



Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

Incorporating Accreditation of Prior Learning

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To provide support, clarification and guidance on the assessment and implementation of prior learning gained through student's¹ previous experience, achievements or qualifications.
- 1.2 Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is an assessment process which makes use of evidence of a student's previous non-certificated achievements to demonstrate competence or achievement within a unit or qualification. This includes experiential learning.
- 1.3 Accreditation of prior learning (APL) is an assessment process which makes use of a student's previous certificated achievements to demonstrate knowledge or competence within a unit or qualification.
- 1.4 Usually, RPL/APL will be used for discrete units/modules, rather than entire qualifications or years of study, as a student would not normally be able to offer evidence of prior achievement that completely matches every aspect of a qualification's assessment requirement. Nor would such wholesale RPL/APL be in the best interest of the student and their learning experience.
- 1.5 RPL/APL allows a student to avoid unnecessary duplication of learning, meaning that they can be presented for summative assessment without repeating learning in areas where they will be able to show they can meet the learning outcomes.

2 Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all qualifications including apprenticeships. Process A (section 5) illustrates the protocol for further education students; process B illustrates the protocol for higher education students.
- 2.2 Where a student wishes to claim RPL/APL against elements of their apprenticeship standard, any request should be considered as part of the initial skills scan and defining of the individualised training programme, and should not be considered as part of process A or process B.
- 2.3 Students on higher apprenticeship programmes should follow the process B (higher education students) should they wish to claim RPL/APL for any element of the qualification element their apprenticeship standard, if applicable.
- 2.4 This policy will provide support for all staff with responsibility for assessment and to those responsible for planning, carrying out quality assuring assessment.

3 Responsibilities

- 3.1 This policy was discussed and agreed by the Quality team prior to approval by the Senior Leadership Team.

¹ The term student includes all types of provision including apprentices.

4 Definitions and/or Relevant Legislation

- 4.1 Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is a review of non-certificated achievements.
- 4.2 Accreditation of prior learning (APL) is a review of certificated achievements
- 4.3 This policy is written in the context of:
- The current College Strategic Plan 2023-2028
 - All current legislation that is relative to Equality and Diversity, Safeguarding and Health Safety & Welfare
 - Where appropriate the College policies for Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, Safeguarding and Health and Safety
 - ESFA/MCA funding guidance in relation to prior knowledge and experience and reduction in funding where appropriate.

5 The Policy

Process A – Further Education Qualifications

- 5.1a It is the responsibility of the Assessor/Tutor and Internal Quality Assurer (IQA) to ensure the RPL/APL evidence is identified as part of the Initial Advice and Guidance meeting. This process must be read in conjunction with the Awarding Organisation/s RPL/APL policy and forms part of the planning of assessments.
- 5.2a Using RPL/APL allows staff to plan for individuals with different starting points.
- 5.3a It is the responsibility of the IQA to ensure that evidence presented for RPL/APL is current and of the standard required to meet the learning outcomes.
- 5.4a The RPL process is relevant where a student has evidence of having previously acquired knowledge and skills but has not received formal recognition for it through a qualification or other form of certification. Evidence can be drawn from:
- Domestic/family life
 - Education and training
 - Work activities
 - Community and voluntary activities.

This list is not exhaustive

- 5.5a The APL process is relevant where a student has evidence of formal recognition through a qualification or other form of certification. The tutor/assessor must decide if the evidence is current, sufficient, relevant, reliable, valid, safe and authentic.
- 5.6a Evidence obtained through the RPL/APL process must be assessed to the same rigorous quality process, as evidence obtained through any other process.
- 5.7a In no circumstances does the RPL process mean that any required qualification summative assessment can be avoided e.g., mandatory exams, practical/theory tests or assignments. This is because the prescribed summative assessment is the process through which evidence is evaluated.

