

Technical Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

Policy Code:	TE1
Policy Start Date:	September 2026
Policy Review Date:	September 2028

Please read this policy in conjunction with the policies listed below:

- TE3 Technical Recruitment, and Initial Assessment, of Apprenticeships Policy
- TE4 Technical Assessment Policy
- TE8 Technical Learner and Employer Compliments and Complaints Policy
- TE9 Malpractice and Maladministration Policy
- TL2 Appeals (Exam and Qualification Grades) Policy

1 Policy Statement

- 1.1 The policy outlines the procedure for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).
- 1.2 For the purpose of this policy, 'technical learners' encompasses T-Level students, apprentices and pupils in KS4-5 studying 'vocational' subjects, for example, BTEC qualifications.
- 1.3 References to the Trust or Academy within this policy specifically include all nursery, primary, secondary and special academies within the Trust, as well as Priory Apprenticeships and Lincolnshire ITT.
- 1.4 This policy does not form part of any member of staff's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

2 Roles, Responsibilities and Implementation

- 2.1 The Education & Standards Committee has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory framework. This committee delegates day-to-day responsibility for operating the policy and ensuring its maintenance and review to the Director of Professional Learning.
- 2.2 This policy is approved by the Education & Standards Committee before being ratified at the next available Trust Board meeting. Approval and ratification is minuted, with records kept by the Clerk to Trustees.
- 2.3 Leaders and Managers have a specific responsibility to ensure the fair application of this policy and all staff are responsible for supporting colleagues and ensuring its success.

3 Aims

- 3.1 To recognise learning undertaken elsewhere to widen participation and promote equality and diversity.
- 3.2 To provide a framework within which to assess learners' prior learning and to validate it with integrity and transparency, with the support of the awarding body to ensure validity.
- 3.3 To ensure that assessment standards and specifications are implemented fully (both in spirit and in letter), in all work being evidenced for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).
- 3.4 To assess a potential apprentice's prior learning and experience, to ensure that they are eligible to do the apprenticeship and it is the right programme for them.

4 Range and Scope of the Policy

- 4.1 The policy covers all vocational courses offered within the Trust but may well apply to other vocationally related courses should they become a part of the curriculum in future. This includes those on the Regulated Qualifications Framework, Self-Regulated Framework (SRF) and other national frameworks. Evidence of learning must be:

- valid;
- reliable;
- current;
- authentic; and
- sufficient.

5 Application

- 5.1 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is the overarching term used for the award of credit on the basis of demonstrated learning that has occurred at some time in the past either through attending formal courses, through paid or unpaid work, self-directed learning or other life experiences.
- 5.2 The use and application of RPL is of particular value to learners without formal qualifications, who are either in employment, preparing to enter, or returning to employment. It enables them to gain all or part of a qualification without having to undertake a formal learning programme.
- 5.3 RPL can be used where a learner has not had their prior learning formally recognised.
- 5.4 All evidence must be evaluated using the stipulated learning outcomes and assessment criteria from the qualification or unit being claimed. In assessing a unit using RPL the assessor must be satisfied that the evidence produced by the learner meets the assessment standard established by the learning outcome and its related assessment criteria. Centres must have personnel with appropriate expertise and knowledge to facilitate this and make decisions about RPL.
- 5.5 Evidence used for RPL will be subject to standards verification as normal.
- 5.6 Most often RPL will be used for units within a qualification. It is acceptable to claim for an entire qualification through RPL although this is not the normal practice because it would be unusual for a learner to be able to offer prior achievement that completely matches every aspect of a qualification's assessment requirements.
- 5.7 The prior achievement that would provide evidence of current knowledge, understanding and skills will vary from sector to sector. It will depend on the extent

of the experience, technological changes and the nature of the outcome claimed. If the currency of any evidence is in doubt, the assessor may use questions to check understanding, and ask for the demonstration of skills to check competence. The assessment strategy for each qualification must be adhered to.

