



Bachelor of Arts Equivalency RPL Resource Guide

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An Introduction to RPL for BA Equivalency

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a two-part acknowledgement:

- 1) Adults learn from a variety of sources and experiences outside the classroom.
- 2) If someone can prove that they already have learned skills and abilities, they should not be required to repeat that learning.

The benefits of the RPL process are many. A learning assessment enables individuals to identify the breadth of their life experience and skills, often boosting their self-confidence and sense of empowerment. Uncovering personal strengths and challenges can help individuals determine their educational and employment goals. When institutions give recognition for the learning individuals have done, RPL starts those individuals on the path to achieving their goals.

While RPL is an excellent option to consider, it is not for everyone. It is important that learners consult with the RPL Coordinator and consider what will be best for their unique situation.

At Providence, RPL provides seminary applicants with the opportunity to present the learning they have gained through their lives and work experiences as a potential way to meet the seminary's entrance requirements without an undergraduate degree. Before beginning the RPL process, individuals must submit a complete application to Providence Theological Seminary and must meet the requirement for mature student status. RPL Applicants will complete an interview and a detailed portfolio, which a faculty member will then assess for BA Equivalency.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who qualifies for RPL?

RPL applicants are adult learners (30+ years old) with significant life and work experience that translates to university-level learning. Applicants will need to be able to prove that their skills are current and that those current skills are relevant to the admission they wish to receive through RPL at Providence.

How can I access RPL?

Providence has an RPL Coordinator who will help applicants at all stages of the RPL process, from general inquiries to portfolio development and submission. The RPL Coordinator contacts the RPL student once they have completed the Providence Theological Seminary application process.

How much will RPL cost?

The RPL process requires a fee of \$995 to cover the RPL administrative fees and the Faculty Assessor. This fee is subject to change, and it is non-refundable.

How long does RPL take?

RPL requires a significant time commitment, as applicants must compile a portfolio / evidence collection that demonstrates they possess skills equivalent to those of a Bachelor of Arts graduate. It will likely take you 3 - 6 months to prepare your RPL portfolio, depending on how much time and effort you can devote to it. It will take us 2 - 4 weeks to assess your portfolio once you submit it.

May I have an extension if I am not able to meet my agreement deadline?

The RPL student may request a one month extension if they are unable to meet the agreement deadline. The application must be submitted at least two weeks before the agreement deadline. There is a \$100 extension fee for the application; see the RPL Coordinator for the application form.

Can I appeal my RPL assessment?

RPL assessments can be appealed. See page 18 for more details.

Bachelor of Arts Learning Outcomes

Knowledge and Understanding

On completion of a Bachelor of Arts degree, learners should be able to:

1. Demonstrate a broad knowledge of the Arts and Sciences
 - Describe two or three life / learning experiences with English, History, Philosophy, Music or Theatre
 - Describe two or three life / learning experiences with Anthropology, Psychology, Sociology
 - Describe two or three life / learning experiences with Mathematics, Computer Science, Pure and Applied Science
2. Discuss their major field of study confidently and competently
 - Describe the basic history of their major field of study
 - Explain at least one key topic in the contemporary study of their field
 - Identify the basic concepts, theories, and perspectives important to their field, including critical, interpretive, historical, cultural, and social approaches to that field

Academic Skills

On completion of a Bachelor of Arts degree, learners should be able to:

3. Employ critical thinking skills for discernment and/or analysis of situations, texts, and ideas
 - Develop coherent ideas for use in theory and debate
 - Interpret texts carefully for key ideas, meanings, and fallacies
 - Distinguish objective knowledge from hypotheses and opinions to develop sound arguments
4. Communicate effectively to share knowledge
 - Use theoretical terms and perspectives important to their field
 - Listen and ask questions to appreciate others' viewpoints
 - Respond critically but respectfully to others' ideas for improved understanding
 - Write and speak in clear and compelling ways to ensure audience engagement
 - Adapt presentation for a variety of audiences
5. Write clear, succinct, and well-argued papers for academic evaluation or publication
 - Conduct independent, self-motivated research to gather information
 - Select and evaluate information sources to employ those sources professionally
 - Synthesise information to formulate an argument
 - Edit and revise their argument to ensure excellence

