

Guidance note for co-ordinators: RPL Process for qualifications

Xact is constantly updating our processes to improve our effectiveness and customer relationships. We welcome constructive feedback to assist us in this process. In turn, we offer this guidance note to enable co-ordinators to understand the reasons behind delays and difficulties faced by Xact in progressing some RPL applications and to support them to get the most from our service.

1. Completing application form

Please note that incorrectly completed application forms may be returned. Below are some of the ways in which applicants are failing to address questions on three sections of the application form correctly:

- a) **Fire safety activities:** This section asks applicants to *“Summarise a selection of specific fire safety workplace activities which you have carried out in the past 12 months involving significant areas of non-compliance.”*
“I audit factories, hotels, care homes, shops, HMO...” is a common response which does not address the question and means that applicants will not have considered significant fire safety issues they may have encountered when we contact them.
- b) **Courses attended relevant to qualification:** There's a tendency for applicants to list every course they have completed when less than 5% are applicable to question.
- c) **Optional units (Level 4 Diploma only):** Incorrectly completing this section either by not selecting any units or selecting all units presents another challenge. This delays the process because it means the applicant has not considered previously what optional NOS would be appropriate for their workplace activities.

2. Arranging telephone discussion

Significant delays have occurred when applicants do not respond – in some cases for months - to requests from Xact to return calls to discuss suitable workplace activities for RPL evidence.

3. Acceptance of process

Difficulty in engaging applicant in the RPL process. The main factor behind the submission of sub-standard evidence is often an apparent reluctance to engage with the process and accept the requirement to demonstrate to the awarding body **current competence** by using recent evidence and demonstrating:

- i. knowledge and understanding of the subjects
- ii. analysis, interpretation and reasoning

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- iii. logical sequence of reasoning to justify why they have applied the solution/made recommendations in the manner they have and to show why they have not used other approaches that may apply.

Unwillingness to submit to the process is often indicated by:

- a) Complaints of *“I don’t have the time”* or *“This won’t take long, will it? I am very busy”*
- b) Reiteration of the belief that the applicants should be deemed competent by virtue of all the courses they have attended down the years or the fact they have been doing the job for years and are therefore competent.
- c) An expectation that the submission of copies of audit forms will be sufficient to prove competence.
- d) Statements along the lines of: *“I shouldn’t have to do this because I know that I’m competent.”*

4. Identifying suitable workplace activities

Delays are caused in this area due to:

- a) Failure to identify suitable fire safety activities on the application form. See 1a) above
- b) Suitable workplace activities not identified during initial contact. Applicants are provided with clear guidance about what is required and are asked to contact us once they have identified suitable evidence. Significant delays have occurred in this area with some applicants taking months to respond to Xact’s contact.

5. Reading RPL Plan and Evidence Collection Guides (ECG)

Disruptions to the RPL process are caused when applicants have:

- a) not followed the guidance provided in the above documents.
- b) complained that they don’t understand what they have to do when they have not read the guidance provided.
- c) contacted Xact with questions which are addressed in the above documents.

If an applicant does not follow the guidance provided a) their work will be returned and b) we will instruct them to read the guidance provided. In extreme circumstances, we may ask them to address all questions through their line manager/co-ordinator which has been the case with a couple of applicants due to repeated unnecessary requests for information.

6. Following RPL Plan

Problems are raised when applicants decide to use different workplace activities than those agreed in the RPL plan (*Also see 7 below*), causing the following issues:

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- a) Workplace activities selected by the applicant may be unsuitable.
- b) The assessor will reject their evidence because their submitted evidence and RPL plan do not match.

RPL plans can be amended providing changes are agreed with Xact in advance. An amended RPL plan will be forwarded to the applicant.

7. Comparing RPL Plans

Some applicants have compared their RPL plan with those of other applicants, deciding to submit the same amount of evidence as the person with whom they have made the comparison.

Please note that applicants must understand that RPL Plans are individual and there are rational but often complex reasons why one applicant's plan is different to another's. Applicants will be asked to re-submit their evidence as per their individual RPL plan if they opt to not to do so and decide to deviate from the agreed plan.

8. Submitting evidence

Significant delays have occurred in this area due to:

- a) some applicants taking many months to submit evidence following issue of RPL plan.
- b) applicants submitting only part of their evidence. Evidence is only assessed once it has all been received because the assessor is required to examine all the evidence simultaneously so both weaknesses and strengths can be viewed as a whole.
- c) poorly submitted evidence e.g. where there are supporting documents to supplement their responses in an Evidence Collection Guide (ECG) with no cross referencing in the ECG. If the assessor is not able to easily follow which supporting document is applicable to a response, the evidence will be returned for resubmission.
- d) submitting documentation not required, e.g. not requested in Evidence Collection Guide (ECG); reference documents, the documentation will be returned for resubmission.