5.8a It remains the role of tutors/assessors and IQA's to ensure that learning outcomes are only deemed to have been met where evidence is:

- **Valid:** Consider if the demands of the learning outcome have been met
- **Authentic:** Does the evidence genuinely belong to the student and how has it been produced with consideration to use of Artificial Intelligence.
- **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.
- **Current:** The evidence is sufficiently recent for the assessor to be confident that the student still has that same level of knowledge and skills.
- **Sufficient:** There must be enough evidence to fully meet the requirements of the learning outcome. If there is insufficient evidence, it can be complimented by additional evidence
- **Safe:** the evidence is not generated solely by artificial intelligence and therefore cannot be considered in this process

5.9a If a student can demonstrate that they meet all the learning outcomes and assessment criteria in a unit, then the tutor/assessor can claim credit for that unit solely based on their RPL/APL achievement.

5.10a If RPL evidence is only sufficient to cover one or more learning outcome, or to partly meet the need of a learning outcome, then additional assessment methods should be employed to generate evidence for knowledge deficits on which to base a sufficient assessment decision.

5.11a RPL/APL evidence must be assessed by a competent assessor/tutor. This must be in the best interests of the student.

Methods of assessment may include but are not limited to:

- Examination of certificates
- Examinations of documents/portfolios
- Expert witness testimonies
- Reflective accounts
- Professional discussion.

5.12a RPL/APL must be carried out as an entire process. This means that the tutor/assessor should:

- Plan with the student
- Make a formal assessment decision
- Feedback assessment decisions to the student, confirming the decision and giving guidance on the available options
- Maintain records
- Ensure that students are aware of the grievance and appeals procedure.

5.13a RPL evidence will be subject to internal quality assurance. A record of the discussion must be retained for a period of 3 years. This can be a document, or a recording plus a transcript with dates, times and evidence of those present at the meeting. Where awarding organisation documents exist, these must be used.

5.14a Where RPL/APL is being utilised, funding requirements must be checked with the Registry Team. In the case of Apprenticeships, the Apprenticeship team must ensure that apprentices are not over funded for skills and knowledge they have already secured, and programme durations are adjusted where appropriate. The same process will apply to the adult curriculum where this leads to appropriate funding adjustments.

Process B – Higher Education Qualifications

- 5.1b It is the responsibility of the Programme Leader to ensure the RPL/APL evidence is identified as part of an Initial Advice and Guidance meeting. This process must be read in conjunction with the validating/awarding institutions RPL/APL policy.
- 5.2b All decisions confirming or rejecting RPL/APL claims will be made by the colleges Higher Education RPL/APL panel.
- 5.3b Using RPL/APL allows staff to plan for individuals with different starting points.
- 5.4b It is the responsibility of the Programme Leader to ensure that evidence presented for RPL/APL is current and of the standard required to meet the module learning outcomes.
- 5.5b The RPL process is relevant where a student has evidence of having previously acquired knowledge and skills but has not received formal recognition for it through a qualification or other form of certification. Evidence can be drawn from a range of sources but must be tangible and demonstrable to support any claim for RPL.
- 5.6b The APL process is relevant where a student has evidence of formal recognition through a qualification or other form of certification. The Programme Leader must decide if the evidence is current, sufficient, relevant, reliable, valid, safe and authentic.
- **Valid:** Consider if the demands of the learning outcome have been met
 - **Authentic:** Does the evidence genuinely belong to the student and how has it been produced with consideration to use of Artificial Intelligence.
 - **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.
 - **Current:** The evidence is sufficiently recent for the assessor to be confident that the student still has that same level of knowledge and skills.
 - **Sufficient:** There must be enough evidence to fully meet the requirements of the learning outcome. If there is insufficient evidence, it can be complemented by additional evidence
- 5.7b Evidence obtained through the RPL/APL process must be assessed to the same rigorous quality process, as evidence obtained through any other process.
- 5.8b In no circumstances does the RPL process mean that any required professional, regulatory, statutory body (PRSB) assessment, leading to professional accreditation, can be avoided e.g., mandatory exams, practical/theory tests or assignments.
- 5.9b If a student can demonstrate that they meet all the learning outcomes and assessment criteria in a module, then the Programme Leader can request a claim for credit in that module, solely based on their RPL/APL achievement.
- 5.10b If RPL evidence is only sufficient to cover one or more learning outcome, or to partly meet the need of a learning outcome, then additional assessment methods can be employed to generate evidence for knowledge deficits on which to base a sufficient assessment claim.
- 5.11b RPL/APL applications and evidence must be evaluated by a competent and suitably experienced course team member, prior to consideration by a panel of peer colleagues within the college. All decisions will be taken in the best interests of the student.
- 5.12b Methods of assessment may include but are not limited to:
- Examination of certificates

