Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT)Policy

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V1.5	10-2025	Annual review – Disclaimer added to data retention section to ensure uniformity with information held on the NCFE website.

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1. Policy principles

This policy will ensure centres are clear about what does and does not constitute acceptable Recognition of Prior Learning and Credit Accumulation Transfer Policy.

2. Introduction

This policy has been written to reflect the requirements of the Ofqual's General Conditions of Recognition. It aims to be open, transparent, and clear in its purpose, scope, and implementation. Any centre applying this policy with their learners may approach us to discuss their own requirements or challenge any decisions made by the Awarding Organisation.

2.1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to define the processes for recognition of prior learning and credit accumulation and transfer to ensure centres are aware of the requirements when applying each approach.

2.2. Scope

This policy will apply to all centres who offer our qualifications.

2.3. Responsibilities/duties

Compliance with this policy lies with each centre and any interpretations or clarifications required will be supplied by the External Quality Assurance team.

2.4. Definitions

Word/Acronym	Definition
AMR	Annual Monitoring Review
APL	Accreditation of Prior Learning
CAT	Credit Accumulation and Transfer
EQA	External Quality Assurance
IQA	Internal Quality Assurance
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SLC	Speaking, Listening and Communication
RQF	Regulated Qualifications Framework
QCF	Qualifications and Credit Framework

2.5. Location

This policy is available on the NCFE website.

3. Process

3.1. Defining Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT)

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CAT should be considered as a separate process to RPL as CAT applies to learning that has been previously certified for a different regulated qualification or from a different Awarding Organisation on the same framework (RQF or QCF). This is to prevent a learner from having to unnecessarily repeat previous learning.

Where a learner has already achieved a unit with credit, we will recognise that prior learning and will allow the credit to be transferred onto a new qualification, provided that the units have the same Ofqual reference number.

3.2. Defining Recognition of Prior Learning

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) was formerly known as APL (Accreditation of Prior Learning) and is defined as 'a method of recognising previous learning or attainment to meet current requirement' or '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, behaviours, skills and understanding they already possess and so may not need to develop these through a course of learning'.

3.3. Applying Recognition of Prior Learning

RPL can demonstrate competence or achievement within a unit or qualification. Through the RPL process, evidence of a learner's previous achievement (learning) is assessed against the assessment criteria of a unit.

Evidence used by learners must be current and valid and meet the assessment criteria of the qualification, and evidence must be reliable, whereby centres consistently arrive at equivalent assessment decisions.

Evidence obtained through RPL must therefore meet the same rigorous quality criteria that other assessment methods must conform to. It remains the role of Assessors and quality assurance staff to ensure that 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 current practice requirements.

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 assessment criteria being considered. If there is insufficient evidence to fully meet requirements, then evidence obtained through RPL must be complemented by evidence gained through other suitable assessment methods before requirements can be said to have been met.

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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.

3.4. 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 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, however, evidence from RPL is only sufficient to cover one or more assessment criteria, or to partly meet the need of an assessment criteria, then additional assessment methods should be employed to generate the sufficient evidence required to make a safe assessment decision.

Knowledge, skills, behaviours, and understanding must be current for RPL to be used and subject leads within centres must decide if prior learning is up to date for the relevant sector and subject areas. Centres may use questioning or other acceptable assessment strategies to check the depth and significance of prior learning. Assessment decisions based on RPL must be made by centre staff with suitable occupational competence and subject expertise. Acknowledging evidence of previous learning is considered to be part of the internal assessment process and any decisions must be made clear to the External Quality Assurer.

The centre must ensure that:

- It is carried out by designated staff with relevant levels of expertise to meet the requirements of the assessment strategy/guidance for the qualification concerned.

The methods of assessment used will be determined by the assessment strategy for the qualification being assessed but might, for example, include:

- Examination of documents,
- Expert 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 decision and giving guidance on the available options
- 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 assessment criteria being claimed are covered and that records of assessment are maintained in the usual way. The

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process must be subject to the same quality assurance requirements as any other assessment method.

