RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL) and ACHIEVEMENT POLICY

PURPOSE

This policy applies to all qualifications and apprenticeship assessments provided by Innovate Awarding (IAO).

IAO seeks to enable learners/apprentices to avoid the duplication of learning and assessment through equivalences or exemptions for the purposes of awarding credit.

For individuals with learning or achievements that have not been certificated/accredited it may be possible to assess and validate these through the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) process. These achievements may then count towards a qualification.

Who does this policy apply to?

- Quality Assurance Managers in recognised centres
- Internal Verifiers
- Assessors
- Innovate Awarding External Quality Advisors
- Innovate Awarding staff

When to use this policy

The policy and procedure will apply to:

- Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF)
- Approved units of assessment
- Apprenticeship Assessment

DEFINITIONS

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is the recognition of non-certificated learning towards a full (not partial) unit or qualification.

Recognition of Prior Achievement (RPA) is the recognition of previous certificated accredited achievement towards a full (not partial) unit or qualification.

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THE POLICY

Qualifications

The RPL process must be negotiated with the centre and must be claimed as part of a course. The centre is responsible for assessment and claiming credit. There is no difference between achievement of the required standards by RPL and achievement through a formal programme of study, therefore RPL appears on certificates as credit-bearing.

In order to achieve the above, a learner must produce valid and reliable evidence of learning to support any claims based on experience. A learner may claim RPL against a whole unit or several units. It is not possible to award part units, but where the RPL evidence does not fully meet the needs of a complete unit, the missing information may be provided via the same assessment processes that are undertaken by a taught group of learners. In order to achieve recognition of achievement there are two options open to the learner:

1. Undertake the same assessments as those following the formal course of learning and assessment that lead to the desired unit or qualification. These assessments may be undertaken without attending the teaching sessions.
2. Submit a portfolio of evidence based on previous learning, skills and/or competence cross-referenced to the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of the unit or units for which RPL is being sought.

It should be noted that RPL is an alternative route to achievement and not an easy option or shortcut. Evidence must be produced for RPL which is subject to the same assessment and quality assurance requirements as applied to evidence produced as part of a course.

Under some circumstances there may be a limit to the proportion of a qualification that can be achieved by either credit transfer or RPL. Full details of these requirements will be identified in the specification documents for qualifications offered by Innovate Awarding.

Learners wishing to avail themselves of this method of accreditation must negotiate the procedure with the centre through which they wish to claim the award of credit. All centres recognised by Innovate Awarding must have policies and procedures and trained staff which enable these processes to be invoked and implemented.

The learner must play an active role in the process and must produce evidence and map it to the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of all units they wish to claim.

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The learner wishing to make the claim may also require the support of their employer or other organisation (e.g. if they have worked as an unpaid volunteer) in order to be able to confirm achievement of assessment criteria for which there is no tangible evidence, e.g. practical tasks. Proposals to use the RPL process for a learner must be the responsibility of a Innovate Awarding approved centre. Through the process the centre's assessors and quality assurance staff must ensure that evidence is:

1. **Valid** - Does the evidence genuinely demonstrate that the demands of the learning outcome have been met? For RPL, currency of evidence is of particular concern. To ensure that the evidence meet up-to-date demands Innovate Awarding normally expects evidence to be within the last 3 years.

2. **Authentic** - Consideration needs to be given as to whether the evidence being examined is genuinely the work of the learner. If the learning outcome is related to team working, it would be acceptable to use evidence that may be the result of the work of a team, but not if it was being used as evidence of an activity which should have been carried out individually.

3. **Sufficient** - There must be enough evidence to fully meet the requirements of the learning outcome, or learning outcomes being considered. If there is insufficient evidence to fully meet requirements, evidence obtained through RPL must be used alongside evidence gained through other suitable assessment method(s).

4. **Reliable** - All evidence obtained through RPL should be presented in a manner that allows another assessor to arrive at the same assessment decision, were the assessment to be repeated.

In order to quantify the use of RPL processes, Innovate Awarding's External Quality Assurers will be required to identify the provision where RPL has been applied. Collated information about the use of RPL and credit exemption will be made available as part of the annual quality process. Centres are required to keep records of valid claims through exemptions and equivalencies for 3 years.

Restrictions

For exemption and equivalency – a maximum of 70% of a qualification can normally be achieved through exemption or equivalency. At least 30% should be gained through new learning.

For RPL – IAO reserves the right to exclude the use of RPL in cases such as:

- Licence to practise
- Health and safety requirements
- Regulated professions
- Work placements

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Guidance for implementation
IAO will expect the following elements to be present in any RPL policy operated by a centre:

Stage 1

General awareness raising regarding claiming of credit – information, advice and guidance.

