South Thames Colleges Group

Carshalton College | Kingston College | Merton College | South Thames College

UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS POLICY 2026-27

1. Policy Overview

1.1 Purpose

This policy and associated procedures set out the admission arrangements for prospective students, South Thames Colleges Group (STCG), partner institutions and other organisations wishing to enrol on a higher education programme offered by South Thames Colleges Group (STCG).

1.2 Definitions and Scope

This policy covers admissions to *directly* funded courses, i.e. courses for which tuition fees are paid directly to the College Group, either by the student, their sponsor (such as an employer) or the Student Loans Company (SLC), soon to be called the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE). The type of courses covered by this policy include Higher National Certificates and Diplomas, Foundation Degrees, Honours Degrees and Top-Ups.

For admissions guidance on *indirectly* funded courses, i.e. courses which are taught at South Thames Colleges Group but tuition fees are paid to the franchising university partner, please refer to Partner Institutions' Admissions Policies (see Section 21.2).

The Policy reflects current legislation and funding guidelines and should be read in conjunction with other relevant College policies and procedures. A separate Admissions Policy covers all Further Education courses including Full Time, Part Time, Full Cost Recovery and Apprenticeships.

The Policy will be reviewed annually.

2. Fair Admissions

South Thames Colleges Group seeks to ensure a fair Undergraduate Admissions process which provides equal opportunity for all applicants, regardless of background, to gain admission to a course suited to their ability and aspirations. Our approach to the admission of students also upholds the principles of fair admission outlined in the Schwartz Report (2004), through being transparent, fair, honest, consistent, accessible, personalised and timely.

The policy has been drawn up following examination of best practice guidance from the Office for Students (OfS), Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) and aims to provide an efficient, fair and transparent HE Admissions function to all stakeholders in line with our Group Mission.

3. Customer Service Principles

STCG is committed to delivering high-quality customer service and this is implemented by a set of customer service standards established by the Undergraduate Admissions Team.

4. Quality Assurance

QAA were the designated quality body for Higher Education until 31st March 2023, after which the OfS will assumed responsibility for setting and monitoring standards of UK higher education.

The QAA's revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education sets out the expectations that all HE providers are required to meet on various aspects of their HE provision. South Thames Colleges Group is confident that Undergraduate Admissions processes adhere to the expectation that "all students are provided with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education", and that it "has a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system."

Feedback or complaints on any aspect of the higher education programmes can be made to feedback@stcg.ac.uk or via the anonymous feedback page on the website.

5. Availability of information

Undergraduate courses are currently available at two of the four colleges within South Thames Colleges Group. There are various sources of information for prospective students wishing to research their course choice:

- Information on each course is published on the Group website (www.stcg.ac.uk)
- University partners' websites also include relevant information to prospective applicants for franchised courses
- Prospective applicants are invited to individual college open events
- Prospective applicants are invited to contact college staff by phone or email

If information in alternative formats, such as braille, large print or audio, can be requested via the College based Admission Teams.

6. Changes to information

Under certain circumstances it may become necessary for the STCG to make changes to its staff, facilities and opening hours. This may impact upon the Group's ability to deliver certain courses as described in printed or online materials, or other communications with applicants. In cases where we are unable to continue a course, or certain elements of a course, for reasons beyond our control, we will notify applicants as soon as is practical. However, the Group will strive to ensure that courses delivered are as close to those advertised as possible. Applicants should refer to the Group Student Protection Plan, which is available on the undergraduate pages of the Group website, and its approach to the protection of continuity of study.

7. Admissions Procedures

Applications for undergraduate courses are received in the following ways:

- **Full-time, directly-funded courses:** via UCAS (using the college group institution code K82)
- **Full-time, franchised:** via UCAS (using the university partner's institution code – please see individual course pages or university websites)
- **Part-time:** via the 'Apply Now' button on course pages of the Group website.

Applications will be initially assessed by the relevant college's Admissions Team using a combination of methods outlined under Section 10: 'Entry Criteria'.

