



# **Policy for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL); and Recognition Prior Experiential Learning (RP(E)L)**

## **BTEC Higher National Programmes**

**September 2025**

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| <b>Scope</b>   | - Students and prospective Students<br>- Academic, Registry, Quality, and<br>Admissions Staff at UK Business College |
| <b>Access:</b> | Public   |

**Version 1.2**

**Approved by the Board of Governors**

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# 1. Scope

1.1 This policy applies only to Pearson-accredited BTEC Higher National Programmes taught on the Regulated Qualifications Frameworks by UKBC.

1.2 Recognition of prior learning (RPL) considers the academic credit value of students' prior learning and experience that can be counted towards the completion of a course of study and the associated award or qualification. A student's skills and knowledge, achieved through work, community or voluntary experience, and/or prior study, is considered through a formal process against descriptors to assess the level achieved across the relevant learning outcomes. Assessments are based on the relevance and currency of the experience.

1.3 The following policy sets out how UK Business College ("UKBC") consider applications for RPL. It should be read in association with College's Student Recruitment and Admissions Policy. There are two types of RPL considered herein:

- **'RPL'** –Recognition of Prior (Certificated) Learning'– learning which has been formally assessed and certified by Pearson or an educational institution or education/training provider; or
- **'RP(E)L'** –Recognition of Prior (Experiential) Learning' – learning gained through other experience and demonstrated by (for example):
  - work experience (paid or unpaid) records relevant,
  - community or voluntary work,
  - non-certified education or learning,
  - references and testimonials from verified academics or professionals.

1.6 In applying this policy, the College shall have due regard for the requirements of Pearson, as articulated in Section 4 of the [Pearson Guidance for Centres: Recognition of prior learning policy and process](#).

1.7 The use of RPL and RP(E)L is optional and will only be applied where appropriate and supported by sufficient evidence.

## 2. Differentiating RPL and RP(E)L from Screening for Accreditation of Prior Experience (SAPE)

2.1 Consideration of RPL and RP(E)L is separate from the College's 'Screening for Accreditation of Prior Experience (SAPE)' process, which considers applications for entry that are not supported by the normal pre-requisite qualifications, but where a candidate may have personal or professional experience which qualifies them for entry to a particular programme.

2.2 For RPL and RP(E)L, an Assessor reviews whether the evidence is sufficient to show that a student has already met some of the assessment requirements for the sought qualification. This assessment may be conducted before or (in exceptional circumstances) after admission (in the case of the latter, the College cannot use RPL and RP(E)L to exempt a unit where a candidate has attempted and failed an assessment in that unit).

Information gathered during the SAPE process may be used in the consideration of requests for RP(E)L.

### 3. Principles

3.1 UKBC is committed to supporting the UK Government's agenda to promote the social mobility across the country by improving the accessibility of higher education and the participation of groups of people who are statistically underrepresented in graduate populations.

3.2 The College implements a recruitment strategy that removes barriers for people who may benefit from studying a higher education qualification, but whose personal or economic circumstances, or lack of academic experience may discourage them from pursuing one.

3.3 To be successful in this regard, the College must implement robust assessment of an applicant's ability to successfully complete the applied-for programme and enter employment commensurate with their award after study.

3.4 These processes are set out herein.

**3.5 As a rule, all RPL and RP(E)L decisions shall:**

- i.* be made on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of academic staff who are competent in assessing the subject matter of the unit(s) being exempted and overseen by the Programme Leader (referred to herein as 'Assessors'),
- ii.* be considered on the basis of verifiable documented evidence,
- iii.* be explicitly mapped to the current qualification's assessment criteria and unit learning outcomes as well as other reference points (with reference to published guidance from Pearson on the mapping of older to learning outcomes to current ones),
- iv.* specify any necessary remedial activities which would sufficiently cover any gaps identified in fulfilling the assessment criteria,
- v.* assure that assessed evidence from certified learning is at the same level of education for which RPL and RP(E)L is being claimed,
- vi.* be consistently applied and documented effectively for all RPL Recruitments (Records should be retained for no less than 3 years); all such documentation will record clearly where learning outcomes have been met by either certified learning (RPL) or experiential learning (RP(E)L),
- vii.* All evidence submitted for RPL or RP(E)L must be Valid (relevant to the learning outcomes being claimed), Current (demonstrating up-to-date knowledge and skills), Reliable (consistent and dependable), Authentic (the learner's own work), and Sufficient (adequate to fully meet all learning outcomes and assessment criteria).

- viii. As a general rule, prior learning (both certificated and experiential) should have been achieved within the last 7 years prior to the learner's registration date. Where learning falls outside this period, additional evidence may be required to demonstrate that knowledge and skills remain current.
- ix. RPL and RP(E)L cannot be applied to externally assessed units, examinations, or any Pearson set external assessments.

3.6 All decisions should be ratified by the Assessment Board and minutes; records of the evidence for RPL and RP(E)L decisions should be kept and may be viewed by Pearson-appointed External Examiners.

3.7 Where RPL or RP(E)L is used to determine achievement of learning outcomes:

- Experiential learning (RP(E)L) can only be awarded a Pass grade.
- Certificated learning (RPL) may be awarded Pass, Merit, or Distinction, provided that all relevant grading criteria are fully met and evidenced.

3.8 RPL processes shall not be used for any more than 50% of the total credit value of a Higher National award.

### **3.9 Roles and Responsibilities**

3.9.1 The effective implementation of RPL and RP(E)L requires clearly defined roles and responsibilities. The following roles apply:

3.9.2 Assessors are responsible for reviewing and assessing evidence submitted for RPL or RP(E)L. They must be appropriately qualified and have subject-specific expertise in the relevant unit(s). At UKBC, the Course Coordinator will typically act as the Assessor. However, where a unit requires specialist subject knowledge, assessment may be undertaken by another suitably qualified lecturer with relevant expertise. Assessors will map evidence against learning outcomes and assessment criteria and make assessment decisions based on the standards of the qualification.

