



Supporting Information to the Recognition of Prior Learning for Initial Teacher Education Framework

Aim

The framework aims to ensure that Initial Teacher Education (ITE) candidates, particularly those from diverse groups including First Nations peoples, mid-career professionals, and paraprofessionals, receive appropriate acknowledgment for their unique skills, expertise, and previous learning through the allocation of credit towards their qualifications.

The framework aims to promote and enhance the **transparency, consistency, usability** and **integrity** of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) practices in ITE. This document aims to elaborate on the framework.

Scope

The framework is designed to integrate with and augment existing RPL practices, enabling a synergistic and national approach to RPL in ITE.

It should be considered as further guidance that complements the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA)'s *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021*, Domain 1: Student participation and attainment, Section 1.2 Credit and Recognition of Prior Learning. The framework aims to build on this domain by providing more specific guidance for RPL in ITE.

The framework will be embedded in the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) revised *Guidelines for the accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Australia*.

It is also designed to be applicable across a broad spectrum of ITE programs, including undergraduate and postgraduate programs in primary, secondary, and K-12 education, to cater to the diverse spectrum of teaching environments and educational levels, in line with the skills outlines in the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST).

Evidence

The framework is comprised of **13 Principles** which are adapted from the Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE) final report: *'An Evidence-Informed Framework for Recognition of Prior Learning in Initial Teacher Education'* (29 February 2024). The principles were developed using a comprehensive, multi-phase methodology, that integrated:

1. current research,
2. a document analysis,
3. stakeholder surveys, and
4. social labs.

Rationale

Students and higher education providers (HEPs), as well as Australia more broadly, stand to benefit from successful implementation of this framework.

By supporting transparent and consistent RPL practices, the framework aims to create more accessible and efficient pathways into ITE for students, especially those from diverse backgrounds.

This can potentially shorten program duration and reduce associated costs for students, and ultimately increase student satisfaction and confidence in their provider/s of choice. This ensures people can enter the workforce sooner and contribute to the economy.

Successful application of the framework may not only improve entry rates into ITE courses but also potentially improve completion rates through diminished financial burden and time commitment for students.

The framework also advocates for streamlined processes to reduce administrative burden for HEPs, as well as increased training and support for institutional staff who undertake RPL assessments.

In response to a national teacher shortage, on 15 December 2022, Education Ministers agreed on a National Teacher Workforce Action Plan (NTWAP). This framework implements NTWAP's Action 9 under Priority Area 2 (*'Recognise previous study, work experience and skills that may be transferable to teaching'*), which is important for enhancing the supply and retention of teachers across Australia.

Principles

The 13 RPL principles cover four areas of focus:

1. Policy Focused Principles,
2. Evidence Focused Principles,
3. Process Focused Principles, and
4. Governance Focused Principles.

Policy Focused Principles

Designed to ensure that RPL practices are not only aligned with national and institutional regulatory requirements but also reflect the evolving landscape of teacher education, which should:



1. **align with Higher Education Standards Framework (HESF), Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), State and Territory regulatory requirements, including the APST, and HEP policies.**

This principle supports compliance and upholds the integrity, quality, consistency and relevance of ITE programs in Australia.

Practices should align with, for example, the AQF explanation document on RPL:

www.aqf.edu.au/publication/recognition-prior-learning.

RPL evidence should be assessed against the subject/course outcomes and also reference to the APST requirements. This is to ensure ITE programs offered to preservice teachers receiving credits through RPL are still adequately prepared for the school curriculum and learning areas of their chosen discipline and/or stage of schooling.

2. **be reflected in course accreditation and HEP policies, including clauses pertaining to ITE-specific RPL practices where necessary.**

It is recommended that Education faculties or schools develop ITE-specific RPL policies and procedures. This should include seeking exemptions to broader HEP policy where relevant, especially in terms of awarding RPL for non-formal and informal learning (which will assist in attracting career changers and paraprofessionals to the teaching profession).

3. **be expressed clearly and explicitly, using nationally consistent RPL nomenclature, and should be publicly and readily accessible by the intended audiences.**

Inconsistency in terminology and calculation of credit points may lead to confusion among students and complicate the RPL process.

