# RECOGNISED PRIOR LEARNING (RPL) POLICY

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# RECOGNISED PRIOR LEARNING (RPL) POLICY

## 1. Introduction

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) enables people of all ages and backgrounds to receive recognition and formal credit for learning acquired in the past, through either successful study of a qualification (or part of) or through learning gained via work and business experience. There are four ways in which to claim RPL, namely through APEL, APCL and Advanced standing. These approaches to gaining RPL are outlined in the following document.

### 1.1. What is APCL?

The Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL) is a process through which previously assessed and certificated learning is considered and, if appropriate, recognised for academic purposes.

### 1.2. What is APEL?

The Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) is the account taken of learning experiences gained through life, work, and business that by their very nature cannot be evidenced through formally assessed certification or transcripts. The APEL can enable us to assess the skills and knowledge base you have gained through your relevant work experiences.

### 1.3. What is Advanced Standing?

This is the term used for the procedure of granting credit to a student for educational experiences or courses undertaken at another institution which are non-certificated.

## 2. Scope and purpose

Shrewsbury College is passionate about raising aspirations and supporting achievement for people with diverse requirements, entitlements, and backgrounds. It actively promotes personal development, widening access and participation, employability, building business partnerships with the community, and equality of access through the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). This enables the identification and accreditation of the knowledge and skills applicants have acquired previously.

Recognition and accreditation relate to the achievement of learning, and the outcomes of that learning, whilst the experience serves to provide the underpinning evidence of that learning. The process of extracting learning from experience is critical for recognition purposes.

Shrewsbury College promotes reflective practice that enables applicants to demonstrate their full potential in specialist areas. Applicants are encouraged to use

reflection to deconstruct and then reconstruct personal and professional experience with a focus on the learning achieved for credit purposes.

We recognise learning wherever it takes place plus the knowledge and skills that can be acquired from a whole range of learning experiences, both formal and informal. The purpose of the RPL policy is to ensure that processes and procedures are implemented consistently across the college, the requirements of awards and professional bodies are met, and that academic quality and standards are maintained and that Shrewsbury College is exercising properly its responsibilities for all awards we are approved to deliver.

We encourage RPL as a means of entry to, or credit within, all our programmes. The outcomes of RPL support recruitment and retention through:

- Recognising and awarding academic value to a diversity of learning experiences
- Avoiding repetition of learning previously acquired
- Contribution to curricula flexibility for the student
- Enabling acceleration of students' rate of progress where applicable

Entry based on experience rather than formal qualifications is accepted practice within Shrewsbury College and is normally achieved through an interview and/or evaluation process where the applicant can demonstrate relevant skills, knowledge, and competencies. Beyond satisfying the criteria for admission to an award, an applicant may be able to make a submission for RPL which can be counted towards their award and enable them to gain admission with credit e.g., directly onto a higher stage of the award, or to receive credit towards one or more modules on that award.

## 3. Principles

a. Applicants who require credit for prior learning will be offered the opportunity to prove learning through the RPL process. Learning can count against awards offered by Shrewsbury College subject to the limitations identified by awarding bodies.

b. Credit awarded through an RPL process must be identified as RPL level/stage for programme planning and award purposes. This should be uploaded onto their Promonitor student record within the document upload section. This will be recorded by the enrolling member of staff or the admissions team.

c. Where credit is awarded against core or named modules the learning must meet the learning outcomes of such modules to satisfy the overall module aims and outcomes.

d. Judgement on the level and amount of credit to be awarded will be subject to the normal academic quality and standard processes for the assessment of students.

e. Decisions regarding RPL are a matter of academic judgement. The decision-making process and outcomes will be transparent and demonstrate rigor and fairness and will be made in liaison with the Awarding Organisation.

f. Information and guidance will clearly outline the process for making an RPL application including the range and nature of the evidence required to support the application and outline learner support available.

g. Normally it is assumed that if the student completed the certificated learning more than five years ago the learning will be out of date and no credit can be given. However, Shrewsbury College will consider the circumstances of each application for the accreditation of prior learning on its own merits e.g., if a student has worked professionally and has built on that learning in the interim period.

**4. Staff development and training**

All staff associated with the support, guidance and assessment of applications will be given appropriate training and development.

**5. Equality and Diversity**

This policy will be implemented in accordance with Shrewsbury College Single Equality Scheme.

