CDS Defence & Security
The Bramery • Alstone Lane •
Cheltenham • GL51 8HE • UK
t: +44 (0)3301756960
e: enquiries@cdsds.uk
w: www.cdsds.uk

Recognition of Prior Learning Policy DSIS-RPL01

CDS Defence & Security Internal Standard DSIS 17483

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Author	**Authoriser**
Gary Henderson	Jim Fisher
Higher Education & Accreditation Lead	Head of Operations
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Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

1 Purpose

CDS Defence & Security (CDS DS) recognises learning that learners have already achieved, so they are not asked to repeat learning or assessment for skills and knowledge they can already prove.

This policy explains how learners can apply for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), how claims are assessed and quality assured, and how decisions can be challenged.

2 Scope and Definitions

This policy applies to all learners registered, or applying to register, on City & Guilds and ILM qualifications at CDS DS and to all staff involved in delivery, assessment and quality assurance. It covers centre-based, workplace and remote delivery.

Term	Meaning
Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)	A method of assessment that considers whether a learner can meet assessment requirements through knowledge, understanding or skills they already have, and so do not need to develop through a course of learning.
Prior learning	Learning from any source: formal courses, work experience, voluntary roles, training, or life experience. It may be certificated or uncertificated.
Credit transfer	Using credit already achieved for a unit on a regulated qualification towards another qualification that contains the same or an equivalent unit where the qualification's rules of combination allow. This is handled through the awarding body's rules of combination, not through RPL assessment.
Exemption	Where a learner is exempted from part of a qualification because of a previous certificated achievement that the awarding body recognises as equivalent. Exemptions are confirmed with City & Guilds/ILM.
RPL claim	The learner's application, with supporting evidence, to have prior learning recognised against specific learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

RPL is not an alternative to meeting the standard. Evidence must meet the same assessment criteria, to the same standard, as evidence produced during the programme.

3 Principles

CDS DS applies RPL according to the following principles:

- RPL is learner-centred and voluntary. All learners are told at enquiry and induction that RPL is available, and no learner is pressured to use it.
- RPL is available to every learner on a fair and equal basis, in line with our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.
- RPL is used only where the qualification specification allows it. Some units or assessments, such as externally set tests or assignments, may exclude RPL; the specification takes precedence.
- RPL can be claimed for a whole unit, part of a unit or individual assessment criteria. It can lead to a full qualification only where the qualification rules allow.
- RPL is an assessment method. Decisions are made by an occupationally competent, qualified assessor and are subject to internal quality assurance and external quality assurance by City & Guilds/ILM.
- Evidence used for RPL must be valid, authentic, current, sufficient and reliable (see Evidence requirements).
- Achievement through RPL is certificated in the same way as achievement through any other assessment method. Certificates do not state that RPL was used.
- The process will be clear, timely and proportionate, so that the cost and effort of an RPL claim are not greater than completing the learning.

4 Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Head of Centre & Quality Nominee	Owns this policy, ensures it is implemented and reviewed, and makes sure staff are trained in RPL. Ensures RPL records are available for EQA visits.
Tutor / Course Coordinator	Raises RPL with learners at enquiry, initial assessment and induction. Supports learners to identify relevant prior learning.
Assessor	Plans the RPL assessment with the learner, judges evidence against the assessment criteria, carries out any extra assessment needed (e.g. professional discussion, questioning, observation), records decisions and gives feedback.

Role	Responsibilities
Internal Quality Assurer (IQA)	Includes RPL decisions in the sampling plan, checks that decisions are valid and consistent, and supports standardisation of RPL practice across assessors.
Learner	Identifies prior learning, gathers evidence, confirms the evidence is their own, and takes part in any further assessment required.
Administration / Exams Officer	Records RPL outcomes accurately, registers learners and claims certificates correctly, and keeps records for the required retention period.

5 The RPL Process

Each RPL claim follows these steps, and every step is recorded on the learner's file.

