Cardiff Met
RPEL Portfolio of Evidence

Contents

Section 1 Introduction

What is RPEL?

Recognising Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) is the process which allows education providers to recognise formal and informal learning and award or transfer of credit for use towards existing courses.

RPEL supports lifelong learning and allows individuals to integrate education with work by putting a value on their knowledge, skills and experience, regardless of whether or not they have been formally achieved through an educational institution. These competencies may have been gained through formal education, informal training or through life or work experience.

RPEL is an assessment process aimed at confirming and recognising learners' competencies. By completing the RPEL Portfolio of Evidence, a learner is applying for formal recognition of their learning and experience against a specific set of learning outcomes identified in a Cardiff Met module of study.

What is a Portfolio of Evidence?

Some learners may want to prove that they have completed learning outcomes for specific subject modules at Cardiff Metropolitan University, even though they have not yet studied there. There are many reasons a learner may want to do this, including:

- Help to access a course/ programme when a formal entry requirement has not been met
- Help gain credit toward a course/ programme, shortening the time studying
- Gain discreet credit to prove learning has been undertaken
- Identify skills and knowledge as well as identify gaps for further development
- Motivate learning and boost self confidence
- Provide entry onto a postgraduate course/ programme if you already have relevant professional experience but do not have an undergraduate qualification

The Portfolio of Evidence is a very thorough document which identifies and evidences learning from work and/or life that proves course specific learning has occurred.

Where do I start?

When a learner identifies that they have experience and knowledge that they want recognition for, it is best to start by identifying a module/s at Cardiff Met that most appropriately matches the learner's skills. This requires the identification of a subject, then a programme of study and then the specific module. It is always best to contact the University directly to speak to the RPEL Advisor in the first instance,

who can advise on the most appropriate module/s of study. Once the module/s has been identified, then a Portfolio of Evidence can be created to prove the learning outcomes.
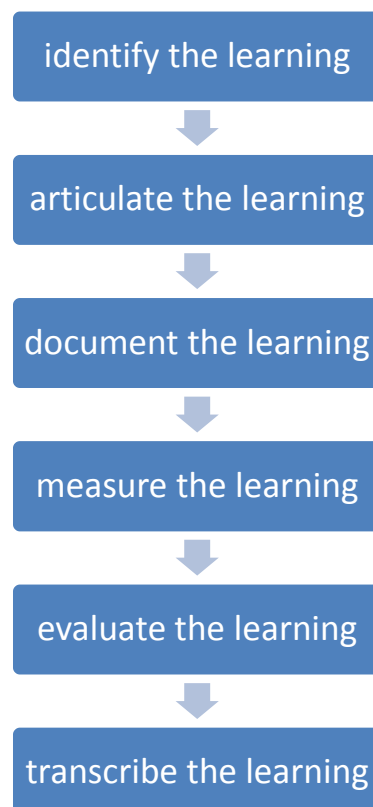
What does a Portfolio of Evidence look like?
A Portfolio of Evidence is usually a ring binder which contains the module/s outline (including the learning outcomes), and the learners articulation of identified learning and sufficient supporting documentation in an organised and easily readable format.

What kinds of evidence will you ask for?
For the RPEL Portfolio of Evidence, we are looking for examples of Experiential Learning (informal learning). This refers to learning gained through work, voluntary activities or other life experiences. It is unlikely to be documented and would require the collection of evidence to substantiate the learning claimed. Examples would be:

- Work products (reports, minutes, emails etc.), testimonies, and projects, professional publications, learning logs / reflective accounts, videos and audio.
- Evidence of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and non-accredited training courses.
- Hobbies, interests, voluntary work.
- In addition you could be interviewed or observed.

What is the process for completing the RPEL Portfolio of Evidence?

identify the learning

⬇

articulate the learning

⬇

document the learning

⬇

measure the learning

⬇

evaluate the learning

⬇

transcribe the learning

Section 2 Developing the Portfolio of Evidence

Identifying where your prior learning has taken place

The first step is to identify where and how you have gained your knowledge, skills and understanding as this can help you when you are considering the learning you have gained. It is also useful to identify the way that you prefer to learn, which differs between people to include:

- Auditory learning e.g. discussion, lecture, music
- Visual learning e.g. reading books, research online, mind maps
- Kinaesthetic learning e.g. hands-on experience, experimenting

Although most people use a combination of the three learning styles, they usually have a clear preference for one. Knowing and understanding the types of learning styles is important for students of any age, allowing you to design and develop methods of learning that are suited to you.

