

2025

KLP 017 Recognition of Prior Learning Policy (RPL)



Group Horizon
LIGHTING UP YOUR FUTURE

Policies and Procedures

RPL Policy

(Recognition of Prior Learning)

Introduction

This policy sets out the principles and process for the use of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) to support learners in achieving qualifications, including apprenticeship standards where applicable. Group Horizon Ltd (GHL) will ensure that the process of assessment for RPL is subject to the same quality assurance and monitoring standards as any other form of assessment.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a method of assessment that considers whether learners can demonstrate that they meet the assessment requirements for a unit through knowledge, understanding, or skills they already possess, without needing to complete a formal course of learning (Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework Ofqual/08/3726).

Where apprenticeships are concerned, RPL must be considered at the start of the programme, in line with Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) rules, to adjust the duration and funding of the apprenticeship accordingly. However, RPL cannot be applied towards the End-Point Assessment (EPA) itself, as this must be completed independently by the End-Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO).

Definition of RPL

RPL is a method of assessment that uses evidence of a learner's previous work experience, learning, or achievements to demonstrate competence in, or achievement against, the learning outcomes within units of a qualification. It may also be referred to as:

- Recognition of Prior Achievement (RPA)
- Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)

The qualifications regulators in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland define RPL as:

a) Identification by an awarding organisation of any learning undertaken, and/or attainment, by a learner:

- Prior to enrolling on a qualification that the awarding organisation makes available or proposes to make available.
- That is relevant to the knowledge, skills, and understanding assessed as part of that qualification.

b) Recognition by an awarding organisation of that learning and/or attainment through amendments to the requirements a learner must meet before being assessed or awarded a qualification.

For apprenticeships, RPL should be considered at the start of the on-programme phase to tailor the learning journey appropriately. However, RPL cannot be used to exempt learners from mandatory components of an apprenticeship, including Gateway requirements or End-Point Assessment (EPA).

Type & Suitability of Evidence

Examples of the types of evidence that may be submitted for RPL assessment include:

- Workplace documents
- Witness testimonies
- Personal statements
- Professional discussion
- Assessor observation records
- Record of voluntary activities
- Certificates issued following an informal or formal course of learning (*detailed qualification specifications may be required for mapping purposes*).

All evidence submitted for RPL assessment must be:

- Valid – it must relate directly to the assessment criteria.
- Authentic – it must be the learner’s own work.
- Current – it should normally be no more than 24 months old, except where:
 - The industry or sector has rapid changes that require more recent evidence.
 - The learner can prove the evidence is still valid.
- Sufficient – it must fully meet the assessment criteria.

For apprenticeships, RPL must be carefully reviewed at the start of the programme to determine:

- Any reductions in the duration of the apprenticeship (following ESFA funding guidance).
- If the learner requires less on-programme training to meet the required knowledge, skills, and behaviours (KSBs).
- That End-Point Assessment (EPA) cannot be exempted through RPL.

RPL Process

The RPL process must be fair, transparent, and neither advantage nor disadvantage any learner. It includes the following 10 stages:

Stage 1: Initial Assessment

- The possibility of using RPL as an assessment method must be discussed with the learner at the start of the course or apprenticeship.
- For apprenticeships, an initial skills assessment will identify prior learning, which must be recorded and evidenced to determine eligibility for reduced training or adjusted funding.

Stage 2: Advice and Guidance

- The assessor should encourage the learner to identify prior learning that could be used as evidence.
- The assessor will determine whether the learner can present sufficient evidence to meet the criteria for RPL.

Stage 3: Assessment Planning

- The formal approach to gathering and presenting evidence is planned.
- The learner must be made familiar with standards and expectations.

Stage 4: Evidence Collection

- The assessor supports the learner in identifying appropriate evidence.

Stage 5: Evidence Mapping

- The learner, with assessor support, maps the evidence against the assessment criteria.
- This should be done progressively rather than left until the end of the process.

Stage 6: Formative Feedback

- The assessor reviews the evidence and provides feedback to the learner.

Stage 7: Assessment

- The learner must submit all required evidence within six months of starting the RPL process.
- The assessor checks the evidence for:
 - Validity
 - Authenticity
 - Currency
 - Sufficiency
- The assessor may ask additional questions to strengthen weaker areas of evidence.
- The RPL limit of 50% for an overall qualification must not be exceeded.

Stage 8: Assessment Decision

- The assessor reviews the evidence and makes an assessment decision within 10 working days.

Stage 9: Internal Verification

- Once the assessment decision is made, internal verification must take place.
- If workplace evidence is included, the internal verifier may contact employers to authenticate witness testimonies.
- Internal verification must be completed within 10 working days of the assessment decision.

Stage 10: External Quality Assurance (EQA)

- Once internal verification is completed, the assessment decision is available for external quality assurance checks.
 - External quality checks are normally completed within 10-20 working days of the internal verification decision.
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Internal Verification

At the start of a programme, the internal verifier must plan for learners intending to present RPL evidence. This includes:

- Recording RPL plans and schedules to ensure no activity is overlooked.
- Undertaking a range of sampling activities to review assessor performance.
- Observing assessors during assessment planning and feedback sessions with learners.
- Selecting a representative sample of RPL candidates for verification, ensuring different delivery modes and assessor decisions are covered.
- Sampling evidence across all learners where only a small number are following the RPL route.

The sample size for internal verification should be:

- 20% for experienced assessors.
- Up to 100% for less experienced assessors.

Assessment decisions must be made within 10 working days of evidence submission.

End-Point Assessment (EPA) Considerations

- RPL cannot be used to exempt learners from End-Point Assessment (EPA).
- Gateway requirements must still be met, and prior learning should not reduce the need for a learner to develop the required knowledge, skills, and behaviours (KSBs).
- Any adjustments to apprenticeship duration due to RPL must comply with ESFA funding rules and be fully documented in the training plan.