1. **Information.** Learners are told about RPL in pre-course information, at initial assessment and at induction.
2. **Initial discussion.** The learner and a tutor or assessor discuss the learner's experience against the qualification's units and decide whether an RPL claim is realistic. Credit transfer and exemptions are checked at this stage.
3. **Registration.** The learner is registered with City & Guilds/ILM for the qualification. RPL decisions cannot be confirmed for an unregistered learner.
4. **RPL assessment plan.** The assessor and learner agree a written plan naming the units, learning outcomes and assessment criteria being claimed, the evidence to be supplied, the assessment methods and the target dates.
5. **Gathering evidence.** The learner collects and submits evidence, cross-referenced to the assessment criteria, and signs a declaration that it is their own.
6. **Assessment.** The assessor judges the evidence against the criteria. Where it is not enough on its own, the assessor uses further methods such as professional discussion, oral or written questioning, observation, or a reflective account.
7. **Decision and feedback.** The assessor records which criteria are met and gives written feedback within [10] working days of the final submission. Any criteria not met are added to the learner's learning plan or assessed through the normal route.
8. **Internal quality assurance.** RPL is weighted as higher risk in the sampling plan, with full sampling for assessors new to RPL. RPL decisions are sampled by the IQA before certification is claimed.
9. **Certification.** Once all requirements are met and quality assured, the centre claims the certificate in the normal way.

6 Evidence Requirements

All RPL evidence must meet five rules before an assessor can accept it.

Rule	What the assessor checks
Valid	The evidence relates directly to the learning outcomes and assessment criteria being claimed.
Authentic	The evidence is the learner's own work. Learners sign a declaration, and assessors confirm authenticity through questioning, discussion or witness contact where needed.
Current	The knowledge or skills are still up to date. Where evidence is older than 3 years, or practice or legislation has changed, the assessor seeks more recent evidence or confirms currency through questioning.
Sufficient	There is enough evidence to cover every criterion claimed, consistently and at the required level.
Reliable	The evidence would lead different assessors to the same decision and is underpinned by the IQA process.

Typical evidence includes certificates and transcripts, job descriptions and appraisals, work products (reports, plans, presentations), witness testimonies from line managers, reflective accounts, records of professional discussion, and observation records.

Certificates alone are rarely sufficient for RPL. The assessor must be able to map the evidence to each assessment criterion and will usually confirm it through questioning or discussion.

7 Quality Assurance

RPL decisions are included in the IQA sampling plan, and every assessor making RPL decisions is sampled. RPL is a standing item at standardisation meetings at least three times a year. All RPL records are available to the City & Guilds/ILM External Quality Assurer on request.

8 Records

For each claim the centre keeps the RPL assessment plan, the evidence or a record of it, the learner's authenticity declaration, assessment records and feedback, and IQA records. Records are stored securely under our Data Protection Policy and kept for at least 3 years after certification, or longer if City & Guilds/ILM require it.

9 Fees

CDS DS will tell learners about any RPL fees before the claim starts. Fees will reflect the assessment work involved.

10 Appeals and Complaints

Learners who disagree with an RPL decision can appeal under the centre's Appeals Policy. If the matter is not resolved internally, the learner may appeal to City & Guilds/ILM. Concerns about the service received are handled under the Complaints Policy.

11 Malpractice

Submitting evidence that is not the learner's own, or falsifying RPL records, is malpractice. It will be investigated under the Malpractice and Maladministration Policy and reported to City & Guilds/ILM where required.

12 Related Policies

This policy should be read with the Assessment Policy, Internal Quality Assurance Policy, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration Policy, Appeals Policy, Complaints Policy, Malpractice and Maladministration Policy, and Data Protection Policy.

13 Review

This policy is reviewed every 12 months, and sooner if City & Guilds/ILM requirements, regulatory guidance or EQA feedback change. Check the current City & Guilds quality assurance requirements and the qualification specifications at each review.

---------- **End** ----------