

PURPLE INFINITY

SUMMATIVE REPORT

STAGE 2 / VERSION 2

UPDATE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION RPL RESOURCES
[13 FEBRUARY 2023]

A summative report on the re-design of extant assessment tools to support the CHC30121 Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care



This document is submitted by purple infinity to the Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. It provides a summative report of outcomes arising from Stage 2 of the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Assessment Resources project.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Andrew Jones", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Andrew Jones
13 February 2023

Contents

Background	4
Updated RPL resources	5
Project scope.....	6
Project methodology	7
Key findings	8
1. Systemic aversion to RPL	8
2. Under-utilisation of RPL	8
3. Chronic workforce shortages	9
4. Low digital literacy	9
Next steps	10

Background

In July 2022, purple infinity was contracted by the Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations to re-design and re-purpose a set of legacy recognition of prior learning (RPL) toolkits to support suitably experienced candidates seeking recognition against the CHC30121 Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care.

The project was initially planned over the following four stages:

Stage	Description	Milestone
Stage 1	Development of draft print-based products	31 October 2022
Stage 2	Testing / industry validation of print-based products	31 December 2022
Stage 3	Development of online products	28 February 2023
Stage 4	Testing / industry validation of online products	30 April 2023

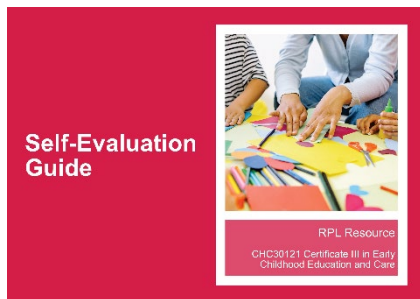
This report summarises the key finding and issues arising from Stage 2 of the project.

Updated RPL resources

The updated RPL resources include the following documents.

Self-Evaluation Guide

This has been designed for experienced early childhood educators holding a pre-CHC30113 Certificate III qualification and experienced primary school teachers seeking recognition for the CHC30121 Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care. It steps candidates through a series of sixty self-evaluation questions aligned to the qualification, and encourages them gather evidence to support an RPL assessment against the qualification.



Version 5 (46 pages)

Assessor Guide

This has been designed for assessors who operate in the children's education and care sector. It offers advice on how to conduct high quality recognition of prior learning (RPL) assessments against the CHC30121 Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care.



Version 4 (164 pages)

Mapping Guide (v1)

This has been designed for assessors who operate in the children's education and care sector. It may also be of interest to RTO staff responsible for quality assurance / compliance. It maps the evidence-gathering instruments included in the Self-Evaluation Guide and Assessor Guide to the 15 core and 2 elective units that comprise the CHC30121 Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care.



Version 2 (100 pages)

Project scope

RPL Toolkits developed by Quality Training Concepts and purple infinity in the period 2011-13 were re-designed to support RPL assessments against the recently revised CHC30121 Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care.

The updated RPL assessment resources are:

- self-paced and self-directed
- easy to use
- functional for as many people as possible (including the target group and participating RTOs)
- mapped to fifteen (15) core and two (2) elective units from the CHC30121 Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care to ensure regulators and RTOs are confident with their quality.

During the re-design process, purple infinity:

- rationalised and re-purposed all upfront guidance from the original print-based RPL Toolkits
- provided hyperlinks to external websites where possible (to reduce the need for detailed text)
- prepared a matrix of core and elective units from the CHC30121 Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care (i.e. those named in the qualification packaging rules)
- researched smarter and more streamlined approaches to evidence collection
- included guidance to assist the target group identify relevant and appropriate evidence
- mapped duplicated/equivalent competencies across multiple units (to ensure the target group is not required to repeat information when entering data)
- developed a mapping guide to clearly depict all duplicated/equivalent competencies
- avoided the terms 'cluster' and 'clustering' (as RTOs often use these terms in different contexts).

Project deliverables

purple infinity developed three print-based RPL assessment resources, two of which were formatted as fillable PDF forms with text boxes, radio buttons, check-boxes and list boxes.

The project deliverables allow the target group to:

- identify any assessable activity (including tasks, skills and experiences)
- gather relevant evidence (including documents, photos and videos)
- answer self-evaluation questions that cover multiple related units.

Target group

The key target groups for the RPL resources include:

- experienced early childhood educators (Self-Evaluation Guide)
- experienced primary school teachers (Self-Evaluation Guide)
- qualified assessors (Assessor Guide and Mapping Guide).

