



# **Chartered Institute of Housing**

## **Awarding Organisation**

### **Claiming Credit for QCF qualifications**

#### **Equivalent Units, Recognition of Prior Learning & Exemptions**

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The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) is the Professional Body for People who work in Housing.  
The CIH is an accredited Awarding Organisation and a Registered Charity No. 244067/R

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## Claiming Credit

This guidance has been developed to help providers to understand the claiming of exemptions and equivalent Units within the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF).

The QCF enables learners to avoid duplication of learning and assessment in three ways:

- A. For achievements within the QCF it is possible to transfer credits from an Equivalent unit.
- B. Learning and achievements that have not been certificated can be assessed and validated through recognition of prior learning (RPL) process.
- C. Individuals with certificated achievements outside the QCF can claim exemption from the requirement to achieve credits for designated units.

## Contacting the CIH Awarding Organisation



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## Part A: Equivalent Units

### 1. Overview

Within the QCF it is possible to count credits awarded from another qualification and/or recognised awarding organisation within a qualification rule of combination.

There may also be circumstances where credits from expired (and therefore inactive) units can still be counted towards a qualification. Although determining exemptions will follow a similar process to determining equivalent units, there is an important distinction in that **equivalence substitutes units within the QCF, whereas exemptions substitutes a unit** or units within the QCF for achievement that has been certificated outside of the QCF.

Equivalences will arise in relation to other units in the databank, whereas exemptions relate to qualifications or certificated achievement outside the QCF.

### 2. Identifying an Equivalent Unit

Where the CIH Awarding Organisation has identified a Unit as an Equivalent Unit it will be incorporated within the qualification Rules of Combination of the qualification.

However, a Centre or learner may also identify a Unit that may be deemed to be equivalent. The Centre should make the evaluation and submit the application to the CIH Awarding Organisation.

If the CIH Awarding Organisation agrees with the evaluation, the equivalent Unit will be recorded and the Rules of Combination updated at the earliest opportunity.

## **Part B. Recognition of Prior Learning**

### **1. What is the recognition of prior learning?**

The recognition of prior learning (RPL) in the QCF is defined as:

*A method of assessment that considers whether a learner can demonstrate that they can meet the assessment requirements for a unit through knowledge, understanding or skills that they already possess and do not need to develop through a course of learning*

The term 'RPL' is used in the QCF to reflect similar terms in use in many other European countries, as well as in Scotland. Other frameworks use terms such as 'Accreditation of Prior Learning' or 'Recognition of Prior Achievement' to define similar assessment arrangements.

### **2. The aim of RPL**

The QCF aims to be responsive to the needs of individual learners. One important principle that reflects this aim is that learners should not be required to 're-learn' something that they already know, understand or can do. The purpose of RPL is to allow individuals to claim credit for achievements that have not been previously certificated.

This focus on 'previously uncertificated' learning is central to the definition of RPL in the QCF. Where previous achievements have been certificated then this same principle operates either through credit transfer (for achievements certificated in the QCF) or through exemption (for certificated achievements outside the QCF).

### **3. The Principles of RPL**

The aim of RPL is to allow individuals to claim credit for learning or achievement that has not been previously certificated. The following are principles for effective, consistent and quality-assured practice in RPL.

#### **Principle 1**

RPL is a valid method of enabling individuals to claim credit for units and qualifications in the QCF, irrespective of how the learning took place and the assessments undertaken. There is no difference between the achievement of the required standards through prior learning and through a formal programme of study.

#### **Principle 2**

RPL must comply with all regulatory requirements for assessment. RPL policies, processes, procedures, practices and decisions should be transparent, rigorous, reliable, fair and accessible to individuals and stakeholders to ensure that users can be confident of the decisions and outcomes of RPL.

### **Principle 3**

RPL is a learner-centred, voluntary process. The individual should be offered advice on the nature and range of evidence considered appropriate to support a claim for assessing RPL, and be given guidance and support to make his or her claim.