For instance, at one university, a standard session's workload might consist of four Units of Study (or Subjects or Courses), equating to 40 credit points, whereas at another, the same number of Units might only account for 24 credit points. Providers are advised to incorporate a unified measure, such as Equivalent Full-Time Study Load (EFTSL), into the RPL nomenclature and provide guidance on its application. This may streamline the understanding and implementation of RPL, ensuring that all stakeholders, particularly students, are fully informed of the process.

Evidence Focused Principles

Designed to ensure ITE students applying for RPL are supported institutionally so they can achieve the maximum credit without impairing the integrity of the program. HEPs' RPL practices should:

4. **allow for the alignment of prior learning with a known unit/course outcome.**

The evidence required for RPL in ITE programs should:

- a) satisfy the needs of the learning outcomes for the individual units or courses that are to be credited; and
- b) satisfactorily demonstrate the connections between prior learning and the APST aligned to that unit or course outcomes. This may require evidence that confirms that the ITE student has been taught, has practiced and has been assessed at a graduate level for any of the APSTs ascribed to that unit or course. Evidence may be considered from formal educational achievements (such as elements of tertiary qualifications in a related field). The assessment of informal and non-formal learning evidence demands a more rigorous



comparison and standard setting (see principle 12). The evidence necessary when seeking RPL of informal learning may be more diverse than the nature of the credit being sought. A teaching assistant may have experiences that may be considered for some unit or courses and the evidence might include testimonies of length of service and allied observations. Expertise in language and culture, including from First Nations applicants, and multi-lingual applicants, may be evidenced by examples of language assessment and supporting statements from community members that can attest to the skill level.

Providers should also consider the relationship of individual courses to the program. There may be a course which is the only time a particular APST is mapped from a program level. Alternatively, some APST may be mapped against several units/courses. These mapped relationships are critical in directing the type and amount of evidence required and how the evidence meets each unit/course learning outcomes as well as the associated APST.

5. be feasible in terms of volume of material required for the application and the assessment of RPL, with streamlined processes for the applicant and university staff.

Providers should aim to limit the volume of evidence that ITE students are required to provide. Where possible it would be mutually beneficial that pieces of evidence could be used for multiple purposes. To manage the volume of submissions, providers may choose to:

- develop a dedicated template for RPL applications;
- conduct workshops or informational sessions to assist ITE applicants and students in preparing their RPL applications; and/or
- supply examples of successful RPL submissions and case studies, explaining the rationale behind the acceptance of certain pieces of evidence.

In line with HESF Standards 7.1.3 and 7.2, the institutional requirements for RPL should be publicly available and provide sufficient generic information to enable students to feel equipped to know what is being requested and how to provide the requisite evidence. Wherever possible providers should provide exemplars and clarifying statements for procedures and evidence that supports the timely completion of RPL processes.

ITE providers should consider all possible opportunities to cover or limit the cost of the RPL application process to avoid incurring costs for future preservice teachers. Providers should communicate processes and requirements, including any costs associated, clearly and transparently.

6. utilise valid and reliable sources of evidence to enable consistent decisions.

RPL requires that all evidence provided must demonstrate that the student has met the learning outcomes for course/s, unit/s and subject/s they are seeking credit towards and must show the equivalent rigour irrespective of the type of RPL being sought. *Examples at Appendices 1 and 2.*

7. ensure relevant prior experience is at least equivalent in discipline content, depth and breadth to the unit(s) being awarded credit.

To uphold the integrity of ITE programs, providers must employ a systematic approach to evaluate prior learning against the specific requirements of each unit or course.

This approach may also be informed by documents like AITSL's *Accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures* (Schedule 1), and the



New South Wales Education Standards Authority's (NESA) Subject Content Knowledge requirements (2018), which provide a clear outline of what students are required to possess for each subject and learning area.

Process Focused Principles

Designed to streamline the RPL process, ensuring that it is not only responsive to student needs but also feasible and effective for administrative purposes, which should:

- 8. ensure assessment of RPL is undertaken by higher education provider staff with well-developed knowledge of RPL policies and practices, and ITE degrees.**

Assessment and granting of RPL should be done by an approved academic staff member at the faculty or school level (such as Course Convenor or Program Coordinator) with appropriate expertise who can act in accordance with relevant policy documents. Unit Coordinators can be asked to make recommendations on RPL assessment which are kept in respective universities' credit transfer systems and reviewed every five years.

