Lincoln College
University
Centre

LINCOLN COLLEGE

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL) – POLICY AND PROCEDURE

(Higher Education)

QC/PO/11

SPONSOR

Director – Performance and Standards

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EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STATEMENT

Lincoln College strives to treat all its members and visitors fairly and aims to eliminate all forms of unlawful discrimination, specifically across all protected characteristics. We will work towards a fair and just organisation and promote inclusion for all those impacted by Lincoln College and the wider community.

LINCOLN COLLEGE

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL) – POLICY AND PROCEDURE (HIGHER EDUCATION)

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LINCOLN COLLEGE

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL) – POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1. SCOPE OF POLICY

This policy applies to all qualifications, including those on the National Qualification Framework (NQF), the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF), Self Regulated Framework (SRF), Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and other national frameworks in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and self-regulated qualifications.

2. DEFINITION

'A method of assessment, leading to the award of credit, that considers whether a student can demonstrate that they 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'.

Note: RPL should not be confused with exemption, unit equivalency or credit accumulation and transfer.

Types of RPL

RPEL - Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning - a process through which learning achieved outside education or training systems is assessed and, as appropriate, recognised for academic purposes, usually through the award of credit.

RPCL- Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning - a process, through which prior certificated learning which has not previously resulted in the award of university credits or qualifications positioned on the relevant HE qualifications framework is assessed and recognised by the college for academic purposes, usually through the award of credit. Prior Certificated Learning may include professional development or employment-related awards.

Credit Transfer - where credits or qualification(s) have been awarded in accordance with the relevant higher education qualifications framework and QCF / RQF. Credit transfer may be internal (i.e. from one Lincoln College programme to another) or external, but marks are only retained for internal credit transfer.

Direct entry – where a student applies to enter into a programme at a level greater than the first year of a course, for example, applications from students who have completed a Foundation Degree, CertHE, DipHE, HNC, HND at another institution, who wish to enter directly into Years 2 or 3 of an undergraduate degree courses.

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. Partial unit completion is not acceptable. Evidence of learning must be:

- valid
- reliable
- authentic
- sufficient

3. INTRODUCTION

Lincoln College seeks to enable students to avoid the unnecessary duplication of learning and assessment. There are two ways in which this will be achieved:

- The opportunity to transfer credits, i.e. to recognise previously accredited achievement from within or outside regulated qualification frameworks to count towards other qualifications.

- For individuals with learning or achievements that have not been certificated/accredited it may be possible to assess and validate these through an RPL process. These achievements may then count towards a qualification.

4. AUDIENCE

The intended audience for this document is:

- Lincoln College leaders and managers
- External quality assurers
- Internal quality assurers
- Teachers and assessors
- Qualifications regulators

The policy and procedure will apply to qualifications approved by the relevant regulatory authorities.

5. POLICY

5.1 In order to achieve the above, a student must produce valid, authentic, sufficient and reliable evidence of learning to support any claims based on experience. A student may claim RPL against a whole unit or several units. It is not possible to award part units; instead, the minimum credit claim that will be considered is a whole, single unit of study. Where the RPL evidence does not fully meet the needs of a complete unit, the missing information may be provided via the same assessment processes that are undertaken by a taught group of students.

5.2 An application for recognition of prior learning will not normally be accepted if five or more years have elapsed since it occurred unless the applicant can provide evidence that their learning has continued in a professional or similar context. In such cases, course teams may choose to set an assessment to test an applicant's current knowledge.

5.3 In order to achieve recognition of achievement there are two options open to the student:

- Undertake the same assessments as those following the formal course of learning and assessment that lead to the desired unit or qualification. These assessments may be undertaken without attending the teaching sessions.

- Submit a portfolio of evidence based on previous learning, skills and / or competence cross referenced to the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of the unit or units for which RPL is being sought.

5.3 Under some circumstances there may be a limit to the proportion of a qualification that can be achieved by either credit transfer or RPL. Full details of these requirements will be identified in the rules of combination for any qualifications offered by awarding organisations. The maximum amount of RPL a student be awarded towards a qualification is two-thirds of the total credit value of the course. RPL is not permitted at level 6 of a BA (Hons) or BSc (Hons) programme of study.

5.4 Students wishing to avail themselves of this method of accreditation must negotiate the procedure with Lincoln College. All awarding organisations must have policies and procedures and trained staff which enables these processes to be invoked and implemented.

5.5 The student must play an active role in the process as s/he must produce evidence and map it to the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of all units they wish to claim. Appropriately trained staff from Lincoln College will be available to give specialist advice on this process. The individual wishing to make the claim may also require the support of their employer or other organisation (e.g. if they have worked as an unpaid volunteer) in order to be able to confirm achievement of assessment criteria for which there is no tangible evidence, e.g. practical tasks.

