

9 – Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

Version 4

POLICY STATEMENT

RECOGNISED PRIOR LEARNING POLICY (RPL)

The RPL process is relevant where a learner has previously learnt something but has never received formal recognition for this learning through a qualification or other form of certification.

Within the QCF an individual is able to ‘claim’ that he or she knows or can do something already and does not need to attend a course to learn it again. If the learner can prove this claim (through assessment of relevant evidence) then credit can be awarded for that achievement. In short, RPL refers particularly to previously un-certificated learning, and achievements through RPL always lead to the award of credit within the QCF.

In the context of the QCF, the definition of RPL is quite specific and related to assessment leading to award of credit. Assessment for RPL is conducted against the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of a unit and is subject to the same quality assurance requirements as any other kind of assessment in the QCF. If a learner can demonstrate that they can meet the standard of the unit, defined by the learning outcomes and assessment criteria, then they can claim credit for that unit, irrespective of whether they prepared for assessment through a formally taught course or through previous experience.

It should be noted that there is no concept of ‘partial achievement of a unit’ in the QCF. All learning outcomes of a unit must be achieved for credit to be awarded, and the number of credits will always be defined by the credit value of the unit. There is no facility to claim or be awarded some of the credits in a unit. Therefore, where the RPL processes only evidence partial achievement of learning outcomes, some other form of assessment must be employed to confirm achievement of all outcomes. If necessary, a learning programme could be developed to cover only those outcomes which were not achieved in the RPL evidence.

ASSESSMENT OF RPL EVIDENCE

It is the role of the Assessor, supported by the IQA team, to accept or reject RPL evidence using the usual audit check.

That the evidence is:

- Valid
- Authentic
- Sufficient
- Reliable (and therefore ‘current’)

The following RPL principles should be followed to ensure the process retains vigour and quality assurance as of any other type of assessment.

- RPL is a valid method of enabling learners to claim credit for units in the QCF, irrespective of how their learning took place. There is no difference between achievements of the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of a unit through prior learning and through a formal study programme.
- RPL policies, processes, procedures, practices and decisions should be transparent, rigorous, reliable, fair and accessible to individuals.
- RPL is a learner-centred, voluntary process. The individual must be offered advice on the nature and range of evidence considered appropriate to support a claim through RPL.
- The process of assessment for RPL is subject to the same quality assurance and monitoring standards as any other form of assessment.
- Assessment methods for RPL must be of equal rigour as any other assessment methods.

THE RPL PROCESS

The RPL process involves learners from the moment they consider making a claim and supports them through to the result of the assessment. CHL follow a stage-by-stage process when offering and completing RPL applications:

Stage 1 – General Awareness, Information Advice and Guidance

When an individual indicates an interest in registering for a QCF qualification, the possibility that they may be able to claim credit for some of their previous learning will need to be raised with them. If the learner is interested in this, they will need to know:

- The process of claiming credit through RPL
- The sources of professional support and guidance available to them
- The administrative processes for RPL applications
- Timelines and appeal processes

Stage 2 – Pre-assessment, gathering evidence and giving information.

During this stage the learner will carry out the process of collecting evidence against the requirements of the unit or units for which credit is being claimed. In some cases, this may entail the development of an assessment plan or similar tool to support the learner through the process.

The evidence gathered will need to meet the standard of the unit (as expressed in the learning outcomes and assessment criteria).

Stage 3 – Assessment/documentation of evidence

Assessment as part of RPL is a structured process for gathering and reviewing evidence and making judgments about an individuals' prior learning and experience in relation to unit standards. Assessment must be valid and reliable to ensure the integrity of the award of credit and the RPL system as a whole.

Stage 4 – Feedback

After the assessment the assessor will, where possible, need to give feedback to the learner, discuss the results and give support and guidance on the options available to the learner.

Stage 5 – Awarding Credit

All credits achieved through RPL are recorded by the assessor/ Centre in the same way as all other credits.

Stage 6 – Appeal

If a learner wishes to appeal against a decision made about their claim for credit, they need to follow the CHL Appeals Procedures.