Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

Policy no:	3.4
Version date	25 August 2025
Approved by	Academic Board
Policy Group	Academic Management
Version number	V4
Next review due	August 2026
External reference points	Sustainable Development Goals (2015): 4 Quality Education, 5 Gender Equality, 10 Reduced Inequalities.
	UK Quality Code: Admissions recruitment and widening access: Higher education providers use fair, reliable and appropriate assessment methods that enable them to select students with the potential to complete the course successfully.
	Core Practice on Assessments: Assessment is inclusive and equitable.
	Pearson's senior leadership team, October 2022: *Recognition of prior learning policy and process*

Version Control			
Previous Version	New Version	Date	Update/Notes
V3 (28/10/24)	V4	26-08-25	Reformatted and added version control table.

Contents

1. Introduction

Trent Education Centre (TEC) is dedicated to increasing access to and involvement in Higher Education, particularly for underrepresented and marginalised community members. TEC recognises that rather than formal degrees, many of the individuals we seek to support have prior knowledge or experience that helps them succeed in higher education. It is possible that some students have completed part of a qualification on a course at another TEC or university that is comparable to the qualification they wish to join at Trent Education Centre. This is referred to Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

2. Purpose

This policy explains to staff members what to do when students apply for a course without formal qualifications but have relevant prior knowledge or experience. They may also substitute their prior knowledge or credentials for some of the requirements of the course they want to enrol in as proof of accomplishment. If students can show that they have equal prior learning, they will be exempt from attending courses and turning in assessments for portions of the course. The purpose, methods, and procedures for granting recognition of prior learning (RPL) are outlined in this policy.

RPL is helpful for students who have relevant learning experience but lack the required credits and are transferring between different learning programmes. Students transferring from one accredited awarding organisation to another can take advantage of this.

3. Scope

This guideline is applicable to any part of a TEC course where coursework is used to demonstrate learning. If an exam is the only way that learning is demonstrated, then the student **must take the exam**. The national frameworks of the United Kingdom, including those in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, are recognised by TEC. Qualifications under the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) are likewise covered by this policy.

Prior knowledge obtained through certified courses that do not fit within the designated curriculum of study is referred to in this policy. It also includes experience gained, such as a job term in which the learner may show sufficient learning equivalent to that received by finishing a certain degree programme. Generally, for work experience to be qualified for RPL, it must have been completed for a minimum of two years. In extraordinary cases, TEC may accept one year of work experience in lieu of an evaluation of pertinent courses, provided that the experience is judged comparable.

The only qualifications for which students may apply for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) are those for which internal assessments have been completed. This covers certifications pertaining to subjects or themes determined by outside sources and evaluated internally as well. Applications for RPL for set exams, set assignments, or external assessment are not accepted.

RPL cannot be used to prove accomplishment to receive a complete qualification. An exemption would be used to describe this. When it comes to accrediting a unit or units, or entry requirements to a course, RPL may be used if the assessment criteria for that specific unit or qualification have been met.

4. Descriptions of RPL

When learners can show they have already met the requirements for a unit without needing to study for that unit or take the assessment, they are eligible for recognition of prior learning, or RPL. This is a commonly accepted form of assessment for nationally regulated qualifications. The two subsets that make up RPL are as follows:

4.1. Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)

This procedure allows applicants to have their earlier learning from experience—such as paid or volunteer work—and/or self-directed study acknowledged.

4.2. Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL)

This procedure allows an applicant to request official recognition for past learning from credentials that aren't acknowledged by the combination guidelines for the proposed qualification. The terms listed below are frequently referred to as RPL by the following abbreviations.
   - Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)
   - Accreditation of Prior Achievement (APA)
   - Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)
   - Accreditation of Prior Learning and Achievement (APLA)

5. Guarantees

RPL seeks to ensure that a broad range of learning and accomplishments are accurately and fairly acknowledged by making the following guarantees:

   - RPL is authentic, current, reliable, valid, and sufficient.
   - Accurate recording of RPL procedures, such as experiential and certified learning.
   - Keeping accurate records of the instances in which experiential or certified learning has satisfied learning objectives.
   - Academic team members qualified to make decisions about RPL review applications for RPL.
   - The certified accomplishments from the past that are utilised for RPL meet the requirements for the applicable learning outcomes, and assessment criteria.
   - RPL assessed evidence from certified learning is at the same educational level as the evidence it is substituting for

6. Pearson and RPL

An award for higher education that has received Pearson certification cannot be used to satisfy the requirements for another Pearson award of the same level through recognition of prior learning. The term "award" refers to a full qualification, like a Higher National Diploma or Certificate. A single unit can be used for RPL but is not considered an award.

TEC will evaluate whether Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is appropriate on an individual basis in cases where awards for higher education have been certified by another awarding body with a Pearson licence.

Units may be used towards RPL when students want to top-up from an equivalent Level 4 programme to a Level 5 HN programme on the RQF framework. However, TEC must assign extra tasks for Learning Outcomes that are not met by the prior qualification.

The highest mark possible for a unit in which RPL is used to evaluate the fulfilment of learning objectives for a Pearson Higher National award is a Pass if the RPL was completed through experiential learning.
Explicit proof of how RPL meets the Merit or Distinction requirements for every learning outcome is required if Merits or Distinctions are to be awarded for prior learning .

