

# CMI Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy

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## History

Date	Amendments made
August 2023 V7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Approved centre - RPL Approval Process, stages 3 and 4 amended to show RPL evidence requirements and the process for RPL claims in CMI's moderation system (approved centres) and registration system (registered centres).</li></ul>
April 2023 V6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Complete revision of the policy to add clarity.</li><li>Added information and clarification for Registered CMI Centres.</li></ul>
September 2021 V5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>SQA new principles amended</li></ul>
October 2018 V4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Complete revision of the policy to add clarity. Addition of text taken from Ofqual documentation and cross-checking of documentation from regulators in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Outlining suggested Centre timelines/process and</li><li>addition of timescales for CMI to acknowledge RPL applications.</li><li>Addition of scenarios in which RPL may or may not be used. Information was added regarding the list of regulated qualifications.</li><li>Addition of provision for Centres to charge for RPL applications.</li></ul>

## Distribution

### Distribution List

- All Quality Managers
- Partner Relationship Managers
- Customer Service Team
- Partner Engagement Managers
- Awarding Body Support Team
- CMI Centres

## Purpose

### Document Purpose

This guidance applies to all CMI Centres and Learners registered on a CMI qualification. This document aims to support and give clarification to Centres and their Learners on how CMI recognises Learners' previous achievements.

# Introduction

## Document Introduction

This document applies to all qualifications on credit-based frameworks. These include the [Regulated Qualifications Framework \(RQF\)](#), the [Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework \(SCQF\)](#) and the [Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales \(CQFW\)](#).

# Regulatory Requirements

## Regulatory Requirements

### Condition E10 - Recognition of Prior Learning

**Ofqual Handbook** - General Conditions of Recognition (Published October 2017 - Updated May 2022) state the following:

E10.1 - An awarding organisation must establish, maintain, publish and comply with a policy which specifies whether or not it will recognise prior learning.

E10.2 - In any circumstances where the policy it has in place permits the Recognition of Prior Learning, an awarding organisation must ensure the policy enables it to award qualifications in a way that complies with its Conditions of Recognition.

**CCEA Regulation** - General Conditions of Recognition (Published January 2023) - E10.1, E10.2, As above

**Qualifications Wales** - Standard Conditions of Recognition (Published January 2021) - E10.1, E10.2, As above

### Condition H5 - Results for a qualification must be based on sufficient evidence

**Ofqual Handbook** - General Conditions of Recognition (Published October 2017 - Updated May 2022) state the following:

H5.1 - An awarding organisation must ensure that the result of each assessment taken by a Learner in relation to a qualification which the awarding organisation makes available reflects the level of attainment demonstrated by that Learner in the assessment.

H5.2 - An awarding organisation must ensure that –

- (a) the marking of an assessment in relation to, and
- (b) the awarding of;

a qualification which it makes available takes into account all admissible evidence generated by a Learner as part of that assessment.

H5.3 - Where an awarding organisation sets a rule as to the quantity or type of evidence generated by Learners which will be admissible in an assessment, it must ensure that –

- (a) the assessment makes the rule clear, and

(b) the rule is applied to all Learners taking the assessment (other than where any Reasonable Adjustments or Special Consideration require it to be altered).

H5.4 - Where an awarding organisation sets a rule as to how the final mark for a qualification will be calculated from marks for different assessments, it must ensure that –

(a) the qualification makes the rule clear, and

(b) the rule is applied to all Learners taking the qualification (other than where any Reasonable Adjustments or Special Consideration require it to be altered).

**CCEA Regulation** - General Conditions of Recognition (Published January 2023) - H5.1, H5.2, H5.3, H5.4, As above.

**Qualifications Wales** - Standard Conditions of Recognition (Published January 2021) - H5.1, H5.2, H5.3, H5.4, As above.

It also meets the requirements of the SQA Accreditation Regulatory Principles (2021):

“The awarding body and its providers must ensure that its qualifications and their delivery assessment are inclusive, fair and accessible to Learners: - arrangements for providers to manage recognition of prior learning and achievement (if applicable) ” Principle 14.

## Scope

### Scope

This procedure applies to all key stakeholders engaged with the CMI qualifications. This includes CMI Centres, Centre Staff and CMI Learners.

## Definition of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

### Definitions

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) was formerly known as APL (Accreditation of Prior Learning) and is an assessment process which makes use of the evidence from a Learner’s previous non-certificated and certificated achievement(s) or attainment to demonstrate competence or achievement within a unit or qualification.

