

BIIAB Qualifications

Recognition of Prior Learning Policy



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Purpose

The purpose of this policy and process is to provide support, clarification and guidance to BIIAB Qualification's approved Centres when implementing the policy and approach with regard to the recognition of a learner's previous achievements.

Policy Statement and definition of RPL

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a structured method of gathering and reviewing evidence of a learner's prior achievements, and making judgements as to whether they match the learning outcomes of a new qualification and/or a qualification component(s).

It considers whether learners can demonstrate that they can meet the assessment requirements for a component through knowledge, understanding or skills they already possess, and allows learners to avoid unnecessary duplication of learning and assessment.

RPL enables recognition of achievement from a range of activities using any valid assessment methodology. Provided that the assessment requirements of a given component or qualification have been met, the use of RPL is acceptable for recognising the achievement of a component, components or a whole qualification. Evidence of learning must be: valid; reliable; safe; fair and demonstrable.

It allows for learners who may have acquired knowledge, understanding, or skills through formal or informal learning, to progress.

The use and application of RPL is of significant value to learners 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.

RPL may be claimed against one or more components or against an entire qualification. It is acceptable to claim for an entire qualification through RPL; though this is not the normal practice because 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.

BIIAB Qualifications' approved centres that offer RPL to learners must have in place their own internal RPL policy, as well as the appropriate level of resources to implement and maintain it.

BIIAB Qualifications' role in the context of RPL, is to enable and validate the RPL process. The process itself must consider whether a learner possesses, through existing experience and skills, the evidence of knowledge and understanding necessary to achieve stated assessment criteria and/or learning outcomes, and to support a claim a for RPL.

Principles of RPL

Principle 1

RPL is a valid method of enabling individuals to claim achievement for components and qualifications, irrespective of how the learning took place and the assessments undertaken. There is no difference between meeting the required standards through prior learning and through fresh learning and assessment.

Principle 2

RPL must comply with all regulatory requirements for assessment. RPL policies and procedures should be transparent, rigorous, reliable, fair and accessible to individuals and stakeholders, to ensure that users can be confident of the decisions and outcomes of RPL.

Principle 3

RPL is a learner-centred, voluntary process. The individual should be offered advice on the nature and range of evidence considered appropriate to support a claim for assessing RPL, and be given guidance and support to make his or her claim.

Principle 4

The process of RPL is subject to the same standard of quality assurance and monitoring processes as any other form of learning and assessment.

Principle 5

Assessment methods for RPL must be of equal rigour to other assessment methods, be fit for purpose and relate to the evidence of learning. An individual can claim RPL against any achievement, unless the assessment criteria of the component states otherwise. For example, if an external assessment sets the standard of the learning outcome that the learner must achieve, then the learner must pass the external assessment to achieve the component and gain the credit.

The RPL process

Stage 1: Information, advice and guidance

When a learner expresses an interest in registering for a qualification, he/she should be made aware as part of the initial information provided by the Centre, of the opportunity to use RPL as an alternative route to its achievement.

The Centre should explain the following to the learners at this stage:

- they must be able to supply the relevant evidence to support an RPL claims
- the process to be followed to claim achievement through RPL
- the sources of professional support and guidance available to them

- the administrative processes for RPL applications
- the timelines, appeals processes and any fees and/or subsidies available to support the process.

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

Learners who decide to use RPL must be informed of the RPL process and have support from their centres to make a viable claim.

The learners will need to collect evidence for assessment against the requirements of the relevant qualification/component(s) learning outcomes and assessment criteria, develop an assessment plan to support him/her during the process and present their evidence for assessment.

The evidence required for RPL will depend on the purpose, learning outcomes and assessment criteria for the relevant qualification/component(s) and can draw on any aspect of a learner's life, including education and training, work experience and voluntary activities and can encompass formal and informal learning.

Prior achievement must be current and as a guide this is normally three years. However, currency may be less in some circumstances depending on the skills/competence involved.

Work experience records and workplace observation may be included within the evidence, providing it has been validated and authenticated by an employer or expert witness.

It is the centre's responsibility to inform BIIAB Qualifications at the point of registration about any learner who wishes to use RPL as a method of assessment towards the intended qualification.

Stage 3: Assessment/documentation of evidence

The learner's RPL evidence must be formally assessed by the assessor against the qualification/components assessment criteria.

Centres should provide a mapping document which clearly shows how the learner's prior achievement meets the assessment criteria, and where any gaps arise, how they have been addressed. The evidence must be sufficient conclusively to prove consistency of learner performance in meeting the assessment criteria, and that RPL is based on the learner's own work.

All RPL-related achievement must be clearly marked as such in all documentation, and records of assessment maintained according to procedure. The assessment process for RPL must be subject to the same quality-assurance procedures of the awarding organisation as any other assessment process. Therefore, the learner's evidence must be retained and made available to the centre's internal quality assurer (IQA) and the external quality assurer (EQA) during quality assurance sampling.

Stage 4: Feedback

After the assessment the assessor will, where practically possible, give feedback to the learner, discuss the results and give support and guidance on the options available to the learner. This may include that the learner will have to complete the normal assessment for those component(s) if he/she wishes

to generate sufficient evidence on which to base a safe assessment decision against the assessment criteria for the qualification/component.

If the validity of the evidence is in doubt, the assessor may use questions to check understanding or check learner competence. If the collated evidence of RPL for a learner is judged by the centre not to be sufficient to meet all the requirements of the relevant component(s), then the assessor will provide guidance to the learner on the options available, which may include, for example, further learning and development.

The assessor will also confirm to the individual whether a recommendation for RPL will be made. In all cases, once the assessment process is complete, the standard procedures for reporting results leading to the award of component(s) or qualifications should be followed.

Decisions will be subject to internal and external quality assurance as normal and should BIIAB Qualifications identify that not all requirements have been met by the RPL evidence, more evidence will be needed, or the learner will have to undergo additional assessment requirements.

Evidence used for RPL and internal quality assurance records, along with the additional RPL records, must be retained for 3 years following certification as normal.

Stage 5: Claiming Certification

BIIAB Qualifications is responsible for awarding component(s) or qualifications. The RPL procedure is the same as for other forms of assessment. All component(s) or qualifications achieved through RPL are recorded by BIIAB Qualifications in the personal learning record in exactly the same way as all other component(s) or qualifications.

Stage 6: Appeal

If Learners wish to appeal against a decision made about their claim for component(s) or qualifications, they would need to follow the standard appeals processes that exist within the Centre and as published on BIIAB Qualifications website.

Policy Review Arrangements

This policy is subject to a three-year review cycle, or earlier should any feedback or concern be brought to the attention of BIIAB Qualifications, to ensure it remains fit for purpose and the process and its outcomes are deliverable.

It is also reviewed as part of BIIAB Qualifications continuous improvement monitoring through its annual self-assessment arrangements.