

Guidance for managing the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for qualifications which form all or part of a route to GOC registration

Status of document:	Live
Version:	1.0
Approved by:	Director of Education
Date of approval:	9 November 2018
Effective from:	7 December 2018
Owner:	Head of Education
Author:	Head of Education
Questions? Contact:	education@optical.org

The role of the GOC in RPL

- 1.1 We recognise that many providers are part of institutions that already have well tested and longstanding systems for RPL in other programmes, which may be non-professional or regulated by other regulators.
- 1.2 We encourage safe and appropriate recognition of prior learning and, with appropriate and evidenced assurance, will not unreasonably restrict RPL activity.
- 1.3 We may impose conditions around RPL activity if we are not satisfied that the provider's RPL policy, process or quality assurance meets the requirements within this guidance, or there are wider concerns regarding the provider meeting our requirements.
- 1.4 For clarity, the GOC processes applications from individuals, who are fully qualified in non UK countries, to join the fully-qualified GOC register via the appropriate registration process.¹

Guidance

- 1.5 All providers, delivering fully or provisionally approved GOC qualifications, education, training and assessment which form part of a route to registration as an optometrist, dispensing optician, contact lens optician or independent prescriber, are responsible for managing and assessing all RPL requests that they receive.
- 1.6 Requests for RPL may arise regarding (but not limited to):
 - 1.6.1 a completed qualification certificated by a professional or regulatory body in the United Kingdom, which evidences prior learning from a non-GOC approved programme;
 - 1.6.2 a completed qualification certificated by a professional or regulatory body outside of the United Kingdom, which evidences prior learning from a non-GOC approved programme; and/or
 - 1.6.3 completed modules from a different GOC-approved qualification (without having completed the full qualification).
- 1.7 Providers must ensure that:
 - 1.7.1 all GOC competencies are assessed to the required standard;
 - 1.7.2 that no module(s) is/are exempted through the recognition of prior learning without the appropriate assurance of an individual's understanding and its verifiable achievement; and
 - 1.7.3 that public safety is not put at risk in any way.

¹ <https://www.optical.org/en/Registration/international-applicants/index.cfm>

1.8 Providers should consider guidance from the Quality Assurance Agency and/or OFQUAL in developing their RPL provision (this includes policy, process, application and its quality assurance).

1.9 A provider's RPL (or equivalent) provision must adhere to the following requirements, as appropriate:

Principle	Requirement and criteria
1) Authentication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the provider must ascertain that the prior learning has been certificated by a legitimate body, and that the status of the qualification is both comparable to those in the UK and is reputable²; individual student transcripts must be considered to confirm that the units have been completed and assessed.
2) Currency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the provider must ensure that the prior learning was either undertaken and certificated recently from the date of certification, or the knowledge has been maintained and is still relevant and equivalent.
3) Equivalency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the competencies of prior learning map across and demonstrate equivalence to the GOC competencies and Standards; the prior learning course content, mode of study, delivery and assessment methodology is sufficiently equivalent to that of a GOC-approved qualification and the level for exemption being considered.
4) Volume	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> exemptions must not be given at the final stage of the programme; the individual must still demonstrate the required skills – i.e. the RPL does not exempt an individual from final sign off; each provider must be able to satisfy itself and the GOC that it has assessed and seen demonstrated all the requirements for the final GOC approved qualification for each student. each provider's RPL policy (or equivalent) must specify a maximum limit for the number of modules for which RPL may be applied.
5) Effective governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the provider must be able to evidence the process they use and the key measurables of this process the provision is applied fairly, considering equality, diversity and inclusion; the provision is quality assured to ensure that it is applied appropriately;

² Providers may wish to consider using the services provided by NARIC, the National Academic Recognition and Comparison of International Qualifications and Skills, to aid this assessment.

Principle	Requirement and criteria
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all group RPL exemptions must be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure the principles above are met, and evidence of this review must be included in the annual AMR reporting to the GOC, alongside any other requested information by the GOC regarding the provision;
6) Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the provider must adhere to our ‘annual monitoring and reporting’ requirements and our ‘notification of reportable events and changes’ requirements in that they must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ report on the application and quality assurance of their RPL arrangements to the GOC; ○ provide detail regarding any exceptions to our requirements or to a provider’s RPL provision; and ○ if a provider is considering applying a ‘group RPL exemption’, they must notify the GOC in advance, and must submit the relevant evidence to assure the GOC of its suitability, in line with the requirements within this guidance.

Glossary

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL): the umbrella term to describe the assessment and recognition of prior learning undertaken by individuals which may form part of an exemption to completing modules from another learning programme. This term is sub-categorised into the following:

- **Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL):** the assessment and recognition of prior learning undertaken by individuals outside of certificated education or training systems, which may form part of an exemption to completing modules from another learning programme.
- **Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL):** the assessment and recognition of prior formal and certificated learning undertaken by individuals which may form part of an exemption to completing modules from another learning programme.