

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy and Process

Introduction

This Policy and Process sets out Gateway Qualifications' approach to Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) of its qualifications.

Recognition of Prior Learning provides learners and Gateway Qualifications' Recognised Centres ("Centres") with an alternative assessment method by which a learner's previous achievements can meet the assessment requirements for a unit/qualification through the knowledge, understanding or skills that they already possess and so, do not need to develop these through a course of learning.

It enables the recognition of achievement from a range of activities using any valid assessment methodology. Provided that the assessment requirements of a given unit or qualification are met, the use of RPL is acceptable to contribute to a unit, units or a whole qualification..

This policy provides all Gateway Qualifications' stakeholders information and guidance on implementing a fair and consistent approach to the Recognition of Prior Learning.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide support, clarification and guidance on the Gateway Qualifications approach to the recognition of prior learning.

The intended audience for this document is:

- Gateway Qualifications staff and wider workforce
- Centre staff responsible for quality assurance
- Centre Assessors and Internal Quality Assurers
- Key stakeholders involved in qualification development

Scope

This policy applies to Gateway Qualifications' qualification offer, including those on the Ofqual Regulated Qualifications Framework, and other national frameworks in Wales.

This policy does not apply to Access to HE Diplomas.

Not all qualifications permit Recognition of Prior Learning. Where the use of Recognition of Prior Learning is permitted, this will be stated within the published Qualification Specification.

The approach taken to Recognition of Prior Learning requires the same level of quality assurance as applied to any other approach to assessment.

The policy applies to all Centres offering Gateway Qualifications' qualifications. The use of Recognition of Prior Learning is not mandatory. However, if Centres choose to adopt RPL, they must have an internal policy on Recognition of Prior Learning.

Definition

The Regulators' define the 'recognition of prior learning' as:

1. the identification by an awarding organisation of any learning undertaken, and/or attainment, by a Learner –
 - (i) prior to that Learner taking a qualification which the awarding organisation makes available or proposes to make available, and
 - (ii) which is relevant to the knowledge, skills and understanding which will be assessed as part of that qualification, and
2. recognition by an awarding organisation of that learning and/or attainment through amendment to the requirements which a Learner must have satisfied before the Learner will be assessed or that qualification will be awarded.

Recognition of Prior Learning principles

1. The Regulators' definition of RPL is the adopted definition for Gateway Qualifications.
2. Gateway Qualifications does not permit RPL to be used for all qualifications. The following are examples where RPL is not permitted, the list is not exhaustive:
 - licence to practice qualifications
 - qualifications with specific health and safety requirements
 - qualifications with work experience requirements.
3. The applicability as to whether RPL can be applied is established as part of the qualification development process and may be revised as part of the qualification review process.
4. The RPL rules are set for individual qualifications and detailed in the associated published qualification specification.
5. RPL can be used to claim full (not partial) units within qualifications. It is unlikely that RPL can be claimed for a full qualification as it would be unlikely that a learner could demonstrate evidence to match the full range of assessment requirements.
6. RPL as an assessment method should follow the principles of:
 - Validity
 - Authenticity
 - Sufficiency
 - Reliability
 - Currency
 - Fairness.
7. Evidence must be provided by learners to meet the assessment criteria of a unit/ qualification.
8. Evidence provided by the learner must be achieved within the last five years unless the qualification specification states a different timescale.

9. The process must be negotiated by the learner with the Centre. The Centre is responsible for assessment and claiming achievement. There is no difference between achievement of the required standards by Recognition of Prior Learning and achievement through a formal programme of study.
10. Centres must follow the Gateway Qualifications RPL process.
11. RPL is subject to external quality assurance monitoring.

If further clarification is required about the units and qualifications that are eligible for Recognition of Prior Learning, Centres should contact Gateway Qualifications before using RPL as an alternative assessment method.

Recognising Prior Learning process

Introduction

The process of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) covers both certificated learning attained through a Gateway Qualifications' regulated qualification and other experiential/certificated learning.

Centre preparation

Centre staff should check the published qualification specification to establish if RPL is permitted or not.

RPL not permitted

- Where RPL is not permitted learners must satisfy the full qualification requirements through the course/programme they are undertaking.

RPL permitted

Where RPL is permitted the RPL process set out in this Policy must be followed.

Recognising prior achievement of Gateway Qualifications' components(units)/qualifications

Where qualifications are previously achieved as part of a Gateway Qualifications' qualification suite then RPL may be applied without a formal application process. An example would be where a learner may progress from a smaller qualification to a larger qualification and where the qualifications have shared content such as an Award, Certificate, Diploma or linked qualifications such as employability units in a vocational qualification.

