

Recognition of Prior Learning Policy (Vocational)

Policy Code:	V01
Policy Start Date:	March 2020
Policy Review Date:	September 2022

Please read this policy in conjunction with the policies listed below:

- VO4 Learner Malpractice Procedure
- VO9 Staff Malpractice Procedure
- HR12 Staff Discipline Policy
- VO8 Reasonable Adjustment and Special Consideration Policy

1 Policy Statement

- 1.1 The policy applies to all staff at The Priory Federation of Academies Trust and outlines any procedure for the Recognition of Prior Learning.
- 1.2 References to the Trust or Academy within this policy specifically include all primary, secondary and special academies within the Trust, as well as Robert De Cheney Boarding House, the Early Years setting at the Priory Witham Academy, Priory Training, Priory Apprenticeships, Lincolnshire Teaching School Alliance and the Lincolnshire Teaching School Alliance SCITT.
- 1.3 This policy does not form part of any member of staff's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.
- 1.4 The Trust is committed to leading a mentally healthy organisation, which includes a commitment to and promotion of emotional wellbeing and mental health. Therefore, all Trust policies and procedures ensure this commitment is incorporated in order to support all staff and students. Members of staff are encouraged to speak to their line managers, and students are encouraged to speak to any member of staff, if they feel any part of this policy would affect their emotional wellbeing and mental health. Any such comments should be passed to the Trust's HR department (via FederationHR@prioryacademies.co.uk) for appropriate consideration at the next available point in the policy review cycle.

2 Roles, Responsibilities and Implementation

- 2.1 The Pay, Performance and HR Committee has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory framework. This committee delegates day-to-day responsibility for operating the policy and ensuring its maintenance and review to the Human Resources Director
- 2.2 Leaders and Managers have a specific responsibility to ensure the fair application of this policy and all member of staff are responsible for supporting colleagues and ensuring its success.

3 Aims

- 3.1 The Priory Federation of Academies Trust (The Trust) is committed to ensuring that learners are not disadvantaged in any way and is therefore committed to recognising students' prior learning as it is encountered.

- 3.2 To recognise learning undertaken elsewhere to widen participation and promote equality and diversity.
- 3.3 To provide a framework within which to assess learners' prior learning and to validate it with integrity and transparency with the support of the awarding body to ensure validity.
- 3.4 To ensure that assessment standards and specifications are implemented fully (both in spirit and in letter), in all work being evidenced for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

4 Range and Scope of the Policy.

The policy covers all vocational courses offered within the Trust but may well apply to other vocationally related courses should they become a part of the curriculum in future. This includes those on the Regulated Qualifications Framework, Self-Regulated Framework (SRF) and other national frameworks. Evidence of learning must be:

- Valid
- Reliable
- Current
- Authentic
- Sufficient

The Trust encourages the use of Recognition of Prior Learning where it is of learners in facilitating assessment.

Where an apprentice already has existing skills and proven experience, it is important that the apprenticeship is adapted to reflect this.

5 Application

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is the overarching term used for the award of credit on the basis of demonstrated learning that has occurred at some time in the past either through attending formal courses, through paid or unpaid work, self-directed learning or other life experiences.

The use and application of RPL is of particular 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 can be used where a learner 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 towards a full Pearson qualification
- a unit or units recognised by a Pearson Certificate of Achievement of a full Pearson qualification.

All evidence must be evaluated using the stipulated learning outcomes and assessment criteria from the qualification or unit being claimed. In assessing a unit using RPL the assessor must be satisfied that the evidence produced by the learner meets the assessment standard established by the learning outcome and its related assessment criteria. Centres must have personnel with appropriate expertise and knowledge to facilitate this and make decisions about RPL. Evidence used for RPL will be subject to standards verification as normal.

Most often RPL will be used for units within a qualification. 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 learner to be able to offer prior achievement that completely matches every aspect of a qualification's assessment requirements.

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. Note that the assessment strategy for each qualification must be adhered to.

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.

Where Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning evidence is being assessed against graded units, only pass criteria can be awarded.

