

## Skills4Stem Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

### Definition

The Regulatory Arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) provides the following definition of RPL and this definition is fully supported by the CQFW (Wales):

*Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is 'a method of assessment that considers whether a learner can demonstrate that they can meet the assessment requirements for a unit through knowledge, understanding or skills that they already possess and do not need to develop through a course of learning'.*

A similar definition is provided by The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework:

*The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is the process for recognising learning that has its source in experience and/or previous formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts. This includes knowledge and skills gained within school, college and university and outside formal learning situations such as through life and work experiences.*

In the context of the QCF, the definition of RPL is quite specific and relates to assessment leading to the award of credit. Assessment for RPL is conducted against the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of a unit and is subject to exactly the same internal and external quality assurance requirements as any other kind of assessment within the QCF.

The RPL process must be agreed by Skills4Stem and must be claimed by the learner as part of a qualification. Skills4Stem is responsible for assessment and claiming credit. There is no difference between achievement of the required standards by RPL and achievement through a formal programme of learning.

### Process

The RPL process should enable the learner to record their knowledge, understanding and skills acquired from their work experiences and training. Learners can do this using their CPD log. Where appropriate this can be used to claim credit for their achievements. This process can give them either a part or full qualification irrespective of how their skills and knowledge were learnt.

There are two contexts of RPL; one is where a portfolio of evidence is put together by the learner showing the prior learning undertaken – the learner would then need to complete the ILM assessments in order to gain the qualification, the second is where the learner has evidence of their learning which also shows they have completed an assessment (non-ILM) which can be 100% mapped to the ILM assessment criteria. This piece of assessment would have been assessed and internally quality assured by Skills4Stem.

The following stages apply to Skills4Stem learners:

### **Stage 1 – Awareness, information and guidance**

Ahead of enrolling a potential learner, the possibility that they may be able to claim credit for some of their previous learning should be raised with them. If the learner is interested in this, they will need to know the:

- Process of claiming achievement by using RPL
- Sources of support and guidance available to them
- Timelines, appeals processes and any fees involved

Skills4Stem will provide this information direct to the learner.

### **Stage 2 – Pre-assessment; gathering evidence and giving information.**

At this stage the learner will carry out the process of collecting evidence against the requirements of the relevant unit(s). In some cases the development of an assessment plan and tracking document or similar may be required, to support the learner through the process. The evidence gathered will need to meet the standards of the unit, or part of unit, that the evidence is being used for.

### **Stage 3 – Assessment/documentation of evidence**

Assessment as part of RPL is a structured process for gathering and reviewing evidence and making judgments about a learners' prior learning and experience in relation to unit standards. The assessor may be looking at work experience records, validated by managers; previous portfolios of evidence put together by the learner or essays and reports validated as being the learner's own unaided work. Assessment must be valid and reliable to ensure the integrity of the award of credit and, as above, the evidence gathered needs to meet the standards of the unit, or part of unit, that the evidence is being used for. The assessment process will be subject to the usual quality assurance procedures of Skills4Stem and ILM, for example internal standardisation and internal verification as well. Evidence gathered through RPL should be clearly referenced and sign posted to aid internal assessment and internal and external verification.

### **Stage 4 – Claiming certification**

Once the internal and external quality assurance procedures have been successfully completed, certification claims can be made by Skills4Stem to ILM. Assessment and internal verification records, along with any additional RPL records completed, should be retained for the standard three year period following certification.

The assessor must ensure that all learning outcomes and assessment criteria being claimed for each unit are achieved and that the records of assessment are maintained in the usual way.

### **Stage 5 – Appeal**

As with any assessment decision, if a learner wishes to appeal against a decision made about their assessment they need to follow the Skills4Stem Appeals and Results Policy.

## **Outcomes of RPL**

If individuals can produce relevant evidence that meets learning outcome requirements then recognition can be given for their existing knowledge, understanding or skills.

If an individual can meet all the learning outcomes and assessment criteria in a unit, then they can claim credit for that unit solely on the basis of their RPL achievement.

If however, evidence from RPL is only sufficient to cover one or more learning outcomes, or to partly meet the need of a learning outcome then additional work must be undertaken by the learner. All assessment criteria must be met in order for an assessment decision to be reached.

This is recognised as good practice by all the concerned regulators and Ofqual has a statement which reinforces this:

*Learners are unlikely to have all the evidence they need to achieve a full unit and may need to produce additional evidence. Evidence used for RPL is not time-limited but assessors must determine whether it is valid and authentic. RPL may be used in conjunction with other assessment methods such as examination of recent products, professional discussion or observation to assess current performance.*

Since evidence from RPL is similar to that derived via any other acceptable assessment method, where the standard of a unit is met by evidence obtained from, or partly from RPL, credit can be claimed.