



Recognition of Prior Learning

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Scope of policy

This policy applies to qualifications, 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.

The use of Recognition of Prior Learning is not mandatory. However if The Shrubberies School chooses to implement it at any time, we will follow this policy and ensure that the appropriate resources to do so are available.

Policy statement

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a method of assessment [leading to the award of a qualification] 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.

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. Partial unit completion is not acceptable. Evidence of learning must be:

- Valid¹
- Reliable.

It will be used where it is of value to learners in facilitating assessment. If used, we will follow these principles and keep appropriate records.

¹ This includes 'current'

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. We use the term Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

Amplification

The use and application of RPL is of particular value to learners without formal qualifications, who are preparing to enter 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
- a unit or units recognised by a Pearson Certificate of Achievement of a full Pearson qualification.

All evidence will be evaluated using the stipulated learning outcomes and assessment criteria from the qualification or unit being claimed. 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. The Shrubberies School will employ staff with appropriate expertise and knowledge to facilitate this and make decisions about RPL. Evidence used for RPL will be subject to standards verification as normal.

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. 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.

Where evidence is assessed to be only sufficient to cover one or more learning outcomes, or to partly meet the need of a learning outcome, then additional assessment methods should be used to generate sufficient evidence to be able to award the learning outcome(s) for the whole unit.

Where Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning evidence is being assessed against graded units, only pass criteria can be awarded.

The RPL process is **not** concerned with allowing for exceptional entry to, or exemption from, a programme of study.

We will ensure that:

- Identification of any achievement through RPL is prior to learners taking a qualification
- It is relevant to the learner's knowledge, skills and understanding which will be assessed as part of a qualification
- Learners are registered as soon as they formally start to gather evidence
- Records of assessment against prior learning are maintained
- Certification claims are made according to normal procedures
- All relevant evidence is assessed before assessment decisions are confirmed
- There are designated staff with the appropriate expertise to support and assure the RPL process.

The RPL process

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Stage 1 - Awareness, information and guidance

Ahead of enrolling a potential learner, the possibility that they may be able to claim unit(s) for some of their previous learning and/or experience 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, gathering evidence and giving information

At this stage the learner will be supported to carry out the process of collecting evidence against the requirements of the relevant unit(s). 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 learning 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 work validated as being the learner's own unaided work.

Assessment must be valid and reliable to ensure the integrity of the award of unit(s) 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.

If the collated evidence of RPL for a learner is judged by the centre not to be sufficient to meet all the requirements of the relevant unit(s), then the learner will have to complete the normal assessment for those unit(s) if they wish to be awarded the qualification.

The assessment process will be subject to the usual quality assurance procedures of the centre, for example internal standardisation and internal verification. Evidence gathered through RPL should be clearly referenced and sign posted to aid internal assessment and internal and external verification.

Stage 4 - Claiming certification

RPL processes and evidence used by The Shrubberies School will be subject to the normal standards verification process. Pearson will check RPL via its external verification processes, and if they identify that not all requirements for a unit have been met via the RPL evidence, then more evidence will be supplied or the learner will have to undergo the normal assessment requirements.

Once the internal and external quality assurance procedures have been successfully completed, certification claims can be made by the centre. Assessment and internal verification records, along with any additional RPL records completed, will be retained for the standard three year period following certification.

The assessor will ensure that all learning outcomes and assessment criteria being claimed for each unit are achieved and that the records of assessment are maintained in the usual way.

Stage 4 - Appeals

As with any assessment decision on procedural grounds; if a learner wishes to appeal against a decision made about their assessment they need to follow the school policy and procedures and then Pearson Enquiries and Appeals procedures.

Regulatory references

UK regulators require all awarding organisations to establish and maintain their compliance with regulatory conditions and criteria. As part of this process, policies that relate to Pearson's status as an awarding organisation will reference any particular conditions and criteria that they address. This policy addresses the following regulatory criteria and conditions:

Ofqual/CCEA Accreditation/Qualifications Wales General Conditions of Recognition September 2015
Condition E10: Recognition of Prior Learning Condition H5: Results for a qualification must be based on sufficient evidence
SQA Accreditation Regulatory Principles (2014)
Principle 10 The awarding body shall ensure that it has the necessary arrangements and resources for the effective delivery, assessment and quality assurance of SQA accredited qualifications

Policy review date

Nov 2022