



Skills & Training Services (STS)

Local Operating Procedure

Recognition – Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy

Version Control Sheet

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Change Control

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Introduction

Skills and Training Services recognise that learning may take place in a wide variety of contexts, including via formal taught courses, self-directed study and professional or life experiences. This policy is designed to facilitate formal recognition of learning undertaken elsewhere, supporting our mission to widen participation and promote equality and diversity. The overall aim of the Policy is to provide a framework within which decisions about Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) are valid, consistent, timely and fair.

Definitions

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is the overarching term used for the award of credit based on demonstrated learning that has occurred at some time in the past either through attending formal courses (prior certificated learning) or through paid or unpaid work, self-directed learning, or other life experiences (prior experiential learning). The theme common to both prior certificated learning and prior experiential learning is that learning and not just the experience of the activities alone, is being recognised and awarded credit.

Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL) is the process for assessing, recognising, and awarding credit for learning that has been previously accredited, formally recognised or certificated through a higher education institution or training provider.

Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) is the process for assessing, recognising and/or awarding credit for learning that has been achieved through experience and/or training that has not been formally assessed.

Principles

Credits may be given for prior learning where the level, standard, content, relevance, and currency of that learning are appropriate to a particular programme of study. Credits may be awarded via RPL for:

- individual modules (noting that RPL can only be awarded for whole modules), where the applicant or learner can demonstrate that they meet the assessment requirements for the module through knowledge, understanding and/or skills that they already possess, because of prior learning.

Applicants or learners awarded credit against modules or levels of study are exempt from the requirement to study those modules or levels as part of their programme of study.

The maximum amount of credit that can be awarded via RPL is specified within the framework and standards for the relevant type of award. Any course-specific variations to these regulations must be identified and approved at the point of course validation or re-approval and recorded on the definitive course record (for example, some awards may exclude or limit the use of RPL due to Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements).

The period for which prior learning remains valid and worthy of credit is discipline-specific. Decisions on the 'shelf-life' of prior learning must be made at course level. Normally, learning should have occurred within the past five years.

Course documentation (including the definitive course record) must be explicit in stating where



there are PSRB requirements that might affect an applicant or learner's ability to make a RPL claim for credit against certain modules or levels of study.

The RPL assessment process must be applied consistently in accordance with these principles and any specific RPL requirements of individual courses, as determined at validation.

Applying for RPL

It is the responsibility of Skills and Training Services to ensure all applicants/learners are given the opportunity to apply for RPL. Skills and Training Services will review the applicants/learners prior learning and experiences, which will be in the form of:

- discussions with the applicant/learner on their prior learning and experiences
- reviewing the Learner Record Service (LRS) (only once consented by the applicant/learner.
- carrying out a thorough skill scan against the knowledge, skills, and behaviours

Further guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeships-recognition-of-prior-learning>

In line with the apprenticeship funding rules (please see alternative funding rules for each contract for any variance), funding must not be used to pay for any training for knowledge, skills and behaviours already attained by the learner.

Potential applicants who may be eligible for RPL should be made aware of the opportunities available and associated timescales, as part of the recruitment and application process. RPL may be awarded at other points during a learner's period of study at the discretion of the relevant Awarding Body.

Applicants and learners should be encouraged to submit RPL applications in a timely manner, to enable RPL decisions to be made prior to the commencement of the element(s) of the course for which they are seeking exemption. This is particularly important for applicants who are seeking exemption from an entire level of study as part of the application process, so that their application can be considered and approved before they commence their studies at the appropriate level.

Where applicants or learners are seeking exemption for individual module(s), they should attend and submit any appropriate assessment for those elements of their course for which RPL is being sought while they await the outcome of their RPL application.

To apply for RPL the Application for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) form (see appendix 1) must be completed. This will be completed by the applicant/learner while being supported by a Skills and Training Services representative. Information and guidance on applying for RPL (both written and verbal) will clearly outline the process for making an application, the evidence that is required to support applications and the criteria against which decisions will be made. Receipt of submitted RPL applications will be formally acknowledged within ten working days and the applicant / learner will be notified of anticipated timescales for reaching a decision on their application and how they will be informed of the outcome. All applications for RPL must be sent to the Programme Lead who will discuss this with the relevant Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) representatives.

Where RPL has been approved the result must be reflected as follows:

- reduction in delivery content and planned guided learning hours
- reduction in duration of the programme



- reduction in the price of the programme (amount being drawn down in funding)

Guidance will be provided to Skills and Training Services staff on their role and responsibilities, which should include:

- providing information and guidance to applicants and learners on the RPL process which involves advising the applicant or learner on the compilation of a portfolio of evidence or other appropriate form of assessment.
- clarifying what is required as part of the application, including what will be considered suitable evidence of prior learning.
- supporting the applicant or learner in completing and submitting the RPL application form and the supporting evidence.

Evidencing Prior Learning

Evidence of prior certificated learning should include:

- copies of relevant certificates
- course documentation evidencing content, learning outcomes and level of study
- details of module results (for example via an academic transcript or equivalent).

