

Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

Abstract

This policy provides a framework for assessing and formally acknowledging the skills, knowledge and competencies that learners have acquired through previous education, work experience or life experience

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1. Introduction

Learners will often embark on a qualification with some form of prior achievement or experience, and as such, Active IQ operates a policy whereby these may be recognised in order to remove unnecessary duplication and repetition.

The learner is central to the recognition of prior learning (RPL) process; ultimately, it will be their choice and responsibility whether to apply for RPL, and in doing so, they must supply the relevant evidence/details.

There can be three assessment decisions made in response to any RPL request:

- RPL assessment exemption allowed
- RPL fast-track to assessment allowed
- RPL evidence insufficient

2. RPL assessment exemption allowed

Active IQ has reviewed a recognised certificated qualification and deemed it 'equivalent' to a unit or an assessment within a unit. These are called 'agreed exemptions'.

- agreed exemptions will be evidenced by a suitable certificate containing full details of the qualification or unit codes recognised by Active IQ
- agreed exemptions may be time sensitive and, as such, further evidence to prove that currency has been maintained may be required (e.g. should a learner hold a certificated qualification deemed equivalent, but historic, the learner may need to provide further additional evidence showing how they have maintained currency of their knowledge and skills in order to claim the agreed exemption)
- a centre can check if a certificated qualification can be deemed an agreed exemption by sending a copy of the certificate (including the qualification and unit codes) to the centre's external verifier (EV) for further guidance
- should the review find there are gaps between the evidence presented and the assessment criteria for a whole unit, no assessment exemption can be allowed
- a centre does not have to apply to Active IQ prior to making an RPL assessment decision; however, if there is any doubt, it would be prudent to check with the centre's EV to ensure appropriate guidance and support is sought in order to minimise the risk of inappropriate certification that may result in a certificate recall, malpractice, or a maladministration investigation. Furthermore, the centre must conduct a

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comprehensive interview checking against any learning outcome/unit being claimed for RPL, and a record must be kept. As RPL is an assessment decision, ultimate responsibility for the decision lies with the centre. Questions and checks against assessment criteria should be completed to ensure the learner already meets the standard against which they are claiming, and their responses should be recorded. Where skills-based criteria need to be checked, a skills-based approach should be used (e.g. a practical observation of associated skills rather than a verbal check). Centres must ensure that RPL assessment decisions are subject to appropriate internal verification sampling

Centres must inform Active IQ of RPL exemption(s) when making the relevant claim for certification for the learner (via the notes section within the claim file, as part of the certification claims procedure in Parnassus).

3. RPL fast-track to assessment allowed

If a learner cannot present sufficient evidence to allow assessment exemption (as detailed in the section above), a centre can consider whether the learner has sufficient competence to allow fast-tracking to assessment. This means a learner may not have to undertake the learning and development activities in preparation for assessment. A centre can fast-track learners using formative assessment to confirm a learner's readiness for assessment where deemed appropriate, although they must ensure:

- the learner can move to assessment fairly and is not disadvantaged by the direct progression to assessment
- the learner already holds the knowledge and skills required to complete the assessments fairly, or any knowledge or skills gaps are appropriately filled using appropriate qualification delivery methods
- the learner agrees with the fast-track decision
- sufficient records of the fast-track decisions are maintained to provide evidence in the event of a future learner appeal
- the learner's right to appeal is not compromised by the fast-track decision

4. RPL evidence insufficient

A centre may feel that a learner's presented evidence is insufficient and does not meet VARCS (i.e. the evidence is not deemed to be valid, authentic, reliable, current or sufficient), and as such, the outcome must be that a learner completes the usual qualification delivery and assessments as defined by the qualification requirements and centre delivery model.

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5. RPL best practice guidance

The centre is advised to maintain detailed records of any previous RPL requests, assessments, Active IQ support and guidance, and centre decisions made to ensure ongoing decisions can be standardised and evidence is always available as required.