Suitably qualified applicants' details are shared with the relevant course tutor, and the applicants invited to interview/test/audition, as appropriate, within ten working days.

7.1 Gold applications

Current students studying within the College Group may wish to take advantage of the Gold application system in order to apply for a course at a College. The Gold application process requires that students verify the details we hold for them are correct.

Personal tutors will be used as references. Applying in this way will not affect your right to a student loan. The Gold application process does not favour internal applicants over external ones as they are all assessed together with external students who will have applied via UCAS and against the same entry criteria, it is simply a different method of collecting applicant data. Gold Applicants data will be shared with UCAS and processed in accordance with their Privacy policy including use for statistical purposes.

7.2 Incomplete applications

In instances where information is missing, incomplete, or more detail is required, the Admissions Team will attempt to contact the applicant via the phone number and/or email address on their application form.

8. Entry Criteria

8.1 Subject requirements

Each undergraduate course has its own entry criteria, outlined on individual course pages on the Group website. These are set by Curriculum staff in order to ensure that suitably qualified applicants are received who have the potential, required knowledge and experience to make success on the course a reasonable expectation.

Criteria *may* include English, Maths or Science GCSEs, Level 3 qualifications such as A level, BTEC or Access qualifications, Level 4 qualifications such as a Higher National Certificate, or Level 5 qualifications such as a Higher National Diploma or Foundation Degree.

Certain courses may express entry criteria in the form of UCAS points. To find out how many points your qualification attracts, or what grade you should be aiming for, check the UCAS points calculator.

Offers are made based upon predicted and actual grades, and in some cases prior work and educational experience, as well as performance at interview/test/audition. Offers will be communicated within ten working days of interview/audition. Please also see appendix A regarding Recognition of Prior Learning.

8.2 Auditions and Portfolios

Some courses which are work-based by nature may require access to relevant employment and/or prior relevant work experience. Please see the Appendix A for information on Recognition of Prior Learning.

Further details on audition requirements for performing arts courses will be sent to applicants with invitations, such as which audition pieces to prepare.

If you have applied for a creative course, you may be asked to bring a portfolio of work with you so that the tutor is able to see the level of your work.

Further information on how applicants will be assessed will be sent with individual interview invitations.

8.3 References

ALL applications require references from either their most recent educational establishment, or their current employer if you have been out of education for more than two years. Confirmation of study/employment alone is not sufficient.

References will be included in UCAS applications, or must be received by post on official, headed paper, or by email directly to the Admissions Team via the referee's professional email address.

8.4 Interviews
Most applicants will be invited to an informal interview with the course leader, providing an opportunity for both sides to get to know each other.

8.5 English language requirements
Students whose first language is not English *may* be required to demonstrate their level of English by providing evidence of a relevant qualification such as IELTS, evidence of having successfully studied in an English-speaking country previously or taking a diagnostic test.

Where evidence is not available and the course leader deems an applicant's level of English to be sufficient, the College Group will not unreasonably withdraw an application on these grounds.

8.6 International student applications
South Thames Colleges Group is a registered Student Route sponsor and a member of EECTIS and therefore welcomes applications from suitably qualified students from outside of the UK. Please note that international students are currently only able to study on courses offered at Kingston College sites.

While qualification equivalence may be worked out in most cases, some native language qualifications may require translating in order for full assessment to be carried out. The college group uses the UK ENIC - UK National Information Centre for Global Qualifications and Skills (ECCTIS) to ascertain qualification equivalence but may, on occasion, request that applicants translate their qualifications via a professional translation service. All international students who do not have settled status or are here from the EU (maximum allowed time 6 months) will require a Student Route Visa to study.

STCG also offers some English courses which are suitable for students on a tourist visa.

For further information on visa requirements, please contact admissions.kingston@stcg.ac.uk

9. Decision-making

Subject leaders will make decisions on applicants based on their application form and performance at interview/test/audition.

