

# Recognition of prior learning (RPL) guide



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## What is recognition of prior learning?

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) means you can get recognition for the knowledge and skills you have already gained, to support your personal and career development. Prior learning can come from life experiences, school, paid or unpaid work, short courses or learning at college or university.

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) website says:

‘RPL is a valuable process of reflection and consolidation of past experiences, to enable you to identify what transferable skills and learning you have achieved that can be used to pursue your lifelong goals and ambitions.’

The SCQF website has useful information on RPL including this **Guide to Recognition of Prior Learning** tool [scqf.org.uk/guide-to-rpl](https://scqf.org.uk/guide-to-rpl)

Your learning is unique to you, people may have the same job but each will learn different things from the experience. We also bring our own life experiences which may influence how we work.



## What does RPL mean for me?

### Registration and qualifications

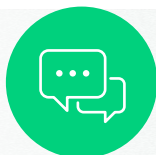
All SSSC registered social care and early years workers must hold, or agree to work towards, the appropriate qualifications for the job they do; this is what we call a benchmark qualification. You may be able to use your existing learning, providing evidence of your knowledge, skills and understanding, for RPL to gain credit points towards this qualification to shorten the normal period of study. Not all learning providers accept RPL so you should check with your chosen learning provider before starting your RPL journey.

Each accredited qualification is given a level (which shows how difficult the qualification is) and a number of credit points (which shows how much learning is involved in achieving that qualification).

It's up to the learning provider to decide if RPL credit is granted towards a qualification. They must ensure the context of your learning is appropriate to the level, size and relevant to the content of a qualification. This can take a lot of work and will require you to complete a portfolio of learning to support the process.

If you undertake the RPL process, your learning provider would assess your prior learning against the requirements and standards of your chosen qualification to establish whether they can apply any credit. SSSC benchmark qualifications are Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs). The requirements and standards of these qualifications are based on four common themes and the National Occupational Standards (NOS) relevant for the role you are qualifying to do.

### These four common themes are:



**Communications**



**Health and safety**



**Professional development**



**Safeguarding**

The NOS describe the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to do a particular job to a nationally recognised level of competence. They form the basis of qualifications and training programmes required to work in social services in Scotland. The NOS also incorporate the four common themes as the SVQ mandatory/core units. For more information you can find the NOS related to the relevant SVQ in our **NOS Navigator** [learn.sssc.uk.com/nos](https://learn.sssc.uk.com/nos)

When working through the RPL process with your learning provider it is essential that you refer to these four common themes and the NOS relevant to the role you are qualifying to do.

If you are interested in RPL and early learning, the Scottish Government has a useful resource for those applying for RPL for early learning and childcare qualifications [www.gov.scot/publications/recognition-of-prior-learning-rpl-for-early-learning-and-childcare-qualifications](https://www.gov.scot/publications/recognition-of-prior-learning-rpl-for-early-learning-and-childcare-qualifications)

## **RPL and continuous professional learning**

RPL can be a way of supporting the continuation of lifelong learning. We support lifelong learning through registration and continuous professional learning (CPL). CPL is the learning we do for work which helps us develop our knowledge, skills and professional behaviour so we can deliver our best practice. You must complete CPL to maintain your SSSC registration.

## **Ways in which RPL can support your CPL**

- Assist you to gain entry to a learning programme which will enhance your knowledge and skills.
- Increase your confidence by recognising your achievements and transferable skills and support you to plan how to build on these.
- Plan for new career opportunities or learning opportunities by recognising learning you've achieved.
- Support you to reflect on the learning you have gained and how it is relevant to your role.
- Support you to recognise where your learning may fit into a qualification's requirements.
- Support you to clearly identify the gaps in your learning.

## What counts as prior learning?

There are three different types of learning to consider when thinking about what you can count as prior learning.

1. Learning gained through personal experience in day-to-day life, volunteering or professional contexts where a certificate was not issued.