6 PRINCIPLES OF RPL

According to 'Claiming Credit – Guidance on the recognition of prior learning within the Qualifications and Credit Framework' the five principles of RPL are as follows: Lincoln College Group adopts the recommended approach of the five principles of RPL as part of the provision to recognise RPL

- RPL is a valid method of enabling individuals to claim credit for units/ total qualification time (TQT) and qualifications of the relevant framework, irrespective of how the learning took place and the assessments undertaken. There is no difference between the achievement of the required standards through prior learning and through a formal programme of study.

- RPL must comply with all regulatory requirements for assessment. RPL policies, processes, procedures, practices and decisions should be

transparent, rigorous, reliable, fair and accessible to individuals and stakeholders to ensure that users can be confident of the decisions and outcomes of RPL.

- RPL is a student-centred voluntary process. The individual should be offered advice on the nature and range of evidence considered appropriate to support a claim for assessing RPL, and be given guidance and support to make his or her claim.

- The process of RPL is subject to the same standard of quality assurance and monitoring processes as any other form of learning and assessment.

- Assessment methods for RPL must be of equal rigor as other assessment methods, must be fit for purpose and relate to the evidence of learning. An individual may claim RPL against any whole unit unless the assessment criteria of a unit states otherwise. For example, if an external assessment sets the standard of a learning outcome that a student must achieve, then the student must pass the external assessment to achieve the unit and gain the credit.

7. GUIDANCE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The Open University will expect the following elements to be adhered to:

7.1 Stage 1: Awareness raising regarding claiming of credit – information, advice and guidance.

Once students have decided to consider their learning for RPL purposes, they will need to know about:

- how to claim credit/TQT via the RPL process
- sources of professional support and guidance available to individuals and employers
- the administrative processes for RPL applications
- timelines, appeals processes, and any fees or subsidies
- the currency of existing credits, qualification, experience, skills or competence. (i.e. Does the evidence relate to current learning? Where centres and/or professional statutory or regulatory bodies have specific requirements and/or time limits for the currency of evidence, certification, or demonstration of learning, these should be made clear and transparent)

7.2 Stage 2: Pre-assessment – gathering evidence and giving information.

- When an individual has decided to pursue an RPL route towards achievement it is vital that the candidate is fully informed of the RPL process and has sufficient support to make a viable claim and to make decisions about evidence collection and presentation for assessment.

- During this stage the candidate will carry out the evidence collection and develop an assessment plan. The evidence required for the award of credit will depend on the purpose, learning outcomes and assessment criteria for the relevant units within the relevant framework.

7.3 Stage 3: Assessment / documentation of evidence.

- Assessment as part of RPL and within the relevant framework is a structured process for gathering and reviewing evidence and making judgments about a candidate's prior learning and experience in relation to unit standards.

- Assessment must be valid and reliable to ensure the integrity of units and qualifications and the RPL system as a whole. The assessment process for RPL must be subject to the same quality assurance processes of awarding organisations as any other part of the assessment process. Students' work which contributes towards their claim for credit via the RPL process should be internally and externally verified and all achievement documented as for conventional student achievement, all RPL – related achievement should be marked as such in all documentation.

7.4 Stage 4: Awarding credit.

The awarding organisation is responsible for awarding credit.

The procedure is the same as for other forms of assessment. The credit is recorded in the student record. Any claims for credit via RPL should be identified as such to ensure that the appropriate amounts identified in rules of combination for qualifications are not exceeded. This will be recorded as RPL as opposed to normal assessment methods and on the claims for credit towards a full qualification. Certificates, where appropriate, may be awarded with RPL credits being identified as such and RPL will then be recognised on credit transcripts.

7.5 Stage 5: Feedback.

After the assessment the assessor will need to give feedback to the candidate, discussing the results and giving support and guidance on the options available to the candidate, which may include, for example, further learning and development.

7.6 Stage 6: Recording of credit.

The recording of RPL will be made on the college's MarkBook system. Credit will be noted at the appropriate board of examiners and not counted towards the student's classification. Performance in units for which an award of credit for prior learning has been made is not taken into account in the calculation of the final award.

7.7 Stage 7: Appeal.

If claimants wish to appeal against a decision made about their claim for credit (via the RPL process) they should follow the standard appeals process as described in the Student Assessment and Appeals Policy and Procedures.

8. COLLATING INFORMATION ON THE USE OF RPL

In order to quantify the use of RPL processes, external quality assurers will be required to identify the provision where RPL has been applied. Collated information about the use of RPL and credit exemption will be made available as part of the annual quality reporting process.

9. ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL) POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The Learning Standards Quality Committee will review the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy and Procedure on an annual basis and make recommendations for its development.