



Recognition of prior learning Policy

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy

What is accreditation of prior and experiential learning?

Recognition of Prior and/or Experiential Learning (RPL) is a process that enables people of all ages, backgrounds and attitudes to receive formal recognition for skills and knowledge they already possess. A person's learning and experience can be formally recognised and considered to:

- gain entry to further or higher education courses
- give exemption from certain parts of a new course of study
- qualify for an award in an appropriate subject in further or higher education

RPL considers:

- organised prior-learning where the learning has been assessed and where certificates are awarded on completion and evidence of these can be seen.
- recognition of achievement from a range of activities using any appropriate assessment methodology. Provided that the assessment requirements of a given unit or qualification have been met, the use of RPL is acceptable for accrediting a unit, units or a whole qualification.

Evidence of learning must be valid and reliable.

RPL will be of particular value to:

- mature learners returning to education who lack the formal qualifications required for entry to a course of study. RPL can be used to gain access to a course of further or higher education
- past learners who have previous further and higher educational qualifications, but who now seek to add to those qualifications in order to broaden their expertise or change careers. RPL can be used to avoid repeating specific modules of learning by providing evidence that prior learning has already taken place
- learners who wish to return to courses of study that have been interrupted by work or family commitments. Again, RPL can provide evidence that prior learning has occurred.
- those who are seeking the award of professional qualifications and need to provide evidence of specific training and practical work experience. RPL provides the framework for collecting and presenting the evidence that is required
- learners on full or part-time courses who wish to gain recognition for informal learning that has taken place through work or leisure-related activities

Principles of RPL:

- **Principle 1**
RPL is a valid method of enabling individuals to claim credit for units, irrespective of how their learning took place. There is no difference between the achievement of the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of a unit through prior learning or through a formal programme of study
- **Principle 2**
The Centre RPL policies, processes, procedures, practices and decisions will be transparent, rigorous, reliable, fair and accessible to individuals and stakeholders to ensure that users can be confident of the decisions and outcomes of RPL
- **Principle 3**
RPL is a learner-centred, voluntary process. The individual will be offered advice on the nature and range of evidence considered appropriate, to support a claim for credit through RPL, and be given guidance and support to make a claim.
- **Principle 4**
The process of assessment for RPL is subject to the same quality assurance and monitoring standards as any other form of assessment. The award of credit through RPL will not be distinguished from any other credits awarded.
- **Principle 5**
Assessment methods for RPL will be of equal rigour to other assessment methods, be fit for purpose and relate to the evidence of learning. Credit may be claimed for any unit through RPL unless the assessment requirements of the unit do not allow this, based on a rationale consistent with the aims and regulations of the framework.

RPL is also of value to learners transferring across various learning programmes that have relevant learning, but do not hold relevant credits or certificates. This may include learners transferring from NQF to QCF specifications.

The RPL process **is not** concerned with allowing for exceptional entry to, or exemption from, a programme of study.

The RPL process **does not** allow the recognition of any unit assessed by external assessment only because such units are subject to specific evidence requirements.

If we agree to carry out RPL we must ensure that:

- Learners are registered as soon as they formally start to gather evidence
- Records of assessment are maintained, as for any other unit/qualification
- Certification and claims are made according to normal procedures
- All relevant evidence is assessed before assessment decisions are confirmed
- There are designated personnel with the appropriate expertise to support and assure the RPL process.

This policy will be reviewed every 12 months by the Head of Assessment and Quality Nominee.

Version No	Purpose / Change	Lead	Inception/ Review Date	Next Review Date
1	Document Inception	Mick Farrar Quality Manager	November 2016	November 2017
2	Document review update	Mick Farrar Quality Manager	November 2017	November 2018
3	Document review update	Mick Farrar Quality Manager	November 2018	November 2019
4	Document review update	Ian Gunn Head of Centre	November 2019	November 2020