

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL)

Policy Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a process which recognises and can accredit achievement from a range of valid assessment activities. Provided that the assessment requirements of a given unit or qualification have been met, the use of RPL is acceptable for accrediting part of whole, of any HMFSC unit, unit(s) or a qualification.

EVIDENCE SUBMITTED FOR RPL MUST BE:

- **Authentic:** indisputably the learners own work
- **Current:** meets the requirements of the current learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria
- **Valid:** accurately meets the requirements of the current assessment criteria
- **Relevant:** the evidence generated/provided is appropriate to the content
- **Sufficient:** there is enough of it to confirm consistency of performance regarding meeting of the learning outcome

INTRODUCTION

RPL provides a route for the recognition of the achievements resulting from continuous learning and recognises that learning is continuous - whether at work, home, leisure or in the classroom.

TERMINOLOGY

- Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)
- Accreditation of Prior Experimental Learning (APEL)
- Accreditation of Prior Achievement (APA)
- Accreditation of Prior Learning and Achievement (APLA)

These terms broadly describe the same process but because of its wide acceptance, nationally and internationally, HMFSC uses the term Recognition of Prior Learning.

GUIDANCE ON RPL

The RPL process is not concerned with allowing for exceptional entry to, or exemption from, a programme of study. It focuses on assessment of prior learning which may count as evidence towards a whole part of a unit or unit(s) accumulated towards a HMFSC qualification.

Although it is possible for an entire qualification to be achieved through RPL, it is generally unlikely that evidence from prior learning would completely match every aspect of the qualification's assessment requirements.

In considering claims for RPL, HMFSC reserves the right to require samples of evidence from additional units. Where significant number of learners are claiming.

RESPONSIBILITY

All applications for RPL should be submitted to Noreen Moses (Systems & Quality), her final recommendations will be moderated by the Internal Verifier.

RESPONDING TO INITIAL ENQUIRIES

On first enquiry, HMFSC will discuss the following and confirm in writing, with the RPL candidate:

- The emphasis RPL places on learning and achievement
- Putting the RPL claim with the context of an overall qualification
- An overview of what would be needed from the learner when putting together an RPL claim
- An overview of the issues surrounding assessment of RPL

One-to-one contact is essential, all RPL learners will need support particularly in the RPL process and subject-specific information. Learners should receive sound advice and guidance on how to proceed re:

- Understanding the need for reflection and self-evaluation
- Identifying possible sources of achievement
- Identifying possible evidence of achievement
- Understanding the nature of evidence required
- Understanding how to interpret assessment requirements

SUBJECT SUPPORT WILL INCLUDE:

- Identifying the learner's aspirations and expectations
- Identifying, through an action plan, the learner's targets and how and when to achieve them
- Encouraging reflection and self-evaluation
- Helping to identify actual sources of achievement within a specific context
- Advising the learner on how to assemble and present evidence of past achievements in a concise and effective manner
- Advising on further work to be done
- Identifying the assessment requirements

The starting point for any learner wishing to claim for RPL is to reflect on their experience gained:

- At work
- In any relevant voluntary work and leisure activities
- In formal or informal education and training e.g. adult education courses or incompany training or independent study
- From home-based activities, such as care of the young, the elderly or the sick
- Involvement in the family business

RPL learners will need to understand the relevant assessment requirements associated to the unit(s) or part of the units(s) they are claiming. Then they will be able to work towards assembling evidence to support these claims.

MAPPING ACHIEVEMENT

Listing the learning and assessment requirements of individual HMFSC qualification units clearly, enables both the support staff and the learner to focus on what is required and what has been achieved. This mapping will allow for continuous self-assessment by the RPL learner.

Often the next way of explaining assessment requirements is to identify the evidence/examples of evidence that would meet the specified requirements. By way of example, it could be in the form of an assignment, a project, documentation or testimony from persons competent to give this.

PROVIDING EVIDENCE OF ACHIEVEMENT

The Portfolio Learners will need to provide evidence which shows that they have covered the requirements of the units(s). This normally means different types of evidence are indexed within a folder or file of some kind and this is usually called a portfolio.

The evidence provided should then be mapped or indexed against the qualification/unit assessment requirements. Professional discussions or oral assessment can be used to contribute towards portfolio evidence, which must be documented and can be supported by audio/video tape recordings

Most portfolios will require at least:

- A statement of the claim for accreditation
- A statement of authenticity
- A brief curriculum vita, to put the claim into context a summary of the learning and assessment requirements claimed
- A commentary which identifies prior achievement against individual learning and assessment requirements
- A list of evidence against each assessment requirement claimed
- Full evidence against each assessment requirement claimed

Assessors will be looking for evidence that is:

- Authentic: indisputably the learners own work
- Current: meets the requirements of the current learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria
- Valid: accurately meets the requirements of the current assessment criteria
- Relevant: the evidence generated/provided is appropriate to the content
- Sufficient: there is enough of it to confirm consistency of performance regarding meeting of the learning outcome.

Separate evidence is not required for each qualification assessment criterion. Where possible, learners should be encouraged to present evidence that demonstrate the achievement of a number of unit assessment requirements/criteria.

DETERMINING THE STANDARD

The standard of the evidence submitted to satisfy all the requirements must be made clear to the RPL learner. In setting out these requirements, HMFSC will ensure that the language used is clear and unambiguous. Emphasising that the standard required of an RPL learner is identical to that demanded of a learner pursuing a conventional study route.

ASSESSING THE EVIDENCE

Through the evidence submitted, RPL learners must demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the qualification they are claiming via RPL.

Oral testing is an effective method of assessment particularly suited to RPL learners, as it can be used to contextualise their learning experience. Oral testing procedures must be structured and evidence of the test and the learner's performance must be available for external verification.

The assessor has the responsibility for ensuring that all the requirements of a part of an HMFSC unit or unit(s) or qualification have been met before applying for a qualification certificate. 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.

If on any account the assessor is not satisfied with the evidenced submitted, it will be necessary to seek additional evidence. This is just the same as with traditional programme of study.

If only part of a unit's requirements have been met. HMFSC will arrange for the appropriate additional learning and assessment to cover the outstanding evidence. Additional learning may be provided through individual tutorials, assignments, class instruction, open learning or through a learning contract.

INTERNAL VERIFICATION

HMFSC treats RPL evidence as traditional evidence, namely that such evidence should be initially assessed then internally verified.