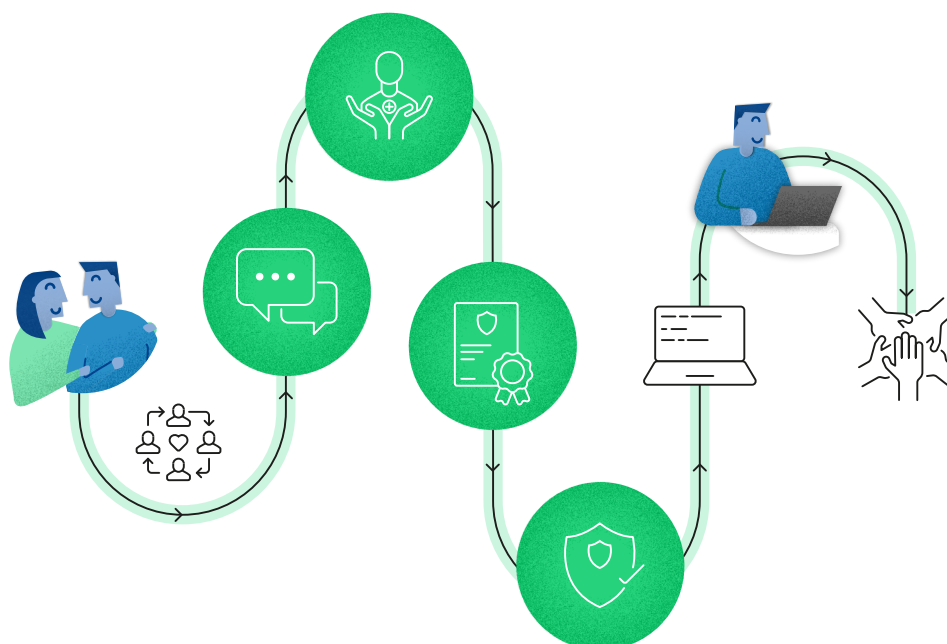
Some examples include:

- caring for a relative/friend
- school activities
- mentoring
- volunteering/voluntary work
- learning on the job in the workplace
- workplace training/courses, for example Open Badges.

2. Training or learning that shows achievement (more than a certificate of attendance) that has been certificated by an awarding body but is not credit rated on the SCQF Framework.

3. Training or learning that has been certificated and credit rated on the SCQF Framework and equivalent frameworks.

Many people complete specific certificated learning and there is often content you can use towards benchmark qualifications. You can map this type of learning to relevant benchmark qualifications, however the content must be relevant to the context of your role or job function. If you have records of training or learning, make sure you present them to someone who can check how relevant the learning content is to your chosen qualification – this will be your assessor or training provider.



## How should I record my prior learning?

It's up to you how to record your prior learning. It is important to include how your learning made a difference to your practice. Having a record of your learning will support you when you are working with your learning provider through their RPL process. You should anonymise any record of your work or learning that refers to colleagues and people who use services. You can also discuss the best way for you to record your RPL with your learning provider.

Here are a few examples of ways to record your prior learning.

- 1 You can record learning in your own written journal, you can use a learning log, notes or a mixture of ways including diagrams, mind maps, video or audio. Or your learning provider may have an RPL template you can use.
- 2 A great way of recording learning is through our **MyLearning** app [learn.sssc.uk.com/mylearning](https://learn.sssc.uk.com/mylearning) It's a free, smartphone-based app to help you quickly and conveniently log learning activities wherever and whenever they take place.
- 3 If you have used our resources on the **SSSC Learning Zone**, you can register for Open Badges. The advantage of completing Open Badges is that your employer, learning provider, or workplace assessor, may be able to use the account given to gain your Open Badge either directly towards your qualification or as the foundation to further development.  
To help you review and reflect on your learning, we'd encourage you to complete the CPL Open Badge [badges.sssc.uk.com/badges/sssc-continuous-professional-learning-2022](https://badges.sssc.uk.com/badges/sssc-continuous-professional-learning-2022)  
You can find out more on the **Open Badges** website [badges.sssc.uk.com](https://badges.sssc.uk.com)
- 4 Reflective learning diary or account  
A reflective learning diary or account is a personal record about your experiences of learning. It may simply list the things learned in a day, in the past, or over a longer period, with comments on why they are important. You can include personal feelings about learning something new, overcoming barriers, or perhaps moments when you have had a sudden realisation. Reflection is the process of thinking about every aspect of your learning and practice including identifying where and how your practice could improve.





## Useful links

Here are some useful links for more information about reflective accounts.

Dundee and Angus College developed this useful guide to reflective writing. It includes information regarding how to write reflectively, reflective vocabulary, why reflective writing is important and different reflective writing formats.

[rise.articulate.com/share/Jn88vIG2\\_0upyzLZU-N5ohZ7v1yEAgFb#/lessonsJNzOcRkRmhtGL1D2UjK6gCEglL28mAUc](https://rise.articulate.com/share/Jn88vIG2_0upyzLZU-N5ohZ7v1yEAgFb#/lessonsJNzOcRkRmhtGL1D2UjK6gCEglL28mAUc)

The following link provides information regarding Gibbs' Reflective Cycle which is a model created to support people to learn from experiences.

[www.mindtools.com/pages/article/reflective-cycle.htm](http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/reflective-cycle.htm)

The SCQF website has drawn together some templates that may help you gather your thoughts and identify skills which are transferable.

