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Recognition of Prior Learning

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1. Aim

1.1. Cambridge Regional College (CRC) is committed to the principle that that prior learning is recognised, where appropriate, to avoid unnecessary duplication of assessment.

2. Principles

2.1. This policy applies to all qualifications and all sites of delivery, however, where learning is evidenced only through a national examination, the student is required to sit this examination, e.g. Qualifications such as GCSEs or A levels.

2.2. This policy aims to be open, transparent and clear in its purpose, scope and implementation.

2.3. CRC defines 'Recognition of Prior Learning' (RPL) as a method of assessment (leading to the award of credit) that considers whether a student can demonstrate that they can meet the assessment requirements through knowledge, understanding, qualification or skills they already possess and so do not need to develop these through a course of learning.

2.4. The following terms are also recognised for the purpose of recognition of prior learning

- Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)
- Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)
- Accreditation of Prior Achievement (APA)
- Accreditation of Prior Learning and Achievement (APLA)

2.5. RPL enables recognition of achievement from a range of activities using any appropriate assessment methodology. Provided that the assessment requirements of a given unit or qualification have been met, the use of RPL is acceptable for accrediting a unit, units or a whole qualification. Evidence of learning must meet the VARCS rule:

- Valid - The evidence needs to demonstrate that the assessment requirements have been met.
- Authentic - 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.
- Reliable - Evidence obtained through RPL should be such that an assessor would arrive at the same assessment decision, were the assessment to be repeated.
- Current - 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.
- Sufficient - There must be an ample amount of evidence to comprehensively fulfil the requirements outlined in the learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

2.6. RPL is a valid method of enabling individuals to claim credit for units or qualifications, irrespective of how their learning took place.

2.7. RPL applications should also consider, and where possible recognise, qualifications completed outside of the UK that are supported by a Statement of Comparability which evidences the comparable level of these in the UK education frameworks via a national recognition agency. The current national recognition agencies are ENIC and for Early Years qualifications, ECCTIS.

2.8. All RPL applications will adhere to the relevant Awarding Organisation's (AO) processes and regulations. CRC will seek advice from the AO before proceeding with an RPL claim.

2.9. RPL is a student-centred, voluntary process. The individual should be offered advice on the nature and range of evidence considered appropriate, to support a claim for credit through RPL, and be given guidance and support to make a claim.

2.10. The process of assessment for RPL is subject to the same quality assurance and monitoring standards as any other form of assessment. The award of success through RPL will not be distinguished from any other successes.

2.11. Assessment methods for RPL must be of equal rigour to other assessment methods, be fit for purpose and relate to the evidence of learning. Credit may be claimed for any unit through RPL unless the assessment requirements of the unit do not allow this, based on a rationale consistent with the aims and regulations of the framework.

2.12. The use and application of RPL is of particular value to students without formal qualifications, who are either in employment, preparing to enter, or returning to employment. It enables them to gain all or part of a qualification without having to undertake a formal learning programme.

2.13. As a part of the apprenticeship sign-up process, the assessor, apprentice, and employer will document prior skills or knowledge on the apprentice's delivery plan (formerly known as the commitment statement). The individual delivery plan will be adapted to take this into consideration.

2.14. RPL focuses on assessment and awarding of credit for prior learning which may count as evidence towards units or full qualifications.

2.15. Where units are assessed against assessment criteria or grading criteria, then all evidence must be evaluated using the stipulated criteria.

2.16. Most often RPL will be used for units or parts of a qualification. It is acceptable to claim for an entire qualification through RPL although this is not the norm.

3. Suitable process

3.1. Individuals carrying out RPL must:

- Be a designated staff member with relevant levels of expertise to undertake the process.
- Be guided by subject experts who are able to review and compare learning outcomes and evidence from a range of sources.
- Ensure that the process meets the awarding organisation requirements for APL/RPL.
- The process must be subject to the same quality assurance requirements as any other assessment method.
- The RPL assessment should be carried out as an entire process. This means that the assessor should:
    - **Stage 1** - Plan with the learner - discuss with the learner the evidence they wish to provide to claim RPL and decide whether the evidence is admissible. The learner should be offered advice on the nature and range of evidence considered appropriate to support RPL. This should be within 15 working days of the date of application for RPL.
    - **Stage 2** - Allow the learner to gather and present the evidence. This should be provided to the Centre within 10 working days of the conclusion of Stage 1.

