

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING POLICY

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SOUTH HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE GROUP

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING POLICY

1.0 Introduction

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) focuses on assessment and awarding for prior learning which may count as evidence towards a unit or full qualification, should a student transfer into the College from another provider.

It also recognises where Apprentices may have completed components of a previous framework and standard, that should be acknowledged in the both the RPL assessment on One File and on the Training Plan.

This policy provides a generic framework designed to ensure the integrity of awards and the quality of provision, but staff must still consider awarding body protocols where they differ or require additional action.

2.0 Scope

This policy can be applied to any qualification provided the awarding body allows for RPL.

3.0 Objectives:

This policy is designed to ensure that:

- students can benefit from relevant and recent prior learning;
- evidence of prior learning is valid, authentic, current, sufficient and reliable;
- evidence is assessed against relevant awarding body criteria;
- records of the evidence, assessment and verification are maintained and available for internal and external scrutiny;
- students have the right of appeal;
- Meets the principles outlined in the QAA code of practice specifically for HE provisions
- Complaint with ESFA funding rules – particularly within apprenticeship where rules update yearly

4.0 Principles

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. RPL must be carried out by personnel with appropriate expertise and knowledge.

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 ask for the demonstration of skills to check competence. The assessment strategy for each qualification must be adhered to.

Where evidence is assessed to be only sufficient to cover one or more learning outcomes, or to partly meet the need of a learning outcome, then additional assessment methods should be used to generate sufficient evidence to be able to award the learning outcome(s) for the whole unit.

The RPL process does not allow the recognition of any unit or qualification assessed by external assessment only. This is because such units are subject to specific evidence requirements.

5.0 The RPL Process

An example RPL process is outlined below, **but specific awarding body protocols must be adhered to.**

5.1 Stage 1 – Awareness, information and guidance

During initial advice and guidance with a prospective student, the possibility that they may be able to claim credit for some of their previous learning should be raised with them. If the student is interested in this, they will need to know the:

- process of claiming achievement by using RPL;
- sources of support and guidance available to them;
- timelines, appeals processes and any fees involved.

5.2 Stage 2 – Pre-assessment; gathering evidence and giving information.

At this stage, once the Course Leader has confirmed eligibility with the awarding body, 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 the unit, that the evidence is being used for.

5.3 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 student's prior learning and experience in relation to unit standards. The 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 credit and, as above, the evidence gathered needs to meet the standards of the unit, or part of unit, that the evidence is being used for. The assessment process will be subject to the usual quality assurance procedures, for example internal standardisation and internal verification, and may need to be verified externally.

Evidence gathered through RPL should be clearly referenced and signposted to aid internal assessment and internal and external verification.

5.4 Stage 4 – Claiming certification

Once the internal and external quality assurance procedures have been successfully completed, certification claims can be made. Assessment and internal verification records, along with any additional RPL records completed, should be retained for the standard period following certification.

The assessor must ensure that all learning outcomes and assessment criteria being claimed are certificated correctly and that the records of assessment and verification are maintained in the usual way.

5.5 Stage 5 – Appeal

If a student wishes to appeal against a decision made about their assessment, they need to follow the appeals process as set out in the Colleges Assessment Policy.

6.0 Apprenticeships: RPL Process

South Hampshire College Group recognises that apprenticeships have different funding rules around the requirements of Recognised Prior Learning.

The purpose of this section is to provide guidance and information around the need for undertaking initial assessment and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) within apprenticeships. All potential apprentices must be assessed prior to the sign-up stage for prior learning/attainment, usually relating to any qualifications that may have already been achieved, but equally also relating to workplace experience. All potential candidates must be assessed against the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSB) as outlined in the standard to be undertaken.

6.1 Process

Initial assessment/ the interview stage ensures that the apprenticeship is an appropriate programme (right subject and level) for the individual, but also establishes if the workplace/employer is right for the apprentice to gain the required exposure. Therefore, adopting a **‘right student, right programme, and right employer’ approach** to all initial assessments.

South Hampshire College Group recognises that apprenticeship funding should not be used to pay for, or accredit, existing KSB’s. Alongside reducing the cost of an apprenticeship for an employer, RPL should equally reduce the duration, where it is not possible to reduce duration due to the design of the model for cohort delivery, the apprentice cannot use the delivery identified as RPL towards the collation of their OTJ evidence, as this is not deemed new knowledge and skills, rather it is a ‘refresh’ of existing KSB’s. Where there is a reduction in duration it must still meet the minimum OTJ hours required (6 hours a week) calculated by weeks on programme minus annual leave of 5.6 weeks per year.

The delivery team are to ascertain the amount of RPL that should be adjusted following the completion of the skills assessment activity and must include commentary where the scores identify to be that of a ‘mastery’ level. This assessment outcome must then be recorded clearly on the “Training Plan” and “Apprenticeship Agreement” and is to include the new duration and Total Negotiated Price (TNP). To add here, the Assessment price (cost of EPA) must be accurate and not a blanket 20% figure of the funding band. Before apprentices are enrolled, this will then be quality assured via the compliance team.

6.2 RPL considerations and actions made by South Hampshire College Group:

- We will identify and document any knowledge, skills and behaviours, relevant to the apprenticeship standard, gained from the following: Prior education, training, or associated qualifications in a related subject sector area, including any previous apprenticeship undertaken;
- Or learning or competence gained from prior work experience, particularly where the apprentice is an existing employee, or is beginning their apprenticeship after completing another programme with a relevant work placement.
- We will check the individual's personal learning record if they have one. Where the individual has completed a T-Level, we will take account of the progression profiles published by the Institute, which will identify if a subsequent apprenticeship in the same occupational area can be funded (as there are at least 12 months off-the-job training left to deliver) and if so, whether that apprenticeship must be an accelerated apprenticeship
- Equally, where published and relevant, guidance on progression routes for skills bootcamps and occupational traineeships must be considered in the same way.

Our assessment will quantify the content which should be omitted from the training plan, in the form of a volume of off-the-job training hours. The reduction of off-the-job training hours will translate to a reduction in duration and in the total negotiated price (where applicable). Where we cannot reduce the duration, we will ensure that the programme still meets the minimum requirements of the off-the-job training for the full duration of the apprenticeship. Where we have accounted for prior learning and experience and the reduction of content would mean that the apprenticeship would fail to meet either the minimum duration requirement, or the minimum off-the-job training requirement, the apprenticeship is not eligible for funding.

6.3 After Initial Assessment

Following the initial assessment, if the decision is made that the candidate is eligible for the apprenticeship, we will ensure the following:

- The RPL is documented in the evidence pack and summarised in the 'Training Plan'
- An agreement between the provider and employer is reached regarding both reductions in price and duration of the apprenticeship;
- An agreement between the provider and employer is reached and documented on the delivery of the apprenticeship programme to reflect the apprentices existing KSB.

7.0 The UK Quality Code for Higher Education

The Code continues to articulate fundamental principles that should apply to higher education quality across the UK, irrespective of changing national contexts. These include principles such as emphasising the role of providers in assuring the quality of the experience they offer to students, supporting student engagement, and ensuring external referencing is used to ensure the integrity of awards and the quality of provision.