

Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

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1. Background and Purpose

LCK Academy ('the Academy' or 'LCKA') is committed to widening access and participation to higher education, especially amongst members of the community who are disadvantaged or under-represented. The Academy acknowledges that many of the people we aim to support have pre-existing knowledge or experience which enables them to succeed in higher education, rather than formal qualifications. Other students may have attained qualifications or partial qualifications in other institutions, which are equivalent to the qualifications being offered at the Academy.

Students who possess relevant prior knowledge or experience may be able to enter a course without formal qualifications. Their prior knowledge or qualifications may also be submitted as evidence of achievement in place of certain parts of the course they wish to join. Students would not need to attend classes or submit assessments for parts of the course if they can demonstrate that they have equivalent prior learning. This policy sets down the rationale, methodology and processes for awarding recognition of prior learning (RPL).

2. Aims and Objectives

RPL aims to provide equitable and precise acknowledgement of a wide range of learning and accomplishments by ensuring:

- RPL is valid, current, reliable, authentic, and sufficient.
- Proper documentation of RPL processes, including certified learning and experiential learning.
- The maintenance of clear records of where learning outcomes have been met by either certified or experiential learning.
- Applications for RPL are considered by staff who are competent to make decisions about RPL.
- Previous certified achievements used for RPL align with the assessment criteria of the relevant learning outcomes.
- Assessed evidence from certified learning is the same level of education if it is being used for RPL purposes.

3. Application

The Academy acknowledges the UK national frameworks, including those in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. This policy is also applicable to qualifications under the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF).

This policy refers to prior knowledge acquired via accredited courses that do not fall under the specified curriculum of study. Additionally, it also refers to experience obtained, such as a period of employment during which the student may demonstrate adequate learning similar to that earned by completing a certain degree of study. Generally, a minimum duration of two years would be necessary for RPL-eligible work experience to be considered. The Academy may, under exceptional circumstances, take one year of work experience in place of a relevant coursework evaluation if said experience is deemed equivalent.

Students can only apply for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for parts of a qualification that have been assessed internally. This includes qualifications with themes or topics set by external sources that are also internally assessed. RPL applications for external assessment, set exams, or set assignments are not accepted.

RPL cannot be utilised to demonstrate achievement for a full qualification. This would be referred to as an exemption. If the assessment criteria for a particular unit or qualification have been fulfilled, RPL may be applied to accredit a unit, units, or entry requirements to a programme, where applicable.

4. Definitions of RPL

Learners qualify for recognition of prior learning (RPL) when they can provide evidence that they possess the necessary knowledge, understanding, or skills to fulfil the assessment criteria for a unit without having to enrol in an additional course of study. It is widely recognised as an assessment method for qualifications regulated at a national level. RPL comprises the following two subsets:

4.1. Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)

This is the process for applicants to obtain recognition of prior learning they have acquired through experience, such as professional or voluntary work, and/or self-directed study.

4.2. Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL)

This is the process by which an applicant seeks formal recognition of prior learning from qualifications that are not recognised under the proposed qualification's combination guidelines.

The following abbreviations are commonly used to refer to the set of terms described here as RPL:

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

5. Pearson BTEC RPL

A Pearson-certified Higher Education award cannot be utilised as prior learning to contribute towards the attainment of another Pearson higher education award of the same level. An award is defined as a completed qualification such as a Higher National Certificate or Higher National Diploma. Individual units do not qualify as an award and can be used for RPL.

Where higher education awards have been certified by another awarding body under Licence from Pearson, the Academy can assess on a case-by-case basis whether Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is applicable.

Where students wish to top-up from a Level 4 HN programme on the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) to a Level 5 HN programme on the RQF framework, units can be used for RPL but the Academy must ensure that additional tasks can be set to ensure that Learning Outcomes not achieved can meet assessment criteria.

When RPL is utilised to assess the fulfilment of learning outcomes for a Pearson Higher National award, the highest grade attainable for that unit will be a Pass if the RPL has been completed through experiential learning. If RPL is conducted through the evaluation of certified learning, centres must provide clear evidence of how RPL can fulfil the Merit or Distinction criteria for all learning outcomes.

RPL processes should not be used for any more than 50% of the total credit value of a Higher National award. The Assessment Board must ratify and document all RPL decisions, and the evidence supporting these choices should be maintained and accessible to Pearson-appointed External Examiners.

The Academy shall ensure that awarding organisations, such as Pearson or any of its awarding organisation partners, are kept informed in instances where RPL has been conducted. Students will be duly registered once the collection of evidence commences. Like the management of claims and other units/qualifications and certifications, assessment records will be preserved in accordance with standard operating procedures. All relevant evidence will be evaluated prior to the confirmation of assessment decisions.

