

Procedure 4.3 Recognition of Prior Learning

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- ❖ This procedure is shared with our students and/or can be obtained:
 - on our website <https://docklandsacademy.co.uk/policies-and-procedures>,
 - on the desktops of all computers in the library on the top floor,
 - by emailing us at info@docklandsacademy.co.uk.
- ❖ Also, our students are informed about the main aspects of the procedure in the Student Handbooks, Induction Seminar and Learning Agreement.
- ❖ The procedure is reviewed and monitored on a regular basis for currency and fitness as part of our Annual 1.9 Policy and Procedures Review.

1. Aim

- 1.1 The purpose of this procedure is to enable recognition of achievement from a range of activities using any appropriate assessment methodology. Providing 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 where the evidence is valid and reliable.
- 1.2 This procedure applies to all Pearson/BTEC qualifications, including those on the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) and other national frameworks in Wales and Scotland and self-regulated qualifications. However, where learning is evidenced only through a national examination, the learner is required to sit this examination.

2. Operational description

- 2.1 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. The Academy will focus upon assessment and awarding of credit for prior learning which may count as evidence towards a unit accumulated towards a full BTEC qualification, a unit or units recognised by a Pearson Certificate of Achievement or a full BTEC qualification.
- 2.2 RPL is about using a learner's evidence of earlier learning and achievement towards part of a qualification. The learner needs to show that through knowledge, understanding or skills they already have, they do not need to repeat the course or complete extra assessment activity.

3. RPL for Higher Nationals

- 3.1 The RPL process is not concerned with allowing for exceptional entry to, or exemption from, a programme of study. RPL does allow the recognition of any unit assessed by external assessment, because such units are subject to specific evidence requirements.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 Assessment methods for RPL are of equal rigour to other assessment methods; they must 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.
- 3.4 In the cases where Pearson has already mapped the shared content across units or qualifications, the learner may use a previously achieved certificate as evidence without them having to repeat learning or assessment. Otherwise, the Academy maps and checks that the learners' previous certificated achievement meets the current qualifications assessment criteria. A record of the mapping is kept so that Pearson can confirm that it is valid. No extra assessment is needed if a learner's previously achieved certificate or qualification meets the requirements of a whole unit.
- 3.5 Where units are assessed against assessment criteria or grading criteria, then all evidence is evaluated using the stipulated criteria. In assessing a unit using RPL the assessor must be satisfied that the evidence produced by the student meets the assessment standard established by the learning outcome and its related assessment criteria.
- 3.6 The evidence must be valid, current, reliable, authentic and sufficient.
- 3.7 Most often RPL will be used for units. RPL is not normally used to provide evidence against achievement for an entire qualification. However, it is acceptable to claim for an entire qualification through RPL although this is not the norm. This would be called an exemption and is usually used where a learner must gain a specified qualification for a particular purpose (for example, as an entry requirement for further study, employment, or registration). If the Academy or learners think that they are entitled to an exemption, the organisation which has specified the original qualification requirement is referred to. Also, if a particular qualification is specified as an entry requirement to a qualification offered by Pearson, any appropriate exemptions are listed in their specification.
- 3.8 When using RPL for Higher National awards, the underlying principle is that assessed evidence from certified learning should be at the same level of education for which RPL is being used. However:
 - 3.8.1 A Higher Education award which has been **certified by Pearson**, cannot be used as prior learning to contribute to the achievement of another Pearson higher education award of an equivalent level. An award is defined as a completed qualification (Higher National Certificate or Higher National Diploma).
 - 3.8.2 Individual units are **not defined** as an award and can be used for RPL.
 - 3.8.3 An **exception to 3.8.1** will be for credit-bearing units contributing to HN Flex study, where a student has achieved a Pearson Level 4 Higher National Certificate, studies HN Flex units and then progresses onto the Pearson Level 5 Higher National Diploma.

- 3.9** RPL is also of value to students transferring across various learning programmes who have relevant learning but do not hold relevant credits or certificates.
- 3.10** The use and application of RPL is of particular value to students 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.
- 3.11** 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 will use questions such as in the Academy's Internal Evaluation Interview to check understanding, and for competence. Note also that the assessment strategy for each qualification will be adhered to.
- 3.12** Where RPL is used to determine whether learning outcomes have been met on a Pearson Higher National award, the maximum grade that the student can achieve for that unit will be a Pass if the RPL has been undertaken through experiential learning. Where RPL is undertaken by assessing certified learning, the Academy demonstrates clearly where RPL is able to meet Merit or Distinction criteria across all learning outcomes.
- 3.13** RPL process is not used for any more than 50% of the total credit value of a Higher National award.
- 3.14** All RPL decisions are ratified by the Assessment Board and minuted.
- 3.15** The Academy has clearly documented processes for RPL that is undertaken through certified learning as well as experiential learning. All RPL documentation and records of the evidence for RPL decision, where learning outcomes have been met by either certified or experiential learning, are kept for the review of Pearson-appointed External Examiners.
- 3.16** RPL is subject to Standards Verification as part of the annual Pearson Quality Assurance mechanism.

4. Process

4.1 Preparation

The academy ensures that it has staff with expertise to support and assure the RPL process. The Academic Head is responsible for the quality assurance of the RPL process and, together with the Internal Verifier, will provide support for RPL claimants and maintain appropriate records.

