

## Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>Policy Name</b>    | Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy |
| <b>Department</b>     | Education Services                         |
| <b>Approved By</b>    | College Education Committee                |
| <b>Approval Date</b>  | November 2013                              |
| <b>Effective Date</b> | 1 January 2015                             |
| <b>Review Date</b>    | January 2018                               |
| <b>Policy Status:</b> | Revised, Version 2                         |

### 1. Purpose and scope

- 1.1. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is the formal recognition of experience obtained prior to entry to an RACP training program. The RPL process assesses previously completed structured learning, and may result in exemption from one or more components of an RACP training program.
- 1.2. The purpose of this policy is to ensure a rigorous and adequately documented process is followed in the application for, and granting of, RPL.
- 1.3. A key tenet of RACP education is that all training should be prospectively approved. This is based on the educational rationale that learning should be planned in advance in order to ensure it is educationally robust and meets RACP standards.
- 1.4. However, the RACP recognises that there are circumstances where prospective approval of training is not possible, and gives trainees the opportunity to apply for RPL in order to avoid unnecessary duplication of learning.
- 1.5. This policy defines who may apply for RPL and what categories of learning may be eligible. It describes the principles to be addressed when making an application for RPL and in assessing applications for RPL, as well as possible outcomes after assessment of an application.
- 1.6. This policy applies to all trainees, including post-Fellowship trainees, of RACP training programs (Division, Faculty and Chapter) in Australia and New Zealand.
- 1.7. This policy does not apply to prospectively approved dual or joint training programs.

**1.8.** This policy supersedes the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy version 1 (approved May 2010), the Post-Fellowship Training Requirements Policy, and the practices of 'Retrospective Certification / Retrospective Acceptance' and 'Cross-Accreditation' in an attempt to streamline and simplify all RACP processes which recognise prior learning.

## **2. Principles of RPL**

### **2.1. Validity**

The learning experience should be relevant to the training program. Validity of the learning experience is assessed through alignment with the learning objectives as set in RACP curricula standards, and consideration of content, level of training and clinical / medical experience.

### **2.2. Authenticity**

The learning experience must have been undertaken by the applicant, and the information in the application must be true and accurate.<sup>1</sup>

### **2.3. Currency**

The learning experience should indicate up-to-date knowledge and skills in relation to the intended area of training. The experience must have been completed not more than five years prior to entry to the relevant training program.<sup>2</sup>

### **2.4. Reliability**

Reliability refers to the consistency or repeatability of the competency. The assessment tools used to provide evidence of competency should be reliable and comparable to that of the RACP training program.

### **2.5. Comparability**

Comparability ensures that the learning experience undertaken has similar value to that of the RACP training program. The learning experience should be comparable in terms of content, breadth of experience, level of responsibility, rigour of training requirements, assessment process, supervision and credibility of training setting.

### **2.6. Continuity**

To ensure the learning experience was focussed, effective and valuable, all applications must outline experience undertaken over a sustained time period of a

---

<sup>1</sup> N. Nyantanga, D. Forman, J. Fox, *Good Practice in the Accreditation of Prior Learning*, 1998, London: Cassel Education.

<sup>2</sup> In exceptional circumstances, and at the discretion of the assessing Committee, an applicant who cannot meet the currency requirement may instead demonstrate ongoing professional development and practice in the competency within the 5 years prior to application.

minimum 1 continuous month, unless a minimum approvable training period is otherwise stipulated in the relevant training program handbook.<sup>3</sup>

## **2.7. Timeliness**

Applications for RPL must be received within 3 months of entry to the relevant training program. Applications received outside this timeframe will not be accepted.<sup>4</sup>

## **2.8. Evidence-based**

The applicant must provide sufficient evidence of the learning experience to demonstrate that the learning outcomes have been achieved, and to enable the assessor to judge the appropriateness of the experience.<sup>5</sup>

## **2.9. Maximum Time**

To ensure the integrity of RACP training programs, a limit is placed on the amount of RPL that may be granted. In most circumstances, RPL will be granted for no more than 12 months of training time.

**2.9.1.** At the discretion of the assessing Committee, up to 24 months of RPL may be granted for learning experience undertaken as part of a formal specialty training program, or to post-Fellowship trainees.

