

Recognition Of Prior Learning Policy

Approved on	20th July 2026
Approved by	Board of Trustees
Next Review Date	16th July 2029

Change Record

Date of Change:	Changed By:	Comments:
10.7.25	JPT	No changes
15/07/26	JPT	Terminology changes.

Date of next review: 15/07/29

Introduction

Essex and Thames Education recognises that learning may take place in a wide variety of contexts, including via formal taught courses, self-directed study and professional or life experiences. The Recognition of Prior Learning Policy is designed to facilitate formal recognition of learning undertaken elsewhere, supporting our institutional mission to widen participation and promote equality and diversity. The Policy has been mapped to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B6: Assessment of trainee or apprentices and the Recognition of Prior Learning (2013). The overall aim of the Policy is to provide a framework within which decisions about Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) are valid, consistent, timely and fair.

Definitions

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is the overarching term used for the award of credit on the basis of demonstrated learning that has occurred at some time in the past either through attending formal courses (prior certificated learning) or through paid or unpaid work, self-directed learning or other life experiences (prior experiential learning). The theme common to both prior certificated learning and prior

experiential learning is that learning, and not just the experience of the activities alone, is being recognised and awarded credit.

Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL) is the process for assessing, recognising and awarding credit for learning that has been previously accredited, formally recognised or certificated through a higher education institution or other higher education / training provider. This can include professional development or employment-based awards offered at higher education level that have not led to the award of credits or qualifications positioned on the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree Awarding Bodies (2014) (FHEQ).

Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) is the process for assessing, recognising and/or awarding credit for learning that has been achieved through experience and/or training that has not been formally assessed.

Examples of the types of prior learning that might typically be considered for QTS are detailed in Annex A.

Principles

In exceptional circumstances credit may be given for prior learning where the level, standard, content, relevance and currency of that learning are appropriate to a particular programme of study. RLP, RPCL and RPEL will not be considered for Level 4 qualifications but may be considered against the rest of the programmes run by the SCITT.

RLP, RPCL and RPEL will only be considered against one term of programmes leading to QTS and will not be considered against academic credits. Credit will only be considered where the applicant or trainee or apprentice can demonstrate that they meet the assessment requirements for the relevant level of study through knowledge, understanding and/or skills that they already possess as a result of prior learning.

Applicants, Trainees, Apprentices and Practitioners awarded credit against a SCITT programme are exempt from the requirement to study those modules or levels as part of their programme of study. However they will still be required to pay the module fee.

Credit will only be considered against a maximum of 1 term of school practice of the QTS courses. The maximum amount of credit that can be awarded is one term of teaching practice. A trainee or apprentice

granted credit towards an award on the basis of prior learning cannot subsequently use that credit towards a further award offered by the SCITT.

The period of time for which prior learning remains valid and worthy of credit is normally two years and learning should have occurred within the past five years.

If a trainee fails to make expected progress then, as with all other trainees, their training may be extended beyond two terms.

Applying for RPL

Applicants should normally apply for RPL as part of the admissions process. Potential applicants who may be eligible for RPL will be made aware of the opportunities available, and associated timescales, as part of the recruitment and admissions process. RPL may be awarded at other points during a student's period of study at the discretion of the SCITT.

Applicants are encouraged to submit RPL applications in a timely manner, to enable RPL decisions to be made prior to the commencement of the element(s) of the course for which they are seeking exemption.

It is the responsibility of applicants to apply for RPL, using the Application for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) form (Appendix 1) which is available from Essex and Thames Education Office. Information and guidance on applying for RPL clearly outlines the process for making an application, the evidence that is required to support applications, and the criteria against which decisions will be made. Receipt of submitted RPL applications will be formally acknowledged within ten working days, and the applicant will be notified of anticipated timescales for reaching a decision on their application and the means by which they will be informed of the outcome.

Evidencing prior learning

Evidence of prior certificated learning should include:

- a) copies of relevant certificates
- b) course documentation evidencing content, learning outcomes and level of study
- c) details of module results (for example via an academic transcript or equivalent).

Evidence of prior experiential learning should include:

- a) a systematic personal reflection on relevant learning experiences and how these have furthered their understanding of the relevant subject area

- b) clear statements about the learning achieved through these experiences and how this relates to the learning outcomes for the relevant element(s) of the course for which they are seeking exemption
- c) evidence to support these statements, which might include:
 - i) confirmation of job responsibilities and job description by a line-manager a record of achievements
 - ii) details of specialist training / skills contact details of referees who can comment on the applicant's achievements
 - iii) other documentation to demonstrate the learning outcomes achieved.

Evidence of prior experiential learning is usually submitted via a portfolio, although alternative forms of assessment may also be employed to suit the particular needs of individual courses (including structured interviews, presentations, performances or other assessment tasks). Interviews, presentations or performances should be recorded so that there is a reproducible record evidencing the demonstration of prior learning.

Assessing prior learning

The decision-making process and outcomes will be transparent and demonstrably rigorous and fair. Assessment and approval of RPL applications will be conducted by Essex and Thames Education Senior Leadership Team (SLT). This has delegated authority to make decisions on RPL and to award the relevant credit, with the outcomes reported to the next full meeting of the Headteachers' Executive Advisory Board. All documentation relating to RPL applications and decisions will be made available for subsequent external scrutiny.

