A Guide to Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

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RPL Policy

RPL is a process that enables people to receive formal recognition for skills and knowledge they already possess. RPL recognises that learning is continuous – at work, home and at leisure, as well as in the classroom and provides a route for the recognition of the achievements resulting from continuous learning.

RPL is an assessment process that enables recognition of achievement from a range of activities using any valid assessment methodology. Provided that the assessment requirements of a given unit, programme or qualification have been met, the use of RPL is acceptable for validating units that form a programme or qualification.

The 5 Steps of RPL

Step 1: Application

  i.   RPL learner contacts Crossfields Institute to request an RPL Learner Registration Form.

  ii. When the RPL learner completes and returns the Registration Form to us, Crossfields Institute will determine the registration fee according to the total volume of learning to be received, and our Accounts Department will invoice the approved centre. Upon payment Crossfields Institute will register the learner.

  iii. Crossfields Institute sends the learner and tutor/assessor the programme or qualification units.

Step 2: Assembling an RPL claim

RPL learner activity The learner will:	RPL Tutor/Assessor activity The tutor/assessor will:
Reflect on experience to identify achievement	Provide guidance to the learner
Establish an action and assessment plan	Identify and agree an action plan and assessment strategy with the RPL learner
Agree timescale with tutor/assessor	Provide guidance of timescale

Identify gaps in achievement	Map achievement and identify gaps
Provide evidence of achievement in a portfolio, for example this may be paper-based, electronic, video recorded evidence etc.*	Determine and set the standard

*The portfolio is divided into units, with the Unit Descriptor (which also serves as the evidence tracking sheet) as the first page of each section. The portfolio MUST be paged numbered and cross-referenced to the Unit Descriptor, in order to make for straightforward inspection and signing off of portfolios.

Step 3: Assessing an RPL claim

RPL learner activity The learner will:	RPL Tutor/Assessor activity The tutor/assessor will:
Review action and assessment plan	Assess the evidence and check its authenticity
Possibly provide new evidence	Provide the learner with regular feedback
Acknowledge additional learning	Arrange additional learning
Submit final portfolio	Arrange Internal Quality Assurance (IQA)

Step 4: Validating an RPL claim

RPL learner activity The learner will:	Internal Quality Assurer (IQA) activity The IQA will:
Receive feedback on the portfolio submitted	Ensure that the evidence is sufficient
	Provide learner feedback on achievement to tutor(s)
	Arrange external assessment (Crossfields Institute) of the RPL evidence

Step 5: External Quality Assurance carried out by Crossfields Institute

Detailed Outline of the 5-Step Process

Step 1 – Application

All learners working towards Crossfields Institute programmes or qualifications must be registered for their programme or qualification with Crossfields Institute and Pearson Qualifications. Requests for registering RPL learners can be made at any time. The learner will be registered for the programme or qualification in the usual way. Crossfields Institute does not accept simultaneous application for a learner to be registered and to receive certification, thus commitment to the RPL process must be made early on.

Step 2 – Assembling an RPL claim

Reflecting on Experience

The starting point for any learner wishing to claim for RPL is to reflect on their experience in order to identify relevant achievement. They should think about experience gained:

- At work
- In any relevant voluntary work and leisure activities
- In formal or informal education and training – for example, adult education courses or in-company training
- From independent study
- From home-based activities, such as care of the young, the elderly or the sick or involvement in the family business.

RPL learners will need to understand the relevant assessment requirements associated with the units they are claiming. Then they will be able to work towards assembling evidence to support these claims.

Identifying Gaps in Achievement

The assessment requirements of Crossfields Institute programmes and qualifications are listed clearly on the unit or module descriptors. Use copies of these documents to identify and keep track of what has been achieved and what is still required of the learner.

Providing evidence of achievement – the Portfolio

Learners will need to provide evidence that shows that they have covered the requirements of the units. This will take the form of a portfolio, prepared by the learner, which sets out the programme or qualification assessment requirements claimed, together with any supporting evidence. The student will divide their portfolio (a three ring binder) into sections according to unit/s. The Unit Descriptor (which also serves as the evidence tracking sheet) must be at the front of each section. The portfolio MUST be paged numbered and cross-referenced to the Unit Descriptor, in order to make for straightforward inspection and signing off of portfolios.

