

Recognition of Prior Learning Policy – Higher Education

Owner: VP HTE	Related Strategies: HLSS
Relevant to: Heads of Academy, Learner Services, Teachers	

Office Use only:

Corporate Intranet Family: Curriculum and Quality	Approval Board/Committee/Group: ELT Executive Owner: DCEP	Approval/Re-approval Date: June 2021	Implementation Date: July 2021	Next Review Date: July 2022
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New Policy or Substantive Policy Review

Version	Date	Policy Development Agreed by (Executive Owner)	Policy Development Author	Draft Policy Verified by	Policy Approval	Impact Assessment (if applicable)
1	June 2021		VP HTE			

Rationale for new or substantive policy review	This policy has been identified as being needed following external review with the OU
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Please make explicit if change/review relates to procedures, guidelines and associated documents only

Periodic Policy Review / Change History

Version	Date of Review / Revision	Description of Change	Reviewed By	Approved By (Executive Owner)
1	Oct 21	4.9 Expiration on RPL evidence 4.18 Link to OU assessment regulations 6.1 RPL application time-limit 7. Policy Monitoring & Evaluation	QEM	

Communication

To be agreed by Executive Leadership Team

Announcement on hub <input type="checkbox"/>	SLT email <input type="checkbox"/>
College newsletter <input type="checkbox"/>	All staff email /
SLT meeting <input type="checkbox"/>	Cascade brief <input type="checkbox"/>
External website /	Training needed (specify who) <input type="checkbox"/>

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1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this document is to provide support, clarification and guidance to assessors on the College's Policy regarding the recognition of a learner's previous work-related achievements and / or qualifications.
- 1.2. The College will work with Awarding Organisations to ensure assessment policy, processes and procedures are up to date and reflect the changing impact of Covid-19 in accordance with government guidelines
- 1.3. In line with policy review dates centres will check with Awarding Organisations for continued authorisation or RPL

2. Audience

- 2.1. It is of particular relevance to those responsible for supporting Higher Education (HE) learners in their choice of qualification and to those responsible for planning and quality assuring assessment.

3. Scope

- 3.1. This document applies to all qualifications on credit-based frameworks. These include the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), National Qualifications Framework (NQF), Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF), Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and the Scottish Qualifications Framework (SQF)

4. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Defined

- 4.1. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a form of assessment which makes use of evidence of a learner's previous non - certificated achievements to demonstrate competence or achievement within a unit or qualification. Through the RPL process, evidence of a candidate's previous achievement (learning) is assessed against the learning outcomes of a unit.
- 4.2. Students wishing to transfer from one HE provider to another may do so in accordance with [Student Transfer Arrangements](#) – which may include the transfer of Credit (4.5.)
- 4.3. **Recognition of prior Certificated Learning (RPCL)** - Recognition of learning which has been undertaken but has not resulted in credits, such as non-UK awards, professional development - this may have been formally assessed
- 4.4. **Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)** - This is the recognition of learning which has been achieved through experience, for example, in the work-place or through voluntary activities
- 4.5. **Credit Transfer** - Allows credit awarded by one higher education awarding body to be recognised and included towards the requirements for a programme at another higher education provider; or that allows credit gained on a particular programme to contribute towards the requirements of a different one.
- 4.6. For Higher Education, as per the UK Quality Code:

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“The recognition of prior experiential learning involved an assessment process on the part of the academic staff within the college that leads to recognition. Recognition is given through the awarding of credit. The essential feature of this process is the learning gained through experience which is being assessed, not the experience itself.”

“Prior Certified learning related to prior learning (such as professional development or employment-based award) which is at higher education level, but which has not led to the awarding of credits or qualifications on the FHEQ. A process of assessment enables a decision to be made about whether the learning is suitable for recognition.”

- 4.7. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a method of assessment [leading to the award of credit] that considers whether learners can demonstrate that they can meet the assessment requirements for a unit through knowledge, understanding or skills they already possess and so do not need to develop through a course of learning.
- 4.8. RPL restrictions normally apply for programmes where there are Professional, Statutory & Regulatory Bodies (e.g., Professional Practice, Licence to Practice, Regulated Professions), these should be referenced against PSRB/course specific admission requirements for RPL permit.
- 4.9. Evidence to accompany RPL should be a maximum of five years prior to the enrolment date of the programme of study.
- 4.10. When to use RPEL:

