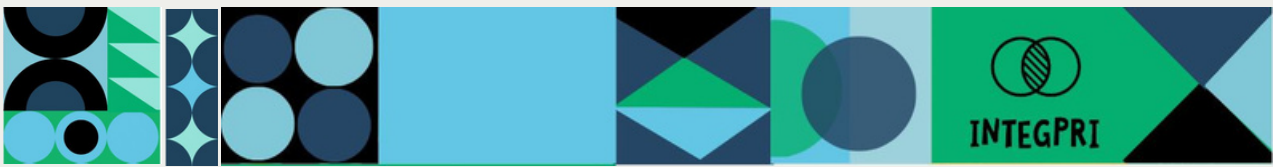




Chapter 3

**Setting the pedagogical
framework for RPL in
practice**

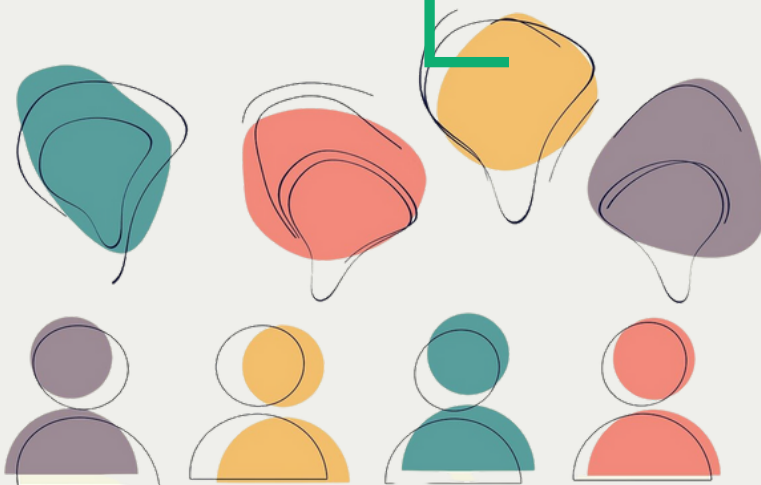


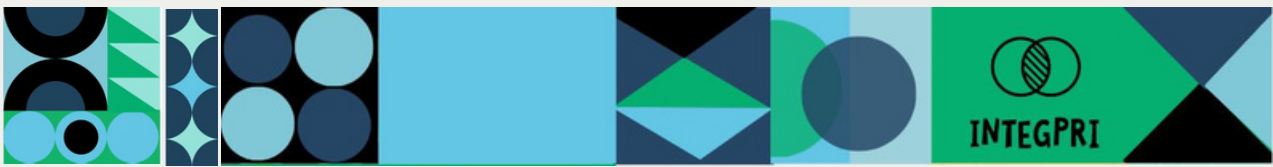
The classification and evaluation of prior learning could be the only considerations in recognition processes. This, however, ignores the fact that the recognition process also entails one's learning, who must discover what is necessary, what knowledge they truly possess, and how to demonstrate their competence in a manner that is relevant to the criteria. The prerequisites for a legitimate RPL process are not met if they do not comprehend these issues. For the individuals who participate in RPL the challenge is to comprehend what is expected of them and how to demonstrate this, while the challenge for the assessor is to comprehend the significance of what is displayed by the participants.

When the RPL process is aimed at migrants, this issue of a potential lack of comprehension becomes particularly necessary because both language barriers and cultural context disparities may affect the level of mutual understanding.



An ineffective communication within such a process might also lead to the lack of understanding: if the assessor and the framework are unable to clearly communicate their demands, they will be hard to understand; similarly, if the applicants are unable to clearly communicate the "evidence" of their knowledge and skills, an assessor will find it challenging to identify them.





The fact that strategic action rather than communicative action may characterize assessment practice is another issue that is revealed by Habermasian theory. This is the case when the assessment's outcome, such as the recognition of a formal qualification or a certain category takes precedence over the individual's knowledge and abilities, which should be made evident and then improved in the following phase.

