**Devon and Cornwall Counselling Hub**

**Learning Assessment Policy**

**Regulations relating to assessment:**

Each learner is required to:

* Attend examinations and submit work for assessment in accordance with programme regulations, and without cheating or otherwise seeking to gain unfair advantage.
* Undertake all assessed work within a unit, before the learner can be deemed to have passed that unit.
* Produce work for assessment that meets the specified criteria. To pass a unit, learners must complete all assessments containing outcomes that contribute to the final grade of that unit in accordance with the requirements of the Awarding Body. These may be internal or external assessments.
* Provide DCCH with any evidence regarding personal circumstances which may have affected performance in any assessment, and which should be taken into consideration when conferring a grade.
* Retain all assessed work in the form of a portfolio until their final Award has been conferred and allow access to the portfolio by DCCH staff as required. This may be a considerable period of time and is to allow External Verifiers and Internal Verifiers to view evidence of assessments in full. Failure to do this may affect certification of the award

An important principle, in relation to assessment, is that of fairness; both to the individual learner and to the learner body as a whole. Where the Programme Tutor is of the opinion that a learner may be heading for non-achievement or termination, it is the duty of the Tutor to draw this to the learner’s attention.

**Conditions of Assessment:**

The learner’s right to be assessed or re-assessed depends on fulfilment of the responsibilities specified below. (Note that this guidance may be superseded by specific awarding body policy.)

* If a learner does not attend for assessed work or fails to submit work for assessment without good cause, DCCH has authority to deem the learner to have not passed/achieved the assessments concerned. DCCH reserves the right not to permit re-assessment in these circumstances.
* \*\****please refer to the Assessment Malpractice Policy for further details.\*\**** if a learner is found to have cheated (including plagiarism) or attempted to gain an unfair advantage

**Regulations relating to examinations**

**Academic Assessment Appeals**

There are two grounds upon which a learner may appeal against a decision taken about assessment undertaken by the Course Tutor:

* if a learner’s performance was adversely affected by factors which they were unable, on valid grounds, to divulge to the Course Tutor prior to assessment
* if there was a material administrative error, or the assessment was not conducted according to the regulations.

Learners have one month from the date of publication of the results in which to lodge an appeal with the DCCH. Note that this may vary for external assessments and awarding body guidance should be referred to.

If a learner wishes to appeal an assessment decision, they must make a written submission to the Course Director within 10 working days of receiving the assessment result. The reasons for appeal must be clearly and concisely expressed.

The Course Director can advise and help you to:

* decide whether you have grounds for appeal
* set out your written appeal and supporting documents (if any)
* understand the appeals procedure and prepare you for the next stage.

Should a learner have cause to raise a grievance relating to:

* Access to Assessment
* Method of Assessment
* Bias in Assessment

He/she should, in the first place, approach the Course Tutor within 5 working days of the grievance arising. Both parties will make every effort to resolve the grievance to their mutual satisfaction within 10 working days of approach to the Course Tutor.

If your appeal/grievance is referred to the Internal Verifier they will ensure a full investigation into your reasons in accordance with the \*\***Appeals Policy\*\***.

All reasonable efforts will be made by the investigating personnel to determine the validity of your appeal/grievance. The findings of the investigation will be presented to the Course Director following the investigation and their decision as to whether the appeal is upheld or not, will be final. No further correspondence will be entered into.

**Recognition of prior learning**

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a method of assessment that considers whether learners can demonstrate that they meet the assessment requirements for a unit through knowledge, understanding or skills they already possess and so do not need to develop these through a course of learning.

RPL may also be known as Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL), Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL), Accreditation of Prior Achievement (APA), Accreditation of Prior Learning and Achievement (APLA) and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). It is acceptable to RPL aspects of units, complete unit(s) or a whole qualification using a range of evidence which should be valid (including current) and reliable.

Individual Awarding Bodies have policies for RPL and these should be reviewed with any request by a learner for RPL.

RPL is a valid method to enable learners to claim credit for units irrespective of how their learning took place; there is no difference between the achievement of a unit or aspects of units through RPL or a formal study programmes.

All the processes and subsequent decisions made in relation to RPL should be rigorous, transparent, fair, reliable, and accessible to ensure that all stakeholders can be confident in the decisions and outcomes agreed.

* RPL should be learner-centred and voluntary, a learner wishing to take advantage of RPL should be provided guidance and support to make a claim for credit through the process.
* Assessment for RPL is subject to the same QA processes as any other form of assessment.
* Assessment for RPL should be of equal rigour to any other assessment method and can be used for any unit unless the assessment requirements of the unit / qualification do not allow this.