3.9.3 Internal Verifiers are responsible for ensuring the quality and consistency of RPL and RP(E)L assessment decisions. This includes sampling assessment decisions, reviewing evidence and mapping, and confirming that assessment practices are fair, valid, reliable, and consistent with College and Pearson requirements.

3.9.4 The UKBC Programme Leader will oversee the RPL and RP(E)L process within their programme area. They ensure that Assessors and Internal Verifiers are appropriately trained and competent, and that RPL decisions are applied consistently across the programme.

3.9.5 The Assessment Board is responsible for formally ratifying all RPL and RP(E)L decisions. Records of decisions and supporting evidence will be maintained and made available for audit and external review.

3.9.6 External Examiners may review and sample RPL and RP(E)L decisions as part of the quality assurance activities. They do not make assessment decisions but may provide feedback or request further evidence where necessary.

## 4. Procedure

### 4.1 **Stage 1: Awareness, information, and guidance:**

4.1.1 During the admissions process, recruiters will discuss with prospective students about the option of using RPL or RP(E)L to claim units for some of their past learning or experience. If the prospective student is interested in this, they will be advised of:

- The process of claiming a unit using RPL (including the types of evidence that may be required),
- The support and guidance that is available,
- How long the process will take, how to appeal.

4.1.2 Recruiters should check that the evidence provided by the student for RPL has been achieved before the start of their course of study.

### 4.2 **Stage 2: Pre assessment, gathering evidence and giving information:**

4.2.1 The student will be registered as soon as they officially start to gather evidence. To help the student in gathering evidence the College will use a tracking document.

4.2.2 RP(E)L evidence gathered needs to meet the standards of the unit, or part of a unit, that the evidence is being used for. Evidence from a student's past experience could include:

- work experience (paid or unpaid) records relevant,
- community or voluntary work,
- non-certified education or learning,
- personal life experiences

4.2.3 When considering RPL for completed units of a previous iteration of the same BTEC qualification (whether under the QCF or RQF Framework) , these will be mapped to the current assessment criteria using Pearson's published guidance for centres.

### 4.3 **Stage 3: Assessing and documenting evidence:**

4.3.1 The College will notify the Pearson-appointed External Examiner, before any monitoring activity starts, where it has applied RPL for any units. The External Examiner may include these in their sampling.

4.3.2 A student's past achievement that would show evidence of current knowledge, understanding and skills varies between industries. It depends on the range of their experience, technological changes and the nature of the outcome claimed. The Assessor(s) may ask questions or ask a student to show them skills, to check that their understanding and skills are current.

4.3.3 Assessment as part of RPL and RP(E)L is a structured process for gathering and reviewing evidence and making judgements about a student's past learning and experience in relation to unit standards.

4.3.4 The Assessor(s) may look at:

- Work experience records validated by managers.
- Past portfolios of evidence or essays made by the student.
- Reports validated as being the student's own unaided work.
- references and testimonials from verified academics or professionals

- Professional discussions.
- New assignment briefs or tasks that have been created to fill any gaps in the student's work.
- Expert witness testimonies from appropriately qualified professionals

4.3.5 Note: External Examiners are not required to give feedback on an assignment brief or task where this is set.

4.3.6 The College will evaluate all the evidence using the learning outcomes and assessment criteria from the qualification or unit being claimed. In assessing a unit using RPL or RP(E)L, the Assessor(s) must be satisfied that the evidence meets the standard for all learning outcomes and assessment criteria. Where prior certificated learning fully meets all learning outcomes and assessment criteria of a unit, no additional assessment is required.

4.3.7 Where there are gaps in the student's work through RPL, then UKBC will use supplementary assessment methods to create enough evidence to be able to award the learning outcome for the whole unit.

#### **4.3.8 Documenting evidence**

4.3.8.1 Evidence collected through the RPL or RP(E)L process needs to be assessed and verified through the same quality assurance procedures that UKBC uses for any other internal assessment methods.

4.3.8.2 Records of assessment against prior learning are kept and made available for verification.

#### **4.4 Stage 4: Outcomes of the RPL**

4.4.1 Once an assessment decision has been reached, feedback is given to the student including the assessment decision and what options are available to the student in the event the College decides not to award the unit.

4.4.2 Students will be advised on how they can appeal if they do not agree with the assessment decision. If the student wants to make a complaint, they can do so using the College's complaints procedure.

#### **4.5 Stage 5: Claiming Certificates**

4.5.1 Students can claim certificates once the quality assurance processes has been successfully completed using the standard procedures.

4.5.2 After certification, the College will keep the assessment and internal verification records, along with any extra RPL or RP(E)L records for no less than three years.

#### **4.6 Stage 6: Appeals**

4.6.1 Appeals will be considered in line with the College's Academic Appeals Process.

4.6.2 If a learner remains dissatisfied after exhausting the UKBC's internal appeals or complaints procedures, they may escalate their concern in line with Pearson's formal

complaints and appeals procedures - <https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/understanding-our-qualifications/policies-for-centres-learners-and-employees.html>

## **5. Review and Update**

5.1 This policy will be reviewed annually or as required by changes to internal or external regulations. All changes to it will be ratified by the College's Board of Governors.

| <b>Document Information</b> |  |
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| Document Title              | Policy for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL); and Recognition Prior Experiential Learning (RP(E)L) |
| Version                     | 1.2  |
| Date                        | September 2025   |
| Previous version/date       | September 2024   |
| Next review                 | September 2026   |
| Approved by                 | Board of Governors   |
| Owners:                     | Head of Admissions   |