



**Dumfries and  
Galloway College**

One step ahead

# RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING PROCEDURE

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**Responsibility: Vice Principal Curriculum and Student Experience**

**Issue Date: 28<sup>th</sup> November 2025**

**Equality Impact Assessment: 12<sup>th</sup> November 2025**

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Version: 1



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## Recognition of Prior Learning Procedure

### 1. Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to recognise prior learning as a method of assessing whether a student's experience and achievements meet the evidence requirements (i.e. standards) of awarding body units which may or may not have been developed through a course of learning.

### 2. Scope

This procedure enables recognition of achievement from a range of activities using any appropriate assessment methodology. Provided that the assessment

requirements of a given unit or qualification have been met, the use of RPL is acceptable for accrediting a unit, units or a whole qualification. Evidence of learning must be:

- ✔ valid
- ✔ current (this is not time specific and will depend on the topic. It relates to the student currently having the skills and the skills being current in relation to the industry sector)
- ✔ reliable

### 3. *References*

- ✔ Recognition of Prior Learning Policy
- ✔ Assessment Policy
- ✔ Assessment Appeals Procedure

### 4. *Definitions*

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is not a new process and has been developed over time, which has led to the use of a number of terms to describe the process. Among the most common are:

APL	Accreditation of Prior Learning
APEL	Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning
APA	Accreditation of Prior Achievement
APLA	Accreditation of Prior Learning and Achievement

These terms broadly describe the same process. The College will use the single term Recognition of Prior Learning in this procedure to encompass all of the above.

Assessor	Any member of staff applying RPL
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## 5. *Responsibility*

All staff who are responsible for assessing students.

## 6. *Procedure*

- 6.1 The recognition of prior learning may be used to assess complete or partial units. Where evidence of prior learning only partially meets the requirements of a Unit, other methods of assessment should be used to complete the outstanding requirements. The minimum level of awarding and certification will be a complete Unit.
- 6.2 Previously attained qualifications may be used as evidence of prior learning as long as they have been awarded by a recognised awarding body or professional body. It is the College's responsibility to ensure that the content, level of demand and assessment approach of the prior attained qualification broadly matches the evidence requirements specified in the Unit(s). A qualifications certificate on its own is unlikely to be sufficient evidence for assessment and verification purposes. This should be supported by module descriptors or equivalent, which provides information on the level, demand, content and assessment of the previously attained qualification.
- 6.3 The assessment of prior learning **WILL** be subject to the same internal verification by the College as other methods of assessment. Awarding bodies will also adopt the same approach to quality assurance as any other method of assessment. Appeals from students will follow the same process applicable to standard assessment of the Unit(s) or Group Award concerned.
- 6.4 Prior achievement that would provide 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 ask for the demonstration

of skills to check competence for example assessment on demand. The assessment strategy for each qualification must be adhered to.

- 6.5 Where evidence is assessed to be only sufficient to cover one or more outcomes, or to partly meet the need of an outcome, then additional assessment methods should be used to generate sufficient evidence to be able to award the learning outcome(s) for the whole unit e.g. assessment on demand.

The recognition of prior learning is **not** an exemption from a Unit(s) within a Group Award. Students should be entered for the Unit(s) and/or Group Award as normal. Evidence to support prior learning decisions needs to ensure the currency of the student's knowledge, skills and achievement within the context of the Unit(s) being assessed.

Awarding bodies do not set a general time limit for the currency of evidence of prior learning or experience. Currency is likely to differ depending on the sector. Supplementary questioning may be undertaken by assessors in order to ascertain the currency of a student's prior learning or experience.

Assessors should ensure that the application of RPL is in accordance with awarding body guidance.

## 7. *Distribution*

All Staff  
Repository  
LearnNet

## 8. *Revision Log*

Revision Log		
Date	Section	Description
12/11/2025	Format	Updated to reflect current Document Control Template, inclusion of Responsibility section and EIA
12/11/2025	Front Cover/ Responsibility	Vice Principal Learning and Skills changed to Vice Principal Curriculum and Student Experience
12/11/2025	EIA	Updated to reflect current research methods used when reviewing this procedure

THIS FORM TO BE UPDATED WHENEVER THERE IS A CHANGE IN ANY SYSTEM DOCUMENT				
Document Name	Document Owner	Revision Number	Date of Issue	Date of Withdraw
Recognition of Prior Learning Procedure	Vice Principal Curriculum and Student Experience	1	28/11/2025	

## Appendix 1 – Equality Impact Assessment

Document:	Recognition of Prior Learning Procedure
Executive Summary:	Impacts are positive across all protected characteristics, in that people from minority groups across the board are often either late to education and have relevant experience from their working life due to difficulties in life they have faced related to their protected characteristic profile. In addition, people from minority groups can be more prone to have disrupted study due to issues in their lives outside of college, so the ability to gain recognition of work done previously will disproportionately assist them as opposed to the majority groups in the population. Care has been taken to mitigate possible negative impacts in relation to age, disability and race. Impacts for Veterans are positive due to recognition of forces qualification systems and neutral for the remaining additional considerations. The human right to education is advanced by this policy

