

Application of Recognition of Prior Learning for Apprenticeship Programmes

1. Scope/Background

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance and information around the need for undertaking initial assessment and recognition of prior learning (RPL) when engaging apprentices in line with the Department for Education (DfE) [funding rules](#). RPL extends beyond existing qualifications into the knowledge, skills and behaviours already set out in the relevant apprenticeship standard and it is a requirement that these knowledge, skills and behaviours are considered when reviewing the prior learning of potential apprentices. Whilst the University already has a robust process for the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL), RPL under DfE rules will feed into the level of funding allowed for each apprentice.

The DfE rules require that the apprenticeship content, duration and price must be reduced where the individual has relevant prior learning and this must be factored in when negotiating the price of the apprenticeship with the employer.

A learner must not be being taught knowledge, skills or behaviours they already possess and must require significant and sustained new training in order to reach the competencies required in the relevant standard.

2. Initial Assessment of Apprentices

On engagement of apprentices, it is the School's responsibility to check the learners [personal learning record](#), if they have one, to ensure that:

- the learning and job role undertaken is appropriate for the individual: apprentices should not undertake paid training they do not need;
- how much of the programme the individual is required to study to reach occupational competency and meet the employer's expectations;
- Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSBs) dictated within the apprenticeship standards have been addressed through the learning journey or are recognised through prior learning and experience.

Each Apprenticeship Programme should undertake an initial assessment and skills scan of prospective apprentices which should include the following:

- Benchmark the learner's starting point of learning;
- Inform the learner journey and individual learning plan;
- Ensure the appropriateness of assessment and off-the-job training;
- Identify and evidence any accreditation of prior learning, including experiential learning;
- Carry out identification and analyses of skills gaps;

- Inform the amount of funding to be drawn;
- Identify any potential barriers to learning;
- Ensure appropriate recording of the initial assessment;
- Map the competencies and practitioner elements of the apprenticeship standard.

The responsibility for the initial assessment belongs to the School/Programme Director or a nominated member of the delivery team. The initial assessment should be completed at application stage and recorded accordingly within the evidence pack.

The School/Programme Director will explore recognised accredited prior learning and experiential learning with the candidates. Where the applicant does not require training in one or more KSB area, the content, duration and price of their apprenticeship must be adjusted accordingly.

If it is agreed that there is relevant existing prior learning, the programme team must assess whether the individual still meets the eligibility criteria of requiring 'significant and sustained' new training in accordance with DFE rules

3. Recognition of Prior Learning

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) allows training providers to value knowledge, skills and experience of individuals regardless of where they have been acquired. RPL offers individuals and businesses the chance to accredit their employees' learning and experience through an RPL application process. Detailed information on the requirements around applying RPL can be found on the GOV.UK pages [Recognition of Prior Learning](#)

Where prior learning has been identified through the initial assessment process and applied to the apprentice standard, evidence of knowledge, skills or behaviour needs to be shown and recorded.

To align with the DfE funding rules, any accepted recognition of prior learning must result in an adjustment of both costs and duration¹. The School/Programme Director should work with the apprentice and the employer to complete the RPL application. An RPL application will consist of the following steps:

- The School/Programme Director must have a discussion with the learner about the likelihood of relevant prior learning against the proposed apprenticeship standard. Evidence of this discussion must be retained in the evidence pack.
- Mapping of the initial assessment findings against the apprenticeship standard;
- Skills scan
- Development of assessment and a submission of evidence in the case of experiential Learning;
- Development of learner journey and individual learning plan to account for existing KSBs;
- Application of the University's existing APEL processes where necessary;

Where the standard is linked to a regulated profession, and this impacts the reduction, this must be documented.

Where an applicant does not have any RPL, this too must be documented and signed by the employer before the start of the apprenticeship. This record must be retained in the evidence pack.

4. After Initial Assessment

¹ Where a reduction to the overall programme length is not possible due to timetabled teaching, it is possible to retain the length of the programme but reduce the number of study hours required. The number of Planned Hours for the apprenticeship must be reduced in recognition of RPL according to the formula set out in the Apprenticeship Funding Rules.

Following the initial assessment, if the decision is made that the learner is eligible for the apprenticeship, the school must ensure the following:

- The RPL is documented in the evidence pack and summarised in the Training Plan. The Training Plan will set out the remaining training that will still be required for the individual;
- An agreement between the School and employer is reached regarding both reductions in price and duration of the apprenticeship using the DfE calculation tool. Evidence of this agreement must be retained in the evidence pack

5. Applying RPL for apprenticeship re-starts

When an apprentice re-starts an apprenticeship with the University after previously withdrawing, the School/Programme Director must establish whether any additional prior learning has been accrued since they last studied with us.

If the apprentice has gained further prior learning, this must be discussed, agreed by signature, documented and retained in the evidence pack. Adjustments to the price and duration must be made to the residual apprenticeship price and duration, according to the formula set out in the Apprenticeship Funding Rules.

If the apprentice has not gained further prior learning since withdrawing from the apprenticeship, this must be documented and retained in the evidence pack. In this scenario, the price at restart will be the residual apprenticeship price:

the original price (including any RPL discount applied at the original start) minus payments received during previous episodes of the apprenticeship

The Planned Hours will be the same as they were at the original start, as the Planned Hours figure refers to the number of hours required to complete the entire apprenticeship, not just the residual episode of learning.

Document Control Box	
Policy / Procedure title:	Application of Recognition of Prior Learning for Apprenticeship Programmes
Date approved:	June 2025
Approving body:	AQSC-TLS
Implementation date:	September 2025
Version:	1.1
Supersedes:	1.0
Previous review dates:	July 2021
Next review date:	July 2030
Related Statutes, Ordinances, General Regulations / Policies	N/A
Related Policies:	N/A
Related Procedures and Guidance:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Procedure on Break in Learning for Degree Apprentices• Guidance for Recording Off-The-Job Training in Degree Apprenticeships• Principles and Guidance on Accreditation of Prior Learning
Policy owner:	Director of Student and Academic Services (SAS)
Lead contact:	Teaching and Learning Officer (Policy and Procedure)

	<p>For any queries or questions relating to this document, please direct your email to teaching-policy@manchester.ac.uk</p>
--	---