Through the RPL process, evidence of a Learner’s previous achievement(s) (learning) is assessed against the assessment criteria of a unit.

Ofqual, CCEA Regulation and Qualifications Wales gives the following definition of RPL:

**Condition J** - Interpretations and definitions

#### J1.8 - Recognition of prior learning

- (a) identification by an awarding organisation of any learning undertaken, and/or attainment, by a Learner –
- (i) prior to that Learner taking a qualification which the awarding organisation makes available or proposes to make available, and

- (ii) which is relevant to the knowledge, skills and understanding which will be assessed as part of that qualification, and
- (b) recognition by an awarding organisation of that learning and/or attainment through an amendment to the requirements which a Learner must have satisfied before the Learner will be assessed or that qualification will be awarded.

SQA Accreditation gives the following definition of RPL:

### **Glossary: Terms and Definitions**

Describes a process used for the purpose of recognising competence against a given set of standards, competencies, or learning outcomes.

## **When to use Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)**

### **Who can use RPL?**

The RPL process can currently only be undertaken by fully approved CMI Centres, as the process needs to be undertaken by assessment and internal quality assurance staff within the Centre. As CMI Registered Centres do not have assessment or internal quality assurance staff then they are unable to make the RPL decision.

In order to not disadvantage Learners from CMI Registered Centres from using the RPL process; CMI can offer an RPL checking service for a fee. This service is part of the 'Assessment Checking' service and fees may apply. Registered CMI Centres should contact their CMI Quality Manager directly to discuss the process.

### **When to use RPL**

The RPL process is relevant where the Learner has any prior learning or attainment achieved prior to them registering for a CMI qualification which is relevant to the knowledge, behaviours, skills and understanding which will be assessed as part of that qualification.

Evidence can draw on any aspect of a Learner's prior experience including

- education and training (including certificated activities)
- work activities
- community or voluntary activities.

It may be useful to draw a distinction between different types of RPL:

- Recognition of Prior Certificated learning – learning for which certification has been provided by an educational organisation or awarding body
- Recognition of Prior Experiential learning – learning gained from experience but which has not been certificated.

### **Evidence required for RPL**

Evidence obtained through the RPL process must be assessed to the same rigorous quality levels as evidence obtained through any other process. There must be a summative assessment of the evidence provided to ensure it meets the assessment criteria of the CMI unit(s) being claimed.

## Criteria required to be met for RPL to be awarded for Approved CMI Centres

For Approved CMI Centres it remains the role of CMI Centre Assessment and Internal Quality Assurance staff to decide on RPL and that it is undertaken by a person(s) with relevant levels of expertise to ensure that assessment criteria are only deemed to have been met where evidence is:

### **Valid:**

Does the evidence genuinely demonstrate that the demands of the assessment criteria have been met? For RPL, the currency of evidence will be of particular concern. Does, for example, the evidence meet up-to-date demands or is it representative of practice that has significantly changed? Evidence used for RPL cannot date from **more than 5 years before the date of application** to the Centre for RPL and Assessment and Internal Quality Assurance staff at the Centre must determine whether it is valid.

### **Authentic:**

This involves consideration of whether the evidence being assessed is genuinely the work of the Learner. For example, the evidence may have been produced by somebody else or maybe the result of the work of a team. In the latter case, this would be acceptable if the assessment criteria were related to team/joint working, but not if it was being used as evidence of an activity which should have been carried out individually.

### **Sufficient:**

There must be enough evidence to fully meet the requirements of the assessment criteria or learning outcomes being considered. If there is insufficient evidence to fully meet requirements, then evidence obtained through RPL must be complemented by additional evidence gained through other suitable assessment methods (s) before requirements/outcomes can be said to have been met. Where an RPL decision is made, there must be a clear audit trail of the decision-making process.

### **Reliable:**

The evidence obtained through RPL should be such that an Assessment and Internal Quality Assurance staff would arrive at the same assessment decision, were the assessment to be repeated.

## The Outcome of the RPL Process

If individuals can produce relevant evidence that meets the above criteria (Valid, Authentic, Sufficient & Reliable) and the assessment criteria requirements, then recognition can be given for their existing knowledge, understanding, behaviours or skills. If an individual can demonstrate that they meet all the learning outcomes and assessment criteria in a unit, then they can claim they have achieved that unit solely on the basis of their RPL achievement.

Where a unit is claimed as part of a dual accreditation agreement with CMI, CMI reserves the right to decline an RPL request because of moderation requirements. Each request will however be considered on a case-by-case basis.

