

## RECOGNISED PRIOR LEARNING POLICY

### What is RPL (Recognised Prior Learning)

RPL is the process for recognising learning that has its source in experience and/or previous formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts. Learners may already have Credit Points from formal learning. In some cases it may be possible to transfer credit points that have previously been awarded to another qualification or learning programme. Information on credit transfer can be found in the using RPL for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning involves a review of past experiences. Learners reflect on their experience in order to discover and then express what these experiences have taught them. RPL is a process through which learning gained from experience can be recognised and used. It also includes learning gained through non-formal learning and training programmes in the workplace, in the community and in the voluntary sector. People can gain a range of knowledge and skills through:

- family life (home-making, caring, domestic organisation)
- work (paid or unpaid)
- community, voluntary or leisure activities
- key experiences and events in life.

There is no restriction on the type of experience that can provide someone with knowledge and skills – even negative experiences might have led someone to learn something about themselves. RPL is about recognising that all experiences can provide a basis for learning. The RPL process can help people to value and build on the learning they have gained informally. RPL enables learners to realise what they have learnt through their experiences and to demonstrate this to others. It reveals the learner's potential and capacity to learn from future experiences. This recognition may allow individuals to go on to do more study or training if they choose. It may also help someone if they are, for example:

- planning their career
- planning their personal development
- wanting to take a more active part in their community.

SOMAX's policy is in line with SQA awarding body requirements policy is to recognise prior learning as a method of assessing whether a learner's experience and achievements meet the evidence requirements (ie the standard) of a SQA Unit or Units and which may or may not have been developed through a course of learning.

SOMAX recognise that learners gain knowledge and skills acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts. Formal learning is learning certificated by a recognised awarding or professional body; Non-formal learning includes learning such as employer's in-house training courses, which may or may not be assessed and/or certificated; finally, Informal learning is learning based on experience from a variety of environments which is not formally assessed.

Evidence to support prior learning assessment decisions must be valid, reliable and of equal rigour to the standard assessment of the Unit concerned. This means that the evidence should broadly match the evidence requirements specified in the Unit and reflect the level and credit value attached to the Unit.

The recognition of prior learning may be used to assess complete or partial Units. Where evidence of prior learning only partially meets the evidence requirements of a Unit, other methods of assessment should be used to complete the outstanding requirements. The minimum level of awarding and certification will be a complete Unit.

Previously attained qualifications may be used as evidence of prior learning as long as they have been awarded by a recognised awarding body or professional body. It is a Centre's responsibility to ensure that the content, level of demand and assessment approach of the prior attained qualification broadly matches the evidence requirements specified in the Unit(s). A qualifications certificate on its own is unlikely to be sufficient evidence for assessment and verification purposes. This should be supported by module descriptors or equivalent which provides information on the level, demand, content and assessment of the previously attained qualification.

Evidence to support prior learning decisions needs to ensure the currency of the learner's knowledge, skills and achievement within the context of the Unit(s) being assessed. Currency is likely to differ depending on the sector. Supplementary questioning may be undertaken by assessors in order to ascertain the currency of a learner's prior learning or experience. Although SOMAX would usually not consider anything that is over 3 years old.

**The recognition of prior learning may not be used as a method of assessing in the following types of Units and assessments:**

- Course and/or external assessments
- Other integrative assessment Units (which may or not be graded)
- Certain types of assessment instruments where the standard may be compromised by not using the same assessment method outlined in the Unit
- Where there is an existing requirement for a licence to practice
- Where there are specific health and safety requirements
- Where there are regulatory, professional or other statutory requirements
- Where otherwise specified an assessment strategy, for example, in Vocational Qualifications.