

Recognition of prior learning policy and process

2021

Who and what is this policy for:

This policy is for centre staff 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

Welcome to Pearson, the world's learning company. We have a simple mission: to help people make more of their lives through learning. Whether it's at home, in the classroom or in the workplace, learning is the key to improving our life chances. We are the UK's largest awarding body and we are regulated by Ofqual (England), SQA Accreditation (Scotland), CCEA Regulation (Northern Ireland) and Qualifications Wales (Wales). We offer academic and vocational qualifications that are globally recognised and benchmarked, with educational excellence rooted in names like Edexcel, BTEC, and LCCI.

Our regulatory policies are integral to our approach and articulate in a consistent way how we meet regulatory requirements. These policies are designed to support centres and learners with 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. Our [Late Certification policy](#) is there to guide centres.
- 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 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 TAGs and qualifications with QTAGs.

4. Recognition of prior learning for Higher Nationals

- 4.1 When using RPL for 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. However, a Higher Education award which has been **certified by Pearson**, cannot be used as prior learning to contribute to the achievement of another Pearson higher education award of an equivalent level. An award is defined as a completed qualification (Higher National Certificate or Higher

National Diploma). Individual units are **not defined** as an award and can be used for RPL.

- 4.2 Where higher education awards have been certified by another awarding body, under License from Pearson, this may not apply as centres must make case by case determinations as to whether RPL is applicable.
- 4.3 Where students wish to top-up from a Level 4 HN programme on the legacy specification to a Level 5 HN programme on the RQF specification, units can be used for RPL but the centre must ensure that additional tasks can be set to ensure that Learning Outcomes not achieved can meet assessment criteria.
- 4.4 An **exception to 4.2** will be for credit-bearing units contributing to HN Flex study, where a student has achieved a Pearson Level 4 Higher National Certificate, studies HN Flex units and then progresses onto the Pearson Level 5 Higher National Diploma.
- 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, 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 Higher National award.
- 4.7 Centres delivering 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. 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 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 [Enquiries and Appeals about Pearson vocational qualifications policy](#).

6. Feedback and complaints process

- 6.1** 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](#).

7. Regulatory references

7.1 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.

7.2 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
Ofqual	<u>General Conditions of Recognition</u>	H5
Ofqual	<u>General Conditions of Recognition</u>	C2.5
SQA	<u>Regulatory Principles (2021)</u>	12
SQA	<u>Regulatory Principles (2021)</u>	13

8. Review date

8.1. This policy will be reviewed in November 2022.