- **Stage 3** - Make a formal assessment decision on the evidence provided and feedback on the assessment decision to the learner, confirming decisions and giving guidance on the available options (particularly in situations where the decision has been not to award credit). This should be done within 10 working days of the conclusion of Stage 2.
- **Stage 4** - Claim certificates. You can claim certificates once the quality assurance processes have been successfully completed using the standard procedures.

At all stages

- The assessor / tutor must ensure that all learning outcomes and assessment criteria being claimed are covered and that records of assessment are maintained in the usual way.
- All decisions should be transparent, rigorous, reliable and fair and accessible to all learners and the relevant AO.
- Ensure that learners are aware of their right to access the appeals process should they feel the assessment decision was unfair.

- Inform the applicant about the outcomes of process and be able to give a clear and precise plan of future learning and assessment requirements.

4. Suitable criteria

4.1. Evidence that is accepted as Recognition of Prior Learning:

- Students have successfully completed the assessment criteria for a whole or part of a unit within a qualification
- Students have evidence of recent prior study that meets assessment criteria of the current programme of study being undertaken in full
- RPL must be included in the appropriate sampling plan as an assessment method as appropriate and subject to internal quality assurance

4.2. Evidence that is not accepted as Recognition of Prior Learning:

- Similar criteria but at a lower level
- Prior learning that is considered out of date
- Prior learning that has not achieved a pass
- Prior learning that has not been assessed by a suitably qualified assessor

5. Awarding Organisations (AO)

- AO documentation will be checked prior to completion of any RPL application.
- If an AO has their own designated RPL procedure, this will be followed.
- If an AO has their own validity period for evidence that can be considered for RPL then this will be followed.
- Advice and guidance will be taken from the AO if there is any uncertainty as to the appropriateness of the RPL evidence/application.
- Any APL/RPL documentation will be made available for external moderation visits.
- If an AO requests that a certificate number is uploaded to their portal as evidence of RPL then a unique identifier taken from the certificate will be used.

6. Retention of assessment and quality assurance records

6.1. Assessment and IQA records are to be retained for quality, inspection and audit purposes as per the Assessment Policy and Internal Quality Assurance Policy.

7. Right to appeal

7.1. At any time during the RPL process students have the right to appeal as per the College Academic Appeals policy if they feel the RPL decision was unfair. Formal appeals must be submitted in writing (or by suitable alternative means), with appropriate evidence within the time period specified within the Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure.

Document history

Date	Issue number	Change/Comments	Date Approved	Approved by
01/07/2016	2	Minor Amendments; reference AO	26/7/2016	Director of Quality
14/03/2017	3	Updates made to include suitable and unsuitable criteria	14/3/2017	Director of Quality
20/07/2018	4	Updates made	20/7/2018	AP Quality improvement
12/02/2020	5	Updates made with reference to retention period and appeals policy	12/2/2020	Quality Assurance Manager
15/02/2021	6	Minor Amendments	15/2/2021	Quality Assurance Manager
28/07/2022	7	Inclusion of RPL for Apprenticeships (para. 2.12).	28/07/2022	Quality Assurance Manager
02/05/2023	8	Addition of timeline to 3.1.5	02/05/2023	Quality Assurance Manager
05/08/2024	9	Updated paragraph 2.5 evidence must meet VARCS	05/08/2024	Director of Quality
22/11/2024	10	Equality Impact Assessment Completed		EIA Working Group
18/06/2025	11	Additional bullet point added to section 5 stating that a unique identifier taken from the certificate will be used as RPL evidence.	18/06/2025	Quality Assurance Manager
04/08/2026	12	Annual Review - minor formatting updates		Quality Assurance Manager

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