

Recognition of Prior Learning

Policy and Procedures

Introduction

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is defined by Ofqual as the:

- a) Identification by an awarding organisation of any learning undertaken, and / or attainment, by a Learner –
 - i) prior to that Learner taking a qualification which the awarding organisation makes available or proposes to make available, and
 - ii) which is relevant to the knowledge, skills and understanding which will be assessed as part of that qualification, and
- b) Recognition by an awarding organisation of that learning and / or attainment through amendment to the requirements which a Learner must have satisfied before the Learner will be assessed or that qualification will be awarded.

Centres can apply on behalf of their Learners for prior attainment or experience to contribute towards the award of an RSPH qualification. The following policy and procedures sets out the evidence requirements, criteria, stages of application, possible outcomes of an application and appeals procedure if RSPH does not approve an application for recognition of prior learning.

Eligible RSPH qualifications and limits to RPL

RPL will be considered only for RSPH qualifications which consist of *at least* two units. RPL will be awarded only for complete units and will be limited to a maximum of 50% of the units for a qualification (or 50% of the credit value for a qualification if the qualification and constituent units have been assigned credit values).

Evidence requirements and criteria

1. Attainment by a learner of an existing qualification / units or pre-existing qualification / units awarded by RSPH or another awarding organisation can be used as evidence for RPL.

The unit or qualifications being provided as evidence for RPL must, *as a minimum*:

- be at the same level as the RSPH qualification / unit
- be of the same size (in terms of credit value or total qualification time) as the RSPH qualification / unit

- be assessed in the same or equivalent manner as the RSPH qualification / unit
- consist of learning outcomes and assessment criteria that are equivalent to those of the RSPH qualification / unit
- cover the same content requirements as the RSPH qualification / unit.

RPL will not be approved for a unit or qualification that does not cover all of the requirements of the RSPH unit.

The unit or qualification would normally have been awarded within 5 years of the request for RPL. In exceptional cases RSPH may accept attainment of a qualification or unit at an earlier date than this if the Learner can also provide evidence of continuing professional development or similar to attest to the currency of the knowledge, understanding or skill of the Learner.

2. Prior work experience of a Learner can be used as evidence for RPL for practical or work-based units within an RSPH qualification.

Evidence of prior work experience must meet the requirements of:

- Validity The evidence demonstrates that the requirements of the unit have been met
- Authenticity The evidence is produced by the work of the Learner
- Sufficiency There is enough evidence provided to fully meet the requirements of the unit and for the assessors and verifiers to determine that the requirements of the unit have been met
- Currency The evidence meets current requirements and the Learner is still able to meet those requirements
- Reliability Assessors and verifiers will reach the same assessment decision if the assessment was to be repeated.

NB. Centres and Learners should carefully consider the merits of RPL for practical and work-based units as evidence of attainment may be more easily provided by Learners undertaking the RSPH assessment for the unit.

Application for RPL

Application for RPL is a 2-stage process, summarised as:

Stage 1. Submission by a centre of evidence of RPL, either provided by a particular unit, qualification or by prior work experience. The submission will be assessed to determine whether or not it is acceptable to RSPH as part attainment of an RSPH qualification.

Stage 2. Claiming of a unit by a centre through RPL on behalf of a Learner.

The details of the application process are as follows:

Stage 1:

- a. Initial enquiry by centre.

Centres are advised to make an initial enquiry to RSPH to determine if a particular qualification is eligible for RPL and if the proposed prior achievement is likely to be appropriate for the qualification. RSPH will respond to this initial enquiry within 5 working days.

- b. Submission of evidence for RPL by centre.

The centre will provide evidence to RSPH that the qualification / unit / prior work experience meets the evidence requirements set out above.

- c. RSPH decision or request for further information.

RSPH will acknowledge receipt of this evidence within 5 working days and provide a response within 20 working days.

- d. Appeal by centre if decision is to reject the submission for RPL.

In the event that RSPH rejects the submission, the centre can appeal this decision within 20 working days of receipt of the decision.

Stage 2:

- a. The centre informs RSPH that it will be submitting evidence of achievement through RPL on behalf of the Learner(s) for a unit.

- b. The centre submits evidence for RPL.

- c. RSPH credits the Learner(s) with achievement of the unit, or rejects the claim for RPL.

This will be consistent with the usual timescales for notification of results for the qualification.

- d. Appeal if the Learner wishes to appeal against the decision by RSPH to reject the claim for RPL.

Normal timescales for *Appeals and Enquiries About Results* will apply.

Outcomes

The outcomes for a Stage 1 application are:

- Submission accepted. RSPH agrees that the prior attainment as evidenced by the suggested qualification, unit or prior work experience satisfies the assessment requirements of the RSPH unit.
- Submission deferred. RSPH requires additional evidence before being able to reach a decision that the suggested qualification, unit or prior work experience satisfies the assessment requirements of the RSPH unit.
- Submission rejected. RSPH does not accept that the suggested qualification, unit or prior work experience satisfies the assessment requirements of the RSPH unit. In the event of this outcome the centre can appeal the decision.

The outcomes for Stage 2 application are:

- Claim accepted. The Learner(s) is(are) credited with achievement of the unit.
- Claim rejected. RSPH considers that the evidence submitted for RPL for a particular Learner or cohort of Learners does not provide sufficient evidence of achievement for the whole of a unit. The centre can appeal this decision on behalf of the Learners, submit additional evidence or allow the Learner(s) to be assessed via the normal procedures for that unit.

Appeals

As stated above, a centre can appeal against RSPH's decision to reject a submission for RPL, or to reject a claim for RPL.

Appeals against a decision to reject a submission must be made within 20 working days of the submission being rejected, and detail why the submission should have been approved.

Evidence relating to the suitability of the qualification or unit or prior work experience for RPL

that was not part of the original submission will not be accepted as part of the appeal. The appeal should be made in writing to the Director of Qualifications who will either make a decision on the appeal or convene a panel to examine the evidence.

Appeals against a decision to reject a claim for RPL will use normal RSPH procedures as detailed in RSPH's *Appeals and Enquiries About Results* policy and procedures.

The role of the centre in RPL

The centre has a key role in requesting RPL for a qualification on behalf of its Learners, in submitting claims for achievement by RPL and in submitting any appeals that the centre feels are justified.

If the agreed process of RPL is via recognition of prior work experience, the centre will need to guide the Learner(s) through the process of compiling the portfolio of evidence based on the prior work experience and advise the Learner(s) on the suitability of evidence. The individuals who carry out this role must not also be involved in the assessment or internal verification of the portfolio of evidence. The centre will internally assess and verify the portfolio of evidence in the normal way for the unit but must make the External Verifier aware that the unit is being claimed via RPL.

The centre should note that RPL is a mechanism for claiming achievement towards a qualification. A centre may decide not to pursue RPL for achievement but to allow Learners with evidence of prior learning to proceed to assessment via a shortened programme of learning. The centre will need to balance the advantages of this for the Learner with the risk that the assessment may not result in the expected outcome for the Learner.

The role of RSPH in RPL

As the Awarding Organisation RSPH must ensure that all Learners who receive a specific qualification have met the requirements of the qualification. The key role of RSPH in granting RPL to Learners is in ensuring that the RPL route for achievement of a unit within a qualification provides a reliable indication of a Learner's knowledge, skills and understanding that is as valid and reliable as the RSPH assessment for that unit.

Applications for RPL will only be considered by staff who are competent to consider and make decisions about RPL. These staff would normally be the Education Manager with responsibility for the relevant qualification area.

Application forms

Centres should use the relevant form, available from the RSPH web-site, to submit applications for RPL.