

# Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy

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## 1. Introduction

This policy serves as a comprehensive set of guidelines for all approved VTCT centres offering VTCT, iTEC and Skillsfirst regulated qualifications. Its purpose is to provide approved centres with detailed information and guidance to ensure a transparent, fair, and consistent approach to the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). It is essential to acknowledge that this policy excludes end-point assessment (EPA).

## 2. Purpose and Definition

The definition of RPL is that this is a method of assessment that considers whether a learner can demonstrate that they can meet the assessment requirements for a unit / component of a qualification, by considering knowledge, understanding, or skills that a learner already possess and does not need to develop through a course of learning. It enables the recognition of achievement from a range of activities using any valid assessment methodology. The use of RPL is of significant value to learners provided that the assessment requirements of a given unit or qualification are met.

The term 'RPL' refers to the:

- (a) identification of any learning undertaken, and / or attainment, by a learner
  - (i) prior to that learner taking a qualification at your centre and
  - (ii) which is relevant to the knowledge, skills and understanding which will be assessed as part of that qualification and
- (b) evidence presented is recognition to confirm the learner has attainment at the right level and standard before the learner will be assessed, or that a qualification can be awarded.

Due to the nature of RPL it is essential evidence is:

- Valid
- Authentic
- Sufficient
- Current
- Reliable

It should be noted that RPL is an alternative route to achievement and not an easy option or shortcut. This policy does not cover end-point assessment (EPA). However, it is important to note that the RPL process must be of equal rigour to other assessment methods.

### 3. RPL Responsibilities

Compliance with this policy lies with each of the approved centres.

#### 3.1. Centres Responsibilities

It is the approved centre's responsibility to:

- have a policy in place which communicates how the centre will explore and implement RPL
- ensure that all staff involved in the management, assessment, and quality assurance of VTCT qualifications are fully aware of this policy and expectations regarding RPL
- ensure that all staff involved in the management, assessment, and quality assurance of VTCT qualifications are fully aware of the centres own RPL policy
- inform VTCT about any learner who wishes to use RPL as a method of assessment towards their intended qualification
- make sure the centre staff are trained in the use of RPL
- ensure staff undertaking the RPL mapping process are competent to make accurate decisions about RPL
- ensure RPL documentation has been completed to a competent standard to support RPL
- evaluate whether the learner's prior achievement fully or partially achieves the learning outcomes and assessment criteria
- ensure the evidence meets the demands of the learning outcomes and qualification
- ensure the evidence is valid, authentic, sufficient, current and relevant
- carry out the necessary due diligence and quality assurance arrangements to support the RPL process
- ensure the mapping documentation and supporting documentation is available for external monitoring activities
- make certificate claims following the normal certification process
- make learners aware of the opportunity to use RPL as part of the initial information, advice and guidance they receive
- inform learners RPL is an alternative route to achievement and not an easy option or shortcut
- inform learners RPL does not extend to end- point assessment (EPA)
- ensure learners are aware of any restrictions and that they will be required to submit evidence to support the RPL process
- have an effective appeals policy and procedure in place so that a learner can query any decision taken by the centre not to allow RPL
- inform the learner of the right to appeal

If the accountable person has any concerns or doubt regarding the learner's knowledge, understanding, skills, competence, or evidence proposed, RPL must not be applied.

#### 3.2. Learners Responsibilities

It is necessary for any learner to familiarise themselves with the centre's and VTCT's own RPL policy. Learners are obligated to provide suitable evidence promptly to substantiate the use of RPL. This evidence must be current and directly pertinent to the learning aims and assessment criteria under consideration, encompassing the requisite learning, knowledge, understanding, experience, skills, and achievements. Such adherence ensures the integrity and effectiveness of the RPL process within the context of their qualifications.

## 4. Applying PRL

RPL can demonstrate competence or achievement within a unit or qualification. Through the RPL process, evidence of a learner's previous achievement is assessed against the assessment criteria of a unit. Evidence used by learners must be current and valid and meet the assessment criteria of the qualification, and evidence must be reliable, whereby centres consistently arrive at equivalent assessment decisions. Evidence obtained through RPL must therefore meet the same rigorous quality criteria that other assessment methods must conform to. It remains the approved centres responsibility to ensure that evidence is evaluated thoroughly, and key considerations are given to validity, authenticity, sufficiency, currency, and reliability. Approved centres must ensure any decisions on the application of RPL are carried out by staff who are competent to consider and make decision about RPL.

Validity - The evidence needs to demonstrate that the assessment requirements have been met.

Currency - Particularly in RPL cases, the currency of evidence holds significant importance. It is essential to evaluate if the evidence aligns with current practice requirements. Evidence of currency may vary from sector to sector.

Authenticity - Authenticity entails determining whether the assessed evidence truly represents the work of the learner. For instance, the evidence might have been generated collaboratively as a team.

Sufficiency - There must be an ample amount of evidence to comprehensively fulfil the requirements outlined in the learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

Reliability - Evidence obtained through RPL should be such that an assessor would arrive at the same assessment decision, were the assessment to be repeated.

If a learner disagrees with the centre's decision to recognise prior learning, the learner can ask the centre to review its decision in accordance with the centre's Appeals Policy.

## 5. Process and Procedure

If an approved centre wishes to offer RPL to a particular learner. It must complete an RPL application and self-declaration form, please request these directly from our quality assurance department [qualityassurance@vtct.org.uk](mailto:qualityassurance@vtct.org.uk)

Following receipt of the form from VTCT it is advisable to carry out the entire process. This means that the nominated person should:

- Plan with the learner
- Make a formal assessment decision
- Feedback assessment decisions to the learner, confirming decisions and giving guidance on the available options
- Maintain appropriate records
- Ensure that learners are aware of their right to access the appeals process should they feel the assessment decision was unfair
- Ensure that all assessment criteria being claimed are covered and that records of assessment are maintained in the usual way. The process must be subject to the same quality assurance requirements as any other assessment method.

VTCT external quality assurers will be required to sample the evidence during routine external quality assurance activities. Centres are required to keep records of valid claims through RPL for 3 years. Failure to apply and complete the necessary process may result in sanctions being applied by VTCT inline with our malpractice and maladministration and sanctions policy.

### **5.1. Outcomes of RPL**

If any learner is unhappy with how a centre has dealt with their application or the outcome, and they have exhausted the centre's own policies they may submit a complaint to VTCT.

Document amendment history page

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v2		September 2017	Updated with new branding	Qualifications Administrator
v4		12/02/2018	Updated with new branding	Qualifications Manager
v5		30/10/2018	Additional information added to 3.2, 4 and 4.1.	Assessment Manager
v6		31/10/2018	Formatting amendment	Assessment Manager
v7		31/03/2019	Clarification to text	Assessment Manager
v8		17/10/2021	Update of job titles. Formatting amendments.	Head of Assessment
v9	Head of Standards	31/01/2023	Policy Integration	Quality Assurance Administrator
v10	Head of Standards	08/03/2024	Refinement of policy	Quality Assurance Supervisor

Document Review

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Head of Standards	Agreed

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