### **Principle 4**

The process of RPL is subject to the same standard of quality assurance and monitoring processes as any other form of learning and assessment.

### **Principle 5**

Assessment methods for RPL must be of equal rigour as other assessment methods, be fit for purpose and relate to the evidence of learning. An individual can claim RPL against any whole unit unless the assessment criteria of the unit states otherwise. For example if an external assessment sets the standard of the learning outcome that the learner must achieve, then the learner must pass the external assessment to achieve the unit and gain the credit.

## **4. Making an application for Credit through RPL**

The Centre will evaluate any application for RPL. Credit will only be granted where it is successfully demonstrated that all of the QCF Unit Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria has been met. The claim can only be for a whole Unit. RPL will not be considered for a partial Unit.

The learner must play an active role in the application and gather evidence and develop an assessment plan. This must be benchmarked to the Unit as evidence that each learning outcome and assessment criteria has been met.

## **5. Assessing the RPL application**

The Centres is responsible for evaluating the application. They will make an assessment of the achievements of the learner by comparing knowledge, skills and competencies to the standard Unit requirements.

The assessment must be valid and reliable to ensure that the integrity of the Unit and qualification as a whole. They will feedback to the learner, discussing the results and giving support and guidance on further options open to the learner. Where the Unit is not achieved, this may include further learning and development.

The Centre must advise the Internal Verifier and CIH External Moderator of the application, to enable review through the quality assurance and moderation processes.

## **6. Appeal**

If the learner wishes to appeal against a decision made about their application for RPL, they must follow the standard Centre appeal process.

## Part C – Exemption

### 1. What is an exemption?

Exemptions play an important part in supporting learner progression within the QCF. Although many are familiar with the principles of exemption in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), there needs to be a clear understanding of how this function operates in the QCF, and of how it differs from other key functions such as RPL and the identification of equivalent units.

[Annex 1 illustrates the differences between RPL and exemption.](#)

### 2. The regulatory basis for exemption

The requirements and expectations for exemption in the QCF are set out in the *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework* (Ofqual/08/3726).

They are based on the following definition of exemption:

*The facility for a learner to claim exemption from some of the achievement requirements of a QCF qualification, using evidence of certificated, non-QCF achievement deemed to be of equivalent value. This may include certificated achievements in the NQF or outside of the NQF*

This means that learners who have certificated achievements outside of the QCF can claim exemption from units within QCF qualifications that are deemed to be of equal value. Therefore a learner could achieve a qualification through a combination of credits awarded for units within the QCF, and exemption from the requirement to achieve credits for a unit or units based on certificated achievements outside the QCF.

Exemptions can be planned by awarding organisations or individually requested by learners

### 3. Planned exemptions

The CIH Awarding Organisation will identify Units that will enable exemption and record these within the Unit template and the QCF Qualification Rules of Combination. The qualification may then be achieved through a combination of credits actually awarded and credits exempted on the basis of other certification.

### 4. Individually requested exemptions

There may be cases where exemptions are requested by learners holding certificated achievements that were not foreseen when the rule of combination was submitted for accreditation.