Practical and/or Professional Abilities

On completion of a Bachelor of Arts degree, learners should be able to:

6. Apply theoretical principles practically to achieve successful projects and tasks
 - Identify areas requiring improvement
 - Theorize effective improvement methods to present for implementation
 - Plan, design, and carry out a project or task with well-defined outcomes
 - Analyze the project or task's effectiveness for adjustment as necessary

7. Collaborate with others to develop plans and reach goals
 - Respect diversity of ideas, worldview, social status, ethnicity, sexuality, and religion
 - Help develop clear purpose and objectives for team work
 - Accept and provide feedback in a constructive manner
 - Support or lead as appropriate, contributing to the team and motivating for high performance
 - Manage and resolve conflict when appropriate
 - Demonstrate positive attitudes and behaviours

8. Take initiative for personal empowerment and collective growth
 - Assume responsibility for their own well-being and the well-being of others, as well as for the success of their work
 - Design and suggest alternate ways to achieve goals
 - Foresee complications to plans for timely preparation and resolution
 - Solve any problems creatively and efficiently
 - Evaluate their work to identify both success and methods of improvement

These outcomes are the primary rubric against which prior learning will be evaluated. In order to qualify for full seminary acceptance (Bachelor of Arts Equivalency), portfolios and evidence collections must demonstrate that learners have achieved these outcomes at a GPA level of 2.5 or 60% competence.

RPL Process Overview

Step 1: Complete application process with the Providence Enrollment Office

Step 2: Initial Consultation with Providence RPL Coordinator

- Explanation of Providence RPL process and policy
- Identification of BA Learning Outcomes
- Completion of RPL Application Form
- Payment of RPL Process Fee

Step 3: Portfolio Development

- Online portfolio development workshop with personalized assistance
- Gathering information / documentation
- Sorting, compiling information / documentation
- Formatting finalized portfolio

Step 4: Submission of Portfolio for Assessment

- RPL Assessment Forms are added to portfolio
- Portfolio is sent to Faculty Assessor(s)

Step 5: Results of Portfolio Assessment

- Applicant is notified by the Registrar's Office

RPL Process Details

Initial Consultation with the Providence RPL Coordinator

The first RPL consultation takes place after the student has completed the Seminary application process. This initial consultation will help to gauge the potential of your prior learning by identifying the BA Learning Outcomes in which you may have equivalency. The consultation will also help determine which faculty member(s) might serve as your RPL Assessor.

Before you begin your portfolio development, wait until the RPL Coordinator contacts the appropriate faculty member(s) to determine availability for assessment. The faculty member might request an interview with you before making her/his decision about serving as an assessor.

If the self-assessment facilitated by the RPL Coordinator gives you confidence about continuing the RPL process, you will complete the RPL Application form and make plans for regular appointments with the RPL Coordinator as you develop your portfolio. You will also be required to pay the RPL Process Fee of \$995 (non-refundable, subject to change) at that time.

Portfolio Development Assistance

The portfolio is the document that contains the organized representation of your relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes for which you are seeking undergraduate equivalency, with documented evidence as proof. Because each person's portfolio is both particular to the person and to the degree program they wish to enter, it is critical to take advantage of the information and assistance offered at Providence.

Assistance for portfolio development is available through individual appointments with the RPL Coordinator or with the help of an external RPL coach. If a portfolio is not a suitable format for proving your skills, another form of evidence collection will be permitted. Be sure to discuss your needs with the RPL Coordinator.

Completion of Portfolio / Evidence Collection

A comprehensive, yet brief, portfolio is the best way to ensure that the assessor understands the breadth and depth of your knowledge, and how that knowledge is equivalent to the learning outcomes expected of an undergraduate degree. The portfolio development process requires you to reflect upon your previous work and life experiences, describe and document the learning you've achieved through these experiences, and determine how they compliment your academic pursuits at Providence.

See page 10 for a detailed description of the required elements of a portfolio.

Submission of your Portfolio for Assessment

The portfolio is submitted to the RPL Coordinator when it has been completed. The RPL Coordinator will ensure you receive a confirmation that your RPL Portfolio has been forwarded to the Assessor.

