

Recognition Document for the Assessor and Participant

A Definition of Recognition

Recognition is the process whereby leaders can gain qualifications without having to undergo study by demonstrating their current skills and knowledge to match competencies in a particular qualification. The skills and knowledge can come from a wide range of sources, including previous studies, working experience, life experience, etc. They can be obtained from involvement in the Pathfinder Organisation as well as elsewhere.

Learning can occur anywhere. Every aspect of life has the potential to provide valuable opportunities for people to learn skills, knowledge and attitudes needed for leading activities in the outdoors. Therefore a process has been provided to recognise ways in which evidence of such learning may be examined and assessed to confirm competence.

The original term to describe this process was called *Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)*. This term focussed on previous learning and how this contributed to the person's current competence. Later processes tended to favour the term *Recognition of Current Competence (RCC)*. This emphasised the need for the person to be currently competent in the skills and knowledge gained through prior learning. Another term in use is *Skills Recognition*. In general, the term **recognition** is now used as the preferred alternative to RPL, RCC and Skills Recognition to describe this important process.

The Process of Recognition

Recognition is a process whereby evidence is collected and a decision is made by assessors according to the requirements of one or more endorsed units of competency from a Training Package. In this case, the units of competency are from the National Outdoor Recreation Training Package (SRO03) and the Pathfinder Leadership Award (PLA).

The decision is made on **evidence**, provided by applicants, of the skills and knowledge that they are currently using which has been previously learnt through work, study, life and other experiences.

Evidence

A range of evidence is normally used in Recognition processes. Evidence falls into three broad groups:

- Evidence of current competence obtained *during* the Recognition process itself (eg, through questioning by the assessor);
- Relatively *recent* evidence presented by you that provides a good indication of current competence (eg, log books,); and
- *Historical* evidence provided by you showing proof of learning at an earlier time (eg, certificates from courses that you have attended, Pathfinder Blue Book).

Evidence can also be:

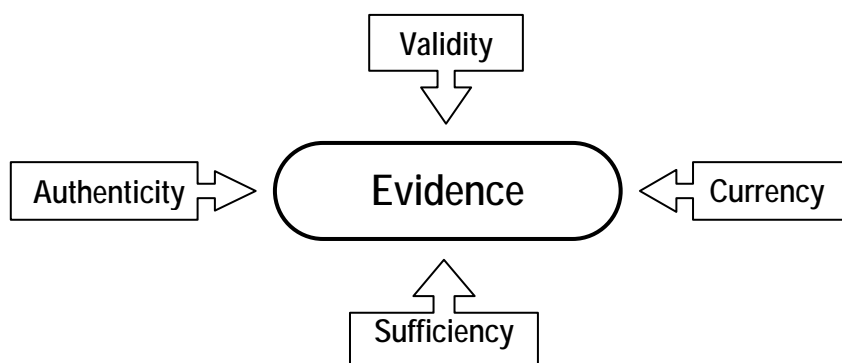
- *Direct*: obtained when an assessor observes actual performance in a workplace, or via videos or by examining products made;
- *Indirect*: when it is not possible or desirable to be assessed directly as it may be too costly or involve risks. Indirect evidence is gained through projects, simulations and role plays;
- *Supplementary*: allows the assessor to infer competency through written or oral questioning, tests done off-the-job, or testimonials from third party sources.

Supplementary evidence needs to be gathered and used very carefully, paying special attention to authenticity and confidentiality. It must also be emphasised that it is the assessor, not the third party source, who makes the ultimate decision of a candidate's competence.

The exact mix of evidence that is selected will depend upon the background of each individual. However, an assessor would not normally be satisfied with just one type of evidence, such as an employer testimonial, and would request a variety of both direct and indirect evidence.

Rules of Evidence

When evidence is being assessed it is critical that it meets the established rules of evidence.



Validity

The evidence being provided needs to directly cover the unit(s) of competency for which Recognition is being sought. Evidence may need to be validated through observation of performance, or questioning to ensure that the evidence provided relates directly to the units of competency concerned.

