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1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to enable those who have prior learning or experiences, to be able to demonstrate them in a way that would allow them to gain credit in the qualification framework.

2. Responsibility

Strategic responsibility lies with the Director of Quality and Higher Education. Operational responsibility lies with curriculum teams.

3. Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all qualifications, including Higher Education (HE) qualifications at Walsall College. In the case of Higher Education qualifications delivered by the College that are awarded by partner HE institutions, the College will adhere to the respective institution's own Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy and Procedure.

4. Policy Statement

- 4.1 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a method of assessment leading to achievement that considers whether students can demonstrate that they can meet the assessment requirements for a unit through knowledge, understanding or skills they already possess and do not need to develop through a course of learning.
- 4.2 The term 'recognition' is used to describe accurately the process in relation to prior learning applicable to two widely recognised forms: prior experiential (or informal) learning and prior certificated learning.
- 4.3 The Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) involves an assessment process on the part of academic staff that leads to recognition, normally through achievement of a unit. The essential feature of this process is that it is the learning gained through experience which is being assessed, not the experience itself.
- 4.4 Prior certificated learning relates to prior learning (such as professional development awards or employment-based awards) which is at higher education level but which has not led to the award of credits or achievement on the qualification for which the claim is being submitted.
- 4.5 RPL enables recognition of achievement from a range of activities using appropriate assessment methodology. Provided that the assessment requirements of a given unit or qualification have been met, the use of RPL at Walsall College is acceptable for accrediting a unit or units of a qualification. Evidence of learning must be current (within the last five years), valid and reliable. The authenticity of the evidence requires consideration of whether the evidence is genuinely the work of the learner.

- 4.6 The use and application of RPL is of particular value to students without formal qualifications, who are either in employment, preparing to enter, or returning to employment. It enables them to gain part of a qualification without having to undertake a formal learning programme. RPL can be used where a student has not had their prior learning formally recognised. RPL focuses on assessment and awarding for prior learning, which may count as evidence towards a unit accumulated.
- 4.7 All evidence will be evaluated using the stipulated learning outcomes and assessment criteria from the unit being claimed. In assessing a unit using RPL, the assessor must be satisfied that the evidence produced by the student meets the assessment standard established by the learning outcome and its related assessment criteria. Walsall College has staff with appropriate expertise and knowledge to facilitate this, (normally Trainer/Assessors). At Walsall College RPL may be used for units, but it would not be acceptable to claim an entire qualification through RPL as it is unlikely prior achievements would match every aspect of assessment requirements. Guidance from the Awarding Body is an essential stage of this process.
- 4.8 The prior achievement that would provide evidence of current knowledge, understanding and skills will vary from sector to sector. It will depend on the extent of the experience, technological changes and the nature of the outcome claimed. If the currency of any evidence is in doubt, the assessor may use questions to check understanding, and ask for the demonstration of skills to check competence. Where evidence is assessed to be only sufficient to cover one or more learning outcomes, or to partly meet the need of a learning outcome, then additional assessment methods should be used to generate sufficient evidence to be able to award the learning outcome(s) for the whole unit.
- 4.9 Walsall College will ensure that:
- Students are registered appropriately against the agreed qualification guidance, stipulated by the Awarding Body.
 - Records of assessment decisions made against prior learning are maintained.
 - Certification claims are made according to procedures.

5. Procedure

5.1 Stage 1 – Awareness Information and Guidance

The Guidance Team, in the first instance, can advise potential students about the process for seeking RPL. Thereafter, and for existing students, support will be provided by assessors with a full understanding of the specific qualification requirements. If the student is interested in seeking RPL, the following will be explained by the tutor:

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

5.2 Stage 2 – Pre-assessment; Gathering Evidence and Giving Information.

At this stage, the student 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 student 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.

5.3 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 student's 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 student or essays and reports validated as being the student's own unaided work.

An application for RPL should not be approved until the following criteria are satisfied:

1. The date of the prior learning has been checked and confirmed to have taken place within the past five years.
2. There is a correlation between the prior learning or experience which has taken place, and the level and intended learning outcomes of the course units.