Sandberg demonstrates how a "caring ideology" becomes a key component of RPL implementation in the health sector. Participants and teachers can develop a trusting relationship, and the evaluation process shifts from evaluating participants' knowledge and skills to recognizing their unique personal attributes. The candidates' incomplete understanding of what is actually evaluated in the RPL process has an impact on the assessment of their knowledge. As a result, RPL and evaluation methods have the ability to include communicative activity.



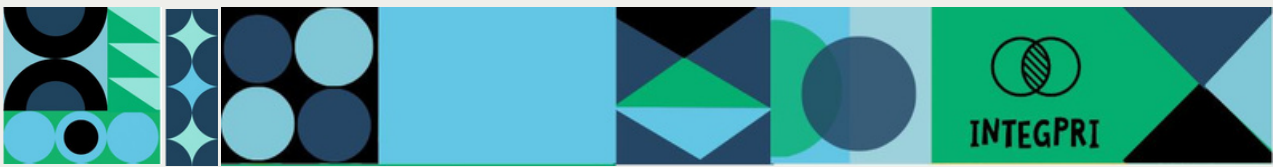
Conditions for a fair and valid evaluation are created by mutual understanding between the candidate and the assessor. Additionally, real interaction raises the possibility that the RPL process may result in both an assessment and a learning opportunity.



Nevertheless, it should be highlighted that this conceptual viewpoint proposes a communicative "ideal" that is difficult to be achieved in practice, despite the fact that it still offers insightful recommendations for enhancing RPL procedures. The importance of understanding one another should be kept in mind in especially when RPL targets migrants because a candidate's ability to demonstrate their talents may be hampered by their level of language proficiency (Andersson, 2021).

In Andersson's (2017) further exploration of the learning opportunities built into the recognition process, three components of the potential learning process are identified:

- learning what you already know, or developing awareness of your prior learning
- learning what is necessary in the recognition process



- learning how to display your knowledge in order to receive recognition.

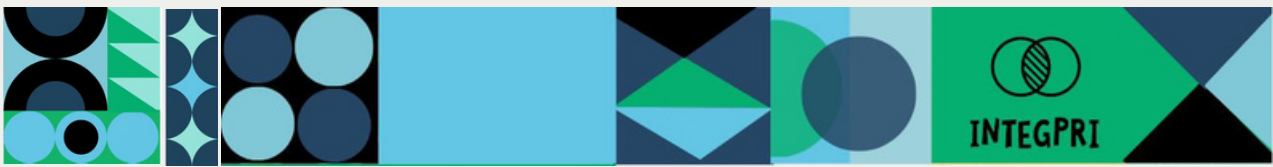
To be able to show legitimate proofs of prior learning, the candidate most likely needs to gain knowledge in each of these three areas; otherwise, the assessment will be invalid. This is significant, especially for RPL initiatives that engage migrants and refugees who lack essential background information and firsthand knowledge of the host country.

Ralphs (2016) defines three configurations as a specialised pedagogical practice. These entail the translational, navigational and dialogical model.



Translational Model

The main goal of this practice is to make it easier for competent employees, to articulate and translate their (specialized experience - based) knowledge and skills into the language used in the configuration of a vocational qualification as well as an associated teaching material. This approach makes the premise that formal knowledge concepts are produced and disseminated outside of formal educational environments, but only in the specific, contextualized manner used in organizations and/or workspaces. A large portion of this knowledge is implicitly incorporated into the sociocultural language and practices of these organizations.



To make that information consistent with the more explicit discourse of the standards, the model involves the use of a specialized set of interpretation tools. The primary goal is to equip participants with the tools necessary to translate their practice - based knowledge and skills into the requirements and norms of the target qualification. This portfolio of evidence will be used for assessment and certification. The use of specialized techniques, typically a mixture of actual, oral, and/or written exercises and tasks, helps participants step back from their experiences and become more familiar with the concepts, vocabulary, and assessment criteria related to the certification.

