

# RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING AND EXPERIENCE (RPL) POLICY FOR APPRENTICE STARTS FROM 1 AUGUST 2020

Policy last updated: August 2023

Review Date: August 2024

## 1. Policy Statement

North Lancs Training Group is committed to an inclusive approach to the assessment of learning including the recognition of prior learning and experience and/or achievement. This policy has been compiled by NLTG employees with a vast knowledge and competence in teaching pedagogy gained in work-based learning over NLTG's 50 years as a Training Provider.

## 2. Key Objective

Key objective of initial assessment is to ensure the applicant is enrolled onto an appropriate Apprenticeship for their job role i.e. appropriate level of Apprenticeship and appropriate Standard. It is therefore an imperative requirement that the NLTG tutor discusses and agrees the most appropriate Standard in conjunction with both employer and applicant. We also need to ensure that no funds are used to pay for training of skills, knowledge and behaviours already attained by the apprentice.

3. **Accreditation of Prior Experience:** is defined as previous non-certificated achievements. This form of RPL is relevant when an individual's learning has not been formally recognised and evidence of this learning can be drawn from: domestic/family life, work experience, work activities and/or community or voluntary activities.

4. **Accreditation of Prior achievement:** is defined as previous certificated achievements via prior education, training or associated qualifications in a related subject sector area, including any previous apprenticeships undertaken.

## 5. Assessment of RPL evidence

North Lancs Training Group will ensure that the process of assessment for RPL is subject to the same quality assurance and monitoring standards as any other form of assessment. NLTG will use the information gathered through our initial assessment processes to identify and analyse specific skills gaps in the applicants knowledge, skills and behaviours specific to the relevant Apprenticeship Standard.

## 6. RPL process

- RPL will be included in all parts of the learner journey so that learners fully understand the process of RPL assessment and related opportunities i.e. initial assessment (including reviewing the applicants Personal Learning Records via Gov.uk Learning Records service, previous training, qualifications and work experience detailed on our application documentation, and where applicable our MI systems i.e. where applicant has previously undertaken training via NLTG), induction, ILPs, reviews, ongoing feedback, (this includes documentation which allows learners to apply for RPL at the beginning of their Qualification/Standard).
- Schemes of work and planning highlight opportunities for RPL
- Review and assessment documentation record RPL
- Employers will be included in planning for, and collection of RPL evidence
- IQA processes include RPL, including sampling/Mock Assessment
- RPL is included in Self-Assessment processes
- Learner feedback informs improvement of RPL processes.

## 7. Funding

In line with ESFA Apprenticeship funding rules wherever RPL is identified at initial assessment:

- i) NLTG will use Apprenticeship government – employer co-invested funding to address any skills gaps (assuming the applicant meets ESFA/ESF eligibility criteria and that by undertaking an Apprenticeship they will be developing substantive new skills)
- ii) the duration of the programme will be adjusted accordingly. Where the shortening of the Apprenticeship means that it fails to meet either the minimum duration requirements or the minimum off-the-job training requirement, the apprentice is not eligible for funding. The tutor will in such circumstances then discuss commercial opportunities for such training i.e. not ESFA funded
- iii) the cost of the training will be adjusted accordingly. **NOTE The EPA cost will not be adjusted in such circumstances.**
- iv) Duration (in terms of Start to Completion/ Achievement date) and costs, regardless of whether any RPL is identified at initial assessment, is entered on NLTG MIS system for ILR recording.
- v) NLTG’s Skills Radar /ILPR / Skill scan will only facilitate assessment and subsequent training needs for the skills, knowledges and behaviours that are required to enable the Apprentice to be successful at End Point Assessment (Standards). Any other training identified is outside of scope of Apprenticeship Funding.

## 8. How NLTG use Recognition of Prior Learning and experience to plan learning and costs

### 8.1 NLTG Definition of competence

NLTG treat competency as far more than just a “tick list” of skills.

Competency is defined as being able to complete a task to a defined quality standard within defined timescales on a consistent basis.

Key components of competency include aptitude, confidence, retention and mastery.

**Aptitude** - the amount of time required by an Apprentice to attain mastery of a learning task. Aptitude is not constant across all Apprentices and can be subject to change due to environmental conditions or learning experience.

**Confidence** - .the ability to take the knowledge and skills and move into an action or behaviour in a range of contexts

**Retention** – a preservation of the after effects of experience and learning that makes recall or recognition possible

**Mastery** - possession or display of great skill, knowledge or technique

### 8.2 NLTG high expectations

One of NLTG’s core values as defined in our 3 years strategic provision plan is that we have “High expectations of learners”.