In this way, professional staff can then make decisions on RPL assessment in accordance with the register. Ongoing institutional professional development should be provided to personnel undertaking assessments. Providers should proactively offer targeted trainings, workshops, and collaborative forums such as benchmarking to increase understanding and trust among RPL assessors.

- 9. be timely.**

HESF (Standard 7.2) require HEPs to inform students about RPL policies, arrangements, and potential eligibility for credit for RPL, prior to enrolment. For overseas students, TEQSA mandates that providers must make students aware of any course credit applicable prior to accepting their enrolment in a course, to allow them to plan their studies effectively.

Providers should proactively and regularly review their website to ensure information is current and accurate in relation to RPL for ITE.

Prospective students should be notified about the indicative timeframe for a decision on a RPL application. Providers should also engage in a conversation with the applicant before and after the RPL application to ensure the applicant has a strong understanding of what their study pathway looks like.

This timely assessment and advice is key for enhancing the student experience, aligning with the HESF Standards, and ensuring that students are fully informed and prepared for their educational journey.

Governance Focused Principles

Designed to establish robust oversight and quality assurance mechanisms for RPL in ITE, assuring students and stakeholders alike of the integrity and validity of the credits awarded through RPL. HEPs' RPL practices should:

- 10. adhere to fair and equitable governance principles.**



The governance environment surrounding RPL in ITE encompasses the policies, guidelines, processes, and structures dedicated to RPL within ITE institutions. This environment is pivotal in ensuring the RPL processes are characterised by consistency, fairness, and transparency. To enhance this environment, providers are advised to undertake several key initiatives:

- Create and circulate detailed, comprehensive guidelines regarding the RPL processes in ITE to academic program committees or equivalent, to ensure a unified understanding of the expected criteria, procedures, and outcomes.
- Adopt uniform assessment tools and criteria for evaluating prior learning, to guarantee that assessments are carried out in a consistent, objective, and unbiased manner.
- Provide regular training for assessors on the principles of fair and equitable assessment practices, which should highlight the significance of maintaining consistency and transparency in the assessment of prior learning.
- Establish strong review and appeal mechanisms for RPL decisions to allow individuals to seek clarification in instances of disagreement, thereby increasing the process's transparency and perceived fairness.

11. ensure that appropriate records are maintained.

These records serve as concrete evidence of the RPL process by documenting the steps taken throughout the assessment process, the criteria applied, and the decisions reached. They should also include any reasons for not granting credit.

This principle is essential for maintaining accountability, ensuring fairness, and continuously improving the quality and effectiveness of RPL assessments.

12. incorporate national benchmarking, standard setting, and moderation processes.

This principle is fundamental in elevating the quality, equity, and consistency of RPL assessments across various educational institutions. Achieving such consistency guarantees that, given the same evidence against national benchmarks and standards, the outcomes of RPL assessments would be uniform.

The perceived quality and credibility of ITE programs are enhanced when stakeholders are aware that robust, transparent, and equitable processes underpin RPL assessments. This perception is vital in attracting and retaining high-calibre students into the teaching profession, thereby contributing to the development of a well-qualified teaching workforce equipped to meet the diverse needs of learners.

13. incorporate short-term and long-term evaluation processes.

Short-term evaluation processes are important for early feedback and adjustments. They allow for the timely review of RPL practices using data from their initial implementation to evaluate their impact and the extent to which the results are consistent with expectation. Additionally, long-term evaluation should provide evidence of the sustained impact of the procedures, and any unintended consequences that the procedures might be having on ITE. Evaluation processes more broadly are required to monitor the uptake and impact of RPL in ITE. By regularly reviewing and updating RPL practices, ITE institutions can work towards making sure that the procedures remain relevant, effective, and in alignment with the ever-changing educational landscape.



Appendix 1

Examples of Formal and Non-formal learning relevant to RPL for ITE

Type of learning	Examples relevant to ITE	Considerations
Formal learning	Undergraduate degree in a field with outcomes related to the ITE course outcomes.	Or components of degree.
	Postgraduate qualifications in related field.	Or components of qualification.
	Accredited teacher training courses.	Or components of courses.
Non-formal learning	Short courses, workshops or micro-credentials (online or in-person) related to teaching skills or education topics.	
	Seminars or conferences on teaching methodologies.	
	Professional development programs not leading to formal qualifications.	