Learning takes place in a variety of situations, including:

- team work
- project work
- presentations
- one-to-one coaching
- mentoring
- in-house training
- secondments
- informal discussions with friends and colleagues
- problem solving and brain storming

Eventually you will be writing a reflective narrative about a specific area of your knowledge, skills and understanding, and identifying evidence which supports your narrative. It can be useful to include in your narrative how you may have actually gained your knowledge, skills and understanding. It may have been through a planned programme of study, through informal contacts with colleagues, through actually going through the experience e.g. giving a presentation at a team meeting, dealing with a difficult situation or person, demonstrating a new product to a client, creating a new database, etc.

Below are three possible approaches which may help you identify knowledge, skills and understanding which you have gained, and which can form the basis of a portfolio of evidence which can be presented for assessment.

a. Identifying learning gained though undertaking a job.
   All types of work are relevant, no matter the sector or whether it was paid. It might be useful to start by drawing a table of your experience to draw out your skills
b. Identifying learning gained through undertaking a specific project/initiative.
   You may have undertaken a specific project as part of your job, for a personal interest or as a volunteer.

c. Identifying learning gained through dealing with a specific incident or situation - such as dealing with a difficult client/colleague, an accident, an emergency, a presentation.

All of these situations require you to undertake a role, responsibilities, or a specific set of actions to deal with a situation. It is the skills that you have learnt and used in these situations that you must identify and prove in your Portfolio of Evidence.

A starting point to identify where your learning has taken place could be to draw out a table of your experience, for example:

identify knowledge, skills and understanding	What I have to know to perform my responsibilities / achieve a result	How can I prove this knowledge?
Job Roles		
Job responsibilities		
Projects		
Incidents and situations		
Major accomplishments (for yourself/ an organisation/ other people)		

Another useful tool in identifying your prior learning and knowledge is to complete a reflective exercise on different roles and situations, so that you find a deeper understanding of your skills and how they can be proven.

Reflection is the process of identifying experiences and learning from them. It has been defined as:

"*The process of creating and clarifying the meanings of experiences in terms of self in relation to both self and world. The outcome of this process is changed conceptual perspectives*" (Boyd & Fales, 1983pp101)

Some of us are natural reflectors whilst others will find this process difficult. Our learning style will influence how we reflect and the tools that we will find useful to help us reflect. Some of us love to commit our thoughts to paper whilst others prefer

to verbalise these ideas. These different styles of learning will determine how and with whom we reflect and how these reflections are recorded.

See Appendix 1 for an example of how to undertake a reflection on your experience. (A structured reflection based on Kolb's learning cycle)

Claiming credit for a specific module

Credit is claimed against specific modules at the University. There are a wide range of modules in a number of subjects that you will need to choose from. Your experience will naturally match some subjects better than others, so the first step is to identify which module/s you want to claim credit for.

To do this you will need to speak to the RPEL advisor, who will assess your experience and suggest the modules relevant to you. Once you have chosen the module/s you want to claim credit against, you must then match your knowledge and skills to the learning outcomes for the specific module.

Learning Outcomes

Every module has learning outcomes, which are statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after they have completed a process of learning. Once you have identified your knowledge and skills, you need to match these to the learning outcomes to prove how you have met them through undertaking your job, project, voluntary work, leisure activities, dealing with specific situations etc.

Credit levels and credit values

The credit level must also be taken into account. For example, there may be more than one module which relates to a similar topic - such as team leadership – but are at different levels. The learning outcomes for a module - say 20 credits at level 5 - will be based on the level descriptors for level 5. Therefore, there will be an expectation of higher levels of knowledge, skill and understanding than if you were matching your learning against a level 4 module of a similar name.

