RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING PROCEDURE

Contents

1. Purpose of this policy

Wiltshire College and University Centre is committed to the principle that learning, wherever it occurs, should be recognised in an appropriate way within its academic provision. This procedure is to ensure that an individual's prior learning achieved through formal and informal training, work experience or other life experiences is appropriately recognised.

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is a process that recognises the value of achievements already gained by a learner. RPL might be used to meet the requirements of part of a unit or, exceptionally, a whole unit.

The main objectives of the policy are:

1.1   To assist learners in identifying relevant prior learning, achievement and/or experience.

1.2   To determine if evidence presented by the learner should follow the RPL, or related Credit Transfer or Exemption procedures of the awarding organisation.

1.3   To agree and review an action plan to enable candidates to receive accreditation for prior learning, achievement and/or experience.

1.4   To support candidates in preparing and presenting evidence of prior learning, achievement and/or experience for assessment.

2. Scope

2.1. This policy applies to qualifications on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), and all other qualification framework unless stated otherwise by relevant awarding organisation and other national frameworks, self-regulated qualifications and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for Higher Education.

2.2. However, where learning is evidenced only through a national examination, the learner is required to sit the examination, e.g. General Qualifications such as GCSEs or GCE are not within the scope of this policy.

2.3. All learners shall be entitled to apply for RPL providing they meet the specific requirements of the validating /awarding organisation governing the qualification for which they are studying

3. Definitions

3.1. RPL - 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 they already possess and do not need to develop through a course of learning.

3.2. Exemptions - The facility for a learner to claim exemption from some of the achievement requirements of a qualification, using evidence of certificated, achievement deemed to be of equivalent value.

3.3. The process of exemption is applied to certificated achievement; RPL to previously uncertificated achievement. 'Exemptions' are deemed to be 'of equivalent value' to credits in the relevant qualification framework, whereas RPL leads directly to the award of credit.

3.4. Credit Transfer/Equivalency - Unlike the exemption above this process applies to previously certificated achievement of credits which can be transferred to other qualifications where permitted under the awarding organisations rules of combination.

4. Responsibilities.

4.1 **Students**

4.1.1. The student must provide evidence to show that the requirements of the unit, module or part of a unit, or module have been covered; recording this evidence on the credit claim form, and consult with the agreed subject specialist in the preparation of his/her evidence.

4.1.2. Students must agree an action plan to enable him/her to obtain the award s/he is aiming for.

4.1.3. Students must agree to attend any further appropriate assessments if the initial evidence is deemed to be unsatisfactory for the RPL assessor.

4.2. Lecturers/Assessors

4.2.1. To provide support and encouragement to all students wishing to claim credit for prior learning.

4.2.2. Following initial enquiries by any student the member of staff should place the student in contact with a subject specialist.

4.2.3. The subject specialist should develop, with the student, an action plan to address the learning outcomes of the programme.

4.2.4. The subject specialist should identify the evidence needed to support the claim for credit and explain how this evidence will be assessed and by whom.

4.2.5. Ensure that the student claiming credit is enrolled with the College for specific award/qualification.

4.2.6. To notify MIS of any student claiming credits by RPL or using units gained from one qualification towards the next level of achievement.

4.3 Management

College management should ensure that:

4.3.1 All College staff are fully conversant with this procedure and the demands it places on them.

4.3.2 All appropriate staff are competent to undertake their roles and responsibilities in the procedures for verification and recognition of prior learning.

4.3.3 Staff development is made available to those staff not conversant with or competent to undertake the procedures for RPL.

5. Assessment of RPL Evidence

5.1. Assessment methods for RPL must be of equal rigour to other assessment methods, be fit for purpose and relate to the evidence of learning. Credit may be claimed for any unit through RPL unless the assessment requirements of the unit do not allow this.

5.2. The methods of assessment used will be determined by the assessment strategy for the qualification being assessed but might, for example include:

- Examination of documents
- Witness testimony
- Reflective accounts

- Professional discussion

5.3. Where units are assessed against assessment criteria or grading criteria, then all evidence must be evaluated using the stipulated criteria. In assessing a unit using RPL the assessor must be satisfied that the evidence produced by the learner meets the assessment standard established by the learning outcome and its related assessment criteria.

5.4. It is the role of teachers, assessors and internal quality assurers to ensure that evidence of learning is:

5.4.1. Valid – The evidence provided by the learner must genuinely demonstrate that it conforms to the demands of the learning outcome.

5.4.2. Current – Currency of evidence is particularly important. For example, does the evidence meet up-to-date demands or does it reflect a practice that has significantly changed? Evidence of current knowledge, understanding and skills will vary from sector to sector. It will depend on the extent of the experience, technological changes and the nature of the outcome claimed. If the currency of any evidence is in doubt, the assessor may use questions to check understanding, and for competence.

5.4.3. Sufficient – There must be enough evidence to fully meet the requirements of the learning outcome, or learning outcomes, to be considered. If there is insufficient evidence to fully meet requirements, then evidence obtained through RPL must be complemented by evidence gained through other suitable assessment methods before requirements can be said to have been met.

5.4.4. Authentic – The evidence being examined must genuinely be the work of the learner. If the evidence produced is the result of team work, then it is acceptable providing the new learning outcome is related to team / joint working, but not if it was being used as evidence of an activity which should have been carried out individually. It is important that learners understand what plagiarism means and sign a declaration of authenticity.

5.4.5. Reliable – Evidence obtained through RPL should be such that an assessor would arrive at the same assessment decision, were the assessment to be repeated.

6. RPL Assessment Process

6.1. The RPL assessment should be carried out as an entire process. This means that the assessor / tutor should:

6.1.1. Plan with the learner.

6.1.2. Make a formal assessment decision

6.1.3. Feedback assessment decisions to the learner, confirming decision and giving guidance on the available options (particularly in situations where the decision has been not to award credit).

6.1.4. Maintain records of assessment as for any other unit / qualification.

6.1.5. Ensure that all relevant evidence is assessed before assessment decisions are confirmed through verification procedures.

6.1.6. Ensure that learners are aware of their right to access the appeals process should they feel the assessment decision was unfair.

6.1.7. Ensure that certification and claims are made according to normal procedures.

6.1.8. Ensure that the process is subject to the same quality assurance requirement as all other assessment methods.

7. Related Polices and Procedures

- Internal Verification and Assessment Procedure
- Academic Appeals Procedure

8. Monitoring & Evaluation

8.1. The standards by which the success of the procedure can be evaluated are:

8.2. Student feedback showing high levels of satisfaction with the advice and help received in preparing to claim RPL.

8.3. Staff feedback on the quality of support provided by the College to enhance skills and competence to undertake the procedures for RPL.

8.4. External examiner/verifier comments on the rigour and consistency applied to RPL procedures across the College.

9. Equality Statement

Wiltshire College & University Centre strives to ensure equality of opportunity for all students, local people and the workforce. As an employer and a provider of education, the College aims to ensure that none are placed at a disadvantage as a result of its policies and procedures. It is intended that this policy and procedure is fair to all. Where any part could potentially lead to unequal outcomes, the policy then justifies why this is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

10. Policy Review and Ownership

This policy and procedure is owned by the Head of Teaching, Learning and Assessment. It will be reviewed periodically in light of developments in employment legislation, good employment practice or audit; and to ensure it continues to be relevant and supports operational effectiveness. The document is managed by the Campus and Curriculum Admin Team Leader.