Centres will not need to claim previously attained units as these will be identified from the learner's record on the registration and award system.

Where prior learning is being sought for units that do not share the same unit code but are similar, e.g. from recognising units from a legacy qualification for learners transferring to a new qualification the process in the next section should be followed.

Recognising prior achievement attained outside Gateway Qualifications' regulated qualifications

Where prior learning has been achieved outside the Gateway Qualifications' offer such as a component(unit)/qualification awarded by another awarding organisation or through experiential learning then the process below must be followed.

Stage 1: awareness, information, advice and guidance

During enrolment, the Recognition of Prior Learning process should be discussed. In particular, learners will need to know:

- the process of claiming achievement through Recognition of Prior Learning
- the sources of professional support and guidance available to individuals and employers
- the administrative processes for Recognition of Prior Learning applications
- timelines, appeals processes and any fees and subsidies.

Stage 2: Pre-assessment, gathering evidence and giving information

During this stage prior learning evidence is collated and the Centre will need to map it across to the relevant component/s(unit/s)/qualification content. An assessment plan or tracking document might be useful to aid this process.

Stage 3: Assessment

Assessment as part of Recognition of Prior Learning is a structured process for gathering and reviewing evidence and making judgments about a learner's prior learning and experience in relation to the component(unit) standards.

Assessment must be valid and reliable to ensure the integrity of units and qualifications. The evidence gathered needs to meet the standards of the component/s(units) and qualification assessment requirements being applied for RPL and show appropriate evidence of current knowledge, understanding and skills. Evidence may include:

- qualification certificates/unit/component transcripts
- 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
- witness testimonies/professional discussions
- new assignments or tasks that have been created to fill any gaps in the learner's work.

The tutor/assessor must be satisfied that the evidence from the learner meets the standard for all of the learning outcomes and assessment criteria. If any gaps are identified then the learner may be set alternative assessments or undertake the normal assessments in order to be awarded the qualification but may do so without attending teaching sessions.

Stage 4: Applying for RPL

Centres can do this by completing an online RPL form and submitting the supporting evidence.

Stage 5: Awarding achievement

All work submitted for RPL must be referenced clearly for Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) and External Quality Assurance (EQA).

The assessment process for RPL will be subject to the same quality assurance processes as any other part of the assessment process. If it is identified that there is insufficient evidence, either more evidence will be requested or the learner must complete the normal assessment requirements.

Centres must inform the relevant EQA, before any monitoring activity starts, if RPL has been applied for any particular components(units) or learners as they may include these in their sample. Where the Centre does not give prior notification that RPL has been used as an alternative then this will be investigated by the EQA and recorded in the EQA monitoring/sampling report.

The Centre's processes in respect of Recognition of Prior Learning will be reviewed during the quality monitoring visit by the Centre's External Quality Assurer, to ensure that the processes have been applied consistently and fairly and that any decisions made regarding the application for RPL have been carried out by staff who are competent to consider and make decisions about RPL. The outcome of the review and agreed actions (where appropriate) will be recorded in the external quality assurance report.

On completion of the IQA and EQA procedures, the Centre can claim certificates following the usual process.

RPL and externally marked components(units)/qualifications

Where RPL is being sought for a component/s(unit/s) within a qualification that is externally marked and awarded by Gateway Qualifications and the learner has evidence of prior achievement then Stages 1 - 4 should be followed. Once the Centre is satisfied that sufficient documentary evidence has been provided then the Centre will need to register the learner on the qualification and submit the completed online RPL form to Gateway Qualifications.

The RPL form and supporting documentation will be reviewed by the Quality Assurance team and the outcome of the review will be communicated to the Centre within 5 working days from the receipt of a fully completed application.

Stage 6: Appeal

On the basis that the application of RPL is not granted as an alternative method of assessment for a qualification or units thereof, learners should appeal to the Centre first and then, if not satisfied, to Gateway Qualifications.

Record-keeping

Centres are required to keep records of Recognition of Prior Learning for three years after certification. This includes details of which learners, units, assessment evidence and evidence of the RPL process for the particular claim.

Monitoring

Gateway Qualifications' Quality and Standards Committee will be responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and Process.

Summary reports will be submitted to each meeting to enable the Committee to review the effectiveness of the process and, where appropriate, monitor changes to the policy and procedures, which will be submitted annually to the Board of Trustees for monitoring and appropriate action.

Contact us

If you have any queries about the contents of the policy, please contact:

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Ofqual, Qualifications Wales General Conditions of Recognition
Condition E10: Recognition of Prior Learning
QAA licensing criteria
n/a