Once learners have decided to consider their learning for RPL purposes, they will need to know about:

- How to claim credit via the RPL process
- Sources of professional support and guidance available to learners and employers
- The administrative process for RPL applications
- Timelines, appeals processes, and any fees or subsidies
- The currency of existing evidence, qualification, experience, skills or competence. (i.e. does the evidence relate to current learning? Where centres and/or professional, statutory, or regulatory bodies have specific requirements and/or time limits for the currency of evidence, certification, or demonstration of learning, these should be made clear and transparent)

Stage 2

Pre-assessment – gathering evidence and giving information.

When a learner has decided to pursue an RPL route towards achievement it is vital that the learner is fully informed of the RPL process and has sufficient support to make a viable claim and to make decisions about evidence collection and presentation for assessment. During this stage the learner will carry out the evidence collection and develop an assessment plan. The evidence required for the award of credit will depend on the purpose, learning outcomes and assessment criteria for the relevant unit within the RQF. It is the centre's responsibility to inform Innovate Awarding at registration about any learner who has previously achieved units that have been approved as Exemptions, Equivalents, and Credit Transfer or will be achieved through RPL. This information along with copies of certificates as applicable must be made available to the centre internal verifier and the EQA during quality assurance sampling as part of claiming the award of credit.

Stage 3

Assessment as part of RPL and within the RQF is a structured process for gathering and reviewing evidence and making judgements about a learner's prior learning and experience in relation to unit standards. Assessment must be valid and reliable to ensure the integrity of units and qualifications and the RPL system as a whole. The assessment process for RPL must be subject to the same Innovate Awarding quality assurance processes as any other of the assessment process. Learners' work which contributes towards their claim for credit via the RPL process must be internally and externally verified and all achievement documented as for conventional learner achievement, all RPL related achievement must be marked as such in all documentation.

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Stage 4 - Awarding credit

Awarding organisations are responsible for awarding credit. The procedure is the same as for other forms of assessment. The credit is recorded in the learner record and claims for credit are made through the usual recommendation for the award of credit process.

Stage 5 - Feedback

After the assessment the assessor will need to give feedback to the learner, discussing the results and giving support and guidance on the options available to the learner, which may include, for example, further learning and development.

Stage 6 - Appeal

If claimants wish to appeal against a decision made about their claim for credit (via the RPL process) they would need to follow the standard appeals process that exists within the Innovate Awarding recognised centre.

Stage 7 – Complaint

If the claimants have completed the appeals process within the Innovate Awarding recognised centre and are not satisfied that it was dealt with correctly, they can then make a complaint. This should firstly be done following the Innovate Awarding recognised centre process. If this process has been followed and the claimant is still not satisfied with the outcome they can make a complaint to Innovate Awarding and the details of this policy can be found on the Innovate Awarding website www.innovateawrding.org

Apprenticeship Assessment

Where an employer wishes to change the Apprenticeship Assessment Organisation after their apprentice has gone through gateway and has started the apprenticeship assessment process, they must follow the below steps to ensure the apprentice is not asked to resit/retake any components that they have successfully completed:

1. Ensure an agreement has been signed by the provider with IAO
2. Ensure the apprentice has been registered on Proficient
3. Submit all evidence of assessment outcomes taken with the previous Apprenticeship Assessment Organisation
4. Ensure IAO has a contact at the previous Apprenticeship Assessment Organisation in case of any queries over the evidence submitted

Assessment windows if applicable

The apprentice should still have time left within their assessment window. This information must be shared with IAO.

If an apprentice is outside their assessment window and the rules of the standard allow it, IAO can continue with their assessments but this must be within 6 months of their Gateway date.

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The previous Apprenticeship Assessment Organisation should supply the evidence of assessment outcomes by completing a notification of results document. An example copy of this document can be found in **Annex 1**.

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ANNEX 1

Notification of Results Document

APPRENTICESHIP ASSESSMENT FOR [INSERT STANDARD TITLE AND NUMBER]

NOTIFICATION OF RESULTS	
APPRENTICE NAME:	**ULN:**
VENUE:	**DATE:**
DATE THE ASSESSMENT WINDOW BEGAN:	**DATE THE ASSESSMENT WINDOW WAS FROZEN:**

APPRENTICESHIP ASSESSMENT COMPONENT	ATTEMPT NUMBER	MARK ACHIEVED	GRADE ACHIEVED
OVERALL APPRENTICESHIP ASSESSMENT GRADE:			
IEA JUSTIFICATIONS: **LIST ALL COMPONENTS AND GIVE THE NARRATIVE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE GRADE GIVEN**			

RESULTS PROVIDED BY:		**DATE:**	

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