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# RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

## A GUIDE FOR TRADE QUALIFIERS



Government of Newfoundland and Labrador Department  
of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills  
Apprenticeship and Trades Certification Division

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## **Preface**

This Applicants Guide is intended as a companion to Policy 6 and Procedure 7 of the Provincial Apprenticeship Certification Board and the Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Division of the Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills respectively.

This document provides guidance to Trade Qualifiers who participate in the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) towards Certification in Newfoundland and Labrador.

It is the user's responsibility to ensure they have the most current version of this document. Version numbers can be found in the lower right corner of each page. The most current version can be found online.

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# **INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW**

## **RPL GUIDE USERS**

This guide is to be used by Trade Qualifiers seeking prior learning assessment in accredited skilled trades training programs in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The guide will offer guidance on the nature of RPL, the roles of those involved in RPL, and an overview of the RPL process.

## **RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING**

As it applies to skilled trades certification in Newfoundland and Labrador, prior learning can be defined as learning acquired through previous experiences. Sources of learning can include (but are not limited to) formal credits achieved in a training program other than the training program the applicant is currently enrolled in, learning experiences not associated with institutional study, such as experiential learning, and professional credentials attained in another country.

Through a defined process, an applicant can demonstrate this learning and potentially attain advanced standing towards skilled trade certification, either as an apprentice, a trade qualifier, or through credential recognition.

## **WHY WE RECOGNIZE PRIOR LEARNING**

Many people will experience learning in different ways. Not all learning takes place in a formal setting such as a classroom or school shop. We recognize that learning which takes place outside of the formal post-secondary structure has value, and is often the same or very similar to the learning which occurs in a traditional post-secondary environment. Apprenticeship has a long history of recognizing this learning. Indeed, modern apprenticeship models rely heavily on learning experienced at work to produce high quality journeypersons.

As a trade qualifier, the recognition of these other types of learning can result in significant time and cost savings, through the granting of permission to challenge the certification exam.



## THE RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING FOR TRADE QUALIFIERS

A Trade Qualifier is an individual who has amassed sufficient practical work experience to meet the established criteria to attempt the certification journey level (Provincial or Interprovincial) examination. The criteria require relevant on-the-job experience of at least one year in excess of the apprenticeship term. For example, a Trade Qualifier employed as an Automotive Service Technician requires five years of work experience where the apprenticeship term for that occupation is four years. The Trade Qualifier must provide documentation which verifies competence through sign-off of mandatory work skills as attested by a certified journeyperson in the respective occupation. Documentation must also include verification of time employed in the occupation.

A person attempting certification as a Trade Qualifier need not complete any institutional training if they have all their work skills attested to by a certified journeyperson; although the option to attend training is available where the need for theoretical upgrading is identified. If the Trade Qualifier uses a supporting affidavit to verify hours or work skills, they must participate in an RPL session to verify those skills or hours.

Trade Qualifiers who successfully complete the certification examination receive the same Certificate of Qualification (journeyperson certificate) as a completing apprentice.

## STAKEHOLDERS IN THE RPL PROCESS

**The Provincial Apprenticeship and Certification Board (PACB)** determines the process by which apprentices, potential apprentices and trade qualifiers receive credit for learning acquired from other forms of formal training and from work and life experiences.

**The Program Development Officer (PDO)** will be the first point of contact for direct entry apprentices, trade qualifiers, foreign credentialed workers and graduates of non-accredited NL skilled trades training programs. The PDO will introduce students to RPL, offer guidance to applicants on the RPL process, and will be the principal liaison with the college and the designated assessor. The PDO arranges the RPL class call, and is responsible to record assessment results in the applicant's permanent record.

**The Applicant** must indicate their interest in RPL. After consultation with the PDO, the applicant will be responsible for assembling evidence of prior learning, both informal and formal, for assessment. With guidance from the PDO, the applicant will

assemble their evidence and present to the assessor. The applicant is responsible to participate in all assessment assigned by the assessor.

**The Designated Assessor** will work with the PDO and the applicant to design and conduct the RPL assessment. Upon receiving evidence of prior learning from the applicant, the assessor will prepare an assessment plan and review it with the applicant. The assessor determines if sufficient evidence is presented to proceed with an assessment. The assessor will guide the applicant through the assessment process, grade all evaluations and determine if the prior learning demonstrated by the applicant satisfies the requirements set by provincial curriculum. The assessor ensures the assessment results are recorded and returned to the PDO.

# **THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

## WHAT TO EXPECT AT YOUR APPRENTICESHIP OFFICE

If you are currently working in the trade, and have significant experience and skills, you should contact a Program Development Officer (PDO) at a regional Apprenticeship and Trades Certification office.

