Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy	
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Policy prepared by	Director of Quality and Compliance
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Introduction

Educationwise recognises that learners may already have relevant knowledge, skills and experience before starting a programme.

This may have been gained through:

- Previous qualifications
- Previous education or training
- Employment
- Workplace experience
- Voluntary work
- Previous apprenticeships
- Other relevant learning or experience

Recognition of Prior Learning, known as RPL, helps Educationwise understand what a learner already knows and can do.

This helps avoid unnecessary repeat learning and ensures the learner's programme focuses on the knowledge, skills and behaviours they still need to develop.

RPL will be considered in line with the requirements of the relevant programme, funding rules and Awarding Organisation.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Identify relevant prior learning and experience
- Avoid unnecessary repeat learning
- Make sure programmes reflect each learner's starting point
- Ensure apprenticeship funding is only used for new learning
- Ensure Adult Learning Provision fees reflect the learning and assessment required
- Support appropriate credit transfer and exemptions
- Maintain accurate learner and funding records
- Provide a fair and consistent process
- Explain how learners can question or appeal an RPL decision

Scope

This policy applies to:

- Apprenticeships
- Adult Learning Provision
- Commercial courses
- Regulated qualifications
- Other programmes where RPL may apply
- Relevant subcontracted provision

For this policy, **Adult Learning Provision** includes programmes currently funded through Advanced Learner Loans and any future adult education funding streams delivered by Educationwise.

The way RPL is assessed and how it affects the programme or price will depend on the type of provision.

Apprenticeship funding rules, Adult Learning funding rules and Awarding Organisation rules may have different requirements. Educationwise will apply the requirements relevant to each learner.

What is Recognition of Prior Learning?

RPL is the process of considering knowledge, skills and experience that a learner already has and deciding whether this means they do not need to complete some of the planned learning.

For apprenticeships, prior learning and experience includes previous education, training or qualifications in a related area as well as knowledge or competence gained through previous work experience.

Prior learning may include:

Previous accredited learning

Learning that has already resulted in:

- A qualification
- A unit
- Credits
- Certification
- Another recognised achievement

Previous experience

Knowledge or skills developed through:

- Employment
- Previous job roles
- Practical experience
- Voluntary activity
- Previous training
- Other relevant activity

Previous experience does not automatically mean RPL should be applied. Educationwise must consider what the learner can already demonstrate against the actual requirements of their programme.

Credit transfer and exemptions

Credit transfer and exemptions are related to RPL but may follow specific Awarding Organisation rules.

A learner may be able to:

- Transfer existing credits
- Receive an exemption from a unit or part of a qualification
- Use an equivalent previous qualification
- Have previous achievement formally recognised

This will only be applied where permitted by the relevant Awarding Organisation.

Evidence may include:

- Certificates
- Transcripts
- Personal Learning Record information
- Statements of achievement
- Awarding Organisation records
- Other suitable verified evidence

Educationwise will not confirm that a credit transfer or exemption has been granted until the relevant requirements have been checked.

When prior learning is considered

Prior learning should normally be considered as part of information, advice and guidance, initial assessment and enrolment.

For apprenticeships, the RPL assessment must be completed early enough to inform the learner's training plan, planned off-the-job training hours, duration and price.

The current apprenticeship funding rules require the provider's initial assessment to consider learner eligibility, prior learning and experience, learning support and English and maths support.

RPL should therefore be completed and agreed before apprenticeship training starts and before funding is claimed.

Information may be gathered through:

- Discussion with the learner
- Personal Learning Record
- Training Needs Analysis
- Skills scan
- Previous qualifications
- Certificates or transcripts
- CV or employment history
- Previous apprenticeship information
- Workplace experience
- Assessment against programme requirements
- Additional diagnostic assessment where appropriate
- Discussion with the employer for apprenticeships

Not every learner or programme will need the same assessment method.

Evidence

Evidence of prior learning must be enough to support the decision made.

Evidence should normally be:

- Relevant
- Authentic

- Reliable
- Current enough for the programme
- Sufficient to explain the decision

Evidence may include:

- Qualifications
- Certificates
- Personal Learning Record information
- Previous assessment evidence
- Portfolios
- Work products
- Employer confirmation
- Skills assessments
- Professional discussion
- Practical demonstration
- Records of previous training
- Other suitable evidence

The type of evidence required will depend on the programme and the level of prior learning identified.

Apprenticeships

RPL forms part of the initial assessment for an apprenticeship.

Educationwise must review an apprentice's prior learning and experience to make sure the apprenticeship is suitable and the training plan reflects what they still need to learn.

Apprenticeship funding must not be used to pay for training which delivers knowledge, skills and behaviours the apprentice already has.

