



Recognition of Prior Learning

Guidance for centres offering VTCT qualifications

October 2018

Version 6



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1. Introduction

This Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Exemption and Equivalence Policy aims to provide information and guidance to support those who are directly involved in the planning and advising on the assessment of students with prior learning in a specific subject area at VTCT approved centres.

The first step in assessing a learner's prior learning or experience is to determine which category the learner's evidence fits into:

- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
- Exemption
- Equivalence

2. What is Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)?

'RPL is a method of assessment that considers whether a learner can demonstrate that they can meet the assessment requirements for a unit through knowledge, understanding or skills that they already possess and do not need to develop through a course of learning.'

Learners may possess skills and knowledge that have not been acquired through formal learning, e.g. through work experience and/or other related learning that has not been formally certificated. This means that learners may be able to proceed directly to assessment without further study using evidence from uncertificated learning.

2.1. When to use RPL

RPL should be applied:

1. When a learner has no previous certification or formal learning.
2. When a learner has relevant skills and/or knowledge acquired through:
 - Domestic/family life
 - Education and training
 - Work activities
 - Community or voluntary activities
3. In order to avoid repetition of learning

2.2. How to apply RPL

RPL evidence is assessed to decide whether or not a learner can proceed straight to summative assessment.

RPL evidence is assessed to identify gaps in skills and knowledge in order to ascertain what further study (if any) is required prior to summative assessment.

RPL does not exempt learners from any element of the mandatory assessment requirements of a qualification. RPL simply means that further learning is not necessary and the learner can proceed directly to summative assessment. In no circumstances can any mandatory observations or mandatory exam requirements be avoided. For the avoidance of doubt, where it has been decided that RPL is the appropriate route to achieving the qualification for a learner who holds no prior recognised certification, it is not sufficient for the learner only to complete one or two of the mandatory practical observations. It is also not acceptable to exempt the learner from external examination requirements. All mandatory summative assessments attached to the qualification must be completed as normal.

2.3. Assessment of RPL evidence

Learners must present relevant evidence that meets the learning outcome requirements so that RPL can be applied for their existing knowledge, understanding or skills. Evidence obtained through RPL must conform to the same rigorous quality assurance requirements that other assessment methods conform to.

- Full units: If a learner can meet all learning outcomes and assessment criteria in a unit, then credit can be claimed for that unit solely on the basis of their RPL evidence.
- Partial units: If evidence is only sufficient to cover one or more learning outcomes, or partly meets the requirements of a learning outcome, then additional assessment methods should be employed to generate sufficient evidence.

3. What is exemption?

Exemption is the facility for an individual to claim exemption from some of the achievement requirements of a regulated qualification.

3.1. When to use exemption

- Exemption should be applied when:
 1. A learner has achieved a regulated qualification which is recognised as equal or comparable
 2. A learner possesses knowledge and skills that are deemed to be current*
 3. A learner holds a certificate or qualification which has been awarded on the achievement of assessment criteria and assessment methods which are deemed to be equivalent to the regulated qualification

*Determining currency

- A qualification is deemed to be current if achieved within the last three years.
- Skills and knowledge are deemed to be current if qualification specific work experience is current, i.e. within the last three years.

3.2. How to apply Exemption

- The evidence should be assessed to decide if knowledge and skills are equal or comparable to the regulated qualification
- The evidence should be assessed to decide if the learner's knowledge and skills can be deemed to be current
- The evidence should be assessed to identify any gaps in skills and knowledge which would require the learner to undertake further study
- There must be evidence to demonstrate a minimum of an 80% overlap with the unit/qualification for which exemption is being sought

4. What is Equivalence?

Equivalent units are RQF units which are equivalent in criteria and content to another RQF unit. An equivalent unit needs to be of the same credit value/GLH or greater and the same level or higher. Equivalence allows the replacement of one RQF unit in a qualification with another RQF unit that has the same general content and is of the same or greater credit value/GLH and level.

4.1. When to use Equivalence

Equivalence should be applied when a learner has achieved an equivalent RQF unit in another RQF qualification.

4.2. How to apply equivalence

Units from different qualifications but sharing the same Unit Reference Number are deemed to be equivalent.

5. Responsibilities of centres

Centres shall ensure that:

- A Centre Lead is appointed who is responsible for, and has a full understanding of RPL, Exemption and Equivalence.
- In all cases of RPL, Exemption and Equivalence, mandatory assessment requirements are complied with.
- If RPL, Exemption or Equivalence is to be used, the VTCT External Quality Assurer (EQA) is informed.
- Assessment and Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) procedures and practices are rigorous, robust and auditable, and of the same standard as any other form of assessment and IQA.
- Evidence provided by the learner for RPL, Exemption or Equivalence is relevant, authentic, sufficient, valid, clear, transparent and current.
- If the Centre Lead has any concerns or doubt regarding the learner's knowledge, understanding, skills, competence or evidence proposed, RPL, Exemption or Equivalence must not be applied.
- Formal records of RPL, Exemption or Equivalence are kept by the centre
- Learners are informed that RPL, Exemption and Equivalence are not necessarily money or time-saving exercises and that the collation of evidence may involve a high proportion of time and may incur some cost, charged by the centre.

