



# Policy for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

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Approved externally by  
SFJ Awards'  
Quality & Standards  
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# 1 Purpose

The use of **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)**<sup>1</sup> is accepted as part of the Regulated Qualification Framework (RQF).

This policy sets out how SFJ Awards' supports the use of RPL to recognise a learners prior learning to achieve qualifications in the most efficient way.

# 2 Definition

The recognition of prior learning allows learners credit for what they have already achieved.

Such prior achievement:

- May be knowledge, understanding or skill
- May have been acquired through formal or informal learning or experience
- Must be current and up-to-date
- Must match the required outcomes of the qualification they are registering for
- Must be objectively demonstrable

RPL is a structured, formalised process of gathering and reviewing evidence of a learner's prior achievement and judging whether it matches the outcomes of the new qualification / component. It is an assessment method which allows learners to avoid unnecessary duplication and repetition of learning and assessment.

If learners wish to have prior achievements accepted as part of a new qualification, they must apply for such recognition *before* starting the programme.

Previous achievement can count for a maximum of 70% of the new qualification.

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<sup>1</sup> The Qualifications Regulator, Ofqual define 'recognition of prior learning' as the –

- a) *identification by an awarding organisation of any learning undertaken, and/or attainment, by a Learner –*
  - i. **prior** to that Learner taking a qualification which the awarding organisation makes available or proposes to make available, and
  - ii. which is **relevant** to the knowledge, skills and understanding which will be assessed as part of that qualification, and
- b) **recognition** by an awarding organisation of that learning and/or attainment through amendment to the requirements which a Learner must have satisfied before the Learner will be assessed or that qualification will be awarded.

*Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition, June 2016 (Ofqual/16/6023)*

### **3 Principles of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)**

SfJ Awards follows these principles in relation to its Recognition of Prior Learning:

#### ***Principle 1***

RPL procedures must be transparent and accessible for learners. Learners should be offered advice, guidance and support in making their claims.

#### ***Principle 2***

RPL decisions must be rigorous, reliable and fair so that all stakeholders can have confidence in them.

#### ***Principle 3***

RPL assessment methods must be of equal rigour to other forms of assessment. They must be fit for purpose and relate to the evidence of learning.

#### ***Principle 4***

RPL assessment processes must be subject to the same internal and external quality and assurance standards as any other form of assessment.

## 4 Roles and Responsibilities

### Learners:

- Be familiar with your centre's RPL Policy and the centre's procedures for claiming RPL as part of the initial advice and guidance you receive.
- Provide evidence of previous achievements for consideration, where appropriate and asked to do so.

### Centre Assessors:

- Ensure learners are aware of your centre's RPL Policy.
- Ensure you are aware of your centre's RPL Policy and procedures for claiming RPL.
- Ensure that a learner's previous achievements are evaluated upon enrolment and where applicable, access to RPL and further support and guidance is provided for the learner.

### Centre Internal Quality Assurers (IQAs):

- Support assessors and provide them with training/guidance in the use of RPL as a method of assessment.
- Ensure learners who have achieved through RPL are included in the IQA sample.

### Heads of Centre:

- Ensure your centre has a suitable RPL Policy in place to meet centre approval requirements.
- Ensure staff (and learners) are aware of the RPL Policy and the centre's procedures for claiming RPL.

### SFJ Awards' External Quality Assurers:

- Support centres and provide them with training/guidance in the use of RPL as a method of assessment.
- Include learners who have achieved through RPL in the EQA representative sample.

### SFJ Awards' Quality & Assessment Manager:

- Ensure that RPL is available through each of SFJ Awards approved centres.

- Ensure RPL is carried out in accordance with the principles stated within this policy.
- Ensure that where evidence is deemed as sufficient, RPL leads to formal certification.
- Ensure that, where RPL has been claimed, the learner's evidence is subjected to external quality assurance.

## 5 Guidance for SFJ Awards' Centres

SFJ Awards' approved centres must work to the principles of this policy and carry out RPL by:

- using appropriate assessment methods to ensure the evidence being assessed is valid, authentic, reliable, current and sufficient
- registering learners as soon as they formally start to gather evidence
- ensuring RPL assessment decisions are rigorous, reliable and fair
- maintaining records of assessment and monitoring learner progress
- processing learner registration and certification claims using the centre's standard procedures
- ensuring that centre staff have the appropriate training and expertise to support RPL

**If you are unclear about any aspect of RPL, your external quality assurer (EQA) will be able to advise you.**

## 6 The RPL Process

### Stage 1: Information, advice and guidance

Learners should be made aware of the opportunity to use RPL as part of the initial information, advice and guidance they receive. They should also be advised that RPL is an alternative route to achievement **and not an easy option or shortcut**. It will be the learner's choice and responsibility whether to apply for RPL. They must be able to supply the relevant evidence to support their RPL claim.

