

Recognition of prior learning policy and process

2024

Who and what is this policy for:

This policy is for centre staff, employers and private training providers who are planning to use Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) as evidence towards the achievement of Pearson's vocational qualifications.

This policy sets out how and when RPL can be used as a method of assessment for Pearson's vocational qualifications. It includes guidance on how the RPL process can be managed. If you have any queries on this policy, please contact us via the [Pearson Support Portal](#)

Pearson Education Ltd – Our Mission and Values

At Pearson, our purpose is simple: to add life to a lifetime of learning. We believe that every learning opportunity is a chance for a personal breakthrough. That’s why our c.20,000 Pearson employees are committed to creating vibrant and enriching learning experiences designed for real-life impact. We are the world’s leading learning company, serving customers in nearly 200 countries with digital content, assessments, qualifications, and data. For us, learning isn’t just what we do. It’s who we are. Visit us at www.pearsonplc.com

We are regulated by the UK qualifications regulators Ofqual (England), SQA Accreditation (Scotland), CCEA Regulation (Northern Ireland) and Qualifications Wales (Wales). Our regulatory policies are integral to our approach and articulate how we meet regulatory requirements. These policies are designed to support centres and students and set out clearly our approach to the design, delivery, and award of Pearson qualifications and services.

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1. Scope of policy

- 1.1 **You can apply** Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) to **internally assessed parts** of our vocational qualifications-(inclusive of those qualifications that have externally set themes/topics which are internally assessed) including those on the Regulated Qualifications Framework, Self-Regulated Framework (SRF) and other national frameworks in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. RPL can also be applied to **internally assessed parts** of equivalent vocational qualifications from other Awarding Organisations.
- 1.2 The use of **recognition of prior learning is optional**. But, if you choose to apply it, you need to have an internal policy on RPL and the proper resources to do so.
- 1.3 You cannot apply for RPL for external assessment, set exams or set assignments.

2. What is Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)?

- 2.1 RPL is about using a learner's evidence of earlier learning and achievement towards part of a qualification. An assessor reviews whether the evidence is enough to show that a learner has met the assessment requirements for a current 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.
- 2.2 If there is evidence that the learner has previously shown the knowledge, skills or understanding required by part of a qualification, this may be used towards achieving that qualification. The evidence must be:
 - valid;
 - current;
 - reliable;
 - authentic and
 - sufficient.
- 2.3 RPL is not normally used to provide evidence against achievement for an entire qualification. 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 you or your learners think that they are entitled to an exemption, we recommend you refer to the organisation which has specified the original qualification requirement. If a particular qualification is specified

as an entry requirement to a qualification offered by us, we will list any appropriate exemptions in our specification.

- 2.4** Applications for RPL must be carried out by centre staff who are competent to consider and make decisions about RPL.

3. Can learners use a previously achieved certificate towards a qualification?

- 3.1** Occasionally we will map or give guidance to show shared content across units or qualifications (for example, First Aid Certificates). In these cases, a learner may use a previously achieved certificate as evidence without them having to repeat learning or assessment.
- 3.2** If we have not mapped qualifications, you will need to map and check that the learners' previous certificated achievement meets the current qualifications assessment criteria. It is important that you keep a record of the mapping so that we can confirm that it is valid.
- 3.3** No extra assessment is needed if a learner's previously achieved certificate or qualification meets the requirements of a whole unit. This includes units with Unit Teacher Assessed Grades (U-TAGs) and qualifications with Qualification-level Teacher Assessed Grade (QTAGs).

4. Recognition of prior learning for Higher Nationals

- 4.1** When using RPL for Pearson 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. Pearson also acknowledges that RPL can be undertaken through assessment of previous experiential learning.
- 4.2** Where two Pearson Higher National qualifications at the same level share common units, it may be possible for the achieved and certificated units within one of the Pearson Higher National qualifications, to be recognised as prior learning and count towards the achievement of another Pearson Higher National qualification at the same level. This could include where the two Pearson Higher National qualifications are in different subject sectors. This approach is subject to the limitations in 4.2.1 and 4.6 below.

- 4.2.1** In order to achieve an additional Pearson Higher National qualification at the same level, which has been certified by Pearson:
- The units to be used as prior learning must be common to both of the Pearson Higher National qualifications and meet rules of unit combination;
 - The credit value of the common units must not exceed 50% of the total credit value of the additional qualification the student is seeking to achieve. This is to assure academic standards and a student's attainment of the key subject relevant knowledge, skills, and professional behaviours of the additional Higher National qualification; and
 - The student must have taken a combination of units worth at least 50% of the total credits for the additional Pearson Higher National qualification at the same level to be awarded. This is to ensure that a student can demonstrate attainment of the key subject relevant knowledge, skills, and professional behaviours of the additional Higher National qualification.

4.3 An award is defined as a completed qualification (Pearson Higher National Certificate or Pearson Higher National Diploma). Individual units are not defined as an award and can be used for RPL (including HN Flex units). Where higher education awards have been certified by another awarding body, under License from Pearson, 4.1 does not apply, however for the use of RPL by Pearson centres, 4.5 below applies at all times.

4.4 Where students wish to top-up from a Level 4 HN programme on the legacy specification to a Level 5 HN programme on the current specification, units can be used for RPL based on prior certified learning and/or prior experiential learning but the centre must ensure that additional tasks can be set to ensure that Learning Outcomes not yet achieved can meet assessment criteria. For the Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs), delivered only in England, centres must additionally ensure that relevant Knowledge, Skills, and Behaviours (KSBs) are achieved when using the RPL.

