



Recognition of prior learning policy

Who is this policy for?

This policy is for centres and/or learners regarding the recognition of a learner's prior learning and which may be applied to AIM approved qualifications or units delivered either within or outside the UK.

Owner	Responsible Officer
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1.1	April 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appendix 1 – AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group telephone number updated to 0844 2253377
2	October 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Section 2.2.2 - Clarity of timescales for submission of application ▪ Section 2.3.9 - Policy now states graded RPL capped at a pass. ▪ Section 2.3.9 - Clarity of restrictions for externally assessed unit ▪ Section 2.2.2 - Clarity of learner and centre agreement to proceed with application at the point of enrolment. ▪ Appendix 1 - Added SQA as regulator contact.

Contents

Section 1 – Scope	4
1.1 Scope	4
1.2 About us	5
Section 2 – Policy detail.....	6
2.1 Definition.....	6
2.2 Responsibilities.....	7
2.3 Process	8
2.4 Malpractice.....	12
2.5 Appeals against the recognition of prior learning and achievement decision	13
2.6 Learner complaints.....	13
Section 3 - Regulatory References	14
Regulatory criteria.....	14
Section 4 - Appendix	15
Appendix 1 – Useful contacts.....	15

Section 1 – Scope

1.1 Scope

This policy and related procedures are intended for:

- centres and its' staff delivering AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group approved qualifications or units who wish to use a learner's prior learning or achievement in their delivery and assessment of a learner on an AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group qualification and/or unit
- learners registered on AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group approved qualifications or units, who wish to use their prior learning or achievement on an AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group qualification and/or unit
- AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group staff to ensure that all requests to recognise prior learning or achievement are dealt with and applied in a consistent and fair manner to meet the requirements of qualifications regulations

The purpose of this policy is to:

- define recognition of recognition of prior learning, equivalency, credit transfer
- detail the responsibilities AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group, centres, centre staff and learners have
- detail the methods which enable learners to avoid duplication of learning and assessment for the purposes of awarding credit
- identify evidence examples which a learner can use to claim prior learning
- state how evidence being used by a learner to claim prior learning and achievement must be viewed by a centre
- provide key process requirements for, equivalencies and credit transfer
- state what restrictions there are for recognising prior learning
- provide information on evidence requirements for both reasonable adjustments and special considerations requests
- detail follow-up actions after a centre has made a decision on recognition of prior learning
- provide the regulatory references which apply
- provide useful contacts of both AIM and the various regulators

1.2 About us

AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group is a leading **Awarding Organisation** and one of the UK's largest **Access Validating Agencies** (AVA). We work in partnership with colleges, independent training providers, universities, employers and voluntary organisations to develop accredited and regulated vocational qualifications. Our qualifications cover a range of academic levels from Entry Level to Level 6 across a wide range of subject areas.

As an AVA we are licensed by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) to develop and award nationally recognised Access to Higher Education Diplomas. AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group is also an independent, government recognised, **End-Point Assessment Organisation** (EPAO) responsible for an apprentice's final assessment to ensure they can do the job for which they've trained.

Section 2 – Policy detail

2.1 Definition

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) cannot be used where units and qualifications are subject to external assessment.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) allows a learner's past experiences and achievements to count towards a qualification. An assessor evaluates whether the existing evidence sufficiently demonstrates that the learner meets the current qualification's assessment criteria. If the learner can prove that their existing knowledge, skills, or understanding fulfil the requirements, they may not need to retake the course or engage in additional assessments.

If there is evidence that the learner has previously shown the knowledge, skills or understanding required by a qualification, this may be used towards achieving that qualification. The evidence must be:

- valid
 - current
 - reliable
 - authentic
 - sufficient
- Applications for RPL must be carried out by centre staff who are competent to consider and make decisions about RPL.