### Stage 2: Pre-assessment

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

The learner will need to:

- Collect evidence for assessment
- Develop an assessment plan
- 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).

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

### Stage 3: Assessment/Documentation of evidence

The learner's RPL evidence must be formally assessed by the assessor against the qualification learning outcomes and assessment criteria. This may include original certificates presented by the learner (with the centre verifying the learner's achievement if necessary).

Learners can use a maximum of 70% of previous achievement. At least 30% of the qualification should be achieved through new learning to demonstrate that the learner's skills, knowledge and competence are current and that some development and progression has taken place. Learners will therefore need to produce additional evidence to achieve the full qualification. Where RPL evidence partially meets the need of a unit / component, additional assessment methods must be used to generate sufficient evidence on which to base a safe assessment decision. The assessor must ensure that all learning outcomes and assessment criteria being claimed are met.

Centres should provide a mapping document which clearly shows how the learner's prior achievement meets the qualification learning outcomes and assessment criteria, and where any gaps arise, how they have been addressed.

All RPL-related achievement must be clearly marked as such in all documentation and records of assessment maintained according to procedure. 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.

Centres are required to keep records of valid claims through RPL for seven years. Please refer to the Records section of SFJ Awards' Centre Handbook available from the centre secure login area of the website.

**Stage 4:** Feedback

After the assessment, the assessor will give feedback to the learner, discuss the results and give support and guidance on the options available to the learner, which may include, for example, further learning and development.

**Stage 5:** Awarding

The procedure is the same as for other forms of competence based assessment. The achievement is recorded in the learner record and claims are made through the usual SFJ Awards' certification process detailed within the Centre Handbook, available from the centre secure login area of the website.

**Stage 6:** Appeal

If learners wish to appeal against a decision made they should follow the SFJ Awards' approved centre standard appeals process.

## 7 Currency and Restrictions

### Currency

Learners must still have the knowledge, understand and skills being claimed for through RPL. 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.

Where a previously achieved qualification is being used as RPL, currency would be determined as *three years* from the date the original certificate was awarded to the point at which the learner is registered on the qualification for which the RPL claim is being made.

The assessor will assess the learner's competence so they can be satisfied that the prior learning / achievement is still current and valid and that any skills gaps have been addressed. We expect that prior learning is not the only form of evidence used and that supplementary evidence is used to demonstrate that the learner still has the required level of knowledge and / or competence. The additional evidence could be provided through assessment methods such as witness testimonies or professional discussions with the learner.

### Restrictions

All RPL applications are subject to EQA review prior to implementation. Applications should be made initially to your nominated EQA.

A qualification cannot be achieved through RPL alone. Previous achievement can count for a maximum of 70% of the new qualification.

Any specific restrictions on the use of RPL are stipulated in the respective Qualifications Handbook.

It is unlikely SFJ Awards will permit RPL in certain cases such as:

- Licence to Practise
- Health and Safety requirements
- Regulated professions

RPL cannot be used where units or components are subject to an examination / external assessment.

## 8 Quality Assurance

Details of registered learners who are using RPL towards the qualification must be recorded and made available to the centre's internal quality assurer and the external quality assurer.

Internal and external quality assurers must ensure that units / components where RPL has been claimed are included in internal and external quality assurance representative sampling to ensure consistency in how RPL has been used within, and across, centres.

To support comparability in how RPL is used and assure consistency over time, examples of RPL learner evidence must be included in centre internal Standardisation activities. Examples of RPL will also be included in SFJ Awards' external Standardisation activities.

## 9 Review of the Policy

This policy will be reviewed by the Quality and Assessment Manager on a regular basis as part of SFJ Awards' self-evaluation arrangements. It will be revised in response to lessons learnt, customer feedback, changes in legislation and guidance from the Qualifications Regulators.

Our review of the policy will ensure that SFJ Awards procedures continue to be consistent with the regulatory criteria and are applied appropriately, equitably and consistently.

Policies and formal amendments to policies are approved by the SFJ Awards Quality & Standards Committee.

If you have any queries about the content of the policy or you wish to give feedback, please contact SFJ Awards Tel: 0114 284 1970 or email [info@sfjawards.com](mailto:info@sfjawards.com).

## 10 Location of the Policy

You can download copies of the policy from our website: <http://sfjawards.com/policies/rpl>.