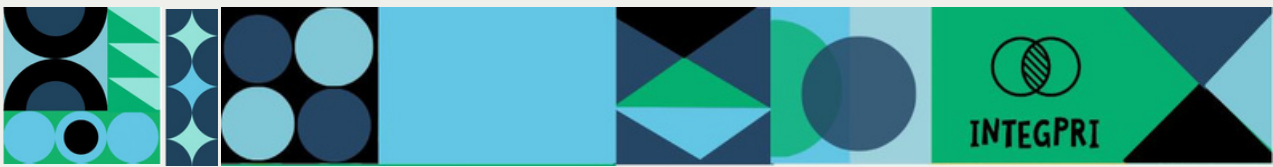
Although the agency and knowledge of the participants are unquestionably crucial to the overall effectiveness of the process, it is managed by RPL practitioners and assessors. Participants must be able to explain their knowledge in accordance with the requirements outlined in the qualification and/or curricular outcomes, and/or demonstrate their competence. This form of RPL practice is significantly influenced by established guidelines, rules, and resources.

The navigational model

This practice is more focused on the various rules and literacies related to the production and acquisition of knowledge in various settings than it is with creating equivalence between various forms of knowledge. The RPL pedagogy's objective is to provide participants the cognitive, narrative, and text-based literacy skills they need to move between the many knowledge and learning cultures (forms and practices) associated with work- or community-based experiential learning and formal education and training.

This model requires the acquisition of important new knowledge and abilities in order to successfully transit and adjust to learning in formal educational situations. This approach is frequently used to grant admission to university programs.



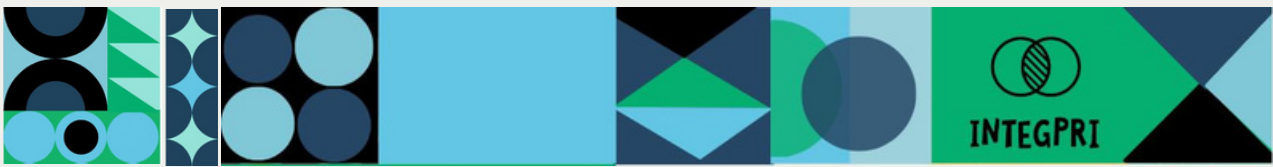


The dialogical model

A critical debate between academic and non-academic cultures of knowledge characterizes this configuration of RPL practice. The dominance of a single source of epistemology in the development of qualifications and curriculum design is challenged by this outline. The fundamental dynamic and artistry of the pedagogy is a dialectical movement between two knowledge specializations in a process that enables learners to elevate their local context and contribute to the creation of a new, hybridized knowledge discourse for attaining both the academic and societal/organizational goals of the curriculum.

As a result, they reflect the dual objectives and directional cues of the activities as well as the ideologies and levels of conflict or cooperation among the primary role actors. Assessment norms and related practices are often negotiated (for example college, union and university). The attributes and restrictions of this kind of practice are strongly affected by institutional policies, cultures, and resources





The Recognition of Informal and Non-Formal Education

RPL detects, records, evaluates, and validates mostly non-formal and informal learning outcomes in comparison to benchmarks used in formal education and training. It emphasizes that learning must be evaluated based on results and less on the manner, timing, or location of the learning. Countries are urged to recognize and validate all forms of learning as well as "develop or improve mechanisms for the recognition" in accordance with the UNESCO-developed Guidelines for the Recognition, Validation, and Accreditation of the Outcomes of Non-Formal and Informal Learning.

A learning package has also been released by the International Labour Organization (ILO) to assist nations in the recognition of prior learning. A skill recognition process entails a direct assessment of skills (such as by observation, interviews, or testing against established standards) in addition to the review of documents (such as certificates, portfolios, CVs, and letters of recommendation). After the process, skills may be entirely, partially, or not at all acknowledged (UNESCO, 2018)





RPL Practices

Assessment-driven RPL practices

Assessment-driven RPL procedures are primarily found in the vocational sectors where individuals without the necessary credentials, although having years of expertise in the area, have been challenged by new standards, labor market needs, and quality assurance mechanisms. In this case, the emphasis is on the development and use of cost-effective assessment methods and tools based on unit requirements and credentials that exhibit similar technical and professional competencies anticipated in a specific job market.



