

Recognition of Achievement and Prior Learning (RAPL) Policy and Procedure

Purpose

This policy and procedure explains how ISP recognises a learner's previous learning and achievement so that they do not have to repeat assessment for knowledge, skills and understanding they can already demonstrate. It gives Providers clear guidance on when RAPL can be used, what evidence is required, how ISP makes its decision and how to appeal. It helps ensure RAPL is applied consistently, fairly and without compromising the integrity of ISP qualifications.

Scope

This policy applies to all ISP Providers (approved centres), their staff and their learners, and to ISP staff involved in RAPL decisions and quality assurance.

Intended audience: Providers (including assessors and internal quality assurers), ISP RAPL approval team, ISP quality assurance and external quality assurance staff, ISP awarding and support team.

This policy should be read alongside ISP's Appeals Policy, Malpractice and Maladministration Policy, and Equality and Fair Access Policy [confirm titles].

Regulatory requirements

This policy supports ISP's compliance with the requirements of its regulator(s) on recognition of prior learning. [ISP to confirm regulators and condition references, for example Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition, Condition E10 (Recognition of Prior Learning), and the equivalent conditions of any other regulator that recognises ISP.]

Definition of RAPL

RAPL is a process that allows a learner to claim exemption from assessment of the whole of, or a defined part of, an ISP qualification or unit, on the basis of learning or attainment they achieved before registering on the qualification, where that learning is relevant to the knowledge, skills and understanding the qualification assesses.

RAPL is not a way of reducing the standard of a qualification. Evidence is judged against the learning outcomes (LOs) and assessment criteria (AC) of the ISP unit in the same way as any other assessment evidence.

RAPL principles

1. **Provider-led applications.** RAPL applications are made by the Provider on behalf of a registered learner. ISP will not consider requests made directly by learners; they will be redirected to their Provider.
2. **Provider policy.** Providers must have their own RAPL process that aligns with this policy, and must make learners aware of it (see Stage 1).
3. **ISP decides.** The decision to grant RAPL is made by the ISP RAPL approval team for the relevant qualification. Providers cannot award RAPL themselves.
4. **Oversight.** ISP keeps oversight of every instance where RAPL is applied.
5. **Whole or partial units.** RAPL can be claimed for a whole unit or part of a unit. Where only part of a unit is recognised, the learner must still be assessed on the remaining AC using the standard ISP assessment.
6. **Individual assessment.** Every application is considered on its own merits, learner by learner.
7. **Fair and accessible.** RAPL must be offered fairly and inclusively, and must not disadvantage any learner.
8. **Learner choice.** Using RAPL is optional. A learner may choose to complete the standard assessment instead.

Evidence requirements

Routes to RAPL. [ISP to confirm which routes it accepts.]

- **Route A: Certificated learning.** The learner holds a qualification or unit from another awarding or professional organisation recognised by ISP that maps to an identifiable ISP qualification, unit or credit. This is the current ISP route.
- **Route B: Non-certificated learning (optional).** The learner's workplace or other experience is assessed directly against the unit LOs and AC. If ISP adopts this route, the evidence must be assessed as set out below.

Evidence must be:

- Valid: relevant to the unit being claimed
- Authentic: the learner's own work or achievement
- Sufficient: covers all the LOs and AC being claimed
- Reliable: would lead to the same decision if assessed again
- Current: shows up-to-date knowledge, understanding and skills [ISP to set a maximum age for evidence, e.g. achieved within the last 5 years]
- Fair: free from bias and accessible to the learner

Level. Evidence must be at a similar or higher level than the unit being claimed.

Examples of acceptable evidence:

- Certificates, transcripts or unit/component records from a recognised awarding or professional organisation
- Work experience records validated by a manager
- Previous portfolios of evidence produced by the learner
- Reports validated as the learner's own unaided work
- Witness testimonies or professional discussions
- Assignments or tasks completed specifically to fill gaps

Situations where RAPL does not apply

- Where a learner has already achieved a unit within an ISP qualification, credit for that unit is transferred automatically when the learner progresses to another ISP qualification that shares the unit (for example from an Award to a Certificate), provided the rules of combination are met. No RAPL application is needed.
- This automatic transfer does not apply where the learner was registered on a previous version of the qualification. In that case the Provider should contact ISP to ask whether an equivalent unit arrangement applies [ISP to confirm whether an equivalent units policy exists].
- RAPL cannot be used where the evidence does not map to an identifiable ISP qualification, unit or credit.

