
Introduction

UNIVERSITY OF WALES TRINITY SAINT DAVID (TSD)

RECOGNITION AND ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RAL)

Introduction

Much learning is undertaken in the workplace and valuing staff is an important facet of growth in all organisations. This provision supports the workforce in claiming credit for the higher level work-based learning gained.

The accreditation of prior learning (APEL) based on work-based learning and development is currently negligible, although many higher level staff development activities are regularly undertaken in the workplace. Where it does occur successfully is where learning is related to the admission requirements of traditional institutional based courses in subject specific areas. Demonstrating a value by accrediting this work-based learning will directly benefit learners and their employers and will also provide a forum to support employers in work-based training activities.

The current workforce possesses skills, abilities and knowledge which may have been applied elsewhere or learned out of context. Participants will achieve accreditation for this prior learning and this can form part of a qualification such as a certificate, diploma or degree. There will be clear routes for progression identified and learners will be advised of all opportunities by their academic adviser. This scheme develops an innovative, quality assured approach to the APEL, promote lifelong learning and professional development in the learner and enable the employer to improve the adaptability of the workforce.

Accreditation of prior learning will enhance the learning experience and could also identify specific areas for the further development of the individual. It will also reintroduce the workforce to learning and thus widen the participation of non-traditional learners making further learning more accessible.

As accreditation of prior learning can only form two thirds of a qualification, and has limited standing outside such a recognised qualification, it is

envisaged that all the learners will be motivated to develop their credits further.

This scheme is relevant to all sectors as gaining accreditation on prior, experiential and certificated learning is non sector specific.

Use of RAL credit to gain qualifications

Subject to meeting specific programme requirements (see *Professional Practice, Programme of Study Handbook*) up to two-thirds of a Professional Practice qualification can be awarded through RAL credit. Therefore, as an example, a person could get up to 80 credit points at level 7 for a Postgraduate Diploma (total = 120 credit points), through RAL credit.

Once you have been awarded credit for your RAL claim, you will get a certificate of credit which shows how much credit you have obtained and at what levels. **This certificate is not a qualification, but the credit you have gained can be put towards a qualification.** Many people put their RAL credit towards a Professional Practice qualification.

The type of prior learning you submit in your RAL portfolio may be of two types:

- Learning on courses of study which has already been credit-rated. In this case, you are not asking the University to *give* you credit for this learning, but to *recognise* it.
- Experiential learning, for example, learning gained from work or other significant experiences. This learning must be described in detail in your areas of learning.

Whichever type of prior learning you claim credit for, and it can be a mixture of both the above types, it must be relevant to the focus of any future programme of study you go on to undertake.

The structure

The course outline should enable you to identify learning from your work-based experience and to claim credit for it. This, in addition to any credit gained from formal education or training at the right level, will enable you to gain credit towards a qualification. Many people have found this to be a transforming experience.

Content

The provision is organised in sections. Although the sections focus on one area and provide for the advancement of knowledge and understanding the material provided is pertinent to all sections and to the accomplishment of the final portfolio and evidence of reflection.

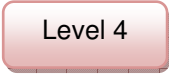
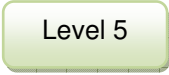
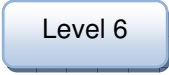
This is a flexible learning module which you work through, completing the tasks and exercises in the virtual learning environment (VLE). A wide range of activities, discussion and information are available and are indicated at each stage of the module by the icons. (see below)

Each section has been organised following, wherever possible, a similar structure. The variations depend upon the content of the section. Generally each section will include the following:

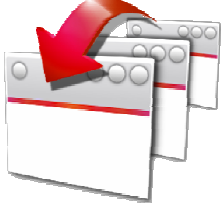
- Introduction and key concepts
- Background reading
- Examples of good practice
- Activity
- Reflection
- Cross-reference to the learning outcomes
- Contribution to final assessment
- Additional resources
- Advice and/or hints

The information will be indicated clearly using the following codes.

Table – Icons and colouring codes

Icon and colouring codes	
	Introduction – the objectives of the section
	Level 4 content
	Level 5 content
	Level 6 content
	Level 7 content

	Reading
	Writing
	Reflection
	Evidence
	Portfolio building
	DVD / Videos
	Audios
	Avoid

	Exercises - compulsory
	Activities - for personal development and support learning
	Can download to iPad / iPhone
	Link to web address
	PowerPoint Presentation
	Advice and/or hints
	Additional resources available on the Virtual Learning Environment Site

You have been allocated an Academic Adviser for the Recognition and Accreditation of Learning (RAL) and it is important that you seek feedback on your draft work from this Academic Adviser. You can also contact Catrin Evans, the Project Administrator on 01267 671304, c.e.evans@tsd.ac.uk.