Appendix 2

Examples of Informal learning relevant to RPL for ITE

Examples relevant to ITE	Considerations
Length of employment	Timeframes of employment at any business or company relevant to the industry that relates to the Discipline Knowledge, with specific consideration given to on the job learning such as teaching assistants and First Nations educators
Conference attendance record	May include conferences with a focus on identified discipline knowledge.
Interview notes	Transcripts of interviews about identified discipline knowledge may be used.
Professional reading logs and reflection	May include journals relating to professional readings that the applicant has maintained with critical reflections and/or the transfer of ideas to improve practice.
Procedure documentation for evaluating programs used in previous professional experience	May include templates produced by the applicant with completed samples of colleagues' implementation.
Strategic goal documents	Must demonstrate the applicant's contribution where goals were collaboratively determined, such as, for the workplace planning or policy and evidence of the applicant's role during implementation.
Performance review feedback to and from colleagues	May be drawn from professional or supervisory observation sessions.
Reflections by colleagues after taking part in professional learning delivered by the applicant	Should outline the impact of the professional learning on the practice of the participant.
Analysed client feedback and survey data	May be based on programs, projects, and processes, as well as client engagement initiatives.
Examples relevant to ITE	Considerations
Client interview notes	May show preparations for client interviews as an example of effective communication. Should illustrate the outcome(s) of the meeting and future directions.
Peer feedback	May include feedback from colleagues outlining the impact of the applicant's personal and/or professional experience on their own practice.
Diary of practice and reflection	May be excerpts from daybooks or professional journals and evidence-based ideas for future planning.
Resources constructed and shared with colleagues	May include hands on resources, smart notebook files, computer-based games and tasks, booklets etc. Must be clearly linked to Discipline Knowledge.
Meeting minutes or notes	May include notes prepared by the applicant prior to a meeting, formal meeting minutes published after the meeting and/or applicant reflections/contributions or proposed actions based on discussions during a meeting with colleagues.



Examples relevant to ITE	Considerations
Screenshots of online blogs, wikis, discussion forums	Must demonstrate a specific aspect of the Discipline Knowledge points and illustrate authentic engagement by the applicant in discussions.
Itineraries and planning documents for events	Must demonstrate how the applicant has taken responsibility for workplace systems and legislative requirements to ensure client/colleague wellbeing and safety.
Communication with providers and/or colleagues	Should illustrate the outcome(s) of the meeting and future directions.
Examples relevant to ITE	Considerations
Community partnerships and engagement notes and meeting logs	Should illustrate the outcome(s) of the meeting and future directions.
Professional reading journal	May include full references of articles, the purpose of the reading, critical reflection, and evidence of impact on professional practice.
Action research project documentation	Must include evidence of impact of the initiative on subject content knowledge.
Participation in professional associations and/or volunteer on a committee (such as the parent school committee, local business group, sporting organisation, etc)	May include details of how the applicant participated and what the impact was on the practice of others.
Planning notes for professional development organised for colleagues and delivered by experts	May include a needs analysis and follow up.
Professional development workshops/forums delivered or attended	May include extracts of relevant slides from PowerPoint presentations and/or evidence of resources developed.
Analysis of professional development workshops/forums delivered	May include feedback/evaluations from participants and personal evaluation of the initiative.



Glossary of Key Terms

Credit and Recognition of Prior Learning is outlined in the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 - Standard 1.2, which is regulated by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA). In line with the TEQSA 2021 Guidance Note, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is defined as: "...an assessment of an individual's prior learning to determine whether credit will be granted. RPL includes formal, informal, and non-formal learning".

The Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) Glossary of Terminology (2013) further clarifies these categories as follows:

- Formal learning – "learning that takes place through a structured program of learning that leads to full or partial achievement of an officially accredited course" (p. 95).
- Informal learning – "learning gained through work, social, family, hobby or leisure activities and experiences. It is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support (p. 96).
- Non-formal learning – "learning that takes place through a structured program of learning but does not lead to an officially accredited qualification" (p. 98).

Acronym	Description
ACDE	Australian Council of Deans of Education
AITSL	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
APST	Australian Professional Standards for Teachers
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
HEP	Higher education provider
HESF	Higher Education Standards Framework
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
NESA	NSW Education Standards Authority
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
TEQSA	Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency