

Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

Document Summary

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1: Recognition of Prior Learning – Policy & Practice

The City College is totally committed to an inclusive approach in the provision of appropriate learning opportunities and, to this end, emphasises its responsibility to recognise prior learning and / or achievement.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a method of assessment that considers whether students can demonstrate that they can meet the assessment requirements for a unit through knowledge, understanding or skills they already possess and so do not need to develop through a course of learning. It is used sparingly and can be applicable to adult students returning to education.

RPL provides a route for the recognition of the achievements resulting from continuous learning. RPL enables recognition of achievement from a range of activities using any valid assessment methodology. Provided that the assessment requirements of a given unit or qualification have been met (through evidence that the relevant unit learning outcomes have been met by a students' prior learning), the use of RPL is acceptable for accrediting a unit, units or a whole qualification. Evidence of learning must be valid and reliable. (BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to Quality Assurance and Assessment 2021/22, p94)

The process of assessment for RPL applies the same quality assurance and quality monitoring standards as is any other form of assessment offered by the College.

2: When RPL will be used by The City College

The use of recognition of prior learning is optional, and if applied, an internal policy of recognition of prior learning is necessary, with the resources to do this. RPL cannot be applied for set exams, set assignments or external assessment and involves using a learner's evidence of earlier learning and achievement towards part of a qualification. The College recognises that the use of RPL is acceptable for accrediting a single unit, a group of units or a whole qualification.

The knowledge, understanding and/or skills used for accreditation may have been acquired in any area of life eg. former education or training experiences, domestic or family life, work-related activities, or community or voluntary activities. So long as the composite learning outcomes have been met through the provision of appropriate evidence, a student or prospective student is able to claim credit for units where RPL has been used to generate some, or all, of that evidence.

3: Assessment of RPL evidence

Assessment methods for RPL must be as rigorous as those used for other methods of assessment in that they must be fit for purpose and relate to the evidence of learning provided. It is possible to claim credit for any unit through RPL unless the assessment methods proscribed for that unit do not allow this. It is the responsibility of lecturers and internal verifiers under the supervision of the internal lead verifier to ensure that the evidence presented and accepted is:

- **Valid:** The evidence provided by the student or potential student must be a clear demonstration of conformity with the demands of the specified learning outcome.
- **Current:** It is essential that the evidence should be current i.e. that it should meet up-to-date demands and not be demonstrative of a practice which has significantly changed. The exact form of the evidence required will vary from programme to programme and will depend on the extent of the experience and the nature of the outcomes claimed. If there is any doubt about the currency of any evidence supplied then lecturers and/or verifiers will be allowed to use questions to check for understanding and for competence.
- **Sufficient:** evidence must be sufficient fully to meet the requirements of the learning outcome/s. if the evidence offered is deemed to be insufficient then that RPL evidence must be supplemented by evidence generated through other appropriate assessment method/s before the learning outcome can be said to have been met.
- **Authentic:** The evidence provided must have been produced only by the individual who presents it. As with any other form of assessment, it is important that the student understands the meaning and implication of plagiarism and that a declaration of authenticity is provided.
- **Reliable:** Evidence provided in support of any RPL claim should be such that the individual assessing it would make the same decision if the assessment was to be repeated.

Please note that a Higher Education award, certified by Pearson, cannot be used as prior learning for another Pearson higher education award of an equivalent level while individual units are not, of themselves, an award and can be used for RPL.

If RPL is used, the maximum grade that the learner can achieve for that unit is a Pass if the RPL is through experiential learning.

RPL cannot be used for more than 50% of the total credit value of any Higher National Award.