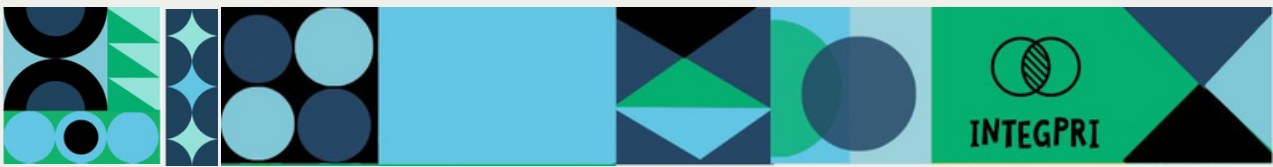
RPL is described in this form of practice as a method of credit exchange (Harris 2000), in which formally acquired knowledge and abilities are evaluated and validated as being similar in value to those stated in the chosen unit standard or certification.



In this practice, standardized test activities are highlighted, but a variety of other practices are typically needed to frame the evaluation criteria and help provide the necessary documentation.

Portfolio development

Higher education is where portfolio creation methods are found, as non-traditional students are assisted in creating learning portfolios to support their requests for admission to, or upgraded status in, already-existing university-level programs. Here, the emphasis is on becoming oriented to the formal educational discourse and, more particularly, to the metacognitive skills needed to succeed in these situations. The institution expects applicants to re-articulate their experiential learning in respect to its principles and portfolio requirements.

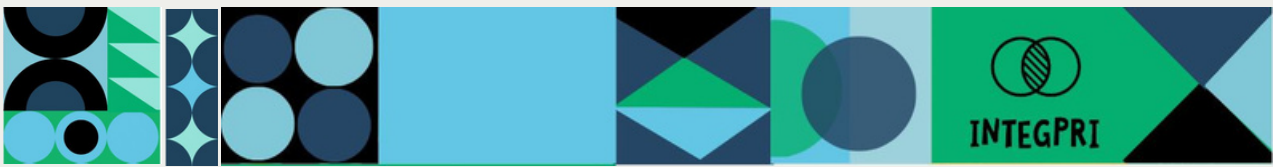


This approach to RPL heavily relies on the experiential learning ideas and methods that are frequently connected to the field of adult education and sees RPL as an individualized developmental process that is congruent with liberal humanist traditions in higher education.



Hybrid Portfolios and Methods for Developing Curricula

This type of practice considers RPL as a series of boundary encounters where the learning and knowledge practices of the university are brought in discourse with the specializations of other communities of practice, such as union leaders, for-profit businesses, or professional associations. These, in turn, change the social relationships that govern portfolio development and educational planning from ones that are entirely governed by the academic staff or evaluators to ones in which empirical and educational variations are acknowledged, valued, and frequently contested in order to achieve a common set of goals (Anderson, 2021).



Alternative Assessment Methods

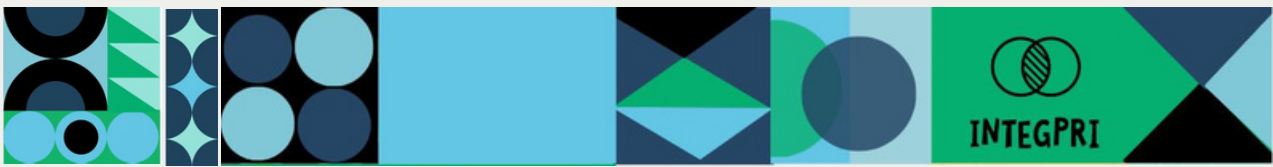
Alternative assessment methods have been established by a variety of institutions and organizations throughout the world that are successful in their particular settings.

The evaluator typically assesses the material after reconstructing the applicant's declared history in the background paper and compiling the portfolio.

