



## AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF RURAL AND REMOTE MEDICINE

### Recognition of Prior Learning (Vocational Training) Policy: 2009

#### 1. Introduction

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a term that refers to the acknowledgement of skills and knowledge already attained in the context of awarding credit/recognition against a course of study or qualification.

RPL acknowledges skills and knowledge already attained through:

1. Prior work experience, including paid and voluntary work;
2. Formal training or study; and
3. Life experience.

#### 2. Context

RPL has many benefits including:

- Shortened training time;
- Reduced repetition of training experiences;
- More informed learning goals.

ACRRM Fellowship pathways are designed to be flexible and to recognise prior learning and experience, whilst maintaining academic rigour. A wide range of doctors with a great diversity of knowledge/experience may apply for RPL.

ACRRM encourages candidates in the Vocational Preparation Pathway through the Australian General Practice Training (AGPT) Program, Independent Pathway and Remote Vocational Training Scheme (RVTS) to apply for RPL where relevant.

ACRRM will assess applications for RPL in the following circumstances:

- On entry to or during the training program, to ascertain the total amount of training time needed to attain Fellowship;
- When changing from one Fellowship pathway to another, e.g. changing from FRACGP to FACRRM training;
- When changing training pathways, e.g. moving from Independent pathway to RVTS; and
- On the completion of the FRACGP and FARGP (or Grad Dip Rural), where a candidate is not eligible to apply for Fellowship through the Advanced Standing Process.

Whilst ACRRM will accept an application for RPL at any time during a candidate's training, early applications facilitate clear expectations and goals that can be used to inform candidates' learning experiences.

Experience acquired during a candidate's intern year cannot be used towards an application for RPL.

Where doctors wish to undertake clinical posts during a period of leave from the training program, they may wish to apply for RPL for that post. ACRRM strongly advises candidates to discuss their plans with Vocational Training at ACRRM, who can refer the matter to the ACRRM Censor. This is to ensure that the proposed clinical post has relevant educational content and appropriate supervision. This in turn will provide a greater likelihood of the post being accepted for RPL purposes.

ACRRM is happy to facilitate information and documentation of educational activities for candidates who wish to apply for RPL in other training or professional development programs.

### **3. Principles**

In order to have their prior learning and skills formally recognised to reduce overall training time, candidates must demonstrate:

- The extent to which the prior experience/learning meets the learning outcomes and completion of training requirements of the ACRRM Vocational Training Programs;
- The extent to which the experience/learning embraces the process elements of the training component, including the teaching sites; and
- The way prior experience/learning was assessed.

Simplified, these principles mean:

- What was learned or done (content);
- How was it learned or done (context); and
- How was it assessed (assessment)

Generally no more than two years of RPL will be granted to a candidate applying for RPL. There may be exceptional circumstances where the Censor will grant in excess of two years and these situations will be judged individually on their merits.

Any aspect of the training programs may become exempt due to RPL. For example, a candidate in the Vocational Preparation Pathway may be granted RPL for two years, which can include portions from core clinical, primary rural and remote and/or advanced specialised training.

### **4. Preparation of Applications for RPL**

The RPL process in itself can be a barrier to application, as candidates can perceive it to be a complex process. Candidates are encouraged to think of the process in the following terms:

- What do I know?
- How do I know it?
- What can I do?
- What have I done?
- What documents and other methods of support exist to demonstrate this?

Candidates will need to clearly identify in their applications how their prior learning/skills meet the learning outcomes of a particular content area defined within ACRRM's Primary or Advanced Curricula. They then need to provide satisfactory evidence of that learning/skill.

The responsibility for compiling, presenting and substantiating the application rests with the applicant, who must provide an RPL portfolio with sufficient supporting evidence to verify their request. Candidates training

within the AGPT or RVTS are strongly encouraged to seek the support and assistance of the Regional Training Provider or RVTS when compiling an application. In this situation the candidate should ensure that the Regional Training Provider or RVTS is informed of the intention to apply for RPL.

The portfolio will need to be prepared in electronic format. ACRRM has designed an Application Form, which will assist candidates to prepare their portfolio.

The following types of experiences and skills could be considered for RPL:

1. Prior hospital, general practice or advanced skills/specialist practice, which has been supervised or unsupervised, occurring in metropolitan or rural and remote settings in Australia or overseas;
2. Prior experience gained in overseas postings as part of defence force deployment or voluntary/paid medical aid work;
3. Prior courses of study, excluding primary undergraduate or graduate medical school training, but including course work completed at a university, medical college or other appropriate institution (deemed by the Censor)

## **5. Indicators of Acceptable Evidence**

The following items encompass the types of evidence which will assist a candidate support their application for RPL:

- 5.1 A log of verified clinical experiences obtained by the applicant, with an explanation of how these correlate to the learning outcomes of the relevant content area of the Primary Curriculum or Advanced Curricula;
- 5.2 A log of educational activities undertaken by the applicant, with an explanation of how these correlate to the learning outcomes of the of the Primary Curriculum or Advanced Curricula;
- 5.3 Where an Advanced Curriculum does not exist for an approved area of Advanced Specialised Training, the candidate should demonstrate how the clinical experience and educational activities extended beyond the learning outcomes in the Primary Curriculum;
- 5.4 Copies of feedback and assessments undertaken; and
- 5.6 Copies of conference papers, course outlines, completed clinical audits, publications and testimonials.

## **6. RPL Assessment Process**

The candidate should submit their application for RPL to the Vocational Training Team at ACRRM. The application will then be referred to The ACRRM Censor.

The Censor will assess RPL applications for sufficiency, authenticity, currency, validity, reliability and amount/type of RPL to be granted.

In exceptional circumstances (as defined by the ACRRM Board of Censors), where the evidence does not assist the ACRRM Censor to reach a definitive conclusion about RPL, they may ask the candidate to fast track to an element of the ACRRM assessment program. This option is at the sole discretion of the Board of Censors.

For example, if a candidate applied for RPL for the entire Primary Rural and Remote component of the Vocational Preparation Pathway, and the Censor felt they needed further confirmation, they may give the candidate the option of sitting the next Multiple Choice Examination. The Censor would then use the result obtained in the examination to inform their decision. This process acknowledges that a candidate may be completing a component of the assessment program in an atypical order or timeframe. The cost of assessment would still be borne by the candidate.

Processing of applications typically takes between 3 - 8 weeks. An appeals mechanism is available to unsuccessful applicants for up to 3 months from the date of notification and will be considered in accordance with the College's Appeals Procedure.