- 5.8 Where evidence is assessed to be only sufficient to cover one or more learning outcomes, or to partly meet the need of a learning outcome, then additional assessment methods should be used to generate sufficient evidence to be able to award the learning outcome(s) for the whole unit.
- 5.9 Where Recognition of Prior Learning evidence is being assessed against graded units, only pass criteria can be awarded.
- 5.10 The RPL process is **not** concerned with allowing for exceptional entry to, or exemption from, a programme of study. RPL may lead to exemption from components of a programme where prior learning fully meets the required standards; however, it does not allow exemption from mandatory elements where this is prohibited by assessment or funding rules.
- 5.11 If the Trust wishes to carry out RPL then the following must be satisfied:
- identification of any achievement through RPL takes place before learners take a qualification;
 - RPL is relevant to the learner's knowledge, skills and understanding which will be assessed as part of a qualification;
 - learners are registered as soon as they formally start to gather evidence;
 - records of assessment against prior learning are maintained;
 - certification claims are made according to normal procedures;
 - all relevant evidence is assessed before assessment decisions are confirmed; and
 - there are designated personnel with the appropriate expertise to support and assure the RPL process.
- 5.12 No extra assessment is needed if a learner's previously achieved certificate or qualification meets the requirements of a whole unit.
- 5.13 For T Levels, the application of RPL is limited and must align with Department for Education and awarding organisation guidance. Recognition of prior learning must not compromise the integrity of industry placement requirements or core component assessment.

6 The RPL Process – Vocational Courses (excluding apprenticeships)

- 6.1 An example RPL process is outlined below, with common steps and actions outlined.

Stage 1 - Awareness, information and guidance

Although it is primarily the responsibility of the learner to apply for RPL, where appropriate, ahead of enrolling a potential learner, the possibility that they may be able to claim unit(s) for some of their previous learning and/or experience should be raised with them. If the learner is interested in this, they will need to know the:

- process of claiming achievement by using RPL;
- sources of support and guidance available to them; and
- timelines, appeals processes, any fees involved, what is required as part of the application, including what will be considered suitable evidence.

Stage 2 - Pre-assessment, gathering evidence and giving information

At this stage the learner will carry out the process of collecting evidence against the requirements of the relevant unit(s). In some cases the development of an assessment plan and tracking document or similar may be required, to support the learner through the process. The evidence gathered will need to meet the standards of the unit, or part of unit, that the evidence is being used for.

Evidence of prior certificated learning should include:

- copies of relevant certificates;
- course documentation evidencing content, learning, outcomes and level of study; and
- details of module results.

Evidence from a learner's past experience could include:

- reflection on learning experience through home or family life, voluntary or community work; and
- a statement about the learning achieved and how it related to the learning outcomes for which they are seeking exemption.

Evidence of support may include:

- confirmation of job responsibilities or job description from line manager;
- a record of achievements;
- details of specialist training/skills;
- contract details of references who can comment on the applicant's achievements; and/or
- other documentation to demonstrate the learning outcomes achieved.

Interviews, presentations or performances should be recorded so that there is a reproducible record demonstrating prior learning.

Stage 3 - Assessment/documentation of evidence

Decisions regarding RPL are a matter of academic judgement, and may be influenced by the requirements of external bodies. The decision-making process and outcomes should be transparent, rigorous and fair.

Decisions assessment as part of RPL is a structured process for gathering and reviewing evidence and making judgments about a learners' prior learning and experience in relation to unit standards. The assessor may be looking at work experience records, validated by managers; previous portfolios of evidence put together by the learner or essays and reports validated as being the learner's own unaided work.

Assessment must be valid and reliable to ensure the integrity of the award of unit(s) and, as above, the evidence gathered needs to meet the standards of the unit, or part of unit, that the evidence is being used.