Assessment must be valid and reliable to ensure the integrity of the achievement 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 standard quality assurance procedures of the College, for example internal standardisation and internal verification as well as the Awarding Body's quality assurance procedures. Evidence gathered through RPL will be clearly referenced and sign posted to aid internal assessment and internal and external verification.

5.4 Stage 4 – Claiming Certification

Once the internal and external quality assurance procedures have been successfully completed, certification claims can be made by the College. Assessment and internal verification records, along with the completed RPL record, will be retained for the standard three year period following certification.

The assessor will ensure that all learning outcomes and assessment criteria being claimed for each unit are achieved and that the records of assessment are maintained according to Awarding Body guidance.

5.5 Stage 5 – Appeal

If a student wishes to appeal against a decision made about their assessment, they need to follow the appeals process below, in sequential order:

Appeal Stage 1 - Appeal to the Assessor/Tutor

1. Where a student disagrees with the assessment given, he/she must explain the reasons for this with the Assessor/Tutor, in written form, within five working days. This will be recorded on the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Appeal Form (included within this policy document).
2. The Assessor/Tutor will consider the evidence, and provide a response to the student in writing, within ten working days of receipt of the appeal. This response will be recorded on the RPL Appeal Form, and will give a clear explanation of the appeal decision, following re-evaluation of the evidence.
3. A record of the appeal will be retained within the student's file and/or on College systems as appropriate.

Appeal Stage 2 - Appeal to the Internal Verifier/Moderator

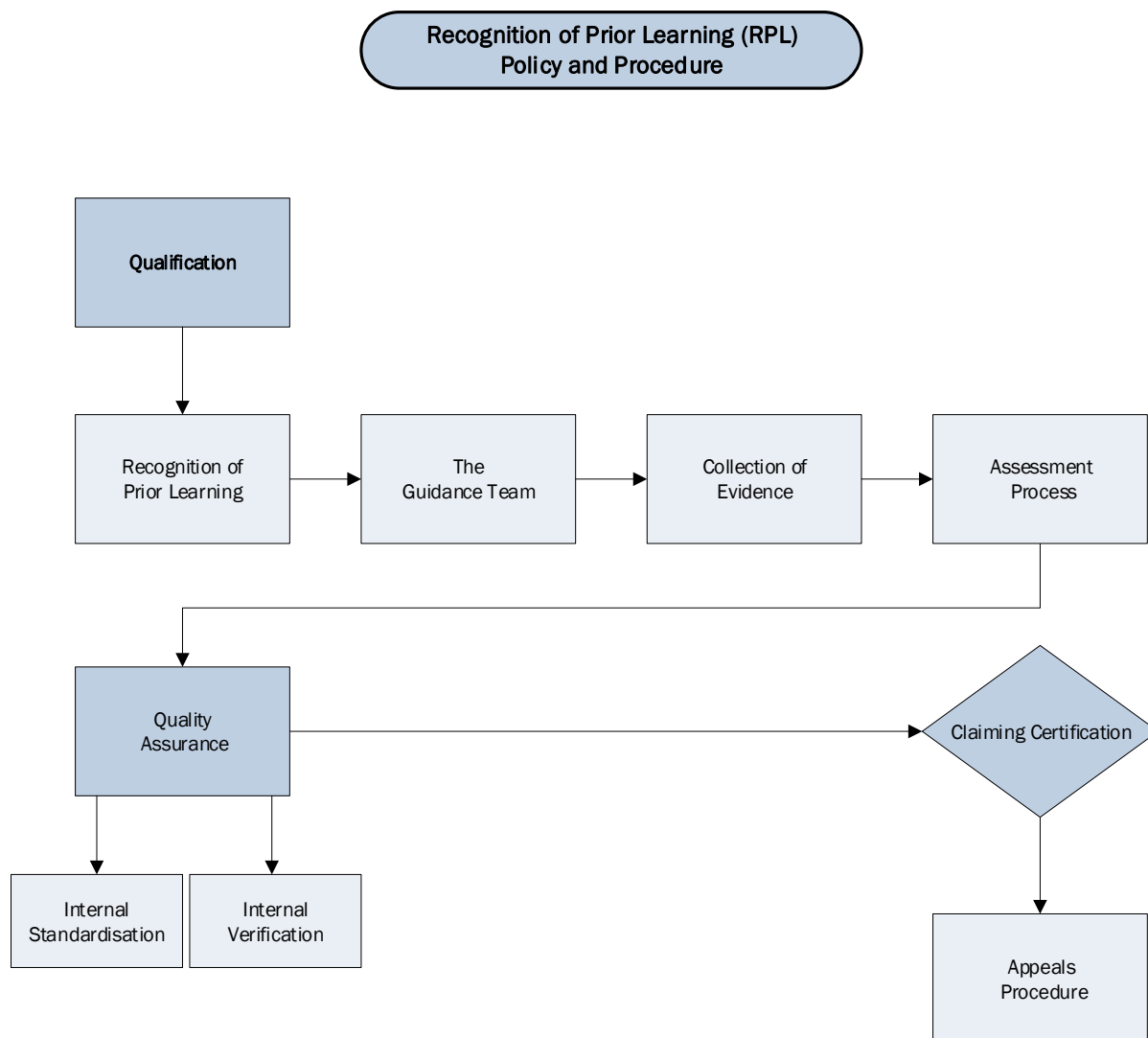
1. Where a student disagrees with the decision at Appeal Stage 1, they should forward the RPL Appeal Form to the Internal Verifier/Moderator within five working days.
2. The Internal Verifier/Moderator will reconsider the assessment decision, which may involve evaluation of the student's evidence, the Assessor's rationale for the decision, the opinion of another Assessor and the opinion of the candidate.
3. The Internal Verifier/Moderator will provide the student with the reconsidered decision in writing within ten working days of receiving the appeal. This decision will be recorded on the RPL Appeals Form. A copy will be retained on the appropriate online system.