- Examinations of documents/portfolios
- Expert witness testimonies
- Reflective accounts
- Professional discussions

5.13b RPL/APL must be carried out as an entire process (see appendix A).

This means that the Programme Leader should:

- Plan with the student
- Support with the gathering of RPL/AP evidence
- Support the application for RPL/APL using form in appendix B
- Obtain sign-off for the RPL/APL application from the relevant Curriculum Lead
- Submit, on behalf of the student, the RPL/APL application to the RPL panel for consideration, usually, no later than three weeks prior to the commencement of the module.

The RPL/APL panel will then:

- Give full and thorough consideration to the application
- Make a formal decision as to whether to accept or decline the application
- Feedback assessment decisions to the Programme Leader, confirming the decision and giving guidance on the available options
- Maintain records
- Ensure that students are aware of the grievance and appeals procedure.

5.14b RPL evidence may be subject to internal quality assurance. A record of discussions must be retained for a period of 3 years.

5.15b Where RPL/APL is being utilised, funding requirements must be checked with the Registry Team.

6 Relevant Policies and Procedures

6.1 Internal Quality Assurance Policy
Assessment Policy (FE and Workbased Learning) including
Marking and Written Feedback Policy

7 Who to Contact with Queries

7.1 Vice Principal, Quality of Education

Adherence to and compliance with this policy will be monitored through the internal quality assurance process.

This policy will be reviewed 3 yearly by the Vice Principal Quality of Education in line with Awarding Organisation and Ofqual requirements.