3.5. Examples of RPL evidence

- Relevant documents, testimonies or reflections mapped across to the qualification's assessment criteria.
- Job descriptions or performance management feedback showing that the learner already has the suitable and current skills, knowledge, and behaviours within the unit.
- Learners have evidence of recent prior study which meets assessment criteria of the current programme of study being undertaken in full.
- RPL must be included on the appropriate sampling plan as an assessment method as appropriate and subject to internal quality assurance (IQA).

3.6. Requirement to pass all three components of Functional Skills English

A learner must achieve a pass in all three components at the same level to achieve a pass at qualification level. A learner cannot aggregate results from components at different levels to be awarded the qualification.

For Speaking, Listening and Communication (SLC), a pass at GCSE level cannot be considered for RPL as the assessment criteria does not match the Functional Skills qualification as there is only one presentation task and Ofqual require at least two.

3.7. Carrying forward component marks for Functional Skills English

A learner can carry forward their result for a component from a previous attempt at a functional skills qualification in English at the same level awarded. This includes circumstances in which a learner has not previously attempted all three components.

Circumstances when prior learning will not be recognised:

- Learning that is similar to assessment criteria, but which has been met at a level lower than the current programme of study being undertaken by the learner.
- Prior learning that is not current in meeting the qualification.
- Prior learning that has been referred by an assessor.
- Prior learning that has not been assessed by an assessor.

3.8. Applying Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT)

Credit accumulation and transfer (CAT) is the system by which learners can accumulate and transfer credits over a period of time, in differing locations and contexts, to gain qualifications. Credit transfer is the process of using credit(s) awarded in the context of one qualification or awarded by a different awarding organisation towards the achievement requirements of another qualification.

CAT is therefore the term used to describe the system which supports credit transfer. Credit transfer gives recognition to the fact that some units are the same, irrespective of the fact that they appear in different qualifications. This recognition promotes progression within and between industries and avoids unnecessary duplication of learning.

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Credit transfer is relevant where a unit in a qualification is the same (include unit/qualification assessment number) as a unit in another qualification.

A practical example of credit transfer would be a learner who achieves an award which is comprised of units 'A, B and C' transferring their credits to progress towards a certificate comprised of 'A, B, C, D and E'. In this case the units in the award have been nested in the certificate enabling the recognition of the previously achieved units.

If on the other hand a learner registered for the Certificate containing units 'A, B, C, D and E' without having done the award, but then withdrew from their programme of learning after completing only 'A, B and C', they could transfer their credits and consequently obtain the Award.

For Speaking, Listening and Communication, a pass at GCSE level cannot be considered for CAT, as the only carried forward permitted is the same qualification and level from a different awarding organisation.

3.9. Contact information

For further information on RPL and CAT, please refer to the Ofqual Conditions of Recognition.

Ofqual Handbook: General Conditions of Recognition - Guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

If you've any queries about the content of this policy, please contact the External Quality Assurance team at externalqualityassurance@ncfe.org.uk.

4. Initial Equality Impact Assessment

An Initial Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for this policy, and no concerns were raised.

5. References to associated documents

- User guide to approval review User guide to approval report
- User guide to annual monitoring review (AMR) User guide to annual monitoring report
- User guide to external quality assurance (EQA) review User guide to external quality assurance (EQA) review

6. Implementation and dissemination

This policy is available on NCFE website

7. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the External Quality Assurance team.

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9. Data retention

9.1. Disclaimer: Submission of Original Documentation

To protect personal information, please do not send original documents to NCFE via post. We cannot accept responsibility for the loss, damage, or return of any original documentation sent to us.

Where documentation is required, we request that you provide certified copies or high-quality scanned versions instead. This approach helps protect your documents and ensures a more secure and efficient service.

Evidence of RPL and CAT must be retained by centres and is subject to the same quality assurance checks before certification can take place.

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