

Policy on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Introduction

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is an assessment process which enables recognition of achievement from a range of activities, using any valid assessment methodology. Provided that the assessment requirements of a given unit or qualification have been met, the use of RPL is acceptable for accrediting part of a unit, unit(s) or a qualification.

Evidence submitted for RPL must be:

- Authentic
- Current
- Relevant
- Sufficient

The use and application of RPL can be used by learners without formal qualifications and enables them to gain all or part of a qualification on the evidence of their past achievements.

The RPL process is **not** concerned with allowing for exceptional entry to, or exemption from, a programme of study. It focuses on assessment and certification of prior learning which may count as evidence towards:

- a part of a unit or unit(s) accumulated towards a full qualification
- unit or units recognised by an BTEC awarding body
- an in-house qualification

Terminology

RPL policies and procedures have been developed over time, which has led to the use of a number of names to describe the process. Among the most common are:

- Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)
- Accreditation of Prior Achievement (APA)
- Accreditation of Prior Learning and Achievement (RPLA).

These terms broadly describe the same process but because of its wide acceptance, nationally and internationally, the Medeshamstede Academy uses the term Recognition of Prior Learning.

The Medeshamstede Academy operates a centrally based RPL policy, which is the responsibility of the Principal/Head of Centre.

Process

When a student of the Medeshamstede Academy is enrolled on a course, as part of the induction for this course, they will be informed of the Medeshamstede Academy RPL policy. If the learner wishes to apply for RPL for a qualification, they will be given a copy of the RPL policy and a meeting will be arranged with the Quality Nominee.

The Quality Nominee will assist the learner throughout the process and may request assistance from an in-house specialist to deal with a member's request for RPL.

The Quality Nominee will assist the learner with their claim for RPL, an action and assessment plan including an analysis of achievement will be created with agreed timescales. The analysis of achievement will also identify gaps in the learner's evidence for RPL. The evidence of achievement will be collated in a portfolio; which will include for example paper-based, electronic, video recorded evidence, etc.

The Accredited Centre Manager/Quality Nominee will then,

- Assess the evidence and check its authenticity
- Grade where relevant
- Provide learner with regular feedback
- Arrange additional learning if required
- Arrange internal verification/moderation/standardisation

The learner will

- Review action and assessment plan
- Possibly provide new evidence
- Acknowledge additional learning
- Submit final portfolio

Dependant on the qualification that the learner is claiming RPL for, the Quality Nominee will either submit the portfolio to the Lead Internal Verifier or arrange for external verification/moderation of the RPL evidence, following the procedure for that particular qualification.

The learner will be provided with feedback on progress of their claim for RPL.

If the qualification the learner is claiming RPL for, is provided by an external provider, for example Edexcel, the portfolio will be submitted for External Verification/Moderation the organisation involved.

Appeals Procedure

The learner will have access to awarding body's appeal process, details of which will be accessed via the Quality Nominee.

For appeals against decisions regarding internally run courses, the learner must put their appeal in the first instance to Quality Nominee in writing.

If the issue cannot be dealt with between the two parties, then the lead internal verifier for that principal subject area will be appointed to oversee the appeal. They may either review the decision themselves or appoint another independent assessor to carry out this task on their behalf.

Once the decision has been reviewed, which will include discussing the case with both the Learner and the Quality Nominee, the reviewer will make a decision and inform both the Learner and the Quality Nominee will be informed in writing of the result.

The decision of the appeals panel is final.

Appendix 1

Advice for learner

The starting point for any learner wishing to claim for RPL is to reflect on their experience in order to identify relevant achievement. They should think about experience gained:

- at work
- in any relevant voluntary work and leisure activities
- in formal or informal education and training – for example, adult education courses or in-company training
- from independent study
- from home-based activities, such as care of the young, the elderly or the sick or involvement in the family business

A useful starting point would be to compile a selective autobiographical account of the learner's experience, a curriculum vitae or a portfolio of practical work. This exercise can help support staff and assessors to gain a broad overview of the learner's experience. In addition, the exercise will encourage the learner, with the help of support staff, to identify:

- the key components of their experiences
- what they needed to know or do
- what actions were successful or unsuccessful
- what has been learnt and achieved
- how this achievement relates to the requirements of the unit(s) or part(s) of a unit(s)

RPL learners will need to understand the relevant assessment requirements they are claiming. Then they will be able to work towards assembling evidence to support these claims. Dependant on the qualification RPL is being claimed for, the portfolio may require:

- a statement of the claim for accreditation
- a statement of authenticity
- a brief *curriculum vitae* or autobiography, to put the claim into context
- a summary of the learning and assessment requirements claimed
- a commentary which identifies prior achievement against individual learning and assessment requirements
- a list of evidence against each assessment requirement claimed
- full evidence against each assessment requirement claimed

Assessors will be looking for evidence that is:

Authentic - the learner's achievement must be her/his own work rather than another person's or the combined work of a group.

Current - the learner's prior learning and achievement must be shown to be still retained by the learner and must also fulfil the requirements of the qualification or part of the qualification being accredited by RPL.

Relevant - information presented by the learner which can be assessed against the assessment requirements of the qualification or part of the qualification being accredited by RPL. The evidence can be gathered from a number of sources and can be presented in a variety of forms, for example, photographs, videotape, etc.

