

Initial Assessment Process and Recognised Prior Learning Guidance

Key points to note when onboarding learners

- Recognition of prior learning is part of the Initial Assessment Process – Use this process to identify learner suitability, eligibility and tailor the learner journey
- Recognition of prior learning extends beyond English, maths, and existing qualifications
- All the skills, knowledge and behaviours set out in the standard should be considered as part of the Initial Assessment process and in reviewing the prior learning of the apprentice
- Apprenticeships could be considered poor value for money and unnecessarily long if training covers SKB's that the apprentice had studied previously. Funding **should not** be used for learning which is not new to the learner
- The Initial Assessments Process, including a detailed review of prior learning, is vital to ensure high-quality apprenticeships. Ofsted inspectors actively look for evidence of a robust learner engagement process

Initial Assessment Process and Recognition of Prior Learning

Before a learner commences on an apprenticeship qualification the training provider must assess the individual's prior learning to establish a starting point for the learner. This should be based upon their current operating level and checks of prior learning. Checks can be carried out through the Learner Records Service (LRS) which hold individual Personal Learning Records (PLR). This will determine how much of the apprenticeship training the individual requires, as they may not require every element of the course. Checks should also consider if the individual is working in an appropriate job role to meet the requirements of the qualification. Apprentices should not be spending paid time doing training they do not need. Apprenticeship (Levy) funding should not be used to pay for training which is not required.

An Initial Assessment Process should be carried out with individuals prior to enrolment to help ensure that the apprenticeship is an appropriate programme. As part of this process individuals need to complete Functional Skills Initial Assessments and Skills Gap Analysis.

Ofsted inspectors consider the 'distance travelled' by the apprentice in determining the value added by the training programme. Without knowing the starting point of an apprentice, inspectors cannot correctly assess the distance travelled and the quality of the apprenticeship training that has been delivered. Training providers must evidence a robust Initial Assessment Process, clear milestones, and progress against these (These can all be evidenced through the ILP and Reviews).

The completion of the Initial Assessment Process and RPL checks identify how much of the apprenticeship programme the individual requires to reach occupational competency. If there is relevant prior learning, the training provider must assess whether the individual still needs an apprenticeship with a minimum duration of 12 months with at least 20% off-the-job training. In some circumstances, this amount of training will not be necessary for the individual so the learner would be considered ineligible for the apprenticeship programme and an alternative should be considered.

Where prior learning is evidenced, the cost of the qualification must be altered to reflect this. To meet the ESFA funding rules, the training element within the apprenticeship must have a minimum duration of 12 months with at least 20% off-the-job training. Where prior learning is evidenced the cost of the qualification must be negotiated proportionately to reflect this.

To assess recognised prior learning, the following must be considered against the skills, knowledge, and behaviours set out in the qualification:

- Work history and experience
- Prior education, training, or associated qualification(s) in a related sector subject area (this goes beyond English and maths)
- Any previous apprenticeship(s) undertaken

Initial Assessment Process & RPL Responsibilities

The training provider is responsible for the following:

- Carrying out an Initial Assessment Process and RPL checks **before** individuals commence their apprenticeship qualification
- Recording and evidencing Recognised Prior Learning within the learner Individual Learning Plan (with necessary adjustments made to duration and cost to reflect RPL)
- Working with the employer to agree how the programme will be delivered to reflect any relevant existing skills, knowledge, and behaviours
- Recording skills, knowledge, and behaviours through a Skills Gap Analysis in line with the SKB's of the relevant apprenticeship standard to establish existing understanding and identify training needs
- Recording individuals Functional Skills Initial Assessment and Diagnostic results

Providers are not mandated on how to record or assess prior learning but are mandated to carry out prior learning checks with any findings documented and taken account of.

The relevant apprenticeship standard should be used as the basis for Initial Assessment Process considering:

- What is the goal and what is the individual trying to achieve?
- Where is the individual currently against this goal?
- How much of the content is new to the individual?
- Does the individual require significant and sustained new learning?

Models for assessing prior learning vary, but some good examples include:

- A professional discussion with the individual to discuss skills, knowledge, and behaviours gained in current and previous roles against the skills, knowledge, and behaviours set out in the apprenticeship
- Evidence of competency at a lower level, indicating the individual is ready for progression. (This needs to be evidenced and recorded within the learners ILP or evidence uploaded within the Learning Plan as part of the induction/welcome)

The recording of RPL is subject to audit checks and funds may be recovered where RPL checks have not taken place, have not been evidenced or a price reduction has not been made to reflect the prior learning.

If results of the Initial Assessment Process and RPL checks show that the learner does not meet the criteria to complete a 12 month qualification with 20% off the job training then the enrolment should not go ahead and the learner should be supported in looking for an alternative qualification.

If the Initial Assessment Process and RPL checks show that the learner is suitable to be enrolled onto the qualification, then the following should be considered and evidenced:

- Has the training provider documented RPL and summarised this in the Individual Learning Plan?
- Has the training provider agreed with the employer how the programme will be delivered (including the duration and costs) to reflect the learner’s existing SKBs?
- Has the training provider set out key milestones for the apprentice so their progress can be reviewed against this?
- Has the training provider assessed the apprenticeship training material against the job role to ensure sufficient opportunities for the apprentice to consolidate their learning in the workplace?

Reference

Process	Tasks
Initial Assessment Process	Completion of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Functional Skills Initial Assessments - Functional Skills Diagnostics (<i>can be completed after learner has enrolled</i>) - Skills Gap Analysis – Learner - Skills Gap Analysis – Employer
Recognition of Prior Learning Process	Completion of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Personal Learning Record (PLR) checks - Checks of Individuals certificates for prior learning - Professional discussion with individual to review relevant prior learning If RPL is present: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agreeing necessary adjustments with employer - Adjusting programme duration and costs - Evidencing and recording RPL within the ILP <i>(templates for recording RPL information can be found in IA & RPL Procedure)</i>