**6. Regulatory requirements of awarding and professional bodies.**

Shrewsbury College requires that all staff are aware of and operate under the specific requirements of its awarding bodies and where appropriate, professional bodies.

**7. RPL Procedure.**

The processes for APCL and APEL are different. Both processes are designed to ensure consistency and comparability and parity of treatment of applicants. Records relating to RPL applications and supporting evidence will be retained in accordance with the College's Data Retention Policy and any applicable awarding organisation requirements.

### 7.1. APCL Process

a. Curriculum Directors will be responsible for the APCL applications to their programmes of study. Applicants will normally make only one APCL application prior to initial registration on a programme of study.

b. The applicant must provide information about their certificated learning on the RPL application form (Appendix 1). In all cases documentary proof that the qualification or part thereof, has been obtained and a full transcript of results must be provided. It is the applicant's responsibility to provide either original documentation or certified copies of original documentation.

c. Applications for APCL must be submitted to the Curriculum Director at the point of application for an academic place. Decisions on APCL applications will be made by the Curriculum Director before a student initially enrols. Retrospective applications for APCL will not normally be allowed. Where appropriate, reference to the equivalence of the prior learning to the learning outcomes of the modules for which credit is being sought must be clearly identified.

d. If an offer of a place to study at Shrewsbury College is made to an RPL applicant, that offer should be a conditional offer, subject to, but not restricted to, successful completion of the RPL process.

### 7.2. Responsibilities for APCL applications

a. The applicant will be responsible for:

- The decision as to whether any application will be made for prior learning.
- Submitting an application with supporting evidence to the relevant Curriculum Director

b. The Curriculum Director will evaluate the applicant's prior certificated learning and decide whether the applicants learning may be considered for accreditation in terms of equivalence to the modules for which credit is being sought.

c. The Curriculum Director will not offer the applicant any guarantees as to the outcome of his/her submission.

d. The Curriculum Director will inform the enrolling team of the outcome

e. Confirmation Outcome will be sent to student.

### 7.3. APEL Process and Advanced Standing

Credit for prior experiential learning and CPD may be gained from a variety of sources e.g., workplace, community activities, voluntary work, and other informal learning experiences. The award for experiential learning is of general credit rather than awarding specific credit value. Evidence of the experience itself is not considered sufficient for the award of credit. The evidence must be presented in a way that demonstrates that equivalent and relevant learning has taken place.

### 7.4. Responsibilities for APEL applications

a. The applicant will be responsible for:
   - The decision as to whether any application will be made for prior learning.
   - Submitting an application with supporting evidence to the relevant Curriculum Director

b. The Curriculum Director will evaluate the applicant's prior experiential learning and decide whether the applicant's experience may be considered for accreditation to the modules for which credit is being sought.

c. The Curriculum Director will not offer the applicant any guarantees as to the outcome of his/her submission.

d. The Curriculum Director will inform Admissions of the outcome

e. Admissions to confirm outcome to student.

### 7.5. Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes reflect the knowledge, understanding, practical and transferrable skills which the applicant has acquired resulting from experiential learning. Applicants will need to provide evidence that each learning outcome has been achieved. The nature of evidence will vary considerably and may include:

- Reflective statements
- Portfolio
- Written assignments
- Performance practice-based documents
- Reports on observations of practice
- Video/audio tapes with commentary and analysis related to the achievement of learning outcome

- Analytic and evaluative description of practice
- Statements from workplace supervisors in relation to aspects of their practice.

### 7.6. Assessing Applications for APEL and Advanced Standing

To make an application for credit based on experiential learning, the applicant must provide information on the RPL application form (Appendix 1). Applicants must provide verifiable evidence to support their application. An applicant may include:

- A summary of the learning claimed in relation to the targeted programme and the outcomes achieved
- Evidence of partly completed credits from other settings matched against each element of learning of the targeted programme and the outcomes achieved
- Log of experience and employer references
- A summary of evidence against each element of learning, cross-referenced against the full evidence.
- Any other evidence as appropriate.