Apprentices aged 16 to 18

For apprentices aged 16 to 18, Educationwise will:

- Check the learner's Personal Learning Record where available
- Discuss previous learning and experience with the learner
- Consider previous apprenticeships or relevant training

- Consider relevant work experience

The current funding rules recognise that significant prior learning is less likely for apprentices aged 16 to 18 unless they have already undertaken related training or have relevant work experience.

Where no relevant prior learning is identified, this will be recorded and agreed with the employer.

Where relevant prior learning is identified, Educationwise will complete a skills scan against the knowledge, skills and behaviours of the apprenticeship standard or against a proposed training plan which is mapped to the outcomes of the standard.

Additional diagnostic assessment may also be used where appropriate.

Apprentices aged 19 and over

For all apprentices aged 19 and over, Educationwise will:

- Check the learner's Personal Learning Record where available
- Discuss previous learning and experience
- Complete a skills scan against the knowledge, skills and behaviours of the apprenticeship standard or a proposed training plan mapped to the standard
- Consider relevant qualifications and previous training
- Consider relevant workplace experience
- Use additional diagnostic assessment where appropriate
- Consider the published progression profile where the learner has completed a relevant T Level

A skills scan is required for apprentices aged 19 and over under the current apprenticeship funding rules.

The skills scan must be meaningful and should help identify what the apprentice already knows and what they still need to learn.

It should not simply be a scoring exercise.

Training Needs Analysis

Educationwise may use its Training Needs Analysis alongside the skills scan and other initial assessment information.

This may consider:

- Existing knowledge

- Existing skills
- Existing behaviours
- Relevant work experience
- Previous qualifications
- Areas requiring further development
- The apprentice's job role
- The requirements of the apprenticeship standard

Where prior learning is identified, there must be enough information to explain how the RPL decision was reached.

Where no relevant prior learning is identified

Where the assessment confirms that the apprentice does not have relevant prior learning or experience:

- This will be recorded
- The outcome will be agreed with the employer
- The learner can proceed with the full planned apprenticeship
- No RPL price reduction is required

This reflects the current funding rules.

Where prior learning is identified

Where relevant prior learning is identified, Educationwise will consider its impact on:

- Training content
- Planned off-the-job training hours
- Programme duration
- The training plan
- The apprenticeship price

The outcome must clearly show what the apprentice already knows and what learning has therefore been removed.

Where content is removed from the training plan because of prior learning, the reduction must be shown as a number of off-the-job training hours and must result in a reduction in price.

Minimum apprenticeship requirements

After prior learning has been applied, the apprenticeship must still contain enough new learning to be eligible for funding.

For apprenticeships starting from 1 August 2026:

- The practical period must last at least **8 months**
- The programme must contain at least **187 hours of eligible off-the-job training**

If either minimum cannot be met after RPL is applied, the individual is not eligible for apprenticeship funding.

The required off-the-job training hours do not directly determine the programme duration. The agreed hours can be delivered over a suitable timeframe as long as the minimum eight-month duration is met.

Off-the-job training and RPL

Educationwise will use its normal planned off-the-job training hours for an apprentice with no relevant prior learning as the starting point.

These planned hours must be at least the minimum volume published for the relevant apprenticeship standard.

Where RPL is identified:

- The relevant training content will be removed
- The associated off-the-job training hours will be identified
- The planned hours will be reduced
- The resulting programme will still need to meet the minimum funding requirements

The training plan must not include content already identified and agreed as prior learning.

Apprenticeship price reduction

Where prior learning results in training being removed, Educationwise will calculate the percentage of prior learning against the off-the-job training hours it would normally plan for an apprentice with no relevant prior learning on the same standard.

The total apprenticeship price must then be reduced by at least **50% of the prior learning percentage from the funding band maximum**.

For example:

- Educationwise would normally plan 1,000 off-the-job training hours
- The learner already has learning equivalent to 200 hours

- Prior learning therefore represents 20% of the planned training
- The minimum reduction from the funding band maximum is 10%

If the funding band maximum was £10,000:

- Minimum RPL reduction = £1,000
- Maximum apprenticeship funding following the RPL adjustment = £9,000

The resulting figure becomes the maximum starting point for any further price negotiation with the employer.

The calculation must be recorded clearly.

Employer agreement

For apprenticeships, the outcome of RPL must be agreed with the employer.

The employer and Educationwise must agree that:

- The apprenticeship is suitable for the individual
- Relevant prior learning has been identified and taken into account
- The resulting training plan meets the learner's remaining development needs
- The planned off-the-job training is appropriate
- The learner's job role has a clear and substantial link to the apprenticeship standard
- The apprenticeship price is appropriate

The current rules specifically require the provider and employer to agree that relevant prior learning has been properly accounted for in the training plan.

