

6. How is assessment for RPL different to programme or course-based assessment?

Generally, throughout a course or a programme of learning learners will be given specific assessment tasks at key points, either for feedback, remediation, or modular progression. At the end of a programme of study there will be some kind of overall summative assessment, based on the requirements of the exit level outcomes of a qualification or part of a qualification.

For RPL purposes learners are usually assessed mainly on the overall summative component. However, other forms of evidence may also be required (such as proof of specific workplace experience or performance, or in the form of different products).

It should be stressed, however, that there are many variations in the way RPL assessment can be carried out, in terms of both scope and methods. For example, RPL for credits against only one learning area, subject or set of unit standards will be very different to RPL against an entire qualification which is made up of many different learning areas. The former (depending on the subject) could be carried out by one written test or practical task; the latter may demand different kinds of evidence for different parts of the qualification, and even an overall integrated assessment against the exit outcomes. Also, RPL methods of assessment will obviously differ according to the nature of the area being assessed: the assessment model for a knowledge-based discipline (e.g. physics) will be very different to one in which experience is a key focus (e.g. teaching), or one in which practical skills need to be demonstrated (e.g. carpentry).

It should be noted that there is no clear cut division between RPL assessment and other forms of assessment. Any type of assessment could be used for RPL if the assessment is fit-for-purpose, and appropriate for the RPL context. The following general comments can be made:

- The approach or model for a particular RPL assessment may differ to that carried out for the programme leading to the same certification (e.g. timing, and some of the assessment tasks may differ).
- There may be different types of evidence required by the RPL model (e.g. documentary proof of experience).
- The RPL requirements may on the other hand include the same assessments as those in the programme (e.g. a formal, written summative examination may need to be written; a particular kind of practical demonstration may need to be carried out).

You will find various examples of RPL models and processes in the Useful Guidelines section of the main page of The NQF and RPL. You can also refer to the Assessment page of the Gateway to get more detailed information on assessment.

[Answer to FAQ 6 The NQF and RPL, the NQF Gateway]