

Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

Best Practice Training & Development offers consultancy, skills training and professional certification to meet a wide variety of business and learner needs.

These services are offered to all organisations and individual learners where we have the skills and competence to be of assistance.

As part of our commitment to quality assurance, Best Practice Training & Development seeks to provide learners with guidance and support to help them achieve their learning and development goals while meeting any regulatory requirements.

This policy concerns prior learning and recommends ways a learner can meet any requirements while avoiding repetition of learning and assessment. We appreciate that recognition of prior learning is an important tool to supporting those who have returned to learning or who intend to do so. This policy relates to all learners.

Definition

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is a process by which both formal learning for recognised awards, informal learning from experience and non-formal learning for uncertificated but planned learning is given academic recognition. The RPL process is relevant where an individual has evidence of having previously learnt something but has never received formal recognition for it through a qualification or other form of certification. Evidence can draw on any aspect of a candidate's prior experience including:

- Domestic / family life
- Education and training
- Work activities
- Community or voluntary activities.

RPL is shown when a learner can demonstrate that they can meet the assessment criteria within a unit through knowledge, understanding or skills they already possess without undertaking a course of learning. Learners must submit sufficient, reliable and valid evidence for internal and standards verification purposes. RPL is acceptable for accrediting a unit, units or a whole qualification; depending on awarding body regulations. Recognition of prior learning does not involve assessing and judging the *prior* learning or experience but assessing the candidate's *current* competence and knowledge.

Recognition of Prior 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.

Principles of RPL

- RPL is a valid method of enabling individuals to claim credit for units, irrespective of how their learning took place. RPL policies, processes, procedures, practices and decisions should be transparent, rigorous, reliable, fair and accessible to individuals to ensure that users can be confident of the decisions and outcomes of RPL.

- 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.
- Assessment methods for RPL must be of equal rigour to other assessment methods, be fit for purpose and relate to the evidence of learning. Credit may be claimed for any unit through RPL unless the assessment requirements of the unit do not allow this, based on a rationale consistent with the aims and regulations of the framework. Assessment methods may include, the following:
 - Examination of documents
 - Witness testimony
 - Reflective accounts
 - Professional discussion

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

- Valid
- Current
- Sufficient
- Authentic
- Reliable

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 for competence. Note also that the assessment strategy for each qualification must be adhered to.

RPL Assessment Process

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

- Plan with the learner, assessing their skills, knowledge and behaviour.
- Make a formal assessment decision, this may include results obtained using a skills scan.
- Feed back assessment decisions to the learner, confirming decision and giving guidance on the available options (particularly in situations where the decision has been not to award credit).
- Maintain records of assessment as for any other unit / qualification.
- Ensure that all relevant evidence is assessed before assessment decisions are confirmed through verification procedures.
- Ensure that learners are aware of their right to access the appeals process should they feel the assessment decision was unfair.
- Ensure that certification and claims are made according to normal procedures.
- Ensure that the process is subject to the same quality assurance requirements as all other assessment methods.

The RPL process does **not** allow the recognition of any unit assessed by external assessment only because such units are subject to specific evidence requirements.

This policy has been developed specifically for the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) but is valid for dealing with prior learning for all qualifications.

RPL and Government Funding

Where a learner has prior learning that has previously been accredited or could count towards a qualification, the funding amount claimed will be reduced according to ESFA rules (*see ESFA – AEB funding and performance management rules*). Prior learning will not be used to reduce funding for English and maths qualifications up to and including level 2.

This policy will be reviewed on a yearly basis to ensure that it remains fit for purpose.

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