

# **Student Guide to the Recognition of Prior Learning Process**

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## 1. What is Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)?

RPL is the process by which we can give you recognition for previous learning and/or experience. This can be used to give you advanced standing or credit towards a UCEN Manchester qualification. This means that you can enter higher education at the level that is appropriate to your previous learning and experience. This guide needs to be read in conjunction with the RPL Policy and Procedures. These will provide more detail on the amount of credit you can apply for. You can only apply for credit against whole modules.

## 2. What kind of Prior Learning is Accepted

There are 2 main types of RPL:

**Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL);** *a process through which previously assessed and certificated learning is considered.*

### Example

In 2023/24 Asif started a BA(Hons) Degree in Acting at Flamingo University but part way through the year decided that Flamingo wasn't the correct institution for him. During his time at Flamingo he successfully passed 3 x 20 credit modules. He has now applied to the BA(Hons) Acting at UCEN Manchester. This course has similar modules to the 3 which he completed at Flamingo. Asif could apply for RPCL for the modules previously completed.

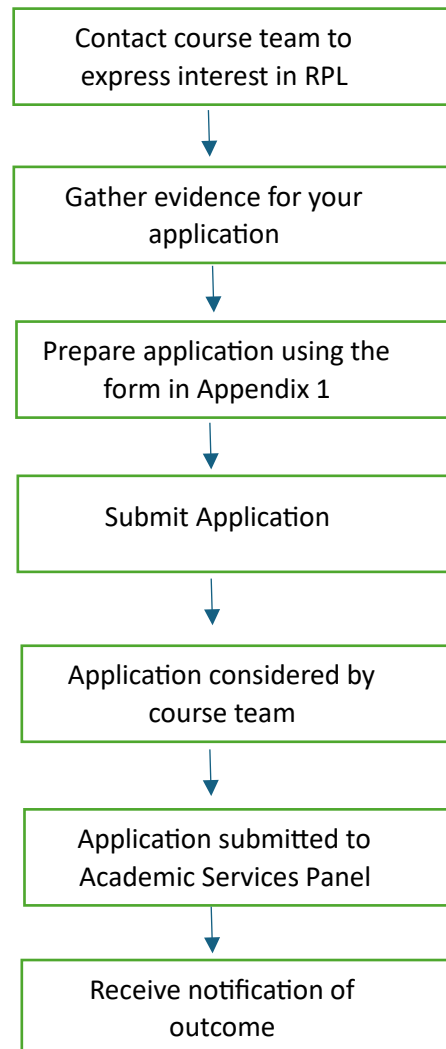
**Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL);** a process through which learning achieved outside of formal education or training is considered.

### Example

Yolande has been working as an IT manager for the past 7 years. She has now decided that she would like to undertake a Foundation Degree in Cyber Security. On reading the course information and module specifications she thinks that at least two of the modules reflect substantial elements of her job. Yolande could apply for RPEL for her experience in her current role.

## 3. How do I Apply?

The first step is to contact the course team to discuss your application to the course together with your experience and/or qualifications. They will explain the process to you and support you through the process.



#### **4. Your Responsibility**

It is your responsibility to:

- to make the claim
- to demonstrate you have acquired knowledge and skills
- to support the claim with appropriate evidence.

## **5. Possible evidence for claims**

UCEN Manchester must be able to assure itself that any claim to accredit prior learning is acceptable, sufficient, authentic and current.

If within the claim, the evidence is being presented to 'match' a module, evidence must be presented in such a way that the panel can easily determine the extent to which the evidence matches, as far as possible, the learning outcomes for that specific module.

### **5.2 Prior experiential learning**

- systematic reflection on your experience
- The writing of clear statements about the learning achieved through your experience
- The collection and collation of evidence to support those statements.

Experiential learning claims must be supported by a portfolio of evidence.

The most successful RPEL cases are those where a supportive portfolio of evidence is provided with detailed and comprehensive information regarding the claim. Often portfolios seen by the board have included different types of evidence to support an applicant's learning and achievements, together with commentaries and proof of authenticity. Examples may include:

- i. A professional narrative/essay on the learning you have gained
- ii. Samples of work
- iii. Practice-based documents
- iv. Reports on observations of practice
- v. Video/audio tapes with commentary and analysis related to achievement of learning outcomes
- vi. Witness testimonies from relevant people such as line managers, colleagues, those who can confirm your achievement/learning gained

### **5.2 Prior certificated learning and Credit Transfer**

The identification of prior certificated learning and Credit Transfer is achieved through:

- The submission of evidence of certification
- The submission of course documentation, evidencing content, learning outcomes and level
- The evidencing of module results

Certificated learning claims must be supported by the official transcript made by the awarding body of the original qualification. This should include any guidance explaining the allocation of credit and the grading scheme of the awarding body.

Where credit has not yet been confirmed, academic references from the awarding body must be supplied and any offer made must be conditional.

Claims will be matched to the learning outcomes, level and credit value of a specific whole unit, multiple units or a whole level within a specific target award. Claims cannot be made against part of a module.

The support of the programme leader in determining whether an application is suitable for approval for RPL is important. Academic staff must provide both the applicant and RPL board, details of their judgement regarding the academic suitability of the request for RPL.

Regardless of the academic tutors 'view' on the suitability of the RPL request, academic tutors must not sanction any request for RPL and in all instances must not allow an applicant/ student RPL prior to formal approval by the Academic Services Panel.

Wherever possible, all decisions on applications for RPL will be made and communicated to the applicant prior to commencement of the unit/programme of study. If a decision has not been made on the validity of the application, the student must attend and submit any appropriate assessment for those elements of the programme for which RPL is being sought, until the outcome of the application is communicated to them.

Some awards may exclude the use of RPL due to professional, statutory and/or regulatory body requirements or where an award is validated on the basis of requiring all students to study and be assessed for the full award, or where an award is validated on any other basis that does not permit, or restricts the use of RPL.

Applicants/ students must attend all scheduled modules until formal approval is given for any exemption from a module.

## 6. 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?

Only previous studies taken at the same level as or higher than the UCEN Manchester programme for which the applicant is requesting partial exemption will be considered for RPCL. For example, it is not possible to make an RPCL claim for exemption from a module worth 30 credits at level 6 on the basis of a previously awarded 30 credits at Level 5. However, an applicant could make a claim for a Level 5 unit on the basis of a previously awarded 30 credits at level 6 or 30 credits at Level 7 (Masters), provided that there is a match in terms of unit content and it can be demonstrated that the learning outcomes of the module have been met.

Applicants may make a claim for exemption from a module on the basis of previously accrued credit with a value greater than that unit. For example, an applicant could claim exemption from a module worth 30 credits on the basis of a previously completed unit worth 40 credits. However, they are not permitted to claim exemption from the same unit on the basis of a previously completed unit worth 15 credits because exemption from part of a unit is not permissible under RPL regulations.