

## Recognising Prior Learning (RPL) and Accreditation of Experiential Learning (APEL) Policy

### Introduction

The recognition of prior learning (RPL) is defined as:

*“A method of assessment that considers whether a learner can demonstrate that they can meet the knowledge, understanding and skills (KUS) requirements of a programme element and/or that they already possess a particular qualification and as a result do not need to develop through a course of learning.”*

Accreditation of Experiential Learning (APEL) is:

*“ the process where credit is sought for learning which has not previously been assessed and awarded credit by an academic institution or professional organisation.”*

It is learning which has taken place from a range of experiences and is often unstructured, personal and unconsciously gained. Skills, knowledge and abilities that come with this type of learning however can be equal to those gained by students following traditional courses through formal educational institutions.

Green Labyrinth undertakes to ensure that APEL and RPL forms part of the Initial Assessment (IA) of all their learners. If a learner can demonstrate that they can match individual KUS requirements or qualifications, this prior learning can be recognised, and the Training and Assessment Plan updated to reflect this.

The learner is at the centre of the RPL process and decides, in partnership with the Work Based Learning (WBL) Consultant, that the RPL is appropriate and whether or not to claim credit using this route.

Green Labyrinth will provide information advice, guidance and support to enable learners to make the appropriate choice about whether to claim credit using the RPL route. We will assess, internally quality assure and certificate the learner’s evidence as appropriate.

Green Labyrinth’s WBL Consultants will assess whether or not there is sufficient evidence (which may include LRS searches) to meet the outcomes they are claiming

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credit for. This is normally achieved using the methods and processes detailed in the assessment plan.

Prior learning may not reduce the price or duration of an Apprenticeship for the following reasons;

- The Apprentice may have extensive experience but may need updating in new methodologies. They may have relevant experience but may need to retrain.
- Everyone has prior experience of behaviours but they need the context.
- All apprentices should have the opportunity to reach distinction level.
- Apprentices may benefit from doing the whole programme rather than missing some elements
- If they are in a cohort it may be better to do the whole programme.

### **Exemptions and Credit Transfer**

Exemption and credit transfer are two other processes that support RPL under the RQF but they are not the same as RPL. Green Labyrinth will ensure in their initial assessment process that learners for whom this applies receive the correct information, advice and guidance.

**Exemption** is where a learner claims exemption from some of the achievement requirements of a QCF or RQF qualification using evidence of certificated, non-QCF or RQF achievement deemed to be of equivalent value.

**Credit Transfer** refers to the process of transferring credits from one unit/qualification across to another for certification purposes

Learners enrolling onto Apprenticeship programmes who hold relevant industrial experience may use the RPL and APEL processes.

Studies pursued and examinations passed in respect of other qualifications and/or evidence from the accreditation of prior experiential learning, may be accepted as exempting candidates from part of an approved programme.

If the learner feels that they have covered the content of a module/ modules via work/ life experience, APEL is a way to provide the evidence to show this and to gain credit for it.

The WBL Consultant will need to establish the learning experience (i.e. what was the experience?) and then identify the learning which has taken place (i.e. what did the learner gain from the experience?)

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Examples of experiential learning include:

- Work experience (paid or unpaid/voluntary), e.g. a task or project that the learner undertook, or a report which they wrote, or a database they designed
- Non-accredited courses, e.g. in-house training, hobbies
- Life experience
- Travel
- Home and family
- Reading and research

In order to make an APEL claim the experience of the learner must be relevant to their intended programme of study. For example, it would not be appropriate for someone to claim APEL based on their experience of working as a conservation volunteer, when they are undertaking an Apprenticeship in Digital Marketing.

The evidence to support an assessment of APEL will typically be presented in terms of:

- **Authenticity** - that the learner has undertaken what is claimed;
- **Directness** - that the learning is specific, relevant and has been identified and categorised;
- **Breadth** - that the learning took place in a wider theoretical and vocational context which was understood by the learner;
- **Currency** - the learning is sufficiently recent to be relevant to the currently proposed award.

When the relevant areas of learning have been identified the WBL Consultant must identify what the learner has gained from those experiences in terms of knowledge, understanding, skills, behaviours; and will need to understand and identify the level of learning. This can be done using appropriate terminology and by giving specific examples of what the learner has done.