The RPEL process is relevant where an individual has evidence of having previously learned something but have never received formal recognition for it through a qualification or other form of certification. However, evidence can draw on any aspect of a candidate’s prior experience, which are documented in some form (e.g., letters/references, publications, technical specification, reports etc.), including:

- Domestic / family life
- Education and training
- Work activities
- Community or voluntary activities

4.11. Assessment of RPL Evidence

RPL assessment should be referenced across any Awarding Organisation regulations. Evidence obtained through RPL must therefore meet the same rigorous quality criteria that other assessment methods must conform to. It remains the role of assessors and quality assurance staff to ensure that evidence is:

- 4.12. *Valid:* Does the evidence genuinely demonstrate that the demands of the learning outcome have been met? For RPL, currency of evidence will be of particular concern. Does, for example, the evidence meet up-to-date demands or is it representative of practice that has significantly changed?
- 4.13. *Authentic:* This involves consideration of whether the evidence being examined is genuinely the work of the learner. For example, the evidence may have been produced by somebody else, or may be the result of the work of a team. In the

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latter case, this would be acceptable if the learning outcome was related to team / joint working, but not if it was being used as evidence of an activity which should have been carried out individually.

4.14. *Sufficient:* There must be enough evidence to fully meet the requirements of the learning outcome, or learning outcomes being considered. If there is insufficient evidence to fully meet requirements, then evidence obtained through RPL must be complemented by evidence gained through other suitable assessment method(s) before requirements can be said to have been met.

4.15. *Reliable:* The evidence obtained through RPL should be such that an assessor would arrive at the same assessment decision, were the assessment to be repeated.

If individuals can produce relevant evidence, that meets learning outcome requirements then, recognition can be given for their existing knowledge, understanding or skills.

4.16. Ofqual issued a statement qualifying the use of RPL by explaining:

“Learners are unlikely to have all the evidence they need to achieve a full unit and may need to produce additional evidence. Evidence used for RPL is not time-limited but assessors must determine whether it is current, valid and authentic. RPL may be used in current conjunction with other assessment methods such as examination of recent products, professional discussion or observation to assess current performance”.

4.17. This means that if an individual can meet all the learning outcomes and assessment criteria in a unit, then they can claim credit for that unit solely on the basis of their RPL achievement. If, however, evidence from RPL is only sufficient to cover one or more learning outcomes, or to partly meet the need of a learning outcome, then additional assessment methods should be employed to generate the sufficient evidence required to make a safe assessment decision. Since evidence from RPL is similar to that derived via any other acceptable assessment method, where the standard of a unit is met by evidence obtained from credit can be claimed.

4.18. Standard credit amounts for RPL claims are 15, 20 or 30, with the minimum amount at 15 credits. The maximum number of credits for RPL is only permissible for 50% of overall qualification credits (e.g., if 120, student may only apply for 60 RPL credits). However, as per awarding body requirements for OU, reference section 22 of [OU assessment regulations](#) and section 5 of this policy; for SHU provision reference the [RPL Policy](#).

4.19. Should students wish to appeal RPL decisions, they will need to do so via the [Appeals Policy](#)

5. RPL & Open University

5.1. Students who are able to demonstrate that they have already fulfilled some of the learning outcomes of the programme by means other than attendance on the planned programme, and will be able, by completing the remaining requirements, 27 to fulfil the learning outcomes of the programme and attain the standard required for the award, may be admitted with advanced standing, thus exempting them from some modules or stages of the programme.

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- 5.2. If the student's prior learning is not certificated, the partner institution itself will assess the student's learning directly, either by requiring the applicant to take the normal progression assessments of the programme or by some other appropriate form of assessment. This will be laid out in the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy and procedure as approved by OU at Institutional approval or review.
- 5.3. A student admitted on the basis of uncertificated learning and experience or through prior certified learning is subject to the same principles of admission as all other students on that programme. Subject to the requirements of any Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements the partner institution has discretion to admit a student with exemption from certain elements of the programme or with specific credit.
- 5.4. A student may be awarded recognition for prior learning (certified, experiential or uncertified), towards the requirements of a named award up two-thirds* of the total credit requirements for that award. *two-thirds of RPL is only permitted for full, three-year bachelor's degrees (360 credits) or full Masters degrees (a minimum of 180 credits) and not sub-awards, where the usual maximum is 50%.
- 5.5. Performance in work for which an award of credit for prior learning has been made is not taken into account in the calculation of the final award.
- 5.6. Recognition for prior learning (certified, experiential or uncertified) is not permitted at level 6 of a Bachelor's Degree or for the thesis/dissertation module, where students are expected to complete 120 credits in order to gain the award.
- 5.7. Recognition for prior learning (certified, experiential or uncertified) is not permitted for the thesis/dissertation module on a PG programme.
- 5.8. The Partner Institution will be satisfied that an individual applicant has fulfilled some of the progression and assessment requirements of the programme by means other than attendance on the planned programme, and will be able by completing the remaining requirements to fulfil the learning outcomes of the programme and attain the standard required for the award, that student may be admitted to an appropriate point in the programme.
- 5.9. The RPL policy allows for candidates to enter stage 2 or stage 3 of an undergraduate qualification on the basis of completion of an appropriate certificated qualification from a recognised UK HE programme of study.
- 5.10. With stage exemption of this kind, it will be recorded on the student's transcript that stage exemption was awarded, but credit for the stage(s) from which the student was exempted would not be transferred to OU validated awards.