Equivalency is:

- where one or more units with similar learning objectives found within a different qualification or one or more updated units within the same qualification which are of equal or higher value to be considered in place of a designated mandatory and or optional unit
- a method which allows learners to avoid unnecessary duplication and repetition of learning and assessment

Credit Transfer for Access to HE Diplomas is:

- the process by which credits used towards one Access to HE Diploma awarded by one Provider or Access Validating Agency may be considered towards the award of a different Diploma with the same or a different Provider or Access Validating Agency
- a method which allows learners to avoid unnecessary duplication and repetition of learning and assessment

2.2 Responsibilities

The following represent the key responsibilities of AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group, centres, centre staff and learners.

2.2.1 AIM responsibilities

Overseen by the Compliance Director, AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group will:

- ensure that all requests for consideration of RPL and achievement are dealt with in a consistent timely manner
- ensure that the integrity of its qualifications and assessments is always maintained
- ensure all staff involved in the reviewing of the RPL are competent in the RPL process and have the knowledge and understanding to make an informed decision based on the evidence provided by the centre

2.2.2 Centre responsibilities

All centres delivering AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group qualifications must:

- have an RPL Policy in place which explains how the centre will explore and implement RPL and achievement as an assessment method and identifies the responsibilities of the learner, the assessor and other key staff involved in the internal quality assurance of AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group Qualifications and units
- ensure that all staff involved in the management, assessment and quality assurance of AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group qualifications and any learners undertaking one are fully aware of this policy and the centre's own RPL and achievement policy
- make learners aware of the restrictions of this policy
- make learners aware that evidence provided for consideration of RPL must have been achieved before the start of their qualification or unit
- inform and make clear to learners at the beginning of the RPL process the timescales for the submission of evidence for it to be considered for RPL so that it is transparent
- take responsibility for any RPL applications for their learners
- signpost learners to support materials to assist them in their understanding of relevant pieces of evidence for RPL
- ensure that the formal application is submitted to AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group at the point of learner registration and comply to this policy
- ensure that a learner has sufficient evidence to make a viable claim and to support evidence collection and presentation for assessment

- ensure that the assessment process for RPL is subject to the same quality assurance processes as any other part of the assessment process
- have an effective appeals policy and procedure in place so that a learner can query any decision taken by the centre not to allow RPL

2.2.2 Learner responsibilities

Any learner undertaking an AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group Qualifications must:

- be aware of this and the centre's own RPL policy
- produce appropriate evidence in a timely manner to support the use of RPL
- ensure that evidence is current and that the required learning, knowledge, understanding, experience, skills and achievements are relevant to the learning aims and assessment criteria it is being judged against

2.3 Process

AIM seeks to enable learners to avoid duplication of learning and assessment for the purposes of awarding credit. **There are three ways that this can be managed:**

- Recognition of prior learning
- Equivalency
- Credit transfer

2.3.1 Recognition of prior learning

- Exemption of units required for the achievement of a qualification can be claimed by a learner using certificated evidence
- RPL units are not recognised by the award of credit and appear on certificates without a credit value
- A learner can apply for non-certificated learning to be recognised towards a unit or qualification
- The RPL application must be agreed with the centre at the point of enrolment
- Exemption for some of the achievement requirements of an AIM qualification can be claimed by a learner using certificated evidence

There are three ways of recognising prior learning which may be open to the learner:

- Submission of a portfolio of evidence based on previous relevant knowledge, skills and competences which must be assessed against the assessment criteria of the unit or units, for which RPL is being sought, to ensure that all learning outcomes have been achieved

- Undertaking the same assessments as learners following a formal course of learning and assessment that lead to award of the unit or qualification. The assessments may be taken without undertaking any further formal learning
- Assessment through summative assessment against a unit or qualification. No extra assessment is needed if a learner's previously achieved certificate or qualification meets the requirements of a whole unit

RPL is an alternative route to achievement and not an easy option or shortcut. Evidence must be produced for RPL which is subject to the same assessment and quality assurance requirements as applied to evidence produced as part of a course