Professional discussions or oral assessment can be used to contribute towards portfolio evidence, which must be documented and can be supported by audio/video tape recordings.

Separate evidence is not required for each programme or qualification assessment criterion. Where possible, learners should be encouraged to present a small number of complex pieces of evidence that demonstrate the achievement of a number of unit assessment requirements.

Staff Guidance and Support

RPL learners will require considerable tutor encouragement and guidance in compiling their RPL evidence. Guiding RPL learners is a staff-intensive activity. While one-to-one contact is essential, there are advantages in holding workshops – both in economy of staff time and in helping to overcome any sense of isolation felt by the learners. Additional support with the RPL process may be provided by the centre or by Crossfields Institute.

Most learners will be unfamiliar with the process of putting together an RPL claim. It is important that learners receive adequate advice and guidance on how to proceed. This will involve:

- Encouraging reflection and self-evaluation
- Helping to identify possible sources of achievement
- Helping to identify possible evidence of achievement
- Advising on the structure and presentation of evidence
- Explaining assessment requirements

Step 3 – Assessing an RPL claim

The RPL tutor/assessor has the responsibility for ensuring that all the requirements of Crossfields Institute units have been met before applying for a programme or qualification certificate. The assessor should assess the RPL evidence, using the assessment criteria in the programme or qualification. In considering the evidence, the assessor needs to ask if it is authentic, current, relevant and sufficient (see below for definitions).

If on any account the assessor is not satisfied with the evidence submitted, it will be necessary to seek additional evidence.

Where evidence presented in support of a claim of RPL is strongly convincing, it may be deemed sufficient for the purpose of certification. If the evidence is less convincing, but nevertheless substantial, the learner might, where suitable:

• Undergo an oral assessment
• Complete an appropriate assignment
• Complete a written test
• Carry out a demonstration
• A combination of the above

Arranging Internal Quality Assurance

Once the portfolios are complete and have been assessed by the RPL tutor, they must be passed on to your Centre Internal Quality Assurer (IQA). If you do not have an IQA, you must begin the process of training one, as having one at your centre is a mandatory requirement of delivering Crossfields Institute programmes or qualifications. The role of the IQA is to ensure that the evidence provided relates to the standards or learning outcomes being claimed and that there are no gaps in the evidence. If the evidence is sufficient, the IQA records the outcome and recommends the learner(s) to Crossfields Institute for award and certification. If the evidence is not sufficient, the IQA will advise the tutor/assessor of what is missing and give the learner the opportunity to collect and submit additional evidence that does meet the criteria. It is the IQA's responsibility to contact Crossfields Institute when the portfolios are ready to be Externally Quality Assured and signed off for certification.

Steps 4 and 5 – Validating an RPL Claim and External Quality Assurance carried out by Crossfields Institute

External Quality Assurance

Crossfields Institute will fulfil the external quality standards mechanisms appropriately, for each programme or qualification. There will be no distinction between RPL evidence and traditional evidence submitted to Crossfields Institute.

The evidence the learner provides is assessed by Crossfields Institute against the following key criteria:

Validity: Does the evidence match the competences being looked for by the institution? Are the skills, knowledge and expertise being demonstrated by the candidate at the appropriate level?

Sufficiency: Is the amount of evidence sufficient? Does it cover all the aspects being looked for?

Authenticity: This refers to the ownership of the evidence. Assessors need to be confident that the work submitted really is the result of the learners' own effort and expertise.

Reliability: Will different assessors place a similar value on the evidence you have provided and make similar judgments when confronted with the same evidence?

Currency: This refers to the date of the evidence. Assessors must be sure that the evidence submitted by candidate is recent enough to be considered a measure of your current levels of competence.

The student will either be recommended for award and certification OR the portfolio with feedback will be returned to the RPL tutor/assessor and student with a request for further evidence.