**2.9.2.** RPL granted toward a single training program will not exceed 24 months, nor will it exceed two-thirds of any RACP training program.<sup>6</sup>

## **3. Eligibility**

**3.1.** To be eligible to apply for RPL the applicant must have met the standard eligibility criteria for entry to the relevant RACP training program, and be registered with the relevant RACP training program.

**3.2.** The learning experience outlined in the RPL application must have been completed prior to entry to the relevant RACP training program.

**3.3.** The learning experience must meet all principles of RPL, as outlined in policy item 2.

**3.4.** RPL will not be considered for:

**3.4.1.** Clinical experience undertaken during an interruption of training.

**3.4.2.** Experience for which RPL has been granted toward another RACP training program.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> This is in accordance with the RACP *Progression through Training Policy*.

<sup>4</sup> Exceptional circumstances may apply, refer to policy item 8.

<sup>5</sup> *Op. Cit.* N. Nyantanga, D. Forman, J. Fox, *Good Practice in the Accreditation of Prior Learning*.

<sup>6</sup> This maximum proportion is applicable to both time-based and competency-based training programs.

<sup>7</sup> This item may be waived, at the discretion of the assessor, in the case of dual or conjoint training.

- 3.4.3. Clinical experience undertaken within Australia and New Zealand prior to completion of all requirements for general registration, or registration in a general scope of practice, with the relevant authorities.<sup>8</sup>
- 3.4.4. The intern year (postgraduate year one) or postgraduate year two.<sup>9</sup>

#### **4. Eligible categories of RPL**

An application which meets the principles and eligibility criteria of policy items 2 and 3 will be considered under one of the following categories of learning:

##### **4.1. RACP training programs**

Training that has been completed and certified as part of an RACP training program may be eligible for RPL towards the requirements of another RACP training program.

##### **4.2. Non-RACP specialty training programs**

- 4.2.1. Training completed or partially completed under the supervision of another specialist medical college in Australia or New Zealand.
- 4.2.2. Training completed or partially completed under the supervision of an overseas equivalent specialist medical authority.

##### **4.3. Relevant post-graduate coursework and research**

- 4.3.1. A course of study completed through a university or similar institution.
- 4.3.2. Holding an academic post in a relevant field.
- 4.3.3. Academic research, institutional research including a PhD, or independent supervised research.

##### **4.4. Relevant experience undertaken outside a formal specialty training program**

In exceptional circumstances, experiential learning may be considered where it was undertaken:

- 4.4.1. for a minimum period of 12 continuous months prior to entry to the RACP training program;
- 4.4.2. at a site considered appropriate for the experience by the assessing committee; and,
- 4.4.3. at an equivalent or higher level of responsibility to that of an RACP trainee in the relevant training program;

---

<sup>8</sup> Exceptional circumstances may apply, refer policy item 8.

<sup>9</sup> Postgraduate year two should be applied for prospectively as Basic Training Year One, and will only be considered for RPL at the discretion of the Adult Medicine or Paediatric Division Education Committee if the applicant can demonstrate they could not reasonably have applied prospectively.

Combined with:

- 4.4.4. evidence of ongoing educational activities;
- 4.4.5. attainment of key learning objectives of the relevant RACP training program;  
and,
- 4.4.6. evidence that the applicant could not reasonably have applied prospectively,  
where the learning experience was undertaken within Australia or New Zealand.

## **5. Application process**

- 5.1. Applications must be made using the RPL application form, within 3 months of the date of commencement of the first training rotation in the relevant RACP training program.
- 5.2. A non-refundable assessment fee is payable at the time of application.
- 5.3. It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide all necessary documentation to demonstrate the learning experience meets the principles and eligibility criteria as outlined in policy items 2 and 3.
- 5.4. Evidence required is dependent on the training program and the category of RPL.

## **6. Assessment process**

- 6.1. Applications will be assessed by the relevant education / training committee, or its delegates.
- 6.2. In assessing applications for RPL, the assessor will refer to the principles and eligibility criteria as outlined in policy items 2 and 3.
- 6.3. Each application will be considered on a case by case basis, and the outcome will be dependent on the nature and amount of evidence provided by the applicant.
- 6.4. The assessment process will be completed within 3 months of receipt of the application wherever possible.
- 6.5. At the discretion of the assessor, the granting of RPL may be conditional upon certification<sup>10</sup> of the first prospectively approved year of training.

