

Recognition of Prior Learning

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Revision History

Version	Date	New/Replacement	Summary of Changes
1	Jan 2025	New	New Policy – complete rewrite of previous policy
2	Oct 2025	Revision	Reviewed – clarity provided under section 3. <i>Principles</i> to distinguish what applies to UCEN Manchester awards and awards by other HEIs.

Contents

1. Scope and Purpose of Policy	4
2. Policy Statement.....	4
3. Principles	4
4. Criteria for Assessment.....	5
5. Procedures	7
6. Appeals	7
7. Equality and Diversity	7
8. Associated Policies and Procedures	7
Appendix 1 Definitions	8
Appendix 2 Application Form	9

1. Scope and Purpose of Policy

This policy applies to all higher education awards within UCEN Manchester. Its purpose is to ensure that the HE Recognition of Prior Learning Policy (RPL) policy and procedures are implemented consistently across UCEN Manchester and that the requirements of awarding bodies are met. In addition, the HE RPL policy and procedures are fully informed by the requirements of awarding bodies, the revised UK Quality Code and the QAA Guidelines on RPL.

UCEN Manchester recognises learning wherever it may take place, and that knowledge and skills can be acquired from a whole range of learning experiences, both formal and informal. The term recognition of prior learning is used to denote the process by which a substantial and significant element of prior learning is identified, mapped against requirements and formally recognised. We therefore encourage credit transfer and RPL as a means of entry to, or credit within, all our programmes. Such recognition will take place within the context of UCEN Manchester's policy and procedures and within specific requirements of any external awarding bodies. Definitions of the terminology used within this document can be found in Appendix 1.

2. Policy Statement

The aim of the policy is to enable individuals to:

- Claim exemption against credit without necessarily undertaking formal training and/or sitting examinations for identified areas of learning
- Identify their own training and development needs and be in control of their progress
- Gain recognition for their knowledge, experience and skills
- Meet employer needs to ensure the accreditation and flexibility of their workforce

3. Principles

- a. Policies and procedures will be explicit, applied fairly and consistently and outcomes will be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis
- b. RPL can be used for pre-entry, post-entry or credit transfer applications
- c. Information and guidance will clearly outline the roles and responsibilities and the process for making an RPL claim including preparation, submission and assessment of a claim for accreditation.
- d. Decisions regarding RPL are a matter of academic judgment. The decision-making process and outcomes will be transparent and demonstrably rigorous and fair.
- e. Judgments will be made on the basis of recognised learning wherever it takes place, subject to its identification and assessment and an appropriate evidence base.
- f. RPL can only be considered against Levels 4 & 5.

- g. The minimum credit value is 10 credits and the maximum 180 credits out of 240 credit programmes or 240 credits out 360 credit programmes.
- h. RPL claims can be made against single modules to a maximum of 50% of a level, or against a whole level
- i. For RPCL claims, the prior study being considered for recognition should have been completed no more than 5 years prior to enrolment on the programme which the credit is being claimed.
- j. For RPEL claims the experience being considered should typically be no more than 5 years old
- k. Any credit for RPL will be identified as such on student transcripts and will be excluded from average grade calculations (recorded as a pass with no grade associated)
- l. For RPCL claims, the prior study being considered for recognition should have been completed no more than 5 years prior to enrolment on the programme which the credit is being claimed.
- m. For RPEL claims the experience being considered should typically be no more than 5 years old
- n. Any credit for RPL will be identified as such on student transcripts and will be excluded from average grade calculations (recorded as a pass with no grade associated)
- o. Recognition may only be given in line with the limits imposed by individual awarding bodies through their accreditation process.
- p. For awards not validated by UCEN Manchester further requirements may need to be met.

[Manchester Metropolitan University RPL Regulations](#)
[Sheffield Hallam University RPL Regulations](#)
[Huddersfield University RPL Regulations](#)
[Pearson RPL Regulations](#)

4. Criteria for Assessment

Claims for RPL will be evaluated against the following criteria:

- i. **Acceptability** - is there an appropriate match between the evidence presented and the learning being demonstrated? Is the evidence valid and reliable?
- ii. **Sufficiency** - is there sufficient evidence to demonstrate fully the achievement of the learning claimed?
- iii. **Authenticity** - is the evidence clearly related to the applicant's or student's own efforts and achievements?
- iv. **Currency** - does the evidence relate to current learning? Are there any professional, statutory or regulatory bodies' specific requirements and, if so, have these been addressed?
- v. **Directness** – was the learning specific? Can it be identified and categorised?
- vi. **Relevance** – is the learning relevant to the claim/future programme?
- vii. **Level** – did the learning reach the appropriate level to allow the learner to

benefit from the proposed programme?