Procedure**Stage 1: Awareness, information, advice and guidance**

During induction, the Provider must make learners aware of the opportunity to use RAPL. Learners must be told:

- What RAPL is
- The Provider's process for claiming RAPL
- How the Provider will support and guide them
- What is involved in an application
- Any costs the Provider charges for RAPL applications
- Timelines, including ISP's decision timescale
- Their right to appeal a RAPL decision

Stage 2: Pre-assessment

The Provider and learner collate the evidence. The Provider maps it to the relevant ISP unit(s) and the specific LOs and AC being claimed, ideally at the start of the programme. The Provider may record this in a learning plan. The Provider should check that the evidence meets the requirements above before applying, and must confirm that certificates or records are genuine and belong to the learner.

Stage 3: Application to ISP

The Provider submits the RAPL Application Form (Appendix 1) to ISP in writing, with all supporting evidence, including copies of certificates and the mapping to ISP units. Incomplete applications will be returned and the decision period will not start until a fully completed application is received.

The ISP RAPL approval team reviews the application against the unit LOs and AC and records its decision. ISP will communicate its decision in writing to the Provider within 30 days of receiving a fully completed application, and will keep a record of the decision and the evidence relied on.

Stage 4: Outcome

- **Successful, whole unit.** ISP confirms the decision in writing and arranges for the unit to be recorded and certificated.
- **Successful, part of a unit.** ISP confirms exactly which LOs/AC are recognised. The learner must be assessed on the remaining AC using the standard ISP assessment. The Provider must keep ISP's written decision with the learner's assessment records and include it when submitting the assessment for the remainder of the unit.
- **Unsuccessful.** ISP informs the Provider in writing with the reasons. The learner may complete the unit through standard assessment, submit further evidence, choose a different unit, or appeal.

The Provider must tell the learner the outcome promptly.

Provider responsibilities

Providers must:

- Have a RAPL process that aligns with this policy and share it with learners
- Submit only applications supported by genuine, mapped and relevant evidence
- Keep copies of the application form, evidence and ISP's decision for [period, e.g. the retention period in ISP's records policy]
- Not claim certification for any unit before ISP has confirmed the RAPL decision in writing
- Cooperate with ISP quality assurance checks on RAPL claims

Quality assurance and malpractice

ISP monitors RAPL activity as part of its Provider quality assurance. This may include sampling approved applications and checking that Providers have followed this policy. Where RAPL has been used without ISP approval, or evidence is found to be false or misleading, ISP will investigate under its Malpractice and Maladministration Policy, which may result in decisions being reversed and sanctions applied to the Provider.

Fees

ISP [does / does not] charge for RAPL applications [ISP to confirm]. Providers who charge learners for RAPL support must make this clear to learners in advance (Stage 1) and any charge must be reasonable.

Appeals

Where a RAPL decision is not agreed, the Provider may appeal on behalf of the learner, using ISP's Appeals Policy. Appeals should be raised in writing within [number] working days of the decision and should explain the grounds for appeal and include any further information. Learners wishing to appeal must do so through their Provider. Appeals will be considered by someone not involved in the original decision.

Equality and fair access

Providers and ISP must apply RAPL fairly. Providers should consider reasonable adjustments for learners who need support to gather or present evidence.

Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed at least annually, and sooner if regulatory requirements change or monitoring shows a need. Feedback from Providers and learners will be considered.

If making a request to ISP for RAPL please email equa@the-isp.org stating:

- Learner name
- ISP learner number
- ISP qualification and unit(s) (and LOs/AC if partial)
- Prior qualification or unit,
- awarding/professional organisation, date achieved and level
- Attach suitable evidence