



# Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy



**The  
Workforce  
Development  
Trust**



## Revisions and Amendment Register

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| May 2024      |         | New updated issue following policy review     | 24/1    |
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# 1. Purpose

**Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)** is 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](#), 2025).*

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

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.

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 be valid, i.e. it must match the required outcomes of the qualification.
- Must be objectively demonstrable.

RPL may also be referred to as 'APL' (Accredited Prior Learning').

## 3. Types of RPL

SFJ Awards recognises the following types of RPL:

### **Credit Transfer**

Credit transfer is the practice of taking prior certificated achievement from one qualification and using towards the achievement of another qualification. Credit Transfer may be used where the unit appears (and is currently regulated) in both qualifications.

For example, the unit 'Principles of Working in the Private Security Industry' unit appears in several SIA licence-linked qualifications, and the achievement of this unit as a part of one qualification may be used towards achievement of another qualification.

Credit Transfer must take the form of full unit achievement, must be current (certificated within the last 3 years), and must not account for more than 50% of the qualification.

### **Exemption**

Exemption applies where certificated prior learning does not exactly match the unit or learning against which RPL is being claimed, however SFJ Awards has agreed that the prior achievement may lead to certain elements of an SFJ Awards qualification not needing to be completed. In such cases, examples of allowable exemptions are usually published in the qualification handbook.

There may be restrictions to exemption, including the currency of the achievement and the amount of a qualification that may be subject to exemption.

### **Non-Certificated Prior Learning**

Non-certificated prior learning may be used towards the achievement of a qualification, where the assessment generated can be mapped against an SFJ Awards qualification. The work must be current – the learning must have concluded within the last 12 months.

It is the responsibility of the Centre to ensure that assessment evidence is mapped against the SFJ Awards assessment criteria and subject to the Centre's own assessment and IQA process. Evidence must be available for External Quality Assurance by SFJ Awards.

## **4. Principles of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)**

SFJ Awards follows these principles in relation to 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. Where RPL is used, this should be identified during Initial Advice and Guidance ('IAG').

### ***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.

## **5. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Learners must:**

- 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 must:**

- Ensure learners are aware of the centre's RPL Policy.
- Be aware of the 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) must:**

- 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 the 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 must:**

- 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 will:**

- 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.

## **6. 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.

## **7. 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 before they start their course of study.

### **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).

RPL will be considered in line with guidance from SFJ Awards regulators, and may not be allowed for certain qualifications.

**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 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). Knowledge, skills, behaviours and understanding must be current for RPL to be used and the assessor must decide if prior learning is up to date for the relevant sector and subject areas.

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 that 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.

### **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 first use the centre's appeal policy and procedure. For any further appeals once the centre's appeal policy has been exhausted, a learner should refer to the SFJ Awards' Appeal policy, which is published on the SFJ Awards website policy page. If the learner wishes to make a complaint then they should refer to the SFJ Awards Complaints policy, which is published on the SFJ Awards website policy page.

## 8. Currency and Restrictions

Learners must still have the knowledge, understanding and skills being claimed for through RPL. Prior achievement must be current and up to date and as a guide this is normally three years where Exemption or Credit Transfer is being claimed. Currency may be less in some circumstances depending on the skills / competence involved. Please refer to the individual Qualification documentation for further details.

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. SFJ Awards 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

Any specific restrictions on the use of RPL are stipulated in the respective Qualification Handbook. The use of RPL can be applied to a single unit, or units, but is restricted for the achievement of a whole qualification.

For Credit Transfer:

- SFJ Awards permits up to 50% of an individual learner's qualification to be awarded through RPL.
- The prior learning should be current – within the last 3 years, unless stated in the Qualification Handbook.
- The credit transcript will show that RPL has been used for the achievement of the unit.

For Exemption:

- The prior learning should be current – within the last 3 years, unless stated in the Qualification Handbook.
- The credit transcript will show that RPL has been used for the achievement of the unit.

For Prior Non-Certificated learning:

- The prior learning must be current – delivery should have taken place within the last 12 months, unless stated in the Qualification Handbook.
- Assessment evidence must be clearly mapped against the SFJ Awards assessment criteria, and subject to the Centre IQA process.
- Achievement of the unit will show as a normal unit on the credit transcript.
- All other qualification-specific requirements (for example pre-requisites, and contact hours) must be met by the learner and evidenced.

It is unlikely that SFJ Awards will permit Credit Transfer or Exemption in certain cases such as:

- Licence to Practise



- Health and Safety requirements
- Regulated professions

RPL may not be allowed where units or components are subject to an examination / external assessment. In such instances, SFJ Awards will offer advice on a case-by-case basis.

## 9. 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.

## 10. RPL for End-Point Assessment (EPA)

Recognition of prior learning for End-Point Assessment references learning and/or achievements that have been gained whilst an apprentice is on their learning programme. SFJ Awards do not need to know about any prior learning which has contributed towards the apprentice's learning programme or, because of RPL being applied, about a reduction in training time.

As part of Gateway an apprentice produces evidence which demonstrates their prior learning. This evidence is assessed by SFJ Awards in line with the assessment plan. During assessment, an apprentice will be asked questions about their prior learning and workplace experiences. The examples given must be related to the time when they were on the apprenticeship programme.

During a resit an assessor will consider any prior achievements and assessment criteria that have been passed on the first attempt. All other elements will be re-assessed as a new assessment activity.

A retake will be a new assessment and the assessor will not consider previous assessment activities or grade decisions.

If an apprentice comes to SFJ Awards from another EPAO, SFJ Awards will discuss with the training provider how many attempts the apprentice has had at the EPA assessment and the reasons for the requested transfer. SFJ Awards will then decide whether to accept the apprentice for EPA. An apprentice who has completed EPA or part of EPA with another EPAO may not use that as RPL.

Apprentices that have completed and passed an End-Point Assessment, either with SFJ Awards or with another EPAO, may not retake the End-Point Assessment.

## 11. Regulatory criteria and conditions

| Regulatory Body | Regulatory guidance document      | Regulatory Condition or Criterion |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Ofqual          | General Conditions of Recognition | C2.5, E10, H5                     |
| CCEA Regulation | General Conditions of Recognition | C2.5, E10, H5                     |

|                      |  |               |
|----------------------|--|---------------|
| Qualifications Wales | Qualification Wales<br>Standard Conditions of<br>recognition | C2.5, E10, H5 |
| SQA Accreditation    | Regulatory Principles  | RP12, RP14    |

## 12. Review of the Policy

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

If you have any queries about the content of the policy or you wish to give feedback then please contact SFJ Awards Tel: 01142 841970 or email [info@sfjawards.com](mailto:info@sfjawards.com).

## 13. Location of the Policy

A copy of this policy can be downloaded from Odyssey, ACE 360 and the SFJ Awards website: [sfjawards.com/policies](http://sfjawards.com/policies).

## 14. Copyright

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