

Recognition of Prior Learning Policy 2025/26

1. Introduction

1.1. 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 unit through knowledge, understanding or skills they already possess and do not need to develop through a course of learning. Recognition of Prior Learning is sometimes referred to as Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) and/or Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL).

2. Definitions

2.1. Prior learning includes: • Prior non-formal learning – learning that may be assessed but does not typically lead to formal certification, for example, learning and training activities undertaken in the workplace, voluntary sector or community- based learning • Prior informal learning – learning that takes place through life and work experiences. This is often unintentional learning • Prior certificated learning i.e. learning demonstrated through the award of units/qualifications awarded by a recognised Awarding Organisation/Body

2.2. RPL differs from Credit Accumulation and Transfer which allows learners to accumulate and transfer credits over a period of time, in differing locations and contexts, in order to gain qualifications.

3. Scope

Centres can apply Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) to internally assessed units of RSL vocational qualifications. The use of RPL is optional but if centres choose to apply it, they must have the proper resources to do so. All centres delivering RSL qualifications eligible for RPL must have an up to date RPL policy. All RSL learning outcomes and assessment criteria must be met to approve any RPL. RPL cannot be applied to externally set assessments or exams.

What is RPL?

RPL is defined by Ofqual as:

- Identification by an awarding organisation of any learning undertaken, and/or attainment, by a learner – i. Prior to that learner taking a qualification which the awarding organisation makes available or proposes to make available and ii. Which is relevant to the knowledge, skills and understanding which will be assessed as part of that qualification, and
- Recognition by an awarding organisation of that learning and/or attainment through amendment to the requirements which a learner must have satisfied before the learner will be assessed or that qualification will be awarded.

Which qualifications and units does this apply to?

This applies to individual internally assessed units within RSL qualifications.

Which qualifications and units does not this apply to?

A whole qualification cannot be claimed using RPL. This policy does not apply when evidence is being used to support achievement for an entire qualification. This is known as an exemption. RPL only applies to circumstances in which a learner(s) prior achievement may be enough to support the claim of internally assessed units of an RSL qualification. Externally assessed units cannot be claimed using RPL.

Centre responsibilities for RPL

The centre must:

- Have an internal policy for RPL which outlines the process should a learner/s wish to claim RPL
- Ensure they have staff with the expertise to support, assess and quality assure the RPL process.

Before registering the learner:

Where this is an individual learner requesting RPL from previous assessment/experience:

- Discuss with them the option of using RPL to claim units for past learning and experience
- Explain the process of claiming a unit using RPL
- Identify the support and guidance that is available to the learner
- Identify how long it will take
- Identify how to appeal
- Identify any associated costs
- The centre will need to check the evidence provided by the learner for RPL has been achieved before the start of their course of study.

Contacting RSL:

- Tell RSL before any that RPL has been applied prior to the commencement of any quality assurance.
- Submit to RSL the process for how RPL will be assessed and quality assured. The same process must be used for every learner in a cohort where multiple learners are claiming RPL.

Registering the learner:

- Register them once they start to gather evidence
- Advise the learner(s) that RPL evidence must meet the standards of the unit, or part of the unit, that the evidence is being used for
- To aid the learner(s) in collecting evidence which maps to the learning outcomes and/or assessment criteria of the unit, RSL recommends that you provide them with an assessment tracking document
- Advise the learner(s) that evidence may be drawn from:
 - Domestic/family life
 - Education (which may or may not have been certificated)
 - Training
 - Paid or voluntary work/activities.

Assessment of evidence and quality assurance

An assessor and internal verifier who have sufficient expertise to support and quality assure the RPL process must be appointed by the centre.

The following gives an example of a robust RPL process; centre staff are advised to have regard to this process when defining their own RPL policy and quality assurance process.

Actual evidence of learner(s) achievement must be reviewed as part of the following process.

Evidence of a learner(s) past achievement is likely to vary across industries. An assessor will review diverse types of past work. This work could include (but is not necessarily limited to):

- Evidence from work experience that has been authenticated by the employer
- Evidence of past work/study that has been confirmed to have been undertaken by the learner(s)
- The testimonies of the colleagues/co-volunteers of the learner(s) (be they peers, subordinates or managers)
- New tasks that have been set for the learner(s) based on gaps in the learner(s) RPL evidence

Evidence of previous learning must be rigorously subject to an assessment of its:

- Validity: does the evidence demonstrate that the demands of the assessment criteria/learning outcome have been met?
- Currency: does the evidence demonstrate that demands of the syllabus have been met and are up to date?
- Authenticity: can the evidence be unequivocally attributed to the learner?
- Sufficiency: is there enough evidence to fully meet the criteria/outcome?

For all submitted evidence, the assessor must be confident it is the learner(s) own. A mapping activity must be undertaken which:

- Demonstrates how the RSL learning outcomes, assessment criteria and grading criteria have been met by the evidence seen
- Demonstrates the extent to which the evidence presented is sufficient to either fully meet, partially meet, or not meet the requirements of the unit
- When mapping, grading criteria cannot be used unless the learner has met all assessment criteria for the unit
- If all assessment criteria are not met, the centre will need to give the learner the opportunity to complete more assessments to create enough evidence to award the learning outcomes
- The centre will need to use their usual assessment and quality assurance methods and a full record of this mapping exercise must be kept for quality assurance purposes. Please note that while RSL appointed moderators may wish to see work for learner(s) for whom RPL has been applied, they are not required to give feedback on any tasks that you set as part of the RPL.

After assessment of evidence and quality assurance

- Once the evidence has been checked and assessment decisions made, give feedback to learner about the assessment decision and the options they have should the centre decide not to award the unit
- Check the learner understands the centre's appeals policy if they do not agree with assessment decision
- If the evidence of prior achievement submitted is sufficient to demonstrate that the learner(s) have met the full assessment criteria and learning outcomes for the unit, it can be claimed for
- Submit evidence for review by RSL
- RSL will require access to the audit trail for all RPL claimed in any centre

If RSL identifies that unit requirements have not been met, your centre will need to provide more evidence or ask the learner to complete the standard assessment requirements if they want to achieve the qualification. RSL responsibilities for RPL Before completing the RPL process:

- The centre must submit to RSL their proposed process for assessing and quality assuring RPL prior to completing the process to ensure it is sufficient
- RSL will review the proposed RPL process and ensure it is fit for purpose
- RSL will provide a response within 10 working days of its receipt. RSL review of RPL evidence:
- RSL will require you to submit the audit trail in the case of one learner. Where RPL has been applied to more than one learner, a sample of work will be requested by the Senior Quality Assurer (SQA). The SQA review will ordinarily be part of the normal moderation process.
- The SQA will let your centre know if RSL would like more information from your centre to justify the application of RPL
- Should RSL determine that the centre has allowed RPL in cases where the evidence for it is incomplete or not valid, centres will need to provide more evidence
- Should it remain the case that RSL has determined that the evidence in support of RPL is incomplete or not valid, despite the provision of additional information from the centre, learners will be required to complete the standard assessment requirements to be awarded the qualification.

Centres may appeal the RSL decision by putting their concerns in writing and emailing:
vqappeals@rslawards.com

Policy reviewed by: Mrs Natasha Hodes and Head of Centre

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