6. Procedure

- 6.1. In order for RPL/credit transfer to be valid, any RPL/Credit Transfer assessment must be undertaken in accordance with the following procedure. Ensuring that:
 - The student completes an Expression of Interest form – logging their RPL/Credit Transfer Request (Appendix 1).

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- Applications for RPL for taught programmes should normally be made at the same time an application. Applications received more than 4 weeks after enrolment on a programme shall not be considered (subject to any awarding partner and/or PSRB regulations).
 - It is carried out by Programme staff with relevant levels of expertise to meet the requirements of the assessment strategy/guidance for the qualification concerned (e.g., Programme/Module Leaders)
 - For Credit Transfer, students are admitted in line with 4.2. [Student Transfer Arrangements](#)
 - The Programme Team consults with External Examiners, and Academic Tutors/Link Tutors, on any potential RPL/transfers, for approval
 - For Credit Transfer and RPCL, evidence of previous study will need to be made available (Pass mark and above for Credit Transfer)
 - Outcomes are logged centrally by the Programme Team and communicated with the HE Office
- 6.2. The methods of assessment used will be determined by the assessment strategy for the qualification being assessed but might, for example, include:
- examination of documents,
 - witness testimony
 - reflective accounts
 - professional discussion.
- 6.3. The RPL assessment should be carried out as an entire process. This means that the assessor should:
- plan with the learner
 - make a formal assessment decision
 - feedback assessment decisions to the learner, confirming decision and giving guidance on the available options (particularly in situations where the decision has been not to award credit.)
 - maintain appropriate records
 - ensure that learners are aware of their right to access the appeals process should they feel the assessment decision was unfair
- 6.4. The assessor must ensure that all learning outcomes and assessment criteria being claimed are covered and that records of assessment are maintained in the usual way. The process must be subject to the same quality assurance requirements as any other assessment method.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

- 7.1. The College will review the policy annually. This review will take into account the views of students and stakeholders.

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- 7.2. The Programme Team will be required to report on student applications of RPL (e.g., number of applications, RPL credit, performance and progression) in Faculty review and annual monitoring, to evaluate and monitor RPL outcomes.
- 7.3. The College will use RPL information to improve the quality of its services and to check how effective the process is for supporting students.

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Appendix 1 – RPL/Credit Transfer Expression of Interest

Recognition of Prior Learning/Credit Transfer

Recognition of Prior Learning related to formal recognition of learning which has taken place prior to the start of your course. This allows you to claim credit against one or more module(s), providing you meet Learning Outcomes associated with module(s), are able to evidence RPL and your assessment is accepted.

There are different types of RPL:

- RPCL - Certified learning is learning that you have credit for and that you can evidence through a transcript or certificate.
- RPEL - Experiential learning is prior experience that you want to be considered in lieu of credit.
- Credit Transfer is from one Higher Education course to another Higher Education course.

If you believe you are eligible for RPL, please complete the following form and email to the Programme and Modules Leaders of the relevant course is based. If you are not sure who this is, please contact the HE Office (Julia.Mills@sheffcol.ac.uk)

Applications for RPL for taught programmes should normally be made at the same time an application. Applications received more than 4 weeks after enrolment on a programme shall not be considered (subject to any awarding partner and/or PSRB regulations).

As per above, evidence will need to be provided to support your claim

Name:	
Student ID (if applicable):	
Address:	
Email address:	
Phone number:	
Preferred contact method:	Phone / email <i>(please delete as appropriate)</i>
Name of course that you want to claim prior learning against:	
Type of claim:	Accredited learning / Experiential learning* / Credit Transfer <i>(please delete as appropriate)</i>