Appeal Stage 3 - Appeal to Appeals Panel

1. Where a student disagrees with the decision at Stage 2, the RPL Appeal Form should be forwarded to the Head of Cluster/Employer Responsive. The Head of Cluster/Employer Responsive will convene an Appeals Hearing.
2. The hearing may involve an interview with the student and staff, by prior agreement. They may be accompanied by a family member/friend/fellow student. All the evidence will be reviewed, and the student will be notified of a decision within five working days of the hearing.
3. The decision will be recorded on the RPL Appeals Form.

Stage 4 - Appeal to Awarding Body

1. Where a student disagrees with the decision at Stage 3, they have a right to appeal to the Awarding Body. The student will be assisted by the Curriculum Manager (CM)/Apprentice Sector Manager (ASM). The decision of the Awarding Body is final.



Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Application Form



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Student Name		Tutor Name		Course	
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Student Evidence			Assessment of Evidence				
Current skills/evidence of RPL/RPEL	How does this relate to the course?	Potential match with selected elements/units (complete with tutor)	Assessor Guidance: Does the evidence presented meet VARCS?				
			Valid	Authentic	Current	Reliable	Sufficient
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Assessor Feedback:

<p>Student Declaration:</p> <p>I confirm that the above information is a true reflection of my current skills.</p> <p>Signature:</p> <p>Print Name: _____ Date: _____</p>	<p>Assessor Declaration:</p> <p>I confirm that this evidence complies with Walsall College's RPL Policy.</p> <p>Signature:</p> <p>Print Name: _____ Date: _____</p>
<p>Pass Evidence <input type="checkbox"/> Refer Evidence <input type="checkbox"/></p>	

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
Appeal Form



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Candidate Name		Course	
Assignment		Submission Date	
Assessment Decision		Assessment Date	

Please explain the reason for your appeal			
Signed		Date	

Appeal Decision			

Stage 1		Stage 2	
Assessor/Tutor		Internal Verifier	
Signed		Signed	
Date		Date	
Stage 3		Stage 4	
Head of Cluster/ ER		If you disagree with the decision at Stage 3, you have the right to appeal in writing to the Awarding Body.	
Signed			
Date			