

General Business Documents

GQA 24

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy and Guidance for Centres



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Purpose

GQA recognises that learners gain knowledge and skills acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts. Formal learning is learning certificated by a recognised Awarding Organisation or professional body; Non-formal learning includes learning such as employer's in-house training courses, which may or may not be assessed and/or certificated; finally, Informal learning is learning based on experience from a variety of environments which is not formally assessed.

This policy aims to give clarification and guidance to Candidates, Centres and other stakeholders on GQA's approach to the use of RPL as an assessment method. This assessment method is used to make use of a learner's achievements to prove competence within a unit or units. It is highly unlikely that a full qualification can be met using RPL as it would be unusual for a learner to be able to offer prior achievement that completely matches every aspect of a qualification's assessment requirements.

The recognition of prior learning may be used as evidence against the assessment criteria within complete or partial GQA Units. Where evidence of prior learning only partially meets the evidence requirements of a Unit, other methods of assessment should be used to complete the outstanding requirements-as with all evidence types the Assessor must be occupationally competent to make the decision.

Evidence to support prior learning assessment decisions must be valid, reliable and of equal rigour to the standard assessment of the Unit concerned. This means that the evidence should broadly match the evidence requirements specified in the Unit and reflect the level and credit value attached to the Unit.

** The use of RPL has been developed over time which has led to the use of a number of terms to describe the process.*

Among the most common are:

- *Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)*
- *Accreditation of Prior Achievement (APA)*
- *Accreditation of Prior Learning and Achievement (APLA).*

These terms broadly describe the same process. GQA Qualifications uses the term Recognition of Prior Learning

Guidance for Centres

All evidence must be evaluated/assessed using the learning outcomes and assessment criteria from the unit or units being claimed. In assessing a unit using RPL, the Assessor must be satisfied that the evidence produced by the learner meets the assessment standard established by the learning outcome and its related assessment criteria. Centres must have personnel with appropriate expertise and knowledge to facilitate this and make decisions about RPL. Evidence used for RPL will be subject to internal and external quality assurance procedures as all other assessment methods.

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 assessment 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 unit(s) and the evidence gathered needs to meet the standards of the unit, or part of unit, that the evidence is being used for.

Evidence to support prior learning decisions needs to ensure the currency of the learner's knowledge, skills and achievement within the context of the Unit(s) being assessed. QQA does not set a general time limit for the currency of evidence of prior learning or experience. Supplementary questioning may be undertaken by an occupationally competent Assessor in order to ascertain the currency of a learner's prior learning or experience

Centres wishing to carry out RPL must ensure that:

- Identification of any achievement through RPL is prior to learners taking a qualification
- It is relevant to the learner's knowledge, skills and understanding which will be assessed as part of a qualification
- Learners are registered as soon as they formally start to gather evidence
- Records of assessment against prior learning are maintained
- Certification claims are made according to normal procedures
- All relevant evidence is assessed before assessment decisions are confirmed
- There are designated personnel with the appropriate expertise to support and assure the RPL process
- Internal quality assurance measures are applied with the same rigour as other assessment methods and decisions

Appeals Procedure

As with any assessment decision on procedural grounds, if a learner wishes to appeal against a decision made about their assessment they need to follow the standard centre policy and procedures and then GQA's Appeals procedure.