Next Steps

When you have identified which modules are likely to contain learning outcomes which reflect your own learning, then you will begin to:

- Identify relevant evidence which will demonstrate your learning
- Write a narrative which provides a context for the learning
- Put together a portfolio of evidence for assessment

Identifying appropriate evidence for a RPEL claim

You must evidence your experience and knowledge against the specific learning outcomes defined in the module descriptor for the module/s you are claiming credit for. This evidence can take many forms, and may include reflective writing or narratives to support the evidence.

Types of evidence

Types of direct evidence, for which you have been wholly or principally responsible, include:

- Action plans - objectives and results
- Budgets
- Procedures or guidance you have been responsible for designing
- Reports
- Articles
- Letters
- A training plan
- A questionnaire you have designed and administered
- A handbook or manual you have contributed to
- A design brief and pictures of completed design
- Film
- Music
- Artefact relating to art, technology, etc.

Types of **indirect evidence include:** This would particularly apply if there was no direct evidence, or the evidence was confidential. It could also be information gathered from others about you. Examples might include:

- Case study
- Testimonials or statements from employers/customers/clients/colleagues
- Certificates of attendance at in-house programme
- Awards
- Articles/reports about you
- Observation report

Reflective narrative can also be written for your portfolio, which will be an account of how learning was achieved, bringing together the learning outcomes and evidence and guiding the assessor through the claim. **This narrative is also evidence in its own right as it shows your ability to reflect on learning, your ability to analyse, and to evaluate, and problem solve.**

The supporting product evidence you include in the portfolio is often written documentation for a particular audience and has not been written to be assessed as part of a RPEL portfolio. Therefore, a brief explanation within the narrative is helpful for the assessor. If any further explanation is needed, then this can be attached to

the actual product evidence. Remember to give each item of product evidence a number or code (catalogued in the Matrix of Evidence in Section 1 of the Portfolio) and use this when referring to the item in the narrative.

Remember that the assessor is looking for quality, not quantity. We are interested in the learning that has taken place, as well as achievements. When you are selecting your evidence, ask yourself:

- Does this item of evidence help prove my knowledge, skills and understanding?
- Is it the best piece of evidence for the learning outcomes?
- Is it sufficient - or do I need more?
- Do I really need it, or have I already provided sufficient evidence? Am I just including it because I like it?

Witness statements and endorsements

Witness testimonies, and endorsements, can be cost-effective and appropriate evidence to support your RPEL claim. They are very useful in confirming achievements for which it is difficult to provide neat product evidence, particularly when it relates to behaviour. For example:

- A member of your team can confirm that you are an effective team leader, that you communicate clearly, and delegate efficiently
- When you gave a presentation at a conference, one of the audience members could provide a statement which confirms the standard of your delivery. They could comment on structure of the talk, the appropriateness of any support material you used – such as PowerPoint slides, and how you dealt with questions from the audience
- A line manager who knows your work can confirm your professional approach when dealing with highly confidential information, and that you are able to identify appropriate strategies when working with difficult clients, or in difficult situations

Wherever possible, written statements and endorsements should feature on headed notepaper or be stamped with an organisation's stamp.

Constructing a RPEL Portfolio of Evidence

To construct your Portfolio of Evidence, we suggest the following structure. Different claims will be made up of different kinds of evidence, but for each there must be a clear structure, narrative to support each piece of evidence and referencing to the Evidence Matrix.

When completed, the portfolio should contain the following:

Section 1

1. **Front cover** which includes:
    - Name
    - Student ID
    - Amount of credit being claimed through the RPEL process
    - Programme and module
    - RPEL Adviser
    - Date of claim
2. Contents page
3. Individual statement of authenticity
4. Learner CV and job description
5. Copies of modules against which the RPL claim is being made
6. Matrix of Evidence

Section 2

1. Evidence
    - Reflective accounts, case studies, narratives, testimonials, work based products and examples, professional discussion transcripts, witness statements etc.
2. Copies of certificates and relevant CPD log

Section 3

Supporting information - this is indirect evidence that supports your learning claim, but is not direct evidence (as in Section 2), for example, articles that mention your work or activities, witness testimonials, memberships of communities or organisations, Profiles / Records of Achievement, Minutes of meetings etc.

