



D17 RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING POLICY

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SCOPE

This policy provides a definition of RPL and information which will be useful for Accipio and our learners. The RPL process is described.

DEFINITION

The Regulatory Arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) provides the following definition of RPL and this definition is fully supported by the CQFW:

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 that they already possess and do not need to develop through a course of learning'.

A similar definition is provided by The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework:

The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is the process for recognising learning that has its source in experience and/or previous formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts. This includes knowledge and skills gained within school, college and university and outside formal learning situations such as through life and work experiences.

In the context of the QCF, the definition of RPL is quite specific and relates to assessment leading to the award of credit. Assessment for RPL is conducted against the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of a unit and is subject to exactly the same internal and external quality assurance requirements as any other kind of assessment within the QCF.

The RPL process must be agreed by the centre and must be claimed by the learner as part of a qualification. 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 learning.

All centres are required to have their own guidance on RPL and to ensure that all staff within the centre are familiar with the content.

PROCESS

The RPL process should enable the learner/s to record their knowledge, understanding and skills acquired from their work experiences and training. Learner/s can do this using their CPD log. Where appropriate this can be used to claim credit for their achievements. This process can give them either a part or full qualification irrespective of how their skills and knowledge were learnt.

Accipio will ensure this process is carried out by staff with the relevant expertise to meet the requirements of the delivery and assessment for the qualification they are working with.

There are two contexts of RPL one is where a portfolio of evidence is put together by the learner showing the prior learning undertaken – the learner would then need to complete the ILM assessments in order to gain the qualification, the second is where the learner has evidence of their learning which also shows they have completed an assessment (non-ILM) which can be 100% mapped to the ILM assessment criteria. This piece of assessment like our ILM ones would have been assessed and internally quality assured by the centre.

Regulations require Accipio to promote RPL as an option to learners. However, it is certainly not always an easier, cheaper or quicker route to a qualification.

Accipio advocates the six-stage process for RPL as set out below. The process of RPL involves learners from the moment they consider making a claim and supports them through to the result of the assessment.

Accipio is required to notify ILM about claims for credit through RPL and are required to keep records of RPL for three years.

Stage 1 – Induction of Recognition of Prior Learning

This should ideally be provided at two hour sessions

- Session 1 – introduction to RPL
- the process of claiming credit through RPL
- the sources of professional support and guidance available to individuals and employers
- the administrative processes for RPL applications
- timelines, appeals processes and any fees and subsidies.

An indication to the learner as to who they will be working with during this process from a centre point of view

Session 2 – demonstrating the RPL process with a sample unit

Note – at the end of this Stage it is vital to work with the learner to select which units they will be using to achieve award of credit.

Stage 2 – Pre-assessment

This Stage is optional but highly recommended.

Mentors who have expertise in the units being used for RPL will provide sessions for the learners – these could be like a ‘surgery style’ and ideally would be timetabled sessions.

The learners will work with the mentor to gather evidence to meet the unit standards.

The mentor will provide individual support as required. This aims to ensure that the learners have the necessary evidence to meet the unit standard and thus be able to gain award of credit for the unit.

An individual may decide to make his or her learning visible and to claim credit. This stage is vital to ensure that the learner is fully informed of the RPL process and has sufficient support to make a viable claim and to make decisions about evidence collection and presentation for assessment. During this stage the learner will carry out the evidence collection and develop an assessment plan. The evidence required for the award of credit will depend on the purpose, learning outcomes and assessment criteria for the relevant unit(s) within the QCF.

Stage 3 – Assessment of evidence against unit standard

The occupational competent assessors will assess if the evidence fully meets the standards of the unit within the QCF and record the assessment process and then record their judgement. This process will then be subject to a final internal quality assurance check to ensure validity and consistency in the judgements. This Stage of RPL also puts together the feedback to the learner and the assessor.

It remains the role of centre assessors and quality assurance staff to ensure that 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/group 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 outcomes considered. If there is insufficient evidence to meet these requirements, then evidence obtained through RPL must be complemented by evidence gained through other suitable assessment method(s) before requirements 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.

Assessment must be valid and reliable to ensure the integrity of units and qualifications and the RPL system as a whole. The assessment process for RPL must be subject to the same quality assurance processes of awarding organisations as any other part of the assessment process.

Stage 4 – Feedback to the Learner on the assessment process

The results of Stage 3 will be fed back to the learner. This feedback must confirm the decision and provide guidance on the available options (particularly in situations where the decision has been not to award credit).

Stage 5 – Award of Credit by ILM

This stage will ensure that everything is in place for this to take place. If the learner does not wish to go forward for award of credit, you will have a verified record of knowledge, understanding and skills, obviously as an awarding organisation we highly recommend that learners do go forward for certification. ILM is responsible for awarding credit and issuing certificates. The procedure is the same as for other forms of assessment.

Stage 6 – Appeal

If a learner wishes to appeal a decision about the claim for credit they can do this through the appeals procedure.

WAYS OF RECOGNISING PRIOR LEARNING

Route 1 – Submit a portfolio of evidence based on previous relevant knowledge, skills and competences which must be assessed against the assessment criteria of the unit(s) for which RPL is being sought to ensure that all learning outcomes and assessment criteria have been achieved.

Route 2 – Undertake the same assessments as learners following a formal course of learning and assessment that lead to award of the unit or qualification. The assessments 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 it is not always an easy option or shortcut. 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.

POSSIBLE SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

There is a wide variety of possible sources of evidence, which include:

- Training records
- Certificates/assessment
- Licenses
- Photographs of work being undertaken
- Witness testament
- Interviews/Professional Discussion
- Work records
- Diaries/Training journal
- Task Sheets/job sheets/log books
- Competence records
- Quality/performance measures
- Appraisal/performance reviews and self-reflections.

OUTCOMES OF RPL

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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 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 work must be undertaken by the learner. All assessment criteria must be met in order for an assessment decision to be reached.

This is recognised as good practice by all the concerned regulators and Ofqual has a statement which reinforces this:

Learners are unlikely to have all the evidence they need to achieve a full unit and may need to produce additional evidence. Evidence used for RPL is not time-limited but assessors must determine whether it is valid and authentic. RPL may be used in conjunction with other assessment methods such as examination of recent products, professional discussion or observation to assess current performance.

Since evidence from RPL is similar to that derived via any other acceptable assessment method, where the standard of a unit is met by evidence obtained from, or partly from RPL, credit can be claimed.