4.2 Awareness, Information and Guidance

4.2.1 RPL is a learner-centred, voluntary process. Before they are enrolled, the individual student claimants are informed about the option of using RPL to claim units for some of their past learning or experience. They are offered advice on the nature and range of evidence considered appropriate, to support a claim for credit through RPL.

4.2.2 They are given guidance on:

- the process of claiming a unit using RPL.
- the support and guidance that is available.
- how long the process will take, how to appeal and any costs included.

4.2.3 The evidence provided by the learner is checked before the start of their course of study.

4.3 Pre-assessment, gathering evidence and giving information

Students will be registered as soon as they formally start to gather evidence. The evidence gathered needs to meet the standards of the unit, or part of a unit, that the evidence is being used for. Evidence from a learner's past experience could include:

- Home or family life
- Non-certificated education or learning
- Paid work
- Community or voluntary work.

4.4 Assessment of Evidence

4.4.1 The Academy informs the Standards Verifier / External Examiner, before **any monitoring activity starts**, for any particular units or learners.

4.4.2 A learner's past achievement that would show evidence of current knowledge, understanding and skills varies between industries. It depends on the range of their experience, technological changes and the nature of the outcome claimed.

4.4.3 The assessment strategy, where stated, for each qualification must also be followed.

4.4.4 Assessment as part of RPL is a structured process for gathering and reviewing evidence and making judgements about a learner's past learning and experience in relation to unit standards. Thus, the Assessor:

- may ask questions or ask a learner to show them skills, to check that their understanding and skills are current.
- may look at:
 - Work experience records, validated by managers.
 - Past portfolios of evidence or essays made by the learner.
 - Reports validated as being the learner's own unaided work.
 - Expert witness testimonies.
 - Professional discussions.
 - New assignment briefs or tasks that have been created to fill any gaps in the learner's work.
- evaluates all the evidence using the learning outcomes and assessment criteria from the qualification or unit being claimed.
- reviews the evidence against all the criteria if Pearson has published assessment or grading criteria.

4.5 Documentation of Evidence

4.5.1 Evidence collected through the RPL process are assessed and verified through the same quality assurance procedures that the Academy uses for any other internal assessment methods.

4.5.2 Records of assessment are maintained, as for any other unit/qualification and certification and claims made according to normal procedures. All relevant evidence will be assessed before assessment decisions are confirmed.

4.6 Outcomes of the RPL Process

4.6.1 Once the learner's evidence is checked and an assessment decision is made, feedback is given to the learner including the assessment decision and what options are available to the learner if it has been decided not to award the unit or qualification.

4.6.2 The Academy makes sure that the learner understands how they can appeal if they do not agree with the assessment decision. They can do so, first by following

the Academy's Procedure 2.4 Appeals and then Pearson's Enquiries and Appeals about Pearson vocational qualifications policy at https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/Support/policies-for-centres-learners-and-employees/Enquiries_and_Appeals_on_Pearson_Vocational_Qualifications.pdf.

4.6.3 If the learner can show that they have met all the learning outcomes and assessment criteria using RPL, they will be able to claim for the unit or qualification.

4.7 Claiming Certificates

4.7.1 The Academy claims certificates once the quality assurance processes have been successfully completed using the standard procedures.

4.7.2 After certification, the assessment and internal verification records are kept, along with any extra RPL records, for three years.

5. Related Documents

5.1 Policies

- 2 Academic Management
- 4 Admissions
- 5 Student Support, Engagement and Learning Resources
- 7 Information
- 8 Marketing and Promotion

5.2 Procedures

- 1.5 Equal Opportunities
- 1.7 Data Protection
- 1.9 Review and Revision of Policies and Procedures
- 2.4 Appeals
- 2.5 Complaints
- 2.11 Pearson Registration
- 2.13 Access and Participation Statement
- 3.6 Internal Verification
- 4.1 Enrolment and Selection
- 4.6 Student Induction
- 4.11 Student Protection Plan
- 5.3 Equality, Diversity and Special Needs
- 7.1 Review and Sign off PI
- 7.4 HE Public Information

5.3 Student Terms and Conditions

8.4 External reference points

- Office for Students (OfS) Requirements and Guidance at <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/regulation/>
- UK Quality Code Advice & Guidance – Admissions, Recruitment and Widening Access at <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/admissions-recruitment-and-widening-access>
- UK Quality Code Advice & Guidance – Concerns, Complaints and Appeals at <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/concerns-complaints-and-appeals>
- Higher Education Code of Governance (Committee of University Chairs, December 2014) at <https://www.universitychairs.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CUC-HE-Code-of-Governance-publication-final.pdf>
- Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) principles of Good Governance for Independent Training Providers at <https://www.aelp.org.uk/media/2595/code-of-governance-final-sept-2018.pdf>
- OIA The Good Practice Framework for Complaints and Appeals at <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/resources-and-publications/good-practice-framework/>

- **OIA The Good Practice Framework: Handling Students Complaints and Academic Appeals** at <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/media/1859/oia-good-practice-framework.pdf>
- **Pearson Recognition of Prior Learning Policy** at https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/Support/policies-for-centres-learners-and-employees/Recognition_of_prior_learning_and_process_policy.pdf
- **UKCISA Code of Ethics** at <https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Membership/Codes-of-practice/Code-of-ethics>
- **Equality Act – 2010** at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>