



Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

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Applicability	Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

Note: This is a controlled document within the [RACP Policy Framework](#).

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1. INTRODUCTION

RACP training is prospectively approved/validated to ensure it is educationally robust and meets RACP standards. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is the formal recognition of competencies gained through learning experiences undertaken prior to entry to an RACP training program to avoid unnecessary duplication of training activities.

2. PURPOSE

This policy aims to ensure a rigorous and well-documented process for RPL, which may result in a trainee being granted exemption from one or more requirements of an RACP training program.

3. SCOPE

This policy defines the RACP principles for recognising prior learning, who may apply, the eligible categories of learning and possible application outcomes.

4. APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to trainees registered in the RACP's training programs. It has been designed to align to the hybrid competency- and time-based nature of those programs. There are some slight differences for the provisions related to the PREP programs and the new curricula programs to account for different educational frameworks. These differences are indicated where relevant.

5. POLICY CONTENT

5.1. Principles of RPL

5.1.1 Educational alignment

The competencies gained through the learning experience must be relevant to the training program. Both the competencies and learning experience are assessed for alignment with the relevant RACP curricula standards/training program handbook and compliance requirements.

Educational alignment is assessed with respect to learning outcomes/goals, progression criteria (new curricula programs), responsibility, rigour of training, assessment process, supervision, training setting, level of training and breadth and depth of training experience.

For professional experience requirements: Recognition of short-term training periods of less than one continuous month will be determined by the relevant training program committee.

5.1.2 Authenticity

The learning experience must have been undertaken by the applicant, and the information in the application must be true and accurate. The competencies gained must be authenticated through evidence of comparable robustness to that used in routine progression decisions.

The applicant must provide sufficient evidence of the learning experience to demonstrate that the curriculum standards have been achieved and enable the training program committee or its delegate to judge the appropriateness of the learning experience.

5.1.3 Currency

- a) The learning experience must have been completed within five years before entering the relevant RACP training program, to ensure the competence remains current.
 - i. If the professional experience was completed more than five years before and was part of another RACP training program, it may still be eligible if the applicant can justify the time gap is due to flexible training arrangements (part-time training, parental or medical leave) and currency of competence can be evidenced.
- b) *For RPL for Research Project¹ requirements:* The learning experiences may have been completed at any time, provided the experiences meet the other principles and requirements of RPL and ongoing currency of competence can be evidenced.

5.1.4 Reliability

The evidence of the learning experience must demonstrate consistency and repeatability of the competency, the observable abilities related to a specific activity that integrates knowledge, skills, values and attitudes.

The assessment tools used to provide evidence of competency should be reliable and comparable to those of the relevant RACP training program.

5.1.5 Timeliness

The application for RPL must be received within the time limit set out in this policy. Recognising prior learning experiences at the beginning of the training program allows the trainee to plan and complete all training requirements and avoid duplication of learning. The application timelines support training program committees to assess trainees against the most relevant progression criteria for their phase of training.

5.1.6 Limit to recognition of prior learning

There is a limit to the amount of RPL that can be granted for professional experience requirements to ensure the integrity of RACP training programs.

- a) RPL may be granted for no more than one phase (foundation/first year) or 12 months of professional experience.
- b) If the learning experience was part of a formal specialty training program (see items 5.3.2 and 5.3.3), the relevant assessing committee has the discretion to grant RPL for up to a maximum of two phases of training (foundation and consolidation/first and second year) or 24 months professional experience requirements.
- c) RACP examinations are not eligible for RPL (e.g. Divisional Written and Clinical Examinations, AFPHM Oral Examination, AFOEM Written and Practical Examinations, AFRM Entry Phase Examination and Fellowship Written and Clinical Examinations, AChSHM Exit Assessment).

¹ Refer to definition of Research Project in the Section 9 and further detail in Section 5.4. Note the Research Project is distinct from Specialty-Specific Research Projects, which are also defined in Section 9.

5.2. Eligibility

- 5.2.1 To be eligible to apply for RPL, the applicant must be registered with the relevant RACP training program.
- 5.2.2 The learning experience outlined in the RPL application must have been completed prior to entry to the relevant RACP training program.
- 5.2.3 The learning experience must meet the principles of RPL set out in this policy.

5.3 RPL for Professional experience requirements

Professional experience requirements (often called rotations) are structured, supervised clinical and educational activities, which involve a combination of workplace-based learning, formal education and reflective practice, and are aligned to the curricula standards of the relevant RACP training program.

Applicants seeking recognition of prior learning for professional experience requirements must demonstrate they have achieved the progression criteria for the relevant phase of training.