Indirect evidence can be used to supplement direct evidence, or where difficulty arises in obtaining direct evidence cost-effectively. Indirect evidence may be required because of the confidential nature of the direct evidence. Indirect evidence will often require additional assessment by questioning, or other means. General statements from the above would not be sufficient. Indirect evidence must state the module and specific learning outcome to which it relates.

Section 3 Recognising Prior Experiential Learning Portfolio of Evidence

Name:	
Student ID:	
Credit applied for:	
Programme name:	
Module name/ number:	
RPEL Advisor:	
Date of claim:	

Contents

Content	Page number
Statement of Authenticity	
Learner CV	
Job Description	
Module(s) descriptors against which claim is being made	
Matrix of Evidence	
Evidence	
Copies of Certificates	
Relevant CPD Log	
Supporting Information	

Statement of Authenticity

This work is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

……………………………………………………………………………………….and has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed .... (candidate)

Date ....

STATEMENT 1

This Portfolio of Evidence is the result of my own work and investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used, the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote(s).

Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

Signed .... (candidate)

Date ....

Either **STATEMENT 2(i)**

I hereby give consent for my Portfolio of Evidence, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, for deposit in Cardiff Metropolitan's Repository, and that the title and summary may be available to outside organisations.

Signed .... (candidate)

Date ....

Or **STATEMENT 2(ii)**

I hereby give consent for my Portfolio of Evidence, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loans, and for deposit in Cardiff Metropolitan's e-Repository **after expiry of a bar on access approved by Cardiff Metropolitan.**

Signed .... (candidate)

Date ....

Learner CV

Personal Details

Name:
Address:

Date of Birth:
Telephone:
Email:

Current and Immediate Past Employment

University/ Higher Education Qualifications

College / University	Dates	Qualifications

Secondary/ Further Education Qualifications

School/ College	Dates	Qualifications

Additional qualifications and professional memberships

Relevant Work Experience (including part time, summer vacation, voluntary etc.)

Achievements

Additional Information

Module descriptors against which the RPL claim is being made

Insert the module descriptor(s) here.

Evidence Matrix

Name: **Module/s:**   **Level:**   **Date:**

Evidence Ref	Assessment Method	Module Number/s	Learning Outcomes															1st Line Assessor	2nd Line Assessor
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15		

Learner Signature:

_____

Summative Feedback:

Assessment Method Key:

P = Product Evidence   **W** = Witness Testimony **PD** = Professional Discussion **R** = Reflective Summary **PS** = Personal Statement

Appendix 1

A structured reflection based on Kolb's learning cycle
by Ruth Matheson, Learning & Teaching Development Unit

Think about a situation from practice

1.   What happened?
How did the task progress?
How did you feel? (e.g. initial gut reaction, changes in feeling as task progressed etc.)
How did you react?
What choices did you have?

This was my first stab at lecturing to a large group of first year students. I have taken weeks to prepare the slides to accompany my talk and ended up with a comprehensive slide show firmly rooted in the literature. As I stood up I was aware of a sea of faces, some chatting to their mates, others texting on their mobile phones, whilst others looked mildly interested.

My initial thoughts were 'what would they make of me?' and I felt butterflies in my stomach as I stood looking out. I tried to rationalise with myself that this was ridiculous as I knew much more than them about the subject and that I was the expert and that they were the novices. I had heard of the 'Dr Fox Effect', that provided you were entertaining, students would rate the session highly even if they could remember very little. Would I be seen as entertaining? Would I be able to engage them? My thoughts flashed back to my student days and how little I got out of sitting there listening to someone up the front and how my mind used to wander to where I was going that night and how I could make £5.00 last the rest of the week. My mind raced, "I had to be better than this".

I started my lecture by introducing the aims of the session. My first challenge being how to engage their attention. The front row listened intently, those at the back less so and the middle section became just a blur. I tried to be enthusiastic and make my voice interesting. The session was an hour and a half long, looking at psychological development in teenage years. I introduced the various theorists and how their theories had contributed to a large body of knowledge.

Twenty minutes into my lecture I could see that I was losing them. I started to feel a sense of panic. Was it me, my delivery or just the subject matter that seemed to have switched them off? It was really hot in the lecture theatre, airless and students were beginning to fidget. I became increasingly aware of lights from mobiles that had been placed on silent but were now being used to text.

