



Action Community Enterprises CIC (ACE)

Recognition of Prior Learning Policy



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Action Community Enterprises CIC

Viking House, Dewing Road, Rackheath Industrial Estate, Norwich, NR13 6PS. Company No.
7663378

Tel: 01603 720308, Email: info@ace-project.org.uk

Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

As part of our commitment to quality assurance, ACE seeks to provide students with guidance and support to help them achieve their learning and development goals while meeting any regulatory requirements. This policy recommends ways that students can meet these requirements while avoiding repetition of learning and assessment.

Scope

This policy applies to all qualifications delivered by ACE CIC, including those awarded by Pearson (BTEC), City & Guilds, and Gateway Qualifications. The RPL process will be conducted in accordance with the requirements and guidance of each awarding organisation.

Policy Statement

ACE CIC recognises and implements the RPL policies and procedures of our awarding organisations: Pearson (BTEC), City & Guilds, and Gateway Qualifications. Where there are differences in requirements, the most stringent will be applied to ensure compliance.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a method of assessment (leading to the award of a qualification) that considers whether students can demonstrate that they can meet the assessment requirements for a unit through knowledge, understanding or skills they already possess and so do not need to develop through a course of learning.

RPL enables recognition of achievement from a range of activities using any appropriate assessment methodology. Provided 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.

Evidence of learning must be valid and reliable.

Principles

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 student-centred, voluntary process. The individual 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 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 distinguished 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. RPL is also of value to students transferring across various learning programmes who have relevant learning but do not hold relevant credits or certificates.

Amplification

RPL can be used where a student has not had their prior learning formally recognised. RPL focuses on assessment and awarding of credit for prior learning which may count as evidence towards:

- a unit accumulated towards a full Person qualification
- a unit or units recognised by a Pearson Certificate of Achievement or a full Pearson qualification.

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. Subject areas must have tutors/assessors with appropriate expertise and knowledge to facilitate this and IV the process.

Most often RPL will be used for units. It is acceptable to claim for an entire qualification through RPL although this is not the norm. However, it would be unusual for a student to be able to offer prior achievement that completely matches every aspect of a qualification's assessment requirements.

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 for competence. The assessment strategy for each qualification must be adhered to.

The RPL process is not concerned with allowing for exceptional entry to, or exemption from, a programme of study. The RPL process does not allow the recognition of any unit assessed by external assessment only because such units are subject to specific evidence requirements. RPL cannot be used for units or components that are subject to external assessment, in line with awarding body regulations.

Subject areas wishing to carry out RPL must ensure that:

- Students are registered as soon as they formally start to gather evidence
- Records of assessment are maintained, as for any other unit/qualification
- Certification and claims are made according to normal procedures
- All relevant evidence is assessed before assessment decisions are confirmed
- There is a designated tutor with the appropriate expertise.

Learner Support for RPL

ACE CIC is committed to supporting learners in understanding the RPL process and gathering appropriate evidence. All learners will receive guidance on the RPL process during induction, and staff will provide advice on the nature and range of evidence considered appropriate. Additional support is available for learners who require help in compiling their RPL claims.

RPL Process

Stage 1: Awareness, Information and Guidance

Prior to enrolling, potential students are made aware of the possibility that they may be able to claim unit(s) for some of their previous learning and/or experience. Where a student believes they may be eligible, the process of claiming achievement by using RPL, the sources of support and guidance available to them and timelines, fees and the appeals process will be confirmed.

Stage 2: Pre-assessment, Gathering Evidence and Giving Information

At this stage the 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 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.

Stage 3: Assessment/Documentation of Evidence

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

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

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

The assessment process will be subject to ACE's usual quality assurance procedures. Evidence gathered through RPL will be clearly referenced and sign posted to aid internal assessment and internal and external verification.

Stage 4: Claiming Certification

RPL processes and evidence used by ACE will be subject to the normal standards verification process. All RPL claims are subject to internal and external quality assurance by the relevant awarding organisation (Pearson, City & Guilds, Gateway Qualifications). ACE CIC will cooperate fully with all external verification and audit processes. If the awarding organisation identifies that not all requirements for a unit have been met via the RPL evidence, then more evidence will be needed or the student will have to undergo the normal assessment requirements. Once the internal and external quality assurance procedures have been successfully completed, certification claims will be made by ACE.

Assessment and internal verification records, along with any additional RPL records completed, will be retained for the standard three year period following certification.

The assessor will 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.

Stage 5: Appeals

As with any assessment decision on procedural grounds; if a student wishes to appeal against a decision made about their assessment they need to follow ACE's Appeals Policy and Procedures. If unresolved, appeals may be escalated to the relevant awarding organisation (Pearson, City & Guilds, Gateway Qualifications), in line with their published procedures.