



RECOGNITION OF COMPETENCIES



The recognition of competencies (RAC) in vocational training has been growing over the past decade in Québec. The number of people registered as well as the number of skills recognised has tripled in the past ten years. QPAT has prepared this document with a view to ensuring the quality of vocational training, maintaining the value of the Diploma of Vocational Studies (CVS) and protecting the rights of vocational training teachers.

What is RAC in vocational training?

RAC in vocational training permits the recognition of professional skills acquired through work or other life experience. Following a well established procedure, a person can be evaluated and receive DVS or AVS credits attesting to the mastery of the competencies evaluated. The process can be initiated by an individual, an employer or by "Emploi-Québec".

A recognised right

The law and the regulations specify that the school board must, in conformity with the criteria or conditions established by the Ministry, recognise learning, both scholastic and experiential, acquired by a person who is registered (Education Act, art. 250 and 469, of the Basic Regulation for Vocational Education, art. 14). The RAC and the training required to complete it are part of the services offered without cost by school boards. On the other hand, school boards do not necessarily provide RAC services for all programs.

The annual directives for vocational training, that specify the implementation of the Basic Regulation, customarily provide instructions regarding RAC. While a directive is not legally binding and therefore not prescriptive, it is a good idea to verify what the Ministry of Education, Leisure and Sport is saying to school boards.

All documents relating to vocational training can be found on the site www.inforoutefpt.org, in the "Administrative Documents" section.

What are the prerequisites?

There are no prerequisites necessary to take advantage of RAC. The prerequisites of the program are necessary to have access to the missing training required to complete a part or a competency/module. The prerequisites of the program are also applicable for certification (a DVS or AVS).

A well-established procedure

For recognition of competencies in vocational training, a number of specific steps are necessary.



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STEP IN THE RAC PROCESS	ROLE OF THE RAC ADVISOR	ROLE OF THE CONTENT SPECIALIST
Reception and preparation of the file	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Provides information on the procedure ➤ Clarifies the objectives of the candidate ➤ Ensures that the documents required have been provided and the description forms completed 	
File analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Verify the file, analyse the quality of the application, and establish equivalencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Can be asked to help evaluate the quality of the application and study the supporting documentation ➤ Prepares the interview and determines the evaluation strategy
Validation interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Organises the validation interview ➤ Participate, where applicable, in the validation interview ➤ Prepare the report on the interview and inform the candidate ➤ Clarify with the candidate or the content specialists the objectives and procedures of the evaluation 	<p>A jury of content specialists conducts an interview to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ recommend completion of a competency/ module of the program for competencies not acquired ➤ determine the make-up training (upgrading) required prior to the evaluation of competencies partially acquired ➤ recognise acquired competencies contained in the Administrative Manual for the Certification of Studies in General Education for Adults and in Vocational Training
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Train the content specialists in evaluation for RAC ➤ Organise and coordinate the evaluation activities ➤ Ensure that the results are communicated 	<p>Evaluate the person's competencies in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ fully recognise the competency ➤ partially recognise the competency and determine the elements of the competency that remain to be acquired ➤ complete the evaluation form
Results of the process and follow-up of the accompaniment plan for the acquisition of the missing components	<p>Taking account of the recommendations of the content specialist:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ enter the mark in the file if the competency is fully acquired ➤ prepare the plan for the acquisition of competencies that are not fully recognised 	

WE SUGGEST A NUMBER OF ORIENTATIONS:

- ▶ The centre should always give priority to a teacher in the centre when choosing a content specialist;
- ▶ The teacher should be in charge during the interview;
- ▶ The teacher is responsible for the evaluation.

When an evaluation is conducted, it is because it is assumed that the candidate will succeed. On the other hand, it is possible that the candidate has only partially mastered a competency. In that case, the prescribed procedure should be followed and the necessary training specified. **Any pressures whatever to pass a person who has not mastered the competency are unacceptable.**



The budgetary rules

The budgetary rules in Vocational Education are complicated and could be the subject of another full document. Briefly, note that the budgetary rules for vocational education:

- ▶ are based on rules that are revised every year and are therefore highly changeable;
- ▶ are provided to school boards which then are free to spend the budget as they see fit with a few exception, of which RAC is not one.

Despite these principles, it would be a good idea to know the rules for the centre's financing when the time comes to defend working conditions and the quality of training provided. We list below the rules for RAC:

- ▶ a sum of \$400 is granted following the **validation interview and registration** of the RAC in a course of study;
- ▶ sum is added for **each competency evaluated and approved**. In 2010-2011, the amount varied from \$100 to \$545, depending on the program;
- ▶ if the **missing training** is equal to or greater than a third of the normative duration of the course (time provided in the competency/module), 100% of funding is provided in accordance with the customary rules¹:
 - if less than a third, no percentage of the amount is granted;
- ▶ nothing is provided for local conception of evaluation.

