

NCFE Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

Policy Owner:	Mr D Howkins, Vice Principal
Approved by Curriculum & Standards Committee:	
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NCFE Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

Policy Statement

1. To ensure that centres are clear on what does and does not constitute acceptable Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

Roles & responsibilities

Compliance lies with the centre and any interpretations or clarifications required will be supplied by the NCFE Quality Assurance team. In the event of a dispute the Quality Assurance team will give the final resolution.

Defining Recognition of Prior Learning

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) was formerly known as APL (Accreditation of Prior Learning) and is defined as 'a method of recognising previous learning or attainment to meet current requirement' or 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, behaviours, skills and understanding they already possess and so may not need to develop these through a course of learning'.

Applying Recognition of Prior Learning

RPL can demonstrate competence or achievement within a unit or qualification. Through the RPL process, evidence of a learner's previous achievement (learning) is assessed against the assessment criteria of a unit.

Evidence used by learners must be current and valid and meet the assessment criteria of the qualification, and evidence must be reliable, whereby the centre consistently arrives at equivalent assessment decisions.

Evidence obtained through RPL must therefore meet the same rigorous quality criteria that other assessment methods must conform to. It remains the role of Assessors and quality assurance staff to ensure that evidence is:

Valid:

The evidence must genuinely demonstrate that the demands of the assessment criteria have been met. For RPL, currency of evidence will be of particular concern. For example, the evidence must meet current practice requirements.

Authentic:

Consideration of whether the evidence being assessed is genuinely the work of the learner. If the result of the work of a team, this would be acceptable if the assessment criteria were related to team / joint 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 assessment criteria, or assessment criteria being 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 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.

Outcomes of RPL

If individuals can produce relevant evidence that meets assessment criteria 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 assessment criteria, or to partly meet the need of an assessment criteria, then additional assessment methods should be employed to generate the sufficient evidence required to make a safe assessment decision.

Knowledge, skills, behaviours, and understanding must be current for RPL to be used and subject leads within centre must decide if prior learning is up to date for the relevant sector and subject areas. Centre may use questioning or other acceptable assessment strategies to check the depth and significance of prior learning. Assessment decisions based on RPL must be made by centre staff with suitable occupational competence and subject expertise. Acknowledge evidence of previous learning is considered to be part of the internal assessment process and any decisions must be made clear to the External Quality Assurer.

The centre will ensure that:

- It is carried out by designated staff with the relevant levels of expertise to meet the requirements of the assessment strategy/guidance for the qualification concerned.

The methods of assessment used will be determined by the assessment strategy for the qualification being assessed but might, for example, include:

- Examination of documents
- Expert testimony
- Reflective accounts
- Professional discussion

The RPL assessment should be carried out as an entire process. This means that the Assessor should:

- Plan with the learner
- Make a formal assessment decision.
- Feedback assessment decisions to the learner, confirming decision and giving guidance on the available options.
- Maintain appropriate records.
- Ensure that learners are aware of their right to access the appeals process should they feel the assessment decision was unfair.

- The assessor must ensure that all assessment criteria being claimed are covered and that records of assessment are maintained in the usual way. The process must be subject to the same quality assurance requirements as any other assessment method.

Examples of RPL evidence:

- Relevant documents, testimonies, or reflections mapped across to the qualification's assessment criteria.
- Learners have evidence of recent prior study which meets assessment criteria of the current programme of study being undertaken in full.
- RPL must be included on the appropriate sampling plan as an assessment method as appropriate and subject to internal quality assurance (IQA).

This policy will be reviewed every 12 months by the Quality Nominee.