



**KINGSMERE  
COLLEGE  
LONDON**

# Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy

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## 1.0 Introduction

**Kingsmere College London** recognises that learners may enter programmes with prior knowledge, skills, or experience gained through previous study, professional practice, or other relevant activities. The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) process provides a structured and quality-assured mechanism through which such learning may be recognised, where appropriate, towards the achievement of a qualification.

This policy is designed to ensure that RPL is applied consistently, transparently, and rigorously, without compromising academic standards, assessment integrity, or the validity of certification claims. RPL is not an entitlement and is awarded only where a learner can demonstrate achievement of the required learning outcomes and assessment criteria to the same standard as those achieved through formal assessment.

This policy is reviewed annually, or earlier where required by regulatory, awarding, or institutional change.

## 2.0 Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all programmes delivered by **Kingsmere College London** and to all learners who wish to apply for recognition of prior learning.

It applies to:

- Learners seeking recognition of non-certificated or certificated prior learning
- Academic staff, assessors, and Internal Quality Assurers involved in RPL decisions
- Quality assurance and academic management staff overseeing the process

RPL may be considered for both distance and face-to-face delivery, subject to the same quality assurance controls.



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### **3.0 Definition of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)**

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a method of assessment through which a learner may demonstrate that they already meet the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of a unit through prior knowledge, understanding, or skills, and therefore may not need to undertake further learning for that unit.

RPL may relate to learning achieved through a range of contexts, including formal education, work-based activity, professional practice, community involvement, or voluntary activities. The key principle of RPL is that it assesses learning, not experience alone.

Related terms are often used interchangeably in practice, including Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL), Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL), and Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL). Where prior learning has already been formally assessed and certificated, it is considered under RPCL, which is addressed separately within this policy.

### **4.0 When to Use RPL**

RPL is appropriate where a learner believes they have already achieved learning equivalent to that required for a specific unit, but where that learning has not previously been recognised through the qualification they are seeking to achieve.

The potential for RPL should be identified as early as possible, normally during initial assessment or induction. Learners should be fully informed of:

- The purpose and limitations of RPL
- The evidence requirements
- The potential advantages and disadvantages of pursuing an RPL claim

Learners must not opt out of teaching, learning, or assessment on the assumption that RPL will be granted. Credit through RPL can only be awarded once the claim has been assessed and formally approved.



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## **5.0 Assessment of RPL Evidence**

Evidence submitted for RPL is assessed to the same standard and level of rigour as evidence generated through formal assessment. RPL does not remove the requirement to meet all learning outcomes and assessment criteria, nor does it allow mandatory assessment components to be bypassed.

Assessors must be satisfied that RPL evidence is:

- Valid, in that it clearly demonstrates achievement of the relevant learning outcomes and reflects current practice where appropriate
- Authentic, in that it is the learner's own work and contribution
- Sufficient, in that there is enough evidence to meet all requirements
- Reliable, such that another assessor would reasonably reach the same judgement

Where evidence is insufficient to meet all requirements, RPL evidence may be supplemented through additional assessment methods before a final decision is made.

## **6.0 Outcomes of RPL**

RPL may result in full or partial recognition, depending on the evidence presented.

- Where a learner can demonstrate achievement of all learning outcomes and assessment criteria for a unit, credit may be awarded for that unit solely on the basis of RPL.
- Where RPL evidence meets some, but not all, requirements, additional assessment methods may be used to generate sufficient evidence to support a safe and valid assessment decision.

Evidence used for RPL is not subject to a fixed time limit; however, assessors must determine whether it remains current, valid, and representative of contemporary practice.

RPL may be used alongside other assessment methods, such as professional discussion or observation, to assess current competence.



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## 7.0 RPL Process

**Kingsmere College London** operates a structured RPL process that clearly defines the responsibilities of learners, assessors, and quality assurance staff. The process is designed to ensure that RPL decisions are fair, evidence-based, and academically sound, while remaining proportionate to the level and scope of the claim being made.

At all stages, learners are supported to understand what evidence is required and how their prior learning will be assessed, but responsibility for demonstrating achievement rests with the learner.

The RPL process involves:

- Initial guidance and planning with the learner to determine whether RPL is appropriate
- Submission of relevant and sufficient evidence by the learner
- Formal assessment of evidence by a suitably qualified assessor
- Feedback to the learner confirming the assessment decision and any further options
- Maintenance of clear, auditable records of the assessment decision

Assessors must ensure that all learning outcomes and assessment criteria being claimed are fully covered and that assessment records are retained in line with standard assessment procedures. All RPL decisions are subject to internal quality assurance and external quality assurance where applicable. RPL credit is awarded on a case-by-case basis and will not normally contribute to 100% of a qualification.

## 7.1 RPL Decision-Making Flow

The following decision-making flow applies to all RPL applications and ensures consistency, transparency, and academic integrity:

### Stage 1: Initial Enquiry and Guidance

The learner raises an enquiry regarding RPL, normally during initial assessment or induction. The College provides clear guidance on the scope of RPL, evidence requirements, and potential outcomes, ensuring the learner understands that RPL is not guaranteed.

### Stage 2: Suitability Review

An initial review is undertaken to determine whether the RPL claim is appropriate in principle. This considers the relevance of the learner's prior learning to the unit being claimed and whether RPL is permissible within the qualification structure.



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## **Stage 3: Evidence Submission**

The learner submits evidence demonstrating prior learning. Evidence may include documentation, reflective accounts, professional discussion, or other appropriate methods, depending on the nature of the claim.

## **Stage 4: Assessment of Evidence**

A suitably qualified assessor evaluates the evidence against the learning outcomes and assessment criteria, applying the principles of validity, authenticity, sufficiency, and reliability. Where required, additional assessment methods may be used to support a robust judgement.

## **Stage 5: Quality Assurance Review**

The assessment decision is subject to internal quality assurance to confirm consistency, fairness, and compliance with College and awarding requirements.

## **Stage 6: Decision and Feedback**

The learner is formally notified of the outcome. Where credit is not awarded, feedback explains the reasons and outlines any further learning or assessment options available.

## **Stage 7: Recording and Certification**

All decisions and evidence are recorded securely and retained for audit and quality assurance purposes. Where credit is awarded, certification and progression records are updated accordingly.

## **8.0 Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL)**

Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning applies where a learner has previously achieved certificated learning that may be considered equivalent to a unit within the qualification being pursued.

Applications for RPCL are subject to rigorous assessment to confirm that the prior learning:

- Is at an appropriate academic level
- Covers the content and learning outcomes of the unit being claimed
- Is supported by valid documentary evidence, including original certificates
- Mapping between the previously achieved learning and the unit being claimed must be clearly documented and retained as part of the RPL record.



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## 9.0 Clarification of Related Terms

A number of processes are often confused with RPL. These include exemptions, equivalent units, and credit transfer arrangements.

Exemptions recognise learning achieved outside formal qualification frameworks but do not attract credit. Equivalent units refer to different units that are judged to be equal to or exceed the content and level of another unit. Credit transfer involves the formal transfer of credits between qualifications or frameworks.

While these processes may be used where appropriate, they are distinct from RPL and are subject to separate consideration