The handbook is divided into stages, which include sources of information, key words, examples, exercises and tasks where appropriate. There are several exercises in this handbook and on the VLE which are designed to help you complete your portfolio. They should not be included in the portfolio, but we strongly recommend that you do them for your own benefit.

The *content* of this module is your own experience, which you critically evaluate and organise. The *structure* of module is contained in the guidelines given in this handbook. As has been already stated in the summary you will be allocated a RAL Academic Adviser. He/she is there to help you compile your claim. All queries about your claim for credit should be directed to your RAL Adviser.

Recognition and Accreditation of Learning, Academic Advisers (RAL AA)

You will normally meet your RAL AA at the Induction Day.

These notes clarify what you, the claimant, can reasonably expect from the RAL AA. Within the scope outlined below you should remember that the formulation and submission of the claim is your sole responsibility.

- The role of the RAL AA is to assist the individual claimant in preparing and submitting a claim for consideration by the University for accreditation. The RAL AA may be, but is not necessarily, involved in the assessment of the claim.
- The Professional Practice Administration Unit will provide the RAL AA with contact details for the claimant.
- The claimant should establish direct contact with the RAL AA who should at this point introduce themselves, explain their role as AA and establish the pattern for future communication. Where the claimant is attending the 'Recognition and Accreditation of Learning' sessions on campus, half hour sessions will have been set aside for a meeting with the claimant on a one to one or small group basis. If the claimant is preparing a claim at a distance, face to face contact may well not be possible and the contact will be a combination of telephone discussion and correspondence.

The RAL Academic Adviser (RAL AA) should:

- be familiar with and able to advise on the standard format for RAL claims and instructions given to claimants;
- be familiar with and able to advise on College procedures for RAL;
- assist the claimant in the identification of areas of learning, appropriate evidence and the statement of learning outcomes;
- receive and comment upon a draft submission;

At draft submission stage the Adviser can gain an overview of the claim which can often enable the Adviser to:

- suggest additional areas of learning hinted at within the claim but not explicitly put forward for assessment. Such areas are often regarded by the claimant as merely supplementary to an area of learning they have identified. Typical "hidden" areas are IT, human resource management/planning and communication skills;
- identify areas where additional or more appropriate evidence should be provided or where one piece of evidence could be used in support of a claim in more than one area of learning;
- advise on the development of the claim against the learning outcomes of specific modules if the claim is for specific credit;
- advise the Professional Practice Unit of specific areas of subject expertise likely to be required to assess the claim, if not for generic management skills.

In addition to the Induction Day a RAL learner is allocated up to a maximum of 3 hours of personal academic support. This time may be taken as tutorials for learners who can attend campus. If a learner is unable to visit the campus or if he/she is part of a cohort the arrangements will differ, and may include workshops and less one-to-one contact. You should discuss the specifics at the start of the programme with your RAL AA as part of the planning process.

Formative feedback from your RAL AA is an *essential* part of this module. You may also write, e-mail or use the website to contact your RAL AA for guidance. As Advisers are often away from their desks, it is useful to leave a message if you are unable to make contact by phone. Feedback on work will be returned by e-mail within 10 working days. Work that has been posted to the University of Wales Trinity Saint David will obviously take longer.

Schedule

We suggest you quickly scan through this scheme to gain an appreciation of the overall content and structure before working through it in detail.

To help you organise your time your RAL AA will negotiate a schedule to indicate what would be a reasonable rate of progress. Please adjust according to *actual* start and deadline dates. As you work through your schedule, make good use of the links to all resources indicated at each stage.

Our expectations

1. As a learner you are responsible for establishing contact with your RAL AA.
2. When asking for guidance, you are expected to have thought about alternative options.
3. You should seek and act upon adviser feedback. Advisers have a maximum time of 3 hours only per learner for personal academic support (face-to-face or by e-mail). Use your time wisely. During teaching periods you can expect feedback within 10 working days.
4. You are expected to find out the Higher Education values of credits for any previous courses by contacting the provider and getting an appropriate statement.
5. You are expected to access and use the Pebble Pad e-portfolio and the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) which supports this module. This contains additional information, activities and background material. Information on accessing the VLE is provided during Induction.

Continuing your studies - registering for new modules

Once accreditation has been achieved you may continue your studies to a full Award through the Professional Practice Framework. Further ESF funded provision is also available. Your RAL AA will be able to advise you on progression.

Bibliography – Work-based Learning

Raelin, J.A. *Work-based Learning: Bridging Knowledge and Action in the Workplace*
San Francisco: Jossey Bass Wiley, 2008.