

# Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy



**Christ the  
Redeemer College**  
L o n d o n

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Christ the Redeemer College recognises that learning is a continuous process and that students should receive recognition of achievement from learning activities that they have already undertaken, both through achieving formal qualifications and through experience. The College is committed to ensuring that the processes adopted for assessing students' prior learning are fair and transparent.
- 1.2 Ofqual defines Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) as 'a method of assessment that considers whether a learner can demonstrate that they meet the assessment requirements for a unit, through knowledge, understanding and skills they already possess and do not need to develop through a course of learning' (Ofqual Condition E10.2).
- 1.3 An important principle underpinning RPL is that students should not need to repeat learning where there is valid and reliable evidence to show that learning outcomes in a given unit/qualification have been met at the standards stated by the assessment criteria.
- 1.4 The College recognises RPL, credit transfer and exemption. These terms are similar but not interchangeable. Credit transfer / exemption should be applied where a student has undertaken units and/or a qualification and has gained credits or a qualification. Credit transfer should be applied to units / qualifications that were certificated within the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) whereas exemption should be applied where the units and/or qualification was certificated outside of the RQF, for example from achievement in a degree programme at a university. RPL should be applied in cases where students are transferring from one learning programme to another and have completed work but have not gained credits or qualifications. RPL should also be applied where the student has engaged in other forms of learning, such as those set out in section 3.1 (below).

## 2. Entry Criteria

- 2.1 It should be noted that the entry criteria for a given qualification will be stated in the qualification. Entry qualifications must be applied regardless of whether RPL, credit transfer or exemptions can be applied. Entry criteria support the judgements of College staff in determining whether an applicant should embark on a particular course of study.

## 3. Application of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

- 3.1 As part of their learning journey, students may have attained prior learning in a variety of ways, including:
- through employment;
  - in relevant voluntary work or leisure activities;
  - in previous education or training, such as adult education courses or in-company training;
  - from independent or previous study in a college or university (where formal credit and/or a qualification was not obtained);
  - from other commitments or activities, such as a care situation or involvement in a family business.
- 3.2 Where such learning has been attained, the use of RPL is acceptable for achievement of the part of a unit, units or a qualification which is being claimed, provided the standards and assessment requirements of a given unit, parts of a unit or qualification have been met.

- 3.3 Evidence for RPL must be:
- authentic
  - reliable
  - current
  - valid
  - sufficient
- 3.4 It is the responsibility of the student to generate the evidence and present it to the assessor for assessment.
- 3.5 The College will support students in the RPL process by providing them with information, advice and guidance. Applicants will be signposted to such information as part of the application process and will be provided with a copy of this policy upon request.
- 3.6 There are various circumstances in which RPL cannot be applied. Examples of these include:
- where this is stated in the qualification specification;
  - where students need to be observed completing a particular task in order to demonstrate that they have met the required standards; and/or
  - in accreditation of externally assessed units.

#### **4. The RPL Assessment Process**

- 4.1 The student requests recognition of prior learning. This should normally be done as part of the application process.
- 4.2 The student meets with an advisor and an experienced assessor who has relevant specialist subject knowledge. Where there is more than one student who is interested in learning more about RPL and how it applies to them the first meeting may be a group meeting. The advisor may also be a member of the assessment team but will not be involved in assessing the RPL request.
- 4.3 In the first instance, students wishing to claim RPL should reflect on their learning experience and identify relevant achievement, considering areas such as those stated in section 3.1 (above).
- 4.4 The student should provide a CV, portfolio of practical work or selective autobiographical account, which is intended to assist the assessment team in gaining a broad overview of their experience and context for the claim.
- 4.5 The College will provide the student with the relevant learning outcomes and assessment criteria and the advisor will work with the student to ensure that they understand the learning outcomes and assessment criteria involved and will provide them with examples of how to present evidence and/or compile a portfolio. An action plan may be developed to further clarify what is required and the timescales involved.
- 4.6 The student will then gather the required evidence and compile their portfolio. The portfolio of evidence must include:
- a CV;
  - a completed RPL form, which will include a summary of the learning outcomes and assessment criteria claimed and a commentary identifying prior achievement against individual learning outcomes and assessment criteria;
  - full evidence against each assessment criterion claimed.
- 4.7 Once an RPL application is complete, the portfolio will be passed to an experienced assessor, who has not been previously involved in supporting a student in making their RPL application, to assess the application.

