
Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

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1. Introduction

The British Horse Society (BHS) is committed to making sure all its activities are conducted fairly, transparently, objectively and free from bias.

The BHS recognise that candidates may have gained knowledge, understanding and skills from prior learning experiences. Where a candidate does not meet the standard entry requirement, the BHS provides the opportunity to apply to via a direct entry route.

2. Scope and applicability

This policy applies to BHS Career Pathways assessments and qualifications delivered by the BHS Education Team, which include:

- Non-regulated qualifications awarded by the BHS. For example, Performance level qualifications
- Regulated qualifications delivered by the BHS Education Team and awarded by BHSQ. For example, Level 2, 3 and 4 qualifications.

This policy is for:

- Learners
- Assessors
- Trainers
- Others as relevant.

3. Purpose and objectives

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that direct entry routes into BHS assessments are clearly defined and understood.

This document will:

- Define recognition of prior learning and direct entry
- Detail the BHS Education Team's approach for the application of direct entry
- Signpost to relevant guidance

It is useful to refer to the following BHS documents, policies or guidance when reading this:

- [Direct entry guidance](#) (web page)
- [Access to Fair Assessment, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration Policy for BHS Assessments](#)

4. Terms and definitions

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is an umbrella term used to recognise prior learning. The BHS recognises RPL for **direct entry** into a qualification or unit, often where a prospective candidate does not meet the standard entry

requirements (pre-requisites). Prior learning can be evidenced by **Recognition of Prior Certified Learning** or **Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning**.

Recognition of Prior Certified Learning (RPCL) is where appropriate certificated learning (for example, from another recognised organisation) can be used for entry to BHS assessments.

Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) is a process where learners can submit evidence to demonstrate they have met entry requirements for BHS assessments via appropriate knowledge and skills acquired through life, work and/or competition experience.

Learner is anyone training for a BHS assessment. During the assessment process the learner is referred to as a **candidate**.

Assessor is contracted to the BHS to make assessment decisions at BHS assessments.

Trainer is used to describe any professional supporting the learner to train for BHS/BHSQ qualifications and prepare for their assessment. This could be, but is not limited to, BHS Accredited Professional Coaches or BHS Approved Riding Schools.

5. The BHS's approach to Recognition of Prior Learning

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) can be used to apply for entry to any assessment/s from Stage 2 (Level 2) up to and including Performance Coach BHSI.

RPL cannot be used to apply for entry to the BHS Fellowship. A learner must achieve the Performance Coach BHSI, Performance Dressage Coach BHSI, Performance Show Jumping Coach BHSI or BHSI qualification before applying for the Fellowship.

If an RPL application is successful, the learner should note the other pre-requisites that may be required before an assessment booking can be made, for example our assessments also have a minimum age requirement. This is detailed on the [BHS website](#).

A learner will not be awarded BHS or BHSQ qualifications, or units towards BHS or BHSQ qualifications, based on their RPL application and evidence. To be awarded a BHS or BHSQ qualification a learner must achieve all required units of the qualification.

When booking an assessment via RPL, the standard BHS assessment [booking terms and conditions](#) apply. Where learners are granted entry into a BHS assessment this is not a guarantee that they will be successful. At any point during an assessment should doubt exist as to the health, safety and/or welfare of the candidate, horses, assessor or others, an assessor or assessment centre personnel has the right to stop the candidate at any time.

6. Process for applying for Recognition of Prior Certified Learning (RPCL)

6.1 Accepted qualifications

Please refer to the BHS website for the [list of accepted qualifications](#) that can be used for a RPCL application. Qualifications or awards must have been achieved within five years of the BHS assessment date applied for.

For some qualifications, for example Work Based Diplomas, specific units must be achieved for acceptance. The units required are stated on the [BHS website](#).

Some qualifications may require additional evidence, for example a reference to accompany the application. This will be stated on the BHS website.

6.2 Application process

Guidance for how to apply is on the [BHS website](#).

RPCL applications must be received and accepted before the learner can book their assessment. An assessment booking cannot be confirmed or paid for until the application evidence is verified. Spaces on assessments will not be reserved whilst waiting for verification.

The qualifications and units (where applicable) will be checked by the BHS Education Team. We may consult with the awarding organisation to confirm certificates are genuine before confirming an RPCL decision.

The learner will receive confirmation as to the BHS assessment/s they can enter. There may be additional pre-requisites required before an assessment booking can be made (for example, BHS membership or achievement of BHS Ride Safe). The BHS Education Team can advise if required.

If the qualifications held were achieved more than five years ago or are not recognised by the BHS, the learner may apply via RPEL.

7. Process for applying for Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)

This route is suitable for learners:

- whose mapped qualifications were achieved more than five years ago
- or
- who hold qualifications that are not recognised by the BHS for RPCL
- or
- who hold no formal qualifications but have significant relevant industry and/or competition experience at the pre-requisite standard required

Where the learner is unable to fulfil the specific pre-requisite entry requirements they can use the RPEL coaching only route to gain entry into BHSQ Level 2 Unit 4: Stage 2 Coaching and/or BHS Level 3 Unit 3: Stage 3 Ride Dressage (this is for when the learner cannot achieve the jumping element of Stage 2 Ride).