If evidence from RPL is only sufficient to cover one or more learning outcomes or assessment criteria or to partly meet the learning outcome or assessment criteria, then additional assessment methods should be employed to generate sufficient evidence on which to base a safe assessment decision.

Learners are unlikely to have all the evidence they need to achieve a full unit and may need to produce additional evidence. RPL may be used in conjunction with other assessment methods such as professional discussion, generation of workplace/product evidence or observation to assess current performance.

Evidence from RPL is similar to that derived via any other acceptable assessment method. This means that where the standard of a unit is met by evidence obtained wholly or partly from RPL, an award can be made.

## Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Process

### RPL Process

Learners wishing to claim RPL must approach their CMI Centre at the time of registration for the qualification. **CMI will not deal with any claims directly from Learners.**

CMI Approved Centres and Registered Centres are required to have their own RPL policy and that policy must ensure it is in line with CMI RPL requirements. The CMI Centre RPL policy must:

- Be made available to CMI Learners.
- Be clear and include timescales.
- Explain the process for RPL appeals and complaints.

CMI Approved Centres wishing to undertake RPL must ensure that:

- Evidence used for RPL cannot date from more than 5 years before the date of application to the Centre for RPL
- The process is carried out by CMI approved Centre staff with relevant levels of expertise to meet CMI requirements.
  - For an **Approved CMI Centre**, this should be undertaken by the Centre Assessment and/or Internal Quality Assurance Staff or person(s) with relevant levels of expertise.

The RPL assessment should be carried out as an entire process, and the following stages are suggested as a process that Centres could follow. This means that the Centre Assessment and/or Internal Quality Assurance Staff person(s) with relevant levels of expertise should:

### Approved CMI Centres -

- **Stage 1** - Plan with the Learner – discuss with the Learner the evidence they wish to provide to claim RPL and decide whether the evidence is admissible. If unsure, please contact your CMI Quality Manager. The Learner should be offered advice on the nature and range of evidence considered appropriate to support RPL. This should be within 15 working days of the date of application for RPL.
- **Stage 2** - Allow the Learner to gather and present the evidence. This should be provided to the Centre within 10 working days of the conclusion of Stage 1.
- **Stage 3** - Make a formal assessment decision on the evidence provided and provide feedback on the assessment decision to the Learner, confirming decisions in writing and giving guidance on the available options (particularly in situations where the decision has been not to award credit). This should be done within 10 working days of the conclusion of Stage 2. Decisions should be made based on whether the RPL evidence for a CMI unit is valid, authentic, sufficient and reliable.
- **Stage 4** - Register the Learner with CMI. When claiming a Learner who has been granted RPL this must be indicated when making the claim on CMI's moderation system. All RPL evidence and the explicit evidence of the decision made with a rationale for the decision must be included with the moderation batch. The CMI Moderator will provide feedback on whether the RPL decision is fit for purpose as part of the moderation process and state whether the unit/s can be awarded. For expediency, centres are encouraged to make RPL claims as soon as the Learner is registered and not to wait until other units have been completed at the centre.

## Registered CMI Centres -

- **Stage 1** - In all cases of RPL by Registered CMI Centres, they must contact via email their CMI Quality Manager to discuss the process prior to the RPL activity being undertaken by CMI.
- **Stage 2** - The Registered Centre is to send all evidence to be considered for RPL and complete the RPL Application form (Appendix A) and send it to CMI's assessment checking service [assessmentchecking@managers.org.uk](mailto:assessmentchecking@managers.org.uk). The sender will receive a bounce-back email stating the Service Level Agreement (SLA) of 20 working days.
- **Stage 3** - At this stage of the process the CMI Registered Centre will be invoiced for the service<sup>1</sup>. CMI will then review the evidence provided and make a formal decision to accept or reject the RPL claim, CMI will give guidance to the Centre on the available options (particularly in situations where the decision has been not to award credit). The completed RPL Application form and evidence provided will then be returned to the Centre. If RPL is granted and the Learner is already registered this will automatically be implemented against the Learner's Personal Academic Record. If RPL is granted and the Learner is not yet registered, the approved RPL application must be submitted at the time of Learner registration so that the Personal Academic Record of the Learner can be updated by CMI.
- **Stage 4** - Centres must maintain appropriate records including the completed application form and RPL evidence for regulatory audit purposes.

### At all stages

- All decisions should be transparent, rigorous, reliable and fair and accessible to all Learners and CMI.
- Ensure that Learners are aware of their right to access the Centre's appeals process should they feel the RPL decision was unfair.
- Ensure that Learners are aware of their right to access CMI's appeals process once the Centre's processes have been exhausted.