## **5. Assessing the Evidence**

- 5.1 The assessor will examine the portfolio systematically for its completeness and will ensure that the evidence relates to the assessment criteria of the unit(s) being claimed by the student and that there are no gaps in the evidence. They will ensure that the evidence is authentic, current, relevant and sufficient, through checking that the evidence:
- is relevant to the standards (valid);
  - represents sufficient breadth and quality to be appropriate to the standards to which it applies (sufficient);
  - is the work of the candidate (authentic); and
  - is recent enough to meet the requirements of the assessment criteria.
- 5.2 The standard required of an RPL student is identical to that demanded of a student pursuing a normal study route. If the assessor is not satisfied with the evidence submitted it will be necessary to seek additional evidence from the student.
- 5.3 It should be noted that separate evidence is not required for each qualification assessment criterion. Students may present a small number of complex pieces of evidence to demonstrate achievement of a number of unit assessment requirements. However, the evidence needs to be clearly mapped by the student so there is no ambiguity.
- 5.4 Many units draw upon a wide basis of knowledge and understanding. RPL applicants must demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the unit or part of the unit they are claiming. This will need to be tested to ensure the candidate has this knowledge. For example, oral testing will be frequently used as this suits the RPL process, but in addition it may be necessary to ask students to complete an assignment or written test or perform a demonstration. A combination of these methods may be used. Evidence of the oral testing should be submitted as part of the portfolio of evidence.
- 5.5 Where a student is unable to produce evidence of prior learning, for example if an employer does not respond to a request for a witness testimony, the learner will need to take an assessment appropriate to the outcome being claimed. If only part of the unit's requirements has been met arrangements will need to be made to cover the appropriate additional learning and assessment.
- 5.6 The advisor and assessor shall maintain full records of the time they spend with the student and the decisions taken. This documentation as well as the student's portfolio will be subject to the College's normal internal quality assurance and standardisation processes and be made available for external quality assurance. RPL portfolios and the assessment decisions associated with them, shall be clearly identified as having been arrived at as a result of an RPL process.

## **6. Credit Transfer**

- 6.1 Credit transfer refers to previously certificated achievement inside the RQF. Where this exists, credit transfer can be applied to ensure learning is not repeated.
- 6.2 All units and qualifications on the RQF have a credit value. This will enable students to understand the number of credits which have been achieved and the transfer of credits for units from one qualification and/or awarding organisation to another can be facilitated, as appropriate. Full credits must be achieved for this to be recognised.
- 6.3 Documentary evidence must be obtained in order to verify student achievement and the credits that have been obtained. The evidence must be sufficient to enable the following to be checked:

- The level of the units and/or qualification;
- The credit value and titles of the units and/or qualification;
- The date showing when the units and/or qualifications were achieved; and
- The aims and standards of the units and/or qualification in order that these can be mapped against the specification of the qualification to which the credit transfer is intended to be applied
- That the units and credits earned fall within the rules of combination of the qualification.

6.4 A senior assessor and IQA will form a judgment as to whether a student has achieved sufficient credit for an award, certificate or diploma based on the evidence, and the full evidence and justification for the proposed credit transfer will be submitted to the awarding organisation, with whom the final decision rests.

## 7. Exemptions

7.1 As noted above, if a student's achievement was certificated outside the RQF, for example from achievement in a degree programme at a university, then exemption may be applied.

7.2 In order for exemptions to be applied, the College will need to check with the relevant awarding organisation to ensure that the proposed exemption is permissible.

7.3 Students seeking an exemption on the basis of previous learning / study will be required to provide evidence, such as transcripts, which verify the achievement and the qualification(s) previously earned. The evidence must be sufficient to enable the following to be checked:

- The level of the units/qualification obtained in order to determine the comparability to the claim for exemption;
- Titles of the units/qualification and the grades achieved;
- Aims, content and standards of the qualification obtained particularly as they relate to the units in the qualification where exemption is sought; and
- The date the qualification was awarded.

7.4 A senior assessor and IQA will review the evidence and justification for the proposed exemption and submit this to the awarding organisation, with whom the final decision rests.

## 8. Approval and Review

**Title:** Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

**Approved with reference to:** QAA Quality Code.

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**Approving body:** Academic Board. **Member of staff responsible:** Rector/ Head of Centre