4: The process of RPL

If the request for RPL rests on previous study, then the process set out immediately below will apply:

- The option of using RPL to claim units for some of their past learning or experience should be discussed with the learner before enrolling. The learner should have the process of claiming a unit using RPL explained, as well as the support and guidance that is available signposted. In addition, the time the process will take, how to appeal the decision and any possible costs should be clearly stated.
- The learner should be registered as soon as they begin to gather evidence for RPL. In order to help the learner, a tracking documents could be created. The evidence needs to meet the required standards and could include paid work, voluntary work, life experience in the home, or non-certificated education or learning.
- The Standards Verifier/External Examiner should be informed before any monitoring activity beings or a learner has applied for RPL. Standards Verifiers or External Examiners are not required to give feedback on an assignment brief or task if one is set as part of RPL.
- The first part of the process of assessing and verifying evidence will involve checking the prior award's learning outcomes and unit content against the corresponding elements The City College unit/s from which the student is seeking exemption. This will be done by an appropriate internal verifier (IV)
- The second part of the process involves checking that any materials offered by the student have, in fact, been produced by her/ him. It should be noted that it is the student, not the College, who bears the responsibility for assembling appropriate evidence. The responsibility of the College is to check the evidence presented, not to seek evidence on behalf of the student
- Once a file of evidence has been submitted then the Programme Leader or an IV will be asked to map the evidence from the prior award, unit by unit, against the required level of The City College programme to ensure that they are covered by the evidence presented. If the Programme Leader or IV is satisfied that the academic requirements are met, then a report will be prepared for The City College Academic Board. The final decision will rest with this Board.
- If the learner wants to appeal against a decision made about their assessment they should first follow The City College's internal appeal process and can then contact Pearson directly through the Pearson Support Portal: <https://support.pearson.com/uk/s/>

If the RPL rests on practical experience and skills, then the method set out below may be used:

- The methods of assessment chosen will depend on the assessment strategy for the programme unit being assessed and may include: examination of documents/ witness testimony/ reflective accounts or portfolios/ professional discussion
- Assessment should: be planned with the student/ be the subject of formal decision making/ be the focus of feedback and advice/ be recorded on a City College grading form in the same way as any other type of assessment/ be verified in the same way as for other forms of assessment/ be considered via the College appeals procedure if this is required/ be subject to the normal College certification process/ be subject to the same quality assurance requirements as any other assessment method.

5: When RPL will be used by The City College of Acupuncture

The City College of Acupuncture will make use of RPL where an individual can demonstrate previous qualifications in health-related disciplines such as osteopathy, physiotherapy or conventional western medicine which may map to the modules in the Acupuncture syllabus. The City College of Acupuncture recognises that the use of RPL is acceptable for accrediting a single unit or a group of units.

If an acupuncture student chooses to apply for the Tui Na course, the course leader will scrutinise the subjects already cleared on the acupuncture course in order to ascertain whether or not the necessary background understanding to be able to follow the Tui Na syllabus. This is a decision that suitable pre-requisites are in place for those who have not yet completed a three-year acupuncture course so it is Recognition of Prior Learning but not leading to exemptions. There are few complementary therapies comparable to Tui Na so exemptions are unlikely to be an issue but, where a potential applicant wishes to explore exemptions, The City College of Acupuncture staff are expected to behave as described below and assessment of PL evidence must fulfil the same criteria described on Page 2.

The City College and City College of Acupuncture staff involved in the RPL process must:

- Offer a range of learning opportunities designed to meet the needs of individual students and potential students
- Design opportunities for individuals to gain whole, or parts of, qualifications without necessarily undertaking a formal programme of study
- Identify existing competences during guidance and induction and thus offer, where appropriate, customised support for a claim for credit via RPL and then provide support throughout the claims process
- Provide individuals with appropriate advice as to the nature and range of evidence appropriate to the support of a claim for RPL

- Ensure that, in any claim for RPL, the evidence meets the learning outcomes specified by the awarding body
- Ensure that any process of RPL assessment is subject to the same quality assurance and verification standards as any other form of assessment carried out with the City College.
- Ensure that all guidance and assessment for RPL is overseen by staff with sufficient relevant levels of experience and expertise to ensure that all the requirements for assessment are met.