My reaction was to try something new. I thought that I would tell them a story to try and place the theories in context and make them more real to my audience. It did cross my mind "what do I do if this doesn't work?" However this appeared to bring their attention back and gave me the opportunity to observe their body language which appeared to demonstrate interest. I'm not sure what I would have done at this point if they had totally disengaged.

The final part of the lecture looked at modern day influences on teenage behaviour. For this I had used newspaper clippings to show how the influences our perception. These were both funny and shocking and seemed to go down well. My lecture ended by summing up the main points and referring back to the learning outcomes outlined in the beginning of the session.

2.   Analysis
Identify the positives
What was important to you?
What skills/qualities/abilities did you use?

In general the lecture went well considering it was my first time. I appeared confident and was able to draw on my own learning experience by introducing a story to provide a context. I have always found the need to place learning in a context to know why I need to know certain information. By watching the body language of my audience I was able to pick up on their disengagement and alter my style. The newspaper clippings worked well as once again this made things meaningful to the learner, they were things that they had seen in the media already and that coloured their understanding of society and I could challenge these perceptions.

I think that my initial nerves were justified in that it would be a very confident or arrogant person that would not care what their audience though of them. However it is when these thoughts rage out of control and become anxiety when they are not useful.

By providing learning outcomes at the start and revisiting them at the end I orientated the students into what the sessions was about and the learning that should have taken place as a result of this, what I didn't do was check if this learning had been achieved.

Identify the things that could have gone better

What were the barriers to success? What needs improvement?

What does stick in my mind is the faces of the students 20 minutes in to my lecture, although trying to seem interested (well some!) it was obvious that I had lost them. What I hadn't done was engage them from the start, I had relied on imparting my knowledge to them as this made me feel comfortable and was one way of dispelling my nerves.

I hadn't checked on whether or not any learning had occurred or whether they had understood any of the concepts of which I was so familiar and found so interesting. I had assumed that because I found it fascinating so would they.

I relied on a strong PowerPoint presentation which was packed with information and references. This may have not been helpful I high insight.

3.   Making generalisations
What conclusions can you draw from the experience?
What have you learnt for the future?
How does this relate to the real world?

What I hadn't appreciated was that my audience had a wealth of knowledge to share. I had 150 18 -25 year olds in the room from different backgrounds, cultures, countries and that they were not long out of the phase I was talking about or even still there.

In order to help students identify why they need to learn there is a need to place that learning in a context and help them make the links as to the importance to them as an individual in the real world.

Although being seen as an expert provides security for the individual lecturer, it may not be the best approach to adopt in helping the students learn. Viewing yourself as a resource may be a better approach.

4.   Planning future action
What might you do differently?
What risks might you take?
What/who might help?
What additional input might you need?

The student's themselves could have shared their perceptions of life as a teenager, the medias portrayal and how this influences them etc.

The use of talking in pairs or small groups would have been really useful in sharing this knowledge and getting to know each other. I could also have got them to brainstorm words that came into their head when given the word teenager, word association techniques may also have worked.

Establishing prior knowledge would have also provided a basis for my lecture. This could have been achieved through a quiz, utilising the student interactive feedback systems much like who wants to be a millionaire and this would have engaged them from the start. This system could also have been used at the end to identify new knowledge.

One thing we discussed at the residential workshop was the use of the 'muddiest point' which provides students with the opportunity to identify the concept that they found most difficult to grasp. This can then be further explained at the beginning of the next session. It would also help me change my presentation for the next year to increase clarity.

By using PowerPoint to illustrate points rather than provide the whole lecture utilises it as an aid to learning rather than providing a text book on the subject.

I'm sure this will come with experience as at the moment it is an aid memoir for me as much as anything to boost my confidence and now that I have been through the process once and realise that I need to change the structure to engage with the students more this changes the purpose of the PowerPoint.

Reference for Kolb's learning cycle:

Kolb DA (1984) *Experiential learning: experience as the source of learning & development.* Upper Saddle River, NJ; Prentice-Hall