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

If the Trust wishes to carry out RPL then the following must be satisfied:

- Identification of any achievement through RPL takes place before learners take a qualification
- RPL is relevant to the learner'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
- 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.

Occasionally we will map or give guidance to show shared content across units or qualifications (for example, First Aid Certificates). In these cases, a learner may use a previously achieved certificate as evidence without them having to repeat learning or assessment.

If we have not mapped qualifications, you will need to map and check that the learners' previous certificated achievement meets the current qualifications assessment criteria. It is important that you keep a record of the mapping so that we can confirm that it is valid.

No extra assessment is needed if a learner's previously achieved certificate or qualification meets the requirements of a whole unit.

6 The RPL Process

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

Stage 1 - Awareness, information and guidance

Although it is primarily the responsibility of the learner to apply for RPL, where appropriate, ahead of enrolling a potential learner, 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 learner 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 when is required as part of the application, including what will be considered suitable evidence.

Stage 2 - Pre-assessment, gathering evidence and giving information

At this stage the learner 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 learner 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.

Evidence of prior certificated learning should include:

- Copies of relevant certificates
- Course documentation evidencing content, learning, outcomes and level of study
- Details of module results

Evidence from a learner's past experience could include:

- Reflection on learning experience through home or family life, voluntary or community work.
- Statement about the learning achieved and how it related to the learning outcomes for which they are seeking exemption
- Evidence of support may include:
 - Confirmation of job responsibilities or job description from line manager
 - A record of achievements
 - Details of specialist training/skills
 - Contract details of references who can comment on the applicant's achievements.
 - Other documentation to demonstrate the learning outcomes achieved.

Interviews, presentations or performances should be recorded so that there is a reproducible record demonstrating minor learning.

Stage 3 - Assessment/documentation of evidence

Decisions regarding RPL are a matter of academic judgement, and may be influenced by the requirements of external bodies. The decision making process and outcomes should be transparent, rigorous and fair.

Decisions assessment as part of RPL is a structured process for gathering and reviewing evidence and making judgments about a learners' 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 learner or essays and reports validated as being the learner's own unaided work.

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.

In making judgements, claims for RPL will be evaluated against the following criteria:

- **Relevance** – Is there an appropriate match between the evidence presented and the prior learning that the applicant or student is seeking to demonstrate? Is the prior learning specific? Can it be identified and categorised? Was the learning in a context understood by the learner?
- **Sufficiency** – is there sufficient evidence to demonstrate full achievement of the learning claimed?
- **Authenticity** – Is the evidence valid and reliable? Does it clearly relate to the applicant or student's own efforts and achievements?
- **Currency** – Does the evidence relate to current learning? Does it meet course validation and/or PSRB time limits in terms of currency of prior learning?
- **Level** – Is the prior learning at a level that is at least equivalent to the relevant element of the programme of study for which the applicant or student is seeking exemption?

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 unit(s), then the learner will have to complete the normal assessment for those unit(s) if they wish to be awarded the qualification.

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.

Stage 4 - Claiming certification

RPL processes and evidence used by centres will be subject to the normal standards verification process. Pearson will check RPL via its external verification processes, and if it is identified that not all requirements for a unit have been met via the RPL evidence, then more evidence will be needed or the learner will have to undergo the normal assessment requirements.

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

The assessor 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.

Stage 5 - Appeals

As with any assessment decision on procedural grounds, if a learner wishes to appeal against a decision made about their assessment they need to follow the standard centre policy and procedures and then Pearson Enquiries and Appeals procedures.

Complaints concerning staff judgement will not normally be considered, as these are not deemed as valid grounds of appeal.

7 Policy changes

This policy may only be amended or withdrawn by The Priory Federation of Academies Trust.

The Priory Federation of Academies Trust Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

This Policy has been approved by the Priory Federation of Academies Trust's Education and Standards Committee:

Signed..... Name..... Date:
Trustee

Signed..... Name..... Date:
Chief Executive Officer

Signed..... Name..... Date:
Designated Member of Staff

Please note that a signed copy of this agreement is available via Human Resources.