Results of your Portfolio Assessment

You will receive an Assessment Notification letter from the RPL Coordinator, specifying the results of your assessment. The assessor's comments will be provided in your portfolio, and the results of your assessment will be identified according to one of the following notations:

2	BA Learning Outcomes met at 60% or higher competence. Full acceptance granted.
1	BA Learning Outcomes not met at 60% competence. Acceptance pending additional documentation / special permission.
0	BA Learning Outcomes not met at 60% competence. Acceptance denied.

Important Notes for RPL Applicants:

- Entry into specific programs at Providence Theological Seminary may require coursework / experience beyond that which is outlined in the general statement of BA Learning Outcomes. Be sure to check with the RPL Coordinator to see if your educational goals will involve the completion of additional requirements. The additional requirements must be completed before you are able to start on the desired Seminary program.
- Presenting false information used for the purpose of Prior Learning Assessment will result in the revocation of admission status.
- Transfer of Credit: Providence will not transfer any credits from courses that were part of the demonstrated learning in the RPL portfolio. This includes formal academic courses as well as other forms of learning.
- For students that successfully complete the RPL process, a notation to that effect will be recorded on the student's Providence Theological Seminary transcript.

Self-Assessment Rating Scale

The purpose of this checklist is to assist you in determining if your knowledge, skills and abilities are equivalent to the learning outcomes for a Bachelor of Arts. Please indicate the knowledge, skills and abilities you are able to provide evidence for according to the following scale*:

- 0 – Have no experience with this
- 1 – Have observed this or been oriented to this
- 2 – Can participate in and assist with this
- 3 – Can do this with minimal assistance
- 4 – Can successfully do this without assistance
- 5 – Can successfully do this without assistance and can lead / teach others to do it

#	BA Learning Outcomes	0	1	2	3	4	5	Possible Evidence
1	Demonstrate a broad knowledge of the arts and sciences							
	Describe two or three life / learning experiences with Humanities, Social Science, and Science							
2	Discuss your major field of study confidently and competently							
	Describe the basic history of your major field of study							
	Explain one key topic in the contemporary study of your field							
	Identify the basic concepts, theories, and perspectives important to your field							
3	Employ critical thinking skills for discernment and / or analysis of situations, texts, and ideas							
	Develop coherent ideas for use in theory and debate							
	Interpret texts carefully for key ideas, meanings, and fallacies							
	Distinguish objective knowledge from hypotheses and opinions to develop sound arguments							
4	Communicate effectively to share knowledge							
	Use theoretical terms and perspectives important to your field							
	Listen and ask questions to appreciate others' viewpoints							
	Respond critically but respectfully to others' ideas for improved understanding							
	Write and speak in clear and compelling ways to ensure audience engagement							
	Adapt presentation for a variety of audiences							

*Scale borrowed from *The Conference Board of Canada*.

#	BA Learning Outcomes	0	1	2	3	4	5	Possible Evidence
5	Write clear, succinct, and well-argued academic papers							
	Conduct independent, self-motivated research to gather information							
	Select and evaluate information sources to employ those sources professionally							
	Synthesise information to formulate an argument							
	Edit and revise the argument to ensure excellence							
6	Apply theoretical principles to achieve successful projects / tasks							
	Identify areas requiring improvement							
	Theorize effective improvement methods to present for implementation							
	Plan, design, and carry out a project or task with well-defined outcomes							
	Analyze the project / task's effectiveness for adjustment as necessary							
7	Collaborate with others to develop plans and reach goals							
	Respect diversity of ideas, worldview, and backgrounds							
	Help develop clear purposes and objectives for team work							
	Accept and provide feedback in a constructive manner							
	Support or lead as appropriate, contributing to the team							
	Motivate the team for high performance							
	Manage and resolve conflict when appropriate							
	Demonstrate positive attitudes / behaviours							
8	Take initiative							
	Assume responsibility for self							
	Assume responsibility for group success							
	Design and suggest alternate ways to achieve goals							
	Foresee complications to plans for timely preparation and resolution							
	Solve any problems creatively and efficiently							
	Evaluate your work to identify both success and methods of improvement							

Score: /165

You are likely to be successful if you scored 95 or above on this checklist. If your answers were consistently 4s and 5s, you are a very strong candidate. The completed checklist will be submitted as a part of your Seminary application process.