### Duties:

1: Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation

2: Promote equality of opportunity

3: Promote good relations

\* Human Rights to privacy and family life, freedom of thought and conscience, education, employment

## PSED Impacts

	Commentary
Age	The need for relevant and current qualifications and experience could be seen to discriminate against those who are older and may be at some remove in terms of years from their qualification or experience. However, the ability to interview and take into account the demonstration of skills mitigates this.
Disability	Where a candidate has a visual or hearing impairment, the College ensures that support is provided to enable that student to participate and that their inability to hear/see/speak shall not prove a barrier to participation in the course.
Gender	Impacts are positive across all protected characteristics, in that people from minority groups across the board are often either late to education and have relevant experience from their working life due to
Gender Based Violence	

Gender identity/ reassignment	difficulties in life they have faced related to their protected characteristic profile. In addition, people from minority groups can be more prone to have disrupted study due to issues in their lives outside of college, so the ability to gain recognition of work done previously will disproportionately assist them as opposed to the majority groups in the population.
Marriage/civil partnership	
Pregnancy/maternity	
Religion or Belief	
Sexual Orientation	
Race	<p>The clear definition of relevant prior learning will ensure that qualifications gained in other countries are fairly adjudicated and candidates are therefore not discriminated against due to their nationality. The inclusion of other relevant evidence further supports this.</p> <p>The responsibility of the learner to gather the evidence for their recognition of prior learning. For some students from other countries (particularly if there has been war or unrest) this may prove difficult. However, the need to establish a strong evidence base justifies this. It is mitigated by the use of questioning and testing of skills to support the candidate's application.</p>

### Additional Considerations

Carers	Impacts are likely to be neutral for these additional considerations.
Mental Health	
Care experienced	
Socio- economic status	
Veterans	Impacts are likely to be positive for veterans as the policy allows for recognition of forces qualifications.
Human Rights*	Human Rights to Education and Employment should be advanced by this procedure.

Lead Officer:	Vice Principal Curriculum and Student Experience
Facilitator:	Student Journey Manager Performance Manager

Date initiated:	6/10/2025		
Consultation:	Desktop Research carried out, including awarding body		
Research:			
Signature	Phil Storrier	Date	12/11/25

## Appendix 2 – Core Skills (SQA)

Specific information on the recognition of prior attained Core Skills may be accessed on the SQA site: <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/83654.11512.html>

The College has agreed the following APL mapping for SQA Core Skills:

<b>Core Skill Subject</b>	<b>Core Skill Component on student's CSP</b>	<b>Core Skill Unit APL*</b>
Numeracy	Using Graphical Information	Using Graphical Information
	Using Number	Using Number
Communication	Oral Communication	Speaking & Listening
	Written Communication	Writing
		Reading (no APL)
Information Technology	Accessing Information	Accessing Information
	Providing/Creating Information	Processing Information

## *Appendix 3 – Recognition of Prior Learning Process*

### Stage 1 – Awareness, information and guidance

Prior to and/or during induction a student should be made aware of RPL and the possibility that they may be able to claim credit for some of their previous learning. If the student wishes to pursue this, they will need to know the:

- 🔧 Policy and process of claiming achievement by using RPL
- 🔧 Sources of support and guidance available to them
- 🔧 Timelines, appeals processes and any fees involved

### Stage 2 – Pre-assessment; gathering evidence and giving information.

At this stage, the student has the responsibility of collecting evidence against the requirements of the relevant unit(s). In some cases the development of an assessment plan and tracking document or similar may be required, to support the student through the process. The evidence gathered will need to meet the standards of the unit, or part of unit, that the evidence is being used for.

### Stage 3 – Assessment/documentation of evidence

Assessment as part of RPL is a structured process for gathering and reviewing evidence and making judgments about students' prior learning and experience in relation to current unit standards. The assessor may be looking at previous awarding body certification with the corresponding unit descriptors and/or National Occupational Standards (NOS); work experience records, validated by managers; previous portfolios of evidence put together by the student or essays and reports validated as being the student's own unaided work. Assessment must be valid, current and reliable to ensure the integrity of the award of credit and, as above, the evidence gathered needs to meet the standards of the unit, or part of unit, that the evidence is being used for. The assessment process will be subject to the College's quality assurance procedures for internal verification as well as the awarding body's external quality assurance procedures. Evidence gathered through RPL should be clearly referenced and sign posted to aid internal assessment and internal and external verification.

#### Stage 4 – Claiming certification

Once the internal and external quality assurance procedures have been successfully completed, certification claims can be made using the standard College process for recording student results and processing onto the awarding body. Assessment and internal verification records, along with any additional RPL records completed, should be retained for the standard retention period (in line with the awarding body requirements) following certification.

The assessor must ensure that all outcomes and assessment criteria being claimed for each unit are achieved and that the records of assessment are maintained in the usual way.

#### Stage 5 – Appeal

As with any assessment decision, if a student wishes to appeal against a decision made about their assessment they need to follow the College's Assessment Appeals Procedure.