No more than 50% of a Higher National award's total credit value can be granted through RPL. All RPL decisions must be approved by the Assessment Board, with delegated powers from the Academic Board All decisions and documentation must be approved by the Academic Board and available for Pearson- appointed External Examiners to access.

Students will be registered with Edexcel online as soon as their RPL has been approved by the Academic Board. The assessment records shall be kept up to date in compliance with standard operating procedures. The assessment decisions will not be confirmed until all pertinent data has been considered. Tracking sheets of student results will include units achieved through RPL.

7. Responsibilities

In addition to overseeing the quality of the RPL process, the Quality Nominee and/or Head of Higher Education works with Programme Leaders and Internal Verifiers to support RPL claimants and keep accurate documentation.

8. RPL for Units

The RPL process is student-centred and optional. Students requesting credit through RPL will be assisted in comprehending the kinds of proof needed to support their claims. They will also receive guidance on how to present their case persuasively.

The RPL assessment procedure follows the same quality assurance and monitoring guidelines as any other assessment procedure. The same internal assessment and verification procedures that apply to other credits will apply to credits granted through RPL.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) can be used to get credit for any unit unless the assessment rules of the awarding organisation prevent it.

When utilising RPL as evidence of passing a unit, the assessor must make sure that the student's evidence meets the standards and satisfies the assessment criteria for the learning outcome.

Different sectors may generate different examples of relevant prior learning. The assessor may use interview questions to assess the student's understanding and competency if there is any doubt about the validity of the evidence. Each qualification's assessment methodology will be adhered to.

TEC must carry out a mapping exercise to make sure that the learning outcomes of a given unit of an award are equivalent to the learning outcomes of the other award if students desire to transfer their learning from one awarding organisation to another.

RPL will be reviewed as part of TEC's overall Annual Academic Management Review (AAMR)RPL is also subject to regular internal verification.

9. Course Entry Requirements

Candidates may choose to use Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) to meet the prerequisites for any programme offered by TEC. The Admissions requirements may include job documentation, such as reference letters, payslips, or other pertinent records, to verify work experience. The original certificates and transcripts must be reviewed and verified by a member of the admissions team and the academic interviewer.

The academic interviewer interviews candidates who have submitted RPL to satisfy the entry requirements. They will evaluate the applicant's experience and/or qualification during the interview to see if they meet the prerequisites for the programme, they want to enrol in. Before an applicant is accepted, the application interview form will record their suitability for the course they are applying.

10. RPL Process

10.1. Stage 1 – Pre-assessment

• Students are advised about the possibility of using RPL to claim up to 50% of the units for a course they wish to enrol onto and qualification they wish to attain.
• A senior faculty member such as the Head of Higher Education evaluates the validity of the evidence submitted by students requesting RPL.

10.2. Stage 2 - Mapping Plan

The student must submit an assessment plan that maps all the RPL they want to claim against the requirements of the pertinent unit(s) or sections of a unit. Some evidence that could be regarded as valid RPL are as follows:

- Other awarding organisation certificates
- Non-certificated education or learning
- Paid job experience backed by employer references.
- Community or voluntary work experience backed by employer references.
- Student-provided academic work, such as prior essays
- The Assessor may ask questions or require the learner to demonstrate their skills to ensure that their knowledge, comprehension, and abilities are up to date.
- The Assessor may generate new assignment briefs or tasks to fill in any gaps in the learner's work.
-

10.3. Stage 3 - Assessment of RPL

- A senior faculty member such as the Head of Higher Education or whoever acts as the Quality Nominee considers the learning objectives and assessment standards for the claimed qualification or unit while evaluating the supporting documentation. The assessor must be confident that the applicants evidence satisfies all relevant learning outcomes and assessment criteria before approving RPL and granting a student exemption from a unit or part of unit.
- Assessment records pertaining to prior learning are kept up to date and easily available for internal verification and External Examination upon request.
- If there are gaps in the learner's work during RPL, additional assessment techniques should be used to obtain enough evidence for awarding the learning outcome of the entire unit.

10.4.   Stage 4 - Outcomes of RPL

- Giving a learner feedback is essential after assessing their evidence and making an assessment determination. In addition to outlining the assessment decision, this feedback should outline the learner's alternatives if the unit or qualification is not awarded through RPL.
- If the student is unhappy with the assessment's outcome, you should confirm that they are aware of the appeals procedure. Students may file an appeal or a complaint in line with TEC's Academic Appeals and Complaints and Appeals Policy.

10.5.   Stage 5 Appeals

Students must pursue the Appeals Process specified in the Admissions Policy if they would like to contest an admission decision based on an assessment of RPL.

11. RPL flow Chart

Stage One:
Pre-Assessment

The student is advised about RPL

Stage Two: Mapping Plan

The student requests RPL and submits a Mapping Plan

The student does not request RPL

Stage Three:
Assessment of RPL

The Assessor accepts the request for RPL

The Assessor rejects the request for RPL

Stage Four: Outcomes of RPL Assessment

The Assessor informs the student why a request for RPL has been rejected

Stage Five: Appeals

The student appeals against the decision using the Appeals Policy

The student accepts the Assessor's decision