**Where may RPL be appropriate? Principles of RPL**

RPL may be appropriate or of value in situations such as:

* A learner with no formal qualifications but experienced in a subject, for example through employment
* A learner who has undertaken a programme of study but has not had their learning formally recognised through a qualification.

NOTE: if a learner has certificated learning, then they should apply for exemption rather than RPL

**The process**

If it is identified through information, advice and guidance that a learner may wish to claim RPL for aspects of a qualification, the process below should be followed.

1. Learner should be registered on the qualification as soon as evidence gathering commences

2. The learner identifies possible areas of a unit / qualification that they feel they may be able to demonstrate RPL

3. The Programme Team confirms (or not) that it is appropriate for the learner to gather evidence to demonstrate RPL and provide guidance on what is required. For example:

* Witness statements
* Photographs
* Training previously received
* Job descriptions
* Appraisals

4. The Programme Team will ensure that the learner understands that the information should be:

* Valid – i.e. match the level and competence required
* Sufficient – does it cover all aspects being looked for and cover the full range
* Authentic – is it definitely the learner’s own work
* Reliability – would a different assessor make the same assessment decision
* Currency – is the evidence recent enough to measure current competence and be appropriate considering changes that may have taken place in thinking and technology over time

5. Once the learner has compiled a portfolio of evidence, an appropriate member of the Programme Team will assess the evidence against the criteria / units that RPL is being claimed for; this decision will then undergo internal verification by the Lead IV for the programme.

6. Records of assessment are maintained in the same way as for any other method of assessment.

7. The learner should go through the Awards Boards process in the same manner as usual

8. Certification claims are made according to normal processes

**Staff expectations**

As part of its ongoing commitment to ensuring the highest level of assessment quality for all programmes delivered by DCCH, there are strict expectations on the conduct of both staff and learners.

Devon & Cornwall Counselling Hub staff (including instructors, tutors, course managers) will:

* Ensure that staff involved in delivering, assessing, and internally verifying are appropriately experienced and qualified to at least the minimum standard as required by awarding bodies, and new tutors are provided with mentors to support their development.
* Ensure that all learners undergo impartial initial information, advice and guidance that includes initial assessment to ensure that learners make the correct course choice considering previous qualifications and experience and future aims.
* Provide an induction programme which ensures that learners:
  + Are familiar and comfortable with their new environment
  + Sign their learner agreement to show understanding of all elements of their programme
  + Are familiar with policies, procedures, and expectations
  + Are clear about the assessment regimes for their programme and what they need to do to achieve
  + Know how to provide feedback on any aspect of their course to DCCH
* Provide an accurate timetable of activities for their programme
* Provide a Unit Guide for each unit which shows activities on a session by session basis, outlining the key objectives for each session
* Provide an assessment schedule at the start of a programme that gives details of all programme assessments including externally assessed components.
* Ensure that all assessments and assessed work go through the internal verification as per the Internal Verification Policy and Procedures
* Ensure that learners are registered on the correct programme, units and assessments prior to any assessment taking place
* Provide appropriate assessment methods for the programme of study that meet awarding body requirements and include the provision of special arrangements as required.
* Utilise a range of assessment types such as practical, written reports, projects, oral (e.g. presentations) which consider the group profile and individual learning needs where possible (e.g. not awarding body prescribed assessment).
* Provide formative and summative assessments that include detailed feedback to enable improvement. All internal assessments are expected to be marked and returned to learners within 2 weeks with feedback being provided
* All assessment will be subject to moderation and verification according to the Awarding Body’s specifications and requirements
* Consider equality of opportunity and fair and respectful treatment of all learners in all aspects of assessment, including access to the appeals and complaints processes of the Organisation
* Provide access to a range of additional support for learners with specific identified learning difficulties or disabilities, including assessment, provision and review of support needs with reasonable adjustments made for assessment (according to awarding body regulations and the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) regulations regarding Access Arrangements in Examinations and Assessments for Learners with Disabilities)
* Assess the quality of the teaching, learning and assessment experience of learners through processes such as lesson observations, the internal verification process, staff development, sharing practice, internal and external audit, external verification, and learner feedback.

This policy has been formulated using the most up to date Awarding Body guidance. Its content is subject to change as and when that guidance is amended. It will be regularly reviewed accordingly.

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