



Recognised Prior Learning Policy (Exams)

Document Control

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1. Purpose of the Policy

This Recognised Prior Learning (RPL) Policy outlines the procedures, principles, and responsibilities for recognising and accrediting the prior learning of students at Vega College enrolling on NCFE qualifications. It is intended to ensure full compliance with Ofqual regulations, NCFE policies, and national statutory guidance.

Purpose of the Policy

This policy aims to:

- Provide a fair and consistent process for recognising learners' prior learning
- Ensure compliance with the regulatory requirements set by Ofqual and awarding body guidance from NCFE
- Align with expectations under the Department for Education's (DfE) Statutory Guidance for Colleges and Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework (EIF)
- Support effective curriculum planning and ensure learners are not required to repeat learning unnecessarily

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All staff involved in the delivery, assessment, and quality assurance of NCFE qualifications
- All learners enrolled or seeking enrolment on an NCFE qualification at the college
- All subject areas and NCFE qualifications offered by the college

2. Definition of Recognised Prior Learning

Recognised Prior Learning (RPL) is defined as "a method of assessment (leading to the award of credit) that considers whether a learner can demonstrate that they 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." (NCFE RPL Guidance).

RPL can be based on:

- Formal learning – learning achieved through accredited qualifications
- Informal learning – experiences outside the formal learning environment, which may be work-based or derived from previous education or independent study

3. Principles of RPL

The RPL process must:

- Be fair, transparent, and inclusive
- Follow the same quality assurance and assessment processes as other forms of assessment
- Reflect the original assessment criteria of the unit or qualification
- Ensure the currency of knowledge – generally within five years unless otherwise specified by awarding body rules
- Be valid, reliable, sufficient, authentic, and current (as per NCFE and Ofqual assessment principles)

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

- Ensure understanding and implementation of RPL procedures across subject departments
- Facilitate training for staff on the RPL process
- Monitor effectiveness through internal quality assurance systems

Quality Assurance Lead / Internal Quality Assurer (IQA)

- Scrutinise and approve RPL evidence to ensure alignment with assessment criteria
- Maintain records of RPL claims and decisions for audit purposes
- Support assessors with judgements and moderation

Assessors / Teachers

- Identify candidates who may be eligible for RPL
- Compare learner evidence with the learning outcomes, assessment criteria and grading criteria of the current qualification
- Make and record evidence-based assessment decisions

Learners

- Present valid, authentic, sufficient, and relevant evidence of prior learning
- Engage proactively and honestly in the RPL evidencing process

5. The RPL Process Step-by-Step

Initial Identification: Learner expresses interest or is identified by tutor as a candidate for RPL

Initial Assessment: Review of evidence and discussion to determine if RPL is appropriate

Collection of Evidence: Learner provides evidence (e.g. previous certificates, portfolios, work samples, references)

Assessment of Evidence: Assessor maps evidence against unit standards and outcomes

Internal Quality Assurance: IQA reviews the assessor's judgement

Decision and Recording: Outcome is formally recorded and learner is notified

Certification or Credit Transfer: Where applicable, credits are applied and details submitted to NCFE or other relevant stakeholders

6. Types of Evidence Accepted

Evidence must demonstrate the required learning outcomes effectively. Types of acceptable evidence include:

- Certificates from previous accredited learning
- Work experience records (e.g. employer statements, performance reviews)
- Portfolios of work
- Records of independent learning or project-based evidence
- Video or audio recordings demonstrating applied skills

Evidence must be assessed for:

- Validity (relevance to the learning outcomes)
- Authenticity (learner's own work)
- Sufficiency (covers all learning outcomes)
- Currency (recent enough to remain valid)
- Reliability (consistently meets standard expected)

7. Limits and Restrictions

RPL cannot be applied to units that require practical demonstration of current skills where expiration dates or updates to standards have been made.

RPL must not compromise the integrity of assessment; it must ensure parity with centre-based assessment pathways.

The maximum proportion of a qualification that may be claimed via RPL is subject to NCFE and regulatory rules.

8. Appeals and Complaints Procedure

Learners have the right to appeal an RPL decision following the college's general appeals procedure.

Step 1: Informal discussion with assessor

Step 2: Formal appeal to IQA within 10 working days

Step 3: Escalation to college's SLT-led appeals panel

Step 4: If unresolved, referral to NCFE's appeals process can be made

Procedures must mirror the centre's Assessment and Appeals Policy, aligned with the Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition.

9. Staff Training and CPD

It is essential to ensure that all relevant staff receive up-to-date training on:

- NCFE and Ofqual RPL guidance
- Standards for assessing RPL evidence
- Internal Quality Assurance linked to RPL
- Training schedules will be embedded in the centre's annual CPD plan

10. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or in response to changes to:

- NCFE or Ofqual regulations
- DfE statutory guidance
- Ofsted expectations (including EIF criteria around curriculum intent, implementation, and impact)

Monitoring methods will include:

- Internal audits of RPL claims
- Feedback from learners and assessors
- Review of IQA reports and external quality assurance feedback

11. References

NCFE Recognised Prior Learning (RPL) Centre Guidance

Ofqual: General Conditions of Recognition

Department for Education (DfE): Keeping Children Safe in Education, Working Together to Safeguard Children, Statutory Guidance

Ofsted: Education Inspection Framework 2019 (revised where applicable)

Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) guidance on assessment and examination protocols