

# Recognition of Prior Learning

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## 1. Context

**1.1** This policy sets out the standards required for the Accreditation and Recognition of Prior Learning and/or Experience at Burton and South Derbyshire College and how the differentiated needs of individual learners will be addressed. All curriculum teams will have in place procedures for the accreditation and recognition of prior learning and/or experience which will be appropriate for recognising the achievements, experience, skills and needs of individual learners across all provision types. These procedures will meet partner university, awarding organisations and regulatory authority requirements for particular courses and modes of study.

## 2. Scope of Policy

**2.1** This policy applies to all partner universities and awarding organisations where qualifications accept the use of Recognised Prior Learning, including those on the Regulated Qualifications Framework, Self-Regulated Framework (SRF) and other national frameworks in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. However, not all qualifications allow the use of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). Where the use of RPL is permitted, this will be stated within the qualification specification.

**2.2** Some apprentices may be able to use previous study at a similar level, or experience gained through work or other settings, against certain aspects of the Apprenticeship Standard.

## 3. Terminology

**3.1** A number of common terms are in use to describe the processes covered by this policy:

- Accreditation of Prior Learning (**APL**)
- Recognition of Prior Learning (**RPL**)
- Accreditation of Prior Achievement (**APA**)
- Accreditation of Prior Learning and Achievement (**APLA**)
- Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (**APCL**)
- Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (**APEL**)

It is the role of tutors, assessors, and internal quality assurers to ensure that evidence of learning is:

**Valid** – The evidence provided by the learner must genuinely demonstrate that it conforms to the demands of the learning outcome.

**Current** – Currency of evidence is particularly important. For example, does the evidence meet up-to-date demands or does it reflect a practice that has significantly changed? 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 for competence.

**Sufficient** – There must be enough evidence to fully meet the requirements of the learning outcome, or learning outcomes, to be considered. If there is insufficient evidence to fully meet requirements, then evidence obtained through RPL must be complemented by evidence gained through other suitable assessment methods before requirements can be said to have been met.

**Authentic** – The evidence being examined must genuinely be the work of the learner. If the evidence produced is the result of teamwork, then it is acceptable providing the new learning outcome is related to team / joint working, but not if it was being used as evidence of an activity which should have been carried out individually. It is important that learners understand what plagiarism/similarity/inappropriate Ai use means and sign a declaration of authenticity.

**Reliable** – Evidence obtained through RPL should be such that an assessor would arrive at the same assessment decision, were the assessment to be repeated.

## 4. When to use Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

- 4.1 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. The knowledge, understanding and/or skills in question may have been acquired in any area of life, for example, domestic/family life, education, and training, work related activities, community, or voluntary activities.

As long as all the composite learning outcomes have been met, an individual can claim credit for units where RPL has been used to generate all or some of the evidence required.

## 5. Principles of RPL

- 5.1 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. RPL is not normally used to provide evidence against achievement for an entire qualification. This would be called an exemption and is usually used where a learner must gain a specified qualification for a particular purpose (for example, as an entry requirement for further study, employment, or registration).

If a tutor believes a learner is entitled to an exemption, it is recommended that reference is made to the organisation which has specified the original qualification requirement. If a particular qualification is specified as an entry requirement to a qualification offered by an awarding organisation it will be listed as an appropriate exemption in their specification.

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. The assessment and award of credit must take into account the relevant validating or awarding organisation's regulations pertaining to RPL. Learners have the right to appeal when an application for credit is unsuccessful.

## 6. Learner Entitlement

- 6.1 All learners and apprentices shall be entitled to apply for RPL, providing they meet the specific requirements of the partner university or awarding organisation governing the qualification for which they are studying.

A learner or apprentice who makes an initial enquiry about RPL should be given timely and appropriate guidance and support on the rules, regulations and processes involved in accreditation.

A learner and apprentice may appeal against the credit points awarded but only on the grounds of non-observance of agreed procedures and/or improper application of those procedures.

## 7. An example of the RPL process

### Centre preparation

All curriculum teams, including Apprenticeships will have a lead person in place with responsibility for initiating a conversation checking a learner's evidence and will make an assessment decision.

### Stage 1 : Awareness, information, and guidance

- Before being enrolled, they will discuss the option of using RPL to claim units for some past learning or experience. If a learner is interested in this, the following will be explained:
  - The process of claiming a unit using RPL.
  - The support and guidance that is available.
  - How long the process will take, how to appeal and any costs included.

- The tutor will check that the evidence provided by the learner for RPL has been achieved before the start of their course of study or Apprenticeship.