6. RPL, exemption, equivalence – the process

Stage 1:

Prior to enrolment all learners should be informed of the possibility of applying RPL, Exemption or Equivalence. If learners decide to apply for RPL, Exemption or Equivalence a learner interview should take place where they are fully informed about:

- The process
- Support and guidance available
- Timelines
- Appeals processes
- Centre Fee(s) involved – to include a clear breakdown and explanation of costs

Stage 2:

All learners who apply for RPL, exemption or equivalence must be provided with literature that informs the learner about:

- What they should know (related to the specific unit or qualification)
- What they should be able to demonstrate (related to the specific unit or qualification)
- Amount and type of assessment(s) they need to undertake
- The type and range of evidence which can be considered

Stage 3:

Learners will collect evidence to meet the standards of the learning outcome(s)/ unit(s). Learners will cross map evidence to the relevant learning outcome(s)/unit(s). Evidence may meet unit requirements partially or in full.

Stage 4:

The evidence will be assessed and judgements made in relation to unit standards. Evidence must be valid and reliable. The assessment process is subject to the usual quality assurance processes, e.g., internal and external quality assurance. A learner has the right to appeal against any assessment decision and should follow the centre's appeals process and then the VTCT appeals process.

Stage 5:

Where further evidence/learning is needed, learners will be provided with an action plan:

- Identifying the further evidence required.
- Identifying any further learning required.
- Highlighting available assessment and re-assessment opportunities

Stage 6:

On successful completion of all quality assurance processes certification claims can be made as normal.

7. Appendix 1: Exemption mapping form (EMF)

This form should be completed by the Centre and approved by the VTCT External Quality Assurer (EQA).

Guidance

- This mapping form must be completed by the centre on behalf of the learner for units for which exemption is sought.
- Centres must map the content of the previously certificated units or criteria against the units or criteria for which exemption is sought.
- There must be a minimum 80% overlap between units or criteria for VTCT to consider approving the request for exemption.
- The mapping activity must be conducted at the learning outcome or assessment criteria level.
- This mapping form must be made available to the VTCT External Quality Assurer for inspection and the VTCT External Quality Assurer should approve all exemptions.

1. Centre details	
Centre name:	
Contact name:	
Contact telephone number:	
Email:	

2. Learner details	
Learner name:	
Learner address:	
Date of birth:	
Email:	

3. Previously certificated unit(s)/module(s)/qualification to be used for exemption	
Unit/module name:	
Unit number:	
Unit level:	
Additional unit/module name:	
Unit number:	
Unit level:	
Additional unit/module name:	
Unit number:	
Unit level:	
Qualification title (if applicable) in which units(s) sit:	
Qualification number:	
Awarding organisation that certificated the unit/qualification:	
Training provider that claimed for the unit/qualification:	
Date of certification:	

4. Mapping grid			
Unit	Mapping		
Unit 1	Unit claiming exemption for:	Evidence	For EQA use only 80% overlap: Achieved/not achieved
Example:	Example:	Example:	Achieved

Learning outcomes	Anatomy and physiology of respiratory, circulatory, neurological, skeletal and muscular systems, endocrine and urinary systems.	Transcript of a complementary therapy A&P unit at level 3 which covers all of the systems listed.	
Learning outcomes	Example: Anatomy and physiology of respiratory, circulatory, neurological, skeletal and muscular systems, endocrine and urinary systems (for exercise and health).	Example: Transcript of a complementary therapy A&P units at level 3 which covers all of the systems listed.	Not achieved – as not in the context of exercise and health
Learning outcomes	Example: Understand postural and core stability.	Student has covered posture in their complementary therapies qualification. This would need to be mapped at an assessment criteria level.	Not achieved - as minor overlap and not in context.
	Describe the structure and function of the stabilising ligaments and muscles of the spine.	Outline common postural faults.	
	Describe local muscle changes that can take place due to insufficient stabilisation.	Describe muscles affected.	
	Assessment criteria Explain the potential effects of abdominal adiposity and poor posture on movement efficiency.	Undertake postural assessment.	
	Explain the potential problems that can occur as a result of postural deviations.		

5. Declaration	
To be completed by the centre	
I, <i>[insert name here]</i> , on behalf of <i>[insert centre name here]</i> declare that <i>[insert learner name here]</i>	
The above learner has provided an original certificate(s) and/or transcript for the qualification/unit previously achieved	



An exemption mapping has been completed which confirms a minimum of 80% overlap with the unit(s), learning outcome or assessment criteria for which exemption is being sought	
An exemption mapping has been completed which DOES NOT confirm a minimum of 80% overlap with the unit(s), learning outcome or assessment criteria for which exemption is being sought	
Action plan	

Document History

Version	Issue Date	Changes	Role
V2	September 2017	Updated with new branding	Qualifications Administrator
V4	12/02/2018	Updated with new branding	Qualifications Manager
V5	30/10/2018	Additional information added to 3.2, 4 and 4.1.	Assessment Manager
V6	31/10/2018	Formatting amendment	Assessment Manager

Document Review

Role	Review Status
Assessment Manager	Reviewed

Document Sign-off

Role	Sign-off Date
Executive Director of Awarding	12/02/2018
Quality and Processing Manager	30/10/2018