The learner's RPL request must first be made to the centre, and it is their responsibility to make the RPL assessment decision. If the centre is in doubt, further advice and guidance can be obtained by contacting the centre's EV.

The centre must conduct an assessment of the presented evidence, checking against any assessment criteria/learning outcome/unit being claimed for RPL. Records of the RPL evidence (e.g. certificates, occupational evidence), assessment decision and feedback must be kept and made available to the centre's EV on request.

Upon authorising any RPL requests, the centre must ensure that appropriate evidence and documentation is reviewed and maintained to ensure that this can be made available to Active IQ upon request.

The method by which the centre reaches its decision to agree a claim needs to be fully documented and retained as a record for the Active IQ EV to sample upon request. This is not only required for comparability exercises against learners completing the full qualification in its original intended format, but also in case of appeal, these records will be checked for rigour to ensure a robust process has been followed appropriately as explained above.

The centre can choose to use their own recording procedures or the Active IQ record form which can be found at the end of this document.

If learners wish to appeal a decision made about their RPL, they should be directed to the centre's internal appeals procedure, and thereafter, if required, the Active IQ appeals policy.

Examples of evidence types that may be acceptable include:

- certificates: learners who have a certificate awarded to them must have the original certificate (not a photocopy). Only original or replacement certificates issued by the awarding organisation will be accepted as proof of prior achievement (not a training provider's internal certificate of completion). If there are any doubts about the certificate, guidance should be sought by contacting the original issuing awarding organisation or Active IQ

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- previous work: for learners who provide previous work as evidence, this work must have been dated and signed by the learner, and where possible, the person under whom they worked, to show it is reliable and authentic. If there are no dates and signatures from the time the evidence was produced, this evidence cannot be accepted
- witness testimony: learners who provide a testimony from a witness need to ensure the witness is reliable by looking at their occupation in relation to the learner and what qualifications they hold. If the witness has an assessor award, this would strengthen the case of the evidence being used

When assessing the evidence being presented, the centre must adhere to the following principles:

- sufficiency: when a learner is claiming for an aspect of competence, the assessor must see sufficient evidence to cover ALL aspects of the competency being claimed
- authenticity: the evidence being assessed must be presented in its original format. For example, an assessor would need to see an original certificate for a learner claiming using this method. Any work that the learner has done, which is being assessed, must be signed and dated and must be the learner's own work
- reliability: the evidence must be reliable. For example, if a learner has provided a witness testimony from a colleague stating that they have proved competence against specific criteria, the assessor would need to judge the reliability of the colleague to be able to make judgements about the learner's performance against specific performance criteria. The assessor would need to ask 'is the colleague competent and objective to be able to give a reliable statement?'

7. References to associated documents

- Qualification specific assessment guidance
- Process for claiming certification in Parnassus

8. Implementation and dissemination

This policy will be implemented immediately upon approval and available on Active IQ website

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed in six months by relevant Active IQ and NCFE colleagues to ensure document is aligned and fit for purpose following full integration of Active IQ.

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10. Data retention

Active IQ will not keep personal data for longer than we need it. Once the retention period is over, and it is no longer justifiable to hold personal data any longer, data will be securely destroyed or anonymised.

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Appendix A - Internal RPL process template

The following template may be used as a guide for internal RPL processes.

Centre name		Centre number	
Learner name		Learner number	
Qualification title		Qualification accreditation number	
Unit title(s) related to the RPL request		Unit accreditation number(s)	
Nature of the request/the rationale			
Supporting evidence attached			
Assessment decisions: please indicate which of the following assessment decisions have been made in this case			
Exemption allowed: agreed exemption			
Fast-track to assessment allowed			
Evidence insufficient			
Actions			
Declaration: I am satisfied that the evidence and information provided is valid, authentic, reliable, sufficient and current, and I support the indicated assessment decision and actions			

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Assessor signature		Date	
Internal verifier signature		Date	
Learner comments and feedback			

Learner signature		Date	
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