8 Communication

8.1 This policy will be communicated via management meetings and located on the Staff Intranet.

9 Authorisation

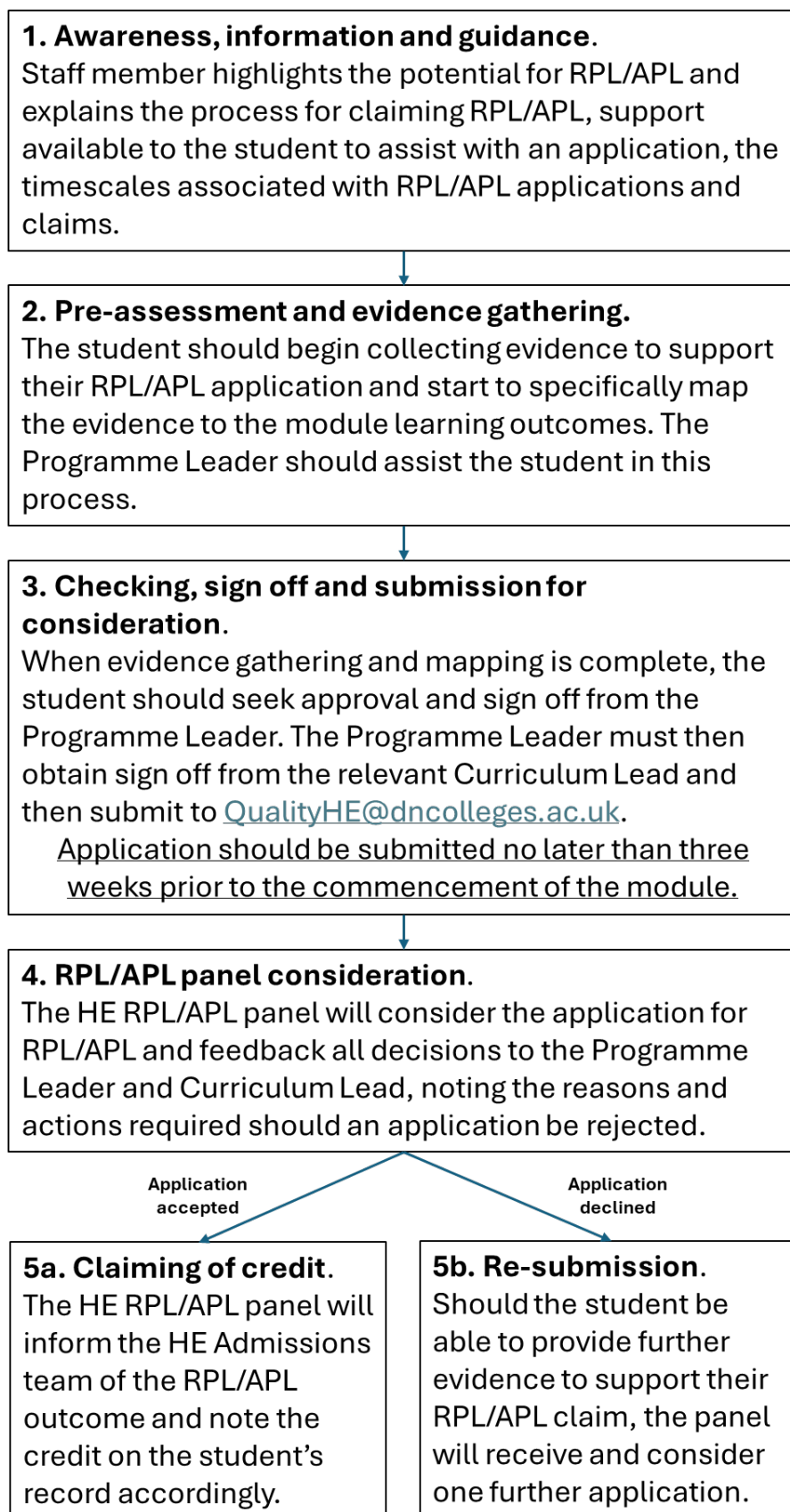
Policy Holder:	Vice Principal, Quality of Education
Union Approval & Date:	N/A
SLT Approval & Date:	4 December 2024
Governor Committee/ Board Approval:	N/A
Next Review Date:	December 2027

*Policies will be reviewed every 3 years unless there is a specific requirement to undertake a review more frequently. If for any reason a review does not take place in the planned period, the policy will remain current until a review takes place.

The Equality Impact has been considered on this policy and procedure.

Appendix A

Higher Education RPL/APL process overview



Appendix B

Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) or Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Application Form and Record of Decision

Students or applicants who wish to be granted RPL/APL for part of a validated partner University qualification, **must** complete all sections of this pro-forma and be guided by the relevant Programme Leaders,

This pro-forma is to be returned to the QualityHE@DNcolleges.ac.uk.

Part 1 – Application Details

Student name	
Student ID (if currently a student at UCNL/UCD)	
Programme	

Please provide an overview of your application for APL and or RPL, including a brief rationale for your application (student/applicant to complete)

Part 2 - Rationale and evidence for APL

Undergraduate courses (HNC, HND, Fd, BSc BA)

State the total number of modules and credits at Level 4 for which APL is claimed		State the total number of modules and credits at Level 5 for which APL is claimed	
Number of modules	Total credit value	Number of modules	Total credit value

Postgraduate (MA, MSc, PGDip)

State the total number of credits at the certificate stage (1 st 60 credits, maximum 60 credits) for which APL is given	State the total number of credits at the diploma stage (2nd 60 credits, maximum 60 credits) for which APL is given

Please use the following table to map previously achieved academic credit to the modules and their learning outcomes, you wish to claim credit for. The relevant Programme Leader should support this process and provide a supporting statement. All rules of the awarding institution must be understood and adhered to.

