

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy and Procedure

As with all relevant Centre policies, this Floorskills Training Centre policy is designed to complement and fulfil the standards and requirements of Awarding Organisations and other stakeholders of our qualifications and training programmes. In all cases AO Policies take precedence over centre policies.

The Recognition of Prior Learning

The purpose of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy and Procedure is to identify a process for the Centre which fits the expectations and requirements of all the stakeholders in the process, namely:

- prospective learners
- examining / awarding bodies and the qualifications offered
- inspecting bodies (Ofsted)
- funding regimes and methodologies
- the Centre's own requirements for resource usage and growth targets

Principles of Recognition of Prior Learning

Principle 1

RPL is a valid method of enabling individuals to claim credit for units, irrespective of how their learning took place. There is no difference between the achievement of the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of a unit through prior learning or through a formal programme of study.

Principle 2

RPL policies, processes, procedures, practices and decisions should be transparent, rigorous, reliable, fair and accessible to individuals and stakeholders to ensure that users can be confident of the decisions and outcomes of RPL.

Principle 3

RPL is a learner-centred, voluntary process. Everyone should be offered advice on the nature and range of evidence considered appropriate, to support a claim for credit through RPL, and be given guidance and support to make such a claim.

Principle 4

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 distinguishable from any other credits awarded.

Principle 5

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.

Policy Statement:

Floorskills Training Centre is committed to giving learners the best opportunities to progress and attain their learning goals. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) may, for some learners, be an appropriate route to obtaining certain parts of qualifications and the centre will support learners with any reasonable claim for RPL.

It is recognised that the introduction of the Qualifications and Credit Framework and credit transfer arrangements may limit the scope for RPL to be applied as described here.

The practices and procedures required to implement RPL for further education programmes and apprenticeships within the Centre are outlined below.

The Centre's main point of reference regarding RPL is the Internal Quality Advisor. The processes for the collection and presentation of evidence for assessment are learner driven. Learners are provided with sufficient information to enable them to provide evidence to 'make their claim'. In the event of difficulties, they will have access to specialist support through subject-specialist assessors. This support will be provided where possible by phone email. No additional support can be provided unless the learner has enrolled for a course and no certification can be called for until the learner is registered with an awarding body.

During the application and induction process learner records will be used (candidate supplied and ILR lookup) to identify possible RPL. During this period, any possible RPL identified, or requested by the learner, will be researched and learners will be assisted in making any subsequent claim for RPL

Programme tutors/trainers will manage the process from the point at which learners begin their programme of study. This involves assessment, informing the Exams Office of the outcome of the RPL learner, internal verification and accreditation. This policy needs to be read in conjunction with the Centre's Recognition of Prior Learning Procedure (see below); Equality and Diversity Policy; Data Protection Policy; Learner Assessment Appeals procedure etc.....

Procedure: Introduction

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is an assessment process which enables recognition of achievement from a range of activities using any valid and recognised assessment method. Provided that the assessment requirements of a given unit or qualification have been met, the use of RPL is acceptable for accrediting part of a unit, unit(s) or a qualification.

Evidence submitted for RPL must be:

- valid
- authentic
- relevant
- current
- sufficient

This procedure identifies how to implement RPL for further education programmes within Floorskills Training Centre.

Terminology

There are a number of other names that have been used to describe the process. Among the most common are:

- Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) Accreditation
- of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL)
- Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)
- Accreditation of Prior Experiential and / or Certificated Learning (AP[E/C]L)
- Accreditation of Prior Achievement (APA)
- Accreditation of Prior Learning and Achievement (APLA).

Guidance on RPL

The RPL process focuses on assessment and certification of prior learning and achievement(s) which may count

as evidence towards:

- a part of a unit or unit(s) accumulated towards a full qualification
- unit or units recognised by a Certificate of Achievement
- a full qualification.

The RPL process does **not** allow the accreditation of any externally assessed unit or module. Learners must complete the required external assessment to achieve the overall qualification. In such cases Credit Transfer may be applicable.

