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Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Credit Transfer Policy and Procedures

Version history

Version	Date	Section(s)	Change(s) made	Location
4.0	05/22	2. Scope	Qualifications Wales added. End-point assessments added.	Secure Portal
4.0	05/22	3. Regulatory Authorities	Qualifications Wales added.	
4.0	05/22	Whole document	“Centre” replaced with “provider” throughout.	
4.0	05/22	Whole document	Lead Quality Reviewer (LQR) replaced with Quality and Standards Advisor (QASA) throughout.	
4.0	05/22	6. Policy. Part B stage 3, Appendix 1	Clarification that RPL requests must come through the Secure Portal.	
4.0	05/22	6. Policy – restrictions	Clarification added that RPL cannot be accepted from other methods of assessment, where a qualification, unit or component is subject to external assessment.	

1. Purpose

Open Awards seeks to enable learners to avoid the duplication of learning and assessment where the learner can provide evidence that they have already achieved the necessary knowledge, understanding and/or skills.

This policy outlines how Open Awards accepts the use of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Credit Transfer to recognise prior learning to allow learners to achieve qualifications in the most efficient way. **References to Credit Transfer throughout this document only apply to Access to HE.**

The policy replaces all previous Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Credit Transfer policies as from the operative date.

2. Scope

This document is applicable for the following Open Awards products:

Ofqual regulated qualifications and units	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Qualifications Wales regulated qualifications and units	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Access to HE Diplomas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
End-point assessments	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Quality Endorsed Courses	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Badge of Excellence	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

3. Regulatory Authorities

The relevant regulatory authorities are Ofqual, Qualifications Wales and Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). Every attempt has been made to ensure that the provisions of this document are consistent with the requirements of the regulatory authorities.

Where the requirements of a regulatory authority change, or where inadvertently these procedures conflict with those of the regulatory authority, the latter shall apply. Where the requirements of the regulatory authority are amended and require changes to this document, such changes will be made as soon as practicable and Open Awards will inform providers accordingly.

4. Audience

This document is for use by the following:

- Approved provider staff
 - tutor/assessors
 - internal quality assurers
 - quality manager
 - Access to HE coordinators
- Learners registered on Open Awards approved qualifications and units
- Open Awards
 - staff
 - Access to HE moderators
 - external quality assurers

5. Definitions

<p>Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)</p>	<p>Ofqual defines RPL as the</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) identification by an awarding organisation of any learning undertaken, and/or attainment, by a Learner <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) prior to that Learner taking a qualification which the awarding organisation makes available or proposes to make available, and b) which is relevant to the knowledge, skills and understanding which will be assessed as part of that qualification, and 2) 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. <p>QAA defines RPL as: The generic term for processes used to recognise learning achieved outside the formal course of learning designed to support student achievement of a named Diploma. It includes recognition of both experiential and certificated learning.</p>
<p>Credit Transfer (Access to HE only)</p>	<p>The recognition of credits awarded by other Access Validating Agencies provided these have been awarded in accordance with the terms of the Access to HE credit framework.</p> <p>Please note: references to Credit Transfer relate only to Access to HE.</p>

6. Policy

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is a process by which learners are recognised for knowledge, understanding or skills they have already achieved.

For Access to HE provision, learners are able to claim Credit Transfer whereby Access to HE units they have previously achieved may count towards their Access to HE Diploma.

RPL is used to recognise a learner's achievement outside the rules of combination for a qualification where this achievement is deemed to be equivalent to the demands of the unit(s) against which it is being considered.

Open Awards' approach to RPL encompasses learning that is either supported by formal certificated achievement or informal, non-certificated learning or experience.

In order to be considered eligible for RPL, the learner will need to show that the knowledge, understanding or skills they already have means that they do not need to repeat units or complete additional assessment activity. The learner may also need 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 practical tasks where there may be no tangible evidence available.

Evidence obtained through RPL must meet the same rigorous quality criteria to which other assessment methods must conform. Units achieved through calculated assessment grades under the Extraordinary Regulatory Framework in 2019-20 are eligible to be used for RPL.

Upon receipt of evidence from the learner, the provider is responsible for mapping the evidence against the assessment criteria to decide whether the evidence is:

- valid and current;
- reliable;
- authentic; and
- sufficient.