Where RPL has been applied, the evidence will show:

- The prior learning identified
- The evidence considered
- What training has been removed
- The number of off-the-job training hours removed
- Any impact on duration
- The price reduction
- The resulting training plan
- Employer agreement

Starting the apprenticeship

RPL and the wider initial assessment should be completed before the learner begins apprenticeship training.

Enrolment, induction, diagnostic assessment and RPL activity are not themselves treated as the apprenticeship learning start.

The learning start date should represent the point at which genuine apprenticeship training begins.

This helps ensure that the training plan and price already reflect the apprentice's prior learning before funding begins.

Regulated professions

Some apprenticeship standards relate to regulated professions where previous learning or experience may need to be formally accredited.

Where training has to be completed or repeated to meet the requirements of a regulator, that training may remain eligible even where the learner has previous experience.

The reason must be recorded as part of the RPL assessment.

Adult Learning Provision

RPL also applies to Adult Learning Provision but the apprenticeship RPL funding calculation does not apply.

For programmes currently funded through Advanced Learner Loans, Educationwise will consider whether a learner has prior learning that:

- Has already been accredited by an Awarding Organisation
- Could be formally recognised and count towards the qualification

Educationwise will:

- Check whether previous learning or achievement is valid, relevant and current
- Check the learner's Personal Learning Record
- Query any information that conflicts with information provided by the learner
- Follow the relevant Awarding Organisation requirements
- Record any RPL decision and its effect on the programme and fee

These requirements are set out in the 2026/27 Advanced Learner Loans rules.

Adult Learning Provision fee reduction

Where RPL means that a learner does not need some of the learning or assessment, Educationwise must reduce the fee by the **percentage of learning and assessment the learner does not need**.

For example, if the agreed course fee is £1,000 and recognised prior learning means that the learner does not need 20% of the learning and assessment:

- Original fee = £1,000
- RPL reduction = 20%
- Revised fee = £800

The apprenticeship 50% RPL calculation does **not** apply to Advanced Learner Loans.

The calculation must be recorded in the learner file.

Full RPL for Advanced Learner Loans

Educationwise must not require a learner to take out an Advanced Learner Loan where:

- Their recognised prior learning meets the full requirements needed to achieve the qualification, or
- The learner only needs to resit an assessment or examination and no additional learning will take place

This is a requirement of the current Advanced Learner Loans funding rules.

Learning and funding information

Where RPL affects the course fee for an Advanced Learner Loan learner, this must be reflected in the information provided to the learner.

The Learning and Funding Information Letter must show the correct fee and loan amount.

Where the qualification or fee changes after the original information has been provided, an updated Learning and Funding Information Letter must be issued before the change is made.

Commercial provision

RPL may also be considered for commercial programmes.

Where the programme leads to a regulated qualification, Educationwise will follow the relevant Awarding Organisation requirements.

Educationwise will consider:

- Whether the previous learning is relevant
- Whether learning can reasonably be removed

- Whether all assessment requirements can still be met
- Whether there is any impact on the course fee
- Any contractual arrangements agreed with the learner or customer

Recognition of prior learning does not automatically mean that a commercial learner will receive a fee reduction unless this is required by the qualification arrangements or agreed terms.

When RPL cannot be used

RPL will not be applied where:

- The evidence does not show the required knowledge or skill
- The learning is no longer sufficiently current
- The Awarding Organisation does not permit it
- The learning is required to meet occupational or regulatory requirements
- Recognition would affect the validity of the assessment
- Suitable evidence cannot be provided where this is required
- The previous learning does not relate to the requirements of the current programme

Educationwise will explain the reason where prior learning cannot be recognised.

Awarding Organisation requirements

Where RPL, credit transfer or exemption relates to a regulated qualification, Educationwise will follow the requirements of the relevant Awarding Organisation.

This may include checking:

- Whether RPL is permitted
- What evidence is required
- Whether Educationwise can make the decision
- Whether Awarding Organisation approval is required
- Any limits on how much of the qualification can be recognised
- How the decision must be recorded
- Any certification requirements

Educationwise will not promise that RPL, credit transfer or exemption will be granted before the relevant requirements have been checked.

Roles and responsibilities

Learners

Learners are responsible for:

- Providing accurate information about previous learning and experience
- Taking part in initial assessment
- Providing evidence where reasonably required
- Discussing relevant experience openly
- Confirming that recorded information is accurate
- Telling Educationwise if relevant information has been missed

Programme Coordinators and Enrolment Team

Programme Coordinators and the Enrolment Team are responsible for:

- Discussing previous learning and experience during IAG and enrolment
- Checking relevant Personal Learning Record information
- Supporting completion of the Training Needs Analysis and skills scan
- Gathering previous qualification information
- Checking that required RPL activity is completed before the learning start
- Making sure relevant evidence is available
- Referring technical curriculum or assessment decisions to the appropriate staff
- Recording the outcome

Programme Coordinators and the Enrolment Team will not make technical Awarding Organisation or curriculum decisions where specialist judgement is required.