The criteria for evaluation of the learning in an application will be based on:

- Acceptability – is the evidence valid and reliable?
- Sufficiency and breadth – is the achievement of the claimed learning fully demonstrated?
- Authenticity – is the evidence clearly the achievement of the applicant?
- Currency – is the learning current, or if not is there evidence of updating? Normally it is assumed that if the applicant completed the experiential learning more than five years ago the learning will be out of date and no credit can be given.
- Statements of professional competency, where appropriate.
- Any other evidence set by the department, such as a written piece of work, will undergo second marking for quality assurance purposes.

## 8. Appeals

An appeal may only be submitted if the applicant believes there has been material irregularity in the processing of the application. An applicant wishing to appeal against

the decision of the Curriculum Director must address their appeal to the VP Quality, Apprenticeship and Information or Director of Teaching and Learning Enhancement, stating clearly the grounds for appeal.

| SHREWSBURY COLLEGES GROUP | **Recognised Prior Learning Application Form Appendix 1** |
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**Appendix 1 - Application Form**

## Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL)

## Or

## Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) including Advanced Standing

Please refer to the RPL Policy when completing this application form.

This form should be completed with the support of the relevant Curriculum Director for the award at Shrewsbury College you wish to study.

It is the applicants' responsibility to provide certified copies of original documentation, such as official transcripts of results, and evidence to demonstrate equivalent experiential learning outcomes.

| **Please indicate the application you are making by ticking ONE option below.**<br>☐ Claiming APCL<br>☐ Claiming APEL/Advanced Standing. | |
|---|---|
| **Please indicate the course you are applying to at Shrewsbury College:**<br>Full Course Title: | |
| **PERSONAL DETAILS** | |
| Forename(s):<br><br>Surname:<br><br>Address: | Mobile:<br><br>Landline:<br><br>Email: |

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|---|---|

| **APCL APPLICATIONS ONLY** |
|---|
| **Academic Qualification Already Certificated**<br>In addition to this section, you must also attach official copies of transcripts/certificates to provide proof of prior certificated learning.<br><br>Please consult the RPL Policy and the relevant Curriculum Director at Shrewsbury College should you require any advice.<br><br>Level and Name of Qualification:<br><br>Title and grade of Credits Awarded:<br><br>Month and year qualification awarded (e.g., Jan 2010)<br><br>Name and address of awarding School or College: |
| **Descriptive outline of the certificated qualification or credits declared above:**<br>**(**50 words max) |

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|---|---|

| **FOR APEL AND ADVANCED STANDING APPLICANTS ONLY** |
|---|
| **Evidence of Experiential Learning or Advanced Standing**<br>You will need to attach a written statement on a separate sheet(s), providing verifiable evidence to support your application and attach it to this form.<br>**This may include:**<br>• A summary of the learning claimed in relation to the targeted programme and the outcomes achieved<br>• Evidence of partly completed credits from other settings matched against each element of learning of the targeted programme and the outcomes achieved.<br>• Log of experience and employer references<br>• Any other evidence as appropriate.<br>**Other evidence may be verified by:**<br>• Practical demonstrations of skill or ability.<br>• Interview to demonstrate ability against areas of the specification |
| **The criteria for evaluation of the experiential learning you have evidenced will be based on:**<br>• Acceptability – is the evidence valid and reliable?<br>• Sufficiency and breadth – is the achievement of the claimed learning fully demonstrated?<br>• Authenticity – is the evidence clearly the achievement of the applicant?<br>• Currency – is the learning current, or if not is there evidence of updating? Normally it is assumed that if the applicant completed the experiential learning more than five years ago the learning will be out of date and no credit awarded. |
| **Please consult the RPL Policy and the relevant Curriculum Director at Shrewsbury College should you require any advice.** |

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| **For all applicants to complete** |
|---|
| **Additional Evidence**<br>Please list below and/or attach any additional evidence, if applicable, that you wish to submit in relation to the application. |
| *By signing below, I declare that the above facts to be correct and I understand that Shrewsbury College can approach the awarding bodies or employer, if it chooses, for verification of the summited qualifications or experience.*<br><br>**Signed: _____ Date: _____** |
| **OFFICE USE ONLY** |
| By signing below, I verify this application for entry, through APCL/APEL or advanced standing, is approved and fulfils the criteria according to the Shrewsbury College RPL Policy.<br><br>**Credits to be awarded (if applicable):**<br><br>**Course Title:**<br><br>**Date for study to commence:**<br><br>**Curriculum Director Signed: _____ Date: _____** |