7.1 Application

An application form, supporting evidence and an application fee are required for RPEL applications. Application guidance and the current application fee is on the [BHS website](#). Before applying via RPEL, we encourage the learner to contact the BHS to discuss their options, the application process and to determine the suitability of this route for their desired outcome.

The application must include supporting evidence confirming how the learner meets the entry requirements to the assessment/s they wish to enter.

A learner cannot apply for a BHS assessment until the RPEL application has been approved. Spaces on assessments will not be reserved whilst RPEL applications are being reviewed.

7.2 Supporting evidence for applications to enter BHS/BHSQ Stage 2, BHS/BHSQ Stage 3 or BHS/BHSQ Stage 4

An RPEL application must include supporting evidence to demonstrate the learner meets the entry requirements to the assessment/s they want to enter. Supporting evidence must be valid, reliable and sufficient.

Supporting evidence must include:

- Curriculum Vitae (CV) detailing their record of relevant work, life and learning experiences
- A minimum of one reference from an industry professional such as an Accredited Professional Coach.
- One Assessor Endorsement completed by a current BHS Assessor

Supporting evidence may also include:

- Copies of relevant certificates and, where applicable, a breakdown of the units achieved
- Copies of affiliated competition results
- Other, as relevant

We recommend contacting the BHS Education Team before applying or approaching potential referees. We can advise on the evidence required and the suitability of their referees to prevent possible delays in processing their application.

7.3 Supporting evidence for applications to enter BHS Performance level BHSI

Significant industry experience, including competition history, is required from anyone wishing to apply for direct entry to the Performance Coach BHSI qualifications and their relevant units. An application needs to evidence that the learner has the required level of knowledge and skill for entry. Supporting evidence must be valid, reliable and sufficient.

As part of an application to enter Performance level assessments, the learner must complete practical training with a BHS Assessor (who assesses at the level) or a Performance Coach BHSI or Fellow (FBHS). This coach must sign off the training record which is included as part of the RPEL application.

The relevant RPEL training record sign off templates can be downloaded from the [BHS website](#).

Supporting evidence for these applications must include:

- Curriculum Vitae (CV) detailing their record of relevant work, life and learning experiences
- The relevant RPEL training record sign off
- Copies of affiliated competition results

Supporting evidence may also include:

- Copies of relevant certificates and, where applicable, a breakdown of the units achieved
- Other, as relevant

We recommend contacting the BHS Education Team before applying or approaching potential trainers. We can advise on the evidence required and the suitability of their referees to prevent possible delays in processing their application.

7.4 Supporting evidence for RPEL coaching only route

Where the achievement of a particular skill (within Care, Lunge and Riding requirements at Stage 1 and Stage 2) cannot be evidenced the RPEL coaching only route is applicable.

Supporting evidence for these applications must include:

- RPEL Evidence Log (created specifically for this route). This will be signed off by the trainer and/or employer then sampled and verified by a BHS Assessor before submitted to the BHS as an RPEL application

And, where relevant

- Historical reference / historical competition history. This would be relevant if the learner could previously work/ride at the level, but can no longer do so
- Copies of any other equine qualification certificates

Type of evidence will include:

- For Care units: Either demonstration of the skill or the learner can instruct an assistant to complete the skill/task to evidence the underpinning knowledge of safe practice
- For Lunge unit: The learner instructs an assistant to complete the skill/task to evidence the underpinning knowledge of safe practice
- For Riding units and Ride Safe: Observation of a horse and rider combination to identify elements as required in the syllabus (for example, correct trot diagonals and canter leads)

A successful application will be granted entry to the Stage 2 Coaching Unit (BHSQ Level 2 Unit 4: Stage 2 Coaching). This provides progression to the BHSQ coaching unit at Level 3.

If a learner wants to apply via this route, please follow the guidance on the [BHS website](#).

7.5 Application processing and timeframes

RPEL applications are considered on an individual basis. We aim to provide initial feedback on an application within 15 working days. If we consider that the evidence supplied is insufficient, we may request further information or evidence.

We will inform the learner of the outcome of their application. If the application is successful, the learner has up to five years from the date of approval to enter a BHS assessment. If after five years, the learner has not entered an assessment they must submit a new RPEL application with updated evidence.

If the BHS Education Team request further information or evidence, applications will be held open for 12 months from initial receipt. If the learner has not been able to supply further information or evidence in this timeframe, and we are unable to confirm with the learner if they wish to continue with their application, all evidence will be securely disposed of. A learner must submit a new application if they wish to continue.

8. Skills Record requirement

All learners, regardless of the route used to apply for their assessment are required to complete the Skills Record requirements for their BHS assessment.

We recommend the learner is familiar with these requirements before booking their BHS assessment.

9. Re-sitting a BHS Assessment

If a learner is unsuccessful in their BHS assessment, they can re-apply via the standard booking route. No additional RPL application is required.

If a learner is unsuccessful in their initial BHS assessment, they will not be permitted to apply via RPL for a higher level. The learner must complete the assessment/qualification before progressing to a higher level.

10. Requirements for record keeping by the BHS

The BHS must maintain records for all applications for audit and monitoring purposes. This includes, for each candidate:

- Application form (if applicable)
- Supporting evidence submitted
- Evidence of the application outcome being communicated to the candidate

These documents will be kept for five years from the date of application approval, after which they will be disposed of securely.

Records will be maintained securely. Please refer to the [BHS Privacy Notice](#) for further information.