The Centre Assessment and/or Internal Quality Assurance Staff or person(s) with relevant levels of expertise must ensure that all learning outcomes and assessment criteria being claimed are covered and that records of assessment are maintained in the usual way. The process must be subject to the same quality assurance requirements as any other assessment method.

For units claimed through the dual accreditation process, only learning outcomes need to be evidenced.

For **Approved CMI Centres**, there is no requirement to have any RPL approved by your Quality Manager as the RPL evidence will be moderated by CMI through our moderation processes. However, a record of any RPL claims must be kept and this will be reviewed by your Quality Manager during your annual Centre quality assurance visit.

For **Approved CMI Centres**, the RPL must be included in the appropriate Centre's Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) sampling plan (where appropriate) as an assessment method and is subject to CMI moderation.

## Circumstances when prior learning will not be recognised

The following circumstances when prior learning will not be considered:

- The Learner has presented a similar level and/or subject qualification and/or unit(s) from another Awarding Organisation that is a similar programme of learning in which they wish to claim RPL for - [RQF Framework](#), [Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework \(SCQF\)](#).
- Learning that is similar to assessment criteria but which has been met at a level lower than the current

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<sup>1</sup> Please note there is no refund on the fee if no RPL mapping can be found

- programme of study being undertaken by the Learner
- Prior learning that is not current in meeting the qualification syllabus
- Prior learning that has been referred by a Centre Assessment and/or Internal Quality Assurance Staff or person(s) with relevant levels of expertise
- Prior learning that has not been assessed by a Centre Assessment and/or Internal Quality Assurance Staff or person(s) with relevant levels of expertise
- Prior learning that has been presented to allow exemption or grade transfer as part of a dual accreditation agreement may not be accepted.

## Potential RPL Scenarios

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#### Scenario 1

A Learner has approached the Centre, wishing to undertake a CMI Level 5 Diploma in Management and Leadership (5D30). As part of the Diploma, the Centre is offering Unit 510 Managing Finance. The Learner is a Finance Manager in their full-time job and feels that they should be awarded this unit on the basis of their work experience.

In this scenario, the Learner cannot just be awarded the unit. However, the Centre should review evidence of the Learner's knowledge and understanding to decide whether RPL would be appropriate. The Learner could submit as evidence work-based reports, presentations, and products that they had produced independently. The Centre would need to assess the evidence against all of the assessment criteria of the unit. The assessor would need to 'signpost' the evidence to show which assessment criteria are met and where. If the evidence did not sufficiently meet all of the assessment criteria, then additional assessment evidence will be required for example through additional written evidence, professional discussion or other forms of evidence. The Centre would retain appropriate records and carry out normal processes of marking and internal quality assurance.

#### Scenario 2

A Learner has approached the Centre, wishing to undertake a CMI Level 5 Diploma in Management and Leadership (5D30). As part of the Diploma, the Centre is offering Unit 510 Managing Finance. The Learner states that they have achieved a finance qualification and have the certificate to prove it, but there is no other evidence.

In this scenario, the Learner cannot just be awarded the unit. However, the Centre would need to check that the qualification is not an RQF qualification. The Centre would check [www.gov.uk/find-a-regulated-qualification](http://www.gov.uk/find-a-regulated-qualification). If the qualification appeared on this, it would be deemed an 'exemption' and could not be claimed as it would 'double count' the credits already achieved in completing the original qualification.

If the qualification does not appear on the list of RQF or SCQF qualifications, the Centre should review evidence of the Learner's knowledge and understanding to decide whether RPL would be appropriate. The Centre would need to satisfy themselves that the qualification as listed on the certificate satisfies the requirements of the unit's assessment criteria by checking the qualification syllabus. The Centre would retain appropriate records and carry out normal processes of marking and internal quality assurance and store appropriate records of the 'mapping process'.

#### Scenario 3

A Learner has approached the Centre, wishing to undertake a CMI Level 5 Diploma in Management and Leadership (5D30). As part of the Diploma, the Centre is offering Unit 510 Managing Finance. The Learner



states that they achieved a finance qualification and have the assessed evidence from that qualification.

In this scenario, the Centre would check the RQF or SCQF qualification list to ensure it did not appear. If the qualification did not appear, the Centre would need to assess the evidence against all of the assessment criteria of the unit. The assessor would need to 'signpost' the evidence to show which assessment criteria are met and where. If the evidence did not sufficiently meet all of the assessment criteria, then additional assessment evidence will be required through additional written evidence, professional discussion or another form of evidence. The Centre would retain appropriate records and carry out normal processes of marking and internal quality assurance.