The provider must be satisfied that the application for RPL meets the criteria and make a recommendation to Open Awards through an RPL Request Form. The provider must ensure that all learning outcomes and assessment criteria of the unit(s) for which RPL is being requested are met by mapping prior learning evidence against them.

RPL requests should be submitted as soon as the learner has started the course and no later than six weeks from their start date. Requests should be submitted via the Secure Portal and will be considered by the Quality and Standards Advisor (QASA) allocated to the provider within five working days of receipt of a completed form supported by relevant evidence. All RPL and Credit Transfer requests for Access to HE learners will be considered within five working days and reported to the Access to HE Committee at the next scheduled meeting.

Where learner evidence is not sufficient to cover all learning outcome for which RPL is being requested, additional assessment methods should be employed to generate the sufficient evidence required to make a safe assessment decision. NB – This does not apply to Access for HE – see restrictions below.

Providers must continue to deliver the unit to the learner until receiving confirmation that the RPL request has been approved.

Restrictions

RPL cannot be claimed for End-point assessments.

RPL can normally be claimed for a maximum of 50% of the outcomes for a qualification.

For “nested” qualifications (qualifications of different sizes within the same suite) a maximum of 70% of the qualification outcomes can be subject to RPL¹. At least 30% should be obtained through new learning at the same level of the qualification.

Open Awards reserves the right to exclude the use of RPL in the following instances:

- Where the qualification provides a licence to practice
- Where specific health and safety requirements must be adhered to
- Where there is a requirement for the learner to be assessed through work placements.

Where a qualification, unit or component is subject to external assessment, RPL cannot be accepted from other methods of assessment.

Access to HE providers must be aware of the additional RPL criteria for Access to HE learners:

- RPL can only be applied to full Access to HE units
- Where previous learning has already been certificated, no credit is awarded, but students are exempted from relevant credit requirements in relation to the Access to HE Diploma
- RPL claimed for experiential (non-certificated) achievement is awarded with credit but does not carry a grade. The learner is exempted from achieving the units for which equivalent achievement has already been demonstrated
- **Learners are expected to have 45 graded Level 3 academic units. If learners are requesting RPL for any of these units, they will not achieve**

¹ For example, Level 1 Award and Level 1 Certificate in Skills for Further Learning and Employment (RQF). Providers must ensure that the rules of combination for the larger qualification are met as a result of RPL from the smaller qualification. If rules of combination are not met, the learner will not achieve the full qualification, regardless of the number of credits awarded. Where the learner's achieved units are no longer in use, the provider must claim RPL against the new version of the unit or the closest equivalent.

the full grade profile and it may be in the learner's best interest to retake the whole course. In such cases the learner must be advised to consult with the university choices before proceeding. If providers are unsure of the options available for learners, they should contact their QASA to discuss.

Access to HE providers must be aware of Credit Transfer criteria for Access to HE learners:

- The credits being transferred must be appropriate to the resulting Diploma title and meet the rules of combination for the Diploma being studied.
- All units, levels, and grades associated with the credit being transferred will be recorded and appear on the resulting unit achievement certificate when the Diploma is awarded. It will be made clear on the certificate that the credit has been transferred.
- The transfer of credit should not be used as an opportunity to improve individual grades.
- Transferred credits must have been achieved five years or less prior to the date of the award of the Diploma.

7. Responsibility of providers

The provider must have in place an RPL policy which clearly identifies the responsibilities of the learner, the assessor and other key staff involved in the internal quality assurance of Open Awards qualification and units. The provider's RPL policy must be made available to provider staff and learners and align with the Open Awards policy.

A learner's previous achievements must be evaluated upon registration and where applicable, access to RPL and further support and guidance be provided for the learner. The provider must make Access to HE learners aware of the restrictions outline above when considering the use of RPL and Credit Transfer.