Testing / industry validation

purple infinity sought feedback on the RPL resources from the following organisations:

- Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
- Australian Skills Quality Authority
- Children's Education and Care Industry Reference Committee
- Lady Gowrie Tasmania
- Redgate Workforce Solutions.

Project methodology

Though a systematic approach to learning resource design, **purple infinity** provided the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations with a re-designed and re-purposed set of RPL assessment resources to support the CHC30121 Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care.

Stage 1 - Development of draft print-based products

- Identify and rationalise relevant components from the original print-based RPL Toolkits
- Research smarter and more streamlined approaches to evidence collection
- Research the potential use of fillable PDF forms for evidence gathering purposes:
 - Will they allow the target group to enter any assessable activity?
 - Will they allow digital evidence to be attached (including documents, photos and videos)?
 - Are they fit for purpose?
- Develop a detailed matrix of equivalent and duplicated content across all core/elective units from the CHC30121 Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care
- Convert relevant components from the original print-based RPL Toolkits into useable products
- Develop self-paced and self-directed RPL assessment resources as fillable PDF forms.

Stage 2 – Testing / industry validation of print-based products

- Test the draft print-based products with a small group of candidates, assessors and RTOs
- Seek input and comment from ASQA
- Submit the final print-based products.

Stage 3 – Development of online products (proposed)

- Engage an online learning design specialist
- Re-build the print-based products as SCORM-compliant objects that can be seamlessly applied to (and integrated within) any Learning/Student Management System.

Stage 4 – Testing / industry validation of online products (proposed)

- Test the draft online products with a small group of candidates, assessors and RTOs
- Seek input and comment from ASQA on the draft online products
- Submit the final online products.

Key findings

The following key findings were identified during Stage 2 of the project.

1. RPL is not trusted as an assessment process in the children's education and care sector
2. RPL is under-utilised as an assessment process in the children's education and care sector
3. The children's education and care sector is experiencing chronic workforce shortages
4. Digital literacy is poor among prospective early childhood educators.

1. Systemic aversion to RPL

RTOs are often reluctant to promote RPL as an assessment option to individual learners, despite this being a condition of their registration.¹ RPL aversion impacted the uptake of the original RPL Toolkits (which were developed in 2011-13), and it was very evident throughout this project.

Anecdotal evidence suggests there are multiple reasons for the sector's aversion to RPL, including:

- the inflexible nature of previous RPL resources (including the original RPL Toolkits)
- the risks associated with *currency* (i.e. one of the four *rules of evidence*) when candidates present a range of evidence gathered over a number of years)²
- the lack of clarity surrounding government funding for RPL assessments against full qualifications
- an entrenched preference to deliver generic training programs to large groups
- an entrenched preference to deliver subsidised training to apprentices/trainees
- an entrenched preference to collect evidence via direct observation³
- a lack of understanding (or an unwillingness to understand) RPL as an assessment process
- a systemic unwillingness to adopt new approaches to skills recognition.

There is a widely held belief in the children's education and care sector that RPL will 'open the door' to unskilled, unsuitable and inexperienced people who will be awarded the CHC30121 Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care via a box-ticking exercise without scrutiny, rigour or assessor involvement.

2. Under-utilisation of RPL

It's not surprising that RPL is under-utilised in a sector that distrusts RPL as a valid and reliable assessment process. However, there is a more compelling reason why RPL is not being embraced by candidates – the CHC30121 Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care is not *RPL-friendly*.

To achieve the qualification, candidates must complete at least 160 hours of work in a regulated children's education and care service.⁴ While *traineeship-friendly*, this is not *RPL-friendly*. Faced with the prospect of completing 4-5 weeks of potentially unpaid work to receive the qualification, the RPL process becomes very unattractive to prospective candidates such as primary school teachers.

It is often far more expedient to complete a training course with 'traditional' assessment activities in Australia's VET sector than it is to seek RPL against a full qualification. Regrettably, this appears to be the case in the children's education and care sector.

¹ Clause 1.12, *Standards for RTOs 2015*

² Clause 1.8, *Standards for RTOs 2015*, Table 1.8-2: Rules of Evidence, Currency – The assessor must be assured that the assessment evidence demonstrates current competency. This requires the assessment evidence to be from the present or the very recent past.

