

Frequently Asked Questions: Recognizing Prior Learning (RPL)

What is RPL?

RPL is a process in which individuals have the opportunity to obtain credit for high school-level knowledge and skills gained outside the classroom and/or through other educational programs. It can include work experience, on-the-job training, corporate training programs, self-directed study, non-credit courses, community work, and life experiences. A variety of assessment tools can be used by the adult learning centre to assess an individual's learning to the outcomes of a course. The assessment can determine what you have gained and whether your learning equals or exceeds the knowledge, skills, and competencies required by particular courses offered at the adult learning centre.

What is meant by prior learning?

Prior learning is any learning that an individual has acquired from formal education, work and/or volunteer experience, personal study and any other activities (i.e. hobbies, travel, training programs, community life, etc.) that resulted in knowledge and skills. Learners may have acquired high school level learning through these significant work and life experiences which may be equivalent to the knowledge, skills and values expected in high school level courses.

How does RPL work?

In a RPL process, you work with an advisor and an assessor to:

- Set expectations about what PLAR can do for you and how your prior learning can be proved
- Gather information on your related past experiences and accomplishments
- Assess what you have learned and determine how it can be translated into accredited skills and knowledge
- Prove your learning through a variety of means including practical demonstrations, interviews, portfolio development, formal testing.

How can RPL help a learner?

RPL can assist a learner to:

- Identify personal strengths and goals
- Prove knowledge and abilities for employment
- Gain academic credits
- Attain occupational licensing or certification
- Identify training gaps
- Shorten training time
- Save time and money

Why “Do” RPL?

Important adult learning takes place outside of educational institutions. High school level learning may be acquired in settings or activities such as the workplace, community, non-credit courses, volunteer activities, travel, etc... We know credentials are increasing even for entry level jobs. The changing job market requires adults to re-skill, re-train

more frequently than ever before. By providing opportunities for PLAR/RPL the Adult Learning Centres (ALCs) are better able to meet the needs of learners.

How do I know if RPL is right for me?

RPL is for adult learners who have significant work and life experience and learning which may be equivalent to high school level courses. Learners should be able to apply learning acquired in different situations and places of work. The learning should be current, relevant to the course and of sufficient breadth and depth to ensure high school level learning.

How long will RPL take?

RPL does take some time. During the process, you will be asked to identify and gather information on your past experiences and accomplishments. That learning will then need to be assessed, proven, and recognized. The length of the process will depend largely on the assessment you use to demonstrate learning and the amount of time you require to prepare for assessment.

An advisor at the ALC can let you know how much time and effort will be required to complete your PLAR/RPL.

Is there a cost involved in RPL at an Adult Learning Centre?

There is no cost to the adult learner. No direct fees will be charged for advising and assessing.

Who will evaluate my prior learning?

A certified teacher/instructor who is qualified to teach the course will assess the level of learning with the stated learning outcomes of the course.

A certified teacher/instructor will:

- agree to and review an assessment plan
- judge evidence and provide feedback
- make an assessment decision using differing sources of evidence and provide feedback

What is a portfolio?

A portfolio is an organized collection of evidence that shows accomplishments both in and out of school. A portfolio is a detailed document which describes and verifies knowledge, skills, and achievements as well as personal goals.

What are the benefits of RPL?

For the adult learner:

- encourages adults to pursue education
- eliminates duplication of learning
- increases access
- may shorten the time to complete a high school diploma
- increases self-esteem and self-confidence
- validates learning gained through work and life experiences
- identifies program areas requiring further study

- Assists with career development and education planning

For the Adult Learning Centre

- Furthers the development of adult learning and teaching practices
- Broadens understanding of assessment and evaluation
- Renewal process – new perspectives on teaching/learning/assessing
- Increases institutional efficiency by eliminating the need for unnecessary training
- Increases student recruitment and retention
- Catalyst for organizational self-reflection/change
- Meets the needs of a wider range of learners
- Provides an important service for business, industry, and community

Does RPL give credit for experience?

No, high school level credit is not awarded for experience. Credit for prior learning is awarded for the learning (i.e. What you know and can do in relation to course outcomes) gained from work and life experiences and /or formal study. Prior learning is any learning that an individual has acquired from formal education, work and/or volunteer experience, personal study and any other life activities (i.e. Hobbies, travel, training programs, community life, etc.) that resulted in knowledge and skills. PLAR/RPL provides the learner with the opportunity to prove prior learning to the course outcomes.

How many course credits can be awarded through RPL process?

An individual may be granted up to 100% credit in a program. There is not limit to the number of courses that a student may RPL.

*As stated in the *Mature Student Graduation Requirements (2003)*, “any credit, including required credits, may be completed by a mature student through Prior Learning Assessment or the Challenge for Credit Option.”*

How will RPL credit be recorded on a transcript?

The ALC will record credits completed through RPL in the same way that grades are normally transcribed in a course, using a percentage mark to indicate the learner’s performance in the course relative to the outcomes identified for the course.