Providers must take responsibility for any RPL applications for their learners. Formal requests for RPL must be made at the point of learner registration and follow Open Awards procedures. Any RPL requests made to Open Awards must be submitted with the assurance that the evidence supporting the request is:

- Valid and current:* Evidence must clearly demonstrate that the demands of the learning outcome have been met
To ensure that the evidence is up to date, Open Awards normally expects evidence to be from within the last three years.
- Authentic:* Consideration needs to be given as to whether the evidence being examined is the learner's work.
Evidence should clearly identify the achievement of the individual learner. Evidence that may be the result of the work of a team, would only be appropriate where teamwork is being assessed.

Sufficient: There must be enough evidence to fully meet the requirements of the learning outcome(s) 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).

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.

Providers must retain a copy of all RPL requests for at least three years from the end of the academic year to which they relate. Records must be stored securely along with evidence of assessment and internal quality assurance decisions and will need to be made available for compliance reviews.

8. Monitoring and Review

Open Awards will review this policy bi-annually as part of its self-evaluation arrangements and revise it as and when necessary, in response to customer and learner feedback, changes in its practices, advice from the regulatory authorities or external agencies or changes in legislation.

In addition, this policy may be updated in light of operational feedback to ensure our arrangements for managing RPL remain effective.

9. Related documents

This policy should also be read in conjunction with the following Open Awards documents:

- Provider Agreement
- Provider Handbook
- Access to HE Provider Handbook
- Enquiries, Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedures
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy and Procedures

10. Regulatory Requirements

The Recognition of Prior Learning policy is designed to fulfil the requirements of our Regulators, specifically:

Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition

- C2 Arrangements with Centres
- G9 Delivering the assessment

- H1 Marking the assessment
- H2 Moderation where an assessment is marked by a Centre
- H5 Results of a qualification must be based on sufficient evidence

QAA Access to Higher Education Diploma specification 2018

Credit Accumulation

C8, C9, C10

Credit Transfer

C11, C12, C13

Recognition of Prior Learning

C14, C15, C16, C17, C18, C18, C20

<i>Originator:</i>	<i>Director of Quality and Standards</i>
<i>Date of latest review:</i>	<i>June 2022</i>
<i>Date of last approval:</i>	<i>June 2022</i>
<i>Approved by:</i>	<i>Management Team</i>
<i>Review interval:</i>	<i>2 years</i>
<i>Next review due by:</i>	<i>June 2024</i>

Part B: Procedures for Recognition of Prior Learning

Stages of the process

Open Awards has defined six stages in the process for recognition of prior learning and credit transfer:



Stage 1: Information, advice and guidance



Learners should be made aware of the opportunity to use RPL as part of the initial information, advice and guidance they receive.

The learner must take responsibility for making the decision about whether to apply for RPL based on appropriate support from the provider. The learner must be able to supply the relevant evidence to support their RPL claim.

Stage 2: Pre-assessment



Learners who decide to use RPL must be fully informed of the process and have suitable support from their provider to make a viable claim and make decisions about evidence collection and presentation for assessment.

The provider will need to support the learner in:

- Collecting evidence for assessment
- Developing an assessment plan
- Presenting their evidence for assessment.

The evidence required for RPL will depend on the purpose, learning outcomes and assessment criteria for the relevant qualification/component(s).

It is the provider's responsibility to inform Open Awards about any learner who wishes to use RPL as a method of assessment towards their intended qualification **within six weeks** of the learner's start date.

The provider also has a responsibility to inform Open Awards at the point of

registration about any learner who has already achieved units that have previously been approved for RPL (including exemptions, equivalents, and credit transfer).

Stage 3: Assessment of evidence



The learner's RPL evidence must be formally assessed by the provider against the relevant learning outcomes and assessment criteria of the unit(s) being considered for RPL. This may include original certificates.

A tutor/assessor at the provider must review all evidence presented and ensure that the learner's prior achievement meets the unit's learning outcomes and assessment criteria, and where any gaps arise, how they have been addressed. **NB: RPL for Access to HE can only apply to the full unit, so no gaps can be addressed.** The provider is responsible for ensuring that the evidence supporting the RPL request is:

- Valid and current:* Evidence must clearly demonstrate that the demands of the learning outcome have been met
To ensure that the evidence is up to date, Open Awards normally expects evidence to be from within the last three years.
- Authentic:* Consideration needs to be given as to whether the evidence being examined is the learner's work.
Evidence should clearly identify the achievement of the individual learner. Evidence that may be the result of the work of a team would only be appropriate where teamwork is being assessed.
- Sufficient:* There must be enough evidence to fully meet the requirements of the learning outcome(s) 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).
- 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.