All applications received will be assessed, regardless of the time of year or UCAS deadline.

9.1 Contextualised Admissions

Contextual information and data is used by universities and colleges to assess an applicant's prior attainment and potential to succeed in higher education in the context of the circumstances in which their attainment was achieved.

Contextualised admissions is used in an attempt to mitigate factors which may impact on attainment, by using a wider range of indicators to identify who 'merits' a place rather than attainment alone.

South Thames Colleges Group uses contextual data in many ways, including:

- for widening participation - to target aspiration raising, and fair access activities

- to identify applicants who may need additional support or advice during the application process, transition or when registered as a student
- to help assess applicants eligible for financial support
- for statistical and qualitative monitoring and reporting purposes

9.2 Unconscious bias

South Thames Colleges Group staff strive to remain as objective and as consistent as possible in their decisions and procedures for the recruitment and admission of students. Subjective decisions based on unconscious biases (those we are unaware we have) or implicit biases (those fundamental to misconceptions we are aware of) can lead to unfair discrimination, interfere with identifying the best match and perpetuate barriers. As such, South Thames Colleges Group has undertaken to raise awareness, promote understanding and develop mechanisms to support informed admission judgement by our staff and for all applicants.

10. Communication with applicants

Following application, the majority of communication with applicants will be via email. This includes confirmation of application (within 5 days of applying), invitation to interview/test/assessment (within ten days of application), and offer communication (within ten days of interview).

As such, applicants are encouraged to regularly check their spam/junk mail folders in case any emails from us are filtered erroneously by their email client.

Applicants applying via UCAS will also see communication via UCAS Track on the progress of their application. For further information on this, please see the UCAS website.

Applicants should call the Admissions Teams or enquiry lines at each college to discuss a potential or ongoing application, particularly where emails are impractical.

11. Offers/No offers decisions

11.1 Conditional offers

A conditional offer is an offer of a place which means that students have to satisfy certain criteria in order to gain entry to the course. In most cases, the conditions will be the entry criteria for the course. Conditions are not imposed to cause bias or discriminate in any way, they are simply to ensure that enrolling students possess the necessary qualities to successfully complete their chosen course.

11.2 Unconditional offers

Unconditional offers are only used by the STCG in cases where students appear to have met the entry requirements. Students are still required to demonstrate they have at enrolment by way of producing original certificates.

11.3 No offer decision

It may be the case that an applicant does not meet the entry criteria for the course they have applied, or that the assessing tutor felt that they did not meet the entry criteria at interview/ assessment /audition. If this is the case, we may suggest an alternative course to improve your skills, or suggest that you re-apply at a future date, having gained more relevant experience. Decisions like these are taken in the interest of the applicant, and should not be viewed as a personal criticism.

12. Confirmation and Clearing

12.1 Confirmation

STCG will receive exam results under embargo up to one week before students in August. STCG cannot at any point during this time discuss whether or not an applicant has been successful. On publication day, following the publication of results, offers will updated on UCAS Track.

12.2 Clearing

Any applicants who may have entered UCAS Clearing will still be able to apply to the College by calling the Clearing hotline or send an email to the clearing email address – clearing@stcg.ac.uk. Depending on staff availability, applicants may be given a phone interview, invited in for a face to face interview/audition, or called back at a later time/date.

Applications will also be accepted in person by attending at one of the Group's Colleges. While the College will endeavour to provide a decision on applications within 24 hours, a process which may include a telephone interview, some courses will require an audition/selection test or assessment of portfolio, and the College undertakes to provide this opportunity within 5 working days of application.

13. Withdrawing applications

Applicants have the right to withdraw their applications at any stage throughout the cycle by emailing Admissions Team. Please see section 23.9 for contact details. The College Group does not accept liability for any fees incurred on the applicant's part via UCAS or any other body who may have assisted in the application. Please note that once you have enrolled a separate Withdrawing Undergraduate Students Fee Policy applies, which includes information on fee liability.

