



WOODLANDS
SCHOOL

ASPIRATION, RESILIENCE, OPPORTUNITY, EXCELLENCE

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) Policy

Amended: November 2025

Approved by Governors: December 2025

Review date: November 2026

Woodlands School is part of The Compass Education Trust Ltd, a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales Company number 07666213.
Registered Office: The Billericay School, School Road, Billericay, Essex, CM12 9LH

Key Staff Involved in the Policy/Procedure

Role	Name(s)
Head of Centre	David Wright
Senior Leader(s)	Seddeer Amran, Nicola White, Emma Jordan, Dominic Riste, Katie Heseltine, Katie Lee Sang, Dean O'Connor
Exams Officer	Honor Dignan-Roth

Overview

This document combines the recognition of prior learning (RPL) and Credit Accumulation and transfer (CAT) procedure. CAT is the process of utilising learner units or qualifications that have previously been recognised and certified. RPL, relates to learners providing evidence of prior learning that has not been formerly acknowledged.

Purpose

This procedure has been written to demonstrate the requirements of Ofqual's general conditions of recognition. It aims to be open, transparent and clear in its purpose, scope and implantation.

Defining Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT)

CAT should be considered as a separate process to RPL as CAT applies to learning that has been previously certified for a different qualification or from a different awarding organisation on the same framework (RQF, NQF, QCF). This is to prevent a learner from having to unnecessarily repeat previous learning.

Where a learner has already achieved a unit with credit, we will recognise that prior learning and will allow the credit to be transferred onto a new qualification, provided that the units have the same Ofqual reference number.

Defining Recognition of Prior Learning RPL

REPL is a method of recognising previous learning or attainment to meet current requirement; or a method of assessment leading to the award of credit that considers whether learners can demonstrate that they can meet the assessment requirements for a unit. This may be through knowledge, behaviours, skills and understanding they already possess and so may not need to develop these through a course of learning.

Applying Recognition of Prior Learning

RPL can demonstrate competence or achievement within a unit or qualification. Through the RPL process, evidence of a learners previous achievement (Learning) is assessed against the assessment criteria of a unit.

Evidence used by learners must be current and valid and meet the assessment criteria of the qualification and evidence must be reliable, whereby the centres consistently arrive at equivalent assessment decisions.

Evidence obtained through RPL must therefore meet the same rigorous quality criteria that other assessment methods must conform to. It remains the role of assessors and quality assurance staff to ensure that evidence is:

Valid – *does the evidence genuinely demonstrate that the demands of the assessment criteria have been met? For RPL, currency of evidence will be of particular concern. Does, for example, the evidence meet current practice requirements?*

Authentic – *This involves consideration of whether the evince being assessed is genuinely the work of the learner. For example, the evidence may have been produced by somebody, else, or may be the result of the work of a team. In the latter case, this would be acceptable if the assessment criteria were related to team/joint working, but if not it was being used as evidence of an activity which should have been carried out individually.*

Sufficient – *There must be enough evidence to fully meet the requirements of the assessment criteria, or assessment criteria being considered. If there is insufficient evidence to fully meet requirements, then evidence obtained through RPL must be complemented by evidence gained through other suitable assessment method(s) before requirements can be said to have been met.*

Reliable: *The evidence obtained through RPL should be such that an assessor would arrive at the same assessment decision, were the assessment be repeated.*

Outcomes of RPL

If individuals can produce relevant evidence, that meets assessment criteria requirements then, recognition can be given for their existing knowledge, understanding or skills.

If an individual can meet all the learning outcomes and assessment criteria in a unit, then they can claim credit for that unit solely based on their RPL achievement.

If, however evidence from RPL, is only sufficient to cover one or more assessment criteria, or to partly meet the need of an assessment criteria, the additional assessment methods should be employed to generate the sufficient evidence required to make a safe assessment decision.

Knowledge, skills, behaviour and understanding must be current for RPL to be used and subject leaders within the centre must decide if prior learning is up to date for the relevant sector and subject areas. The centre may use questioning or other acceptable assessment strategies to check the depth and significance of prior learning. Assessment decisions based on RPL must be made by centre staff with suitable occupational competence and subject expertise.

Acknowledging evidence of previous learning is considered to be part of the internal assessment process and any decisions must be made clear to external quality assessor.

The centre must ensure that:

- It is carried out by designated staff with relevant levels of expertise to meet the requirements of the assessment strategy guidance for the qualification concerned.

The methods of assessment used will be determined by the assessment strategy for the qualifications being assessed but might for example include:

- Examination documents
- Expert testimony
- Reflective accounts
- Professional discussion

The RPL assessment should be carried out as an entire process. This means that the assessor should:

Plan with the learner

- Make a formal assessment decision.
- Feedback assessment decisions to the learner, confirming decision and giving guidance on the available options.
- Maintain appropriate records.
- Ensure that learners are aware of their right to access the appeal process should they feel the assessment decision was unfair.
- Ensure that all assessment criteria being claimed are covered and that records of assessment are maintained in the usual way. The process must be subject to the same quality assurance requirements as any other assessment method.

Examples of RPL evidence:

- Relevant documents, testimonies or reflections mapped across to the qualifications assessment criteria.
- Job descriptions or performance management feedback showing that the learner already had the suitable and current skills. Knowledge and behaviours within the unit
- Learners have evidence of recent prior study which meets assessment criteria of the current programme of study being undertaken in full.
- RPL must be included on the appropriate sampling and subject to internal quality assurance (IQA)

Circumstances where prior learning will not be recognised:

- Learning that is similar to assessment criteria but which has been met at a lower level than the current programme of study being undertaken by the learner.
- Prior learning that is not current in meeting the qualification
- Prior learning that has been referred by an assessor
- Prior learning that has not been assessed by an assessor.

Applying Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT)

Credit accumulation and transfer (CA) is the system by which learners can accumulate and transfer credits over a period of time, in differing locations and contexts, in order to gain qualifications. Credit transfer is the process of using credit(s) awarded in the context of one qualification or awarded by a different awarding organisation towards the achievement requirements of another qualification.


CAT is therefore the term used to describe the system which supports credit transfer, Credit transfer gives recognition to the fact that some units are the same, irrespective of the fact that they appear in different qualifications. This recognition promotes progression within and between industries and avoids unnecessary duplication of learning.

Credit transfer is relevant where a unit in a qualification is the same (include unit qualification assessment number) as a unit in another qualification.

A practical example of credit transfer would be a learner who achieves an award which is comprised of units "A, B & C" transferring their credits to progress towards a certificate comprised of "A, B, C D and E" In this case the units in the award have been nested in the certificate enabling the recognition of the previously achieved units.

If on the other hand a learner registered for the certificate containing units "A, B, C, D and E" without having done the award but then withdrew from their programme of learning after completing only "A, B & C" they could transfer their credits and consequently obtain the award.

This procedure will be reviewed annually by the nominated staff member responsible for quality assurances or the Deputy Headteacher in charge of curriculum.

Signed: 
Head Teacher

Dated: 8th December 2025

Signed: 
Vice Chair of Governors

Dated: 8th December 2025