In the evaluation process, background research, having access to the appropriate tools and resources, and experience as an evaluator are essential. Any onsite knowledge is a typical example of an internal resource (knowledge of related countries, educational systems, and languages is essential).

A database of sample documents that can be used to compare non-official transcripts, diplomas, licenses, and other papers is also proposed in addition to online research that examines conditions in selected countries and at specific institutions. Finally, external information, such as those made publicly accessible by the ENIC-NARIC Networks could be used as useful resources (ENIC-NARIC Networks, 2016a as cited by Loo, 2016).





Evaluation of Competencies

Institutions can evaluate competencies—that is, the skills and knowledge acquired—along with the alternative evaluation techniques covered in the previous section for recognition needs. Europe frequently draws a distinction between competences, or learning outcomes that may be applied to particular settings, and credentials, or official outputs (e.g., diplomas, certificates) based on formal assessment and granted by official authorities (e.g., schools, licensing boards). In fact, it is possible to evaluate an applicant's qualifications as well as their skills to see if they meet particular requirements.

There are instances where applicants cannot obtain official documents or the submitted documents cannot be authenticated by the home institution. Institutions of application may then use a different evaluation procedure in certain circumstances. The following part seeks to summarize the alternative assessment best practices found in the literature.

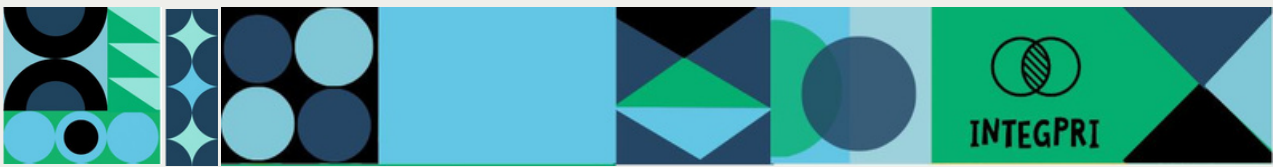
Reshaping a candidate's background

In some circumstances, candidates might be able to submit official copies or photocopies of their complete certificates. Since there is little to no urge to recreate an applicant's educational past, this option offers candidates and institutions "the easy route" (transcripts may require extensive verification if they cannot be verified as official or through the regular process).

Depending on the requirements of the institution where the application is being submitted, the information that goes into a background may include a wide variety of components. A few examples of information types include:

- The applicant's basic identity details
 - A reconstruction of the applicant's education, including degrees and diplomas acquired, dates of attendance and graduation, courses taken, grades/marks, etc., is also required.
 - Details about each school attended (if applicable), such as names, addresses, and accreditation data (if available).
 - Details on the applicant's professional history, such as any pertinent work experience, licenses, or certifications
 - A set of examples that support the information presented above.

Although this is not strictly an assessment, it can be used to evaluate the applicant's qualifications and assist in placing them in the right position.



The portfolio: Validating the background of the candidate

The information in the background paper will need to be supported by as many different types of evidence as possible through a portfolio as mentioned above. Transcripts, both formal and informal, even if they are incomplete, unofficial, or unable to be independently verified, remain the finest form of evidence.

Evaluating the Portfolio and Background Paper

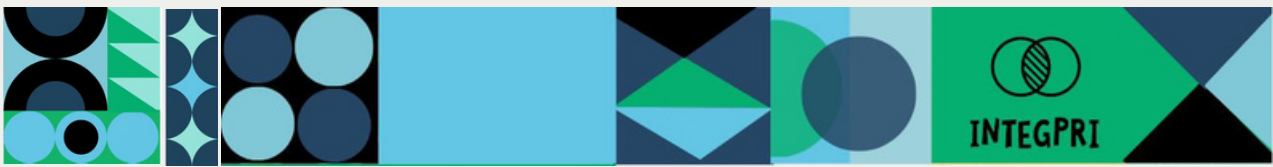
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1. Skills Evaluation