Portfolio / Evidence Collection Requirements

The RPL applicant will provide documentation to prove his/her knowledge, skills, and abilities based on the Bachelor of Arts Equivalency learning outcomes by the successful completion of a portfolio. In special cases where a portfolio is not a sufficient or appropriate method of documenting the applicant's learning, the applicant will be permitted to submit an evidence collection, the details of which will be negotiated between the applicant and the RPL Coordinator and Portfolio Assessor.

As of September 2017, RPL learners will be required to submit an electronic portfolio to the RPL Coordinator that contains each of the elements listed below. The RPL Coordinator will provide instructions on how to assemble an electronic one.

An RPL Portfolio for the assessment of Bachelor of Arts Equivalency will contain the following elements:

1. Cover page with identifying information and statement of authenticity
2. Table of contents
3. Introduction letter or statement of intent
4. Chronological Record
5. Life History Paper
6. Resume
7. Transcripts (if applicable)
8. Self Assessment
 - a. Statement of Learning Outcomes
 - b. Learning narratives
9. Supporting Documents – proof, verification of learning
10. An academic writing sample (research essay)
11. A presentation component, in the form of an interview and / or skills demonstration, if necessary

These elements are described in detail in the sections below. See the Appendix for samples.

Introduction

The overall appearance of the portfolio needs to be neat, clean, and professional. This begins with a clearly labelled **Cover Page**. The cover page should include the following:

- Descriptive title (i.e. RPL Portfolio for Bachelor of Arts Equivalency)
- Learner's name and address, phone number and email address
- Learner's student number
- Signed statement of authenticity
- Date of submission

The next element in the introduction is the **Table of Contents**. In the electronic portfolio, the document emailed will consist of items 1-6, and 8 in the list above. Items 7, 9-10 will be connected via URL attachments (a simple internet search will yield many resources for the creation of an RPL electronic portfolio document). Note that there are many ways to put together this portfolio electronically (files, shared folders on cloud storage, etc.). Please feel free to contact the RPL Coordinator for further guidance if required.

The **Letter of Introduction** is similar to a cover letter for a resume. Use this opportunity to seize the assessor's interest and to link prior learning to the learning required for BA Equivalency. The letter should include an outline of the learner's educational goals.

The **Chronological Record** is a year-by-year account of the important experiences in the learner's life. It is a way of looking at the past and recalling meaningful events and milestones that have led to your

significant learning. This includes any important experiences such as employment, school, marriage and divorce, birth of children, immigration, travel, mission trips, and transitions in life. Preparing a chronological record will help you in knowing yourself better and understanding all of the learning you have acquired. A sample chronological record is located at the back for the RPL resource guide. You may include significant events that have impacted your life over the past 5, 10, 20 years or more.

A **Life History Paper** will help the assessor have a better understanding of the knowledge, skills, and abilities the applicant has learned throughout his or her life. It is meant to be a summary that highlights the significant experiences and learning acquired, not a year-by-year recounting of events. Exercise discernment.

The **Resume** highlights skills gained from work and volunteer experience, while the **Transcripts** indicate any post-secondary level training or education received. The RPL Coordinator can provide assistance in developing a strong skills-based resume for the portfolio.

Self-Assessment

The **Statement of Learning Outcomes** will list the Providence BA Learning Outcomes with corresponding examples (evidences) of the RPL applicant's learning, skills, and abilities. It serves as an outline that demonstrates the applicant's confidence in their learning. It also gives the assessor an idea of the kinds of evidence the applicant will provide to demonstrate his or her competency. The completion of the self-assessment chart was completed as a part of the student's application to Providence Seminary. In the Statement of Learning Outcomes the learner begins to identify the specific skills that they have used within the portfolio to demonstrate learning in within each of the specific BA Learning Outcomes.

Learning Narratives are detailed descriptions of the nature and depth of the applicant's learning as it relates to the BA Learning Outcomes. Each narrative will illustrate one learning outcome, providing a description of

- 1) the experience(s) that allowed the applicant to acquire the learning (i.e. job, volunteer experience, community or family activities, personal study, etc)
- 2) what the applicant learned
- 3) how they learned it, and
- 4) how they have put the learning into practice.

