

THE ORCHARD PROJECT

Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

About us

The Orchard Project is a small but national charity, established in 2009, dedicated to creating a skilled community of orchardists to plant, care for and harvest fruit trees, connecting urban communities and increasing access to fruit. We work with people from all walks of life, with a specific focus on people living in poorer, inner city areas. We have already made a big impact in London and are being seen as the urban orchard experts. Each year we are engaging approximately 5,000 people in orchard related activities. In 2017 we started offering accredited training in partnership with Crossfields Institute.

Introduction to recognition of prior learning (RPL)

RPL is a process that enables learners to receive recognition for skills, knowledge and understanding that they already possess and which meet the standards for a specified qualification.

RPL is an assessment process that enables recognition of achievement from a range of activities using any valid assessment methodology. Provided that the assessment requirements of a given unit or qualification have been met, the use of RPL is acceptable for accrediting all or part of a qualification if this is allowed in the qualification specification.

The qualification specification will outline whether equivalences, exemptions and/or RPL are acceptable and if so what type and how this can be claimed.

The five stages of RPL

If the breach is also classified as an Adverse Effect then the Chief Executive must promptly inform Ofqual in accordance with our procedure for dealing with Adverse Effects (see Governance Manual for further details). In so doing, they will inform Ofqual of the reasonable steps that we have taken or intend to take to prevent, correct or mitigate the Adverse Effect, including details of any reviews we are/will carry out.

Stage 1: Application

A tutor at The Orchard Project (TOP) will make an RPL request on behalf of a learner to the Education, Skills & Training Manager. They will review the request to ensure it meets any stated and acceptable opportunities agreed within the qualification specification and will feed back the outcome to the tutor within 10 working days of receiving the request.

Requests for, and assessment of, RPL should be made as soon as possible once the learner is registered on a qualification. They should not be left until delivery and assessment activities have come to an end, as this could seriously disadvantage the learner if their request is rejected.

Stage 2: Assembling an RPL claim

RPL learner activity The learner will:	RPL Tutor/Assessor activity The tutor/assessor will:
Reflect on relevant prior learning and achievement to identify evidence	Provide guidance to the learner
Establish an action and assessment plan	Identify and agree an action and assessment plan with the RPL learner
Agree timescale and submission date with tutor/assessor	Provide guidance of timescale and submission date
Identify gaps in achievement	Map achievement and identify gaps
Provide evidence of achievement in a portfolio; for example, this may be paper-based, electronic, video/audio recorded evidence etc.	Determine and set the standard

This stage should be undertaken at the earliest opportunity once a learner is registered on a qualification, in order that they will not be disadvantaged if their RPL claim is not awarded.

Stage 3: Assessing an RPL claim

RPL learner activity The learner will:	RPL Tutor/Assessor activity The tutor/assessor will:
Review action and assessment plan	Assess the evidence and check its authenticity
Provide additional evidence if required	Provide the learner with timely feedback
Make a final submission	Arrange Internal Quality Assurance

This stage should be completed within 10 working days of the agreed date for submission of the RPL claim.

Stage 4: Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) of an RPL claim

RPL learner activity The learner will:	Internal Quality Assurer activity The IQA will:
Receive feedback on the portfolio submitted	Ensure that the evidence is valid and has been correctly assessed
	Provide feedback to tutor/assessor in the form of an IQA report
	Arrange external quality assurance (EQA) of the RPL claim

This stage should be completed within 10 working days of receipt of the assessed portfolio by the IQA.

Stage 5: External Quality Assurance (EQA) of an RPL claim

The IQA will notify the External Quality Assurer (EQA) of the RPL claim and make arrangements with them for monitoring and review of the process outlined above.

The EQA will request relevant evidence, including feedback to the learner and IQA report, and will judge if the claim meets the assessment requirements and conditions set out in the qualification specification.

The EQA will either release or withhold the claim in accordance with their judgement, and will report to the IQA accordingly. They will do this within 10 working days of receiving all required evidence. This process will apply even where a qualification is otherwise given direct claims status. A claim for certification that includes an element of RPL must always be referred to the EQA before the claim is made, or it risks being invalidated.

Additional information to support the 5-Stage Process

Stage 1 – Application

All learners working towards Crossfields Institute qualifications must be registered for their qualification with Crossfields Institute. Requests for registering RPL learners can be made at any time. The learner will be registered for the qualification in the usual way. Crossfields Institute does not accept simultaneous applications for a learner to be registered and to receive certification, thus commitment to the RPL process must be made early on.

Stage 2 – Assembling an RPL claim

Reflecting on Experience

The starting point for any learner wishing to claim for RPL is to reflect on their experience in order to identify relevant achievement. They should think about evidence of knowledge and experience gained:

- At work
- In any relevant voluntary work and leisure activities
- In formal or informal education and training – for example, adult education courses or in-company training
- From independent study
- From home-based activities, such as care of the young, the elderly or the sick, or involvement in the family business.