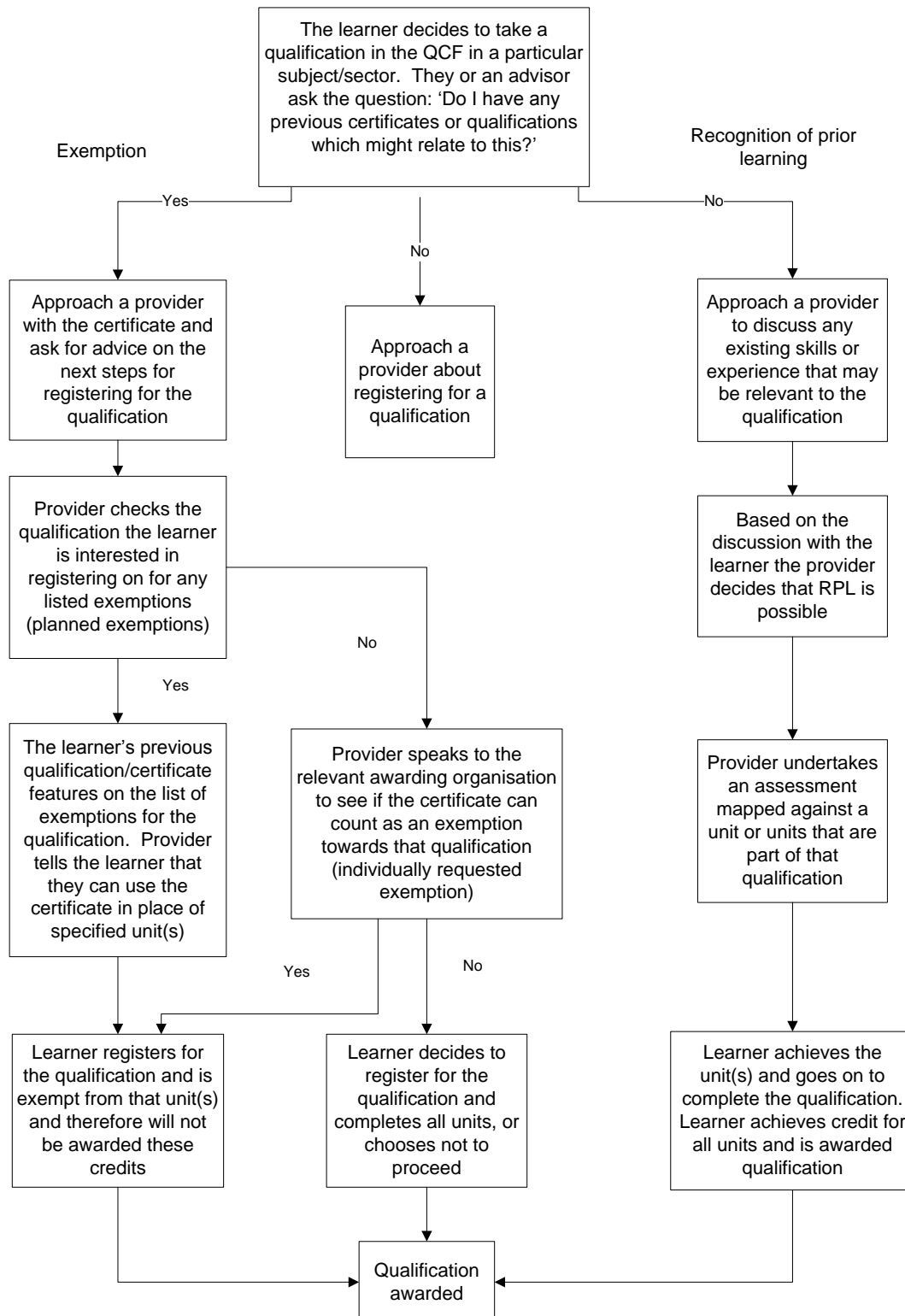
In such instances the Centre will consider requests on an individual basis. They will make the initial evaluation and submit a report to the CIH Awarding Organisation for approval.

Where the application is approved, the CIH Awarding Organisation will record the exemption and the Unit template and the qualification rules of combination will be updated accordingly at the earliest opportunity. The Sector Skills Council will be informed of the exemptions that have been granted.

### **5. Why learners cannot get credit for exemption**

Learners will NOT be granted QCF credits for exemption Units but the exemption unit will count towards the qualification. Learners cannot be awarded credit for exemption because awarding credit for certificated learning outside the QCF would mean awarding credit for achievements twice.

Exemptions in the QCF



Note: Learners cannot be awarded credit for exemption because awarding credit for certificated learning outside the QCF would mean awarding credit for achievements twice