Alexdd
Training

Recognition of Prior Learning
Policy

Next Review Date: 30 November 2026

This policy provides guidance on Recognition of Prior Learning.

Scope of policy

This policy applies to all qualifications, including those on the National Qualification Framework (NQF), the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) and the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF).

Policy Statement

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a method of assessment [leading to the award of credit] 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 do not need to develop through a course of learning.

Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework (Ofqual/08/3726)

Note: RPL should not be confused with exemption which is subject to a seperate Policy and Procedure

RPL enables 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 (this includes Current (Ofqual/08/3726))
• reliable.

Alex D&D Training encourage the use of RPL where it is of value to learners in facilitating assessment. Assessors which use RPL must follow these principles and keep appropriate records.

Terminology

RPL policies and procedures have been developed over time, which has led to the use of a number of terms to describe the process. Among the most common are:

• Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)
• Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)
• Accreditation of Prior Achievement (APA)
• Accreditation of Prior Learning and Achievement (APLA).

These terms broadly describe the same process. Alex D&D Training uses the term Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in connection with the QCF and NQF.

Amplification

The use and application of RPL is of particular value to learners without formal qualifications, who are either in employment, preparing to enter, or returning to employment. It enables them to gain all or part of a qualification without having to undertake a formal learning programme.

RPL can be used where a learner has not had their prior learning formally recognised.

RPL focuses on assessment and awarding for prior learning which may count as evidence towards:

- a unit accumulated towards a full qualification
- unit or units recognised by an Certificate of Achievement
- a full qualification.

All evidence must be evaluated using the stipulated learning outcomes and assessment criteria from the relevant qualification specification. In assessing a unit using RPL the assessor must be satisfied that the evidence produced by the learner meets the assessment standard established by the learning outcome and its related assessment criteria.

Most often RPL will be used for units. It is acceptable to claim for an entire qualification through RPL although this is not the normal practice because 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.

The prior achievement that would provide evidence of current knowledge, understanding and skills will vary from sector to sector. It will depend on the extent of the experience, technological changes and the nature of the outcome claimed. If the currency of any evidence is in doubt, the assessor may use questions to check understanding, and ask for the demonstration of skills to check competence. Note that the assessment strategy for each qualification must be adhered to.

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 or qualification assessed by external assessment only. This is because such units are subject to specific evidence requirements.

The RPL procedure

An example RPL process is outlined below, with common steps and actions outlined.

Stage I. 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. 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.

At this stage the learner will carry out the process of collecting evidence against the requirements of the relevant unit(s), assessment criterion or assignment brief(s). This could be in the form of reflective accounts, work product evidence, observation reports of occupational competence . 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 leaning 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 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 unit, that the evidence is being used for. The assessment process will be subject to the usual quality assurance procedures of the centre, for example internal standardisation and internal verification as well as Brooks and Kirk's quality assurance procedures.

Stage 4 - Appeal

As with any assessment decision, if a learner wishes to appeal against a decision made about their assessment they need to follow the Centre Appeals procedures.