¹Basic funding is granted at the time of the student's certification (at the conclusion of the competency/module). This amount varies according to the program and certain parameters.

Instruments

The Ministry, between 1990 and 2002, developed instrumentation for RAC in vocational training based on a so-called “traditional” approach. It employed tables of specifications and included a portfolio, tests appropriate to the RAC in the case of integrated competencies, and a guide for the organisation of evaluation. This approach favours the use of tests of scholastic learning for unintegrated competencies.

Since 2002, the MELS has developed instruments for RAC based on a model “harmonised” between vocational training and technical training. This approach, intended to be more flexible and accessible without compromising standards, is based on the program of studies taking into account the elements essential to the practice of the competency.

The MELS produced instruments for the RAC in vocational training based on this harmonised approach that takes four forms:

- ▶ the description form (for self-evaluation by the participant);
- ▶ conditions for recognition (methods proposed to test competencies);
- ▶ the evaluation form;
- ▶ the companion guide (information for administering the RAC).

The evaluation form is intended primarily for the content specialists, who are usually teachers. It allows them to evaluate the elements essential to the competency as described in the description form.

One of the main problems with RAC in vocational training is the **lack of instruments provided by the MELS**. While there are roughly 170 DVS and AVS, the MELS has provided material for only fifty programs. In those programs where there is no MELS instrument for RAC, it is possible to create local tests or to recycle tests already used to evaluate scholastic learning. On the other hand, it is required to use the MELS prescriptive tests in evaluating competencies, when they are compulsory.

One of the significant problems with the local creation of evaluation materials is the absence of **recognition of the work required to prepare them**. It may be necessary to inform the union to have this work recognised. Finally, it is sometimes possible for school boards to share materials.

The recognition of work

The work provided by teachers in the RAC is not specifically covered in the provincial agreement. We consequently find ourselves facing a number of situations that could have an impact on centre teaching staffs. A number of unions have included in their local agreements recognition of this work in the workload. For others, it is paid as a supplement to a full workload, which suggest “double-dipping”. Other arrangements, such as hiring people as “independent workers,” should be forbidden and, where they occur, drawn to the attention of the union. Whatever the situation, **do not hesitate to contact your union to determine whether there are any local provisions governing this matter**.

The quality of the RAC

A large majority of vocational training teachers feel that the competencies of students benefiting from RAC correspond to those taught in the program (though equivalencies for prerequisites, such as the General Development Test (GDT) are more frequently the object of criticism). In addition to ensuring satisfactory working conditions, a number of factors will encourage an RAC that is of high quality and that protects the value of the DPS.

Threats to that quality include pressure on teachers (often those with the least job security) from certain administrations to be lax in RAC evaluation, particularly since failure has an impact on funding. Other administrations hire non-teachers to conduct the RAC.

Pay particular attention to certain situations:

- ▶ priority in offering duties of content specialists in RAC given to teachers of the specialty in the centre;
- ▶ mastery of the concepts of workplace health and safety prior to using machinery;
- ▶ evaluation of all the competencies to be recognised, with the exception of situational competencies in specified in Chapter 5 of the administrative manual for the certification of studies in general education for adults and in vocational education (job search, trade and training, introduction to the world of work), which can be recognised at the validation interview without evaluation.

Missing training and the effect on groups

The vast majority of those taking advantage of RAC require “missing training” prior to evaluation. When candidates have mastered a portion of the competency, they can complete studies with an “updating” that can take the form of lectures or other short training programs to which they are referred by the content specialist. When they have mastered little or none of the competency, they can complete the competency/modules they are missing. They should then possess the conditions for admission to the DVS.

This situation has an impact on the “regular” groups that may be required at any time to integrate new students seeking to acquire specific competencies.

These students may require particular attention in that integration process. When instruction is less sequential and a number of competencies are being taught and evaluated at the same time, teachers may occasionally find themselves with RAC students taking training for competencies they have already had recognised.

The individualised approach, with variable entrance and exit, is particularly suitable for the organisation of missing training. Finally, it is useful to remember that missing training is funded if it is equal to or greater than a third of the normative duration of the course (time designated for a competency/module).

RAC, a social concern

The non-recognition of learning acquired outside the school system engenders costs for both the individual and society. For that reason, the accessibility and the quality of RAC in vocational training have to be ensured. To that end, QPAT is working on issues such as:

- ▶ insuring that the teaching conditions in vocational training are not undermined by RAC;
- ▶ making sure that RAC encourages a return to schooling and not dropping out;
- ▶ insuring consistency with the RAC system from the “*ministère de l'Emploi et de la solidarité sociale*” to foster consolidation in vocational training;
- ▶ ensuring that RAC does not lead to a disintegration of the DVS.

This document was prepared in the winter of 2011. Modification by the government of the applicable laws and regulations is always a possibility.

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