



## *Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)*

Some people have skills and knowledge that enable them to gain a qualification without completing a standard training program or course. These skills and knowledge – that would have otherwise been developed through undertaking an accredited course – may have been gained through some other form of study, formal training, self-tuition, work or life experience. Achievements gained outside 'the classroom' can be formally recognised through a system called recognition of prior learning (RPL). These notes are intended to help you understand the system and its benefits.

### **WHAT IS RPL?**

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is a system by which colleges and universities may formally consider achievements gained outside the classroom. It can also be referred to as Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL). It's particularly useful for mature students with workplace or professional experience. RPL may be used to help re-enter learning or as a contribution towards a programme of study.

RPL is a process that assesses the individual's non-formal and informal learning to determine the extent to which that individual has achieved the required learning outcomes, competency outcomes, or standards for entry to, and/or partial or total completion of a qualification. RPL recognises this prior knowledge and experience and measures it against the course in which students are enrolled. A student possessing some of the skills and/or knowledge taught in the course may not need to complete all of its units.

### **RPL has many benefits:**

- students may be able to finish their courses earlier
- study loans and costs are reduced
- the student can take on additional study leading to a second qualification
- by identifying an individual's current competencies, RPL can effectively target training requirements

### **PROVIDING EVIDENCE OF PRIOR LEARNING**

The RPL process involves reflecting on the student's past experiences, being able to show what they have learned and the extent to which this learning is transferable to another context. The type of RPL claim students can make will depend on the nature of their learning and the requirements of the particular institution, as well as the programme of study they wish to undertake. You should be able to provide students with further information and guidance on the RPL procedures for your establishment and the possible cost of the process.

### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

- Local information
- North Forum members
- [Course You Can](#)
- [Diverse Routes](#)
- [National Recognition Information Centre](#)
- [Scottish Qualifications Authority](#)
- [Scottish Government Publications - RPL](#)
- [Diverse Routes – RPL](#)
- [UCAS - RPL](#)