Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

September 2018 | Version 3.0
Policy authorised by Responsible Officer

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1.0 Introduction

The key role of IBT is to secure standards for those qualifications we certificate. As part of our commitment to quality assuring standards we aim to provide guidance and support to help centres and their learners to achieve learning and development goals. We also ensure that any regulatory requirements are met, and in turn we support centres to meet those requirements.

We review all our policies annually or in response to regulatory changes to ensure that they remain fit for purpose.

2.0 Scope of policy

This procedure applies to all key stakeholders engaged with the IBT qualifications. This includes IBT Centres, Centre staff and IBT Learners.

3.0 Definition of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

"Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a method of assessment [leading to the award of credit] that considers whether Learners can demonstrate that they can meet the assessment requirements for a unit through knowledge, understanding or skills they already possess and so not need to develop through a course of learning." (Regulatory)

RPL policies and procedures have been developed over time which has led to the use of several 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).
- Recognition of prior certificated learning (RPCL)

Recognition of prior certificated learning (RPCL) is the process through which previously assessed and certificated learning is recognised as equivalent in relation to meeting the requirements for the achievement of the qualification.

4.0 When to use RPL

The RPL process is relevant where a learner has evidence of having previously learnt something but has never received formal recognition for it through a qualification or other form of certification.

Evidence can draw on any aspect of a Learner's prior experience including:

- Education and training
- Work activities
- Community or voluntary activities

Good practice in RPL requires that the potential for a learner to claim credit through any form of RPL should be identified within an initial assessment process. The student should be made aware of the potential advantages and disadvantages of pursuing a claim for RPL. It is essential that a learner does not opt out of the teaching and assessment of a unit because they hope to gain the credits through RPL before the claim has been approved.

5.0 Assessment of RPL evidence

Evidence obtained through the RPL process must be assessed to the same rigorous quality as evidence obtained through any other process. In no circumstance does the RPL process mean that any required qualification summative assessments can be avoided e.g. practical/theory tests or assignments.
It remains the role of Assessors to ensure that assessment criteria are only deemed to have been met where evidence is:

Valid - Does the evidence genuinely demonstrate that the demands of the assessment criteria have been met? For RPL, currency of evidence will be of particular concern. Does, for example, the evidence meet up-to-date demands or is it representative of practice that has significantly changed?

Authentic - This involves consideration of whether the evidence being assessed is genuinely the work of the Learner. For example, the evidence may have been produced by somebody else, or may be the result of the work of a team. In the latter case, this would be acceptable if the assessment criteria were related to team / joint working, but not if it was being used as evidence of an activity which should have been carried out individually.

Sufficient - There must be enough evidence to fully meet the requirements of the assessment criteria or learning outcomes being considered. If there is insufficient evidence to fully meet requirements, then evidence obtained through RPL must be complemented by additional evidence gained through other suitable assessment method(s) before requirements/outcomes can be said to have been met.

Reliable - The evidence obtained through RPL should be such that an Assessor would arrive at the same assessment decision, were the assessment to be repeated.

6.0 Outcomes of RPL

If individuals can produce relevant evidence that meets assessment criteria requirements, then recognition can be given for their existing knowledge, understanding or skills.

- If an individual can demonstrate that they meet all the learning outcomes and assessment criteria in a unit, then they can claim credit for that unit solely based on their RPL achievement.

- If evidence from RPL is only sufficient to cover one or more learning outcomes or assessment criteria, or to partly meet the need of a learning outcome or assessment criteria, then additional assessment methods should be employed to generate sufficient evidence on which to base a safe assessment decision.

- Evidence used for RPL is not time-limited, but assessors must determine whether it is valid and authentic.

- RPL may be used in conjunction with other assessment methods such as professional discussion or observation to assess current performance.

- Evidence from RPL is similar to that derived via any other acceptable assessment method. This means that where the standard of a unit is met by evidence obtained wholly or partly from RPL, credit can be claimed.

7.0 RPL process

Centres wishing to undertake RPL must ensure that:

- It is carried out by IBT approved Centre staff with relevant levels of expertise to meet IBT requirements.

- Methods of assessment used will be determined by the assessment strategy for the qualification being assessed and might, for example, include:
    – Examination of documents
    – Expert witness testimony
    – Reflective accounts
    – Professional discussion
    – The RPL assessment should be carried out as an entire process.

This means that the Assessor should:

- Plan with the Learner

- Make a formal assessment decision

- Feedback assessment decisions to the Learner, confirming decisions and giving guidance on the available options (particularly in situations where the decision has been not to award credit)

- Maintain appropriate records

- Ensure that Learners are aware of their right to access the appeals process should they feel the assessment decision was unfair

The Assessor must ensure that all learning outcomes and assessment criteria being claimed are covered and that records of assessment are maintained in the usual way. The process must be subject to the same quality assurance requirements as any other assessment method.

No more than 50% of the IBT qualification can be accredited in this manner.

7.1 Recognition of prior certificated learning (RPCL)

The centre must have in place an RPL policy which clearly identifies the responsibilities of the learner, the assessor and other key staff involved in the quality assurance of the qualification.

The application from the learner must be subject to rigorous assessment by the centre to ensure that the learner has undertaken sufficient learning at the appropriate level to cover the content of the unit being claimed for. This should involve mapping the unit content to that of the unit or qualification previously achieved. This can be undertaken by the learner or the centre but the evidence of this process must be provided along with a copy of the original certificate when the RPL application is submitted to IBT.

8.0 Clarification of related terms

Terms in this section

A range of terms and processes are frequently confused with RPL including:

- Equivalent Units
- Credit Accumulation and Transfer & Credit Transfer
- Qualification Legacy
- Predecessor Qualification
- Shared Units

IBT encourages the use of these processes where they are of value to Learners and/or Centres.

Exemptions

Exemptions allow the recognition of qualifications (i.e. formally recognised achievements) obtained outside of the RQF. However, unlike RPL, they do not attract credits as the skills, knowledge and/or competences described in the unit will have already have been recognised.

Equivalent Units

Equivalent units are different RQF units which, are judged to be equal to, or greater than the content of another. An equivalent unit needs to be of the same credit value (or higher) and the same level (or higher).

9.0 Regulatory references

Regulatory requires all regulated Awarding Organizations to establish and maintain evidence of their compliance with the General Conditions of Recognition. As part of its ongoing process of compliance, IBT policies and procedures will reflect the conditions and criteria they address.

This policy addresses the following Regulatory General Conditions of Recognition (GCR).

GCR Reference	GCR Section title
H5.1	Results for a qualification must be based on sufficient evidence

10.0 Policy review date

September 2019

11.0 Useful contacts

For more information on our qualifications and services visit: www.theibt.co.uk Alternatively, email at: info@theibt.co.uk

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