6. Responsibilities

The Head of Quality is responsible for ensuring the quality of the RPL process and, in collaboration with Heads of Programme and Internal Verifiers, assists RPL claimants while maintaining proper records.

7. RPL for Unit Exemption

The RPL procedure is voluntary, and learner centred. Students seeking credit through RPL will receive guidance and support in understanding the types of evidence required for their claim. They will also be provided with advice on how to effectively make their claim.

The assessment process for RPL adheres to the same quality assurance and monitoring standards as any other form of assessment. Credit awarded through RPL will be treated the same as any other credits awarded.

Assessment methods for RPL are just as rigorous as other assessment methods. They need to be appropriate and relevant to the evidence of learning. Credit can be obtained for any unit through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) unless the assessment requirements of the unit disallow this. The Academy will only request credit for a unit through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) with the approval of a relevant awarding organisation.

A student is limited to claiming a **maximum of 50% of an award**, which is equivalent to half of the total credits required for all the units.

RPL is valuable for students who are transferring between different learning programmes and have relevant learning experience but do not have the necessary credits or certificates. This is provided to accommodate students who are transferring from one recognised awarding body to another.

If students wish to transfer their learning from one recognised awarding body to another, the Academy will conduct a mapping exercise to ensure that the learning outcomes of a specific unit within a particular framework align with the learning outcomes of the other framework. It is important to verify with the appropriate awarding organisation whether a qualification obtained under one framework will be considered sufficient to exempt a student from obtaining a qualification under another framework.

All evidence is evaluated using the specified criteria when units are assessed against assessment or grading criteria. When evaluating a unit using RPL, the assessor needs to ensure that the evidence provided by the student meets the assessment standard set by the learning outcome and its associated assessment criteria.

The evidence of current knowledge, understanding, and skills will differ depending on the sector. The outcome claimed will be influenced by factors such as the extent of experience and technological changes. If there is any uncertainty regarding the validity of the evidence, the assessor will utilise interview questions to assess the individual's comprehension and proficiency. It is important to note that the assessment strategy for each qualification will be strictly followed.

RPL undergoes Standards Verification as part of the annual Pearson Quality Assurance mechanism and other quality audits conducted both internally and by external bodies.

8. Course Entry Requirements

Applicants for any of the Academy's programmes may have the option to utilise Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) to fulfil the necessary entry criteria. When work experience is considered, the Head of Higher Education may ask for proof of employment such as reference letters, payslips, or other relevant documents. If you choose to use formal certification from equivalent programmes of study for RPL, a member of the academic interview team must review and verify the original documents of certification.

The academic interview team member is responsible for conducting interviews with applicants who have submitted RPL to meet the entry requirements. During the interview, we will assess the validity of the applicant's experience and/or certification in relation to meeting the entry requirements of their desired programme of study. The applicant interview form will document the applicant's qualifications and suitability for the desired programme prior to acceptance.

9. RPL Process

9.1.Stage 1: Preparation

- Senior faculty members assess the credibility of evidence provided by students seeking RPL.
- Students are informed about the option of using RPL to claim units for some of their past learning.

9.2.Stage 2: Evidence of RPL

An assessment plan must be provided, which includes all RPL the student wishes to claim for mapped against the standards of the relevant unit or parts of a unit. Evidence that may be considered as RPL include the following:

- Certificates from other awarding bodies
- Non-certificated education or learning
- Paid work experience supported by references from employers
- Community or voluntary work experience by references from employers
- Academic work provided by the student such as previous essays
- The Assessor may create new assignment briefs or tasks to fill any gaps in the learner's work
- The Assessor may ask questions or ask a learner to show them skills, to check that their knowledge, understanding, and skills are current.

9.3.Stage 3: Assessment of RPL

- Evaluate all evidence based on the learning outcomes and assessment criteria for the qualification or unit being claimed. When assessing a unit using RPL, the Assessor must be satisfied that the learner's evidence meets all the learning outcomes and assessment criteria.
- If there are gaps in the learner's work during RPL, additional assessment methods should be employed to gather sufficient evidence for awarding the learning outcome of the entire unit.
- Ensure assessment records related to prior learning are maintained and readily accessible for verification upon request.
- Prior to commencing monitoring activities, the Head of Higher Education notifies the External Examiner of the RPL application.

9.4.Stage 4: Outcomes of RPL

- It is critical to provide feedback to a learner after evaluating their evidence and reaching an assessment decision. This feedback should detail the assessment decision as well as the learner's available options if the unit or qualification is not awarded.
- You should verify that the student is aware of the appeals process if they are not satisfied with the assessment result. A complaint may be lodged by the student in accordance with the Academy Complaints and Appeals Policy.

9.5.Stage 5: Appeals

If a student wishes to challenge an admission decision made on their assessment, they must follow the Appeals Process outlined in the Admissions Policy.