The WBL Consultant must then assess the evidence against the above criteria before making an application for APEL.

The application form for both RPL and APEL is at the Annex.

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## **APEL Proposal Form Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning**

<b>Section 1 Personal Details</b> <b>Please PRINT IN BLOCK CAPITALS</b>	
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Family name:	
Other names:	
Date of Birth (DD/MM/YYYY):	
Programme:	
Start Date:	

Contact telephone number	
Email address	

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Section 2(i) Details of Claim			
Number of credits sought through this claim:			
Level of credits sought through this claim:			
Module title(s), if matching specific module(s):			
<p>Please attach the relevant module learning outcomes to this form. Alternatively, if writing your own learning outcomes, attach these.</p>			
Method of Assessment:			
Date of Assessment/Deadline for submission of Portfolio:			
WBL Manager:			
First Consultant		IQA:	

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## Section 2(ii) Outline of Experience

Brief outline of the learner's relevant experience (to be completed by the WBL Consultant)

This is the knowledge and learning on which the learner will be assessed and which should provide evidence to match the learning outcomes noted.

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**Section 3(i) Applicant Signature**

**I understand that in making this claim I am choosing not to undertake the equivalent taught module(s) as identified and cannot subsequently reverse this decision. I am aware that I will be charged for this APEL claim.**

Signature		Date	
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**Section 3(ii) WBL Consultant Declaration**

**I hereby approve the proposal for the APEL claim as noted above. I will inform the WBL Manager of any subsequent alterations to this agreement, e.g. change of Supervisor/Consultant.**

Signature		Date	
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## [Apprenticeships: Initial Assessment to recognise Prior Learning](#)

The purpose of this guidance is to inform Training Providers, employers and apprentices about the need for, and importance of, Initial Assessment (IA) and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) – specifically:

### Key points:

Recognition of prior learning extends **beyond** English, maths and existing qualifications;

All the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSB) set out in the standard should be considered in reviewing the prior learning of the apprentice. You should always be aware that;

- Recognition of prior learning is part of the learner eligibility assessment;
- Apprenticeships could be poor value for money and unnecessarily long if training covers areas that the apprentice already knows, and public funding should not be used for learning which is not new;
- Initial Assessment is vital to ensure high-quality apprenticeships and Ofsted inspections look for evidence of a robust initial assessment.

This guidance provides additional information to support initial assessment of prior learning in accordance with the policy intent and the apprenticeship funding rules.

### What is an Initial Assessment?

Before an apprenticeship begins, the main training provider must assess the individual's prior learning to establish the 'starting point', or baseline, of the apprentice. This informs how much of the apprenticeship training content the individual requires. It is part of the checks that the apprenticeship is an appropriate training programme for the individual and an essential part of the Information Advice and Guidance provided.

### Why is Initial Assessment important?

Initial assessment checks that the apprenticeship (both the job role and the training) is an appropriate programme for the individual. Apprentices should not be spending paid time doing training they do not need, and the apprentice will not have a good experience if they are repeating training or learning something they already know or can do (experiential learning). Apprenticeship funding should not be used to pay for, or accredit, existing knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSB).

Ofsted inspectors consider the 'distance travelled' by the apprentice in determining the value added by the training programme. Without knowing the starting point of an apprentice, inspectors cannot correctly assess the distance travelled and the quality of the apprenticeship training that has been delivered. Training providers must

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evidence a robust Initial Assessment and clear milestones and progress against these.

### How does Initial Assessment check the eligibility of the individual for an apprenticeship?

The initial assessment checks how much of the apprenticeship programme the individual requires to reach occupational competency. Assuming there is some relevant prior learning, the training provider must assess whether the individual still needs an apprenticeship with a minimum duration of 12 months with at least 20% off-the-job training. In some circumstances, this amount of training will not be necessary for the individual so the learner is ineligible for the apprenticeship programme and an alternative should be considered.