14. Deferring applications

Should an applicant choose to defer their application until the following year, they can do so by emailing Admissions Team. Please see section 23.9 for contact details. The College will contact the applicant during the academic year to confirm they still wish to pursue their chosen course.

15. Enrolment

Enrolment will be in person and offer-holders will be told beforehand via email the date and time to attend, and what to bring with them. Enrolling staff will check how the student intends to pay for their course, verify qualifications (particularly those related to entry requirements/offer conditions), and tutors will discuss applicant module choices with them, where relevant. Learners will also be asked to sign the College Learner Agreement.

In the event of any circumstance where enrolments in person are not permissible, you will be sent a link where you will be able to check and confirm your details on our enrolment portal. This will generate an electronic College Learner Agreement.

The course start date will not necessarily be the same as the enrolment day; you will be separately advised of this in advance by your department.

16. Terms and conditions

Students should refer, for the terms and conditions of their study at South Thames Colleges Group, to a number of sources of information readily available to them including;

- a learner agreement signed upon enrolment,

- a student code of conduct published on the College's website which outlines the expectations that they as students can have of the college and the expectations that the college has of them as learners - Student Code of Conduct
- a range of clearly titled academic and non-academic policies published also on the website - About our Policies
- and detailed information about their course of study provided within a course handbook which will be issued at induction. For those students studying on a course which is offered in collaboration with a partner university links will be incorporated within the handbook to the appropriate university's academic and other regulations.

All students will benefit from an induction event shortly after their enrolment. A key element of induction will be to ensure that students fully understand all the elements of the student contract.

17. Right to cancel

Offer holders have 14 days to change their mind having accepted their offer, as well as 14 days after enrolling on the course. Withdrawing from the course later than this may mean the student is still liable for a portion of the fees. See the separate Withdrawing Undergraduate Students Fee Policy for further information in fee liability, available under the 'Undergraduate' sections of each Colleges' website.

18. Mature students

Mature students are defined as any student aged 21 or over at the start of their studies. Applicants, who have been out of education for a while, may wish to consider an Access to HE, Foundation Year, Foundation Degree or HNC (Higher National Certificate) course before committing fully to Honours Degree level study. In many cases, work experience can be considered in lieu of qualifications, particularly where the experience is relevant to the course subject.

19. Regulatory and Legal Environment

19.1 Age discrimination

In line with The Equality Act, and the Public Sector Equality Duty, South Thames Colleges Group has measures in place to prevent unfair treatment, direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment or victimisation based on protected characteristics such as age. Anyone who feels they have been untreated unfairly by a college within the group or its representatives must refer to the relevant college's complaint procedure.

19.2 Awarding partners' admissions policies

Each of our partner institutions have their own admissions policies and procedures available from their websites:

- Canterbury Christ Church University
- Kingston University London
- Middlesex University London
- University of Roehampton
- St Mary's University - Twickenham

Applicants considering an application to an indirectly funded course (see section 1.2) should apply and follow the partners admissions policy.

19.3 Competition and Consumer Protection Law

Group Colleges are subject to EU and UK competition law because they supply goods or services to the education market. Under Consumer Protection Law, undergraduate applicants are considered consumers since they are paying for a product/service. The College Group complies with the requirement of Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) regulations in the provision of relevant pre-contract information to applicants before, during, and after application.

19.4 Data/General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

In dealing with applications, we are dealing with your personal data. South Thames College Group complies with the Data Protection Act 2018 and thus General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and has established GDPR Procedures. If you suspect there has been a breach of regulations on our part, please inform the College Group Data Controller, identified in the College GDPR Procedures, as soon as possible.

In order to comply with the Data Protection Act students who are 18 years or older, or who turn 18 during the application process or during their course will be communicated with directly. Exceptions to this rule (e.g. vulnerable adults) will apply and in such cases communication with parents/guardians will continue.