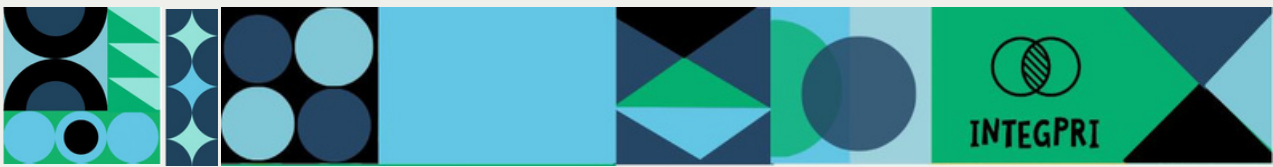
Skills assessments are frequently used for employment, licensing/certification, and disciplines that are more skill-based. These can involve performing specified tasks in a demonstration or taking part in simulation exercises while experts or professors watch and assess.



2. Examinations

Exams may be the most popular method for evaluating abilities and knowledge. As previously indicated, standard exams are frequently used as part of the process by various licensing and certification authorities. Depending on their requirements, employers may be able to use a variety of tests, from standardized certification exams in their specific sectors to collaborations with nearby academic or technical institutions to provide evaluations for job seekers.

Exams can take many different forms in academic settings, from extensive psychometric tests to individual course challenge exams, in which candidates attempt to be tested on certain courses by exhibiting mastery in the course material. Offering applicants who are refugees or otherwise displaced the same opportunities for examination is a good practice. In addition to large-scale tests, smaller tests, like subject-specific exams or course challenge exams, may be effective, particularly when combined with documentary proof or even other methods of assessing students' competencies in academic institutions.



For disciplines that are sequential in nature, like arithmetic or foreign languages, test results that demonstrate an applicant is at a specific level may permit the backfilling of earlier courses, helping the applicant avoid needlessly retaking courses. For instance, if a candidate takes a comprehensive calculus exam, the institution can typically infer that the candidate has studied or mastered the concepts of algebra and trigonometry, which are typically prerequisites to mathematics. The language used in many exams can be intricate, which can occasionally be a problem. It is frequently more complicated than what the applicant is prepared for, especially if it is tailored for particular professions.

3. Interviews

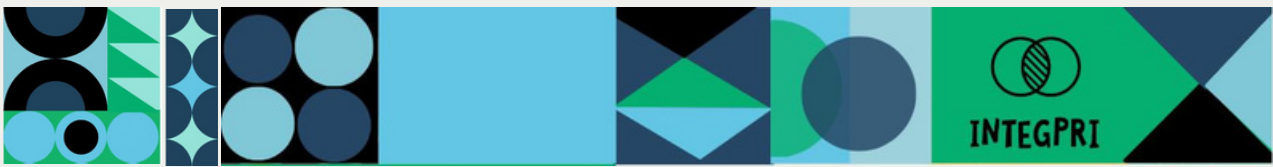
Interviews with one or more professors, subject-matter experts, or seasoned professionals in the field of application are another typical method of evaluation for admission, placement, or employment as they are in the best position to assess whether candidates are qualified to receive transfer credit for a particular level of education or are prepared to enter a particular sector or career. This approach may already be a component of the process in programs where the department makes the admissions decision, but it can also be a beneficial practice in programs where admissions departments make the final decision. Another option is to utilize it solely to decide which courses the student should be granted transfer credit for.

