

Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

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

- 3.1. RPL can be used towards the award of some, but not all, WJEC qualifications. RPL will not be permitted for any external assessments or where regulatory conditions or Government policy prohibits the use of RPL. Where RPL is allowed, it will be clearly stated in the qualification specification, along with any restrictions and parameters for use.
- 3.2. This policy applies to all WJEC qualifications where RPL is permitted including those offered under the WJEC Eduqas brand and any non-regulated provision.

4. Principles underpinning RPL

- 4.1. WJEC has adopted the following principles¹ with regards to RPL:
1. RPL is a valid method of enabling individuals to achieve units irrespective of how the learning took place and the assessments undertaken. There is no difference between the achievement of the required standards through prior learning and through a formal programme of study.

¹ These principles have been derived from *Ofqual, CCEA, Welsh Government, 2011. Guidance on the recognition of prior learning within the Qualifications and Credit Framework*

2. RPL policies, processes, procedures, practices and decisions should 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.
3. RPL is a learner-centred voluntary process. The individual should be offered advice on the nature and range of evidence considered appropriate to support a claim for assessing RPL, and be given guidance and support to make their claim.
4. The process of RPL is subject to the same standard of quality assurance and monitoring processes as any other form of learning and assessment.
5. Assessment methods for RPL must be of equal rigor as other assessment methods, must be fit for purpose and relate to the evidence of learning. An individual may claim RPL against any whole unit unless the assessment criteria of a unit states otherwise. For example, if an external assessment sets the standard of a learning outcome that a learner must achieve, then the learner must pass the external assessment to achieve the unit and gain the credit.

5. Evidence required to allow recognition of prior learning

- 5.1. It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that the learner has the evidence to demonstrate how they can meet the required knowledge, understanding or skills as outlined in the assessment requirements of the specific unit. Evidence may include:
 - a portfolio of the learner's authenticated work
 - work experience records or performance management feedback showing that the learner already has the suitable and current skills, knowledge and understanding within the unit
 - relevant documents, testimonials or reflections mapped across to the unit's standards
- 5.2. Evidence used to demonstrate RPL must be:
 - **Authentic:** Evidence must prove conclusively that RPL is based upon the learner's own work
 - **Valid:** Evidence must meet the requirements of the current assessment criteria
 - **Relevant:** Evidence must be appropriate to the content of the unit/qualification being considered for RPL
 - **Sufficient:** There must be enough evidence to conclusively prove consistency of learner performance in meeting the assessment criteria.

6. Stages of the RPL Process²

- 6.1. When a learner enrolls on a course leading to a WJEC qualification that permits the use of RPL, the centre must inform the learner of this facility.
- 6.2. Should the learner indicate an interest in having their learning considered for the purposes of RPL, the centre must provide the learner with information, guidance and support on:
 - the process of claiming RPL
 - the sources of professional support and guidance available
 - the administrative processes for RPL applications

² This process has been derived from *Ofqual, CCEA, Welsh Government, 2011. Guidance on the recognition of prior learning within the Qualifications and Credit Framework* and was initially adapted from European guidelines on the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

- timelines, appeals processes and any fees and/ or subsidies available to support the process.
- 6.3. Centres offering RPL as an assessment method must ensure that they have staff with the correct level of expertise to support and assure the RPL process.

Pre-assessment — gathering evidence

- 6.4. When a learner decides to pursue a recognition of prior learning route, it is important that the learner has sufficient support to make a viable claim and to make decisions about evidence collection and presentation for assessment.
- 6.5. During this stage the learner will carry out the process of collecting evidence against the requirements of the unit or units through which credit is claimed. In some cases, this may entail the development of an ‘assessment plan’ or similar tool to support the individual through this process.
- 6.6. Evidence gathered should be referenced clearly on any tracking documentation and adequately signposted in order to facilitate internal assessment as well as internal/external quality assurance.

Assessment

- 6.7. Assessment as part of RPL is a structured process for reviewing evidence and making judgements about an individual’s prior learning and experience in relation to the learning outcomes and assessment criteria for the unit being claimed.
- 6.8. During this stage assessors may:
- look at portfolios of evidence collated by the learner
 - look at work experience records or performance management feedback (as validated by managers)
 - read essays and/or reports that have been validated as the user’s own unaided work
 - read witness testimonials/professional discussions
- 6.9. The assessor **must** ensure that all learning outcomes and assessment criteria being claimed are covered and that records of assessment are maintained in the usual way. When considering evidence, assessors must also consider whether the learning that is being assessed is current and not out-of-date. If the learning experience occurred some time ago, the learner is required to provide evidence that they have kept their learning up-to-date. The process must be subject to the same quality assurance requirements as any other assessment method, and work retained and presented to the internal and external moderator/quality assurer as required. If it is identified that there is insufficient evidence, either more evidence will be requested or the learner will need to complete the normal assessment requirements for the unit/qualification.

Feedback

- 6.10. After the assessment has taken place, the assessor must provide feedback to the learner, including confirmation of the assessment decision and what options are available to the learner if the assessor has decided not to award the unit or qualification.

Claiming certification

- 6.11. In all cases, once the assessment process is complete, the standard procedures for submitting results leading to the award of a unit or qualification should be followed.

Appeal

- 6.12. If a learner wishes to appeal against a decision made about their claim for RPL, they would need to follow their centre's standard appeals process.

Malpractice

- 6.13. If a learner is suspected or found to have committed malpractice, for example plagiarism, they will be investigated under the JCQ Malpractice Policies and Procedures. The centre must inform the learner of what would constitute malpractice in the context of RPL.