Module and learning outcomes you are claim APL for (ie on the programme you are or will be studying)	Module and learning outcomes you have achieved and wish to use to claim APL	Evidence available to demonstrate claim

Supporting statement from Programme Leader

Part 3 - Rationale and evidence for RPL

Undergraduate courses (HNC, HND, Fd, BSc BA)

State the total number of modules and credits at Level 4 for which APL is claimed		State the total number of modules and credits at Level 5 for which APL is claimed	
Number of modules	Total credit value	Number of modules	Total credit value

Postgraduate (MA, MSc, PGDip)

State the total number of credits at the certificate stage (1st 60 credits, maximum 60 credits) for which APL is given	State the total number of credits at the diploma stage (2nd 60 credits, maximum 60 credits) for which APL is given

Please use the following table to map previously achieved non-certificated learning to the modules and their learning outcomes, you wish to claim credit for. Tangible and demonstrable evidence to support all RPL claims must be submitted with this application and clearly cross referenced to the module learning outcomes in the table below. The relevant Programme Leader should support this process and provide a supporting statement. All rules of the awarding institution must be understood and adhered to.

Module and learning outcomes you are claim RPL for (ie on the programme you are or will be studying)	RPL explanation	Reference to evidence source to demonstrate claim

Supporting statement from Programme Leader

Modules not exempted:

Please confirm the module(s) **not** exempted and which **must be completed** by the applicant to achieve the qualification:

• Module title	• Le vel (4/5)	• Cre dit value	• Date for completion
•	•	•	•
•	•	•	•
•	•	•	•
•	•	•	•
•	•	•	•
•	•	•	•

Further supporting information or evidence

Part 4 - Checklist

The following questions are intended to help the student/applicant and the Programme Leader when making an APL/RPL claim:

	YES	NO	Comment:
Has a full transcript and module information been received for certificated study?			
Are you satisfied with the documentary evidence (portfolio) provided to demonstrate suitability for RPL? Are competencies and outcomes from the learning clearly defined - does the evidence confirm that the necessary learning has been gained from the experiences described?			
Does the evidence confirm that the student/applicant has completed what they claimed?			
Is there evidence that the learning has been kept up to date/is current to the standards of the academic subject and any professional requirements?			
Is there a clear match of previous learning to those of the module(s) from which specific credit exemption is sought?			
Are the knowledge, skills and competencies at the level at which credit is sought?			
Are all module(s) prerequisites sufficiently evidenced in order to satisfy requirements of the next stage modules?			
Is there a need for additional evidence in support of the RPL claim?			
Is the student/applicant required to attend an interview or undertake any additional work in support of the RPL claim?			

Part 5 – Confirmation and submission

I confirm that full and appropriate consideration has been given to the APL/RPL made here and that the evidence provided is accurate and authentic.	
Signature of student/applicant	
Date	

I confirm that full and appropriate consideration has been given to the APL/RPL made here, the evidence provided by the student/applicant is, to the best of my knowledge, accurate and authentic, and that the APL/RPL is in the best interests of the student/applicant.	
Signature of Programme Leader	
Date	

I confirm that full and appropriate consideration has been given to this APL/RPL by the Programme Leader made here, is in the best interests of the student/applicant and is not within three weeks of the commencement of the module*	
Signature of Curriculum Lead	
Date	

* in exceptional circumstances, an application for APL/RPL is within three weeks of the commencement of the module may be accepted for consideration but only with a substantive rationale provided by the Curriculum Lead. If applicable, please use the space below to provide this rationale.	

Part 6 – Panel consideration, outcome and feedback
(for panel use only)

Application received	
Application attempt	First / Second
Date of panel meeting	
Panel attendees	

Panel decision		
Accept	Reject – permit resubmission	Reject - final

Key considerations made and feedback provided by the HE APL/RPL panel

Signature of Chair of APL / RPL Panel	
Date	