Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all qualifications. However, qualifications that include an external examination will still require the learner to take the examination.

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 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:
- Valid
- Authentic
- Sufficient
- Current
- Reliable

RPL must follow these principles and appropriate evidence must be recorded.
We encourage the use of RPL where it is of value to learners in facilitating assessment.

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. The Blackford Centre uses the term Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

Application

The use and application of RPL is of particular value to learners without formal qualifications, who are either in employment, preparing to enter, or returning to 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 learners have 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 full qualification

Procedure

All evidence must be evaluated using the stipulated learning outcomes and assessment criteria from the qualification or unit being claimed. The assessment strategy for each qualification must be adhered to.

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. Evidence used for RPL will be subject to standards verification as normal.

RPL will mostly apply to modules (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 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 ask for the demonstration of skills to check competence.

When carrying out an RPL assessment we will ensure that:

- We have identified any achievement through RPL prior to learners registering on the course
- We will maintain a record of assessment, as for any other unit/qualification
- We will make RPL claims according to normal procedures
- We will assess all relevant evidence before confirming any assessment decision.

We will nominate designated personnel with the appropriate expertise to support and assure the RPL process.

Claiming for RPL

Potential learners, course tutors and the lead tutor should contact us if there is the possibility that a learner may be able to claim RPL for some of their previous learning and/or experience to obtain appropriate form, support and guidance.

Providing evidence

The learner will be required to submit the stipulated evidence to meet the standards of the unit/qualification that RPL is being claimed.

Assessing the evidence

The assessor may be looking at:
- Work experience records, validated by managers;
- Previous portfolios of evidence;
- Online technical competency tests;
- In date certificates to support the claim for RPL.

The assessment process will be subject to the standard quality assurance procedures to ensure the integrity of the award of unit(s)/qualification.

If the RPL evidence is judged not to be sufficient to meet all the requirements of the relevant unit(s) or qualification, the learner will be required to complete the normal assessment procedure.

Appeals

Any learner who is dissatisfied with the assessment result has the right to appeal the decision. Please refer to the appeals and complaints policy and procedure.