Currency

While historical evidence can be used to confirm competence, it is critical that appropriate evidence is available, or is obtained to show that skills and knowledge for which Recognition is being sought are current. Qualifications, documentation of experience and other indicators of learning obtained more than three years prior to the Recognition process, are unlikely to be adequate evidence of current competence. The assessor needs evidence that the skills and knowledge have been used, reinforced and updated by more recent learning or work opportunities. In terms of outdoor recreation skills and knowledge of Pathfinding, it would be preferable if the majority of the evidence was less than three years old, demonstrating that skills are maintained.

Sufficiency

Assessors need to ensure that enough evidence has been provided to enable them to make a confident decision that competence has been achieved. It is important to ensure that skills and knowledge can be applied over a period of time, and can be transferred to a number of different contexts. It is critical that the evidence addresses the full range of skills and knowledge identified in the relevant unit of competency, and the four dimensions of competency – task, task management, contingency and job/role environment skills. With this in mind it is probably advantageous to provide more, rather than less, evidence where possible.

When organising evidence, it is far better to provide evidence that is direct (something done first hand eg, risk management plans, lessons plans, etc) rather than indirect (evidence such as testimonials and employer letters provided by someone else).

Some units of competency require leaders to demonstrate skills over a minimum stated number of occasions, settings, seasons, scenarios, etc. In these situations it is *preferable* to have a mix of types of evidence. For example, if leaders are required to demonstrate that they have completed a minimum of 3 bushwalks that also need to be spread across different seasons, suitable evidence could include:

- Photos from one bushwalk
- Trip plan/navigation data sheet from one bushwalk
- Log book or testimonial from a trip colleague for another bushwalk.

It would generally not be acceptable to submit a letter/testimonial from a bushwalking colleague stating that 3 bushwalks have been completed as the sole item of evidence.

Authenticity

The assessor needs to ensure that the evidence submitted is actually the leaders work and not that of someone else. To ensure authenticity, the assessor may check records, obtain confirmation from supervisors, employers or trainers. Leaders can assist by ensuring that an approved person, such as a Justice of the Peace authenticates all copies of documents submitted as evidence (eg, University Degrees, First Aid Certificates, etc). Similarly, a supervisor, employer, colleague or co-instructor should where possible, validate any logbooks submitted as evidence.

Portfolio of Evidence

A leader's portfolio of evidence should therefore consist of:

- *Resume*: including all work history and experience (including voluntary and unpaid work).
- *Qualifications and Certificates*.
- *Supporting Evidence*: anything else that will substantiate your experience including references, course syllabus, documents that have been prepared, letters of appreciation/client feedback, proof of employment, testimonials, newsletters, products, videos, logbooks.

Recognition Tools

Leaders may compile their portfolio of evidence in any manner that they deem appropriate, but Recognition Tools have been developed to assist outdoor leaders to document their evidence in a manner that can easily be reviewed by an assessor. Contact the state/territory outdoor recreation peak body to gain access to these Recognition Tools. (A more detailed Information Sheet is available on how to use the Recognition Tools). Although Recognition Tools have not yet been developed for all units of competency within the National Outdoor Recreation Training Package, they are available for those units of competency that are required to become registered within the National Outdoor Leader Registration Scheme (NOLRS).

Peer Assessment Process

In a normal Recognition process, an individual would send their evidence to an assessor within a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) who would then make a decision. To reduce costs to applicants, most Conferences will also be conducting peer assessment workshops, in which leaders will be placed in small groups with others seeking Recognition, and a number of assessors to oversee the process. Each group will then be asked to assess other people's evidence against the same units of competency. This process not only reduces the cost, but also provides great opportunities for sharing resources and networking. There will also be assessors available during the peer assessment process to provide assistance. Contact the local Youth Department to find out when and where peer assessment workshops are being conducted.

Whether a leader completes evidence and submits it directly to an RTO, or attends a peer assessment workshop, some "gaps" in evidence may be identified. Leaders may be required to:

- a. Participate in training to create those aspects of competency which they are lacking; or
- b. Source or provide additional evidence through practical demonstrations, oral assessments, written tests, projects, additional documentation.