



Document Administration

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Code of Practice for the Recognition of Prior Learning for Externally Awarded Qualifications

Scope and Purpose

1. This code applies to externally awarded qualifications, including those on the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF), Self-Regulated Framework (SRF). All qualifications allow the use of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). Where the use of RPL is permitted, this will be stated within the qualification specification.
2. RPL will directly align to that published by the appropriate awarding body. Bishop Grosseteste University will undertake the prescribed RPL process with a view to making a recommendation for accreditation by the external awarding body.
3. The use of RPL is not mandatory.

Policy statement

4. RPL is a method of assessment that considers whether apprentices/students can demonstrate that they can meet the assessment requirements for a unit through knowledge, understanding or skills they already possess and do not need to develop through a course of learning.

Terminology

5. RPL policies and procedures have been developed over time which has led to the use of a number of terms to describe the process. Among the most common are:
 - Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
 - Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)
 - Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)
 - Accreditation of Prior Achievement (APA)
 - Accreditation of Prior Learning and Achievement (APLA)
 - Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL)

Amplification

6. The use and application of RPL is of particular value to apprentices/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.
7. RPL can be used where an apprentice/student has not had their prior learning formally recognised.



8. RPL focuses on assessment and awarding for prior learning which may count as evidence towards:
 - a unit accumulated towards a full qualification;
 - a unit or units within a full qualification.
9. All evidence must be evaluated using the stipulated learning outcomes and assessment criteria from the qualification or unit being claimed. 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. BGU will ensure its staff have appropriate expertise and knowledge to facilitate this and make decisions about RPL. Evidence used for RPL will be subject to external verification as normal.
10. Most often RPL will be used for units. It is acceptable to claim for an entire qualification through RPL although this is not the normal practice because it would be unusual for an apprentice/student to be able to offer prior achievement that completely matches every aspect of a qualification's assessment requirements.
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 may use questions to check understanding, and ask for the demonstration of skills to check competence. Note that the assessment strategy for each qualification must be adhered to.
12. Where evidence is assessed to be only sufficient to cover one or more learning outcomes, or to partly meet the need of a learning outcome, then additional assessment methods should be used to generate sufficient evidence to be able to award the learning outcome(s) for the whole unit.
13. Where RPEL evidence is being assessed against graded units, only pass criteria can be awarded.
14. When considering RPL for a student BGU will ensure that:
 - a) identification of any achievement through RPL is prior to apprentices/students taking a qualification;
 - b) it is relevant to the apprentice's/student's knowledge, skills and understanding which will be assessed as part of a qualification;
 - c) learners are registered as soon as they formally start to gather evidence;
 - d) records of assessment against RPL are maintained;
 - e) certification claims are made according to normal procedures;
 - f) all relevant evidence is assessed before assessment decisions are confirmed;
 - g) there are designated personnel with the appropriate expertise to support and assure the RPL process.



The RPL procedure

15. An example RPL process is showcased below, with common steps and actions outlined:

RPL PROCESS

1. Stage 1 - Awareness, information and guidance

Ahead of enrolling a potential apprentice/student, the possibility that they may be able to claim unit(s) for some of their previous learning and/or experience should be raised with them. If the apprentice/student is interested in this, they will need to know the:

- Process of claiming achievement by using RPL
- Sources of support and guidance available to them
- Timelines, appeals processes and any fees involved

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

At this stage the apprentice/student will carry out the process of collecting evidence against the requirements of the relevant unit(s). In some cases the development of an assessment plan and tracking document or similar may be required, to support the apprentice/student through the process. The evidence gathered will need to meet the standards of the unit, or part of unit, that the evidence is being used for.

3. Stage 3 - Assessment/documentation of evidence

3.1. Assessment as part of RPL is a structured process for gathering and reviewing evidence and making judgments about an apprentice's/students' prior learning and experience in relation to unit standards. The assessor may be looking at work experience records, validated by managers; previous portfolios of evidence put together by the apprentice/student or essays and reports validated as being the apprentice's/student's own unaided work.

3.2. Assessment must be valid and reliable to ensure the integrity of the award of unit(s) and, as above, the evidence gathered needs to meet the standards of the unit, or part of unit, that the evidence is being used for.

3.3. If the collated evidence of RPL for an apprentice/student is judged by BGU not to be sufficient to meet all the requirements of the relevant unit(s), then the apprentice/student will have to complete the normal assessment for those unit(s) if they wish to be awarded the qualification.

3.4. The assessment process will be subject to the usual quality assurance procedures of the centre, for example internal standardisation and internal verification. Evidence gathered through RPL should be clearly referenced and sign posted to aid internal assessment and internal and external verification.



4. Stage 4 - Claiming certification

- 4.1. RPL processes and evidence used by BGU will be subject to the normal verification process. External awarding bodies may check RPL via its external verification processes, and if it identifies that not all requirements for a unit have been met via the RPL evidence, then more evidence will be needed or the apprentice/student will have to undergo the normal assessment requirements.
- 4.2. Once BGU's and the external awarding body's quality assurance procedures have been successfully completed, certification claims can be made by the BGU. Assessment and internal verification records, along with any additional RPL records completed, should be retained for the standard three year period following certification.
- 4.3. BGU's assessor must ensure that all learning outcomes and assessment criteria being claimed for each unit are achieved and that the records of assessment are maintained in the usual way.

5. Stage 4 - Appeals

- 5.1. As with any assessment decision on procedural grounds; if an apprentice/student wishes to appeal against a decision made about their assessment they need to follow the appeals policy for externally awarded qualifications.