



RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

What is Recognition of Prior Learning?

Defined, Recognition of Prior Learning¹ (RPL) is the process that acknowledges the skills and abilities that you have built up via prior study, which includes both formal, informal, and non-formal learning, along with work experience, other skills gained and areas like volunteering.

It describes a process used by colleges, and universities, adult learning centres, training institutions and HR professionals around the world to evaluate skills and knowledge for the purpose of recognising competence against a set of standards, learning outcomes or competencies. This process can be beneficial in Scouting as well.

For Scouting it means...

Essentially, if an Adult Volunteer for a role or appointment has **previous qualifications, skills and knowledge** that are considered 'current'², it could be used in determining only what Scout training is necessary, depending on the evidence provided and the assessment of knowledge and skills. A good example is if an ambulance paramedic comes to Scouting as an Adult Volunteer, do they really need to do 'First Aid and Emergencies' as part of their Scout training?

If the knowledge and skills, relevant work experience or other evidence is linked or 'mapped' directly against what is required in Scout training as defined by the NSO/NSA, individual adults should be able to have that prior learning recognised. The *WOSM Wood Badge Framework* is clear about this.

Through RPL on what has been already achieved, completing components of Scout training may be less time-consuming without having to repeat the same learnings that have already been experienced.

The key component of the process is 'Evidence'

Often, it is the informal and non-formal learning experiences that can make the most contribution towards providing the evidence towards RPL. Evidence are items which are provided to show what the adult can do, is competent in or has the capacity to undertake certain tasks with the required knowledge and skills. It can be in hard copy or digital form and can include pictures/photographs, certificates, testimonials. Those

¹ RPL is known by different names in different countries. In Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa it is RPL. It is APL (Accreditation of Prior Learning, CCC (Crediting Current Competence) or APEL (Accrediting Prior Experiential Learning) in the United Kingdom, and PLAR (Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition) in Canada, where some use RPL, others RCC – Recognition of Current Competence. One system in France is known as VAE (Validation de Acquis des Experiences).

² 'Current' generally means up to 3 years for skills and knowledge, with formal educational qualifications like diplomas, degrees and other experience accepted over a longer time period. This will depend on what is acceptable in the NSO/NSA country.



things that can validate or confirm the knowledge, skills, and experience. Examples could include, but the list is not endless:

- Work history with a description of responsibilities (does this 'connect' with Scouting?)
- Degrees, certificates, training including workshops, seminars taken an active part in
- Specific courses like First-Aid, Management
- Specific outdoor pursuits – mountaineering, hiking, camping, kayaking/canoeing with documentary evidence, photographs, equipment.
- Licences required for certain trades, professions, and tasks
- Professional Associations / Bodies and the membership criteria
- References from previous employers or other NGOs or volunteer groups
- Volunteer work already undertaken
- Internships
- Other documents that show your skills and experience.

Recognition of Prior Learning Applied

While there are formal processes adopted by educational institutions and other bodies (endless forms, specific evidence, and interviews), for Scouting's purposes, we need to be a lot more flexible in allowing an adult to be able to claim 'RPL' for specific skills and knowledge (even specific educational qualifications).

Applying the 'process' can be using a simple 'checklist,' Evidence Check against a set of criteria or a 'Standard' against which the evidence can be mapped or checked. The process can even be a simple conversation with the new adult providing the necessary evidence required. Put more simply, and using an example, if the adult claims to be an experienced outdoor person skilled in kayaking, what evidence can be supplied or shown to validate the claim? Asking questions can assist to do this, but 'logbooks,' documentary evidence, photographs and other items are clearly more appropriate and can show the person/s having the conversation that the adult really is an experienced kayaker or not. Anyone can claim to be an expert at anything, it is the evidence provided that substantiates the claim for RPL.

Recognition of Prior Learning Methods

For NSOs/NSAs, it is necessary to develop a statement or policy on RPL that clearly show that the NSO/NSA is serious about RPL and for adults to be able to participate in an RPL process to have their knowledge and skills recognised. Generally, NSOs/NSAs should work with their Recruitment Officer, Adults in Scouting Commissioner Training Commissioner, or any other person in charge for RPL to design how it might be approached, as the training and adult development area is where RPL is most likely to be applied for.

It would also be useful that in the development of 'training team personnel' or those with a training capacity in the NSO/NSA, that suitable training and development is



undertaken in doing RPL 'assessments' and what to do and look for in the RPL discussion. It is not hard.

Developing simple 'Checklists' or a 'Standard' that reflects what the NSO/NSA Training Scheme is and steps that can be taken for an adult to apply for RPL is necessary for good management and practice with RPL. It need not be a complex process (the simpler the better), but whatever is done, it needs to be clear and understood and widely communicated to the NSO/NSA membership.

Using the Wood badge Competencies list is useful tools and a suitable way to develop a 'checklist' or NSO/NSA Standard for RPL. Asking for support through *WOSM Services* can also be helpful if an NSO/NSA needs specific support.

What is the role of the Recognition of Prior Learning 'Assessor'?

The person assessing the RPL usually sits down with the adult (even a virtual chat) to go through the recognition of prior learning discussion, asking any questions necessary, using 'Show me' or 'Can you describe that' type of language and importantly looking at the evidence the adult has provided for RPL. Using the term 'interview' can make it very formal, and for some adults, threatening. So, the discussion / chat should be informal, friendly, and take place in a comfortable and non-threatening environment. Hence the idea of it happening over a cup of coffee. If a 'checklist' is used in the discussion, try to make its use as a tool and not a crutch.

Outcome

If the evidence provided by the adult and the discussion that has taken place is appropriate and acceptable by the 'assessor', the adult should be aware of what is required to be done to complete their Scout training or whatever else the adult is seeking the RPL for.

Benefits of Recognition of Prior Learning

Allowing RPL of recognised knowledge and skills could allow reduced training time, more flexible training opportunities and the completion of Scout training more quickly. It can also be an incentive to complete other Scout training required later. Time impacts on many things and providing pathways to assist the adult to progress along their Scouting journey with RPL as a component is good practice.

The important thing to remember is not to make the process so complex that it becomes too difficult or too hard for someone to seek RPL. Keep it SIMPLE, keep it SMOOTH, keep it SOUND.

Visit also:

[Adult Recruitment](#)

[AIS Life Cycle – Recruitment](#)

[How To Create Job/Role Description](#)