4.5 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, for example via HN Flex, then centres must demonstrate clearly where RPL is able to meet Merit or Distinction criteria across all learning outcomes.

4.6 RPL processes should not be used for any more than 50% of the total credit value of a Pearson Higher National award. 50% limit is set in line with the wider HE practices and to mitigate risks such as double counting. It is a threshold to enable students to engage with and attain academic standards within the subject context.

Note: Recognition of certified or experiential learning should only be considered for learning achieved within seven years prior to the registration date for the intended higher education programme.

4.7 Centres delivering Pearson Higher Nationals should have their own Recognition of Prior Learning Policy, making clear the procedures and documentation required in the

process. All RPL decisions should be ratified by the Assessment Board and minuted; records of the evidence for RPL decision should be kept and may be viewed by Pearson-appointed External Examiners.

- 4.8** Centres are encouraged to ensure that there are clearly documented processes for RPL that is undertaken through certified learning as well as experiential learning. All RPL documentation should record clearly where learning outcomes have been met by either certified or experiential learning.

5. Recognition of prior assessment for Apprenticeship End-Point Assessments (EPA)

- 5.1** Pearson may recognise prior learning and assessment towards an EPA, for example because an apprentice has changed employer to one who uses Pearson for EPAs, or where an EPAO has ceased to offer the EPA leading to an apprentice needing to transfer to one of Pearson's EPAs. Where this is requested, Pearson will review whether achievement of components on the original EPA is transferable to components of a relevant EPA offered by Pearson. In doing so, Pearson will follow any requirements set by the regulator and Skills England in this respect.
- 5.2** Where satisfied that the content in question is transferable, Pearson will accept the application in respect of that content and achievement towards the components of an EPA offered by Pearson. The remaining components of the EPA will need to be registered for and completed via assessment with Pearson.

6. An example of the RPL process

Centre preparation

Check that you have staff with expertise to support and assure the RPL process

Stage 1: Awareness, information, and guidance

Before enrolling the learner, discuss with them the option of using RPL to claim units for some of their past learning or experience. If the learner is interested in this, you should explain to them:

- 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.

You should check that the evidence provided by the learner for RPL has been achieved before the start of their course of study.

Stage 2: Pre assessment, gathering evidence and giving information

Register your learner as soon as they officially start to gather evidence.

To help the learner in gathering evidence you could create an assessment plan or tracking document.

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.

Stage 3: Assessing and documenting evidence

Assessing

Tell your Standards Verifier/External Examiner, before any monitoring activity starts, if you have applied RPL for any units or learners. Your Standards Verifier/External Examiner may include these in their sample.

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. The Assessor may ask questions or ask a learner to show them skills, to check that their understanding and skills are current.

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

Standards Verifiers or External Examiners are not required to give feedback on an assignment brief or task if you choose to set one as part of RPL.

Evaluate all the evidence using the 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 from the learner meets the standard for all the learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

If we have published assessment or grading criteria, you should review the evidence against all the criteria.

If you find gaps in the learner's work through RPL, then you will need to use more assessment methods to create enough evidence to be able to award the learning outcome for the whole unit.

Documenting evidence

Evidence collected through the RPL process needs to be assessed and verified through the same quality assurance procedures that your centre uses for any other internal assessment methods.

Ensure records of assessment against prior learning are kept and are available for verification if requested.

Stage 4: Outcomes of the RPL

Once you've checked a learner's evidence and made an assessment decision, it is important that feedback is given to the learner including the assessment decision and what options are available to the learner if you have decided not to award the unit or qualification.

You should check that the learner understands how they can appeal if they do not agree with the assessment decision.

If the learner wants to make a complaint, they can do so using our [Pearson Qualifications Website](#).

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.

If we identify, through our quality assurance processes that all unit requirements have not been met, we will:

- ask you to provide more evidence, or
- ask the learner to complete the standard assessment requirements if they want to achieve the qualification.

Stage 5: Claiming certificates

You can claim certificates once the quality assurance processes have been successfully completed using the standard procedures.

After certification, you need to keep the assessment and internal verification records, along with any extra RPL records for three years.

Stage 6: Appeals

If a learner wants to appeal against a decision made about their assessment they first need to follow your centre's policy and procedures and then our [Internal assessment in vocational qualifications: reviews and appeals policy](#).

7. Feedback and complaints process

- 7.1** We welcome your feedback, which helps us to improve the products and services we provide. We know that sometimes things go wrong, but if they do, we want to try to stop them from happening again. If you'd like to give us your feedback or you're unhappy with the service, you can contact us via the [Pearson Support Portal](#).

8. Regulatory references

8.1 UK regulators require all awarding organisations to establish and maintain their compliance with regulatory conditions and criteria. As part of this process, policies and guides that relate to Pearson's status as an awarding organisation will reference any conditions and criteria that they address.

8.2 This policy addresses the following regulatory principles:

Qualification regulator or relevant governing body	Regulatory rule or guidance document	Regulatory condition, criteria, or principle
Ofqual	<u>General Conditions of Recognition</u>	E10; H5; C2.5
CCEA Regulation	<u>General Conditions of Recognition</u>	E10; H5; C2.5
Qualifications Wales	<u>Qualification Wales Standard</u> <u>Conditions of recognition</u>	E10; H5; C2.5
SQA Accreditation	<u>Regulatory Principles (2021)</u>	12; 13

9. Review date

9.1. This policy will be reviewed in November 2025.