2.3.2 Equivalency

- A learner can seek to have one or more similar units from a different qualification or one or more updated units from the same qualification considered towards a qualification in place of one or more designated mandatory and/or optional units
- The units(s) must be deemed by AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group to be of equal or higher value
- Equivalencies may not be recognised by the award of credit and appear on certificates without a credit value

2.3.3 Credit transfer for Access to HE Diplomas

- For Access to Higher Education Diplomas, learners can transfer units achieved towards another Diploma as a part of the credit transfer process
- The unit title appears on the transcript, but the credit value will appear as 0 on learner certificates
- Credit may be transferred between AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group Access to HE Diplomas or may be transferred from another Provider or Access Validating Agency
- It is not a requirement that credits transferred towards AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group Access to HE Diplomas exactly map against AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group units, however any such requests must be within the spirit of the rules of combination, i.e., the programme of study must be similar in content to the AIM Diploma to which the credits are being transferred
- Clarification must be sought from AIM if a centre has any doubt over credit transfer

2.3.4 Credit transfer for other qualifications

For other qualifications, learners can seek to have achieved unit credits in one qualification, awarded against the exact same unit in a different qualification:

- The unit will have the same code, learning aims and assessment criteria
- transfer units achieved towards another qualification as a part of the credit transfer process

2.3.5 Evidence examples

The evidence required to demonstrate RPL, and achievement will depend on the purpose, learning objectives and assessment criteria of the unit(s) in question. All evidence submitted for RPL, and achievement must be referenced and signposted clearly in order to facilitate internal assessment, internal quality assurance and external quality assurance. The items listed below are examples of evidence which could be used.

These are not exhaustive and are only intended as indicative guidance.

- Qualification and/or unit certificates
- Unregulated training
- Completed assessments
- Documents
- Testimonies
- Performance management feedback
- Continuous Professional Development (CPD)
- Professional discussion
- Complete mapping process on RPL form
- Learner reflective account

2.3.6 Reviewing evidence

The assessment of evidence through RPL and achievement must be a structured process which allows the assessor to make judgements about a learner's prior learning, knowledge, understanding, experience, skills and achievements in relation to unit standards. Assessment methods for RPL and achievement must be of equal rigour to other assessment methods, be fit for purpose and relate to the unit(s) it is being judged against.

When examining the evidence being presented, the centre must adhere to the following five principles, that it is:

Valid

- The evidence needs to demonstrate that the assessment requirements have been met

Current

- Unless stipulated by an external licensing body or other authority, for AIM purposes, evidence must be from within the **last three years from the date of the application**
- The evidence needs to meet up-to-date practice standards of the unit

Authentic

- The evidence must be the sole work of the learner, unless the learning objective(s) or assessment criteria of the unit(s) being assessed states that work must be produced in groups or in teams

Sufficient

- The evidence must be substantial enough to fully meet the requirements of the learning objective(s) or assessment criteria being considered
- If there is insufficient evidence to fully meet the requirements, then evidence obtained through RPL and achievement must be complemented by evidence gained through other suitable assessment method(s) before requirements can be said to have been met

Reliable

- The evidence must demonstrate sound competence which would allow confidence in the ability of the learner re-producing the evidence in the future
- The evidence obtained through RPL and achievement must be such that an assessor would arrive at the same assessment decision were the assessment to be repeated

2.3.7 Process for recognition of prior certificated learning, equivalencies and credit transfer

- Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning, equivalencies and credit transfers are included in the rules of combination for a qualification, and centres must register learners against the appropriate and/or equivalency unit/units.
- All applications for a Recognition of prior learning and credit transfer must be completed on the **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) credit transfer form**, available to download from our website.
- The completed Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) form should be emailed by the centre to **compliance@aimgroup.org.uk**.
- The date of RPL validity (the date of the evidence for RPL) will be taken from the RPL application date. All RPL applications must be completed and sent to AIM at the point of learner registration before the learner starts the programme.
- The outcome of the application will be sent via email to the centre within 10 working days.