In making judgements, claims for RPL will be evaluated against the following criteria:

- **relevance** – Is there an appropriate match between the evidence presented and the prior learning that the applicant or student is seeking to demonstrate? Is the prior learning specific? Can it be identified and categorised? Was the learning in a context understood by the learner?;
- **sufficiency** – is there sufficient evidence to demonstrate full achievement of the learning claimed?;
- **authenticity** – Is the evidence valid and reliable? Does it clearly relate to the applicant or student's own efforts and achievements?;
- **currency** – Does the evidence relate to current learning? Does it meet course validation and/or PSRB time limits in terms of currency of prior learning?; and
- **level** – Is the prior learning at a level that is at least equivalent to the relevant element of the programme of study for which the applicant or student is seeking exemption?

If the collated evidence of RPL for a learner is judged by the centre not to be sufficient to meet all the requirements of the relevant unit(s), then the learner will have to complete the normal assessment for those unit(s) if they wish to be awarded the qualification.

The assessment process will be subject to the usual quality assurance procedures of the centre, for example internal standardisation and internal verification.

Evidence gathered through RPL should be clearly referenced and sign posted to aid internal assessment and internal and external verification.

Stage 4 - Claiming certification

RPL processes and evidence used by centres will be subject to the normal standards verification process. Pearson will check RPL via its external verification processes, and if it is identified that not all requirements for a unit have been met via the RPL evidence, then more evidence will be needed or the learner will have to undergo the normal assessment requirements.

Once the internal and external quality assurance procedures have been successfully completed, certification claims can be made by the centre. Assessment and internal verification records, along with any additional RPL records completed, should be retained for the standard three-year period following certification.

The assessor must ensure that all learning outcomes and assessment criteria being claimed for each unit are achieved and that the records of assessment are maintained in the usual way.

- 6.2 In the event that a learner wishes to appeal against a decision made about RPL, they should follow the process outlined in TE7 Technical Appeals Policy.

7 Apprenticeships

- 7.1 For apprenticeships, recognition of prior learning (RPL) must be undertaken as part of the initial assessment process and completed prior to the apprentice's start date. RPL must:

- materially reduce the content of the training programme, evidenced through a clear mapping of prior learning against the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) within the apprenticeship standard;
- result in a reduction to both the duration and the total agreed price of the apprenticeship;
- be fully evidenced, documented, and retained within the apprentice evidence pack in line with ESFA funding rules;
- ensure that the remaining programme meets the minimum duration requirements for an apprenticeship;
- ensure that planned off-the-job training hours are recalculated in proportion to the revised duration and content of the programme;
- be agreed by the apprentice, employer, and training provider prior to programme commencement.

- 7.2 Priory Apprenticeships has a responsibility to assess an apprentice's prior learning and experience. To do this, Priory Apprenticeships will:

- identify and document the apprentice's prior learning, qualifications, and occupational experience;
- undertake a structured initial assessment and skills scan to assess existing competence against the apprenticeship standard;
- map prior learning against the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) within the occupational standard;
- obtain employer input to validate prior experience, job role responsibilities, and current competence; and
- determine whether the apprenticeship remains the most appropriate programme for the individual.

7.3 Once the recognition of prior learning has been undertaken, Priory Apprenticeships will:

- produce a revised training plan that clearly identifies gaps in knowledge, skills and behaviours and the planned training to address these gaps;
- confirm and agree any reduction in programme duration and price with the employer and apprentice;
- accurately record all RPL decisions, supporting evidence, and rationale within the apprentice evidence pack;
- ensure that all changes are accurately reflected in the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) and the Apprenticeship Service account prior to the start of learning;
- ensure that the revised off-the-job training plan complies with funding requirements and is documented.

7.4 Where recognition of prior learning necessitates a reduction to the total price of the apprenticeship, Priory Apprenticeships will reduce the price in proportion to the training elements that the apprentice does not need. This price will then be agreed with the employer prior to programme commencement and documented in the evidence pack.

7.5 RPL decisions must be subject to internal quality assurance to ensure consistency, validity, and compliance with ESFA funding rules.

7.6 Recognition of prior learning must not be used to exempt an apprentice from undertaking end-point assessment, or from any mandatory elements of the apprenticeship where this is prohibited by the apprenticeship standard or funding rules.

8 Policy changes

8.1 This policy may only be amended or withdrawn by The Priory Federation of Academies Trust.