The intention is for all Apprentices to be stretched and challenged to their full potential, to develop deep understanding of their vocation to enable them to master, analyse, evaluate, challenge and to progress in both their work and the wider society. In summary NLTG have high expectations of Apprentices. This concept applies to the whole RPL process i.e. we stretch and challenge Apprentices throughout their learning journey.

### 8.3. Initial Assessment

Initial assessment includes a professional discussion between the employer, the Apprentice and occupationally competent NLTG Tutor. Such discussion will include thorough appraisal of the Apprentices current skill level and experience against the specific knowledge, skills and behaviours defined in the occupational Standard. This includes currency of skills against current industry legislation and guidance.

Where an apprentices skills have eroded through lack of practice or where the apprentice's knowledge has been superseded e.g. through technological advances then it might be determined by NLTG, in conjunction with the employer that such prior learning and experience is not relevant. In such circumstances this will be evidenced as such.

The initial assessment will also identify the Apprentices career aspirations and explore the compatibility of the apprenticeship with their job role. On Aptem this is done via the setting of goals against a set of competencies relating to the standard. These goals are agreed by the Apprentice, Employer and tutor and will help stretch and challenge the apprentice in areas that are relevant to their role. The goals can be amended throughout the programme (either up or down) and progress against goals is discussed at least in each Progress Review.

All Apprentices will be initially assessed for currency of their English and maths skills via Skills Forward.

The grading of the Apprentices knowledge, skills and behaviours at initial assessment will differ depending upon whether they are an Apprentice that is entered on Yeti using the ILPR as an assessment tool or if they are an Apprentice that will be entered on Aptem. See Below. NOTE eventually all Apprentices will be entered on Aptem. Such grading will be used throughout the Apprentices programme to measure progress.

NLTG define progress as “knowing more and remembering more” this will include moving knowledge and skills from short term memory to long term memory. Consequently, if a learner cannot fully recall and articulate at initial assessment previous learning to satisfy embedded competence, then it can hardly be considered as being embedded within their long term memory. The view then is that a learner is either competent or not and this is reflected in how RPL is applied.

This will be explained at our thorough initial assessment. NLTG will not adjust duration or costs should RPL subsequently become apparent after initial assessment.

Any evidence provided will be considered and indicate the readiness for assessment against the individual criteria.

For Standards, there is only opportunity to assess competency against the whole “criteria” of the Standard at the End Point Assessment i.e. the end of the Apprentice programme. NOTE NLTG carry out mock EPA activities at the end of the practical period to provide some indication to the Apprentice and their employer as towards their competency against the Standard and things they could perhaps do better i.e. replicating to some extent what the End Point Assessment will be like for them.

From initial assessment, and thereafter throughout the Apprenticeship, NLTG Tutors will advise the employer and the Apprentice as to the standard of work expected and, in the case of Standards, advise via work scrutiny what level of work the Apprentice is producing in terms of Fail, Pass, Merit or Distinction and the standard required to improve any grade below Distinction level.

### **8.3.1 At initial Assessment – For Apprentices entered on Yeti using the ILPR as an assessment tool**

Initial assessment, as detailed in 8.3 will result in the Apprentices' current skills level and experience being graded against the specific criteria for each Standard listed under the "Skills to be developed/learned/

checked “ column on the “My Learning Plan” worksheet on the ILPR. In this respect NLTG are at the behest of the employer and Apprentice as to what information they provide as part of this thorough discussion.

As part of this discussion the employer and Apprentice will rate the Apprentice’s current ability on a scale of 0 -4 (as per the Skills Indicator Guide on the ILPR) i.e.

- 0- Full skills, knowledge and behaviours development required
- 1- Skills, knowledge and behaviours development started
- 2- Further skills, knowledge and behaviours development
- 3- Ready for Practice Assessment i.e. “Mock” EPA (for Standard), where required.
- 4- Ready for End Point Assessment (Standard) In essence, by rating the Apprentice skills as a grade 3 or 4 the Employer and the Apprentice are agreeing that the Apprentice has attained, in their opinion, such a level of **competence against Apprenticeship Standard that would be successful at End Point assessment** .

In such circumstances, to substantiate this grading, the employer and Apprentice **must** provide examples of experiential and /or certificated learning that will be summarised in the “Evidence” Column on the ILPR and that it is embedded competence that will require no further training / refresher training (i.e. bearing in mind it might be some considerable time later when they are ready for End Point Assessment). Failure to provide documented information/evidence by the Employer and Apprentice at initial assessment in the Evidence column would indicate the Apprentice still has development needs therefore should not be graded 3 or 4. The rationale for such evidencing is that NLTG have to be assured / reassured the Apprentice has the necessary fundamental building blocks to progress with their knowledge and understanding e.g. apprentice has to master certain levels of competency before moving onto greater levels of complexity.