Evidence of prior experiential learning should include:

- a systematic personal reflection on relevant learning experiences and how these have furthered their understanding of the relevant subject area.
- clear statements about the learning achieved through these experiences and how this relates to the learning outcomes for the relevant element(s) of the Serco course for which they are seeking exemption
- evidence to support these statements, which might include:
 - confirmation of job responsibilities and job description by a line-manager
 - a record of achievements
 - details of specialist training / skills
 - contact details of referees who can comment on the applicant's achievements
 - other documentation to demonstrate the learning outcomes achieved.

Evidence of prior experiential learning is usually submitted via a portfolio, although alternative forms of assessment may also be employed to suit the needs of individual courses (including structured interviews, presentations, performances, or other assessment tasks). Interviews, presentations, or performances should be recorded so that there is a reproducible record evidencing the demonstration of prior learning.

Assessing Prior Learning

Decisions regarding RPL are a matter of judgement and may be influenced by the requirements of any relevant Awarding Body. The decision-making process and outcomes should be transparent and demonstrably rigorous and fair.

Assessment and approval of RPL applications will be conducted by the Programme Lead and relevant IQA representative, who have authority to make decisions on RPL and to award the relevant credit, with the outcomes reported to the next full meeting of the Awarding Body for information. All documentation relating to RPL applications and decisions should be made available for subsequent external scrutiny.

Credit can be awarded for prior learning where it is satisfied that the applicant or learner has demonstrated achievement of the intended learning outcomes for the relevant element(s) of the



course for which they are seeking exemption and is prepared to complete the remaining elements of the course. It is recognised that for the RPL in relation to a large amount of credit (for example an entire level of study), mapping against module learning outcomes can be a barrier rather than an enabler of RPL and therefore mapping against course level learning outcomes and/or level descriptors may provide a more appropriate and flexible form of assessment.

In making judgements, claims for RPL will be evaluated against the following criteria:

Relevance	Is there an appropriate match between the evidence presented and the prior learning that the applicant or student is seeking to demonstrate? Is the prior learning specific? Can it be identified and categorised? Was the learning in a context understood by the learner?
Sufficiency	Is there sufficient evidence to demonstrate full achievement of the learning claimed?
Authenticity	Is the evidence valid and reliable? Does it clearly relate to the applicant or learner's own efforts and achievements?
Currency	Does the evidence relate to current learning? Does it meet course validation and/or Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) time limits in terms of currency of prior learning?
Level	Is the prior learning at a level that is at least equivalent to the relevant element of the programme of study for which the applicant or student is seeking exemption?

Notification of Outcomes

Applicants / learners should be notified of the outcome of their RPL application (including the level and volume of credit being awarded) via a letter/email from the Programme Lead with whom their application was formally acknowledged. Where the application is rejected (in full or in part) the outcome letter/email should include feedback on the reasons for this decision and guidance on obtaining the relevant credit within their programme of study. The feedback should also highlight their right to make a complaint about the decision in accordance see below.

Complaints about RPL Decisions

A complaint about an RPL decision may only be made on the grounds that:

- correct procedure was not followed which undermined the validity of the decision and/or
- prejudice or bias on the part of the Programme Lead/IQA affected the decision.

Complaints concerning the judgement of the Programme Lead/IQA and/or complaints based upon the informal assessment of the RPL application by members of delivery staff will not normally be considered, as these are not deemed as valid grounds for complaint.

A complaint must be made in line with the Complaints and Appeals Policy.

Monitoring and Evaluation

We will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and reflect upon the outcomes for enhancement purposes. The Skills and Training Services quality team will undertake periodic audits of RPL documentation and will seek feedback on the RPL process from Programme Lead/IQAs. Outcomes will be reported to the Senior Leadership Team. The purpose of these audits will be to ensure that decisions regarding RPL are valid, reliable, and consistent across the institution, in accordance with the requirements of this Policy



Appendix 1 – Application for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

This form should be used to apply for recognition of prior certificated learning (RPCL) and/or recognition of prior experiential learning (RPEL), in accordance with our Recognition of Prior Learning Policy. The form should be completed by the applicant/learner in collaboration with the nominated STS representative. Once completed, the form should be passed to the Programme Lead for approval.

PART ONE: PERSONAL DETAILS AND NATURE OF CLAIM

To be completed by the applicant/student in liaison with the nominated STS representative.

Name	
Learner ID number (if known)	
Address	
Email address	
Telephone number (home)	
Telephone number (mobile)	
Course	
Department	
STS Representative	
Type of prior learning <i>Please tick relevant box (or both boxes if your claim is a combination of both types of prior learning)</i>	<p style="text-align: center;">Certificated</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Learning that has been accredited, formally recognised, or certificated through a higher education institution or other higher education / training provider</i></p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Experiential</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Uncertificated learning that has been achieved through experience and/or training that has not been formally assessed</i></p>



Summary of prior learning

Please describe the nature of the prior learning for which you are seeking recognition, including subject area, level, volume (in terms of credit) and date undertaken. Please provide as much detail as possible.

Supporting evidence of prior learning

Please list the evidence that you are submitting with this form to support your application for recognition of prior learning

Applicant/learner declaration

I confirm that the information given in this form and within supporting documents is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Print name	
Sign name	
Date	