5.3.1 RPL for professional experience requirements will **not** be considered:

- a) For an experience undertaken during an interruption of RACP training.
- b) For the intern year (postgraduate year one).
- c) For postgraduate year two. It should be applied for prospectively as Basic Training Year One. If the applicant can demonstrate they could not reasonably have applied prospectively, it may only be considered for RPL at the discretion of the relevant training program committee or its delegate.
- d) For learning experiences undertaken within Australia or Aotearoa New Zealand prior to completion of all requirements for general registration with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency or registration in a general scope of practice with the Medical Council of New Zealand.
- e) For RPL for Advanced Training programs:
 - i. if the learning experience has been completed in Basic Training, prior to the passing of the Divisional Examinations and the completion of all Basic Training requirements.
 - ii. if the learning experience has already been granted as RPL towards an RACP Basic Training program.

An application for professional experience requirements and associated competencies, that meets the RPL principles and eligibility criteria, will be considered for experiences that fall under one of the following categories:

5.3.2 Professional experience in 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.

5.3.3 Professional experience in non-RACP specialty training programs

- a) Training completed or partially completed under the supervision of another specialist medical college in Australia or Aotearoa New Zealand.
- b) Training completed or partially completed under the supervision of an overseas equivalent specialist medical authority.

5.3.4 Relevant experience undertaken outside a formal specialty training program

In exceptional circumstances, where the professional experience meets the curriculum standards of the relevant RACP training program, it may be considered if it was undertaken:

- a) for a minimum period of 6 months full-time equivalent in a continuous role prior to entry to the RACP training program,
- b) at a setting considered appropriate for the experience by the training program committee or its delegate with regard to the RACP Training Provider Standards and Basic Training Accreditation Requirements/Standards for the Accreditation of Training Settings for Advanced Training and the relevant training program handbook; and,
- c) at an equivalent or higher level of responsibility to that of an RACP trainee in the relevant training program,
- d) with equivalent work-based teaching, supervision and assessment to that of an RACP trainee in the relevant training program,
- e) satisfactorily completed top-up training or peer-reviewed practice/supervision periods for overseas trained physicians may be considered, subject to eligibility (see item 5.3.1 d).

Combined with:

- f) evidence of ongoing educational activities; and
- g) evidence that the applicant could not reasonably have applied prospectively, where the learning experience was undertaken within Australia or Aotearoa New Zealand.

5.4 RPL for the Research Project requirement

The Research Project is a report on a project that trainees have significant involvement in designing, conducting of research and analysing data. It is mandatory for all Advanced Trainees to complete.

Applications for RPL for the Research Project requirement may be submitted if a trainee has successfully completed one of the following before entering into Advanced Training:

5.4.1 Research doctoral degree, like PhD or MD. Research completed within a primary qualification is not eligible for RPL unless it is conducted in combination with a higher doctoral degree.

5.4.2 Master's/higher degree by research

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- 5.4.3 Major project completed through a Master's by coursework
 - 5.4.4 Publication of research as first author in a peer-reviewed, indexed medical scientific journal
 - 5.4.5 AND if the completion of the above was in one or more of the following accepted project topics:
 - a) Human subjects, populations and communities and laboratory research
 - b) Epidemiology
 - c) Education
 - d) Leadership
 - e) Medical humanities
 - f) Areas of study which can be applied to care of patients or populations.

Research completed during training is ineligible for RPL, but may be eligible for consideration towards Research Project requirements via the RACP's [Research Project Exemption process](#).

5.5 RPL for other requirements

Trainees may apply for RPL for the following activities where these are required within a program, so long as the training program curriculum does not explicitly specify that the activity must be completed while actively undertaking the training program:

- 5.5.1 course, workshop or meeting attendances,
- 5.5.2 presentations, case studies, case reports or case report abstracts,
- 5.5.3 specialty-specific research projects.

5.6 Application process

- 5.6.1 Applications for professional experience must be made within six months of the date of commencement of the first training rotation in the relevant RACP training program.
- 5.6.2 Applications for recognition of other requirements, including research towards the requirements of Research Projects must be made within 12 months of the date of commencement of the first training rotation in the relevant RACP training program.
- 5.6.3 Applications must be made using the relevant RPL application form with payment of a non-refundable assessment fee.
- 5.6.4 It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide all necessary documentation to demonstrate the experience meets the principles and eligibility criteria as outlined in this policy.
- 5.6.5 Evidence required is dependent on the training program and the category of RPL.

5.7 Assessment process

- 5.7.1 Applications will be assessed by the relevant training program committee, or its delegate.

5.7.2 In assessing applications for RPL, the training program committee or its delegate will refer to the principles and eligibility criteria in this policy.