## **7. Outcomes**

---

<sup>10</sup> Certification in accordance with the College's *Progression through Training Policy*.

7.1. Recognition of prior learning may entitle the applicant to exemption from training requirements, including one or more of the following:

7.1.1. Training time requirements

7.1.2. Project or module requirements

7.1.3. Other requirements specific to an RACP training program.

7.2. Under no circumstances will a trainee be exempted from RACP Summative Examination Assessment requirements.<sup>11</sup>

7.3. One of the following outcomes will be communicated in relation to each application:

**7.3.1. Request granted**

The applicant's request meets the required standard and is granted with no conditions.

**7.3.2. Request partially granted**

The assessor agrees the applicant's claim is valid, but does not agree with the full scope of the application. The exemption granted is less than requested, or the full application is granted with conditions.<sup>12</sup>

**7.3.3. Request not granted**

It is not appropriate for the assessor to grant any part of the application.

## 8. Exceptional circumstances

The RACP acknowledges that exceptional circumstances may arise which impact on an individual's ability to submit their application prior to the due date or otherwise comply with the principles or eligibility criteria of this Policy.

In an exceptional circumstance, an application for special consideration must be provided by the trainee (or delegate thereof) in writing to the relevant education / training committee, as promptly as the circumstance permits.

## 9. Appeals

The RACP Reconsideration, Review and Appeals process will be available should an applicant remain dissatisfied with an eligible Decision, as defined by the College By-Law: Reconsideration, Review and Appeals Process.

---

<sup>11</sup> Exceptions may apply to AFRM Module 1 Written and Module 2 Clinical Assessments, and to the AFOEM Stage A Written Examination.

<sup>12</sup> Refer to policy item 6.4

## **I. Definitions**

### **i. Certification of training**

Previously known as 'accreditation of training'. Refers to prospectively approved training which is deemed satisfactory and complete by the relevant education / training committee. It is the process of verifying that a trainee has met the program requirements for the particular training period being considered.

### **ii. Interrupted training**

Refers to any absence (full-time) from an approved training position in excess of statutory leave entitlements. Examples include extended holiday, extended illness, parental leave or postgraduate study.

### **iii. Prospective approval of training**

Once an applicant successfully secures a training position, prospective approval of training is the process of applying for approval of the proposed training program with the relevant education / training committee (or delegate thereof) before commencement of the training position or by the relevant deadline.

### **iv. RACP training program**

Refers to any of the education programs of the RACP's Divisions, Faculties and Chapters. Basic Training and each specialty Advanced Training program are considered separate programs for the purposes of this policy.

### **v. Training requirements**

All training components which must be satisfactorily completed within a given training period, or prior to completion of the entire training program. This includes formative assessments, rural training rotations, Divisional requirements, research projects, reports etc. and are outlined within training requirement handbooks.

## **II. Monitoring and evaluation**

This policy will be monitored and evaluated by Trainee Education Programs / Education Policy Unit of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians.

### III. Related policies and other documents

- i. Progression through Training Policy
- ii. RPL Policy Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
- iii. College By-Law: Reconsideration, Review and Appeals Process

### IV. Acknowledgements

The RACP would like to acknowledge and thank those who participated in the consultation process throughout 2013, as well as members of the Development Working Group who met in February and April 2013 and Peer Review Working Group who met in September 2013.

| Revision History |                |  |                                   |                     |  |
|------------------|----------------|--|-----------------------------------|---------------------|--|
| Version          | Date Effective | Author                                     | Approved by                       | Sections Modified   | Details of Amendments  |
| 1                | Jan 2011       | Expert Advisory Group, Teaching & Learning | College Education Committee       | New Policy          | N/A  |
| 2                | Jan 2015       | RPL Development Working Group              | College Education Committee       | All                 | Full revision  |
| 2                | Jan 2015       | Education Policy Unit                      | College Education Committee Chair | 5.1 and definitions | 'Within 3 months of entry to training' amended to 'within 3 months from the date of commencement of the first training rotation in the relevant RACP training program'. Deletion of definition of 'entry to training'. |