- Centres are required to keep records of valid claims through exemptions and equivalencies for three years.

2.3.8 Restrictions on recognition

For recognition of prior certificated learning and equivalency:

- A maximum of 70% of a qualification can normally be achieved through exemption or equivalency. At least 30% must be gained through new learning at the same level of the qualification. Where a qualification consists of only one unit, a maximum of 50% of a qualification applies.
- 67% of credit within a qualification will normally be achieved at the level of the qualification.

For RPL and Credit transfer for Access to HE Diplomas:

- Up to 50% (30 credits) of a Diploma can be achieved unless specified in the qualification specification.

AIM reserves the right to exclude the use of RPL and achievement in cases such as:

- Licence to practise
- Health and safety requirements
- Regulated professions
- Work placements

RPL and achievement cannot be used where units and qualifications are subject to external assessment.

Where a unit is graded the maximum grade that can be applied following RPL is PASS (for non Access to HE provision).

2.4 Malpractice

A centre must note that failure to comply with the guidance regarding recognition of prior learning and achievement set out by AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group, has the potential to constitute malpractice and may lead to AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group withholding the learner's result.

Instances of malpractice will be dealt in accordance with [AIM Malpractice and maladministration policy and procedures.](#)

2.5 Appeals against the recognition of prior learning and achievement decision

If a learner disagrees with the centre's decision to recognise prior learning or achievement, the learner can ask the centre to review its decision in accordance with the centre's Appeals Policy.

2.6 Learner complaints

If any learner is unhappy with how a centre has dealt with their application for RPL and achievement and has exhausted the centre's own appeals policy, they must follow the [AIM Complaints Policy](#) to submit a complaint.

Section 3 - Regulatory References

Regulatory criteria

This policy is intended to meet our regulatory requirements. In particular:

Section	Condition/ Licensing criteria/Principle
Malpractice and maladministration	Condition A8
Arrangements with centres	Condition C2
Accessibility of qualifications	Condition D2
Responding to enquiries and complaints procedures	Condition E10
Completion of the assessment	Condition G8
Delivering the assessment	Condition G9
Marking the assessment	Condition H1
Centre assessment standards scrutiny where an assessment is marked by a centre	Condition H2
Monitoring the specified levels of attainment for a qualification	Condition H3
Results of a qualification based on sufficient evidence	Condition H5
Appeals process	Condition I1
Documented accessible procedures for appeals	Licensing Criteria 30a, c
Procedures for complaints and appeals	Licensing Criteria 31
Procedures and criteria for the recognition of prior learning	Licensing Criteria 50m
Qualifications and their delivery and assessment are fair, inclusive and accessible to learners	Regulatory Principle 14

Section 4 - Appendix

Appendix 1 – Useful contacts

The following provides contact details for AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group and its regulators.

AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group Contact details

If you have any queries about the contents of the policy, please contact us.

Telephone: [0333 034 8833](tel:03330348833)

Email: enquiries@aimgroup.org.uk

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)

Telephone: [01452 557 000](tel:01452557000)

Email: enquiries@qaa.ac.uk

CCEA

Telephone: [02890 261 200](tel:02890261200)

Email: info@ccea.org.uk

Ofqual

Telephone: [0300 303 3344](tel:03003033344)

Email: public.enquiries@ofqual.gov.uk

Qualifications Wales

Telephone: [0333 077 2701](tel:03330772701)

Email: enquiries@qualificationswales.org.uk

SQA Accreditation

Telephone: [03452791000](tel:03452791000)

Email: accreditation@sqa.org.uk

Disclaimer: Please note that any downloaded version of our policies may not be the most current iteration. For the latest updates and accurate information, kindly refer to the version available on our official website.