When providing RPL evidence for any qualification, the grading assessment criteria in the qualification specification must be adhered to and the learner's performance must be judged against the criteria in the assessment grading grid. The requirements of each grading criterion must be met in full. For instance, if the grading criterion requires the demonstration of independence, the RPL evidence for this must demonstrate independence.

It is possible that an entire qualification could be claimed through RPL, however this is not the norm. As a qualification with externally assessed components cannot be accredited in its entirety using RPL, it would be unusual for an RPL learner to completely match every aspect of the qualification's assessment requirements.

Restrictions on RPL

Parts of some qualifications, such as some outcomes/competences on health and safety or licence to practise will not permit RPL but will require traditional assessment.

The centre checklist

Floorskills Training Centre has:

a policy on RPL (see above)

flexible access to learning resources to enable additional learning for RPL learners who may be recruited at any time during the year, subject to assessment requirements for certain qualifications. Facilities for supporting learners, internal assessment and additional learning are available on request and an appeals procedure (available on the VLE).

Main stages in the RPL process

Centre activity	The main stages in the RPL process	RPL learner activity
Employer enquiry Respond to initial enquiry	Stage 1 Recruitment	Apply to centre
Provide guidance to the employer and learner through the appropriate qualification area. Identify and agree an action plan and assessment strategy with the RPL learner Provide guidance on timescale Map achievement and identify gaps Determine and set the standard Register learner with the Awarding Body Prepare an assessment plan to include relevant RPL	Stage 2 Assembling an RPL claim	Reflect on experience to identify achievement Establish an action and assessment plan Agree timescale Map achievement and identify gaps Provide evidence of achievement in a portfolio, for example this may be paper-based, electronic, video recorded evidence, etc.
Assess the evidence and check its authenticity Grade where relevant Provide learner with regular feedback Arrange additional learning Arrange internal verification / moderation / standardisation	Stage 3 Assessing an RPL claim	Review action and assessment plan Possibly provide new evidence Acknowledge additional learning Submit final portfolio
Arrange external verification / moderation of the RPL evidence following the procedure for each qualification Provide learner feedback on achievement	Stage 4 Accrediting an RPL claim	Receive feedback on the portfolio submitted
Stage 5 External Verification/Moderation carried out by Awarding Body		

Support with the RPL process

Support with the RPL process, including initial screening and pre-entry guidance, will be provided by staff from the appropriate apprenticeship team. Since learners may be unfamiliar with the process of putting together an RPL claim the Centre will help them understand how to proceed. The Centre will:

- Help learners understand RPL
- Encourage learners to self-reflect and self-evaluate
- Help learners to identify possible evidence / sources of achievement
- advise learners on the structure and presentation of evidence
- explain assessment requirements.

During the process of making an RPL claim, additional support can be given to the learner to enable him/her to collate evidence for assessment. It is important that this happens prior to relevant training sessions for which RPL is to be considered.

Subject-specific support

Vocationally qualified staff who have a detailed understanding of the qualifications will assist the learner in their preparations for assessment and may be able to act as a mentor. They may also act as assessors.

Subject-specific staff will offer regular guidance that will involve helping learners to:

- identify their aspirations
- action plan, set targets and how to achieve them
- encourage learners to self-reflect and self-evaluate
- identify possible evidence / sources of achievement within a specific context
- assemble and present evidence of past achievements in a concise and effective manner
- identifying the assessment requirements and advise learners on any further work to be done.

The learner's role - reflecting on experience

If a learner wishes to claim for RPL they should reflect on their experience in order to identify relevant achievement. The learner should think about experience gained:

- at work
- in any relevant voluntary work and leisure activities
- in formal or informal education and training – for example, adult education courses or in-company training
- from independent study
- from home-based activities, such as involvement in the family business.

A useful starting point would be to compile a selective autobiographical account, a *curriculum vitae* or a portfolio of practical work. This can help our staff and assessors gain a broad overview of the learner's experience and background. This will also encourage the learner to identify:

- key components of their experiences
- what they need to know or do
- what actions were successful or unsuccessful
- what they have learnt and achieved
- how this achievement relates to the requirements of the Awarding Body's unit(s) or part(s) of a unit(s).