- viii. **Breadth** – was the learning in a context understood by the learner?
- ix. **Volume** – was the prior notional learning time, or academic credit, equivalent to the amount of credit being sought for exemption?

5. Procedures

The RPL procedure will specifically identify:

- Roles and responsibilities within the process for claiming RPL
- Evidence requirements
- Volume and level for which applications of credit may be made
- Timing of applications
- Confirmation of parity/comparison of international qualifications through Naric
- Currency of prior learning
- Feedback mechanisms
- Learning support available to students

6. Appeals

In every instance the final arbiter of any RPL application will be the awarding body. Appeals against decisions for UCEN Manchester and Pearson provision should be made in accordance with the Academic Appeals procedure.

Appeals against decisions for courses validated by other partners should be made in accordance with the process for that validating partner.

7. Equality and Diversity

This policy will be implemented in accordance with the College's Equality Diversity and Inclusivity Policy (Students) and with consideration of RPL guidelines set out by awarding bodies and where appropriate, the UK Quality Code.

8. Associated Policies and Procedures

- q. RPL Procedure
- r. RPL Student Guide
- s. Academic Appeals Policy
- t. Relevant awarding body academic regulations

Appendix 1

Definitions

Academic Credit is awarded to a student in recognition of the verified achievement of specific learning outcomes at a specified academic level. The academic level denotes the intellectual demand and the amount of credit denotes the volume of learning.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) (formerly known as Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)); the demonstration, assessment and formal recognition of prior learning and achievement. This may either be prior certificated learning or prior experiential learning.

Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL); a process through which learning achieved outside of formal education or training is assessed and, as appropriate, recognised for academic purposes, sometimes with an award of academic credit.

Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL); a process through which previously assessed and certificated learning is considered and as appropriate, recognised for academic purposes, sometimes with an award of academic credit.

Recognition of concurrent learning (RCL); a process that acknowledges the learning that takes place outside the UCEN Manchester scheduled teaching programme, e.g. another higher education provider (such as in ‘study abroad’), or learning from experiences at work, volunteering or in the community, that can be directly assessed or contribute to the assessment process, and as appropriate, recognised for academic purposes.

RPL for Admission; Where an applicant applies for admission to the start of a programme based on their prior learning. Often used where the applicant does not meet the standard entry requirements.

RPL for Academic Credit; Where a student/applicant applies for academic credit towards their programme, based on their prior learning. This may take the form of advanced standing, admission with credit or both.

Advanced Standing/Direct entry; Similar to “admission with credit” but where an RPL claim is made successfully for a substantial volume of academic credit allowing direct entry to a named award at an intermediate level, e.g. entering an undergraduate programme at FHEQ level 5 or level 6, instead of level 4.

Admission with Credit; Commencing a programme of study having successfully entered an RPL claim resulting in the award of academic credit toward a named award that amounts to less than a full academic year of credit, e.g. less than 120 credits at undergraduate level.

Appendix 2 Application Form

Application for approval of credit recognising prior learning (RPL)

To be used only for UCEN Manchester Validated Programmes, Pearson and SEG Level 4 programmes

Surname	Forename(s)
Address:	
Email address:	

Present employer (if relevant):	Post held:
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UCEN Manchester Programme Title:	
Programme Start Date:	
RPL Programme Title and Awarding Body:	

MODULE TO MODULE MAPPING TABLE (please expand as required)					
UCEN/ Pearson/ SEG Module	Module Title		External Unit/Module - equivalents	Module Title	
	Level			Level	
	Credits*			Credits*	
Learning Outcomes:			Learning Outcomes:		
Course/ module content:			Course/ module content:		

Amount of credit intending to be claimed:	
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Please provide any other detail in support of your claim:

Student signature:		Date:	
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(This form may be submitted electronically, which will be constituted as a signature, and any false declaration treated appropriately)

Director/Head of Department signature:		Date:	
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Chair of Academic Services Panel signature:		Date:	
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