



**Dumfries and
Galloway College**

One step ahead

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING POLICY

Responsibility: Vice Principal Curriculum and Student Experience

Issue Date: 28th November 2025

Equality Impact Assessment: 12th November 2025

Version: 1



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Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

1. Purpose

The purpose of the policy is to define how students with evidence of previously achieved qualifications can gain approval to use these as exception from subsequent qualifications.

The principles of the Recognition of Prior Learning as defined by SQA is:

"To recognise prior learning as a method of assessing whether a learner's experience and achievements meet the evidence requirements (i.e. standards of a SQA Unit or Units and which may or may not have been developed through a course of learning". (This also relates to any other awarding bodies used at the College).

This policy is supported by our Values which apply to everyone who comes to the College to learn or work. Our Values include:

- ▶ Here for You
- ▶ Acting with Courage
- ▶ Deliver our Promises
- ▶ Uniting to Succeed

2. *Scope*

This policy is to be implemented at all College sites and applies to all students.

3. *References*

- ▶ Recognition of Prior Learning Procedure
- ▶ Assessment Policy
- ▶ Assessment Appeals Procedure
- ▶ SQA Recognition of Prior Learning Policy Statement

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 policy to encompass all of the above.

Assessor Any member of staff applying RLP

5. *Responsibility*

All staff who are responsible for assessing students.

6. *Policy*

6.1 Recognising Prior Learning

Evidence to support prior learning assessment decisions must be valid, reliable and of equal rigour to the standard assessment of the Unit concerned. This means that the evidence should broadly match the evidence requirements specified in the Unit and reflect the SCQF level and credit value attached to the Unit.

RPL 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

Students may gain knowledge and skills acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts. Formal learning is learning certificated by a recognised awarding or professional body; non-formal learning includes learning such as employer's in-house training courses, which may or may not be assessed and/or

certificated and finally, informal learning is learning based on experience from a variety of environments which is not formally assessed.

6.2 Assessment Approach

The recognition of prior learning may be used to assess complete or partial Units. Where evidence of prior learning only partially meets the evidence 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.

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 will be 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 qualification certificate on its own is unlikely to be sufficient evidence for assessment and verification purposes. This should be supported by unit descriptors or equivalent, which provide information on the level, demand, content and assessment of the previously attained qualification.

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.

The 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. Please note that the assessment strategy for each qualification must be adhered to.

7. *Distribution*

All Staff

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 policy

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 Policy	Vice Principal Curriculum and Student Experience	1	28/11/2025	

Appendix 1 – Equality Impact Assessment

Document:	Recognition of Prior Learning Policy
Executive Summary:	<p>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.</p>

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 policy.

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