



Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Policy and Procedure

The purpose of this document is to provide support, clarification and guidance regarding recognition of a learner's previous achievements and/or qualifications.

'Recognition of Prior Learning RPL is a method of assessment [leading to the award of credit] that considers whether learners can demonstrate that they can meet the assessment requirements for a unit through knowledge, understanding or skills they already possess and so not need to develop through a course of learning'

(Regulatory Arrangement for the Qualifications and Credit Framework)

Acceptable evidence of RPL

- Learners have successfully completed the assessment criteria for a whole or part of a unit within a qualification and this is certified
- Learners have evidence of recent prior study which meets assessment criteria of the current programme of study being undertaken in full
- RPL must be included in the appropriate sampling plan as an assessment method as appropriate and subject to internal quality assurance

Circumstances when prior learning will not be recognised:

- Learning that is similar to assessment criteria but which has been met at a level lower than the current programme of study being undertaken by the learner
- Learning that is at the same level and similar content but not the same assessment criteria
- Prior learning that is not valid and reliable
- Prior learning that has been referred by an assessor
- Prior learning that has not been assessed by an assessor



Assessment of RPL Evidence

RPL allows an individual to avoid unnecessary learning, meaning that they can present for summative assessment without repeating learning in areas where they will be able to show that they can meet the learning outcome(s).

Evidence obtained through RPL process must be assessed, to the same rigorous quality as evidence obtained through any other process. In no circumstances does RPL process mean that any required qualification summative assessments can be avoided e.g. mandatory exams, practical/theory tests or assignments. This is because the prescribed summative assessment is the process through which evidence, produced via any prior assessment method or through RPL process, is evaluated.

All prior learning that is submitted as evidence by a learner should be complemented by a professional discussion to make sure the learner's knowledge or the application of this knowledge is up to date if the assessor deems this necessary.

The assessor receiving the learner's prior learning must be satisfied that the evidence provided meets the assessment criteria for which it has been submitted and where evidence from prior learning is weak, the receiving assessor must plan further work with the learner as appropriate. RPL assessment must be carried out by designated staff with relevant levels of expertise to meet the requirements of the assessment strategy/guidance for the qualification concerned.



It remains the role of assessors and quality assurance staff to ensure that learning outcomes are only deemed to have been met where evidence is:

Valid:

Does the evidence genuinely demonstrate that the demands of the learning outcome have been met? For RPL, currency of evidence will be of particular concern. Does, for example, the evidence meet up-to-date demands or is it representative of practice that has significantly changed?

Authentic:

This involves consideration of whether the evidence being examined is genuinely the work of the learner. For example, the evidence may have been produced by somebody else, or may be the result of the work of a team. In the latter case, this would be acceptable if the learning outcome was related to team / joint working, but not if it was being used as evidence of an activity which should have been carried out individually.

Sufficient:

There must be enough evidence to fully meet the requirements of the learning outcome, or learning outcomes being considered. If there is insufficient evidence to fully meet requirements, then evidence obtained through RPL must be complemented by additional evidence gained through other suitable assessment method(s) before requirements/outcomes can be said to have been met.

Reliable:

The evidence obtained through RPL should be such that an assessor would arrive at the same assessment decision, were the assessment to be repeated.



Outcomes of RPL

If individuals can produce relevant evidence, that meets learning outcome requirements then, recognition can be given for their existing knowledge, understanding or skills. If an individual can demonstrate that they meet all the learning outcomes and assessment criteria in a unit, then they can claim credit for that unit solely on the basis of their RPL achievement. If however, evidence from RPL is only sufficient to cover one or more learning outcomes, or to partly meet the need of a learning outcome, then additional assessment methods should be employed to generate sufficient evidence on which to base a safe assessment decision.

RPL Process

The methods of assessment used will be determined by the assessment strategy for the qualification being assessed and might, for example, include:

- examination of documents
- expert witness testimony
- reflective accounts
- professional discussion

The RPL assessment should be carried out as an entire process. This means that the assessor and Internal Quality Assurer should:

- plan with the learner
- make a formal assessment decision
- feedback assessment decisions to the learner, confirming decision and giving guidance on the available options (particularly in situations where the decision has been not to award credit)
- maintain appropriate records
- ensure that learners are aware of their right to access the appeals process should they feel the assessment decision was unfair
- ensure that certification and claims are made according to normal procedures
- ensure that the process is subject to the same quality assurance requirement as all other assessment methods.



RPL stage	Learner	Best for Training
Recruitment and induction	• Course Application	• Respond to any initial enquiry • Explain RPL Process including exemptions and credit transfer as appropriate • Record details of previous achievements/experience on individual learning plan • Pass info to Internal Quality Assurer
Preparing to submit claim	• With guidance provide evidence of achievement in a portfolio, for example this may be paper based, electronic, video recorded evidence, etc • Agree to action plan if further evidence gathering/assessment is required	• Provide guidance to the learner • Identify and agree an action plan and assessment strategy with the learner • Map achievement and identify gaps
Assessing claim	• Review action and assessment plan • Provide new evidence if required • Acknowledge additional learning • Submit final evidence as agreed	• Assess the evidence and check authenticity • Grade where relevant • Provide learner with regular feedback • Arrange additional learning as required • Arrange internal quality assurance /moderation/ standardisation
Accrediting Claim	• Receive feedback on the evidence submitted	• Provide learner feedback on achievement • Maintain records for external verification/moderation/inspection • Follow awarding organisations procedures for RPL, Exemption or Credit Transfer as appropriate

Policy reviewed October 2024
Review date October 2026