5.7.3 Each application will be considered on its merits, and the outcome will depend on:

- a) the completeness and relevance of evidence provided by the applicant;
- b) the extent to which the evidence demonstrates that the application meets RPL criteria and principles; and
- c) whether the evidence demonstrates that the learning experience meets the competencies and progression criteria of the category of RPL applied for.

5.7.4 If RPL is granted for one whole phase (foundation) or 12 months, the training program committee or its delegate will also make a progress decision with reference to the relevant progression criteria.

5.7.5 The assessment process will be completed within three months of receipt of the application, wherever possible. This may be longer if the training program committee or its delegate requires additional information or evidence from the applicant to assess an application.

5.7.6 At the discretion of the training program committee or its delegate, the granting of RPL may be conditional upon certification of prospectively approved/validated period or phase of training.

5.8 Outcomes

5.8.1 Recognition of prior learning may exempt an applicant from one or more training program requirements.

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

- a) **Request granted**
The applicant's request meets the required standard and is granted with no conditions.
- b) **Request partially granted**
The training program committee or its delegate 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.
- c) **Request not granted**
It is not appropriate for the training program committee or its delegate to grant any part of the application.

6. RECONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPEALS

Rights of reconsideration, review and appeal are set out in the College Reconsideration, Review and Appeals Process By-Law.

7. EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Provisions for special consideration of exceptional circumstances are set out in the RACP Special Consideration for Assessment Policy.

8. REVIEW OF POLICY

This policy will be reviewed every three years or as required in the event of legislative changes or requirements. The policy may also be changed as a result of other contextual changes.

Staff and members of the College may provide feedback about this document by emailing RACPPolicy@racp.edu.au.

9. DEFINITIONS

Term	Means
Certification of training	is prospectively approved (PREP programs)/validated (new curricula) training that is deemed satisfactory and complete by the relevant training program committee or its delegate. It is the process of verifying that a trainee has met the program requirements for the training period being considered.
College	The Royal Australasian College of Physicians, ACN 000 039 047, an incorporated body limited by guarantee.
Fellow, Trainee, and Member	have the same meaning as in the College Constitution.
Interruption of training	is an approved extended absence from training as provided for in the Flexible training policy.
Learning goals	are competencies that outline the expected professional behaviours, values and practices that trainees need to achieve by the end of a phase of training as specified in the training program curriculum.
New Curricula	are replacing the RACP PREP curricula and embrace programmatic assessment with a hybrid of competency-based medical education (CBME) principles and time-based requirements.
PREP Curricula	are the RACP time-based Physician Readiness for Expert Practice (PREP) curricula which are gradually replaced by the RACP new curricula.
Professional experience requirements	under the new curricula is defined as structured, supervised workplace learning activities that enable trainees to demonstrate achievement of the learning goals and progression criteria for their phase of training. under the PREP curricula refers to clearly defined time-based rotations that trainees must complete in accredited training settings.
Prospective approval/validation of training	is the process of applying for approval/validation of the proposed training program with the relevant RACP training program committee (or delegate) before commencement of the training position or by the relevant deadline. For Advanced Training in Public Health Medicine trainees are required to apply for prospective approval/validation of training via Learning Contracts.
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.

Term	Means
Research project	is a formal assessment component designed to ensure advanced trainees develop and demonstrate competency against the 'Research' domain of the Professional Practice Framework. It requires trainees across all programs to gain experience in using research methods, interpreting of research literature, participating in research at some stage of their career and developing quality improvement skills. The research project is a mandatory requirement for all trainees under PREP and new curricula.
Specialty-specific Research Project	Some PREP programs require trainees to also complete specialty-specific research project(s).
Training program committee	is the relevant committee or its delegate or progress review panel responsible for oversight of trainee progress in an RACP training program.
Training requirements	are the components of a training program that a trainee must satisfactorily complete to progress through training. Mandatory program requirements are linked to the certification of training, progression through training, phase progression and program completion.

10. HISTORY

Revision	Effective Date	Summary of Changes
1.0	01.01.2011	New policy
2.0	01.02.2015	Full revision
3.1	01.08.2020	Revision of policy to align with new curricula
3.2	02.12.2022	Administrative update and transfer of policy to new template
3.3	01.01.2024	Updates regarding RPL for Advanced Training Research Projects
3.4	27.03.2025	Administrative update of committee titles as part of the Education Governance Review Initiative.
3.5	18.06.2025	Administrative update to remove reference to the discontinued Australasian Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine Module 1 Written and Module 2 Clinical Assessments, as these assessments were removed from the training program from September 2024.
4.0	01.05.2026	Full Revision