Progress of Functional skills English and maths are individually graded on the ILPR as follows:

- 0 - Not started
- 1 - Completed 1 Functional Skills component
- 2 – Completed 2 Functional Skills components
- 3 - Complete 3 Functional Skills components
- 4 – Test passed

The employer and Apprentice both sign the Training Plan to confirm that a thorough discussion of the Apprentice’s existing skills (if any) at enrolment onto the programme have been identified and graded accordingly on the “My Learning Record” worksheet on the ILPR.

### **8.3.2 At initial Assessment for Apprentice starts as entered onto Aptem using 1 to 4 scale**

Aptems Skillscan tasks the learner, employer and NLTG tutor to initially assess the Apprentices existing and known skills at initial sign on against the following 4 criteria

- 1-No Skills
- 2-Skills development started
- 3-Further skills development required
- 4-Ready for Mock / EPA assessment

### **8.3.3 At initial Assessment for Apprentice starts as entered on Aptem using 1 to 10 scale**

In the summer of 2022 NLTG started to progress towards assessing Apprentices existing and known skills as part of initial assessment using a 10 point scale (version 2) i.e.

Non-Aptem Score Equivalent	Score (Version 1)	Score (Version 2)	Level	Meaning
0-1	1	1	Beginner	<p><b>Knowledge:</b> you have no knowledge of this area.</p> <p><b>Skills:</b> you have not performed this skill in your current or previous roles.</p> <p><b>Behaviours:</b> you have not demonstrated this behaviour in your current role.</p>
		2	Beginner+	
2	2	3	Novice	<p><b>Knowledge:</b> you have limited knowledge of this area.</p> <p><b>Skills:</b> you do not perform this skill other than in a classroom, experimental or closely supervised environment. If you have needed to perform this skill you have felt unsure or out of your depth.</p> <p><b>Behaviours:</b> you have not demonstrated this behaviour in your current role other than on a very occasional basis.</p>
		4	Novice+	
3	3	5	Intermediate	<p><b>Knowledge:</b> you have some knowledge in this area, but it is partial or out of date.</p> <p><b>Skills:</b> You have performed this skill at work but with guidance from a colleague. Most of the time you do not feel confident to perform this skill without support.</p> <p><b>Behaviours:</b> you have demonstrated this behaviour in your current role but only occasionally.</p>
		6	Intermediate+	
4	4	7	Competent	<p><b>Knowledge:</b> you have all the knowledge required on a day to day basis and know where to find answers to more complex questions.</p> <p><b>Skills:</b> you perform this skill regularly without support and to the standard required for your role and you and colleagues can provide recent evidence of you doing so.</p> <p><b>Behaviours:</b> you demonstrate this behaviour consistently and you and colleagues can give recent examples.</p>
		8	Competent+	
No score attributed - Identified as distinction	No score attributed - Identified as distinction	9	Expert	<p><b>Knowledge:</b> you are a “go to” person in your organisation (and possibly beyond) for questions about this area. You share your knowledge with others in your organisation, for example by delivering training or creating support materials.</p> <p><b>Skills:</b> You regularly perform this skill in complex situations and support less experienced colleagues in applying this skill.</p>
		10	Expert+	

level where appropriate	level where appropriate			<b>Behaviours:</b> you are recognised by your colleagues as setting an example to others in respect of this behaviour which you demonstrate consistently and to a high standard.
-------------------------	-------------------------	--	--	--

### **9. Impact of RPL on costs and duration of training for Apprentices**

In calculation of the reduction in duration on the Apprenticeship programme and subsequent training costs the impact of the criteria scored at initial assessment at Grade 3 and 4 (as per 8.3.1 above) is collated in terms of number of Expected Learning hours for each criteria.

#### **9.1 Examples for Apprentices entered on Yeti using ILPR as an assessment tool**

Examples below are solely fictitious and designed to illustrate the methodology behind how NLTG's ILPR calculates RPL reduction.

All examples are based on an Apprenticeship duration of 24 months, 100 Expected Learning Hours and a Training Cost of £1000.

##### **Example 1**

Criteria	Skills Indicator Guide	Expected Learning Hours
A	0 – Full Skills Development required	40 hours
B	3 - Ready for Practice Assessment	50 hours
C	4 – Ready for EPA	10 hours

The implications of the above skill scan would be a 60% reduction in programme duration (from 100 expected Learning Hours) to 12 months, and accordingly a 60% reduction in the Training cost to £700.

NOTE: RPL cannot reduce End Point Assessment Costs.