[scqf.org.uk/media/tcjfc2uz/rpl-useful-resources.pdf](https://scqf.org.uk/media/tcjfc2uz/rpl-useful-resources.pdf)



## What if I didn't complete my qualification in Scotland?

People coming to work in Scotland with qualifications gained in other countries, including the rest of the UK, may find their qualifications do not meet the relevant standards, or our principles and criteria. You can read more about our **Qualification principles and criteria** on our website

[www.sssc.uk.com/knowledgebase/article/KA-02464/en-us](http://www.sssc.uk.com/knowledgebase/article/KA-02464/en-us)

We do not assess non-UK social service qualifications. If you gained a qualification in England, Wales or Northern Ireland you will need to speak to us to see if you can use it for registration. Please use the web form on our contact us page [www.sssc.uk.com/contact-us](http://www.sssc.uk.com/contact-us)

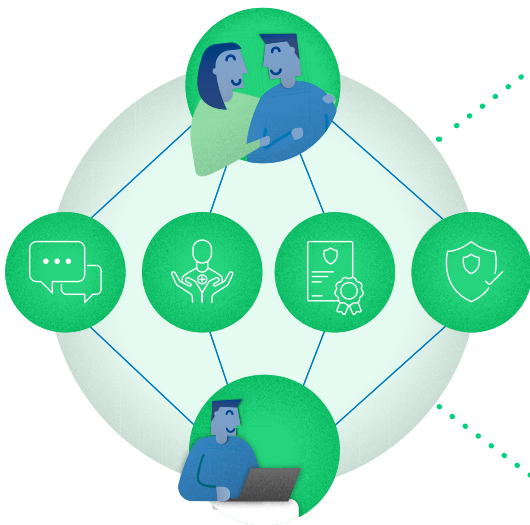
If we don't assess your qualification for registration, you can continue to register with the SSSC and will be required to gain the relevant benchmark qualification.

You can contact your learning provider to find out if you can use your international qualification for RPL, even if we do not accept your qualification for registration requirements. If you are unable use your international qualification for RPL, completing the entire qualification is an opportunity for you to build on your past learning and experiences and apply them in the context of Scottish standards, frameworks and legislation. As well as supporting your professional and career development, you will gain a recognised qualification.

We do assess international social work qualifications for registration. We have more information about international social work qualifications and registration here [www.sssc.uk.com/careers-and-education/qualifications](http://www.sssc.uk.com/careers-and-education/qualifications)

## What is the RPL process for gaining credit towards a qualification?

Contact your individual learning provider to find out if they offer RPL. If they do, you should find out more about their RPL policy and process.



If you and your learning provider decide to start the RPL process they will require you to set out your relevant prior learning, that is your experiences, skills and knowledge. You will need to explain how you have applied this prior learning in your current practice and relate this to your training and learning needs. It will be important to refer to the four common themes (communication, health and safety, professional development, safeguarding) as well as the NOS when identifying what prior learning is relevant. Your prior learning will be assessed against these themes and the NOS.

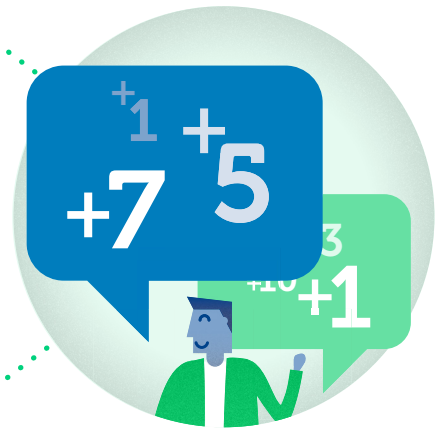
Your learning provider will review the relevant prior learning you have set out. It may be this identifies gaps in your learning at this stage and you will need to complete further learning to continue the RPL process. Your learning provider will assist you with this process. Most learning providers will expect any evidence you use to be from the last two to five years to ensure your knowledge and skills are current.





The next stage of the process is providing evidence of your learning. Each individual learning provider will have a different format for this. They have to assess the evidence you provide against the relevant benchmark qualification you are seeking credit for. The content must be relevant to the context of your role or job function. It is essential to refer to the four common themes (communication, health and safety, professional development, safeguarding) as well as the NOS when collating your evidence. They will have to verify the evidence you provide to ensure it is a true and accurate account of your learning.

Finally, your learning provider will assess the evidence you provided to determine whether credit points will be awarded for it.



You will then continue with your studies. While you may have acquired some credit using your prior learning, you will not be able to achieve an entire qualification using RPL.

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We promote equality by removing unlawful and unfair treatment  
on the grounds of any protected characteristic wherever possible.