RPL learners will need to understand the relevant assessment requirements associated with the units they are claiming. Then they will be able to work towards assembling evidence to support these claims.

Identifying Gaps in Achievement

The assessment requirements of Crossfields Institute qualifications are listed clearly on the unit or module descriptors in the qualification specification. Copies of these documents must be used to identify and keep track of what has been achieved and what is still required of the learner.

Providing evidence of achievement – the portfolio

Learners will need to provide evidence to show that they have covered the requirements of the units or modules. This will take the form of a portfolio, prepared by the learner, which sets out the qualification assessment requirements claimed, together with any supporting evidence. The learner should divide their portfolio into sections according to units or modules. The unit or module tracker (which also serves as the evidence tracking sheet) must be at the front of each section. The portfolio MUST be page numbered and cross-referenced to the unit or module descriptor, in order to make for straightforward assessment and quality assurance of portfolios.

Professional discussions or oral assessment can be used to contribute towards portfolio evidence. They must be documented and can be supported by audio/video recordings.

Separate evidence is not required for each assessment criterion. Where possible, learners should be encouraged to present a small number of complex pieces of evidence that demonstrate the achievement of a number of unit or module assessment requirements.

Staff Guidance and Support

RPL learners will probably require considerable tutor/assessor encouragement and guidance in compiling their RPL evidence. Guiding RPL learners is a staff-intensive activity. While one-to-one contact is essential, there are advantages in holding workshops – both in economy of staff time and in helping to overcome any sense of isolation felt by the learners. Additional support with the RPL process may be provided by TOP or by Crossfields Institute.

Most learners will be unfamiliar with the process of putting together an RPL claim. It is important that learners receive adequate advice and guidance on how to proceed. This will involve:

- Encouraging reflection and self-evaluation
- Helping to identify possible sources of evidence
- Helping to identify possible evidence of achievement
- Advising on the structure and presentation of evidence
- Explaining assessment requirements

Stage 3 – Assessing an RPL claim

The RPL tutor/assessor has the responsibility for ensuring that all the requirements of the Crossfields Institute qualification have been met before submitting the assessed portfolio for internal and external quality assurance. The assessor should assess the RPL evidence, using the assessment criteria in the qualification. In considering the evidence, the assessor needs to ask if it is valid, authentic, current, relevant and sufficient (see below for definitions).

If the assessor judges that the evidence submitted is not sufficient to meet the requirements of the unit or module, it will be necessary to seek additional evidence. This may be done by the learner:

- Undergoing an oral assessment
- Completing an appropriate assignment
- Completing a written test
- Carrying out a demonstration
- A combination of the above

Stage 4 – Internal Quality Assurance of an RPL claim

Once the portfolios are complete and have been assessed by the RPL assessor, they must be passed on to the relevant Internal Quality Assurer (IQA) for the qualification at TOP. The role of the IQA is to ensure that the evidence provided meets the requirements and standards of the units or modules being claimed, and is comparable with other claims for the qualification. If the IQA judges that the evidence is valid, and that the assessment decisions are accurate the IQA records their process using an IQA report and notifies the EQA. If the evidence or assessment decisions are not valid, the IQA will advise the tutor/assessor of what is missing or invalid and discuss what opportunities there may be for the learner to collect and submit additional evidence to meet the requirements. It is the IQA's responsibility to contact the EQA (or Crossfields Institute if an EQA has not been allocated to the qualification at the centre) when the portfolio(s) are ready to be Externally Quality Assured and claimed.

Stage 5 – External Quality Assurance carried out by a Crossfields Institute appointed EQA

A Crossfields Institute appointed EQA will fulfil the external quality assurance process appropriately for each qualification. There will be no distinction between RPL evidence and other forms of evidence submitted to meet the requirements of a qualification.

The evidence the learner provides is judged against the following key criteria:

Validity Does the evidence match the competences that should be evident on successful achievement of the qualification? Are the skills, knowledge, understanding and expertise being demonstrated by the learner at the appropriate level?

Sufficiency Is the amount of evidence sufficient? Does it cover all the aspects required?

Authenticity This refers to the ownership of the evidence. Assessors need to be confident that the work submitted is directly attributable to the learner.

Reliability Does the evidence accurately reflect a level of knowledge, understanding and/or performance that can be consistently demonstrated or produced?

Currency Assessors must be sure that the evidence submitted by a learner is recent enough to be considered a measure of their current levels of knowledge, understanding and competence.

The student will either be recommended for award of credit and certification OR the portfolio with feedback will be returned to the RPL tutor/assessor and student with a request for further evidence and assessment.

Contact us

If you have any queries about the contents of the policy, please contact our Education, Skills and Training Manager on 07714 745 408 or email her at jo@theorchardproject.org.uk.

Review Arrangements

The Orchard Project will review the policy and associated procedures bi-annually as part of our self-assessment arrangements. It will be revised as necessary in response to feedback from our learners, affiliates and regulators.

Policy Last Reviewed: July 2021

Next revision date July 2023

Reviewed by: Education Skills and Training Manager, Jo Homan