4. Sample work

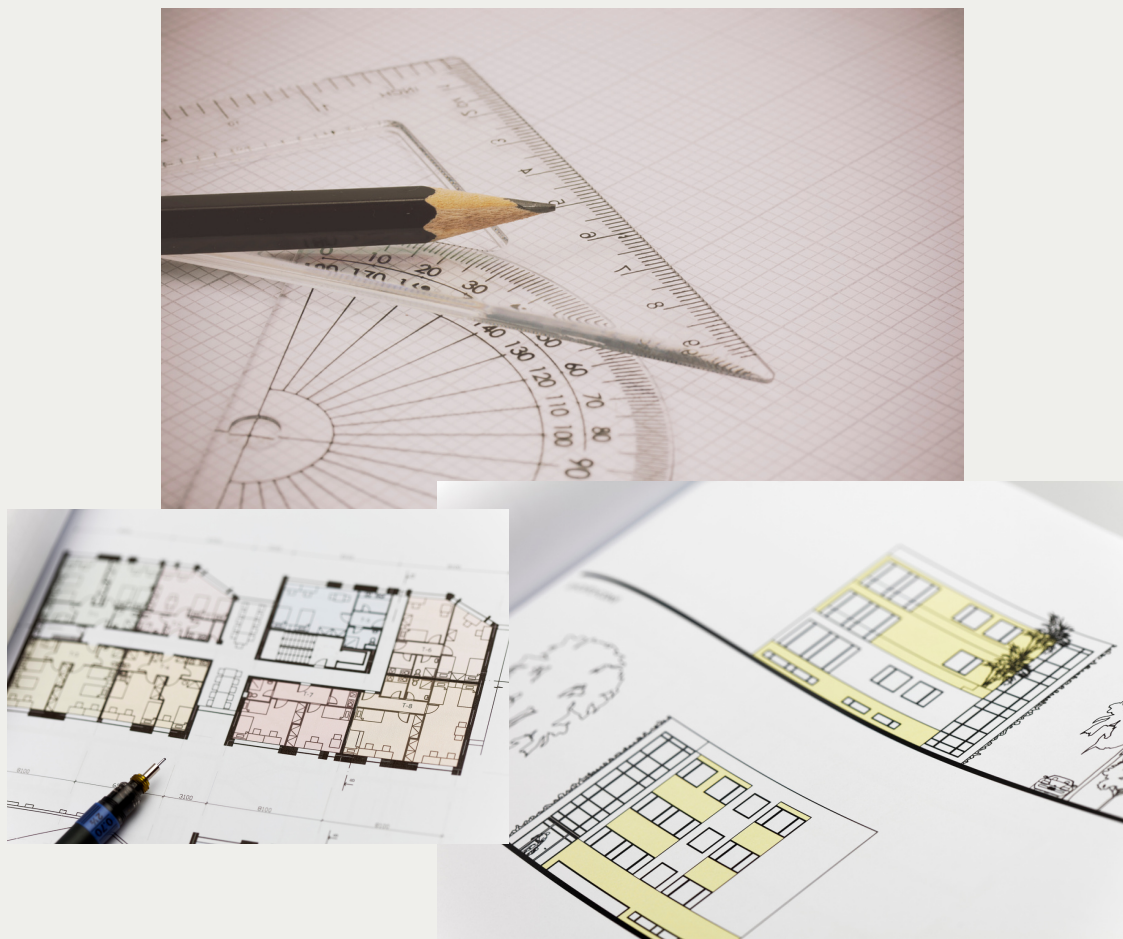
Sample work may be another useful tool for evaluating proficiency and success, particularly for academics and researchers, some high-level students (such as PhD candidates), and art and design students of all levels. The Scholars at Risk (SAR) Network invites applicants to provide samples of their work in order to host displaced and threatened scholars in institutions, mostly in North America and Europe.

5. Special projects

An alternative method of evaluating a candidate's abilities and expertise might be to offer them a customized project in cases when sample work is not accessible and for the benefit of higher reliability. In academic settings, the candidate may be assigned a paper (whether research-based or not), a presentation, a creative project, or another form of project to work on for a set amount of time, with the project's completion to be evaluated by the faculty member (or a panel).



The professor or panel may then suggest an applicant be admitted or placed. For applications to graduate and post-graduate programs, this might be especially helpful. Prior to applying for jobs, candidates may be able to engage with employment centers or coaches to generate original work samples for a portfolio of work that will serve as a means of showcasing their abilities, particularly in the design and creative industries.