##### **Example 2**

Criteria	Skills Indicator Guide	Expected Learning Hours
A	4 - Ready for Practice Assessment	40 hours
B	0 - Ready for Practice Assessment	50 hours
C	1 – Full Skills Development required	10 hours

The implications of the above skill scan would be a 40% reduction in duration (i.e.40 hours deducted from 100 expected Learning Hours) to 4.4 months (in reality this would be rounded up to 15 months), and accordingly a 20% reduction in the Training cost to £800. NOTE RPL cannot reduce End Point Assessment Costs.

NOTE: In this example NLTG would enrol the individual on to the apprenticeship as there are substantial Skills Knowledge and Behaviours (SKBs) to develop. However, the programme duration and plan would be adapted accordingly.

NLTG would not engage the person onto an Apprenticeship in example 1 as they would not be developing substantive new skills as required by the ESFA Funding Rules and in Example 2 we would not engage as the minimum lengths of stay are not being met

##### **Example 3**

Criteria	Skills Indicator Guide	Expected Learning Hours
A	0 – Full Skills Development required	40 hours
B	1- Skills development started	50 hours
C	2- Further skills development	10 hours

In the above example no RPL reductions would apply as the extent of their skills, knowledge and behaviour will need to be tested out/ developed as part of their training. NLTG have to be reassured that the extent of their existing partly developed skills, as identified via initial assessment, are sufficiently substantial and embedded to enable the Apprentice to build on such skills to develop themselves further. This can only practically be achieved by discussion, observations etc over a period of time. In example 3 the duration and cost would remain as 24 months and £1000.

#### Example 4

Criteria	Skills Indicator Guide	Expected Learning Hours
A	0 – Full Skills Development required	40 hours
B	0 – Full Skills Development required	50 hours
C	0 – Full Skills Development required	10 hours

In the above example no RPL reductions would apply as full skills development has been identified.

In all the above examples the Apprentice’s skills and experience, if any, at initial assessment will be recognised to some extent by inclusion within identifying the Apprentice’s Starting Point on the “My Visits and progress” worksheet on their ILPR. Thereafter the ILPR will be updated showing ongoing progress and distance travelled in learning of the Apprentice.

Progress against Skills, Knowledge and Behaviours (all of which as “topics” may include numerous criteria) are calculated by applying the same weighting as the above.

English and maths development are measured via update of the ILPR using the grading system defined in 8.3.1 above.

### 9.2. Examples for Apprentices entered on Aptem using 1 to 4 point scale

Aptem system does not allow for a value of zero in its calculations therefore the baseline for an Apprentice that has no previous knowledge, skills of behaviours against the Standard they are undertaking will be assessed as 1. This equates to a starting point of 25 on Aptem.

i.e. 100 (in effect 100% - fully ready for EPA) divided by the 4 levels that the Apprentice is assessed against = 25

(see below for screenshot of the Tracker page of the learners record on Aptem whereby an Apprentice has been assessed as 1’s for every criteria- shows as “Skills Radar Score : 25%”).



The screenshot displays the Aptem Tracker interface for a learner's record. It is divided into several sections:

- Programme details:** Shows 'Programme duration' as 14 Month(s).
- Learner details:** Shows 'Current learner programme duration' as 427 Day (s).
- Skills Radar Assessments:**
  - 'Skills Radar Assessment' is set to 'Learner - 28/07/20...'
  - 'Skills Radar Score' is 25 %.
  - 'Reduction in training price' is 0 %.
  - 'Reduction in duration' is 0 day(s).
- Adjustments:**
  - 'Programme duration reduction' has three radio buttons: 'No reduction' (selected), 'Custom reduction', and 'Skills Radar reduction'.
- Calculated Adjustments:**
  - 'Recalculated training price' is £ 0.
  - 'Recalculated duration' is 15 Month(s).

At the bottom, there are 'Save' and 'Close' buttons. A vertical 'Support' button is visible on the right side.

If the Apprentice was assessed for all criteria of the Standard as being all 2’s (i.e. Skills development started) then 50% would be shown on the Skills Radar score on the Tracker page Aptem

NOTE Whatever value is shown as the Skills Radar score on the Tracker page this must **not** be interpreted as the percentage of RPL i.e. 25%, for an Apprentice assessed as all 1’s, is in effect 0% RPL

Whatever the baseline level is through the RPL process the Skills Radar score is the starting point against which all subsequent progress will be monitored against.