Sufficient - information submitted by the learner must meet the quality and quantity of the assessment requirements of the qualification being accredited by RPL. Separate evidence is not required for each qualification assessment criterion. Where possible, the learner should be encouraged to present a small number of complex pieces of evidence that demonstrate the achievement of a number of qualification assessment requirements.

Where evidence presented in support of a claim of RPL is strongly convincing, it may be deemed sufficient for the purpose of certification. If the evidence is less convincing, but nevertheless substantial, the learner might, where suitable:

- undergo an oral assessment
- complete an appropriate assignment
- complete a written test
- carry out a demonstration
- or a combination of the above.

Further information regarding RPL can be accessed via the Edexcel web site.

Appendix 2: Mapping achievement

RPL learner profiling form

Learner name	Centre	
Learner address		
BTEC registration number		
Tasks I have regularly carried out	I can provide evidence to prove my ability at these tasks	
	Yes	No
Planning the provision of information		
Obtain information when insufficient detail available		
Decide method of work to optimise resources		
Prepare detailed plans for projected work		
Detailed schedules are prepared to suit course		
Resource requirements are determined		
Obtain clarification on unclear issues of resourcing		
Monitor programme and feedback for future planning		
Meeting course requirements		
Factors affecting the programme are identified and notified		

Please complete the following at the end of the profiling session

RPL learner Name & Signature _____ Date _____

Centre representative _____ Date _____
Name & Signature

Appendix 3: Portfolio evidence and assessment

Evidence within the portfolio

Assessing the evidence

Evidence within the portfolio	Assessing the evidence
<p>1. An authenticated <i>curriculum vitae</i> or <i>selective autobiographical account</i> of the learner's experience which will include the dates and duration of relevant experience, standards of work done, degree of supervision required, details concerning the circumstance of the experience such as its suitability for the projected course. The witness testimony can be a useful source of evidence to verify a learner's prior achievement. The learner should identify an endorser or endorsers connected with their Prior Learning to produce a witness testimony. For each witness testimony, the endorser's role in relation to the learner's Prior Learning must be explained. It is the learner's responsibility to obtain this witness testimony but centres can suggest a suitable format (see <i>Appendix 4: Witness testimonies</i>).</p>	<p>1. The learner's authenticated <i>curriculum vitae</i> or autobiographical account will be useful to the assessor in presenting a global view of career patterns and experience, and will provide a context in which the attainment of specific qualification assessment requirements is judged. When evaluating a witness testimony, the assessor will take into account the credibility of the endorser and the currency of the experience.</p>
<p>2. <i>Physical products</i>, such as manufactured objects, design drawings, design specifications, menus, published materials, planning documents, computer programs, photographic evidence, demonstrating knowledge, understanding and skills. The list given is not exhaustive. A statement of authentication must accompany the products submitted. Where evidence has been created in the past for another purpose, it is important that the learner obtains proof that it is their work. Verification will sometimes be needed from an appropriate third party, associated with the Prior Learning. The endorser should make a statement that describes the role of the learner with respect to the evidence. This will be particularly important where the evidence relates to work carried out by the learner as part of a group project.</p>	<p>2. <i>Physical products</i> will normally be considered as supporting evidence for accounts of experience and may be subject to endorsement in the same way as written accounts. Some physical products may not be portable, or may be perishable, in which case suitable photographic evidence may be substituted, if properly authenticated. A structured and documented interview with the learner, based on the product submitted, should be carried out; particularly as the processes leading to the completion of the product may be as important as the end product itself.</p>
<p>3. <i>Previous accreditation</i> such as licences, training certificates, first aid certificates, etc. can be submitted as RPL evidence. However, these must be accompanied by details of where and how the skills were used. Also the knowledge and skills content of the training certificates/licences must be listed and cross-referenced to the standard and requirements of the qualification being claimed by RPL.</p>	<p>3. When <i>previous accreditation</i> such as licences or certificates are presented as evidence of prior achievement, their relevance to the claimed units must be demonstrable and mapped to the required qualification standards. The RPL learner must be able to provide examples of where and how the skills in the training certificate/licence were used. The authenticity of the documents must be assured and the currency considered.</p>
<p>4. <i>Other supporting documentation</i>, such as independent references, testimonials or job descriptions, can be submitted as RPL evidence and supported where relevant by listing and cross-referencing skills to the standard and requirements of the qualification being claimed by RPL.</p>	<p>4. Many examples may fit into other supporting documentation. Relevance, authenticity and currency must be considered and where necessary can be supplemented with oral assessment.</p>

Appendix 4: Witness testimony

Learner name & signature: _____ Date: _____	
Unit title: _____	
Qualification title: _____	
Achievement(s) to be recognised by RPL²	Achievement(s) mapped to the assessment requirement(s) of the units being claimed by RPL²
Details of testimony³	
I can confirm the learner's evidence is authentic and accurate	
Witness name & signature: _____	
Designation/relationship to learner: _____	
Familiar with the qualification standards to which the learner is working Y/N	
Date: _____	
Assessor name & signature: _____ Date: _____	

² To be completed by the learner

³ Specific comments from the witness on the learner's prior learning that demonstrates achievement of the assessment requirement(s) of the unit