### Stage 2 : Pre assessment, gathering evidence and giving information

- The tutor will register a learner as soon as they officially start to gather evidence.
- To help the learner in gathering evidence they will create an assessment plan or tracking document.
- The tutor will check that evidence gathered meets the standards of the unit, or part of a unit, that the evidence is being used for. Evidence from a learner's past experience could include:
  - Home or family life
  - Non-certificated education or learning
  - Paid work
  - Community or voluntary work

### Stage 3 : Pre assessment, gathering evidence and giving information

- The tutor must inform the awarding organisation, before any monitoring activity starts, if RPL has been applied to any particular units or learners. These may be included as part of the sampling or HE Academic Award Board.
- A learner's past achievement that would show evidence of current knowledge, understanding and skills varies between industries. It depends on the range of their experience, technological changes and the nature of the outcome claimed. The Assessor may ask questions or ask a learner to show them skills, to check that their understanding and skills are current.
- The assessment strategy, where stated, for each qualification must also be followed.
- Assessment as part of RPL is a structured process for gathering and reviewing evidence and making judgements about a learner's past learning and experience in relation to unit standards. The Assessor may look at:
  - Work experience records/CPD logs validated by managers.
  - Past portfolios of evidence or essays made by the learner.
  - Reports validated as being the learner's own unaided work.
  - Expert witness testimonies.
  - Professional discussions.
  - New assignment briefs or tasks that have been created to fill any gaps in the learner's work.
  - Curriculum Vitae
- Awarding Organisation quality assurance processes or External Examiners are not required to give feedback on an assignment brief or task if it is set as part of RPL.
- All the evidence using the learning outcomes and assessment criteria from the qualification or unit being claimed must be evaluated. In assessing a unit using RPL the Assessor must be satisfied that the evidence from the learner meets the standard for all of the learning outcomes and published assessment criteria.
- If there are gaps in the learner's work through RPL, then it will be necessary to carry out further assessment to create enough evidence to be able to award the learning outcome for the whole unit.
- Evidence collected through the RPL will be assessed and verified through the same quality assurance procedures used for any other internal assessment methods.
- All records of assessment against prior learning are kept and are available for verification if requested.
- The maths and English requirement for some apprenticeship standards may require Apprentices to hold Maths and English qualifications at level 1 or 2, dependant on the standard.
  - All learners will have to engage in an initial assessment of knowledge which is designed to give an accurate, up to date picture of current levels of performance and ability. These assessments will be administered online through Century.

- If an Apprentice has RPL of achievement of these qualifications, then acceptable evidence must be seen and approved as a true original by a qualified member of the Functional Skills team. This evidence must meet the acceptable evidence requirements of the Apprenticeship Certificates England (ACE) requirements. Qualifications from non-UK countries will need to be assessed for recognition and comparison of international qualifications and skills.
- An Initial Assessment (IA) of an apprentices prior learning will take place before the commencement of the Apprenticeship and in consultation with the employer. The following criteria will be ascertained:
  - What is the individuals intended end goal?
  - Where are they against this?
  - How much do they already have?
  - Do they require significant new learning?
  - Are existing criteria (Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours) up to date and contextually relevant to the apprenticeship being undertaken?

#### Stage 4 : Outcomes of the RPL process

- Once a learner's evidence has been checked and an assessment decision made, feedback will be given to the learner including the assessment decision and what options are available to the learner if it has been decided not to award the unit or qualification.
- The tutor/Assessor will check that the learner understands how they can appeal if they do not agree with the assessment decision.
- If the learner/Apprentice wants to make a complaint, they can do so by following the Burton and South Derbyshire Colleges feedback policies.
- If the learner/Apprentice can show that they have met all the learning outcomes and assessment criteria using RPL they will be able to claim for the unit or qualification.
- Evidence for Apprentices will be recorded within their Personal Learning Record (PLR), ILP and the commitment statement.
  - For employers of Apprentices, the IA outcomes will inform the funding negotiations with the employer and will be used where applicable to adjust the duration and costs of the Apprenticeship.
- If the awarding organisation identifies that not all unit requirements have been met, they will :
  - ask for more evidence, or
  - ask for the standard assessment requirements to be completed if the learners wants to achieve the qualification.
- Apprenticeship funding and duration adaptations will be calculated by a subject area specialist and the Apprenticeship Manager in accordance with the pre-defined rationale below and will be reviewed and signed off by the Director of Apprenticeships or the Head of Business Development.
  - Unit for unit adjustments within qualifications
  - On the Job training adjustment will consider the skills and behaviours the apprentice already has and the level at which they are evidenced. The ILP will clearly reflect the relevant adjustment.
  - Off the Job training will consider current knowledge and qualifications that can be evidenced. The ILP will clearly reflect the relevant adjustment.
  - All adjustments will be made in agreement with the employer and the apprentice.

#### Stage 5 : Awarding qualifications

- Achievement of a qualification can be claimed once all the quality assurance processes have been successfully completed using the standard procedures.
- An Apprentice can RPL Evolve test results, but they must have undertaken the Evolve assessment in the first instance.
- It is recognised that for an Apprenticeship, evidence of similar qualification/experience may as a standalone be representational; but when considered in relation to a bigger learning

programme may not map to the criteria or not meet the expectations of employers and these will also be taken into account.

- Discussion evidence of any agreed Apprenticeship RPL decisions and adjustments will be recorded on the Apprentice's ILP.
- After certification, all records including RPL records will be kept by the college for three years

### Stage 6 : Appeals

- To appeal against an assessment decision made a learner must follow BSDC's policy and procedures.