³ SkillsIQ, *Children's Education and Care (CEC) Implementation Guide* (Release 5.0, July 2021), p17

⁴ SkillsIQ, *Children's Education and Care (CEC) Implementation Guide* (Release 5.0, July 2021), p20

3. Chronic workforce shortages

According to a report published by the Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) in 2019, the demand for qualified early childhood educators will outweigh supply within the next five years.⁵

Experienced school teachers are a viable labour source for the children’s education and care sector. With this in mind, RTOs should not create unnecessary barriers to this cohort by refusing to offer RPL as a valid and reliable assessment process. In light of current workforce shortages:

- individuals from other industry sectors with relevant, transferable and current pre-existing skills, knowledge and experience **should** be encouraged to seek RPL for the CHC30121 Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care
- the RPL process **should** be engaging
- the RPL process **should not** be unnecessarily complex and difficult
- children’s education and care qualifications and units of competency **should not** be unnecessarily difficult to award/receive through skills recognition processes.

4. Low digital literacy

Anecdotal evidence suggests the vast majority of early childhood educators have low digital literacy. If this is the case, the next two stages of the project will need to be reconsidered, as they involve the conversion of the print-based RPL resources into online products.

However, it is important to note that while unskilled and inexperienced entrants to the industry may have low digital literacy, it is highly unlikely that the proposed target group (namely school teachers) has low digital literacy.

Viability of an online RPL portal

Access to the RPL resources via an online portal is appealing to some stakeholders in the children’s education and care sector. However, a reasonable level of digital literacy will be required to save and upload digital evidence to an online portal. Low digital literacy will be a barrier to the use and uptake of RPL resources in an online environment.

Viability of an online community of practice

If digital literacy is low among the proposed target group for RPL, a better use of funding for the next two stages of the project **may** involve the development of an online ‘community of practice’ – where early childhood educators and VET teachers/assessors can share information via an online portal.

⁵ ACECQA, *Progressing a national approach to the children’s education and care workforce* (Workforce Report, November 2019), p7

Next steps

The remaining contractual stages of the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Assessment Resources project are as follows:

Stage	Description	Milestone
Stage 3	Development of online products	28 February 2023
Stage 4	Testing / industry validation of online products	30 April 2023

Digital literacy research

It is imperative to undertake preliminary research to determine the viability of online participation in the children's education and care sector. At a minimum, research is required to determine the digital literacy capacity of:

- the target group for RPL (i.e. experienced primary school teachers)
- existing workers in the children's education and care sector, including:
 - early childhood educators (who operate at AQF level 3)
 - early childhood teachers (who operate at AQF level 5)
- VET teachers and assessors (who operate at AQF level 4).

The next two stages of the project must focus on the cohort with the highest level of need; namely:

- RPL candidates who need an online RPL portal (subject to their digital literacy capacity); OR
- early childhood educators/teachers and VET teachers/assessors who need an online community of practice (subject to their digital literacy capacity).

Jobs and Skills Councils (JSCs)

There is no evidence to suggest that an online community of practice would be used by existing workers in the children's education and care sector any more than an online RPL portal would be used by prospective RPL candidates. However, if an online community of practice is identified as viable for the sector, its development is ideally suited to the relevant Jobs and Skills Council (JSC), who will be '*supporting collaboration between industry and training providers to improve training and assessment practice*'.

Terms of reference

Regardless of whether an online RPL portal or an online community of practice is funded in the next two stages of the project, the current contractual arrangements will need to be amended in order to accommodate the additional work. The following issues need to be addressed when devising new terms of reference for the project:

- Who will assume ownership of the products?
 - the Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations?
 - the relevant Jobs and Skills Council?
 - the children's education and care sector?
- How will the products be managed?
 - open access?
 - subscription (monthly; annual; one-off payment)
- What will be the life-cycle of the products?
 - in perpetuity?
 - until the next CHC Training Package review?

- How will the products be promoted?
 - face-to-face professional development workshops?
 - online information forums?
 - self-paced instructions?
- What platform will be used?
 - a bespoke platform (developed specifically for the products)
 - an existing sector-specific platform
 - a suitable social media platform (e.g. Facebook; LinkedIn etc)
- What will be the role of the facilitator?
 - minimal maintenance?
 - detailed moderation?

Existing communities of practice

It is worth noting that Early Childhood Australia currently facilitates online communities of practice over 10-week periods in specific subject areas – at a cost of approximately \$1,000 per person.⁶

⁶ Early Childhood Australia, <https://shop.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/communities-of-practice>

purple infinity
<https://purpleinfinity.wordpress.com>