19.5 Disability discrimination

The Equality Act says a disability is a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities (see section 23.6). If applicants have one of these conditions and feel they have suffered discrimination because of it, they can make a claim for unlawful discrimination. For further information, see the Citizens Advice website.

19.6 External agencies

Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)

UCAS operates the application process for many universities and colleges in the UK. South Thames Colleges Group full-time directly-funded undergraduate courses receive applications through this system. Our partnership with UCAS helps us to connect with prospective students, advertise courses, receive and manage applications for admission, manage interactions with prospective students, plan and manage student numbers, complete statutory reporting, and ensure that our admissions processes are fair and transparent.

United Kingdom Visas and Immigration (UKVI)

UK Visas and Immigration is a division of the Home Office responsible for the United Kingdom's visa system. Of the colleges within South Thames Colleges Group, only Kingston College is listed on the UKVI register of licensed sponsors, meaning only this college can accept applications from students requiring a Tier 4 visa. The college was assessed for compliance, and passed, in February 2018, and the next assessment is due in November 2020 (see section 10.11).

UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA)

UKCISA is a membership organisation for institutions working with international students and provides information and advice directly to students. College group staff work with UKCISA for advice, training, guidance, discussion and debate about all aspects of the international student experience, including immigration, fees, student support, mental health and orientation.

19.7 Rehabilitation of Offenders Act

All applicants are required to disclose any relevant unspent criminal convictions, and those who do will attend a risk assessment interview. Please see the Group's Criminal Conviction Procedure for

further details. Once convictions are spent, the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act gives applicants the right not to disclose any convictions they might have when applying for a course. We will usually only ask for unspent convictions.

Certain courses, such as BA (Hons) Integrative Relational Counselling, might ask for a DBS check, which will show any unspent convictions, cautions, warnings or reprimands along with any spent convictions and cautions that are not eligible for filtering.

20. Complaints

South Thames Colleges Group has a complaints procedure specifically for Higher Education students applying to a directly-funded course. Please send your complaint to he.admissions@stcg.ac.uk.

21. Appeals

The Admissions Team will provide an initial decision via email within ten working days. The applicant has the right to appeal the decision in writing.

For those applying to franchised courses, please see procedures for the relevant university partner on their respective websites.

Any admission appeals should be sent in writing to the College Principal, within 5 working days from the decision being communicated.

Appeals will only be considered on the following grounds:

• There is new evidence that was not earlier considered and could have been expected to have materially affected the decision

• The College did not adhere to its own policies and procedures when arriving at the original decision.

Appeals will be considered by the College Principal or their nominated Senior Manager, whose decision is final.

The decision to be communicated as soon as reasonably practical and no later than 20 college working days of the appeal being received.

Complaints about the Admissions process can be found within the Group's Compliments, Complaints and Feedback Policy.

22. Student Finance and Course Costs

22.1 Course fees

Course fees are displayed on the website. Any fee increments are calculated in line with inflation. Non-payment of course fees will result in students being unable to enrol, or being barred from their course, and in some cases award certificates may be withheld.

22.2 Fee assessment

For details on fee assessment and loan eligibility, please see the gov.uk website.

22.3 Additional costs

While each course has its own tuition fee, there may be certain courses where additional funds will be necessary for field trips, equipment, materials, bench fees or studio hire. These costs will be provided in advance on the relevant course page of the college website.

22.4 Student finance

The process known as specific course designation allows eligible students on a designated course to access student support loans from the Student Loans Company (SLC). Providers wishing to have their courses designated must meet criteria set by the Government for quality, academic performance, course eligibility, financial sustainability, management and governance.

All of South Thames Colleges Group's undergraduate courses have received specific course designation, and as such students are able to access SLC loans. Students are able to apply as soon as they have submitted their course application, and change course details or cancel their application later, if circumstances change. For information on eligibility, liability and repayment, please see the gov.uk website.

22.5 Scholarships and Bursaries

Information on available bursaries, which have been approved as part of the College Group's Access and Participation Plan, is available on the Group website.