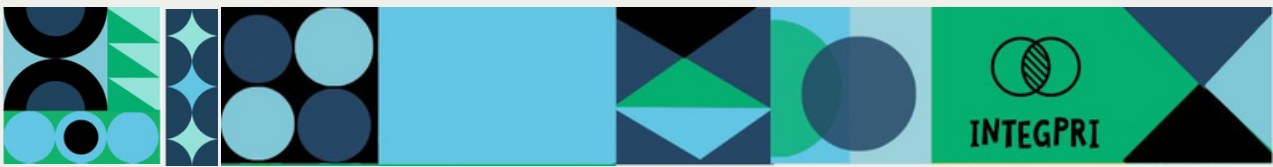
For instance, architects might be able to create a portfolio of sketches to present during the interview process or as part of a job application. However, employers may request that a candidate create and submit one or more brief examples of his or her work that might reasonably be finished within a specific deadline as part of the recruiting process (Loo, 2016).



Types of recognition based on alternative assessment

Institutions of application may not be able to recognize and admit candidates to the same degree as those with complete, verified documentation due to the potential of large gaps in records and gathered evidence on an applicant's background. However, as stated in the EAR Manual (EAR Consortium, 2016), there are alternate methods of recognition for qualified candidates without comprehensive, authenticated documentation:

- Alternative recognition recognizes the experience that is already accessible for a different certification than the one being applied for. For instance, a candidate claiming to be a doctor may be permitted to work in a different capacity in the medical industry or to undergo nursing retraining.
 - Conditional recognition enables the applicant to enroll in a program subject to future conditions, such as completing a set number of courses with a set minimum grade or number of credits, or pursuing additional education and certification. For instance, if a student completes all second-year courses in the first semester with a minimum grade, she or he may be admitted to the second year of an undergraduate architecture program. Employers in unregulated industries might be permitted to engage a refugee worker on a trial basis so that he can show his skills during his initial few weeks or months of employment. Applicants may be eligible for conditional registration through licensing and certifying authorities.
 - Partial recognition in an academic setting acknowledges the evidence provided as a component of a degree program rather than the complete degree program. The candidate would then have the option of enrolling in any additional courses or a focused education or training program. In this situation, for instance, a job applicant might state that she or he has a master's from her home country, but only some of her/his graduation work may be verifiable. The applicant must therefore retake a few graduate-level classes before their master's will be acknowledged.
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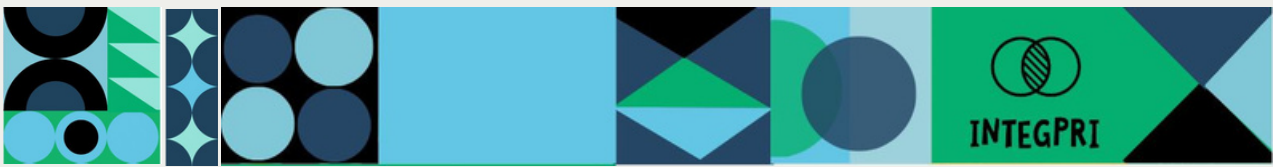
- Partial recognition for employment in an unregulated field may entail providing an apprenticeship or entry-level role for which the candidate may be overqualified with a clear path to full employment provided the candidate can show competency in the position. The candidate can demonstrate key competencies and career potential by being sent to a job development program or a performance review schedule that is accelerated (Loo, 2016).

Conclusion

When possible, recognition bodies should use a variety of assessment practices to recognize refugees' prior learning. They should also evaluate applicants' knowledge and skills to determine whether they possess the competencies necessary for admission to an educational institution, entry into practice in a regulated occupation, or employment in a non-regulated occupation.

As a result, evaluating formal qualifications is a component of a larger RPL process, and some RPL methods may also be helpful in determining if an applicant has successfully completed or just partially completed a formal academic degree.

Finally, it is worth considering that refugees and displaced people in general may face difficulties that are both universal to all entrants and unique to their backgrounds and experiences. Some people have seen firsthand how seriously organizations and authorities have failed to treat them appropriately. Practitioners in this field should be provided the appropriate training to develop the understanding and cultural competency needed to create and implement relevant policies and procedures.



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