FORESIGHT

unsung heroes

The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service 2007

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy

Definition

'A method of assessment that considers whether a learner can demonstrate that they meet the assessment requirements for a unit through knowledge, understanding or skills they already possess and do not need to develop through a course of learning'.

Policy

In order to achieve RPL, a learner must produce valid and reliable evidence of learning to support any claims based on experience. A learner may claim RPL against a whole unit or several units. It is not possible to award part units, but where the RPL evidence does not fully meet the needs of a complete unit, the missing information may be provided via the same assessment processes that are undertaken by a taught group of learners.

In order to achieve recognition of achievement there are two options open to the learner:
1. Undertake the same assessments as those following the formal course of learning and assessment that lead to the desired unit or qualification. These assessments may be undertaken without attending the teaching sessions.
2. Submit a portfolio of evidence based on previous learning, demonstrating skills and / or competence cross referenced to the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of the unit or units for which RPL is being sought.

Under some circumstances there may be a limit to the proportion of a qualification that can be achieved by either credit transfer or RPL.

The learner must play an active role in the process as s/he must produce evidence and map it to the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of all units they wish to claim. The individual wishing to make the claim may also require the support of their employer or other organisation (e.g. if they have worked as an unpaid volunteer) in order to be able to confirm achievement of assessment criteria for which there is no tangible evidence, e.g. practical tasks.

Principles of RPL:

The five principles of RPL are as follows:

- RPL is a valid method of enabling individuals to claim credit for units and qualifications irrespective of how the learning took place and the assessments undertaken. There is no difference between the achievement of the required standards through prior learning and through a formal programme of study.
- RPL policies, processes, procedures, practices and decisions should be transparent, rigorous, reliable, fair and accessible to individuals to ensure that users can be confident of the decisions and outcomes of RPL.
- The individual should be offered advice on the nature and range of evidence considered appropriate to support a claim for assessing RPL, and be given guidance and support to make his or her claim.

- The process of RPL is subject to the same standard of quality assurance and monitoring processes as any other form of learning and assessment.
- Assessment methods for RPL must be of equal rigor as other assessment methods, must be fit for purpose and relate to the evidence of learning. An individual may claim RPL against any whole unit unless the assessment criteria of a unit states otherwise. For example if an external assessment sets the standard of a learning outcome that a learner must achieve, then the learner must pass the external assessment to achieve the unit and gain the credit.

This information is also available in other formats, languages and picture format upon request.