

Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

Introduction

This policy examines the different methods where Awarding Organisations can use prior learning on regulated qualification frameworks and other recognised frameworks.

Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all Awarding Organisations where qualifications accept the use of Recognised Prior Learning, including those on the Regulated Qualifications Framework, Self-Regulated Framework (SRF) and other national frameworks in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. However, not all qualifications allow the use of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). Where the use of RPL is permitted, this will be stated within the qualification specification.

Policy Statement

This policy seeks to enable students to avoid duplication of learning and assessment for the purposes of awarding credit. There are three ways that this can be managed:

- Exemption
- Equivalency
- Recognition of prior learning.

Procedures

The RPL Process

Stage 1 – Awareness, Information and Guidance

Ahead of enrolling a potential learner, the possibility that they may be able to claim credit for some of their previous learning should be raised with them by the assessor and raised with the Lead IQA or Lead IV. If the learner is 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) as agreed with the assessor and Lead IQA or Lead IV. 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 a 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 learner's prior learning and experience in relation to unit standards. The assessor may be looking 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. Assessment must be valid, current and reliable to ensure the integrity of the award of credit and, as above, the evidence gathered needs to meet the standards of the unit, or part of a unit, that the evidence is being used for. The assessment process will be subject to the Academies quality assurance procedures, for example internal standardisation and internal verification as well as the awarding organisation's quality assurance procedures. Evidence gathered through RPL should be clearly referenced and signposted to aid internal assessment and internal and external verification.

Stage 4 – Claiming Certification

Once the internal and external quality assurance procedures have been successfully completed, certification claims can be made. Assessment and internal verification records, along with any additional RPL records completed, should be retained for the standard three-year period following certification.

The 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 on procedural grounds, if a learner wishes to appeal against a decision made about their assessment, they need to follow the Academies policy and procedures and then the awarding organisation's Enquiries and Appeals procedures.

Application of RPL

Exemption is the recognition of certificated, non-QCF achievement; for example, certificated NQF achievement. Exemptions are not recognised by the award of credit and appear on certificates without a credit value.

Equivalency is the transfer of credit from a unit, or units, from within the QCF. To be counted as an equivalency, a unit must have the same credit value or greater and be at the same level or higher than the unit, or units to be claimed. Equivalencies are not recognised by the award of credit and appear on certificates without a credit value.

Acceptable exemptions and equivalencies will be included in the rules of combination of a qualification.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is the recognition of non-certificated learning towards a full not partial unit or qualification. The RPL process must be negotiated with the centre and must be claimed as part of the course. The centre is responsible for assessment and claiming credit. There is no difference between achievement of the required standards by RPL and achievement through a formal programme of study; therefore, RPL appears on certificates as credit-bearing.

There are three ways of recognising prior learning which may be open to the student:

- Route 1 – Submit a portfolio of evidence based on previous relevant knowledge, skills and competencies which must be assessed against the assessment criteria of the unit/s for which RPL is being sought to ensure that all learning outcomes have been achieved.
- Route 2 – Undertake the same assessments as students following a formal course of learning and assessment that lead to award of the unit or qualification. The assessment may be undertaken without attending teaching sessions.
- Route 3 – Assessment through a summative assessment against a unit or full qualification.

It is important to note that RPL is an alternative route to achievement and is not an easy option or shortcut. However, career breaks will be considered, and students will be supported to return to college. Evidence must be produced for RPL which is subject to the same assessment and quality assurance requirements as applied to evidence produced as part of a course.

Currency

Prior learning and achievement must be current to be used by the student, which will normally be within the last three years. For exemptions and equivalencies, this means three years start from the date of the original award to the point at which the student registers with the centre on the course for which the claim will be made. Credit awarded as part of exemption, equivalency or RPL cannot be carried forward beyond three years from the original award.

Restrictions on Recognition

Restrictions will vary according to the Awarding Organisation RPL policy and processes. The awarding organisations aim to ensure that certificates are meaningful and valuable for students and other stakeholders. To support this aim, the following guidelines will be applied to the rules of combination for a qualification to restrict recognition of prior learning and achievement.

Exemption and equivalency

A maximum of 70% of a qualification can normally be achieved through exemption or equivalency. At least 30% should be gained through new learning. 60% of credit within a qualification will normally be achieved at the level of the qualification.

RPL can be used to claim full units and qualifications. However, awarding organisations can reserve the right to exclude the use of RPL in cases such as:

- Licence to practice
- Health and safety requirements
- Regulated professions and work placements.

Additionally, RPL cannot be used where units and qualifications are subject to external assessment.

Associated Procedures and Documentation

- Exams Procedure
- Recognition of Prior Learning: Assessment Policy to adhere to awarding body guidance

Associated Policies

The main policies related to this policy are:

- Complaints and Assessment Appeals Policy
- Recognition of Prior Learning Policy (relevant awarding body)

Policy Validity

This policy is valid for the academic year 2020 and is due for review in July 2021.

Policy Owner and Reviewer


The Senior Manager responsible for this policy is the Head of Training, Safety and compliance. This will be reviewed by the QA Manager.

Policy Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

A review of this policy will form part of the annual process of self-assessment for the curriculum function and will involve input from a range of stakeholders including staff, students, awarding organisations, regulatory bodies, and others.

Policy Impact Assessment

This policy has been Impact Assessed and generates no concerns about differential impact. The Impact Assessment is filed on the shared drive

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