The Training price discount and reductions in duration in the scenarios below are auto-calculated by Aptem based on the following rationale

Table 1

Lower limit	Upper limit	Cost reduction	Duration reduction	Rationale
25	37	0%	0%	For an Apprentice to be assessed against all criteria as 1 then the starting point would be 25; for an Apprentice being assessed for 50% of the criteria as 1 and the remaining criteria 2 the outcome would be 37.5. Hence Apprentices in this band would be between 0% and 17% of the way through the Standard at start. NLTG judge that in such circumstances no cost reduction should be incurred as there are NLTG fixed costs of delivery that are incurred regardless of RPL.
38	50	13%	13%	An Apprentice assessed as 2's for all criteria would score 50 on the tracker i.e. they are 25 points above the starting point of baseline 25 (equivalent to being between 17% and 33% towards completion. In such circumstances NLTG judge a reduction of 13% to be appropriate bearing in mind the fixed costs associated with delivery and the fact that the duration will also be reduced by 13%*
51	60	25%	25%	For an Apprentice to be scored at 60 they must have had some criteria assessed as 3's or above i.e. they are up to 35 points away from the baseline of 25 i.e. between 33% and 47% of the way through the programme. In such circumstances NLTG judge a reduction of 25% to be appropriate bearing in mind the fixed costs associated with delivery and the fact that the duration will also be reduced by 25%*
61	This is the threshold value at which NLTG judge that the Apprentice must not go on programme as they will not be sufficiently developing substantive new skills, knowledge or behaviours. However NLTG may still offer such training on a separate commercial basis by NLTG. (i.e. not ESFA co-invested funding).			

\*See table 2 below for what this equates to in terms of reduction in days based on the duration of programme.

The above rationales are for example only i.e. in reality rarely will an Apprentice, except for one who has no previous skills, knowledge of behaviour, be assessed at one level for all the criteria. In reality there may be a mix of 1, 2 and 3's.

Table 2

Length of programme	What 13% equates to in terms of reduced length of stay (in days)	What 25% equates to in terms of reduced length of stay (in days)
12 months	48*	92*
14 months	56*	107*
15 months	59	114*
16 months	63	122*
18 months	71	137
24 months	95	183

**\*Note in such circumstances the Apprentice would not be signed onto an Apprenticeship as the ESFA minimum length of stay would not be met i.e. 372 days**

In instances where there has been a break in learning the revised planned end date will be calculated by Admin Support with relevant documentation e.g. Training Plan, Apprenticeship Agreement and ILR information amended to reflect the new planned end date.

The above are all the durations on programme that NLTG currently have. If for instance NLTG introduce a new length of stay e.g. 17 months then this will be reflected accordingly for the Standard when built on Aptem.

In all scenarios the employer will agree a negotiated training cost with NLTG.



**Working Example using the above**

Apprentice on a 14 Month standard

Start date of 1 January 2022

Length of stay : 14 months

Planned end date – where no RPL has been identified: 4 March 2023

Planned end date where 13% RPL i.e. equivalent of 56 days reduction has been evidenced \*: 7 January 2023

\*Using NLTG’s Excel spread sheet “Planned End Date Calculator for Aptem Apprenticeship starts” by entering the duration of length of stay (as per NL0109) and the relevant Start date Admin Support can identify the relevant revised planned end date pending the percentage of RPL evidenced on the Initial assessment Skills scan radar.

**9.3. Examples for Apprentices entered on Aptem using 1 to 10 point scale**

For Apprentices initially assessed using Aptem on a 1 to 10 scale (as per 8.3.3.) a score of 7,8,9 or 10 means that the Apprentice is competent or above and ready for RPL for that specific Standards criteria. NLTG will apply proportionate reduction.

Where the agreed score on any given knowledge, skill or behaviour is a 7 or above then the Learning Plan needs amending for that learner and any learning plan components that contain those areas where the Apprentice has shown competence will have planned hours removed. Aptem will then calculate any reduction in time on programme or costs based on the number of hours removed.

**10.Overall Progress on YETI**

The following NLTG generic weightings are applied when calculating the Overall progress of a learner during the programme (i.e. this is not an RPL related calculation):

	Equates to % of Overall Progress
Skills	30%
Knowledge	30%
Behaviours	15%
English	10%
Maths	10%
SEW	5%

If 100% progress was demonstrated for both Skills, Knowledge and for SEW, with 0% for the other topics then the Overall progress would be 65% i.e. 30% plus 30 % plus 5%

In all scenarios the employer will agree a negotiated training cost with NLTG.

The ILPR/ Skills radar is an integral part of every Progress Review. The ILPR is recognised as a method of identifying starting point, and measuring progress and readiness towards end assessment. The Progress Reviews will evidence the specific teaching and development provided.



Signed .....

**GARETH LINDSAY**  
NLTG Managing Director