than the current stated tuition fee for the unit/(s) for which RPL is requested by an applicant.

## Developing RPL assessment tools

In accordance with the National VET standards, RPL assessment tools must:

- Be designed in accordance with the principles of assessment and the rules of evidence
- Meet the requirements of the relevant Training Package or accredited course
- Meet workplace and, where relevant, regulatory requirements.
- They should also incorporate the assessment of generic employability skills and be validated to the same standard as regular assessment processes.
- Principles of assessment and rules of evidence
- Your assessments are required to conform to the principles of assessment.

### RPL tools that are designed must ensure that the RPL evidence: Fulfil the principles of assessment

- Valid (assesses what it says it does)?
- Reliable (other assessors would make the same judgement with the same evidence)?
- Flexible (the needs of the candidate are taken into account in terms of the methods, the time and the place)?
- Fair (for all candidates, avenues of appeal should be open to candidates)?
- Your evidence gathering needs to comply with the rules of evidence, ie your assessment methods,

### Fulfil the rules of evidence

- Valid (covers all requirements of the unit of competency)
- Sufficient (enables you to make a decision about competence over time and in different situations)
- Current (competent performance is contemporary)
- Authentic (is the candidate's own work).

## Evidence matrix

An evidence matrix should be developed to demonstrate how units of competency are assessed within the RPL assessment tool. The components of the units of competency are to be cross-matched in this table with the corresponding component of the assessment tool (self evaluation if appropriate, interview questions, practical tasks and supporting evidence).

The evidence matrix validates the assessment process against the qualification. Developers are to include records as required to provide evidence of the assessment process.

## Industry consultation and validation

To deliver outcomes relevant to the context of employment, assessment tools are required to be developed in consultation with the relevant industry. This is the case both for paper-based tools such as checklists and questionnaires, and for the development of simulated and actual workplace assessments.

Dental Nursing Australia Manager of Studies and Senior Lecturers should consider forming partnerships with local enterprises (Reference Groups) who might provide validation opportunities and access to a workplace or equipment, authentic workplace documents or advice on how to create a realistic simulated environment.

## Validation processes

To ensure the overall quality and consistency of RPL assessment practices, it is necessary to submit the RPL assessment records to the same process of self-auditing and validation as all other assessment procedures.

With respect to RPL, it is important that assessment conducted as part of RPL is validated alongside samples of regular assessment processes, to ensure consistency and parity of assessment across all instances of assessment, whether undertaken at the end of a course of training, or as a result of RPL application.

These validation processes should aim to ensure the transparency, accountability and consistency of RPL procedures in terms of the provision of information, the preparation and assessment of candidates, and the delivery of assessment outcomes, and their parity with regular assessment procedures in terms of confidence and rigour.

## Continuous Improvement

At the end of each semester, the Manager of Studies, CEO, Senior Lecturers and International Manager and any trainers who have been involved in applications for recognition of prior learning in the semester will meet to review the records of course credit granted along with general review of resources, delivery and assessment of programmes. They will review all programmes as well as the applications made and the level of course credits granted to applicants and ensure that fair and consistent levels of course credit has been granted. They will also ensure validation alongside samples of regular assessment processes, to ensure consistency and parity of assessment across all instances of assessment, whether undertaken at the end of a course of training, or as a result of RPL application.

A record of the review (and its outcomes) will be completed by the Manager of Studies and, where improvements to the RPL application process are identified, these will be implemented with immediate effect. The record of the review and implementation of improvements will be maintained by the Manager of Studies in a file in their office.



**Dental Nursing Australia  
Recognition of Prior Learning  
Application Form**

Date:.....

Applicants Name:.....

Address:.....

Contact Phone:.....Mobile:.....

Email:.....

Student ID:.....

**SECTION A: IF YOU ARE APPLYING FOR RPL/COURSE CREDIT IN THE WHOLE  
QUALIFICATION**

Qualification code e.g. BSB50207, Qualification title e.g. Diploma of Business

.....  
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**SECTION B: IF YOU ARE APPLYING FOR RPL/COURSE CREDIT IN A  
FULL/PARTIAL UNIT TOWARDS A QUALIFICATION UNIT CODE  
e.g.FNSICGEN301B, UNIT TITLE e.g. Communicate in the Work Place**

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.....  
.....  
.....

Student  
signature:.....Date:.....

Please send all completed forms and supporting information / evidence to: Dental  
Nursing Australia,  
P.O. Box 69, Belmont, 6984, W.A. Head Office: 37 Hargreaves Street, Belmont  
Ph- 1300855503, Email: [admin@dnakingston.com.au](mailto:admin@dnakingston.com.au)

Office only: Date received.....Processing  
Lecturer.....

<b>Provider No: 52256</b>

<b>Success Training Company Pty Ltd</b>
<b>Dental Nursing Australia</b>
<b>Policies and Procedures</b>
<b>Policy Title:</b> Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and Procedure
<b>Policy Number:</b> Vol:11 0714 RPL SL
<b>Policy Date:</b> April 2015
<b>Policy Renewal:</b> April 2016
<b>Responsibility:</b> Compliance Manager