The PDO will provide you with information on the trade qualifier process, how RPL can be used to help you achieve certification, and also help you prepare the documents you will need to identify the skills to be assessed.

Your PDO is responsible to submit the request along with your supporting evidence to the assessor at the college you will be attending.

## PREPARING FOR ASSESSMENT

If, after meeting with your PDO, it has been determined that you should or must participate in a RPL session before challenging the certification exam, you will have to begin completing the TQ Workplace Skills Assessment Plan (PL-210).

The PDO will give you form PL-210, used to identify which skills will be assessed. This form is divided into several sections.

### Contact Information

Please provide all information so that you may be contacted by those involved in your assessment.

### Assessment of Workplace Skills

Along with the PDO, you will identify skills or skill areas where you require assessment. These skills will be identified by you. The assessor will complete the assessment tools, indicators and endorsement portions of this section.

### Endorsement

You must confirm that you are seeking an assessment of your skills, and that you agree to the assessment methods outlined in the plan.

## WHAT TO EXPECT AT YOUR TRAINING INSTITUTION

You will be assessed at the training institution by a designated assessor who is an expert in your trade.

Your assessor will review your request and will meet with you to discuss your submission. At this time, the assessor may seek clarification on certain items. It is likely that you will be asked questions about your prior experiences which will allow the assessor to develop a thorough understanding of your situation.

The assessor will complete the remainder of the assessment plan (PL-210) during or after this meeting, and will review this with you before assessment begins. The plan identifies the learning to be assessed, and the methods to be used. Once the plan is prepared and you agree to it, assessment can begin.

It is important to remember that you may be attending the assessment session with a number of other apprentices, and the assessor will have to meet with all the apprentices in the same manner. Because of this, you may experience times when you are waiting to meet with the assessor, or to receive feedback on assessment items you are completing. This is a normal occurrence in an assessment session.

## THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS FOR TRADE QUALIFIERS

### Time Frame for Assessment

Assessments are completed at training institutions as scheduling permits. The timing of an assessment placement will depend on trade volumes, the availability of resources at training institutions, and the timely submission of required documentation. Every effort will be made to provide a suitable response to an applicant's request for assessment.

### Identifying the Skills for Assessment

In conjunction with the program development officer (PDO), the trade qualifier (TQ) will complete the applicant portion of form PL-210, the TQ Assessment Plan, which will identify the workplace skills for assessment.

At this time, the TQ should also self-identify any skill or knowledge areas where remedial intervention would be beneficial in improving their potential for successfully writing the certification exam.

PL-210 will be forwarded to the training institution at least 1 week before the TQ begins the assessment process.

### **Pre-Assessment**

Upon receiving the plan, the assessor will review the skills to be assessed and prepare the assessor portion of the plan, detailing the assessment methods to be used. All assessment must fall within the guidelines established in section 5 of the division's procedure 7. The assessor will contact the TQ and arrange a meeting to discuss the assessment plan, and explain the assessment process. At this time, the TQ should identify any challenges they have which may require modifications to the assessment methods planned. Decisions to modify an assessment method will be the responsibility of the assessor, in consultation with the Department if necessary.

The TQ assessment plan will be signed by the TQ to signify their agreement with the plan.

### **Completing the Assessment**

Assessment times and locations will be scheduled by the assessor in consultation with the TQ.

Assessment will be completed in the manner outlined in the assessment plan. The results of the assessment will be rated by the assessor in an appropriate manner. TQ's will be awarded a complete or incomplete for each workplace skill assessed.

### **Reviewing the Assessment**

When the assessment process is complete, the assessor will meet with the TQ to provide a copy of the TQ assessment plan (PL-210), and to review the results. The assessor will identify the skills which have been successfully demonstrated, and those which have not. Skills which have not been successfully demonstrated will require remedial training. Remedial training may occur concurrently with assessment.

The assessor, or a designated instructor for the trade, will outline the nature of the remedial work to be completed including an overview of practical and theoretical knowledge to be addressed, and the time frame allotted for the work.

During, and at the end of the remedial training, the TQ will be reassessed on the identified skills. The PDO will be informed of the TQ's progress on an ongoing basis. A successful assessment will be required for endorsement of the skill.

## **Recording results**

Not later than 3 days before the end of the scheduled remedial training period, the assessor will forward a completed "Qualification to write the certification exam" form to their local PDO, or the PDO coordinating the writing of the certification exam for the TQ. This form is attached to the TQ Assessment plan (PL-210).

When the assessment process is complete, the assessor will record the results on the TQ Assessment Plan (PL-210). The plan will be returned to the PDO at the division for permanent attachment to the TQ's record.

# RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

## TRADE QUALIFIERS

# APPRENTICESHIP AND TRADE CERTIFICATION