Each narrative will be 1-2 pages, double-spaced, with 12-pt font. It is acceptable to combine learning narratives as long as the learner clearly indicates the outcomes that are being demonstrated through the narrative.

Supporting Documents

The **Supporting Documents** section will confirm the learning the applicant describes in his / her self-assessment. In a traditional classroom setting, students prove their learning with exams, papers, and assignments. Similarly, RPL learners must substantiate the learning they claim to have. The assessor will use this documentation to determine if the applicant has indeed met the learning outcomes. It is helpful to think of documentation in two main categories: **direct** documentation and **indirect** documentation.

Direct documentation refers to evidence applicants produce themselves. It is usually the strongest evidence source, because it *shows exactly what the learner can do*. The most important piece of direct evidence in the BA Equivalency portfolio will be the academic writing sample. Other examples of direct evidence include (but are not limited to):

- Reports / projects / assignments

- Audio/video recordings of performances, sermons, teaching and training demonstrations
- Curriculum or lesson plans developed by the learner
- Published articles
- Blueprints
- Computer programs
- Creative work (poems, stories, drawing/painting, sculptures, needlework, etc)
- Other work samples

Indirect documentation refers to evidence provided by a third party that verifies the applicant's learning. The best kind of indirect documentation is a letter or performance review written by a qualified individual (employer, teacher, pastor/elder, etc) – someone who has observed the applicant's skills and abilities themselves and can speak to the specific outcomes that require verification. Examples of indirect evidence include:

- Verification of learning letters
- Promotion evaluations / job evaluations
- Awards, licences, examination scores, certificates / diplomas
- Course outlines from education or job training, job training, workshops / seminars
- Written description of applicant's work (newspaper / magazine, client / co-worker letter)
- Membership in trade professional organizations, unions
- Licenses and performance standards for acquiring licenses
- Military records
- Books read, bibliography, description of books

Applicants are encouraged to carefully evaluate their supporting documents to be sure they do not submit weak documentation, such as vague letters of reference / recommendation (i.e. "Joe Smith was a good employee"), or letters written by family members or close friends. **Each piece of supporting documentation must be clearly labelled with the corresponding learning outcome.**

Academic Writing Sample

While most documentation types are optional based on the applicant's particular circumstances, the **Academic Writing Sample** is mandatory for all applicants. It must be 8-10 pages (double-spaced), use 12-pt Times New Roman font, include page numbers, use a standard formatting style (Turabian / Chicago, APA, MLA) and reference at least 8 scholarly sources. For a guide to formatting styles and identifying scholarly sources, please refer to the "Research Helps" section of the Providence Library webpage here: http://www.providencecollege.ca/college/library/information/research_helps/ Students will be given access to the Providence Library to make use of online journals, books etc. See the RPL Coordinator for more details.

The writing sample will demonstrate how an applicant meets learning outcome 5: *Write clear, succinct, and well-argued academic papers*. It will also serve as supporting documentation for some of the other areas, particularly

2. *Discuss major field of study confidently and competently*
3. *Employ critical thinking skills for discernment and/or analysis of situations, texts, and ideas*
4. *Communicate effectively to share knowledge*

The sample should not be the ONLY piece of documentation to support these outcomes, however.

The writing sample can be an essay or research paper the applicant has completed prior to beginning the RPL process; however, it is recommended that the applicant critically review this document to be sure it meets the assessment criteria.

Evidence Suggestions by Learning Outcome

Selecting good pieces of evidence to demonstrate each learning outcome is key for a successful RPL portfolio. The following suggestion list is meant to be a starting point, not a strict rule. Each applicant will have unique learning, and, therefore, unique evidence of that learning.