RPL Request Forms (supported by mapping evidence) must be submitted via the Secure Portal as soon as the learner is registered, but **no later than six weeks** after their start date.

Open Awards will review the completed form supported by mapping evidence and normally make a decision regarding the RPL request **within five working days** of receipt. Where additional evidence is required to review an RPL request, a decision

will be made within five working days of receipt of all necessary information. Decisions will be confirmed in writing by the QASA allocated to the provider.

For non-Access courses, where learner evidence is not sufficient to cover all learning outcomes for which RPL is being requested, additional assessment methods should be employed to generate the sufficient evidence required to make a safe assessment decision.

Stage 4: Feedback



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

Where RPL evidence partially meets the need of a unit/ component, the learner may be advised that they will need to complete additional assessments to generate sufficient evidence on which to base a safe assessment decision.

Stage 5: Awarding credit



The procedure is the same as for other forms of competence-based assessment. The achievement is recorded in the learner record and claims are made through the usual Open Awards' certification process detailed within the Provider Handbook.

For Access to HE Diplomas, achievement by RPL must be recorded as such in the Markbook. For further information, please refer to the Access to HE Provider Handbook.

After certification, the provider must securely store all assessment and internal quality assurance records including RPL records and **retain for three years** from the end of the academic year to which it relates.

Stage 6: Appeal



If learners wish to appeal against a decision made, they should follow the Open

Awards' approved provider standard appeals process.

Appendix 1: Recognition for Prior Learning (RPL) Request Form



Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is a process by which learners are recognised for knowledge, understanding or skills they have already achieved. All requests must be considered by Open Awards for approval. **The request form MUST be completed as soon as possible and in any event by no later than six weeks after the learner has started the course. Forms must be accompanied by appropriate supporting evidence.**

Provider Name		Course run ID		Qualification	
Learner Name		Learner ID		Learner DoB	

RPL request against previous unit achievement

To be completed for learners evidencing achievement through previously completed qualifications or units.

Units for which RPL is being requested				Previously achieved units against which RPL is being requested					Evidence seen (e.g., certificates, unit transcripts)	Evidence mapped
Unit Title	Unit Code	Unit Level	Graded unit?	Unit Title	Unit Code	Unit Level	Date awarded	Awarded by		
			Yes / No						Yes / No	
			Yes / No						Yes / No	
<i>Add additional rows as required</i>			Yes / No						Yes / No	

RPL request against previous experience

To be completed for learners evidencing achievement through previous experiential learning (i.e. not qualification based)

NEW Units for which RPL is being claimed				EXISTING experience against which RPL is being claimed	Evidence seen (e.g., employer statements, essays, projects)	Evidence mapped
Unit Title	Unit Code	Unit Level	Graded unit?			
			Yes / No			Yes / No
			Yes / No			Yes / No
<i>Add additional rows as required</i>			Yes / No			Yes / No

Provider declaration

I confirm that:

	Please tick
The evidence presented covers all assessment criteria for the unit(s) indicated and the unit(s) should be awarded through RPL.	
An evidence mapping document has been submitted to Open Awards along with this request.	
Rules of combination for the qualification will be met on successful completion of the course.	
No more than 50% of the qualification achievement will be achieved through RPL/ 70% for nested qualifications.	
All evidence of prior learning considered in making this request has been retained by the provider.	
All evidence of prior learning will be made available for Open Awards to review at quality assurance and/or moderation visits.	
I am authorised by the provider to submit this request for RPL.	

Name		Email		Telephone	
Signature		Role		Date	

**Completed forms must be uploaded to the Secure Portal
for consideration by an Open Awards Quality and Standards Advisor within five working days.
Decisions will be advised in writing.**

Please retain a copy of this form for at least three years from the end of the academic year to which it relates.

All information provided on this form will be held securely on our database and only used for the purposes provided. Full details on how we use and protect your data are available in our [Privacy Notice](#).

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