### What counts as prior learning?

In recognising prior learning, the following should be considered against the knowledge, skills and behaviours set out in the standard or framework:

- Work experience (this is particularly important if the apprentice is an existing employee);
- Prior education, training or associated qualification(s) in a related sector subject area (this goes beyond just English and maths); and
- Any previous apprenticeship undertaken

### Who is responsible for doing the Initial Assessment?

The main Training Provider is responsible for:

- Assessing the prior learning of the individual before the apprenticeship can begin;
- Agreeing with the employer how the programme will be delivered to reflect any relevant existing knowledge, skills and behaviours; and
- Recording prior learning in the evidence pack and commitment statement

### How is prior learning assessed?

ESFA does not mandate how a provider assesses or determines prior learning, just that it must be done, and the findings taken account of. The relevant apprenticeship framework or standard should normally be used as the basis for Initial Assessment, i.e.:

- What is the goal and what is the apprentice trying to achieve?
- Where are they currently against this goal?
- How much of the content is new to them?
- Do they require significant and sustained new learning?

Models for assessing prior learning vary, but some good examples include:

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A professional discussion with the apprentice to discuss knowledge, skills and behaviours gained in previous roles against the knowledge, skills and behaviours set out in the apprenticeship; and

Evidence of competency at a lower level, indicating the individual is ready for progression

#### How should prior learning be recorded?

The ESFA does not mandate how prior learning should be recorded, only that the initial assessment must be documented in the evidence pack and summarised on the commitment statement.

**Initial Assessment is subject to audit checks and funds may be recovered where Initial Assessment has not taken place, has not been evidenced or a price reduction has not been made to reflect the prior learning.**

#### How does recognition of prior learning feed into funding negotiations?

The funding band of the apprenticeship is based on an apprentice requiring the full content of the apprenticeship, and in the case of standards this means all the listed knowledge, skills and behaviours.

ESFA funding rules state that the apprenticeship content, duration and price must be reduced where the individual has relevant prior learning. Prior learning must be factored into the price that is negotiated between the provider and the employer: apprenticeship funding must not be used to pay for, or certify, the delivery of existing knowledge, skills and behaviours as this represents poor value for money. There are audit checks to ensure a price reduction has been made to account for prior learning and the reduced training content required. To meet the ESFA funding rules, the training element within the apprenticeship must have a minimum duration of 12 months with at least 20% off-the-job training.

#### How does this all link to a 12 month minimum duration and off-the-job training?

Where there is prior learning, the content and duration of the apprenticeship must be reduced to reflect this. The new (reduced) duration must still meet the minimum threshold of 12 months. At least 20% of the paid hours for the new (reduced) duration must be spent on off-the-job training.

#### How is recognition of prior learning taken into account when applying to be on the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers?

ESFA apprenticeship funding rules require main training providers and employer providers to take account of prior learning. As part of the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers (RoATP) application processes, main providers and employer

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providers must submit their policy on how they will perform initial assessments of apprentices' prior learning.

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## Summary

### Preparation for Initial Assessment:

- Has the employer specified an apprenticeship standard or framework for the individual?
- Has the Training Provider made the learner aware that relevant prior learning can count towards the apprenticeship and asked the learner to consider relevant information against the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) set out in the apprenticeship?

### Initial Assessment

Has the training provider assessed the individual's work experience, prior education, training or associated qualifications in a related sector subject area against the KSBs set out in the apprenticeship?

Has the training provider set out the individual's baseline level of competency against the KSBs to determine the remaining content required?

### Decision required at Initial Assessment:

Assuming some existing prior learning, has the training provider assessed whether the individual still meets the eligibility criteria of requiring significant and sustained new training (a minimum duration of 12 months with at least 20% off-the-job training)?

If not, the individual is not eligible for an apprenticeship and an alternative programme should be found.

### Following Initial Assessment and a decision that the learner is eligible for apprenticeship:

- Has the training provider documented prior learning in the evidence pack and summarised this in the commitment statement?
- Have the training provider and employer agreed how the programme will be delivered (including the cost) to reflect the learner's existing KSBs?
- Has the training provider set out key milestones for the apprentice so their progress can be reviewed against this?
- Has the training provider assessed the apprenticeship training material against the job role to ensure sufficient opportunities for the apprentice to consolidate their learning in the workplace?

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