#### Scenario 4

A Learner has approached the Centre, wishing to undertake a CMI Level 5 Diploma in Management and Leadership (5D30). As part of the Diploma, the Centre is offering Unit 510 Managing Finance. The Learner states that 3 years ago they completed a BA (Hons) in Business Management in which there was a very similar module. They have the dissertation they completed for the module saved on their computer, and the transcript/results to show that the module had been passed.

In this scenario, this could be considered for RPL as degree programmes do not sit on the RQF or SCQF framework. The Centre would need to assess the evidence against all of the assessment criteria of the unit and must verify the Learner's achievement of the module. The assessor would need to 'signpost' the evidence to show which ACs are met and where. If the evidence did not sufficiently meet all of the ACs, then additional assessment evidence might be required through additional written evidence, professional discussion or another form of evidence. The Centre would retain appropriate records and carry out normal processes of marking and internal quality assurance.

#### Scenario 5

A Learner is undertaking a BA (Hons) in Business Management at a university. The programme has been dual accredited to a Level 5 Diploma in Management and Leadership (5D30), and there are modules in each of the 3 years of the programme which are mapped and contribute to the evidence for the Diploma. The university has allowed the Learner direct entry to Year 2 of the programme on the basis that they completed a Foundation Degree at another institution. The Learner will then miss the mapped modules in Year 1. The Learner wants to know if they are eligible for the L5 Diploma.

In this scenario, the Learner could only be awarded the Diploma if the modules achieved in the years of study at the university allow them to meet the rules stated in the syllabus regarding Total Unit Time (TUT) and credits. If the Learner cannot meet these rules and wishes to be awarded the Diploma, they will need to present sufficient evidence to meet the requirements of the CMI units which were 'missed' in Year 1 of the programme. Alternatively, the Learner can be awarded the equivalent CMI qualifications for mapped modules in years 2 and 3 only.

#### Scenario 6

A Learner is undertaking a BA (Hons) in Business Management at a university. The programme has been dual accredited to a Level 5 Diploma in Management and Leadership (5D30), and there are modules in each of the 3 years of the programme which are mapped and contribute to the evidence for the Diploma. The university has granted grade transfer / exemption / APEL C for some CMI-mapped modules based on an entrance test or entry interview. At moderation, the university is unlikely to be able to present evidence that the Learner met the required LOs for mapped modules. The Learner wants to know if they are eligible for the L5 Diploma.

In this scenario, CMI is unable to credit the Learner with the LOs for the mapped modules. If however, the Learner completes some of the mapped modules at the university and assessment evidence is available for moderation, the Learner can be awarded the equivalent CMI qualification for the mapped modules completed.

## Conclusion

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**Question:** This RPL seems like a lot of additional work for the Centre. Can the Centre charge the Learner for this?

**Answer:** Yes, reasonable additional charges could be made to the Learner. It is up to the Centre to determine the level of these charges.

When considering previous evidence for RPL, the Centre must pay due regard to the level of qualification previously achieved or the work experience gained to ensure that it is at a similar level of demand. Evidence from a level below the qualification being sought for RPL is not admissible and the Learner will have to complete the whole unit.

Information on what qualification levels mean in England, Wales and Northern Ireland can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/list-of-qualification-levels>

and for Scotland <https://scqf.org.uk/about-the-framework/interactive-framework/>

Generally, the following should be used as guidance:

- Level 3 qualifications (SCQF Level 6) – comparable to A levels or experience gained in a first-line management role.
- Level 5 qualifications (SCQF Level 8) – comparable to Year 2 of an undergraduate degree or experience gained in a middle management role.
- Level 7 qualifications (SCQF Level 11) – comparable to a Postgraduate/Master's degree or experience gained in a senior/strategic management role.

### Clarification of related terms

#### Terms in this policy

A range of terms and processes are frequently confused with RPL. Centres should refer to these other CMI policies and procedures:

- Exemptions – see the [CMI Exemption Policy and Procedure](#)
- Equivalent Units – see the [CMI Equivalent Units Policy and Procedure](#)

CMI encourages the use of these processes where they are of value to Learners and/or Centres.

## Monitoring and Review

CMI will review this procedure annually as part of our self-evaluation arrangements and revise it in line with any feedback from stakeholders, regulatory authorities or external agencies, or changes in our practices.