

Title of Policy: Recognition of Prior Learning

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Policy Statement

This policy is a guidance to the principles applied to the recognition of prior learning at Barnet Southgate College and the processes used to apply these principles.



Barnet and Southgate College Recognition of Prior Learning Policy (RPL)

Introduction

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

RPL is not the same as Exemption or Equivalence¹. Arrangements for Exemption and/or Equivalence will be stipulated by the Awarding Body, and will be identified in their regulations.

RPL enables recognition of achievement from a range of activities using any appropriate assessment methodology. Provided that the assessment requirements of the specified unit or qualification have been met, the use of RPL is acceptable for accrediting a unit, parts of units or a whole qualification.

Policy

1. Evidence of learning should be valid, reliable, sufficient, and authenticated to meet the assessment requirements as specified by the Awarding Body. Evidence should also be current and this should be determined with reference to the Awarding Body or sector requirements.
2. The assessment strategy for the qualification as determined by the Awarding Body must be adhered to.
3. All evidence must be evaluated using the stipulated learning outcomes and assessment criteria from the relevant qualification specification.
4. RPL must not be used to allow exceptional entry to or exemption from a programme of study.
5. RPL cannot be used for the recognition of any unit or qualification assessed by external assessment only.
6. The college will ensure that:
 - 6.1. All students undertaking RPL assessment have a named member of staff who will coordinate their route through the RPL process. This will normally be the person who is also responsible for assessing the evidence produced for RPL.
 - 6.2. Records of assessment against prior learning are maintained.
 - 6.3. Certification claims are made according to normal procedures.
 - 6.4. All relevant evidence is assessed before assessment decisions are confirmed.
 - 6.5. There are designated personnel with the appropriate expertise to support and assure the RPL process.
 - 6.6. Records of RPL must be kept by the college for a minimum of three years.
7. RPL assessment will be subject to the same college policies as other forms of assessment, for example Assessment Appeals, Malpractice.

¹ Exemption is the facility for a student to claim exemption from some of the achievement requirements of a qualification, using evidence of certificated achievement deemed to be of equivalent value. Equivalence is the recognition of assessment (s) from a different qualification that is deemed to be of equivalent value and so can count towards a qualification in place of designated mandatory or optional assessments requirements.

8. Students can resubmit their RPL assessment to the external moderator/ examiner if it is judged unsuccessful by the designated assessor. There will not be a record of an unsuccessful RPL submission. If the second submission is unsuccessful the student must complete the taught unit/module.
9. If the student is self-funding they will be invoiced for the RPL assessment process.

Appendix 1 - The RPL Process

Stage 1: General awareness about claiming credit – information, advice and guidance Once individuals have made a decision to reflect on their learning they will need to know about:

- The process of claiming credit through RPL.
- The sources of professional support and guidance available to individuals and employers.
- The administrative processes for RPL applications
- Timelines, appeals processes and any fees and subsidies.

Stage 2: Pre-assessment – gathering evidence and giving information

An individual may decide to make his or her learning visible and to claim credit. This stage is vital to ensure that the candidate is fully informed of the RPL process and has sufficient support to make a viable claim and to make decisions about evidence collection and presentation for assessment. During this stage the candidate will carry out the evidence collection and develop an assessment plan. The evidence required for the award of credit will depend on the purpose, learning outcomes and assessment criteria for the relevant unit(s) within the QCF.

Stage 3: Assessment/documentation of evidence

Assessment as part of RPL is a structured process for gathering and reviewing evidence and making judgements about a candidate's prior learning and experience in relation to qualification standards. Assessment must be valid and reliable to ensure the integrity of units and qualifications and the RPL system as a whole. The assessment process for RPL must be subject to the same quality assurance processes of the college and external awarding organisations as any other assessment process.

Stage 4: Claiming certification

Once the internal and external quality assurance procedures have been successfully completed, certification claims can be made as with other assessments. Assessment and verification records, along with any other additional RPL records completed, should be retained for a minimum of three years following certification

Stage 5: Feedback

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

Appendix 2 - RPL Assessment

The specific format of the RPL assessment will be agreed between the student and the designated assessor and will be entered onto an RPL Assessment Plan.

If the evidence is to be presented as a portfolio the structure will be approximately as outlined below:

- 1) Cover
 - a) Name
 - b) Student id number
 - c) Course title

- d) Title - RPL Portfolio
- 2) Contents page
 - a) Number, names and level of units/module credits applied for
 - b) Name and number of any units/ modules matched
- 3) Set of learning outcomes drawn from the prior learning
- 4) Personal introduction to the student and the purpose of the portfolio (one paragraph) 5) Curriculum Vitae (if appropriate)
- 6) Personal statement outlining the relevance of the student's experiences to the learning outcomes.

There is no set format for the personal statement. It will focus on the student and is written in the first person. The text may be divided into sub-sections with the learning outcomes used as subheadings. Alternatively it could be a chronological account of the relevant learning experience cross referenced to learning outcomes and evidence.

- 7) Appendices showing direct or indirect sources of evidence to support/verify the claim for validation of prior learning. One piece of evidence may be relevant to a number of learning outcomes. Evidence could consist of the student's own work (e.g. documents they have written, procedures they have designed, proposals they have drafted, electronic resources etc.) or information gathered from others about the student (e.g. statements from employers, certificates of courses completed etc.)

Other forms of RPL assessment

The designated assessor may decide an alternative method of assessment to a portfolio would provide a more effective way of demonstrating the student's experience, and enable them to meet the learning outcomes. Examples might be:

- 1. Assessment on demand - whereby the student is asked to complete the usual form of unit/module assignment, or an externally set assignment. It is important that the form of assessment is relevant to the evidencing of the student's prior learning as it will have been designed for the traditional form of unit/ module delivery.
- 2. RPL interview, viva or presentation (often accompanied by written work). This must meet any requirements for double marking and internal verification/ moderation, and records of the process must be kept for the external moderator/ examiner. For this reason the interview may be audio or video taped.
- 3. The candidate submits the same assessments as students following the formal course of study that lead to the award of a unit or qualification.