Meetings may be conducted virtually where necessary to facilitate timely decision-making. Prompt consideration of applications is particularly important for applicants wishing to seek exemption as part of the admissions process, and therefore it may be necessary to have more frequent meetings at the start of the academic year to accommodate this.

Credit can be awarded for prior learning where the RPL sub-group of the SLT is satisfied that the applicant has demonstrated achievement of the intended learning outcomes for the relevant element(s) of the course for which they are seeking exemption, and is adequately prepared to complete the remaining elements of the course.

In making judgements, claims for RPL will be evaluated against the following criteria:

Relevance Is there an appropriate match between the evidence presented and the prior learning that the applicant or student is seeking to demonstrate? Is the prior learning specific? Can it be identified and categorised? Was the learning in a context understood by the learner?
Sufficiency Is there sufficient evidence to demonstrate full achievement of the learning claimed?
Authenticity Is the evidence valid and reliable? Does it clearly relate to the applicant's own efforts and achievements?
Currency Does the evidence relate to current learning? Does it meet course validation and/or course and NCTL time limits in terms of currency of prior learning?
Level Is the prior learning at a level that is at least equivalent to the relevant element of the programme of study for which the applicant or student is seeking exemption?

Notification of outcomes

Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their RPL application (including the level and volume of credit being awarded) via a letter from the CEO, in accordance with timescales communicated to the applicant when receipt of their application was formally acknowledged. Where the application is rejected (in full or in part), the outcome letter will include feedback on the reasons for this decision. The feedback will also highlight their right to make a complaint about the decision. The feedback will be agreed by Essex and Thames Education SLT as part of its deliberations.

Complaints about RPL decisions

A complaint about an RPL decision may only be made on the grounds that;

- I. correct procedure was not followed which undermined the validity of the decision and/or
- II. prejudice or bias on the part of Essex and Thames Education SLT affected the decision.

Complaints concerning the academic judgement of Essex and Thames Education SLT and/or complaints based upon the informal assessment of the RPL application by members of staff will not normally be considered, as these are not deemed as valid grounds for complaint.

A complaint should be made in writing to the Chair of Trustees (pete@etpscitt.co.uk) within fifteen working days of notification of the outcome of the RPL application, in accordance with the procedures outlined in Essex and Thames Education Complaints Procedure.

Monitoring and evaluation

Essex and Thames Education will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and reflect upon the outcomes for enhancement purposes. The Quality Assurance Committee will undertake periodic audits of RPL documentation and will ensure that decisions regarding RPL are valid, reliable and consistent across the partnership, in accordance with the requirements of this Policy.

APPLICATION FOR RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL)

This form should be used to apply for recognition of prior certificated learning (RPCL) and/or recognition of prior experiential learning (RPEL), in accordance with the SCITT's Recognition of Prior Learning Policy. The form should be completed by the applicant. Once completed, the form should be passed to Essex and Thames Education Office for consideration. Applicants are advised to consult the RPL Policy prior to making an RPL application.

Name		
Email address		
Telephone Number		
Course for which you would like prior learning to be considered		
Type of prior learning Please tick relevant box (or both boxes if your claim is a combination of both types of prior learning)	Certificated Learning that has been accredited, formally recognised or certificated through a higher education institution or other higher education / training provider	
	Experiential Uncertificated learning that has been achieved through experience and/or training that has not been formally assessed	
Summary of prior learning. Please describe the nature of the prior learning for which you are seeking recognition, including subject area, level, volume (in terms of credit) and date undertaken. Please provide as much detail as possible.		

Supporting evidence of prior learning Please list the evidence that you are submitting with this form to support your application for recognition of prior learning

Applicant declaration

I confirm that the information given in this form and within supporting documents is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Print name	
Sign name	
Date	

PART TWO: EVALUATION OF CLAIM

<u>Alignment of prior learning with course content and learning outcomes</u>
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Please summarise how the prior learning aligns with the relevant element(s) of the course for which the applicant/student is seeking exemption (including equivalency of level, volume, subject content and learning outcomes)

Currency of prior learning

Please confirm whether the prior learning remains current in terms of the content of the course (noting that prior learning should normally have taken place within the last five years and should meet the requirements of any relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body)

Modules / levels against which it is recommended that credit is awarded

Please list the modules that it is recommended that the applicant/student be awarded credit in recognition of prior learning. Where it is recommended that the applicant be awarded credit for an entire level of study (i.e. entry with advanced standing), alternatively please tick the relevant box(es) below

Course Title	Element of the course	Credit Awarded
Total Credit		

Signed on behalf of Essex and Thames EducationSLT

Print name	
Sign name	
Date	

Annex A

Examples of the types of prior learning that might typically be considered for QTS.

Evidence of prior certificated learning:

Teaching qualifications from outside the UK

Partially completed UK QTS qualifications.

Evidence of prior experiential learning:

Extensive time undertaken in teaching role*

This would **not include work undertaken in HLTA or LSA roles.*