22.6 Student Support and Disabled Students' Allowance

Comprehensive Student Support arrangements are outlined on each of our colleges' websites. Applicants are encouraged to advise of any disabilities or additional learning needs in advance of enrolment, so that our colleges can make suitable arrangements. In some cases, it may be necessary to apply for Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA). For information on this, see the gov.uk website.

22.7 Withdrawing students

Depending on the time of year, students wishing to withdraw may be liable for a portion of course fees. Information on this is available here: Withdrawing Undergraduate Students Fee Policy .
Students must notify their college and Student Finance England of their intention to withdraw in writing. Failure to do so may cause increased liability, or affect future loan eligibility.

22.8 Repeating/returning students

Retaking whole year (academic failure)

Where a student is required to retake the whole academic year due to academic failure, they will be charged the full amount for the original year, as well as the year in which they are repeating.

Retaking whole year (mitigating circumstances)

In instances where it can be demonstrated that circumstances such as poor health adversely affected a student's grades or attendance and these have been approved at the relevant assessment board, these circumstances will be considered when deciding on the proportion of fees to charge by the Vice Principal for Higher Education.

Retaking certain modules

Where only certain modules are being retaken, the proportion of fees to be charged to the student will be a proportion of tuition fees consistent with the volume of study required and the relevant awarding body fee.

Notifying Student Finance England

SFE must be immediately informed by the student of any intention to suspend their studies. Failure to do so may affect loan eligibility if the student intends to resume studies later on.

22.9 Contact details

Kingston College
admissions.Kingston@stcg.ac.uk

Carshalton College
admissions.carshalton@stcg.ac.u
South Thames College
admissions.wandsworth@stcg.ac.uk
Merton
admissions.merton@stcg.ac.uk

Appendix A

Recognition of Prior Learning Policy & Procedure

Introduction

1.1. The purpose of this policy is to provide prospective students, South Thames Colleges Group staff, partner institutions and organisations with a guide to the admission of students onto undergraduate programmes within the Group, who have evidence of previous study at this level. The policy has been drawn up following examination of sector best practice guidance from the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and aims to provide an efficient, fair and transparent Undergraduate Admissions function for all colleges within the Group in line with our Equality Policy.

1.2. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a way of assessing whether a learner is able to demonstrate the knowledge, understanding and skills necessary to meet assessment requirements for a unit, module or qualification. This is because it would be unusual for learners to be able to demonstrate prior achievement to match every single aspect of a whole qualification's assessment requirements.

1.3. By recognising prior learning, the College aims to:

- Assist students/applicants to meet their personal objectives
- Ease the access of all mature learners into education and training
- Give credit to learners in areas in which they have prior learning
- Develop the Group image as a centre for advice, education and training
- Promote lifelong learning

1.4. **Recognition of Prior Certified Learning**

Recognition of Prior Certified Learning (RPCL) assesses whether applicants' prior *qualifications* can be considered in lieu of certain modules on the course they are applying to study.

On obtaining RPCL applicants may be able to start their course at a later stage, or reduce its duration. Applicants must consult the course leader as soon as possible prior to the start of their course if they wish to be considered.

1.5 **Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning**

Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) is a process for assessing *work experience* in the field of your studies for credit on your course. Course leaders will be able to discuss the RPEL module requirements with applicants, who may need to start this process before the start of their course.

It is possible to combine credit for learning (RPCL) and credit for learning from experience (RPEL) to start a course at a higher level.

RPEL is of particular value to learners without formal qualifications who may be in employment and preparing to enter formal studies.

Learners are asked to compile a portfolio of evidence that matches the current unit/module/qualification assessment requirements. Prior achievement that would provide evidence of current knowledge, understanding and skills will vary from sector to sector.

For any RPEL request the assessor needs to examine the applicant's evidence with the same rigour that would be applied to the work of any student taking the programme of study and judge whether they meet the assessment criteria and the standards established by the awarding/examining body.

