

CATEGORY:	Higher Education
TYPE:	Procedure
TITLE:	Recognition of Prior Learning
PERSON RESPONSIBLE:	Assistant Principal - Teaching, Learning & Quality

PURPOSE:

NSCG aims to provide opportunities for learners to submit evidence using recognised prior learning (RPL) that can be mapped against learning outcomes and assessment criteria, to contribute to a recognised qualification. The policy aims to ensure that learners are able to apply for RPL against any recognised qualification, for which they are currently enrolled, to recognise learning based on experience and/or other previous formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts. This will include knowledge and skills gained within school, college, university and outside formal learning situations such as through life and work experiences.

Procedure:

1. Introduction

1.1 These regulations apply to all students registered at Newcastle and Stafford Colleges Group (NSCG) and will be used in accordance with specific Awarding Bodies guidance (where applicable).

2. Scope of the Policy

2.1 This policy applies to Pearson qualifications. For students on courses run by university partners, please refer to the relevant policy

<https://www.staffs.ac.uk/students/course-administration/academic-policies-and-regulations/recognition-of-prior-experience-and-learning>

bit.ly/437W8CT

3. Policy Statement

3.1 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a method of assessment [leading to the award of a qualification] 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.

3.2 Note: RPL should not be confused with exemption, unit equivalency or credit accumulation and transfer.

3.3 RPL enables recognition of achievement from a range of activities using any appropriate assessment methodology. Provided that the assessment requirements of a given unit or qualification have been met, the use of RPL is acceptable for accrediting a unit, units or a whole qualification. Partial unit completion is not acceptable. Evidence of learning must be:

- Valid
- Reliable

4. Terminology

4.1 RPL policies and procedures have been developed over time and this 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 Experiential Learning (APEL)
- Accreditation of Prior Achievement (APA)
- Accreditation of Prior Learning and Achievement (APLA).

4.2 These terms broadly describe the same process. NSCG uses the term Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

5. Application of RPL

5.1 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 all or part of a qualification without having to undertake a formal learning programme.

5.2 RPL can be used where a student has not had their prior learning formally recognised

5.3 RPL focuses on assessment and awarding for prior learning which may count as evidence towards:

- a unit accumulated towards a full qualification
- a unit or units recognised by the appropriate Awarding Body of Achievement of a full qualification.

5.4 All evidence for RPL claims will be evaluated using the stipulated learning outcomes and assessment criteria from the qualification or unit being claimed. In assessing a unit using RPL the Course Leader must be satisfied that the evidence produced by the student meets the assessment standard established by the learning outcome and its related assessment criteria. Course Leaders, along with a member of the College Quality Team are deemed to have sufficient expertise and knowledge to facilitate this and make decisions about RPL. Any evidence used for RPL will be subject to standards / external verification as normal.

5.5 Most often RPL will be used for units. It is acceptable to claim for an entire qualification through RPL although this is not the normal practice because it would

be unusual for a student to be able to offer prior achievement that completely matches every aspect of a qualification's assessment requirements.

5.6 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 Course Leader will use questions to check understanding, and ask for the demonstration of skills to check competence. Note that the assessment strategy for each qualification will be adhered to.

5.7 Where evidence is assessed to be only sufficient to cover one or more learning outcomes /units, or to partly meet the need of a learning outcome / unit, then additional assessment methods should be used to generate sufficient evidence to be able to award the learning outcome(s) for the whole unit.

5.8 The RPL process is not concerned with allowing for exceptional entry to, or exemption from, a programme of study.

5.9 As a Centre wishing to carry out RPL we must ensure that:

- Identification of any achievement through RPL is prior to students taking a qualification
- Relevant to the student'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 in line with the Awarding Body
- 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.

6. The RPL Process at Newcastle & Stafford Colleges Group

An example RPL process is outlined below, with common steps and actions outlined.

6.1 Stage 1 – Awareness, Information and Guidance

6.1.1 Ahead of enrolling a potential student, the possibility that they may be able to claim unit(s) for some of their previous learning and/or experience should be raised with them. If the student 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

6.2 Stage 2 – Pre-Assessment, Gathering Evidence and Giving Information

6.2.1 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.

6.2 Stage 3 – Assessment/Documentation of Evidence

6.3.1 Assessment as part of RPL is a structured process for gathering and reviewing evidence and making judgments about a students' prior learning and experience in relation to unit standards. The Course Leader may look 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.

6.3.2 Assessment must be valid and reliable to ensure the integrity of the award of unit(s) 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.

6.3.3 If the collated evidence of RPL for a student is judged by the Course Leader not to be sufficient to meet all the requirements of the relevant unit(s), then the student will have to complete the normal assessment for those unit(s) if they wish to be awarded the qualification.

6.3.4 The assessment process will be subject to the usual quality assurance procedures of the centre, for example internal standardisation and internal verification. Evidence gathered through RPL should be clearly referenced and sign posted to aid internal assessment and internal and external verification.

6.4 Stage 4 – Claiming Certification

6.4.1 RPL processes and evidence used by NSCG will be subject to the normal standards / external verification process. Awarding Bodies will check RPL via its external verification processes, and if we identify that not all requirements for a unit have been met via the RPL evidence, then more evidence will be needed or the student will have to undergo the normal assessment requirements.

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

6.4.3 The Course Leader 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.

7. Appeals

7.1 As with any assessment decision on procedural grounds; if a student wishes to appeal against a decision made about their assessment they need to follow the NSCG Appeals Policy.