The Centre will advise learners of the relevant assessment requirements of what is being claimed and then help the learner work towards assembling evidence to support these claims.

Mapping achievement

For qualifications where unit grades are awarded, it will be essential to follow the guidance given in the specification. The Centre will inform learners how the different grades can be achieved, how they are assessed and highlight units or parts of units that cannot be gained by RPL (such as externally assessed units). To achieve the requirements of NVQs, it will be necessary that the competences stated in the National Occupational Standards are mapped in full and that the frequency with which the competences are demonstrated is clear.

Providing evidence of achievement – the portfolio

Learners will need to provide evidence which shows that they have covered the requirements. This may take

the form of a portfolio which sets out the qualification assessment requirements they are claiming, together with any supporting evidence. To help learners produce their portfolio, the Centre will provide the learner with advice and guidance as to the best way to present evidence of prior achievements.

Discussions or oral assessment may also be used to contribute towards the portfolio evidence, which will be documented and can be supported by audio/video tape recordings.

Guidelines on how to structure the portfolio.

The following suggests what learners may include in their portfolio:

- a statement of their claim for accreditation
- a statement of authenticity
- a brief *curriculum vitae* or autobiography, to put the claim into context
- a summary of the learning and assessment requirements claimed
- a commentary which identifies prior achievement against individual learning and assessment requirements
- a list of evidence against each assessment requirement claimed
- full evidence against each assessment requirement claimed.

The Centre assessors will be looking for evidence that is:

- valid
- authentic
- relevant
- current (within the last three years)
- sufficient.

Separate evidence is not required for each qualification assessment criterion. Where possible learners should adopt a holistic approach when compiling the evidence. The standard of evidence required will be identical to that demanded of any learner pursuing the traditional study route. The Centre will provide guidance on the evidence that will enable learners to successfully achieve their qualification.

Assessing the evidence

The Centre assessor has the responsibility for ensuring that all the requirements of a part of a unit or unit(s) or qualification have been met before applying for a qualification certificate. The assessor will assess the RPL evidence, using the assessment criteria in the qualification. If the assessor is not satisfied with the evidence submitted, it will be necessary to seek additional evidence.

Additional evidence

If the evidence submitted is incomplete learners might be required to:

- undergo an oral assessment
- complete an appropriate assignment
- complete a written test
- carry out a demonstration
- or a combination of any of the above.

If a learner is unable to produce evidence of prior learning (for example if an employer fails to respond to a request for a witness testimony), it will be necessary to take an assessment appropriate to the outcome being claimed e.g. complete an assignment to demonstrate the missing knowledge, skills and understanding or be observed in the workplace where a witness statement should be provided to supplement the learner's

evidence.

Arranging additional learning

If only part of a unit’s requirements has been met, a learner will need additional learning and assessment to cover the outstanding evidence. This may be provided through individual tutorials, assignments or in- class instruction. For NVQs, this additional evidence must be work-based, except where simulation is permissible. Additional learning can also meet the requirements of externally assessed units, essential for the completion of certain qualifications.

Arranging internal verification / moderation / standardisation

When appropriate the Centre will carry out internal verification of the learner’s evidence to ensure that the assessor’s decisions are consistent with the qualification’s specification.

Accrediting an RPL claim

When the Centre is satisfied that the evidence provided meets the standards outlined in the qualification guidance it will submit it for external verification (if required). The evidence will be considered in the same way as traditional evidence for the same qualification.

External verification / moderation

Awarding Body quality assurance mechanisms will ensure that there is no difference between RPL evidence and traditional evidence submitted to it.

Review of this policy and procedure:

This document will be reviewed on an annual basis, and particularly following the introduction of credit transfer arrangements under the Qualifications and Credit Framework.

Equality Act 2010 Impact assessment

	Item	Yes/No
1.	Is the Equality Act 2010 applicable to this policy/procedure?	Yes
2.	Is the Centre single equality policy applicable to this policy/procedure?	Yes
3.	Does this policy/procedure comply with the Act and the Centre’s policy/procedure?	Yes
4.	Are any actions required, if so detail in the box below.	No