All RPL requests are processed by a member of staff with appropriate expertise to support and assure the RPL process and in some cases will require the confirmation and support of awarding bodies.

1.5. RPL is not concerned with the exceptional entry to, or exemption from, a programme of study and should not be confused with unit/programme credit and exemptions. If the applicant already has a unit/programme accredited to them and it is part of the qualification they are pursuing, then they do not have to repeat it.

Procedure

1.6. Each of our partner universities has its own RPL policies and procedures available from their websites, which may be relevant where courses at the College are offered in partnership, and where university academic regulations apply:

- Canterbury Christ Church University – information under entry requirements
- Kingston University London – talk to university departmental staff
- Middlesex University London – information under entry requirements
- University of Roehampton – separate RPL policy
- St Marys - https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/policies/view-all.aspx

1.7. **Pearson** also has its own RPL policy and process, which will be relevant where we offer HNCs/HNDs in partnership, outlined here.

1.8. A general overview of the process for RPL within the group is outlined below, with common steps and actions. The precise steps and evidence required will depend upon the awarding body/partner institutions, learning outcomes and the assessment criteria of the programme/award.

Stage 1 – Awareness, information and guidance

As part of the application or enrolment process an applicant or tutor may raise the possibility that they may be able to claim credit for some of their previous learning/experience. If the applicant is interested, they will need to know:

- The process of claiming achievement by using RPL
- Sources of support and guidance available to them
- Timelines
- Appeals processes

Stage 2 – Pre-assessment/gathering evidence and giving information

At this stage the applicant will carry out the process of collecting evidence against the

requirements of the relevant unit(s)/module(s). In some cases, the development of an assessment plan and tracking document or similar may be required to support the applicant through the process. The evidence gathered will need to meet the standards of the unit/module, or part of unit/module, that the evidence is being used for.

Stage 3 – Assessment/documentation of evidence
Assessment as part of RPEL is a structured process for gathering and reviewing evidence and making judgments about a student's prior learning and experience in relation to unit/module standards and requirements. The assessor may be looking at work experience records, validated by managers; previous portfolios of evidence put together by the applicant or essays and reports validated as being the applicant's own unaided work.

Assessment must be valid and reliable to ensure the integrity of the award of credit and, as above, the evidence gathered needs to meet the standards/requirements of the unit/module, or part of the unit/module, for which the evidence is being used.

The prior achievement that would provide evidence of current knowledge will vary from sector to sector. If the currency of any evidence is in doubt, the assessor may use questions to check understanding, and ask for a demonstration of skills to check competence. The assessment process will be subject to the usual quality assurance procedures of the College, for example internal standardisation and internal verification as well as the partner institutions'/awarding bodies' quality assurance procedures.

Assessment as part of RPCL does not require a portfolio, but evidence of the qualification previously achieved and in particular of the matched learning outcomes.

Stage 4 – Claiming certification
Once the internal and external quality assurance procedures have been successfully completed, certification claims can be made by the College with the relevant partner institution. Assessment and internal verification records, along with any additional RPL records completed, should be retained for the standard three-year period following certification.

Stage 5 – Appeal
An applicant wishing to appeal against a decision made about their assessment of their request will need to refer to the College's Assessment Policy.

1.9. In conducting any assessment of potential RPL it is only possible to accredit a whole unit/module. The assessor will examine the applicant's evidence and judge whether they have demonstrated that they meet the assessment criteria. They may conclude that some of a unit/programme assessment criterion are met by the evidence, but that some criteria are not. At this point they will give feedback to the student about what has been met and what evidence is still needed.

NB: The term 'recognition of prior learning' (RPL) has been used in connection with the QCF and RQF Higher Nationals as well as Degree qualifications. Similar terms at partner institutions include 'accreditation of prior learning' (APL), 'accreditation of prior experiential learning' (APEL), 'accreditation of prior achievement' (APA), 'accreditation of prior learning and achievement' (APLA).