Tutors and curriculum staff

Tutors and relevant curriculum staff are responsible for:

- Reviewing prior knowledge and experience where required
- Reviewing skills scan or TNA outcomes
- Mapping prior learning against programme requirements
- Confirming what learning remains necessary
- Supporting technical RPL decisions

- Making sure the resulting programme reflects the learner's actual needs

Employers

For apprenticeships, employers are responsible for:

- Providing relevant information about the apprentice's job role and experience
- Taking part in discussions about prior learning where required
- Agreeing the outcome of the RPL assessment
- Agreeing resulting training arrangements
- Agreeing the planned off-the-job training
- Agreeing the apprenticeship price

MIS and Programme Coordination

Relevant MIS and Programme Coordination staff are responsible for:

- Making sure RPL decisions are reflected in learner records
- Recording required apprenticeship information accurately in the ILR
- Recording reductions in planned off-the-job training hours caused by RPL
- Recording apprenticeship price reductions using the relevant ILR fields
- Ensuring programme and price information is consistent with the RPL evidence
- Maintaining appropriate supporting evidence
- Making sure Adult Learning Provision fees and records reflect any RPL reduction
- Making sure information reported to the Student Loans Company and ILR is accurate where applicable

IQA and Quality and Compliance Team

The IQA and Quality and Compliance Team will:

- Sample RPL decisions where appropriate
- Check that evidence supports decisions
- Check that Awarding Organisation requirements are followed
- Check that funding calculations are correct
- Monitor consistency
- Review compliance risks

- Identify staff development or standardisation needs
- Escalate concerns where required

Decision and communication

The learner will be told the outcome of the RPL assessment.

Where RPL is applied, the learner will be told:

- What has been recognised
- What learning they still need to complete
- Any change to their programme
- Any change to planned duration where applicable
- Any change to planned off-the-job training where applicable
- Any impact on the price or fee where applicable

For apprenticeships, the outcome will also be agreed with the employer and reflected in the training plan and relevant funding records.

Appeals and complaints

A learner who believes an Educationwise RPL decision is incorrect should first raise the matter with their tutor, relevant curriculum lead or Programme Coordinator.

Where this cannot be resolved, the learner may use the Learner Appeals and Complaints Policy and Procedures.

Where the decision is controlled by an Awarding Organisation, Educationwise will explain the appropriate Awarding Organisation appeal route.

Records

Educationwise will maintain appropriate evidence of RPL decisions.

This may include:

- IAG records
- Personal Learning Record checks
- Training Needs Analysis
- Skills scans
- Qualification evidence
- Evidence of work experience

- Mapping against programme requirements
- Discussion with the learner
- Employer agreement
- Off-the-job training calculations
- Price or fee calculations
- Training plan changes
- Awarding Organisation decisions
- Appeals

Records will be retained in line with:

- Relevant funding requirements
- Awarding Organisation requirements
- Educationwise's Records Retention Schedule
- Data protection requirements

Monitoring and quality assurance

Educationwise will monitor RPL through its normal quality and compliance arrangements.

This may include:

- Sampling learner files
- IQA activity
- Funding compliance checks
- ILR checks
- Review of Personal Learning Record checks
- Review of Training Needs Analysis and skills scans
- Review of apprenticeship RPL calculations
- Review of Adult Learning Provision fee reductions
- Awarding Organisation feedback
- Audit findings
- Staff standardisation

Where an issue is identified, Educationwise may:

- Correct learner or funding records
- Update a process or Way of Working
- Provide staff guidance
- Complete additional sampling
- Add an action to the Quality Improvement Plan
- Escalate a risk through the appropriate governance route

Related policies and procedures

This policy should be read alongside:

- Information, Advice and Guidance Policy
- Enrolment, Registration and Certification Policy
- Learner Support Policy
- Reasonable Adjustment and Special Consideration Policy
- Malpractice and Maladministration Policy
- Learner Appeals and Complaints Policy and Procedures
- Counter Fraud and Error Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Relevant Awarding Organisation requirements
- Apprenticeship funding rules
- Adult Learning funding rules
- IAG and Enrolment Ways of Working
- Training Needs Analysis and initial assessment processes

Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed **annually,** although it may be reviewed sooner where:

- Apprenticeship funding rules change
- Adult Learning funding rules change
- Awarding Organisation requirements change

- Educationwise changes its initial assessment or enrolment process
- An audit identifies a weakness
- Incorrect funding or fee calculations are identified
- Quality assurance identifies inconsistent RPL decisions

The Quality and Compliance Team will oversee the review and significant concerns will be escalated through Educationwise's normal governance arrangements.