



Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy

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**Education & Skills
Funding Agency**

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LINE MANAGER RESPONSIBLE:
LAST REVIEW DATE:
NEXT REVIEW DATE:

Director of Operations
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1.0 Purpose

We are committed to improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment for all learners. The purpose of this policy is to encourage wider participation of learners from diverse educational backgrounds, and to prevent repetition of learning in order to maximise learner progress.

2.0 Aim

The aim of the policy is to enable learners to apply for RPL against any recognised qualification which they are currently enrolled to recognise learning based on experience and/or other previous formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts.

The knowledge, understanding and/or skills in question may have been acquired in any area of life, e.g. Domestic/family life, education and training, work related activities or voluntary activities.

3.0 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a method of assessment that considers whether a learner can demonstrate that they can meet the assessment requirements for a component of a qualification through knowledge, understanding or skills that they already possess and do not need to develop through the course of learning being offered.

It can also be defined as: -

‘a method of assessment 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 do not need to develop through a course of learning.’

4.0 How to apply the use of RPL

Usually RPL will be used for units. It may be acceptable to claim for an entire qualification through RPL, if permitted by the Awarding Organisation although it would be unusual for a learner to be able to offer prior achievement that completely matches every aspect of a qualification's assessment requirements.

4.1 Where an individual has evidence of having previously learnt something but has not received formal recognition for it through a qualification or other form of certification. Evidence can draw on any aspect of a candidate's prior experience including for example, education and training and work activities. The RPL process does not however extend to the recognition of any unit or qualification assessed by external assessment only. This is because such units are subject to specific evidence requirements.

Where a learner has received formal recognition for their learning through a qualification or certification and in which case the assessor should compare the assessment criteria for the two qualifications to ensure full coverage and agree RPL mapping with the Awarding Organisation and External Quality Assurer.

4.2 The only time that RPL cannot be used is where the assessment criteria of a qualification or a component states that an external assessment must take place. It should also be noted that the use of RPL by a learner is voluntary and that s/he may prefer to undertake new training and assessment than to collect evidence for RPL.

4.3 RPL should not be confused with the following: -

- Exemption -the facility for learners to claim exemption from some of the achievement requirements of a qualification, using evidence of certificated achievement deemed to be of equivalent value.
- Equivalent unit(s) a unit/units from a different qualification or submitted by another recognised organisation that is/are deemed to be of equivalent value and so can count towards a qualification in place of designated mandatory or optional units from it.

5.0 Assessment of RPL Evidence

Evidence obtained through the RPL process will be assessed to the same rigorous quality as evidence obtained through any other process. The RPL process does not mean that any required qualification summative assessments can be avoided e.g. mandatory exams, practical/theory tests or assignments etc.

6.0 The Role of the Assessor and Tutor/IQA

It remains the role of assessors/tutor and IQA staff to ensure that learning outcomes are only deemed to have been met where evidence is valid, authentic, sufficient and reliable.

As such the assessors/tutors are responsible for: -

- Advising learners of fees, evidence requirements, grading criteria and any limits on the amount of credit that can be awarded.
- Ensuring all RPL is appropriately documented in line with Awarding Organisation's requirements and made available to learners, administrative colleagues and external assessors using the Awarding Organisation's documentation.
- Assessing RPL evidence and determining whether it is sufficient, valid, authentic, current, relevant, and matches the level of learning required.
- Mapping achievement of RPL, identifying learning not evidenced and arranging additional learning and assessment where appropriate.
- Grading RPL evidence where relevant.
- Arranging IQA/moderation/standardisation and external quality assurance of the RPL evidence in accordance with the Awarding Organisations requirements.
- Retaining RPL evidence, assessment records and IQA documentation in line with Awarding Organisations and JCQ requirements and for a minimum of three years.

IQA role is to ensure that they sample and agree with the decisions being made by the assessor. All RPL claims must be signed off by the lead IQA before processing the application.

In summary, evidence submitted to the RPL process must: -

- Be authentic and prove conclusively that RPL is based on the learner's own work.
- Meet the requirements of the current assessment criteria and be appropriate to the content of the component or qualification being considered for RPL.
- Be sufficient to conclusively prove consistency of learner performance in meeting the assessment criteria.

7.0 Funding Requirements

Once agreed, the MIS team must be notified as the funding adjustment for prior learning field must be completed with the proportion of the learning aim that is still to be delivered if the student is not undertaking the full scope of the learning aim because of prior learning.

This can be because of : -

- a break in learning,
- a transfer from another provider,
- prior learning when they join as a new learner,
- on a new learning aim

8.0 Review and Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually in accordance with our quality assurance procedures.

Annex No 1 RPL Procedures for Learners

Stage 1 Awareness, information and guidance

Ahead of enrolling a learner, the possibility that they may be able to claim credit for some of their previous learning should be raised with them. If the learners are interested in this, they will need to know the: -

- Process of claiming achievement by using RPL.
- Sources of support and guidance available to them.
- Timelines, appeals processes and any fees involved.

Stage 2 –Pre-assessment; gathering evidence and giving information.

At this stage, the learner will carry out the process of collecting evidence against the requirements of the relevant unit(s) and will submit a written application indicating their intention to apply for RPL for a specific unit of their current course/framework/standard to the tutor/assessor.

In some cases the development of an assessment plan and tracking document or similar may be required, to support the learner through the process. The evidence gathered will need to meet the standards of the unit, or part of unit, that the evidence is being used for.

Stage 3 – Assessment/documentation of evidence

Assessment as part of RPL is a structured process for gathering and reviewing evidence and making judgments about a learners prior learning and experience in relation to unit standards. The tutor/assessor may look at work experience records (validated by managers); previous portfolios of evidence put together by the learner, or essays and reports validated as being the learner's own unaided work. The assessment process will be subject to the quality assurance procedure e.g. Internal standardisation and internal verification.

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

- examination of documents,
- witness testimony
- reflective accounts
- professional discussion.

Stage 4 – Claiming certification

Once the internal and external quality assurance procedures have been successfully completed, certification claims can be made to the Awarding Organisation.

Assessment and internal verification records, along with any additional RPL records completed, should be retained for a 3 year period following certification.

The tutor/ assessor must ensure that all learning outcomes and assessment criteria being claimed for each unit are achieved and that the records of assessment are maintained in the usual way.

Stage 5 Appeal

As with any assessment decision, if a learner wishes to appeal against a decision made about their assessment they need to follow the Academic Appeals procedure and the Awarding organisation's procedure.