1. Demonstrate a broad knowledge of the Arts and Sciences.
 - a. **Direct evidence:** A written learning narrative that discusses and explains the applicant's familiarity with Humanities, Social Science, and Science.
 - b. **Direct evidence:** A recording of a piece of music the student has composed
2. Discuss one's major field of study confidently and competently.
 - a. **Direct evidence:** A written learning narrative that describes the basic history of the applicant's major field of study, identifies at least one key topic in the contemporary study of the applicant's field, and identifies the basic concepts, theories, and perspectives important to their field, including critical, interpretive, historical, cultural, and social approaches to that field.
 - b. **Indirect evidence:** A verification of learning letter from someone who works in the field and can support the applicant's learning claims.
3. Employ critical thinking skills for discernment and/or analysis of situations, texts, and ideas.
 - a. **Direct evidence:** A written textual analysis of a relevant book or journal article.
 - b. **Direct evidence:** A verbal debate (taped or demonstrated).
 - c. **Indirect evidence:** A job performance review or a written evaluation of presentation given
4. Communicate effectively to share knowledge.
 - a. **Direct evidence:** An academic paper or article.
 - b. **Direct evidence:** A lesson plan or taped class the applicant has taught.
 - c. **Direct evidence:** A short story, play, poem, or painting.
 - d. **Indirect evidence:** A verification of learning letter from an employer, teacher, co-worker, or student of the applicant; a journal article that critiques presentation or written work
5. Write clear, succinct, and well-argued papers for academic evaluation or publication.

Required element: An academic writing sample (see description on p. 11)
6. Apply theoretical principles practically to achieve successful projects and tasks.
 - a. **Direct evidence:** A written learning narrative that describes a successful project/task in which the applicant applied theoretical principles.
 - b. **Direct evidence:** A project/task plan that the applicant designed & implemented.
 - c. **Indirect evidence:** A verification of learning letter; evaluation summary after a retreat, event where feedback is given for the project or task;
7. Collaborate with others to develop plans and reach goals.
 - a. **Direct evidence:** A written learning narrative that describes how the applicant developed clear objectives, provided/accepted constructive feedback, motivated the team for high performance, and managed conflict appropriately.
 - b. **Indirect evidence:** A verification of learning letter; minutes from a committee served on
8. Take initiative for personal empowerment and collective growth.
 - a. **Direct evidence:** A written learning narrative that describes the applicant's responsibility for self and group success, and a time when the applicant creatively solved a problem.
 - b. **Indirect evidence:** A verification of learning letter.

Assessment Criteria

The following criteria, based on the BA Learning Outcomes, will be used to assess Providence RPL portfolios. The criteria will be assessed based on the following rubric:

Value	Meaning
2	For this criterion, the quality of the evidence submitted exceeds minimum expectations.
1	For this criterion, the quality of the evidence submitted meets minimum requirements, but some improvement is possible.
0	For this criterion, the evidence submitted does not meet the minimum requirements.

This rubric will be used for all elements, except for the Academic Writing Sample, which has its own rubric. Applicants must receive a minimum of 65% on the writing sample, and a minimum of 60% overall is required to achieve full acceptance to Providence Theological Seminary.

Criteria for Assessing Learning	Score		
Knowledge of Arts and Sciences	2	1	0
1. Describes 2 or 3 learning experiences in English, History, Philosophy, Music, or Theatre.			
2. Describes 2 or 3 learning experiences in Anthropology, Psychology, or Sociology.			
3. Describes 2 or 3 learning experiences in Mathematics, Computer Science, or Pure/Applied Science.			
Total:			
Knowledge of and Competency in Major Field of Study	2	1	0
1. Describes the basic history of major field of study.			
2. Explains at least one key topic in the contemporary study of the field.			
3. Identifies basic concepts, theories, and perspectives important to the field, including critical, interpretive, historical, cultural, and social approaches.			
Total:			
Employment of Critical Thinking Skills	2	1	0
1. Develops and utilizes coherent ideas in theory, debate, and / or discussion.			
2. Interprets texts carefully for key ideas, meanings, and fallacies.			
3. Distinguishes objective knowledge from hypotheses and opinions to develop sound arguments.			
Total:			
Effective Communication	2	1	0
1. Uses theoretical terms and perspectives important to the field.			
2. Listens and asks questions about others' viewpoints.			
3. Responds critically but respectfully to others' ideas.			
4. Writes and speaks in clear and compelling ways, engaging the audience.			
Total:			
Academic Writing Sample (see rubric below)			